



Saint Joseph, Pillar of Families

Holy Angels | Saints Peter & Paul | Sacred Heart of Jesus | Saint Michael

The Beacons Pathway Team was invited to join a Zoom meeting with parish staff members to get information and ask questions regarding the Beacons process. Fr. Jason Williams, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, was the speaker who led the meeting. Fr. Jason gave a quick overview of Beacons and then took questions to help those in attendance understand our roles.

Question: Why have a merger versus a cluster? A merger makes it much more straightforward in managing one parish versus multiple. It allows for less meetings as parochial councils, financial councils, administrative offices, worship committees, etc. can become unified committees resulting in less meetings for the pastor and more time to focus on the liturgical.

Question: Does Merger = Closure? No, merger does not = closure. For many years churches have been brought together (e.g., in our family, St. Michael and Ss. Peter and Paul were brought together) and when the churches are thriving with the people attending, supporting financially, and volunteering, there is no need for closure. To close a church building, this decision has to come from the parish up, not from the Archbishop or the Archdiocese. And to do this, there must be some severe reasons (grave reasons) and NOT just that there is a new pastor or Archbishop that comes in and makes this decision.

Question: What is the difference between a church and a parish? A church is a building established for worship by the parish, Holy Angels; Sacred Heart of Jesus; St. Michael; and Ss. Peter and Paul. A parish is a community of the faithful whose care has been entrusted to a pastor. For our family, we are St. Joseph Pillar of Families, the name voted on by the people.

Question: What is the difference between a parochial church and a subsidiary church? In the parochial church, Mass is required to be held a minimum of every two weeks, maintain a tabernacle with the Eucharist present, a baptismal font, and the precedence of all Sacraments. A subsidiary church that remains open has the same right to all of these, as well, but is not required. This distinction is only a distinction in the law; it does not mean that these churches will not have the Sacraments or the Eucharist reserved. In fact, all churches must be accessible for the public worship of the faithful and for prayer. Fr. Jason added that he would advise not to stray from having those items present in our subsidiary churches as that would be stupid X 4. It may even be possible to include stipulations in a decree of merger to ensure the protection of the celebration of sacraments and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, as examples.

Question: Will only the parochial church have Masses for Holy Week and Easter? No. In the past, there may have been guidelines from the USCCB that gave the allowance to parishes with not enough priests to only have one of each service, but there is nothing that says you cannot have these services at multiple churches if there is a need due to the number and if there is an availability of priests.

Question: When we become one parish, how will Sacramental records be kept? While Sacramental records would be kept in one book for the parish, you would notate every Sacrament accordingly to show at which church it occurred. You would also be able to set up the certificate this way.

Question: What is required with each church's bank accounts when a merger occurs? All accounts come under one umbrella. There must be at least one common account for shared expenses.

Question: What other guidelines are there for handling the finances for the parish? The pastor, working with his finance council, will determine how the finances will come together and how they will be administered through multiple accounts. There can be earmarked funds for a specific church, e.g. Maintenance & Repair, with proper authorization.

Question: How is a Balance Sheet of Funds set up? Canon Law does not dictate. The pastor, with input from his finance committee and other consultants, would put these guidelines in place.

Question: Is it wise for parishioners to form their own 501(c)3? Several thoughts that Fr. Jason gave on this subject were that there could be misuse of funds by the administrator(s) handling the funds; insurable accountability of the funds if the bank holding the funds goes bankrupt; audit and control of the account. He also pointed out that the pastor still has authority over accepting the funds and how and for what purposes the funds would be used. The funds that would be given to the parish whether directly or by paying for other projects or bills directly from the 501(c)3 would still be income that would be assessable by the Archdiocese.

Question: Are we moving too quickly? Fr. Jason stated that the Beacons process should not be rushed and that each family will progress at different rates based on the dynamics of where they were coming into Beacons. Some families who were already clusters will move at a different pace than those who just came together. Every family will be different and needs to figure out what works for them. Everything must be done in the context of Canon Law.

Question: How is the decree put together? Understanding that a decree for St. Joseph Pillar of Families Parish is down the road, the pastor and his pastoral council work together on a petition for the Family to be submitted to the Archbishop and presbyteral council. The petition could possibly request that the decree from the Archbishop contain language stating that all four churches in our family will remain open with a tabernacle and the presence of the Eucharist, therefore requiring a minimum number of Masses. The decree is then sent to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for the archbishop's approval or suggested changes. Once a final decree is approved, the assets and liabilities are joined, but it would be in the best interest to maintain religious items in their present church. Fr. Jarred will not be presenting a petition to the archbishop before 2026.

With Fr. Jason's insight and guidance, we realize everything with the Beacons of Light is a work in progress and we ask all family members of St. Joseph Pillar of Families to pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we walk together in this process.

Thank you,
St. Joseph Pillar of Families
Beacons Pathway Team