

# BECOMING ONE PARISH

*"I pray that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me."*

John 17:21



*The following questions and answers have been put together in the hopes of helping our parishioners to better understand the process of Scioto Catholic becoming one parish. Please keep our churches in your prayers during this time of transition.*

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## **What has taken place with Real Presence Real Future (RPRF)?**

RPRF was initiated three years ago by Bishop Robert Brennan, who led the diocese from March 2019 until November 2021 when he left to become the bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. Its genesis came out of a clergy convocation in fall 2019 when priests expressed concerns about future ministry in parishes across an expansive diocese and how to deal with the dwindling numbers within their ranks.

Bishop Brennan appointed Father Michael Hartge, the Moderator of the Curia, to lead the diocese's RPRF efforts, which began in earnest in early 2021 and included an initial Disciple Maker Index survey, 40 Days of Adoration, a Eucharistic gathering, draft models, question-and-answer periods, regional public commentary sessions and publication of information through the [www.realpresencerealfuture.com](http://www.realpresencerealfuture.com) website.

## **What are the final results of RPRF?**

The diocese released the final results of the Real Presence Real Future (RPRF) initiative on Thursday, May 25 after an extensive three-year evaluation process designed to help shape the mission of the diocese for generations to come and serve its people in a 23-county area with a particular focus on evangelization.

## **What has Bishop Fernandes decided regarding RPRF?**

Bishop Earl Fernandes spent his first 12 months after his installation in Columbus evaluating the recommendations from several rounds of draft models and feedback from parishes, schools, committees and clergy to determine the best course of action to meet the needs of parishioners and priests.

After reviewing the recommendations, the bishop accepted some of them and rejected others.

## **What are the two priorities of the Bishop?**

Bishop Fernandes has two priorities for the Diocese of Columbus: Evangelization and Vocations.

## **How has Bishop articulated these two priorities?**

“Real Presence Real Future, we have said over and over again, it’s about the mission of evangelization,” Bishop Fernandes said. “I think through these changes we will have parishes that are not just maintaining what they have but are actually evangelizing, making new disciples, new followers, so that Catholicism is not seen merely as a religion but as a whole way of life.”

## **What is Bishop Fernandes’ decision for Scioto Catholic regarding RPRF?**

There were four types of formal structures established by RPRF. Scioto Catholic was selected to adopt Model B

**Model A** – One parish, one pastor, one church

**Model B** – One parish, one pastor, multiple churches

**Model C** – Multiple parishes, one pastor, multiple churches, one staff

**Model D** – Multiple parishes, one pastor, multiple churches, multiple staffs

Holy Redeemer, Holy Trinity, St. Mary, and St. Peter will remain open as churches. One newly established canonical parish will be formed. There will be one pastor, one finance council, one staff, and one school (elementary and high school).

## **How did the bishop come to the conclusion that he did for Scioto Catholic?**

“The recommendation was based on helping support the pastor. The four parishes aren't close together which makes it hard for the pastor to be accessible. Also, complications arise with four different sets of parish books. Bishop Fernandes encourages parishioners to work to come together as one parish family.” - Jason May, the Diocese Communications Director.

## **What is a parish?**

Can. 515 §1. A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor

(parochus) as its proper pastor (pastor) under the authority of the diocesan bishop.

§2. It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council.

§3. A legitimately erected parish possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

### **What is necessary to merge into one parish?**

The Four Parishes of Our Consortium will be issued a Decree of Suppression, and One Parish will be formed. All four Churches will remain Churches (places of Divine Worship).

### **What will be the process to become one parish?**

Once the transition team begins meeting, there will be extensive information regularly shared with parishioners. Parishioners will also have an opportunity to participate in surveys and attend discussion sessions. Everyone's voice will be valued and heard. Throughout the entire process, key diocesan leaders will be involved to ensure that our becoming one canonical parish is done in accord with diocesan expectations. A plan will be submitted and approved by the bishop. The Plan will describe how each parish is affected by the proposed action of suppression and merger.

### **What is a decree of suppression?**

Suppression pertains to the parish, a geographical area for which the pastor has care of the souls there present. A decree of suppression is a decree issued by the bishop that ceases a parish's existence, but the church itself remains open as a place of divine worship.

### **What is involved with obtaining a decree of suppression?**

The Presbyteral Council must be consulted and heard regarding each individual administrative act by which a parish may be erected, suppressed, or notably

altered. A new parish may be erected in the process of merging parishes. It is necessary for a detailed plan to be presented to the Presbyteral Council which describes how each parish is affected by the proposed actions and for the bishop to hear the Presbyteral Council's advice regarding each affected parish. The bishop is not bound by the advice of the council, but he must hear that advice.

Meanwhile, the church building remains a consecrated or at least dedicated sacred place reserved for divine worship and celebration of the sacraments, the name or title of the Church cannot be changed. Even if it is closed and not in use, it must still be cared for.

### **What will happen with the finances of the suppressed parishes?**

Our finance manager will be looking into the federal tax ID form for changing the name of an existing church (St Mary's as this is the one that we use for our staff's payroll) to the new parish name.

We are working on the start of combining the dormant bank accounts for all 4 parishes into the general checking for each church.

Next, we will be moving to the Parish Aid Fund Accounts, and if not restricted, we will close these accounts. We will get more information on whether any of these accounts are restricted and how to handle them moving forward.

Our finance manager will then be looking into the endowment funds held by the Foundation. She will be getting the agreements for each fund to determine if they are restricted or not, so that we can find the best place for moving forward after that as directed by the finance office.

We will be combining the mass stipend accounts into one account. We will also keep track of all incoming mass stipends and payments for each parish within the one account.

This is a priority: Our finance manager will be looking into getting some verbiage for people that have already made wills and bequests to specific churches as we will need to communicate this to our parishioners, and some will need to be



changed. We will also possibly be working with the Foundation on this part too, for people just beginning to think about this in the future.

Going forward, we will need to apply for a new credit card in the new name of the parish.

We will also have to find out if we need to combine all cemetery accounts or keep them separate.

### **Will the Saint Peter Ladies Guild be able to continue their mission work? Will they have to change their name to reflect the name of the new parish?**

Since this is an auxiliary account, there is no need to change the name. The Ladies Guild can continue their mission work as they currently are.

### **What happens to funds when the churches have fundraisers?**

We will no longer have individual fundraisers for a single church. We will be having them under the new name of the parish and determine before fundraising what the funds will be used for.

### **Will each church have a budget?**

We will have one set of books and one budget.

However, expenses for maintenance supply & repair will be listed by church and the utilities will be listed by church so we can track activity for these expenses.

### **How will sacramental record books be kept after we become one canonical parish?**

The sacramental record books (baptismal, marriage, first communion, confirmation and death) have been gathered from our four parishes, along with our three closed churches. They are kept at the Scioto Catholic office. These will continue to be updated after the merger into one parish. One new set of records will be established for new entries to the newly formed Parish.

### **How will sacramental records be recorded? Will they be under the new parish or at the church where they took place?**

Sacraments will be recorded in the new set of records and will list the new parish name as well as the name of the church in which the Sacrament took place.

### **What will the staff and finance Council look like?**

When we become one parish, we will continue to have one staff, in two locations. The existing staff will be working at the Scioto Catholic office, while future staff members related to our Hispanic Ministry will have access to office space prepared at St. Monica. We will continue to have one finance council.

### **What will the new parish be called?**

The new Parish will be given a name such as, "Scioto Catholic Parish." The name will be selected by the Pastor, after consulting with Diocese Leaders, Transition Team Members, Staff, and Parishioners. The name will be approved by the bishop.

### **What will happen to the names of the existing churches of our consortium?**

After the merger into one parish happens, the particular churches (Holy Redeemer, Holy Trinity, St. Mary of the Annunciation, and St. Peter in Chains, will retain their existing names. The churches remain churches under the umbrella of being one parish.



**Will church names be displayed as they are?**

Yes, particular church names will remain on the signs as they are.

**What will be our parish boundaries?**

All of Scioto County.

**Will our church mass times change?**

No, Mass times will remain the same.

**Will each church retain its own vestments, liturgical articles, appointments?**

Yes, each church will retain its own vestments, liturgical articles, etc., unless there is a compelling reason to share them.

**How is being one parish any different from what we are doing as a consortium now?**

The big difference in becoming a parish as opposed to remaining a consortium is that all of our sacramental record books will become one. This is particularly beneficial for our staff. As the consortium formed, administration became significantly more complex. By simplifying everything as one parish, we are making things considerably easier for our current staff, as well as being proactive in preparing the way for future hires.

By bringing together all of our families with so many different talents and perspectives, we have a chance for deeper personal conversion and stronger evangelization going forward.

## **What is a Transition Team?**

The transition team will include, but is not limited to, the Pastor, the Parochial Vicar, the Deacons, members of the Finance Council, parishioners from each parish, consortium staff, school principals, diocesan support team members, and any others that possess skills and experience of value in this process.

## **What must a Transition Team do in the process of merging our parishes?**

Throughout the entire process, it is most important that this work be undertaken in such a way that the pastoral care of the people and good communication with them is always evident.

## **What is the plan of the Transition Team in relation to the Diocese?**

Every decision made by the Transition Team to implement the bishop's decision of Scioto Catholic becoming one canonical parish will be approved ahead of time by the best authorities in the diocese in canon law, and the overall RPRF process. The Final plan will receive extensive collaboration and input by parishioners.

## **When is the expected completion date of the process?**

The bishop, in collaboration with the pastor, will determine the suppression date. Our goal to become one parish, multiple churches is by Easter 2024.

## **How do we hope to grow as a new parish?**

With the Holy Spirit, we hope to expand the number of masses offered. This will occur when there is an overabundance of the number of parishioners that attend mass at a particular church.

## **Will a new school be built?**

The Pastor, School Principals, and Board of Trustee Representatives have been working & collaborating with an architectural/design firm, alongside representatives from the diocese, for the last 14 months. Several options for new schools are being explored. This includes the possibility of a K-12 building or a phased approach, which would mean building the elementary first.

## **What is the long-term plan for our newly formed parish?**

A mission statement will be formulated.

A strategic plan for evangelization will be established under the guidance of the Director of Evangelization in the Diocese.

A Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be formed to advise the Pastor. An SLT is a group of parishioners, who can be staff and/or volunteers, who help the pastor in his decision making and his day-to-day operations and mission of the parish, from faith formation to buildings and grounds, and everything in between. Typically, an SLT is a smaller group, 3-5 people, who are in very frequent communication with the Pastor regarding day-to-day parish issues. All parishioners will have the opportunity to feed ideas/suggestions to SLT members who will then present them to the Pastor.

# Scioto Catholic

— *Becoming One Parish* —

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**514 MARKET STREET**  
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