



Questions from the Parish Assemblies—Installment #2

Participants from the four parish assemblies provided questions in writing as part of the meeting. Not every question can be answered in the bulletin, but commonly asked questions will be addressed to the extent possible.

Will the temporary closure of churches and offices due to Covid-19 impact the timeline for our parish merger?

The plan is to proceed with the current timeline which calls for a July 1, 2020 merger and the creation of a single new parish with a new name. The merging of parishes is a Church matter and can proceed in accord with Church law. The diocesan bishop is the competent and legitimate authority to determine whether parishes should merge, close, be altered or be created. It is important to note that a parish is NOT a business enterprise, even though it does engage in certain business functions in support of its spiritual mission. So, for example, if a parish employs individuals, it must do so in accord with applicable local, state and federal laws. The parish needs a federal tax identification number that it uses with banks for financial transactions and with payroll for such things as social security withholding for employees. Given the current challenges related to business functions, it may not be possible for all the business-rated functions to be joined by July 1, 2020 even as the four parishes come together to form one new parish, that is, one unified community of the People of God, shepherded by a pastor, continuing the mission of Jesus Christ. So even if some of the integration of business functions lags behind the merger, the new parish can exist and can engage in its spiritual mission in earnest on July 1, 2020.

What will be the relationship between the merged parish and Holy Cross Academy?

Holy Cross Academy is a regional school that is owned and governed by a non-profit organization called North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc. The corporation has a board of priests and lay people who direct the schools. Holy Cross Academy is one of six elementary schools in the region. These six schools are currently the ministry of 32 parishes. This means two things. On the one hand, the regional school is an important and integral component of the ministry of passing on the faith to

the next generation of Catholics. On the other hand, the parishes participate in supporting the school financially. Every school is supported financially by tuition, parish subsidy, fundraising and grants. Currently, Saint Sebastian and Saint Teresa of Avila provide *direct* parish subsidy to Holy Cross Academy. Saint Athanasius and Incarnation provide *indirect* parish subsidy. The way indirect subsidy works is that Saint Athanasius and Incarnation Parishes contribute annually to a diocesan fund called Elementary School Grants. Grants are then distributed by the Diocese to schools based on several considerations, but especially in support of schools that educate students from parishes that do not provide direct subsidy. Beginning on July 1, 2020, when the new merged parish comes into existence, there will only be direct subsidy from the new parish to the school. And while the new parish does not “own” the school, it is nevertheless an integral component of the new parish’s faith formation program and so will enjoy the spiritual and practical support that all the ministries of the new parish receive.

What are the practical implications of being one parish?

While the four parishes already share a common clergy team and while some of the programs and ministries of the four parishes already act as one, for example, the music ministry, currently, we have four distinct parishes with four separate business functions. Saint Athanasius' bills are the responsibility of Saint Athanasius Parish. The money collected for Incarnation Parish belongs to Incarnation Parish. Beginning on July 1, 2020, all bills, regardless of their source (for example, the gas bill for Sant Teresa church building), and all income (such as the collection from the 8:00 am Mass) will belong to the new, merged parish. Further, all ministries, programs, organizations, and activities (including festivals and fish fries), regardless of which parish currently sponsors them, will be the ministries, programs, organizations, and activities of a single, new parish.