

Differentiating Between Families of Parishes, Merged Parishes and Clustered Parishes

	Merged Parishes	Clustered Parishes	Family of Parishes
Priests	Typically, one priest over multiple sites. Occasionally merged parishes have more than one priest.	Typically, one priest over multiple sites. Occasionally clustered parishes have more than one priest.	Multiple priests over multiply sites. This will allow priests more time to engage in the work of ministering to their parish community.
Number of parishes	One canonical parish remains, usually with multiple worship sites.	Typically, 2 or 3 canonical parishes.	Typically, 3 to 6 canonical parishes.
Individual parish identities	Only one parish identity remains.	All parish identities remain.	All parish identities remain; parishes maintain individual integrity

In a merger, multiple parishes join together to become one new parish under one pastor. History, legacy, finances and parish identity are all merged into one new parish. Unlike mergers, the families of parishes model allows for parish identities to remain, keeping multiple parishes intact. The legacy from each parish and the culture and charisms developed are able to continue, and resources and spiritual gifts are now shared with those of other parishes in the family.

Unlike clusters, the families of parishes model truly allows parishes to complement and support one another in one mind and heart. Clusters still maintain independent staff and councils, which do not allow for fruitful and lasting collaboration. The cluster model can be overwhelming and stressful for a pastor who now meets with multiple councils and staff, in addition to ministering to multiple parishes.

In the families of parishes model, all resources (including priests) are shared among the parishes in the family, though each parish maintains its original identity and integrity. This provides more opportunity for priests in the family to minister according to their gifts, talents, and charisms, allowing them to be the ministers whom God has called them to be, supported by their brother priests in serving the family.