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RESOURCES FOR MERGING PARISHES

PLANNING FOR A MERGER

The process of merging parishes provides many opportunities to grow in faith, to increase in love and acceptance and to be imbued with hope. While the merger process can lead to a real renewal of faith for parishioners, there are many losses along the way. The losses must be grieved through a process of remembering and renewing before new grace-filled energy is realized and a new parish community can be created. When the Archbishop directs parishes to merge the primary organizing responsibility for that rests with each parish’s “Parish Implementation Team” as well as the support of the cohort.

Merger

If parishes are to merge within a year to 18 months, their primary responsibility is to prepare for the merger. (See Section Three.) If possible, it is good to have two representatives on the Cohort Implementation Team from the merging parishes to contribute and be a primary communication link. Once the merger is complete the pastor and 4 members representing the new parish participate on the Cohort Implementation Team.

I. The Parish Implementation Team

The Parish Implementation Team, as noted in other places in this guide, is made up of five people including the pastor, PLC or administrator from each parish that is being merged. This team is charged with implementing the Archbishop’s goals with other parishes in the cohort. The team acts like a “steering” committee assisting the pastor in the process, taking on some of the merging responsibilities and acting in a leadership role in the process. The Parish Implementation Team helps ensure effective and sustained communication throughout the process. The Parish Implementation Team works with the pastor to accomplish the following tasks related to merging, as well as the other goals given to the cohort by the Archbishop.

- to assist in providing for the pastoral needs of the parishioners during this time of transition;
- to assist with the tasks which need to be accomplished that are described in the documents which follow;
- to ensure the smooth transition of several parishes to one new parish community;
- to be proactive in inviting parishioners to remember their past, hold it sacred, ritualize the gifts given to the parish and plant new seeds for the future;
- to be a sounding board and an inspiration during the merger process;
- to help in forming a new parish pastoral council;
- to implement with the other cohort members all the goals of the Archbishop, beginning in the first 18 months with at least three ministry goals. One could be in education/formation, one in prayer and worship; one in service or outreach.

Parish Implementation Team Meetings

As noted in other places in this guide, it is recommended that the Parish Implementation Team choose a chair and a secretary. The chair’s job is to facilitate the meetings, work with the Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator to put together an agenda and ensure follow-up to decisions made at the meeting. The secretary is charged with keeping minutes and following up with any written reports that need to be

made during the merger process. It is recommended that at the beginning of the process the Parish Implementation Team meets every other week to lay out the tasks and calendar the process. The meetings should not be more than two hours. At times it will be important for all the parishes involved in a particular merger to meet and plan.

The Parish Implementation Team should be familiar with the canonical and pastoral areas which need to be addressed in the merger process, such as celebrating the past, renewing the present and planting seeds for the future, human resource issues, cemetery issues and items such as how to form a new parish pastoral council.

It is recommended that some common town hall/parish-wide meetings be held during the process. This is one way to keep parishioners informed, help them get to know one another and provide an opportunity for prayer and reflection. The Implementation Coordinators and trained Facilitators are available to assist with town hall meetings and your cohort meetings. Please call the Implementation Coordinators for assistance in scheduling, Julie Bowers (812-239-0320), juliebow25@gmail.com; Dan Krodel (317-445-4661), dankrodel@hotmail.com.

Once the merger happens, the Parish Implementation Team focuses with the cohort to continue working on implementing the remaining goals of the Archbishop.

Please refer to the General Organizational Materials section of this guide for more resources regarding running meetings, scheduling and related issues.

II. Dealing with Change

There is an article, “*Working with Change*” in Section 4 of this guide which is provided as a resource. You may want to duplicate it and study it as a Parish Implementation Team in order to understand your own feelings and those of others as you go through the merger process. The “in between time,” when you are experiencing the ending of what was and waiting for what will be, is a “wilderness” zone. There are many ups and downs in the wilderness. Unpredictability is a word that often describes these months. People take several steps forward and fall back a few. Over a period of time with renewed energy new beginnings do happen and more stability follows.

III. Focus on the Parishioners

Do not put all your energy as a Parish Implementation Team on the “tasks and checklists.” A lot of attention needs to be given to the parishioners and their feelings and needs. Many may be experiencing a great deal of loss. Things will not be the same. Their parents and grandparents, and perhaps great grandparents, have built the parishes that are merging. They need to be remembered and celebrated. Storytelling, rituals and times for the parishioners from the merging parishes to gather to get to know each other, pray and enjoy social events are critical during the merger process. There are rituals included in this section for your consideration. They are “starter” ideas and need to be adapted to your situation.

IV. Special Invitations

As the time gets closer to the actual merger, people need to be welcomed and formally invited to join the new parish. Personal contact should be made so all know they are welcome and needed

for a vibrant new parish. If people have not “registered” for the new parish they should receive a pastoral visit to help them know how important they are and how much the new parish wants them to be a member. In some cases people will join parishes other than the one that is part of the merger process for convenience or personal reasons. This is fine as long as they know they are welcome at the newly merged parish. The personal contact will make all the difference in the world.

To effectively merge parishes we need to honor the past and cherish the memories of it, name the present strengths and struggles, recognize the losses and hurts and generate hopes and dreams for the future. All this is part of living out the “life-death-resurrection” mystery as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our faith will support us in this journey as the Spirit of the Risen Christ is ever present to us.

ALL THE CHECKLISTS IN THIS SECTION NEED TO BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO MICKEY LENTZ, CHANCELLOR, BY OCTOBER 31. See the Archdiocesan Resource List in Section 1, for staff available to assist you in this endeavor.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR MERGERS

THIS CHECKLIST IS A SUMMARY FROM THE WORK OF EACH PARISH IN THE COHORT INVOLVED IN A MERGER. THE SUMMARY, ALONG WITH THE BACK-UP CHECKLISTS, ARE DUE TO MICKEY LENTZ BY OCTOBER 31

✓	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENTS’ SIGNATURE
	1. Read and studied the merger materials in the Implementation Guide	
	2. Completed the Pastoral Transition Issues Checklist	
	3. Completed Temporalities Merger Checklist	
	4. Completed the Canonical Checklist	
	5. Studied and implemented what was necessary to do based on the Records Retention document	
	6. Studied and implemented what was necessary to do based on the “Disposition of Sacramental Records” document	
	7. Studied and implemented what was necessary to do based on the “Disposition of Administrative Records” document	
	8. Studied and implemented what was necessary to do based on the Human Resource Checklist.	
	9. Studied and implemented what was necessary to do based on the Cemetery Checklist	
	10. Studied, used, adapted or created new rituals dealing with loss and new life before the merger happened.	
	11. Studied the materials and have a plan to begin a new parish council and finance council.	

We have worked as a Parish Implementation Team to be a pastoral presence to the parishioners to accomplish the tasks listed above and other things which we saw that needed to happen for a successful merger.

Signatures:

Name

Parish

Date

PASTORAL TRANSITION ISSUES AND CHECKLIST

√	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	1. Gather parish pastoral councils for at least one joint meeting to plan for merger.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator and finance and pastoral council chairs of the parishes about to be merged
	2. As the councils are gathered explain that the major work of merging will be done by the Parish Implementation Teams. Identify members to serve on the various committees needed during the transition. Some are named below.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator of current parishes about to be merged
	3. Form a subcommittee to address transition, grief and loss issues using The Reid Group and/or Parish Facilitators to assist in addressing the issues.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	4. Form a subcommittee to address gatherings, rituals, and celebrations	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	5. Form an evangelization subcommittee to address membership, retention of existing members, welcome new members and strangers, seek out those who have left.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	6. Plan gatherings that celebrate the history of the parishes; plan gatherings that allow for the ritual celebration of loss; plan gatherings that begin to sow seeds of a new beginning and hope for the future.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator with the Office of Worship
	7. Address Human Resource Pastoral Issues	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator, Parish Implementation Team, and Archdiocesan Human Resources Office
	8. Address Worship Pastoral Issues	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator, Parish Implementation Team and Archdiocesan Office of Worship
	9. Address Religious Education Pastoral Issues	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator, Parish Implementation Team and Archdiocesan Office for Catholic Education
	10. Address Outreach Issues	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator, Parish Implementation Team and Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization

√	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	11. Form other needed committees for Spiritual and Pastoral Renewal, Vocations, Pro-Life, Religious Education etc. Please refer to Cohort and Planning Commission Recommendations	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator, Parish Implementation Team and Archdiocesan Office of Vocations
	12. Provide ongoing training for new pastoral commissions and committees.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator and Parish Implementation Team,
	13. Review structures, plans, progress, etc. using the Criteria established by the Planning Commission.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator and Parish Implementation Team,
	14. Develop an implementation plan that includes both written and face-to-face communication.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator and Parish Implementation Team,
	15. Plan a celebration to inaugurate the new parish.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator with worship subcommittee and Office of Worship

TEMPORALITIES MERGER CHECKLIST

√	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	<u>I. Accounting and Financial Information</u>	
	A. Financial	
	1. Assemble for review all prior records; include liabilities, future revenues, assets, receipts (income), and disbursements (expenses) for the last accounting period	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	2. Itemize liabilities; Require third party support for liabilities; contact vendors directly where amounts are in question and no third party support is provided (i.e. statements)	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	3. Itemize any revenues; List any Employees	Pastor(s)
	4. Itemize future revenues (pledges); contact pledgers regarding merger and secure notice of payment of pledge to future merged corporation and determine those pledges to be assigned to new corporation (Assignment and Assumption of Right of Payment)	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator with Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	5. Itemize assets; Require third party verification of all financial assets, (i.e. statements), including real estate	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	6. Determine proper amount of “holdback” by Parish to allow payment of liabilities; Determine Assignment and Assumption of Liabilities	Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	B. Church property	
	1. Prepare inventory of all property such as office equipment, computer hardware, furnishings, appliances, church art, artifacts, sacred vessels, vestments, etc.	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator in consultation with councils
	2. Conduct a needs assessment in light of available property	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator in consultation with councils
	3. Develop a plan for disposition of excess office equipment, furnishings, appliances	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator in consultation with councils
	4. Calculate outstanding Mass obligations and assess ability of new parish to fulfill within one year of merger; may transfer to Mission Office. Insure that all outstanding Mass obligations are satisfied in accord with the norms of Canon Law. (Canons 952-958)	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator with Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	C. Estimate income and expenses for the remainder of this fiscal year and next year and submit to Finance Office	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator and Finance Council(s)
	D. Follow Corporate Checklist with regard to deed changes, accounts, and perpetual care funds and strategy.	Pastor/PLC/ Administrator
	<u>II. Apply for Employer Identification Number</u>	
	A. Complete Application for Employer Identification Number (Form SS-4)	Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	B. File for Employer Identification Number	Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	<u>III. Apply for Indiana Employer Identification Number</u>	
	A. Complete Application for Business Tax Registration	Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services
	B. File application for business tax registration	Archdiocesan Office for Financial Services

	IV. <u>Transfer of Parish Documents to New Parish</u>	
	This transfer must occur by Effective Date of Merger	
	Transfer all parish documents as per ‘Disposition of Administrative Documents’ and ‘Records Retention Policy’	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator
	V. Follow assets and liabilities policy*	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator with Archdiocesan Finance Office

*** Refer to Guidelines and Procedures for Merging Parishes and Merging or Closing Schools – July 2013**

CANONICAL MERGER CHECKLIST

Canonical issues have to do with those things that are ‘church’ related and are under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical law. Once a decision for a canonical reconfiguration has been made by the Archbishop, the items in this checklist should be followed as a minimum. This checklist is analogous to the checklist for Corporate Reconfiguration. Any questions or considerations should be brought up with the Chancellor, Mickey Lentz at 317-236-7325.

	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	1. Communicate Parish Restructuring to Presbyteral Council for consultation	Archbishop
	2. Prepare necessary decrees for Archbishop’s signature.	Judicial Vicar
	3. Sign Decree of Canonical Act	Archbishop
	4. Communicate proposed date by which canonical merger is to be finalized	Archbishop
	5. Discuss canonical implications of parish reconfiguration plan with pastor, council members, and Parish Implementation Team as necessary	Judicial Vicar
	6. Suggest three names for new merged parish	Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator after consultation with Parish Councils
	7. Communicate name for new merged parish and communicate to the Parish Implementation Teams and Pastor(s)/ PLC / Administrator.	Archbishop/Chancellor
	8. Make necessary official notifications of change of status/name.	Archbishop/ Chancellor
	9. Make Disposition of Sacramental Records	Pastor / PLC / Administrator
	10. Communicate any change in territorial boundaries of new parish	Chancellor

RECORDS RETENTION

INTRODUCTION

The records retention guidelines for Archdiocesan/parish records were prepared to assist Archdiocesan and/or parishes' needs to establish control over routine records and to preserve records of permanent value. The list of records included is lengthy but not definitive. Each archdiocese/parish may have a series of records not mentioned here. Retention periods were devised based on canon law, state and federal statutes, and practical archdiocesan/parish realities. If questions arise regarding records-related issues, please contact the Chancellor at 317-236-7325 for additional information.

What Must Merging Parishes Do With Records of This Type?

The administrative records for all parishes in the territory of the reconfigured parish must be transferred, with the oversight of the Chancellor to a single location in the reconfigured parish just prior to the parish reconfiguration. The records will remain at the reconfigured parish.

Disposition of Sacramental Records in a Merger

The sacramental records for all parishes in the territory of the merged parish must be transferred to the merged parish. The records must remain at the merged parish location and must be cared for and protected adequately (Canon 535).

All external electronic files such as Twitter, Facebook are transferred to new parish.

All internal electronic files such as financial and personnel kept on computers are transferred to the new parish.

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES

Records retention schedules represent the period of time that records must be kept according to legal and/or organizational requirements.

This document covers retention schedules for nine different groups of archdiocesan/parish records:

- Administrative
- Personnel
- Financial
- Property
- Cemetery
- Publications
- Sacramental
- Schools
- Child Predator/Child Abuse Clearance

Within each group, different series are listed followed by a retention period. Records older than the retention period should be destroyed. Those of permanent value should be stored appropriately.

For further info consult Sacramental Handbook / Records Retention

If a series of records is not listed here, locate a similar record series in the list and apply that retention period.

A. Administrative Records

These records are produced in the course of the management of the affairs of the archdiocese/parish.

Records Type	Retention Period
Abstracts, deeds (property)	Permanent
Annual reports to Chancery (<i>Status Animarum</i>)	Permanent
Annual reports to the archdiocese/parish	Permanent
Bequest and estate papers (<i>wills</i>)	Permanent
Census records	Permanent
Contracts, inactive	7 years after end of contract
Correspondence, legal	Permanent
Correspondence, official (<i>regarding Archdiocesan/parish policies, Archdiocesan/parish directive, etc.</i>)	Permanent
Correspondence, routine	Review/discard biannually
Decrees	Permanent
Donor lists	Permanent
Endowment decrees	Permanent
Finance Committee minutes	Permanent
Historical file (<i>newspaper clippings, photos, etc., related to archdiocese/parish</i>)	Permanent
Insurance policies	Permanent
Inventories of property and equipment	Permanent
Leases	Destroy 7 years after expiration.
Liturgical minister's schedules (<i>altar servers, ushers, lectors, etc.</i>)	Retain until superseded
Mass intention books	Until all Masses are satisfied - Canons 952-958
Office files, subject	Selective retention: retain those that document Archdiocesan/parish administration and activities
Parish council constitutions	Retain until superseded
Parish council minutes	Permanent
Archdiocese/parish organization records (<i>minutes, correspondence, publications, etc.</i>)	Permanent
Photographs (<i>relating to Archdiocesan/parish history, clergy, parishioners</i>)	Permanent
Policy statements	Permanent
Religious education reports (<i>for the Archdiocesan offices</i>)	Permanent
Rosters of Parishioners	Permanent

Records Type	Retention Period
Subject files (<i>correspondence, memos, rules, schedules, etc.</i>)	Annual review; destroy superseded files biannually
Will, testaments, codicils	Permanent

B. Personnel Records

A personnel file should be maintained for each active Archdiocesan/parish employee. That file should contain the following:

- Employee application
- Resume
- Eligibility verification form (I-9)
- Background Checks
- Salary information
- Sick leave taken and accrued
- Vacation record
- Performance evaluations
- W-4 form

These records are *confidential* and should be made available only to archdiocesan/parish representatives with a legitimate right to know, unless their disclosure is compelled by some legal action. The archdiocese/parish/organization/employer has the right to require that the request be in writing and has a stated number of working days to comply with the request.

Records Type	Retention Period
Benefits	
Disability records	Permanent
Service records	Permanent
General	
Permanent earnings and records	7 years after benefit termination
Attendance records	7 years after termination
Employee contracts	7 years after termination
Employee salary schedules	7 years after termination
Health and safety	
Accident/injury reports	12 years
Environmental test records/reports	Permanent
Hazardous material exposure records	Permanent
Workers' compensation records	12 years after injury (filing), death, or last compensation payment
Employee actions	

Applications rejected	1 year
Employee evaluations	2 years after termination
Personnel files	Permanent
Termination records	Permanent
Salary administration	
W-2 forms	Permanent
W-4 forms	Permanent
Time cards	3 years from date of filing
Time sheets	3 years from date of filing
I-9 form	7 years after termination

C. Financial and Accounting Records

Records Type	Retention Period
Financial	
<i>Banking</i>	
Bank deposits	10 years
Bank statements	10 years
Cancelled checks	10 years
Check registers/stubs	10 years
<i>General</i>	
All Investments, Securities, Stocks, Bonds must be reported to the Archdiocesan Finance Office.	
Audit reports	Permanent
Balance sheets, annual	Permanent
Balance sheets, monthly/quarterly	Destroy after 1 year
Bonds, Cancelled	7 years from date of cancellation
Budgets, approved, revised	7 years
Certificates of Deposit, cancelled	3 years after redemption
Financial reports, annual	Permanent
Financial reports, monthly	Destroy after 1 year
Financial statements	Permanent
Mortgage records	Permanent
Securities sales	7 years
Stock investment	7 years after sale
<i>Accounting</i>	
Accounts payable invoices	7 years
Accounts payable ledgers	7 years

Section III – Merging Parishes **ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**
CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT

Accounts receivable ledgers	7 years
Credit card statements/charge slips	7 years
Invoices and paid bills, major building construction	Permanent
Invoices and paid bills, general accounts	7 years
Cash books	7 years
Cash journals	7 years
Cash journal, receipts on offerings and pledges	7 years
Receipts	7 years
<i>Other Records</i>	
General ledger/annual	Permanent
Journals, general and specific funds	Permanent
Journal entry sheets	7 years
Ledgers, subsidiary	7 years
Payroll journals	Permanent
Payroll registers, summary schedule of earnings, deductions and accrued leave	Permanent
Pledge registers/ledgers	7 years
Permanently restricted gift documents	Permanent
Temporarily restricted gift documents	7 years after meeting restrictions
<i>Tax Records</i>	
Employment taxes, contributions, and payments, including taxes withheld, FICA	7 years from date of filing
W-2 forms	Permanent
W-4 forms	Permanent
IRS exemption determination letters, for organizations other than those listed in <i>The Official Catholic Directory</i>	Permanent
Form 990	Permanent
State tax exemption certificates (<i>income, excise, property, sales/use, etc.</i>)	Permanent

D. Property Records

Records Type	Retention Period
Architectural records, blueprints, building designs, specification	Permanent File in Chancery
Architectural drawings	Permanent File in Chancery
Deeds files	Permanent File in Chancery
Mortgage documents	Permanent
Property appraisals	Permanent

Real estate surveys/plots, plans	Permanent
Title search papers and certificates	Permanent

E. Cemetery Records

Records Type	Retention Period
Account cards (<i>record of lot ownership and payments</i>)	Permanent
Annual report	Permanent
Bank statements	7 years
Board minutes	Permanent
Burial cards (<i>record of interred's name, date of burial, etc., alphabetically</i>)	Permanent
Burial record (<i>record of interred's name, date of burial, etc.</i>)	Permanent
Contracts documenting lot ownership	Permanent
Correspondence	Selective retention: keep if item has historical, legal, fiscal value
General ledger	Permanent
Lot maps	Permanent
Perpetual Cemetery Funds	Permanent

F. Publications

Records Type	Retention Period
Anniversary books	Permanent
Annual reports to the archdiocese/parish	Permanent
Newsletters of the archdiocese/parish or affiliated organizations	Permanent
Other archdiocese/parish-related publications	Permanent
Parish bulletins	5 years

G. Sacramental Records

Records Type	Retention Period
Baptism register	Permanent
Confirmation register	Permanent
First Communion register	Permanent
Death register	Permanent
Marriage register	Permanent
Marriage case files	Permanent
Anointing	Permanent

H. School Records

Permanent

I. Child Protection Records

Permanent

If you have questions about your records and where they should be kept, please contact the Chancellor at 317-236-7325

ARCHIVES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The mission of the archives is to centralize, preserve, protect and make available those materials that pertain to the origin and history of the archdiocese.

Location: Xavier Building – Third Floor

Hours: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm – Tues., Wed., Thurs., by appointment

317-236-1429 or 1-800-382-9836 Ext. 1429

Karen Oddi, Associate Archivist

Teresa Law, Records Management Coordinator

koddi@archindy.org

tlaw@archindy.org

CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT merging or closing parishes are invited to consider placing historical and administrative materials in the archives for safe, permanent preservation in a climate controlled environment. Each parish in the archdiocese already has one or more boxes of materials in the archives. Additional materials will update and further document the history of the parish for research and other requests.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS FOR TRANSFER TO THE ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVES

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS	Constitutions & bylaws; list of charter members; annual reports of parish council, commissions, and organizations
ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS	Major consulting, planning or building projects
COMMUNICATIONS	CDs of parish bulletin by year; newsletters
PHOTOGRAPHS	Celebrations, staff, parishioners, buildings, activities, school, etc. Write on the back with special photo pen or number each photo and make an index. Photo DVDs are welcome but identify clearly, please.
PRINTED MATERIALS	Parish directories and histories; parish anniversary materials (worship aids, booklets, invitations, etc.); pastors' installations; significant publicity items such as a commemorative poster; photocopies of newspaper stories, especially from local newspapers
CLOSED SCHOOL RECORDS	File alphabetically by surname of student—not by year(s) of attendance.
SACRAMENTAL RECORDS	Old, delicate register books may be placed in the archives.
ARTIFACTS/LITURGICAL ITEMS	Please consult with archivist.
BIBLES, PRAYER/OTHER BOOKS	Only if very unusual and in good condition-Contact archivist for advice on disposal or sale of books.

TIPS FOR PREPARING MATERIALS FOR PLACEMENT IN ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVES

• Pack only those materials that are original to your parish. Discard or return records from outside organizations.

• Remove metal clips and staples, clamps, post-a-notes, rubber bands, etc. Destroy duplicate documents, drafts, unofficial notes, routing slips, and any other non-record material.

• If possible, use only standard 10”x 12”x 15” sized record boxes.

• Remove materials from binders and hanging folders and place in plain file folders.

• Arrange files from newest to oldest and place in boxes.

• Make a list of contents of box and place inside. Keep a copy for your records.

Place label on the outside of boxes with the following information:

Location of Parish (City or Town)
Parish Name and Number
Type of Material (school, annual reports, histories, etc.)
Name and Signature of Individual Submitting Materials (Pastor or Delegate)

• Please do not tape lids to boxes.

• Please contact the Archives before delivering or sending materials to ensure their safe arrival and storage.

HUMAN RESOURCE CHECKLIST AND IMPLICATIONS REGARDING PARISH MERGER

The merging of a parish can have a strong impact on the parishioners in a community. The ties that bind people to their parish are well established and in many cases are long standing. It is not easy to let go of the past. A strong emotional attachment, often rooted in familiar historical events, can create a pattern of grieving not unlike the passing on of a loved one.

For the employees of a parish faced with merging, the effect is also one of career and financial uncertainty. If two parishes merge into one, employees doing similar work in each parish know that their jobs are at risk because the new parish simply cannot afford duplication in most positions.

As the Church, we have a responsibility to our employees to assist them in their transitions caused by parish mergers. The Synod of Bishops document *Justice in the World* (1971) stated, “All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the church and its agencies and institutions: indeed the Church should be exemplary.” Just as we would expect a business in our community to tend to the needs of its employees during lay offs, so must we make provisions to assist our staff who lose their jobs.

While employees should expect assistance from their parishes during these transitions, they must also be cognizant of the financial situation facing many parishes today. Unrealistic expectations will lead to anger that will further hurt the parish community at a time of anxiety. A measure of cooperation between the parish and the staff should exist with the goal being one of understanding.

Recommendations for Personnel Assistance during Parish Transitions

Every parish is unique in its staff structure and resources. To strictly mandate a standard set of policies and procedures for the merging of staffs or termination of positions would not recognize the differences that do exist among parishes and is not in the best interests of parish restructuring. The following recommendations are made as a vehicle for discussion by the parishes and their employees, and should be seen as minimum steps to consider. Generally:

- Discuss future staffing plans with current staff and gather input
- Give the staff members whose employment is ending adequate notice of ending dates for their positions.
- Inform all staff of the procedures for the filling of merged positions, along with written job descriptions, wages and benefits, and position requirements.
- Prior to approving any position to be filled, analyze the parish mission and current parish data to make sure the position addresses current needs.

Specific Recommendations when dealing with a termination resulting from a parish merger:

- Give the staff members whose employment is ending adequate notice of ending dates for their positions.
- Parishes must be currently enrolled in the Archdiocesan unemployment compensation program before any terminations occur in order to provide unemployment insurance coverage. The Archdiocesan policy is to offer unemployment compensation for all eligible employees.
- Inform employees of Pension Plan provisions when jobs are eliminated due to mergers. Employees are encouraged to contact the Archdiocesan Human Resource Office for further details about the plan and their options.
- Discuss Severance guidelines with HR office when applicable.
- Inform eligible employees of any continuation of benefits available through HR office.
- Inform employees of how to access job postings.
- Provide employees with time off as needed to interview and research for other positions.
- Pastors/PLC/Administrators are advised that employment actions cited above, especially terminations, could have serious legal implications and that no termination should take place without consulting with the Archdiocesan Director of Human Resources.
- It is also important to note that all employee contracts, agreements and/or settlements made subsequent to the merger announcements are not binding to the surviving parishes.
- Inform employees of Counseling Benefits.

Archdiocesan Resources to Assist Parish Employees

While much of the assistance to staff who lose their jobs is parish-based, the assistance of the Archdiocesan offices can be useful in locating and securing employment within the Church.

The Archdiocesan Human Resource Office will post both job openings on the Archdiocesan website. The office will also make available, as an outsourced service, outplacement counseling, resume writing assistance, job search, and interview skills training on a regional basis. Please contact the office for details. The office will also help with salary and benefit expectations for various positions, and networking among the specialized ministries in the Archdiocese. Sample job descriptions, assistance in policy development and procedures for employee separations are also available from this office.

HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES CHECKLIST

√	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	1. Current staffs from all parishes involved have been informed of future staffing plans.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	2. Staff members whose employment is ending have been given notice of ending dates for their positions.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	3. Fulfilling the new parish mission has been the foundation for creating the job descriptions.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	4. All staff have been made aware of procedures for filling merged positions along with written job descriptions, wages and benefits and position requirements.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	5. Severance benefits are considered in consultation with HR office.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	6. Employees have been informed of Pension Plan options.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator w/ Archdiocesan Human Resource Office
	7. Employees have been provided time off to interview and research other positions.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	8. Employees have been informed of Health Insurance continuation coverage and adequate parish paid coverage has been provided, if needed.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator w/ the Archdiocesan Human Resource Office
	9. Employees have been informed of job postings.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator w/ the Archdiocesan Human Resource Office
	10. Employees whose employment will end have been provided with opportunities for out placement counseling, resume building, workshops, and job search skill training, if needed.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator w/ the Archdiocesan Human Resource Office

CEMETERY ISSUES AND CHECKLIST

The newly formed parish needs to assume responsibility for the care and upkeep of all cemeteries of parishes involved in the merger.

√	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENT
	1. Identify the cemeteries the merged parish will be responsible for.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel with IC*
	2. Identify critical recommendations outstanding for each cemetery.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel
	3. Inventory all cemetery records: i.e. registers, maps, plot books, accounts, finance records, parish burial records and property deeds.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel
	4. Inventory all cemetery forms.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel
	5. Work toward establishing a common advisory board with representatives from each cemetery to guide the future organizational needs and solving problems as a community.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	6. Determine costs, i.e., maintenance, operation, and capital costs for each cemetery.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel with IC*
	7. Determine perpetual care needs for each cemetery and establish a perpetual care fund if one does not already exist.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel with IC*
	8. Work toward developing common pricing for each cemetery of the parish to account for costs and perpetual care; ensure that this is advertised in the parish bulletin.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel with IC*
	9. Consider rotating religious celebrations between cemeteries (e.g. Memorial Day, All Souls Day).	Pastor/PLC/Administrator
	10. Utilize one computer system for all properties for managing cemetery data.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator/Cemetery Personnel with IC*
	11. Follow <i>HR Checklist</i> with regard to personnel.	Pastor/PLC/Administrator

*Implementation Committee

**FORMING A NEW PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR MERGED
PARISH**

A new parish council represents a newly formed parish. This does not mean that former council members cannot be part of the new council. The following suggestions are offered as a way to begin.

1. Have representatives from each parish. If three or four parishes merge, it is wise to have three to four members from each parish. If two parishes merge, consider five from each parish.
2. Terms should be staggered so that members are gradually rotated off the council.
3. For at least the first six months, spend time helping council members get to know each other so that they can function more effectively.
4. Consider a half day retreat where council members become better acquainted and have an opportunity to pray and share faith together.
5. Initially spend time on developing a mission, values and vision statement for the new parish as derived from the Archdiocesan Mission, Values and Vision. Be sure the parish is involved in these processes. They provide a wonderful opportunity to develop a cohesive parish spirit and sense of community.
6. Review **Parish Guide for Carrying out Mission and Ministry, Parish Structure and Organization** found on Archdiocesan website.
7. See Section 4 of this Implementation Guide for reflection on how to prepare and run successful meetings.

FORMING A NEW PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL FOR MERGED PARISH

A new parish finance council represents a newly formed parish. This does not mean that former council members cannot be part of the new council. The following suggestions are offered as a way to begin.

1. Have representatives from each parish. If three or four parishes merge, it is wise to have two to three members from each parish. If two parishes merge, consider three to four from each parish.
2. Terms should be staggered so that members are gradually rotated off the council.
3. For at least the first six months, spend time helping council members get to know each other so that they can function more effectively.
4. Consider a half day retreat where council members become better acquainted and have an opportunity to pray and share faith together.
5. Prepare a new Parish Budget
6. See Section 4 of this Implementation Guide for reflection on how to prepare and run successful meetings.
7. Please refer to Financial Committee Norms and Parish Finance Council By-laws found on the Archdiocesan Website under the Finance office.

RITUALS FOR MERGING PARISHES
ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS
Introduction

Please adapt these to your own circumstances.

As parishes go through a process of merging great bewilderment is often felt by parishioners. Some feel abandoned, uprooted and lost. Some are excited about the new possibilities and opportunities. Others feel betrayed and become apathetic. Many feel like they are in a wilderness zone filled with uncertainty. They are uncomfortable and distressed. It is often a formless grief.

Calling communities together several times during the process of merging parishes, to ritualize their moments of grief and the hopes for the future can be sustaining. Acknowledging what is staying the same and what is changing, as well as what people's hopes and dreams are for the future, will be healing and move people forward toward becoming a new community of Catholic believers, pray-ers and do-ers!

Rituals have power to heal, to comfort, to give new insights and to sustain during times of terrific change. As Catholics we are a ritual people involved in story and symbol, both of which are used in our sacramental system.

Prayer Service: Christ Our Light

Preparation Committee: 3-4 members from each parish

Preparation:

- Ask each person to be prepared to tell a story about their parish, or to bring a symbol of their parish.
- Provide candle tapers and paper followers for each participant.
- Have the Paschal Candle present in front of the altar, with the crucifix near the altar.
- *Holy water in a basin with aspergillum for the blessing of candles.*
- In the parish hall, prepare a social following the service, with foods from each participating parish.

OPENING HYMN

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Priest: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Priest: We are in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He teaches us, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am, in the midst of them.” Therefore, as we assemble for the worship of God, to seek His divine assistance and grace in this time which is painful yet filled with hope, let us ask God to dispel the darkness by first helping us to see our own need for humility and conversion.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Gracious God, we praise you for your glory and your majesty, for your help and your protection.

We thank you for allowing us to experience your Divine Presence in our parish churches, where, through worship of you and the Sacraments, you have given to us your own Son, Jesus Christ, who is forever the Light of the World.

We humbly ask you, Loving God, to remain with us in these times of darkness and sadness, as we take leave of the parishes we have come to love.

We beg you for the grace to be grateful for the blessings of the past, as well as to be faithful in accepting what lies in store for your Church, so that we may be strengthened to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel to the world.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

READING: GENESIS 15:5-12, 17-18

A Reading from the Book of Genesis

The Lord GOD took Abram outside and said:
"Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can.
Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be."
Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.

He then said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession."

"O Lord GOD," he asked, "How am I to know that I shall possess it?"

He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon."

He brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up.

Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them.

As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram,
and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him.

When the sun had set and it was dark,
there appeared a smoking brazier and a flaming torch, which passed between
those pieces.

It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying:
"To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River,
the Euphrates.

The Word of the Lord.

PSALM RESPONSE:

PSALM 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call;
have pity on me, and answer me.
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Your presence, O Lord, I seek.
Hide not your face from me;
do not in anger repel your servant.
You are my helper: cast me not off.

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord.

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

At this time, the people may be invited to express a brief word on the readings that they have heard, and how these readings and the faith of the Church shed light on the feelings that they are experiencing.

After an appropriate time, the priest or deacon gives a homily.

After the homily, a brief period of silence should be observed. After the silence, some members of the assembly should come forward with baskets of the candle tapers to be blessed.

Blessing of the Candles

Member of the faithful:

On the day of our baptism, we were given the gift of Faith. We know that this faith could not have been received in a vacuum; rather, this faith was handed on to us through the Church, and indeed our baptism was our entrance into the Church.

We come this evening to give thanks to God for the many blessings He has given to us through our life of faith lived out in our parishes. We also come to God with heavy hearts, and with sadness, as we recognize that our parishes are not able to remain the same as they were in the past.

We ask you, Father N., to bless these candles, which we will light from the Paschal Candle, the candle from which at our baptism, our entrance into the Church, we received the Light of Christ. Our parents and Godparents promised to help us keep this light burning brightly until the day of the return of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

May this light now remind us, even in this time of darkness, of the Faith we possess in the loving Providence of God our Father, the Hope we share in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, the Charity which is ours through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the unity we which belongs to us through our membership in the Body of Christ, the Church.

Priest: God of power,
who enlightens the world and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin,
bless + these candles.

Let the light of these candles
illuminate our hearts and minds,
that they may reflect always the splendor of Christ,
the Light of the world,
who is Lord, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Beginning with the priest and deacon, all come forward, take a candle from the basket, and light their candle from the paschal candle, and return to their places.

When all have lighted their candles, the priest invites the assembly to make the Profession the Faith:

Priest: With trust in God's mercy, let us bring our prayers to Him.

Response: *Be with us, Lord.*

Deacon: For the Church, that God will strengthen us in this process of parish reorganization, so that we may always be strong witnesses to the Gospel we profess, let us pray to the Lord.

For the times when we doubt the presence of God on our pilgrimage of faith, for those who have lost hope and need encouragement, let us pray to the Lord.

For those against whom we harbor anger, that God will give us the grace to forgive, let us pray to the Lord.

For the times which seem to us dark, lonely, and filled with sadness, that we may understand that through every moment, we possess the glorious hope of salvation through Jesus Christ and His Church, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are supporting our efforts, and helping us to build strong parishes where the Word of God will be heard, the Sacraments received, and the presence of God, in the holy tabernacle and through acts of charity will be made known, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who have died, who handed the Catholic faith on to us, who have built our parishes, and have sustained our Christian life, that they may be received into their eternal home in Heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Priest:

Loving God, hear our prayer. Moved by your Holy Spirit dwelling within our hearts, we humbly ask you, Father, to bless the Archdiocese of Indianapolis at this time of profound parish renewal. Send your Holy Spirit upon our clergy, religious and lay faithful, so that we may imitate the fidelity, love and zeal of the early Church. Grant us the humility to preserve and teach the Catholic faith which has been handed on to us, so that we may worship you in Spirit and in Truth. Increase our charity, so that we may generously attend to those who pass before us in need. Bless us with missionary zeal, so that through the proclamation of the Good News, we may be salt, light and leaven to those who are distant from your love.

Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, Saint John Neumann, Saint Katharine Drexel, Saint Frances Cabrini, (*here name parish patrons*) and all the saints, allow us to join our prayers to yours. Through our union with you in prayer, lead us to the glorious banquet of Heaven, where you praise the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Priest: Let us pray with confidence to the Father, in the words our Savior gave us.

All: Our Father....

Deacon: Please extinguish your candles.

Priest: The peace of the Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Deacon: Let us offer one another the sign of peace.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Priest: May almighty God bless + you,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Deacon: Let us go in peace, to love and serve the Lord and one another.

All: Thanks be to God.

Closing Hymn

Hail, Holy Queen

After the hymn, all are led into the church hall by the processional cross and the Paschal Candle, if possible.

The cross and Candle are placed in the center of the room.

When all have assembled, grace is said. All are invited to share the different foods which were provided from each of the parishes (preferably those foods that are customarily enjoyed by the particular parishes), then a representative of each parish comes to the microphone, and each give a brief history of his/her parish. After this, any members of religious orders who serve in these parishes are invited to come forward, and give a history of that particular Congregation's history and apostolate within the parish.

Those members of the faithful who wish to tell a story about their parish are invited to come forward to the microphone. If any have brought with them symbols from their parish, they are asked to show them to the people at this time. The representatives should also act as moderators, to ensure that the time of sharing moves along.

At the end of the sharing, one of the parish priests or deacons comes forward, and reinforces the themes that were brought forward during the time of sharing, and ties them together through the lens of our Catholic faith.

The priest or deacon makes reference to the cross and Paschal Candle in the center of the room, to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, who is our light in darkness.

Finally, all those who contributed prepared the foods and the social are thanked, and all stand, and pray the Hail Mary together, asking Her who is the Mother of the Church, for her guidance and prayers.

CLOSING RITUAL OF A CHURCH
With Adoration and Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament
to the New Church

After the Prayer after Communion, the celebrant, led by incense, cross, candles and the other ministers of the altar and the deacon, processes to the Baptistry. The Litany of the Saints is sung.

Procession to the Baptistry

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for the gift of Baptism, our entrance into faith, into the life of the Church. (*silent pause*)

As we profess the holy Catholic faith handed on to us in our Baptism, let us thank God for all those who have been born into the life of Christ through Baptism in this church throughout its _____ year history.

Assembly: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The celebrant sprinkles the people with holy water. While doing so, the Litany of the Saints is continued. The Litany should include the patrons of the church to be closed, as well as the patrons of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and those saints to whom the members of the local community have devotion, including those whose images are found within the particular church.

Celebrant: Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of faith, which you have made possible to us through the grace of Baptism. We thank you for the gift of the Church, the Body of Christ, into which we have been baptized, and through which we will find salvation. Bless all those who have received the gift of faith through this font with the grace of perseverance. By your grace, we ask that you especially touch the hearts of those baptized here who have left the practice of our Catholic faith, so that they may return to the life-giving font of the sacraments.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Procession to the Confessionals

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for the forgiveness of sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. *(silent pause)*

Let us be grateful to Him, that He has forgiven us through this sacrament of healing whenever we have begged for His mercy, and let us thank God that He has delivered from the slavery of sin those who received this sacrament in this church.

Assembly: Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us, poor sinners.

Celebrant: Loving God, we thank you for revealing to us through Jesus Christ, your Son, that you do not wish the sinner to die, but to return to you and live in freedom. Through your Holy Spirit, inspire many to return to this sacrament of mercy and healing, so that all your sons and daughters may be restored to your likeness through grace.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Procession to the Stations of the Cross

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for the mystery of His Son's glorious Cross. *(silent pause)*

Throughout the _____ year history of this church, countless men, women and children have followed the Way of the Cross, meditating devoutly on our Lord's passion and death.

Celebrant: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

Assembly: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Celebrant: Gracious, we thank you that your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, accepted death on the cross for the salvation of mankind. We ask that all those who have united their own sufferings and trials to those of Jesus Christ may be given an increase of hope in his glorious resurrection.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

At this point all sing Stabat Mater.

Procession to the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for having given to us His own Mother as our Mother and the model of the Church. *(silent pause)*

The faithful who have entered the doors of this church have hurried to her for refuge, seeking her intercession and protection in order to live more perfectly the Christian life, and to be united more closely with the will of God and the hope offered through His Word.

Assembly: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Celebrant: Father, we thank you that your Word became flesh through the Virgin Mary. May all those who have sought her intercession, prayed for her help, and united themselves with the mystery of Christ through the holy Rosary, become more like Him who is our life and our salvation.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

At this point all sing Immaculate Mary.

Procession to the Statue of the Patron Saint of the Church

This occurs if the patron of the church is a saint or saints other than the Blessed Mother and is represented by a painting, statue, or other image within the church.

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for our patron/patroness,
_____. *(silent pause)*

Through his/her life, example, and intercession we have sought to become participants in the life of the Blessed Trinity, and have been encouraged to love even our enemy.

Assembly: Dear Saint/s _____ we thank you for guiding us on our pilgrim way. Pray for us to God, that we may remain faithful to Him and continue to serve Him all our days.

Celebrant: Father, we thank you for the example of Christian life which Saint/s _____ has given to this community for _____ years. May we who have been inspired by his/her example and helped by his/her prayers one day enter into the joy of Heaven, our true home.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Procession to Ambo

Deacon: Let us give thanks to God, our almighty Father, for sending us His Word, Jesus Christ. *(silent pause)*

From this ambo, the Word of God has been announced through the proclamation of Sacred Scripture and the tradition of the Church handed on through the preaching of her sacred ministers.

Assembly: The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.
The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.
The statutes of the Lord are true, all of them just;
More desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold,
Sweeter also than honey or drippings from the comb.

Celebrant: Loving God, we thank you that we have heard your Word through the announcement of the Church. Strengthen us to give, by word and example, true witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that all may come to believe in you.

Assembly: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Procession to the Altar

At this time all sing Psalm 63. The Ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament is Taken from the tabernacle and placed on the corporal in the center of the altar. The empty tabernacle remains open. The celebrant and deacon together with the ministers and indeed the whole congregation kneel in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The celebrant places incense in the thurible and incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

Celebrant: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the gift of the Eucharist, your real and living presence among us. *(silent pause)*

On the altar of this church you have allowed us to join you in this holy and perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. You have handed over your life to us through this holy sacrament as we worshipped you at Sunday Mass,

special feast days, Confirmations and First Communions, celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage and anniversaries, and funerals celebrated here in hope. You have quietly waited for us, as you remained present in the tabernacle to speak to us, and to receive our humble prayers and requests.

As we prepare to leave this church, we ask you to remain with us again. Show to us your love for us, and help us always to return to the Eucharist as the source and summit of our Christian life.

At this time, all sing O Sacrament, Most Holy, or another Eucharistic Hymn. All remain in silent prayer for a few moments, and then the celebrant receives the humeral veil, takes the ciborium, and begins, led by the cross, candles and then the thurifer, to lead the procession out of the church to the new church.

If the procession is by foot, then a litany or another song may be sung.

When the celebrant and the faithful arrive at the new church, the celebrant carrying the Blessed Sacrament, led by the cross, candles and thurifer, leads the people into the church, and places the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, and kneels in prayer, while the faithful enter the church. If a litany was not being sung during the procession, then a suitable Eucharistic hymn may begin as the priest places the Blessed Sacrament on the altar.

When the faithful are assembled, a few moments of silence are observed, and then the Tantum Ergo is sung by all. The celebrant incenses the Blessed Sacrament. After the incensation, and after the hymn is ended, the Deacon or the celebrant goes to the altar, and takes the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle for Reposition. The Divine Praises are said.

If appropriate, the welcoming pastor, or if indeed, the same celebrant, welcomes the faithful to their new house of worship.

After these remarks, all sing: Holy God, We Praise Thy Name.

Every opportunity should be made to provide a place for refreshments and fellowship with the entire community of the faithful.

Special thanks is given to Monsignor John Bendik, Pastor, Saint John the Evangelist Church, Pittston, for his assistance in preparing this ritual.

**MODEL FOR A MASS CELEBRATING THE BEGINNING OF A
NEWLY MERGED PARISH**

BEFORE MASS BEGINS:

1. The Pastor welcomes the Archbishop or Vicar if one is to celebrate the Opening Mass of the new Parish.
2. A Commentator reads a brief history of the parishes that are being combined.
3. The Sacramental Books of all of the parishes to be made into one parish are then presented to the Vicar.

The Commentator calls out the name of the first parish, and its Sacramental Books are presented to the Archbishop, Vicar or Pastor.

As the Books are being presented, the first verse of a hymn may be sung.

When the Books have been presented, and the stanza of the hymn is finished, then the second parish's name is called.

As the Books are being presented, the second verse of a hymn may be sung.

This process continues for as many parishes are represented.

4. After the presentation of the Sacramental Books which are distinct to each parish, the Liturgical Books which are common to all parishes are brought forward, presented from each of the parishes that will form the one new parish. They may be brought to the Vicar or Pastor under a banner of the new parish.
5. At this time, the Mass begins.