



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

9531 Liberty Road | Randallstown, Maryland 21133

April 23, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Beloved in the Lord,

Since September 2022, the *Seek the City Come Planning Process (STC)* to has examined how to reimagine, realign, and revitalize the Catholic Church in Baltimore City and suburbs within the Beltway. **Learn more from the website** (<https://www.archbalt.org/seekthecity/>).

Holy Family Church (HFC) is not part of STC. The Pastoral Associate, Darron C. Woodus, and I have participated as observers. HFC may be impacted. In addition, I am the Vicar Forane of the West Baltimore County Region. Two parishes in my region are part of STC: SS Agnes & William of York Pastorate and Our Lady of Victory Parish.

I am not a distant observer. Baltimore is my hometown. I was baptized in Saint Edward Church. My home parish is Saint Joseph Monastery. I received the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist for the first time there. I received the Sacrament of Confirmation there.

As a seminarian, I served at Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Cecilia, Saint William of York, and New All Saints Parishes.

I was ordained at the Cathedral of Mary our Queen. My first and second Holy Masses of Thanksgiving were offered at Saint Joseph Monastery and New All Saints Parishes, respectively. My home parish's population was smaller. New All Saints was a merger of All Saints & Our Lady of Lourdes Parishes.

My first priestly assignment was at the "twinned" parishes of Saint Anthony of Padua & Most Precious Blood. My first pastor's assignment was at Saint Mary of the Assumption, Govans. Addressing the declining urban Catholic population was an issue during both assignments. So was the need to evangelize in our neighborhoods.

Before coming to HFC, I served at Saint Agnes & Saint William of York Parishes.

STC PROPOSAL SHARED LAST WEEKEND

Hard and necessary decisions must be made. It does not necessarily mean that previous evangelization efforts were unfruitful. However, a new environment needs to be cultivated to produce more fruit over time. The present configuration was built to operate in a scenario that was decades ago. Much has changed since then.

This has been a prayerful, deliberative, and transparent process. It has been widely covered on Archdiocesan media platforms. Clergy and lay leaders of STC parishes were asked to keep their parishioners informed.

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A parish of the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore. The mission of Holy Family Catholic Church is to help people to believe in Christ, belong to His Church, and bless our communities.

There was no "secret plan" already in existence. STC is unrelated to the Bankruptcy Reorganization Process. STC began in September 2022. The Bankruptcy Reorganization Process began in October 2023 for reasons that are unrelated to STC.

Last weekend, the STC parishes received the proposal for merging parishes. Learn more at the website (<https://www.archbalt.org/seek-the-city-proposal/>). It is not the final decision. More feedback will be received, such as during Open Public Sessions, which are open to all:

- **Tuesday, April 23 from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM** at Saint Frances Academy (501 E. Chase Street, Baltimore). This is sponsored by the Archdiocesan Office of Black Catholic Ministries.

Thursday, April 25 from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at Archbishop Curley High School (3701 Sinclair Lane, Baltimore).

- **Monday, April 29 from 7 PM to 8:30 PM** at Our Lady of Fatima Church (6400 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore). This session will be conducted in Spanish only.
- **Tuesday, April 30 from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM** at the Cathedral of Mary our Queen (5200 N. Charles Street, Baltimore). Note the change of location than what I reported recently.

Archbishop Lori will make the decision by June after further consultation and prayer. After the decision is made public, the mergers are currently projected to take place over a year or so.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ are experiencing pain. STC parishes are preparing their responses to the proposal. There are no "winners and losers." All will be making sacrifices. **Hopefully, over time, there will be acceptance that maintaining the *status quo* is unsustainable.**

IMPACT ON HFC

HFC may be impacted. **A number of Northwest Baltimore County residents are members of STC parishes.** Some may discern about joining a merged parish or another parish that is closer to their residence. **If they discern to join HFC, then we must accompany them. They will be grieving as they make HFC their new parish.**

I ask HFC to join me in doing the following:

- **Pray:** An intention will be added to the Prayers of the Faithful. Offer the STC Prayer (<https://www.archbalt.org/seekthecity/united-in-prayer/>).
- **Read:** Look to official news sources: Archdiocese of Baltimore and The Catholic Review.
- **Be humble:** When I arrived at HFC in November 2015, the Business Manager and the Finance Committee Chair estimated that HFC would not survive past 2020 if then-downward trends in Sunday Holy Mass attendance and Offertory continued.

Cooperating with the Lord and each other, we reversed those trends. Let us remain humble. HFC continues to have opportunities and challenges to address.

This is a reminder for HFC to remain mission-minded and not slide into maintenance-mode. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus in last Sunday's Gospel reading: "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (*Luke 24:46-48*).

Father Raymond Harris
Pastor