

## [6/15] Toward Becoming One Parish (II)

By Fr. Steven Lewis, Parochial Vicar

Last week, we reviewed the work of a pastoral planning steering committee whose work completed before my arrival. This year, 2025, the pastoral councils of both parishes began meeting in joint session to take up the task of “work[ing] together **now** so that any future changes will go smoothly.”

To make efficient use of our time as a group, we decided that we would begin with an effort to identify and consider important areas under which we might form this new unity. We are calling these “Pillars of Unity.”

From the membership of this joint council, we solicited ideas for possible Pillars. We were encouraged to brainstorm to identify them, which might be characterized by one or more of the following:

- something relevant to our shared life of faith (on an ongoing basis, or at least at some stage of it)
- something that, to get right as we come together as one parish, we need to plan first
- something that we might not do at all our churches or all the time, but is important not to lose sight of
- something that we should do more than we do now (or even start!)
- something that might work for us as a bigger parish that doesn't work so well at our present smaller-parish size (economies of scale)
- something that will be a significant loss to us if we lose sight of it
- something that describes a 30,000-foot view of an issue, not a super-detailed objective
- something that can be named or described in seven words or less

Members brought their ideas to the meeting, and were asked to categorize them according to the marks of the Church—One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic—or Other if no category seemed to fit. We then split into groups to reduce all our ideas to a more manageable number: to group like ideas together, and then name each group. The number of people who identified a similar pillar does not make it necessarily important; it only indicates how obvious it was. To signal importance to the project of us coming together as one, each member was invited to indicate the five most important prospective Pillars of Unity.

This process allowed those Pillars of Unity identified by the group as most important to rise to the top for our consideration. We then worked to identify persons to invite to lead discussions on the areas identified.

This series continues.