

[6/22] Toward Becoming One Parish (III)

By Fr. Steven Lewis, Parochial Vicar

We have been discussing the work of the pastoral councils of our two parishes meeting jointly and preparing to unite ourselves into a single parish. An early goal of this process was to identify “Pillars of Unity” that were important to keep in mind as we come together as one parish. The work that the joint pastoral councils did to brainstorm, collect everyone’s ideas, categorize them into a more manageable number and prioritize them resulted in the following Pillars of Unity. For summary purposes, those voted most important were:

- Youth (11 votes) [under Catholic]
- Music (10 votes) [under Holy]
- Attracting Parishioners (8 votes) [under Apostolic]
- Outreach (8 votes) [under Apostolic]
- Liturgy (6 votes) [under One]

The next most important were:

- Devotions (5 votes) [under Holy]
- Communications (4 votes) [under One]
- Communion with Universal Church (4 votes) [under Catholic]
- Volunteers (4 votes) [under Other]

What do these Pillars of Unity mean?

Just because a particular area was identified as most important or not does not by itself mean anything. We identified Pillars to identify areas to talk about. Just because we talk about it doesn’t mean we will need to change anything. Just because we haven’t identified it as most important doesn’t mean we can’t talk about it. If we don’t talk about it, it doesn’t mean that thing will go away when we come together as one parish.

These points we have done well to keep in mind as our discussions continue.

We have undertaken this effort to help us focus our discussions as a joint pastoral council during 2025, and perhaps beyond. We understand these Pillars of Unity to be part of a living document. If we come to believe something important to be missing, we may decide to add it. We may find better language to describe a pillar and adopt it. If we need further discussion as a joint pastoral council to understand how we see a given issue, we can undertake those discussions. We expect to invite people who serve our communities to inform our discussion of the Pillars of Unity we have identified. We have also split ourselves into workgroups to study resources in greater detail to inform our discussions.

This series continues.