

## Upcoming Open Forum Meeting on Merging CTK & St. Paul Parishes

Recently, the Joint Pastoral Council considered the possibility of recommending to the Bishop an official merging of our two parishes of Christ the King and St. Paul. This was seen as an inevitable part of the medium - and long-term - planning that the Council often discusses for the Athens Catholic Community.

The Councils have observed, and there seems to be recognition amongst parishioners, that our Athens Catholic Community already functions *de facto* as one parish, with shared programs, events, and Mass times. Merging as one parish can be done with virtually no difference to how our community functions (e.g. no changes in Mass times and no change to church names). What a merger would do is establish one parish community, one Catholic group, worshipping at two churches. Finances would be combined, and our identity as one parish would be strengthened.

Before the Pastoral Council votes on this issue, we would like to solicit feedback from fellow parishioners on this subject. It is our hope to present the advantages and implications of merging parishes into one. For this reason we will hold an **OPEN FORUM MEETING for all members of both parishes on Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 P.M. in the Holy Family Center**. The moderators of the meeting will be Jay Beam from St. Paul's, and Justin Frantz from CTK.

Announcements of any updates on the subject, as well as information surrounding this topic, will be distributed on the parish website (<http://athenscatholic.org/>), through Flocknote, and in the bulletin. Before the meeting (or if you cannot attend the meeting), we would like to hear from parishioners by email at [info@athenscatholic.org](mailto:info@athenscatholic.org), or by mailing the Parish Offices, addressing your mail to the attention of "Parish Merger." Emails and other correspondence received in advance of the meeting will be considered and incorporated into the agenda of the Open Forum Meeting, and all emails will be taken into consideration by the Council even for those unable to attend the Open Forum Meeting. The vote will most likely happen at the Council meeting in August following the Open Forum Meeting.

Thank you for your attention, input, and collaboration,

The members of the Pastoral Council

Jay Beam, Dan DeLuca, Kurt Montle, Wanda Sheridan, Carol Showalter, Ric Abel, Justin Frantz, Terry Smith, Andrew Soloszi, Angela Cross

***What is the difference between a parish and a church?*** People use the expression "parish" and "church" interchangeably, but they are very distinct realities. Although the term "church" can have a broad meaning, such as the Church of Christ into which all the baptized are incorporated (canon 96), a church is a sacred building, set aside for divine worship (canon 1214). It is comprised of four walls and a roof, is blessed or dedicated, and is the location where the faithful from a given parish gather to worship God through the celebration the sacraments and prayer. It is the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for veneration. It has a fixed address and requires lawn maintenance, utility bill payments, repairs, etc.

A parish is an entity in canon law that is defined by a territorial boundary, to serve the needs of the people within that boundary, or without a territory to serve a group of the faithful on the basis of language, ethnicity or some other shared quality (canon 518). A parish must have a pastor (or priest administrator) who cares for the faithful and celebrates the sacraments in the parish church.