

Merger of the 3 Parishes and future of St Anne's

8 October. Read the Decree from The Archbishop of Liverpool, taking St Anne's Church out of sacred use. [Read here...](#)

7 September. Please read the final report of Fr Philip Inch, Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Development, to the Archbishop concerning the future of St Anne' Church. [Read here...](#)

[Read here Decree of Extinctive Union...](#)

[Read here Letter from Archbishop Malcolm...](#)

Father John's Q&A

After the Archbishop's announcement to merge the three parishes of Formby into a new parish, with the title of Our Lady of Compassion, the following in a question and answer format, is an explanation of what the decision means. See the letters opposite.

What exactly has the Archbishop decided to do?

The Archbishop's decision has two consequences; canonical (this refers to the Code of Canon Law, which formulates the Law of the Catholic Church) and pastoral. The first is canonical. When Father John read the Archbishop's Decree, you will have noticed the formal language that was used. This is a legal, canonical document which puts the Archbishop's decision into effect. It is a 'Decree of Extinctive Union'. What does this mean? It simply means that the three parishes of Formby are now merged to form a single, new parish.

The pastoral dimension is perhaps easier to understand. For some years now, the prospect of a single parish being formed in Formby has been discussed and talked about. Now that only one priest will serve the town, it was an obvious moment to put this long considered plan into effect. From today, the entire Catholic community of Formby will form just one parish.

What happens to the three parishes of Formby?

The Archbishop's Decree marks the end of each of the three parishes. Put simply, the Decree has two purposes. Firstly, the parish of Our Lady's in its present form is brought to an end. The parish of St Anne's is brought to an end and the parish of St Jerome's is brought to an end. Secondly, to replace the three 'extinguished' parishes, a new parish is established.

But obviously, the life, experience and memories of the former three parishes is

not simply 'snuffed out'. Those experiences and memories will be carried and cherished into the new parish.

So, are we right in thinking that the parishoners of the former St Anne's and the parishioners of the former St Jerome's will now simply be absorbed into Our Lady's parish and will have to simply join in with Our Lady's and the life of that parish?

No. This is truly a brand new beginning for the Catholic Church in Formby. The Archbishop had the option of giving the new parish a new name, as he has done in other parts of the archdiocese. But, as he mentions in his Pastoral Letter, the church of Our Lady's is the mother church of the town, a place where all the history of the Formby Mission of over 300 years is preserved. So, he chose to give the new parish the historic title of Our Lady of Compassion. But apart from this, everything has a new beginning.

What about all our churches?

The new parish of Our Lady of Compassion is now one parish with three churches. For the moment, the churches of St Anne's and St Jerome's will remain. However, with falling numbers and diminishing finances, it is clear that the upkeep and support of three churches is unsustainable. At the moment, no decisions have been made about the future of our church buildings.

How do we continue to support the church financially?

We are blessed with generous people across Formby who have donated to our parishes for many years. It will take time for a new financial system to be put in place for the new parish. Therefore, we ask that you continue donating as you do at the moment. We certainly need it! Once things change, we will let you know.

What about the future?

We have a challenging but exciting future ahead of us. We are still in the middle of the pandemic which has caused great disruption to all our lives. Our parish community life has suffered greatly. In some ways, things are on hold. Once the pandemic begins to subside and we are able to spend more time together, several things will have to happen. The Archbishop has agreed to visit the new parish, when things improve, to offer thanks for and celebrate the lives and memories of Our Lady's, St Anne's and St Jerome's and to inaugurate the new parish. We have to find a way to mark the end of the journey for each of our parishes.

Then, the future. The new parish will need plenty of time to get on its feet, and for all our people to begin the process of coming together and making a home together. New structures will be needed and all the people of the parish will be involved in mapping out the path that will take us into the future.

A final word...

We have all been through a dreadful year. Everyone has been affected in many different ways. For most of this year, we have been deprived of the comfort and joy of celebrating the Mass and the Sacraments together. All around us, change is happening; in organisations and in people's lives. Our Archdiocese has been badly affected also. What is happening in Formby will also be happening in many other places and to many other parishes. But we have one particular advantage. Our town has always been a close community. This gives us great hope that our new parish will quickly establish itself and flourish. Our Catholic community has been given a new opportunity to come together, to forge a deeper relationship with other Christians and to be a place of openness and inclusivity for all. This is both a possibility and a challenge. Much will depend on our willingness to work together and move forward together. Every single member of the new parish is a stakeholder in this process, something that will become clearer in the months ahead. As disciples of Jesus Christ, let us follow our Master and Lord with a lively faith, a renewed hope and sincere love.

