



May 1, 2021 update FAQ: Merger process Sacred Heart and St. John of the Cross

Will St. John of the Cross close?

The plan calls for both churches—St. John of the Cross and Sacred Heart—to remain open.

When will this be effective?

The Archbishop has approved St. John of the Cross and Sacred Heart Parishes to begin the planning process to merge. It is expected the official merge will be effective May 31, 2021.

Will our mass schedule be changed?

Yes. A revised Mass schedule will consider the best way to serve the needs of the community while also reflecting the restructured resources of both churches, most importantly the fact that there will be a single pastor to serve the combined parish. Following are the Mass times and locations that will be effective June 7, 2021:

Weekend Masses: Saturday Vigil, 5PM at Sacred Heart Church; Sunday Mass at 7:30AM and 9AM at Sacred Heart Church and 11AM at St. John of the Cross Church
Daily Mass: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 8AM at St. John of the Cross Church; Thursday and Friday at 8AM at Sacred Heart Church.

NEW: Will our parish name be different?

The Roman Catholic Parish of Middlebury and Southbury is the NEW parish name that will be effective May 31, 2021. The Archdiocese approved this name which reflects the combined parish community while keeping the current names of Sacred Heart and St. John of the Cross to identify the campus locations.

The dissolution of St. John of the Cross Parish and Sacred Heart Parish involves a process which retains the Sacred Heart Tax ID #. This is an important financial decision which considers retaining \$38,000 in monthly online donations without asking givers to recreate a new online account. Research shows a 25% loss in income when asking members to create a new account. St. John of the Cross online giving is \$7800 month and we will ask these generous givers to register online June 1st. This is a two-step process in which St. John of the Cross is subsumed into Sacred Heart Parish. Then Sacred Heart Parish becomes the new **Roman Catholic Parish of Middlebury and Southbury**. Both parishes cease to exist and become the new parish with two locations.

Will both churches be available for celebrating Sacraments and Funerals?

Yes. It is anticipated that sacramental life will be available in both locations even as the merger seeks to consolidate and streamline other parish resources.

Who will be the new pastor?

Reverend Lawrence Symolon will become the pastor of the new faith community. Monsignor Joseph Donnelly, currently pastor of Sacred Heart, will retire in June 6, 2021, and is actively working with Fr. Symolon and a transition team, comprised of staff and members of both parishes, to plan and implement a smooth leadership transition.

Will Parish offices in both towns remain open?

As we begin the merger process both offices may remain open, although on a modified schedule. As the merger evolves and progresses we will develop the best plan to serve our new community.

What happens to the financial resources of our parish?

The financial resources of both parishes will be combined and the Finance Councils, along with Archdiocesan guidance, will provide oversight of these processes.

Will the Pastoral Associates and Deacons remain in the new parish?

As of now we expect that the current pastoral staff will remain in place and will be part of a combined team to serve the new faith community. The Deacons are expected to remain with the parish.

What is the overall goal of this process?

This process was begun to create a vibrant faith community to meet the evolving needs of the Middlebury and Southbury communities. It reflects an overarching process that was initiated in 2017 when parishes across the Archdiocese of Hartford were reorganized and restructured. These changes reflect several challenging realities, such as a pronounced shortage of priests, in addition to factors such as shifting demographics and changes in parish utilization. The goal is to create a *combined parish* that will be stronger and more sustainable than the current structure allows.



We are inviting the parishioners of both parishes to an open house with the opportunity to ask questions about this process.

These sessions will take place on:

Sunday May 2 from 2-4PM at Sacred Heart Church or
Monday May 3 from 6-8PM at **St. John of the Cross Church**. We will begin both sessions with prayer, offer an opportunity for parishioners to ask questions and then to tour the particular facility in which it takes place.

What does the Heart and the Cross represent?



This logo is an icon for the merge intended to call attention to merger announcements. It is not an official branded logo for the new parish. Look for this symbol with the heart from Sacred Heart and the Cross logos from St. John of the Cross for information on the merger process.

What other changes can we expect?

Many elements of the merged parish are “behind the scenes” issues that will not directly impact the experience of our parishioners. Other aspects will be more visible. For example, we will move towards having a single parish council and single finance council. We will implement one combined Faith Formation (religious education) program. Other parish ministries will be similarly combined. The intent is to have stronger and more efficient sustainable resources to carry us into the future.

Over the next months, we will have more to announce about our progress:

- In May we hope to announce the our newly merged parish office hours and office staff.
- In June, we hope to talk about how the many ministries of our individual parishes will now serve our new parish and to facilitate ministry meetings with similar and shared purposes
- Sometime in late summer or early fall, we will have a parish celebration and getting-to-know-you opportunity of some sort depending on the status of Covid at that time

Send us your questions ami@shcsby.org

What is a merger between parishes?

A merger of two (or more) parishes combines the resources of existing parishes to create a new, combined entity. Typically, the existing church buildings continue to be used, while the pastoral leadership and administrative functions are streamlined to be more efficient and sustainable. In all cases these actions are taken to best position the local church to meet the current and future needs of the community.