

Mission – FAQs

What is a canonical mission?

A canonical mission is an organized community that looks like a parish in many ways but does not have the scale to be a full-service parish for the future. A mission may either be tied to a sponsor parish or be a mission of the archdiocese. Missions of the archdiocese are usually focused on serving a particular ethnic group for the whole archdiocese. Missions of another parish typically serve the local area / neighborhood but do not have the scale to be a full-service parish.

In the Archdiocese of Chicago a community may be appropriately classified as a mission if it is called to serve a particular ministry or charism in a way that merits retaining an identity separate from the sponsor parish. In some cases, a community can be reinstated to full parish status in the future if it reaches sufficient size / scale. Many parishes today began as missions of a nearby parish.

Why might a parish become a mission rather than become a site of a united parish?

A mission structure is appropriate to consider when there is a particular charism, ministry, or demographic distinct from the other parish(es) with whom it would otherwise unite.

Example: Our Lady of Hope Rosemont and Mary Seat of Wisdom Park Ridge

Our Lady of Hope did not have the scale (October Count 400 to 550) to remain a full-scale parish into the future. However, Our Lady of Hope does serve a need for the business and traveling population / convention industry present in the area (e.g., daily Mass similar to St. Peter's in the Loop). Hence the reason it remained open and is now designated as a mission of a larger parish – Mary Seat of Wisdom.

Example: St. Thomas More, Southwest Side of Chicago

St. Thomas More did not have the scale (October Count low 300s) to remain a full-scale parish into the future. The mission structure was instituted to recognize the immediate neighborhood around St. Thomas More is 85+% African American and the parish had not conducted intentional and dedicated outreach to the neighborhood. Designating St. Thomas More as a mission gives weight that a new mission orientation is needed.

Example: St. James at Sag Bridge, Lemont

St. James did not have the scale (October Count under 500) to remain a full-scale parish into the future. St. James offers a number of unique elements contributing to its mission structure versus being a site of a united parish.

- St. James was one of the first churches in Illinois. Its historic identity had merit in retaining its identity.
- St. James is located far from the other parishes in the grouping. The other three parishes in Lemont are 'in town.' St. James is 5 miles away in the forest preserve.
- St. James also draws parishioners from a wide geography who are attracted to St. James's traditional approach to liturgical life.

What are some of the nuts and bolts to know?

- *Pastoral leadership:* The sponsor parish pastor is pastor of the mission. However, the mission may have a Mission Director who is the day-to-day leader of the community and ministry. The Mission Director may be associate pastor of the sponsor parish or hold another ministry role elsewhere. Regardless, he is providing the regular pastoral leadership to the mission under the supervision of the pastor.
- *Masses:* A mission retains a regular Mass schedule, planned in concert with the sponsor parish.
- *Records:* Sacramental records may be maintained at the mission or may be transferred to the sponsor parish's office.
- *Finances:* A mission may retain separate finances, though it is generally expected that there will be one overall financial plan for the sponsor parish & mission.
- *Pastoral plan:* The mission's pastoral plan and ministries will be conducted in concert with the sponsor parish. For example, a mission may continue a separate religious education program or direct its families to the sponsor parish's religious education program.