

St. John The Evangelist, Columbia

Frequently Answer Questions | Reassignment of Father Gerry, Father Hilario, and Father Ambrose

Q1. Why are all our priests being reassigned? Why don't they reassign a Diocesan Pastor?

Archbishop Lori appointed Fr. Gerry to serve as the Director for the Care of Senior and Retired Priests of the Archdiocese of Baltimore following the request for retirement by Fr. Bill Foley. This request by Fr. Foley set into motion the need to replace Fr. Gerry. The Missionhursts had approached the Archdiocese about possible affiliation in the last year or so and communities throughout the Archdiocese were being considered. In this evaluation and with the pending change for Fr. Gerry, St. John's was determined to be a good fit for this new pastoral relationship. As a religious order, the Missionhursts life in community is vital. They live, work, pray and grow together in community and the archdiocese is honoring their call to live and work in community. There are also critical needs in the Archdiocese that Padre Hilario and Fr. Ambrose are being asked to use their gifts and talents to help address.

Q2. Did the priests or the parishioner do anything wrong?

No. Neither Frs. Gerry, Ambrose, and Hilario, nor our parishioners, have done anything wrong. We know that our clergy are regularly reassigned to serve wherever God calls them. We will miss our Pastors, but we know that each of them has accepted a life of answering the call to obedience and serving where our Lord and Savior needs them.

Q3. When will Father Gerry, Father Ambrose, and Father Hilario move to their new assignments?

Due to the retirement of Fr. Bill Foley, Archbishop William Lori asked Fr. Bowen to serve as Director of Senior and Retired Priests, effective July 1, 2024. He will be with us until June 30th.

Father Ambrose is being assigned to Sacred Heart in Glyndon, one of the largest communities in the Archdiocese. His new assignment begins on August 1st.

Father Hilario's new assignment will be announced in the fall. At present, no final decision has been made about his new assignment.

Q4. Why is the Archdiocese considering a religious order for our parish?

After investigating the Missionhursts, the Archdiocese decided that this religious order is a good fit for our parish as we share a common mission. The Missionhursts are called to share the Gospel of Jesus beyond geographical and religious borders. St. John shares this mission.

The Missionhursts seek to listen, gain knowledge about and to understand the communities they serve. They work to empower the laity to be active disciples. The Missionhursts seek to respond to situations of injustice, misery, and oppression. As you look around our parish, you will see that our many ministries and programs are run by the lay men and women of our parish. Our parish continues its long-standing commitment to actively work for social justice and care for those who are marginalized. Based on the above observations, it appears that the Missionhursts will be a good fit for our parish.

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Q5. What other parishes in the Archdiocese of Baltimore have assigned religious orders?

Approximately sixteen religious orders serve in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. For example, the Trinitarians in St. Mark, St. Lawrence and Resurrection in Laurel, and the Redemptorists in Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. John Neumann in Annapolis, etc. (See page 4 for a list of all the parishes in which religious orders serve)

Q6. Are two priests sufficient to serve the needs of our community?

This is a concern that the Pastoral Council has raised to the Archdiocese. We understand that it will be challenging for only two pastors to serve all the growing needs of our faith community at both WL and OM. We are continuing to have conversations to address this concern.

Q7. Is it ok for our Hispanic congregants that the two Pastors are not from any Latino culture?

We are a parish of close to 4,000 families,. The Hispanic community has representations of people from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean (over 15 countries). For several years we have been gifted by having an Associate Pastor who knows the diverse cultures of Latin America.

Both Frs. Mel and Sonny have worked closely in several dioceses in the U.S. with the Latino community and are familiar with their culture, challenges, and the gifts they bring to the Church. We are confident that this will be a good fit for the entire community of St. John.

Q8. I hear that if a religious order is assigned to a parish, no other religious order or diocesan priest can be invited to celebrate a mass or to participate in parish events, is that true?

No, this is not true. A Diocesan or any other religious order priest is welcome to visit and collaborate when needed in our parish. They can be invited to celebrate Mass and collaborate in any special events such as retreats, etc.

Q9. Who are the Missionhursts, and the priest assigned to St. John the Evangelist?



Information on CICM (Missionhurst)

The Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or CICM is an [exclusively Missionary Institute of religious priests and brothers](#) founded in Belgium in 1862. In the United States, they are called Missionhurst-CICM named after the Missionhurst Bulletin which is published quarterly. Its members are called to *go beyond geographical and religious boundaries to share Jesus Christ* with everyone. To be ready to leave their country is a basic requirement in the life of each member of the Congregation. It is an option that constitutes an essential trait of the CICM identity and that profoundly marks its history. Its members come from different nationalities, races, and cultures, yet they are called to live and work together as brothers.

Today, almost 730 priests and religious brothers from [Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America](#), continue serving and caring for God's poorest and most neglected people around the world. There are approximately 40 priests and brothers that serve in the United States, with its Province being housed in Arlington, VA.

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Information about our new Pastor:

Fr. Ramel Portula, CICM

Fr. Ramel Portula is a Filipino Missionary of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or C.I.C.M. He was born on January 5, 1972 and was ordained a priest on March 25, 2000. His past assignments were the following: Parochial Vicar at St Joseph the Worker, McAllen, Texas, Diocese of Brownsville (2000-2002); Parochial Vicar at St Eugene, Wendell, North Carolina, Diocese of Raleigh (2002-2006). Seminary Formator at the CICM Philosophy Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines (2007-2011); Vice Provincial Superior (2011-2012) and Provincial Superior (2011-2012) of the CICM Philippines Province; and Pastor at St Ann Catholic Church, Arlington, Virginia, Diocese of Arlington (2013-2023). Father Mel as he wants to be called speaks English, Spanish, Tagalog and Bisaya (Philippine dialect) fluently. Fr. Mel will join us on July 1, 2024.



Information about our new Associate Pastor:

Fr. Sonny Aryanto, CICM

Fr. Sonny Aryanto is an Indonesian Missionary of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or C.I.C.M. He was born on September 13, 1983 in Indonesia and was ordained on May 21, 2016. His past assignments were the following: Parochial Vicar (2016-2020) of St Louis, Castroville, Texas (Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas); Parish Administrator (2020-2024) of St James Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas (Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas). Fr. Sonny speaks English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia fluently. Fr. Sonny will join us on August 1, 2024.

Q10. As a parishioner, how can I support my fellow parishioners, our lay parish leaders, and our staff during this transition?

Pray and be an active participant in our parish during this time of transition and beyond. We ask you to pray for all affected by this change. Pray that we are inspired by the Holy Spirit to support each other in our loss and that we are open to the opportunities to more effectively proclaim the Good News in word and action. We ask you to join us during this transition to pray for, and welcome Fr. Mel and Fr. Sonny to our parish, with the love and generosity of the spirit that is St. John's. Also, we ask you to join your prayer with ours for happiness and health for Frs. Gerry, Ambrose, and Hilario. Finally, we need to continue to pray for an increase in vocations.

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Archdiocese of Baltimore – Parishes with Religious Orders

<p>Capuchin Franciscans</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St. Ambrose (Baltimore) - Ministry with Africans and African Americans 2. Our Lady of the Mountains (Cumberland) <p>CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. ST. EDWARD / ST. GREGORY (BALTIMORE) <p>CONVENTIONAL FRANCISCAN FRIARS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 SAINT JOSEPH 5 SANCTUARY OF ST. ANTHONY 6 ST. CASIMIR'S (BALTIMORE) 7. IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY <p>INSTITUTE OF THE INCARNATE WORD</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. ST. JOSEPH (EMMITSBURG) 9. OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL <p>JESUITS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. ST. IGNATIUS (BALTIMORE) 11. ST. ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ (WOODSTOCK) <p>MARYKNOLL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Our Lady of LaVang (Baltimore) - Vietnamese <p>SOCIETY OF CHRIST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. HOLY ROSARY (BALTIMORE) <p>MISSIONARIES OF SAINT PAUL OF NIGERIA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Transfiguration <p>DOMINICANS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Saint Philip and James (Baltimore) 16. St. Thomas Aquinas 	<p>PALLOTTINES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. SAINT LEO THE GREAT 18. SANCTUARY OF ST. JUDE <p>VINCENTIANS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. St. Cecilia / Immaculate Conception <p>JOSEPHITES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Saint Anna / Saint Francis Xavier / Saint Wenceslaus (Baltimore) 21 St. Peter Claver (Baltimore) 22 Saint Pius V 23 Saint Veronica <p>TRINITARIANS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24 Saint Mark 25 Saint Laurence 26 Resurrection (Laurel) <p>REDEMPTORISTS (Bp. Bruce, P. Alipio)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 27 Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Baltimore) – Hispanic Ministry 28 St. John Neumann (Annapolis) – Hispanic Ministry <p>MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 29 Our Lady of Pompeii - Fr. Claudio 30. Our Lady of Fatima - Fr. Giuliano 31. St. Clement - Fr. Mateo <p>SONS OF THE HOLY FAMILY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. SJE-COLUMBIA - WE HAD FR. LEANDRO FAZOLINI, WITH SEASONS OF FR. HERNANDO CORTÉS AND HELP FROM P. Luis Picazo. <p>CONGREGATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY – SJE-Columbia – July 2024</p>
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