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Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *"Guided by Faith Workbook: Cluster Pastoral Planning Process, September 1997."* Accessible at http://archphila.org/pastplan/PDF/clusterworkbook.pdf (accessed October 20, 2014).

Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *"Characteristics Found in Vital Parishes, Spring 2003."* Accessible at http://archphila.org/pastplan/PDF/VitalParish.pdf (accessed October 20, 2014).

Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *"Call to Conversion and Holiness, In-Depth Evaluation of Parish Life, Fall 2011."* Accessible at http://archphila.org/pastplan/PDF/InDepthEval.pdf (accessed October 20, 2014).

Bauer, John. *"Communicate, Admit Mistakes and 30 Other Merging Lessons Learned." The Catholic Spirit,* September 8, 2010. Accessible at http://thecatholicspirit.com/archdiocese /archdiocese-planning-process/communicate-admit-mistakes-and-30-other-merging-lessons-learned/. (accessed June 30, 2014).
Fr. Bauer shares valuable lessons learned by him and various priests who were personally involved in the process of merging, closing and collaborating of parishes in the Diocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Particular emphases are given here to the ongoing communication between parish leaders, parishioners and diocesan representatives. The more communication takes place between all parties involved in the process of merging, closing and collaborating, the better. It is also important to inquire from parishioners about their preferred way of receiving information and communication from the pastor and the parish leadership team. Being present and accessible to the people, developing a timeline and benchmarks as well as forming various parish committees to oversee the details connected with the process, are precious elements combined with the challenges of merging and closing of parishes.

Bausch, William J. *The Parish of the Next Millennium*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1997.

Bramwell, Bevil. "The Theology of Church Closing." *Priest* 56 (May 2000): 41-43.
In this article Bavil Bramwell presents and discusses several key reasons associated with church closing. Among most essential reasons he mentions: "shifts in demographics, impossible economic situations and the decline in the number of priests available to serve." (p. 41) The author provides some valuable answers and observations regarding the following questions: What does it mean to be a member of a church community? Also, How strong is the role of the faith in the lives of church community members? The Church is presented here

as the undeniable mediator of God's salvation for God's people. "The Church mediates the grace and the truth of Christ." (p. 42) The role of a church community, especially, a local church community, is to hand down God's revelation to God's people in order for all believers to be saved. When local churches close, we must always remember that we are a part of a larger body called the diocesan and Universal Church.

Cafardi, Nicholas P. "Closing Churches, Merging Institutes and Dividing Dioceses: Developments in Church Property Since 1983." *Canon Law Society of America* 52 (1990): 222-234.
    The author of this article looks very closely at church property laws in comparison with the civil property laws. This article presents in detail different cannons which refer to the effects of closing and merging of Catholic churches. Insights are presented regarding church property laws which are clear and easy to understand.   Issues addressed are; who has the authority to close a parish, what is the process for such action to take place, and what criteria is most important for closure or merger to take place.   One of the most revealing points of this article is a reminder that: "parish property is not diocesan property. The bishop cannot simply take parish assets and use them for diocesan purposes or the debts of another parish." (p. 225)

Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development's, 2003 National Study of Parish Reorganization. *"Some Key Findings About Parish Reconfigurations."* Future Church, http://futurechurch.org/save-our-parish-community/save-our-parish-community/resource/save-our-parish-community (accessed March 18, 2014).

Coriden, James A.   *The Parish in Catholic Tradition: History, Theology and Canon Law*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997.

Crocker, H.W., III.   *Triumph: The Power and the Glory of the Catholic Church.* New York, NY.: Three Rivers Press, 2001.

Diocese of Madison & The Reid Group, The Office for Planning, *"Trusting in the Spirit."* Accessible at: http://www.madisondiocese.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gIZZqyzqjQ%3 D&tabid=737&mid=2095 (accessed on June 30, 2014).
    This online reference is by far one of the most practical and detailed regarding the merging, clustering and closing of parishes. As part of a diocesan-wide process of strategic planning, the Diocese of Madison developed this plan to help parish leaders and parishioners in their efforts to implement this pastoral plan for the benefit of all people involved in this endeavor. This excellent resource covers a multitude of subjects and issues connected with the mergers and closures of Catholic parishes.

Denk, J. Michael. *"Sojourn, a Temporary Stay: for Those Struggling With Merging or Closing Parishes." Priest* 68, no. 8 (August 2012): 13-16.
    As members of a parish community we form "a community of sojourners – a people who stay temporarily at places along the journey to Eternal Life." (p. 15) Parishes and churches are not our final destinations but rather temporary places of worship where our faith in nurtured through the reception of the sacraments. Just like Abraham placed his faith and trust

in God who led him into the unknown, so must people in transition allow God to lead them into a new church community where the Kingdom of God is being realized. Faith in God's loving care and guidance is necessary for any transition in the life of a church community to be successful and life giving.

Dudley, Carl S. and Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Easter, Opal. *"Pastoral Advice on Parish Closures and Mergers in the African American Community." New Theology Review* vol. 22, issue 3 (August 2009): 25-35.
Opal Easter provides very pastoral and valuable advice for parish closures and mergers based on the experience of African American Church communities in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The phenomena of merging and closing of Catholic churches poses the need to assess the viability of all Catholic parishes in the US as they continue to engage actively in Jesus' mission. The challenges of closures and mergers affect pastors, bishops, parish staff and parishioners. Four issues of great importance must be taken into consideration while implementing various parish reconfiguration plans: "transparency, pastoral care of the adults, pastoral care of the youth and parishioner participation." (p. 26) In any reconfiguration plan, attentiveness to people's pastoral, emotional and spiritual needs and their active participation in the process of merger or closure are unignorable essential elements.

Francis, Mark R. *Local Worship. Popular Religion and the Liturgy*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014.

Gallagher, Maureen. *Continuing the Journey: A Book for Parishes in Transition* Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1988.

Goshay, Charita. *"Diocese Releases Plan; Some Area Churches to Merge." Canton Repository,* May 28, 2010.

Gray, Mark M., Cidade, Melissa and Gautier, Mary L. *The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes: Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Series*. Washington, DC: National Association for Lay Ministry, 2011.

Hater, Robert, J. *The Catholic Parish: Hope for the Changing World*. New York: Paulist Press, 2004.

Hodge, Dean R. and Jewell, Marti R. *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: What the Church Needs to Know.* Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2010.

Howes, Robert G. *Bridges: Towards the Inter-Parish Regional Community…Deaneries, Clusters, Plural Parishes.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998.

Jervis, Rick. *"Faithful Fight for Church." USA Today,* May 07, 2008.

Jewell, Marti. R. *"Linking Parishes: 6 Strategies for the Future: Creative Ways to Meet Toda's Challenges."* Emerging Models, http://emergingmodels.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ Linking- Parishes-Article.pdf (accessed March 18, 2014).

There are two main factors contributing to the need of linking and merging of parishes. The first reason is the declining number of priests actively involved in parish ministry.   The second reason is the change in the demographics of the US Catholics. The number of Catholics living in the Northeast is decreasing due to the movement of Catholic population to the South and the West parts of the country. Moreover, there are increasing numbers of parishes who share a priest and also the growing numbers of parishes with a non-resident pastor.

Jewell, Marti R. and Ramey, David A. *The Changing Face of Church: Emerging Models of Parish Leadership.* Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010.

Long-Garcia, J. D. and Kira Dault. *"What's the Difference Between Closing a Parish and Closing a Church?" U.S. Catholic,* October 22, 2013. Accessed on March 18, 2014 and June 30, 2014 at http://www.madisondiocese.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gIZZqyz-qjQ %3D&tabid=737 &mid=2095).

Is there a difference between closing a church and closing a parish? The conviction of this article's authors is there is a fundamental difference between these two entities. The former refers mostly to a physical building consecrated and designated for religious purposes. The later refers to a community of believers who may find themselves worshiping in more than one church building and under the pastoral guidance of one pastor. Canons 515 (bishop's authority to "erect, suppress or alter parishes") and 1222 (reasons for the closure of a church building) are discussed and presented here in detail.

Mogilka, Mark and Wiskus, Kate. *Pastoring Multiple Parishes: Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project Series*. Chicago: Loyola Press. 2009.

O'Malley, Michael. *"Youngstown Diocese Closes Buildings, But Merges Congregations."* The Cleveland Plain Dealer Blog, entry posted March 29, 2010, http://blog.cleveland.com /metro/ 2010/03/youngstown_diocese_closes_buil.html (accessed March 18, 2014).

Piderit, John J. and Morey, Melanie M.   *Renewing Parish Culture: Building for a Catholic Future*. Collegeville, MN: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Rivers, Robert S, CSP. *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.

Schiffer, Kathy. *"Benedict's Warning and Consolation: Changing Demographics Mean Closing Churches."* Kathy Schiffer' Blog, entry posted September 5, 2012, http://www.patheos.com/ blogs/kathyschiffer/2012/09/benedicts-warning-and-consolation-changing-demographics-mean-closing-churches/ (accessed on March 18, 2014).

Schuth, Katarina. *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006.

Seitz, John C. *No Closure: Catholic Practice and Boston's Parish Shutdowns*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Senn, Frank C. "When Churches Die." *Liturgy* 14 (1997): 51-55.
   We are presented here with some valuable and practical insights concerning the process of a church closing. Frank C. Senn reminds his readers that most people experience being a part of a church community on a local level. "We experience the church locally or we do not experience it at all." (p. 51) While dealing with "the death of a church," pastors and parish leaders must take into account people's feelings of loss, grief and anger. Before members of a dying church community come to terms and accept the fact that their church will no longer remain in existence, they must be given enough time to grieve and mourn. Dying church congregations just like dying people go through the following five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.   Pastoral sensitivity is an essential element when implementing a "meaningful and therapeutic," ritual for closing of a church.

Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

Serjak, Cynthia. "Leaving a Sacred Space: Closing a Church." *Pastoral Music* 33, no. 6 (2009): 31-33.
   The author of this article recommends the use of Catholic Funeral rites in the process of closing a church. The focal point in the ritual of closing a church should be a celebration of the life of the church community, her past customs, traditions and history. When adopted with proper pastoral sensitivity, Catholic funeral rites shall help a grieving congregation to deal with their loss and to look into the future with hope. Very often, shock, grief and anger are associated with the church closing process and must be taking into account by pastors and parish leaders.   Listening to people's stories and celebrating together the last Eucharist as a parish community are crucial elements of this process.

Shaping Catholic Parishes: Pastoral Leaders in the 21st Century. Edited by Ganim, Carole. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008.

Sofield, Loughlan, S.T. and Juliano, Carroll, S.H.C.J. *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*. Notre Dame, IN: Ava Marie Press, 2000.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Madison. *"Resources for Merging Parishes."* Accessible at http://www.madisondiocese.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gIZZqyz-qjQ%3D&tabid=737 &mid=2095 (accessed March 18, 2014).

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Zech, Charles E. and Miller, Robert J. *Listening to the People of God: Closing, Rebuilding, and Revitalizing Parishes*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008.