



Office of the Archbishop
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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-6

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

Changing demographics have affected the size and wealth of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the vitality of her parishes. This is particularly true in the City of Chicago itself, where the total population fell by nearly 21% since 1970, from 3,366,957 to an estimated 2,693,976 in 2020. During the last decade, the total population of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) declined by less than 2%, from 5,903,190 in 2010 to an estimated 5,821,933 in 2020. Over the same ten-year period the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Chicago declined by nearly 7% (159,000), from 2,338,000 to 2,179,000.

A good number of our parishes were founded in the first half of the 20th Century or earlier. Many were established for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer reside in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished. Today, many of our parishes are unable or struggling to support themselves. Consequently, from Fiscal Year 2012 through Fiscal Year 2021, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$187,818,176.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$49,452,924.00 to 119 parishes and \$138,365,252 to 99 Catholic schools. This includes \$10,708,494.00 during Fiscal Year 2021 alone: \$3,120,340.00 to parishes and \$7,588,154.00 to Catholic schools, mostly parochial schools. Completely due to the generosity of the faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors, these subsidies cannot continue at this high level. Our mission is to convert our parishes, helping them to become more vital, that is, active centers of Christian discipleship, evangelical mission, scholarship, and charitable outreach. For this mission, the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

More than six years ago, inspired by the experience of St. Francis of Assisi before the cross of the ruined church of San Damiano and the Holy Father's dream of "a missionary option ... capable of transforming everything" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 27, November 24, 2013), and with wide and continuing consultation among the clergy and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Chicago, particularly in the Presbyteral Council, we embarked on the inauguration of *Renew My Church (RMC)*. This is our multi-year process aimed at converting our parishes for mission. It is my intention that every parish join with some of its neighbors (groupings) to plan the future. Careful planning will create a menu of possibilities. We are identifying parishes to be reconfigured through pastoral coordination with neighboring parishes, divisions, unions, and other structural and governance changes.

This decree concerns two adjacent parishes located in the North suburban municipalities of Evanston and Skokie, Illinois: St. Athanasius Parish (established 1921), 1615 Lincoln Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201-234; and St. Joan of Arc Parish (established 1951), 9248 North

Prot. N. 2022 RMC-6
Decree
February 21, 2022
Page 2

Lawndale Avenue, Evanston, IL 60203-1509. The churches of the two parishes are approximately two miles apart, a drive of under six minutes.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Athanasius 438, a 49% decline from the 865 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. The same year, the average Sunday attendance at St. Joan of Arc Parish 555, a 5% decline from the 582 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. In both parishes, all Sunday Masses are celebrated in English.

In Fiscal Year 2021, St. Athanasius Parish had an operating surplus of \$13,148.00. In August 2021, the parish had savings of \$1,998,630.00 on deposit, no debt and estimated capital needs of \$2,915,850.00. By contrast, St. Joan of Arc Parish had operating deficits of \$136,154.00 in Fiscal Year 2021 and \$64,234.00 in Fiscal Year 2020. In August 2021, St. Joan of Arc Parish had \$218,846.00 in savings, no debt, and estimated capital needs of \$1,070,300.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Athanasius Parish included 14 funerals, seven marriages, and 24 Baptisms. In the same period there were 14 funerals, one marriage, and nine Baptisms at St. Joan of Arc Parish. The combined totals for the two parishes, 28 funerals, eight marriages, and 33 Baptisms indicate less than average figures for a single suburban parish.

Following consultations last year with lay and clergy members of the parishes, including input from parishioners at large, a report was submitted to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group of lay and clergy representatives from across the Archdiocese of Chicago. Recently, the *Renew My Church* Executive Committee submitted a recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to a continuing decline in the number of priests to serve as pastors, difficulty in meeting operating budgets at St. Joan of Arc Parish, and significant capital needs at both parishes, the Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources under the leadership of a single pastor and pastoral team is needed.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 121, canon 127 §§1, 2, 2°, & 3, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. Athanasius Parish and St. Joan of Arc Parish, both in north suburban Cook County, Illinois, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territories of St. Athanasius Parish and St. Joan of Arc Parish, the new parish will be called, *ad interim*, St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish, and St. Athanasius Church will be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago electronically *via* the internet on December 21, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 38 for and one against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

I decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2022, the above-mentioned St. Athanasius Parish and St. Joan of Arc Parish shall be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territories of the two parishes. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish;

2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the two extinguished parishes, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish;

4. The territory of the new St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished St. Athanasius Parish and the extinguished St. Joan of Arc Parish as depicted and described on the map and in the document attached to this decree;

5. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the two extinguished parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish (canon 121);

6. The churches of the extinguished St. Athanasius Parish and the extinguished St. Joan of Arc Parish will be churches of the new St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc Parish, retaining their own titles. St. Athanasius Church shall be designated the parish church of the new parish;

7. The data submitted to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of December 21, 2021, are to be attached to this decree and will become available upon request to those eligible to receive them;

8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the two extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Athanasius Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago; and

9. Notification of this decree shall be given immediately through the official website of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The decree shall be conveyed to the pastors of St. Athanasius Parish and St. Joan of Arc Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners of the decree through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, dated, and signed petition, asking me to revoke or amend the decree, must be sent or delivered to me


Prot. N. 2022 RMC-6
Decree
February 21, 2022
Page 4

within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop of Chicago, Archbishop Quigley Center, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Given this 21st day of February, A.D. 2022.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

**THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF
DECEMBER 21, 2021, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE
AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**