



Office of the Archbishop  
835 North Rush Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
312.534.8230  
archchicago.org

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-10

## 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 2,686,530 in 2020. The archdiocese has many vacant, old, and underused parochial buildings and fewer priests to pastor our faith communities.

According to the US Census Bureau, the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) had an estimated total population of 5,881,250 in 2018. The 2018 *Annuario Pontificio* indicated our archdiocese had 345 parishes serving a Catholic population of 2,512,000: an average of 7,281 Catholics per parish. According to the same source, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had a total population of 11,519,517, with 287 parishes for a Catholic population of 4,362,000: an average of 15,199 Catholics per parish. For the Archdiocese of New York, the figures were 2,656,987 Catholics in 294 parishes, an average 9,037 Catholics per parish. A good number of our parishes were founded in the first half of the last 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.

Many of our parishes are unable or barely able to support themselves. Consequently, many have been receiving financial subsidies from the archdiocese. From fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2020 the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$177,109,682.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$46,332,584.00 to 106 parishes and \$130,777,098.00 to 83 Catholic schools. This was an increase of \$14,777,155.00 over a single year: \$3,711,999.00 more to parishes and \$11,064,156.00 more to Catholic 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, especially in times of enormous economic strain. 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 the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

Nearly 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 the 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 four parishes located within a territory of approximately 16 square miles in the adjacent municipalities of Bridgeview, Burbank, Justice, and Oak Lawn, all in suburban Cook County, Illinois. The parishes are St. Gerald Parish (established 1934), 9310 South 55<sup>th</sup> Court, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453-2318; St. Albert the Great Parish (established 1949), 8000 South Linder Avenue, Burbank, Illinois 60459-2049; St. Fabian Parish (established 1963), 8300 Thomas Avenue, Bridgeview, Illinois 60455-1732; and St. Louis de Montfort Parish (established 1963), 8808 Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453-1003.

St. Gerald Parish serves a Sunday assembly of approximately 1,640 English-speaking parishioners. The Sunday assembly at St. Albert the Great Parish numbers 4,493, 35% English-speaking, 56% Polish-speaking, and 9% Spanish-speaking. At St. Fabian Parish the regular attendance at Sunday Mass is 2,413, 48% English-speaking and 52% Polish speaking. Lately, St. Louis de Montfort Parish is home to 586 English-speaking Sunday worshippers. The area of the parishes is experiencing a large increase of both Spanish-speaking and Arabic-speaking families, the Arabic speaking families, mostly from the Middle East, have included Muslims, but also Christians, especially faithful of the Greek Melchite Catholic Church.

In Fiscal year 2019, St. Louis de Montfort Parish continued to serve a small worshipping community, having a 55% decline in Sunday Mass attendance over the 20 years beginning in 1999 (from 1,295 to 586). While this parish had a small operating surplus in 2019 (\$19,049.00), its Fiscal Year 2020 figures report an operating deficit of \$68,971.00 and \$10,000.00 in unpaid bills. The accumulated church debt of the parish is \$711,432.00 and near-term capital needs are unable to be met from recent and projected income. This is an aging parish, with a consistent average of more funerals than Baptisms and marriages combined (27.5 funerals and 16 Baptisms in recent years and no marriages in 2019).

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 Commission submitted its recommendations to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to the decline in active participation at Sunday Mass, operating deficits, declining income, and unmet capital needs at St. Louis de Montfort Parish, along with fewer priests to serve as pastors, it was thought that the area can reasonably sustain only three of the four parishes. Consequently, the recommendations proposed that the St. Louis de Montfort Parish be extinguished as a separate juridic person in the Church and that its territory be divided relatively equally among the three other parishes, namely St. Gerald Parish, St. Albert the Great Parish, and St. Fabian Parish.

The proposal is supported by demographic changes in the area, and by data mentioned in or attached to this decree. Instead of four parishes, three will serve a population of English-,

Polish- and Spanish-speaking Catholics. This will be within the combined territories of the three parishes, each having an average of less than six square miles, reasonable by reference to other suburban areas of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The campus of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish will be within the boundaries of and administered by St. Gerald Parish.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me the proposal that St. Louis de Montfort Parish in Oak Lawn, Illinois, be extinguished as a separate juridic person in the Church and its territory divided among the adjacent St. Gerald Parish, also in Oak Lawn, and St. Albert the Great Parish, Burbank, and St. Fabian Parish, Bridgeview. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on January 15, 18-19, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 33 for and one against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

***decree the following:***

1. Effective July 1, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Louis de Montfort Parish, Oak Lawn, will be extinguished as separate juridic person in the Church and its territory divided among St. Gerald Parish, also in Oak Lawn, St. Albert the Great Parish, Burbank, and St. Fabian Parish, Bridgeview;

2. The mission of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish will be subsumed into the missions of the three parishes receiving territory from the extinguished parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish will become parishioners of St. Gerald Parish, St. Albert the Great Parish, or St. Fabian Parish, according to domicile, although each retains the right to associate with any of the three parishes;

4. The territory of the enlarged St. Gerald Parish, the territory of the enlarged St. Albert the Great Parish, and the territory of enlarged St. Fabian Parish will be as depicted and described in the documents and maps attached to this decree;

5. The real property of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish, including St. Louis de Montfort Church, will be located within the territory of the enlarged St. Gerald Parish, and administered by that parish;

6. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, proceeds from any future alienation of the goods and patrimonial rights of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will, upon such alienation, be divided equally among St. Gerald Parish, St. Albert the Great Parish and St. Fabian Parish (see canon 121);

7. The church of the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish will be a second church of St. Gerald Parish, retaining its own title. Accordingly, St. Gerald Church will remain the parish church of the enlarged parish;

8. The data submitted to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of January 15, 18-19, 2021, are to be attached to this decree and will become available upon request to those eligible to receive them;

9. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the extinguished St. Louis de Montfort Parish will be collected and maintained at the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago; and


10. 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. Louis de Montfort Parish, St. Gerald Parish, St. Albert the Great Parish, and St. Fabian Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners 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 delivered to me 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 25<sup>th</sup> day of February, A.D. 2021.  
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 JANUARY 15, 18-19, 2021, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE  
AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS  
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM