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Prot. N. 2019 RMC-4

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

“Likewise, parishes which are too small should be united insofar as the situation demands it and circumstances permit.” St. Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae*, n. 21, (1), August 6, 1966

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 has decreased by nearly 20% since 1970, from 3,366,957 to an estimated 2,736,000 today. 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 had an estimated total population of 5,914,783 in 2018. The 2018 *Annuario Pontificio* indicates Chicago had 345 parishes serving a Catholic population of 2,512,000. In 2018 the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had a total population of 11,519,517, with 287 parishes for a Catholic population of 4,362,000, more than twice the number of Catholics per parish than Chicago. In the same year the Archdiocese of New York had 2,656,987 Catholics in 294 parishes, also a much larger parishioners per parish number than in Chicago. A good number of our parishes were founded in the first half of the last century or earlier. They were established for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer live in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished.

Too many of our parishes have been unable to support themselves and are receiving financial subsidies from the archdiocese. Between fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2018 these subsidies amounted to \$144,373,461.00, including \$38,171,840.00 to 106 parishes, and \$106,201,621.00 to 83 Catholic schools. More than \$25,000,000.00 was given in the last two fiscal years alone. None of this money will be recovered by the archdiocese. The Archdiocese of Chicago cannot continue this level of financial support for parishes and Catholic schools. Our hope is that our parishes will become more vital, that is, active centers of Christian discipleship, evangelical mission, scholarship, and charitable outreach. To achieve this hope, the parishes must be able to support themselves when possible.

Almost three years ago, inspired by the experience of St. Francis of Assisi before the cross of the ruined church of San Damiano, and by the Holy Father's dream of “a missionary option ... capable of transforming everything” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 27, November 24, 2013), I announced the inauguration of *Renew My Church (RMC)*, a multi-year, intentional process aimed at obtaining and preserving the vitality of our

parishes. It is my intention that every parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago join with some of its neighbors and plan together for the future.

Careful planning will create a menu of possible options for future vitality. We will also identify parishes likely to be restructured through pastoral coordination, unions, and other significant alterations, including closing churches no longer useful for divine worship. To date, 14 parishes in seven geographic localities of the archdiocese have completed *RMC* planning and were restructured to form seven new parishes, another five parishes were left unchanged. So far, two churches have been relegated to profane but not sordid use. This decree involves two parishes in the southwest suburban area called the Pulaski Corridor Grouping.

Beginning in early 2018 the parish priests and delegates from four territorial parishes and two parochial schools, St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish and School, 4100 West 107<sup>th</sup> Street, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453-4908, St. Germaine Parish and School, 9711 South Kolin Avenue, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453-3544, Our Lady of Loretto Parish, 8925 South Kostner Avenue, Hometown, Illinois 60456-1006, and St. Terrence Parish, 4300 West 119<sup>th</sup> Place, Alsip, Illinois 60803-2302, met to plan their futures in the *RMC* process. The parochial campuses, together with their four churches and two schools, are located within approximately seven-square miles. On May 7, 2018, the representatives presented a Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group formed by lay and ordained representatives from across the archdiocese (see Submission of May 7, 2018, attached to this Decree).

Narrowing their work to five possible scenarios, the Grouping Team recommend Scenario A or Alternative Scenario 1 to the Archdiocesan Commission. However, the Commission favored another alternative vision: the union of St. Germaine Parish and Our Lady of Loretto Parish, recommending the closing of Our Lady of Loretto Church by July 1, 2020. Under this vision St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish would remain canonically unchanged and the two parochial schools would continue operating under the new united parish and St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish respectively. St. Terrence Parish would also remain unchanged and seek to find an alternative grouping. Information supporting or challenging the Commission's vision includes the following:

- At the south end of the area, St. Terrence Parish, Alsip, has more than half the territory of the entire grouping. It is financially stable, and as the only Catholic parish in Alsip, relates well to its municipality. It is also the only parish with a growing Hispanic population. Its union with other parishes of the grouping does not now seem prudent.
- St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish, together with its own parochial school, exceeds the minimum levels of income and Sunday Mass attendance required for parochial vitality.
- Our Lady of Loretto Parish has sufficient operating revenue and a considerably older population than St. Germaine Parish. Closing it now would be difficult to justify. The church closing should be looked at in the future when a new pastor has had the opportunity to shepherd the appropriate decision.

- Reducing the number of pastorates and maintaining parochial staffs for one parish rather than two will reduce costs, promote other efficiencies, and better allow for stable and competitive compensation.

Having received the recommendation of the Grouping Team, and after considering other possibilities, including four other scenarios, the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission decided to advance its alternative vision before the Presbyteral Council. However, the council did not agree to the closing of Our Lady of Loretto on a specific date in the future.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on September 12-13, 2018, at University of St. Mary of the Lake-Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois. There, the proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission to alter the status of St. Germaine Parish and unite it with Our Lady of Loretto Parish was presented to the Council along with a recommendation to close Our Lady of Loretto Church by July 1, 2020. The union of the parishes was accepted, but not the closing of Our Lady of Loretto Church. Having heard the Presbyteral Council at the same meeting, I now, after invoking the Holy Spirit,

***decree the following:***

1. Effective July 1, 2019, St. Germaine Parish, Oak Lawn, and Our Lady of Loretto Parish, Hometown, will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new juridic person known, *ad interim*, as Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish;
2. The missions of the extinguished Our Lady of Loretto Parish and the extinguished St. Germaine Parish will be subsumed completely into the newly established Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the two parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish;
4. The territory of the new Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish will be the combined territories of the former Our Lady of Loretto Parish and St. Germaine Parish, that is the territory located within these boundaries:  
  
Start at 87<sup>th</sup> Street and Cicero Avenue,  
East of the south side of 87<sup>th</sup> Street to Crawford (Pulaski) Avenue,  
South on the west side of Pulaski (Crawford) Avenue to 103rd Street,  
West on the north side of 103rd Street to Cicero Avenue,  
North on the east side of Cicero Avenue to 87<sup>th</sup> Street.
5. At least for the next year, the churches of the extinguished Our Lady of Loretto Parish and the extinguished St. Germaine Parish will remain open as parochial churches of the new Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish, retaining their own titles;

6. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the extinguished Our Lady of Loretto Parish and the extinguished St. Germaine Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established Our Lady of Loretto and St. Germaine Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of September 12-13, 2018, will be attached to this decree;

8. In due course, the sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the extinguished Our Lady of Loretto Parish and the extinguished St. Germaine Parish will be commended to the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago for safe keeping and suitable access; and

9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of Our Lady of Loretto Parish, Hometown, and St. Germaine Parish, Oak Lawn, and to their parishioners. Publication will be made through the parish bulletins, and generally on the archdiocesan website.

*Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).*

Given this 14<sup>th</sup> day of January, A.D. 2019.  
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,  
Chicago, Illinois

  
Archbishop of Chicago



  
Reverend Mr. Daniel G. Welter, J.D.  
Chancellor

Attachments

THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF  
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF  
THE RELEVANT MEETING OR MEETINGS OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL ARE  
ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE AND AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO THE OFFICE OF THE  
CHANCELLOR OR THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS