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Prot. N. 2019 RMC-7

## 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.

More than 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. This decree arises out of the work of the parishes of the Uptown/Edgewater Grouping, sometimes known as the Lake Shore Drive Grouping. Along with two parochial schools, three parishes constituted the grouping: St. Ita Parish (established 1900), 1220 West Catalpa Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60640-1311; St. Mary of the Lake Parish (established 1901), 4200 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, Illinois 60613 1621; and St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish (established 1916), 4827 North Kenmore Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60640-3705.

In 2018 the pastors, deacons, parochial school principals, and lay representatives from these parishes, met in the RMC grouping to consider their future. The Grouping Team presented a Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary dated May 25, 2018, to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group of lay and ordained representatives from across the archdiocese (see Submission of May 25, 2018, attached to this Decree).

The ultimate recommendation was conveyed to the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on January 15, 2019, and March 5, 2019, calling for the union of St. Ita Parish with St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish, effective May 31, 2019, and incorporating St. Gregory the Great Parish (established 1904 as a German personal parish) into future planning. St. Mary of the Lake Parish is to remain as it is, joining another grouping. The union of the two parishes is supported by data and arguments attached to this decree. Significant is that St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish has a regular and decreasing Sunday Mass attendance of about 302 and a recent annual operating income of only \$269,018.00, both figures are significantly below the recommended levels needed for parish vitality in the archdiocese, namely, 800 and \$750,000.00 respectively. The union of the two parishes will result in a larger parish, one of a more reasonable size for future programming, evangelization, and development. Financial savings are expected from the requirement to maintain one parochial staff rather than two.

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, having before me the recommendations of the Grouping Team and those of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on January 15, 2019, at Our Lady of Hope Parish in Rosemont, Illinois, and again on March 5, 2019, at St. John of the Cross Parish in Western Springs, Illinois. There, after hearing the Presbyteral Council, noting the council's deliberations on the matter, witnessing the council's vote on March 5, 2019, and, after invoking the Holy Spirit, I accepted the Council's advice and now

***decree the following:***

1. Effective May 31, 2019, St. Ita Parish and St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish, both in the Lake Shore Drive Grouping on the North Side of the City of Chicago, will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish known, *ad interim*, as SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

2. The missions of the extinguished St. Ita Parish and the extinguished St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish will be subsumed completely into the newly established SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the two parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

4. The territory of the new SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish will be the combined territories of the former St. Ita Parish and the former St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish, namely the territory located within these boundaries:

Start at Peterson Avenue and Western Avenue,  
East on south side of Peterson Avenue to Ravenswood Avenue,  
South on west side of Ravenswood Avenue to Thorndale Avenue,  
East on south side of Thorndale Avenue to Clark Street,  
North along center line of Clark Street to Thorndale Avenue,  
East on south side of Thorndale Avenue and its extension to Lake Michigan,  
South along Lake Michigan to the extension of Wilson Avenue,  
West on north side of extension of Wilson Avenue and Wilson Avenue to  
Magnolia Avenue,  
North on east side of Magnolia Avenue to Argyle Street,  
West on north side of Argyle Street to Clark Street,  
North on east side of Clark Street to Foster Avenue,  
West on north side of Foster Avenue to Western Avenue,  
North on east side of Western Avenue to Peterson Avenue.

5. The churches of the extinguished St. Ita Parish and the extinguished St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish will remain open as parochial churches of the new SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury 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 St. Ita Parish and the extinguished St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meetings of January 15, 2019, and March 5, 2019, will be attached to this decree;

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8. In due course, the sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the extinguished St. Ita Parish and the extinguished St. Thomas of Canterbury 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 St. Ita Parish and St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish, both on the North Side of the City of Chicago, and to their parishioners. Publication will be made through the parish bulletins, and generally on the archdiocesan website.

*Before hierarchical recourse [appeal] 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 March, A.D. 2019.  
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,  
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 RELEVANT 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