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Prot. N. 2019 RMC-16

## 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 far 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 *Anuario 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. Many 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. This decree arises out of the work of eight parishes, all located within a territory of less than five square miles in the Bridgeport-Chinatown-Canaryville neighborhoods of Chicago's Southside. The decree is applicable to two parishes in the Bridgeport-Canaryville neighborhoods: Nativity of Our Lord Parish (established 1868), 653 West 37<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609-1621; and St. Gabriel Parish (established 1880), 4522 South Wallace Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609 3536.

In early 2018 the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from the above-mentioned parishes and mission met in the RMC grouping to consider their future. The Grouping Team presented a Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary dated May 1, 2018, to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group of lay and ordained representatives from across the archdiocese (see Submission of May 1, 2018, attached to this Decree).

The recommendation of the Commission was conveyed to the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago first on November 26, 2018. Because clarity could not be achieved for all the recommendations, they were again presented to the Council on January 15, 2019, and March 5, 2019. Ultimately, the recommendations pertaining to this decree provided for the union of Nativity of Our Lord Parish and St. Gabriel Parish in one new territorial parish. The union would be effective from July 1, 2019. The union of the parishes is supported by the data and arguments attached to this decree. Significant is that neither of the two parishes meets two important recommended minimum levels needed for parish vitality in the archdiocese, namely, at least 800 worshipping parishioners on Sundays and \$750,000.00 annual operating revenue.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canons 50-51, 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 both November 26, 2018, and January 15, 2019, at Our Lady of Hope Parish, Rosemont, Illinois. There, I heard the Presbyteral Council, noted the Council's deliberations, and witnessed the Council's vote. Thereafter, the territorial boundaries of the Grouping area parishes were discussed and confirmed at the March 5, 2019, meeting of the Presbyteral Council at St. John of the Cross Parish, Western Springs, Illinois. Consequently, after invoking the Holy Spirit, I

***decree the following:***

1. Effective July 1, 2019, Nativity of Our Lord Parish and St. Gabriel Parish, both in the Bridgeport-Canaryville areas of Chicago's Southside, 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 Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel Parish;

2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into the work of the newly established Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the two parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel Parish;

4. The territory of the new Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished Nativity of Our Lord Parish and the extinguished St. Gabriel Parish, namely the territory located within these boundaries:

Start at the South Branch of the Chicago River (Bubbly Creek) and 35<sup>th</sup> Street,  
East on the south side of 35<sup>th</sup> Street to the C & WI R.R.,  
South on the west side of the C & WI R.R. to the extension of 49<sup>th</sup> Street,  
West on the north side of the extension of 49<sup>th</sup> Street and 49<sup>th</sup> Street to Halsted Street,  
North on the east side of Halsted Street to Pershing Road (39<sup>th</sup> Street),  
West on the north side of Pershing Road (39<sup>th</sup> Street) to the extension of the South  
Branch of the Chicago River,  
North on the east side of the extension of the South Branch of the Chicago River and  
following the river north to 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

5. The churches of the extinguished Nativity of Our Lord Parish and the extinguished St. Gabriel Parish will remain parochial churches of the new Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel 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 Nativity of Our Lord Parish and the extinguished St. Gabriel Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established Nativity of Our Lord and St. Gabriel Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meetings of November 26, 2018, January 15, 2019, and March 5, 2019, will be attached to this decree;

8. In due course, the sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the extinguished Nativity of Our Lord Parish and the extinguished St. Gabriel 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

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9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of Nativity of Our Lord Parish and St. Gabriel Parish, both in the Bridgeport-Canaryville neighborhoods of the Southside 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 at my office within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).*

Given this 15<sup>th</sup> day of April, 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 FROM  
THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS