



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-2

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 2,705,994 in 2018. 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 5,881,250 in 2018. The 2018 *Annuario Pontificio* indicates 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 15,199 Catholics per parish. For the Archdiocese of New York, the figures are 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 live in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished.

Too many of our parishes have been unable to support themselves and have been 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. In fiscal year 2019 our generous people contributed an additional \$4,448,745.00 to at least 78 of our parishes and \$13,511,371.00 to 76 Catholic schools in the archdiocese. We 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 four 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 are identifying parishes likely to be reconfigured through pastoral coordination with neighboring parishes, divisions, unions, and other significant alterations.

This decree concerns a portion of the Lemont Grouping in the far southwest portion of Cook County adjacent to the boundaries of Will and DuPage Counties. Specifically, the grouping encompasses four parishes in the Village of Lemont. These parishes include St. James at Sag Bridge Parish (established 1833), 10600 South Archer Avenue, Lemont, Illinois 60439-9344; St. Patrick Parish (organized 1840), 200 East Illinois Street, Lemont, Illinois 60439-3612; St. Alphonsus Parish (church established 1867, established 1874 as personal parish for German-speaking Catholics), 210 East Logan Street, Lemont, Illinois 60439-4207; SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish (established 1882 as personal parish for Polish-speaking Catholics), 608 Sobieski Street, Lemont, Illinois 60439-4050.

In addition to these four parishes there are three additional quasi-parochial communities within the Village of Lemont or the adjacent Village of Willow Springs: Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis Lithuanian Catholic Mission (established 1990), 14911 127th Street, Lemont, Illinois 60439-7417; Blessed Anton Martin Slomsek Slovenian Catholic Mission (established 1994), 14246 Main Street, Lemont, Illinois 60439-0608; and Our Lady Mother of the Church Polish Mission (established 2003), 116 Hilton Street, Willow Springs, Illinois 60480. Here we focus primarily on St. James at Sag Bridge Parish.

Throughout 2019, the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from the four above mentioned parishes, met in an *RMC* grouping to consider the future vitality of their area of the archdiocese. The Grouping Team 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. With respect to the parish of our focus, the proposal is that St. James at Sag Bridge Parish become a mission of SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the aggregate 41% decline in Sunday Mass attendance at St. James at Sag Bridge Parish over the past 20 years. Recently, Sunday Mass attendance at St. James at Sag Bridge Parish has been growing but remains below the minimum recommended for vitality in this archdiocese. The total operating income of St. James at Sag Bridge Parish in Fiscal Year 2018 was \$435,560.00, enough for expenses, but a significant departure from the recommended minimum income of \$750,000.00 for a single parish.

For cultural, historical, and spiritual reasons, the site of St. James at Sag Bridge Church is extremely important. The site predates the founding of the United States of America and is associated with the earliest French exploration and evangelization of the territory by Jesuit Father Pierre Marquette and Louis Joliet. It seems more than right to preserve this church and its worshipping community intact. However, it will have a new form, one associated with and supported by the parochial mission of a larger 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, canon 515 §2, and canon 516 of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on November 5, 2019, at St. Monica Parish, Chicago, Illinois. There, after hearing the Presbyteral Council, receiving its vote of 35 for and none against the proposal, and invoking the Holy Spirit, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2020, St. James at Sag Bridge Parish in the Village of Lemont, Illinois, will be extinguished as a parish and re-established as a quasi-parish, a territorial mission of SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish, also in the Village of Lemont, Illinois;
2. The mission of the former parish will be subsumed completely into that of the new territorial mission;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the present St. James at Sag Bridge Parish will become members of the new territorial mission;
4. The territory of the new St. James at Sag Bridge Mission will be the territory of the former St. James at Sag Bridge Parish, without changes;
5. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the former St. James at Sag Bridge Parish together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established territorial mission of St. James at Sag Bridge (see canon 121);
6. Unless otherwise provided for by future act, the pastor of the new territorial parish of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Lemont, Illinois, will also be entrusted with the pastoral leadership of St. James at Sag Bridge Mission;
7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of November 5, 2019, will be attached to this decree;
8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning St. James at Sag Bridge Parish will remain at the new St. James at Sag Bridge Mission, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago;
9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. James at Sag Bridge Parish and SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish, both in the Village of Lemont, Illinois, and to the parishioners of the two parishes. Publication will be made through the parish bulletins, and generally on the archdiocesan website.

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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 3rd day of January, A.D. 2020.
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,
Chicago, Illinois

Frederick J. Kardel
Archbishop of Chicago



R.W.M. Daniel J. Helton
Chancellor

Attachments

**ONCE AVAILABLE, THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2019,
WILL BE ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE AND AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**