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Prot. N. 2020 RMC-5

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. From fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2019 the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$162,332,527.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$42,620,585.00 to 106 parishes and \$119,712,942.00 to 83 Catholic schools. This was entirely due to the generosity of the people of the archdiocese and other donors. The archdiocese cannot and should not continue this level of financial support for parishes and Catholic schools that are struggling and supported by populations that have been decreasing. Instead, our mission is to reconfigure our parishes to become more vital, that is, active centers of Christian discipleship, evangelical mission, scholarship, and charitable outreach. To achieve this hope, the parishes must have a growing or stable membership and the capacity to support themselves when possible.

Five 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 process aimed at obtaining and preserving the vitality of our parishes. It has been 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 the future. We are identifying parishes likely to be reconfigured through pastoral coordination with neighboring parishes, divisions, unions, and other significant alterations.

This decree concerns three parishes within an area of approximately two and one-half square miles in the northwest corner of the City of Chicago: St. Thecla Parish (established 1925) 6333 North Newcastle Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60631-2005; St. Cornelius Parish (established 1925) 5205 North Lieb Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60630-1433; and St. Tarcissus Parish (established 1926) 6020 West Ardmore Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60646-5320. Each of these parishes was organized within stable territorial boundaries.

Throughout 2019, the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from the three 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 three parishes, the Commission proposed that St. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form one larger new juridic person, a new territorial parish within the combined territories of the extinguished parishes.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the aggregate 56% decline in Sunday Mass attendance over the past 20 years. Recent Sunday Mass attendance has been 547 at St. Thecla Parish, 785 at St. Cornelius Parish, and 705 at St. Tarcissus Parish, attendance at each parish being below the minimum of 800 recommended for vitality in this archdiocese. The total aggregate operating income of the three parishes in fiscal year 2018 was \$1,655,997.00. Last year, none of the three parishes had the minimum church income of \$750,000.00 necessary for long term parochial vitality. Extinctive union of the three parishes will result in considerable economic benefit for parish operations and evangelical activity.

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 a proposal, derived from the work of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, that St. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish, all in the northwest corner of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish with the combined territories of the three extinguished parishes. Further, know that I 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 18 for the proposal

and 11 opposed to the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit, I

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2020, the above-mentioned St. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish, will be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish to be known as St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish;

2. The missions of the three extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the three extinguished parishes and the faithful residing within the territorial boundaries of the new parish will be parishioners of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish;

4. The territory of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity will be the combined territories of the three extinguished parishes, namely the territory within these boundaries:

Start at Harlem Avenue and Albion Avenue,
East along south side of Niles Village municipal limits and extension of
Albion Avenue to North Branch of the Chicago River,
Southeast on west side of the North Branch of the Chicago River to Cicero Avenue,
South on west side of Cicero Avenue to Lawrence Avenue,
West on north side of Lawrence Avenue to Central Avenue,
North on east side of Central Avenue to Higgins Avenue,
Northwest on north side of Higgins Avenue to Nagle Avenue,
North on east side of Nagle Avenue to Chicago and North Western RR,
Northwest along north side of Chicago & North Western RR to Harlem Avenue,
North on east side of Harlem to Albion Avenue.

5. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the three former parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish (see canon 121);

6. The churches of the former St. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish, will be churches of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Tarcissus Church will be the parish church of the new parish;

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;

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8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the three former parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Tarcissus Church campus, 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. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish, all in the north west corner of the City of Chicago, and to the parishioners of the each of these three parishes. 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 29th day of January, A.D. 2020.
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




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**