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Prot. N. 2020 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 2,705,994 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 two of the four parishes of the less than three square miles of the Lincoln Square Grouping on the Northside of the City of Chicago. The four parishes of the grouping are St. Matthias Parish (founded in 1887 for German-speaking faithful), 2310 West Ainslie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60625-1906; Queen of Angels Parish (founded in 1909), 4412 North Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625-2138; Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish (founded in 1911 for Polish-speaking faithful), 2609 West Carmen Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625-2701; and St. Hilary Parish (founded in 1926), 5600 North Fairfield Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659-4817.

Throughout 2019, the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from the four parishes met 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 St. Matthias Parish and Queen of Angels Parish the Commission proposed that they be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new territorial parish on most of the territory of Queen of Angels Parish.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the 54% decline in Sunday Mass attendance over the past 20 years at St. Matthias Parish combined with the corresponding 25% decline in attendance at Queen of Angels Parish. The total recent Sunday Mass attendance has been 430 at St. Matthias Parish and 1,019 at Queen of Angels Parish. Second to English, the predominant language used for ministry in the area is Spanish. Mass in Spanish is offered at Queen of Angels Parish, and there has been no need for ministry to German-speaking Catholics at St. Matthias Parish for decades. The operating income in fiscal year 2018 was \$465,481.00 at St. Matthias Parish and \$660,191.00 at Queen of Angels Parish, neither figure reaching the minimum of \$750,000.00 believed necessary for long term parochial vitality. Extinctive union of the two parishes will result in a parish of approximately one and one-half square miles and considerable savings, providing an economic benefit for use in 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 the proposal that St. Matthias Parish and Queen of Angels Parish, both on the Northside of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish within most of the territory of Queen of Angels Parish. 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 and receiving its vote of 34 for the proposal and none opposed, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2020, the above-mentioned St. Matthias Parish and Queen of Angels Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish to be known, *ad interim*, as Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish;

2. The missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the two extinguished parishes and the faithful residing within the territorial boundaries of the new parish will be parishioners of the new Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish;

4. The territory of the new Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish will be most of the territory of the extinguished Queen of Angels Parish, namely the territory within these boundaries:

Start at southeast corner of Foster Avenue and Lincoln Avenue,
East on south side of Foster Avenue to Damen Avenue,
South on west side of Damen Avenue to Irving Park Road,
West on north side of Irving Park Road to Chicago River,
North along south side of Chicago River - Drainage Canal to Lawrence Avenue,
East on southside of Lawrence Avenue to Lincoln Avenue,
North on the east side of Lincoln Avenue to Foster 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 two former parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the new Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish (see canon 121);

6. The churches of the former St. Matthias Parish and Queen of Angels Parish will be churches of the new Queen of Angels and St. Matthias Parish, retaining their own titles, and Queen of Angels Church will be the parish church of the new parish;

7. The data submitted to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of November 5, 2019, are to be attached to this decree and will be available upon request;

8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the two former parishes will be collected and maintained at the Queen of Angels Church

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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. Matthias Parish and Queen of Angels Parish, both on the Northside of the City of Chicago, and to the parishioners of these two 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 12th day of February, A.D. 2020.
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Chancellor

Attachments

THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2019,
ARE TO BE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS