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Prot. N. 2020 RMC-6

## 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 \$160,014,332.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$40,039,909.00 to 115 parishes and \$119,974,423.00 to 93 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 Transfiguration of the Lord Parish and St. Hilary Parish the Commission proposed that they be extinguished as separate juridic persons and, with the territory of St. Hilary Parish and some territory taken from Queen of Angels Parish, united to form a single new territorial 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. Hilary Parish combined with only 6% increase in attendance at Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish. The total recent Sunday Mass attendance has been 888 at St. Hilary Parish and 767 at Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish. Next to English, the predominant language used for ministry in the two parishes is Spanish. Mass is also offered in Tagalog at Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish, where there is no longer a needed ministry to Polish-speaking Catholics. The operating income of the two parishes in fiscal year 2018 was \$673,077.00 at St. Hilary Parish and \$287,434.00 at Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish, neither 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. Hilary Parish and Transfiguration of Our Lord 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 the territory of St. Hilary Parish and some territory taken from Queen of Angels Parish to the South. 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 35 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. Hilary Parish and Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish to be known as Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) Parish;
2. The missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) 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 Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) Parish;
4. The territory of the new Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) Parish will be the territory of the extinguished St. Hilary Parish combined with some territory taken from Queen of Angels Parish, namely the territory within these boundaries:  
  
Start at Peterson Avenue and North Shore Channel Waterway,  
East on south side of Peterson Avenue to Western Avenue,  
South on west side of Western Avenue to Foster Avenue,  
West on north side of Foster Avenue to Lincoln Avenue,  
South on west side of Lincoln Avenue to Lawrence Avenue,  
West on north side of Lawrence Avenue to North Shore Channel Waterway,  
North on east side of North Shore Channel Waterway to Peterson 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 Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) Parish (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the former St. Hilary Parish and Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish will be churches of the new Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (*Padre Pio*) Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Hilary 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, are to be attached to this decree and will be available upon request;

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8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the two former parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Hilary 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. Hilary Parish, Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish, and Queen of Angels Parish, in the Northside 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 written, signed, and dated 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, A.D. 2020  
From Holy Name Cathedral,  
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