



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-8

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 2019 these subsidies amounted to \$160,014,332.00, including \$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 faithful of the archdiocese and other donors. We cannot continue this level of financial support for parishes and Catholic schools, especially while the number of those contributing to the support of their parishes increasingly declines. 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 have a growing or stable membership and the ability to support themselves whenever 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, intentional process aimed at obtaining and preserving the vitality of our parishes. It has



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been my intention that every parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago will 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 two neighboring parishes in the Southwest section of the City of Chicago: St. Symphorosa Parish (established 1927), 6135 South Austin Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60638, and St. Rene Goupil Parish (established 1959), 6949 West 63rd Place, Chicago, Illinois 60638. For several months in 2019 the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from these 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. The proposal to be put before the Presbyteral Council was that St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form one new parish, with St. Symphorosa Church designated the parish church.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the 28% decline in regular Sunday Mass attendance for St. Symphorosa Parish over the last five years and a corresponding 17% decline in Sunday Mass attendance in St. Rene Goupil Parish over the same period. The most recent figures available indicate an average attendance of 595 worshippers at St. Symphorosa and 683 at St. Rene Goupil. Both these figures are below the 800 generally needed to sustain future viability for a parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Moreover, recent figures for annual parish operating income, \$667,761.00 for St. Symphorosa and \$339,557.00 for St. Rene Goupil, are both below the \$750,000.00 minimum required to sustain a parish. St. Symphorosa Parish also received \$219,000.00 in aid from the archdiocese for fiscal year 2019. These realities coexist with a continuing decline in the number of priests available to pastor our parishes.

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, having before me the proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission that St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new parish, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on January 27-28, 2020, at Mundelein Seminary of the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois. There, after hearing the Presbyteral Council, receiving its vote of 34 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. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish, both in the City of Chicago, are extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new parish to be called, *ad interim*, SS. Symphorosa and Rene Goupil Parish;



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2. The missions of the former St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish will be subsumed completely into the mission of the new SS. Symphorosa and Rene Goupil Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the present St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish are to be fully and equally parishioners of the new SS. Symphorosa and Rene Goupil Parish;

4. The territory of the new parish will be the combined territories of St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish; namely the territory within these boundaries:

Start at Belt Line Railroad tracks and Harlem Avenue,
East on south side of Belt Line Railroad to Melvina Avenue,
North on east side of Melvina Avenue to 56th Street,
East on south side of 56th Street to Central Avenue,
North on east side of Central Avenue to 55th Street,
East on 55th Street to Cicero Avenue,
South on the west side of Cicero Avenue to 65th Street,
West on the north side of 65th Street to Melvina Avenue,
South on west side of Melvina Avenue and extension to extension of 71st Street,
West on north side of extension of 71st Street to Harlem Avenue,
North on the east side of Harlem Avenue to Belt Line Railroad tracks;

5. The churches of the former St. Symphorosa Parish and of the former St. Rene Goupil Parish will become churches of the new SS. Symphorosa and Rene Goupil Parish, retaining their titles, and St. Symphorosa Church will be designated the parish church of the new parish;

6. 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. Symphorosa Parish and of the former St. Rene Goupil Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established SS. Symphorosa and Rene Goupil Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of January 27-28, 2020, will be attached to this decree;

8. Unless otherwise determined by professional staff of the Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the former St. Symphorosa Parish and the former St. Rene Goupil Parish will be collected and maintained at the campus of St. Symphorosa Church;

9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. Symphorosa Parish and St. Rene Goupil Parish, and to the parishioners of the two parishes. Notice will be made on the archdiocesan website and through the parish bulletins or other suitable means available to each parish.




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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 8th day of May, A.D. 2020.
From the Archbishop's Office,
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 JANUARY 27-28, 2020,
WILL BE ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE AND, WHEN READY,
AVAILABLE THROUGH THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS