



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-14

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



Prot. N. 2020 *RMC*-14

Decree

May 29, 2020

Page 2

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 four neighboring parishes located in or near the South Shore neighborhood on the Southside of the City of Chicago: St. Bride Parish (established 1900), 7811 South Coles Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60649; St. Philip Neri Parish (established 1912), 213 East 72nd Street, Chicago, Illinois 60649; Our Lady of Peace Parish (established 1919), 7651 South Jeffrey Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60649; and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish (established 1947), 2338 East 99th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60617. The decree also modifies the territorial boundaries of St. Katharine Drexel Parish (established 2018), 9015 South Harper Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60619. For several months in 2019 the pastoral leadership and lay representatives from the four parishes met in an *RMC* grouping to consider the future 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 Commission's proposal to be put before the Presbyteral Council was that the four parishes be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new territorial parish, with St. Philip Neri Church designated the parish church.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the fact that there has been an 8% decline in regular Sunday Mass attendance for St. Bride Parish over the last five years and corresponding declines of 27%, 24%, and 35% at St. Philip Neri, Our Lady of Peace, and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parishes, respectively. The most recent figures available indicate that none of the four parishes has the minimum number of 800 regular worshippers required for sustained viability. Indeed, the combined total attendance at the four parishes is 500. Recent figures for annual parish operating income at each of the parishes is also below the \$750,000.00 generally needed for parish mission and survival. The total operating income for the four parishes combined is less than \$700,000.00. 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, have before me the proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission that St. Bride Parish, St. Philip Neri Parish, Our Lady of Peace Parish, and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, all on the Southside of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new territorial parish. I 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, and again on March 3, 2020, at the Albert Cardinal Meyer Center, Chicago, Illinois. After hearing



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-14

Decree

May 29, 2020

Page 3

the Presbyteral Council, receiving its vote in favor of 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. Bride Parish, St. Philip Neri Parish, Our Lady of Peace Parish, and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, all in the City of Chicago, are extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new territorial parish to be called, *ad interim*, Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish;

2. The missions of the four former parishes will be subsumed completely into the mission of the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the four parishes to be united are to be fully and equally parishioners of the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish;

4. The territory of the new parish will be the combined territories of four united parishes augmented by a portion of the territory taken from the neighboring St. Katharine Drexel Parish and described as follows:

Start at 67th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue,
 East on south side of 67th Street to Cregier Avenue,
 North on east side of Cregier Avenue and extension of Cregier Avenue to Hayes Drive,
 East on south side of Hayes Drive through Jackson Park to Lake Michigan,
 South along Lake Michigan to 79th Street,
 West on north side of 79th Street to Yates Avenue,
 South on west side of Yates Avenue to 95th Street,
 East on the south side of 95th to Torrence Avenue,
 South on west side of Torrence Avenue to 103rd Street,
 West on the north side of 103rd to extension of Constance Avenue,
 North on east side of extension of Constance Avenue and east side of Constance Avenue to 95th Street,
 East on south side of 95th Street to Jeffrey Boulevard,
 North on east side of Jeffrey Boulevard to Pennsylvania RR (north of Chicago Skyway),
 Northwest along east side of Pennsylvania RR (Chicago Skyway) to Cottage Grove Avenue,
 North on east side of Cottage Grove Avenue to 67th Street.

5. The churches of the former St. Bride Parish, the former St. Philip Neri Parish, the former Our Lady of Peace Parish, and the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish will be churches of the Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish, retaining their titles, and St. Philip Neri 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 each of the four parishes to be united, together with



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-14

Decree

May 29, 2020

Page 4

any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meetings of January 27-28, 2020, and March 3, 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 four parishes to be united will be collected and maintained at the campus of St. Philip Neri Church;

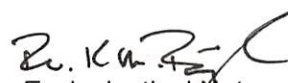
9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. Bride Parish, St. Philip Neri Parish, Our Lady of Peace Parish, and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, and to the parishioners of these four parishes. Notice will be made on the archdiocesan website and through the parish bulletins or other suitable means available to each parish. Notice will also be given to the pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Parish through the United States Postal Service.

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 May, A.D. 2020.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments



THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS OF JANUARY 27-28, 2020, AND
MARCH 3, 2020, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE AND, WHEN READY,
AVAILABLE THROUGH THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS