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Prot. N. 2020 RMC-17

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 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 financially 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 parishes, both located within an area of approximately four square miles in the Andersonville/Edgewater/Uptown areas of the Northside of the City of Chicago: SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish (a territorial parish established by extinctive union May 31, 2019), 5500 North Broadway, Chicago, Illinois 60640; and St. Gregory the Great Parish (a personal parish for German-speaking faithful established 1904), 5545 North Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois 60640. Since the formation of SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish on May 31, 2019, plans have been underway to involve the personal parish within its territory, St. Gregory the Great Parish, in discerning a path for cooperation.

In the year since the formation, a proposal was developed outside the regular timeframe and processes of *Renew My Church (RMC)*, but within the vision of the decree establishing SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish. This proposal, put forth by the pastoral leadership and lay representatives of the two parishes, in consultation with the *RMC* team and the area episcopal vicar, provided for the extinction of St. Gregory the Great Parish as a separate juridic person in the Church and its union with SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish. Under the proposal St. Ita Church will remain the parish church of the parish.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the fact that the founding mission of St. Gregory the Great Parish to be a personal parish for German-speaking faithful ended several decades ago. Over the last 20 years there has been a 57% decrease in regular Sunday Mass attendance at St. Gregory the Great Parish, including a 21% decrease in the last five years. The most recent average Sunday Mass attendance was 405, while the 2019 parish operating income, excluding rental income, was \$666,425.00. Neither of these figures reaches the 800 per Sunday attendance or the \$750,000.00 annual non-rental operating income needed to sustain a vital parish of this archdiocese. These realities coexist with a continuing decrease in the total and Catholic populations of the area and an ongoing 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 involved pastors and their lay leadership, made in consultation with the *RMC* team and the area episcopal vicar and endorsed by the *RMC* Executive Committee, that St. Gregory the Great Parish on the Northside of the City of Chicago be extinguished as a separate person in the Church and united to the territorial parish within which it is located, namely, SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish. Consequently, I convened *via* video-conference, the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on May



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5, 2020. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and its vote of 36 for and 0 against the proposal and invoking the Holy Spirit, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now

decree the following:

1. Effective the feast day of St. Gregory the Great, September 3, 2020, St. Gregory the Great Parish on the Northside of the City of Chicago, will be extinguished as a separate juridic person in the Church and united with the territorial parish within which it is located, namely SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

2. The mission of the former St. Gregory the Great Parish will be subsumed completely into the mission of SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the former St. Gregory the Great Parish are to be fully and equally parishioners of SS Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish;

4. The territory of SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish will be unchanged by this extinctive union with a personal parish within its territorial boundaries;

5. The church of the former St. Gregory the Great Parish will be a church of SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish, retaining its title, St. Thomas of Canterbury Church will retain its status within the parish, and St. Ita Church will remain the parish church;

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. Gregory the Great Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish (see canon 121);

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of May, 5, 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. Gregory the Great Parish will be collected and maintained at the campus of St. Ita Church; and

9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. Gregory the Great Parish and SS. Ita and Thomas of Canterbury Parish, and to the faithful of the two parishes. Notice will be made on the archdiocesan website and through the bulletins or other suitable means available to each parish.

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written and signed 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).



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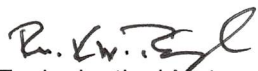
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Given this 12th day of June, A.D. 2020.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


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 MEETING OF MAY 5, 2020,
WILL BE ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE AND, WHEN READY,
AVAILABLE THROUGH THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS