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Prot. N. 2020 RMC-18

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 fell 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. 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. Parishes and Catholic schools that have been struggling and supported by declining populations are no longer able to sustain themselves. Our mission must be to convert our parishes, helping them to become more vital, that is, active centers of Christian discipleship, evangelical mission, scholarship, and charitable outreach. To achieve this mission, 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 is my intention that every parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago join with some of its neighbors and plan together for the future mission. Careful planning will create a menu of possibilities. We are identifying parishes likely to be reconfigured through pastoral coordination with neighboring parishes, divisions, unions, and other significant structural changes.

This decree concerns two parishes in an area of less than four square miles in the Village of Schiller Park, Illinois: St. Beatrice Parish, 4157 Atlantic Avenue, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176-1949, and St. Maria Goretti Parish, 3929 North Wehrman Avenue, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176-1814.

On July 1, 2019, the Reverend Robert W. Schultz, already Pastor of St. Beatrice Parish, was appointed also to be administrator of the neighboring St. Maria Goretti Parish. Since that time significant work began to bring the two parish staffs together as one and to work toward combining the religious education programs of the parishes so that there would be a single enriched program by the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year. In May 2020, following arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, Father Schultz convened the parish pastoral and finance councils of both parishes through video conference over the internet. The councils discussed plans for evaluating the future. In June and July 2020 joint meetings of the combined parish pastoral councils and finance councils were convened three times to discuss various possibilities. The parishes were consulted through circular letters sent twice to all parishioners of both parishes. Finally, the joint and combined councils agreed on a need to proceed toward uniting the two parishes. Endorsing the work of the parishes, the *RMC* staff presented a proposal for decision, with St. Beatrice Church to be designated as the parish church since at 600 its seating capacity is twice that of St. Maria Goretti Church.

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. Significant is the decline in Sunday Mass attendance at both parishes over the past twenty years. This has led to a combined decline of more than 65%, from 1,872 in 1999 to 662 in 2019. Moreover, the combined totals of infant Baptism and marriages was 36 in the last reported figures, significantly less than the combined total of 53 funerals reported for the same period and indicative of less than vital circumstances. Meanwhile, the total church operating revenue in each parish has been less than the \$750,000.00 necessary to meet parochial needs in the Archdiocese of Chicago. In February 2020 St. Beatrice Parish had accumulated savings of \$16,994.00 while St. Maria Goretti Parish had \$17,066.00. At the same time there was a combined accumulated church and school debt of \$672,639.00, with additional debt accruing from operations at St. Maria Goretti Parish. United, the new parish will be of less than average size for the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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. Beatrice Parish and St. Maria Goretti Parish, both in Schiller Park, Illinois, be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single

new parish within the combined territory of the two parishes. Further, know that I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on August 4, 2020. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 33 for the proposal and 1 opposed, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective October 1, 2020, the above-mentioned St. Beatrice Parish and St. Maria Goretti 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 SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti Parish;
2. The missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti 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 SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti Parish;
4. The territory of the new SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished St. Beatrice Parish and the extinguished St. Maria Goretti Parish as given in the attached map and description;
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 SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti Parish (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the former St. Beatrice Parish and the former St. Maria Goretti Parish will be churches of the new SS. Beatrice and Maria Goretti Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Beatrice 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 August 4, 2020, are to be attached to this decree and will be available upon request from those legitimately eligible to receive them;
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. Beatrice Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago; and
9. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. Beatrice Parish and St. Maria Goretti Parish, both in Schiller Park, Illinois, and to the

Prot. N. 2020 RMC-18
Decree
August 21, 2020
Page 4


parishioners of these two parishes. Publication will be made through the parish bulletin or website, and generally on the archdiocesan website.

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

Given this 21st day of August, A.D. 2020.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

THE RELEVANT DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF AUGUST 4, 2020,
WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON REQUEST
FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THEM