



Prot. N. 2020 RPU-11

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On May 29, 2020, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of 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. The parish formed from the union, is known, *ad interim*, as Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish. The union was effective from July 1, 2020.

On August 26, 2020, after consulting with parish leadership, the Rev. Thomas Belanger, pastor of the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish, determined the continued use of all four churches of his parish was not feasible. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar of his region of the archdiocese, asking that Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church of the new parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use (CIC c. 1222 §2).

A church may be relegated to profane but not sordid use when, after hearing the presbyteral council, the diocesan bishop determines there are "grave causes" suggesting a church no longer be used for divine worship and the good of souls suffers no detriment from the relegation. A Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura given May 4, 1996, illuminated what constituted grave causes required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (Ministerium Iustitiae: *Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527).

As related in the Definitive Sentence, a new parish formed from the extinctive union of five parishes sought to relegate three of its five churches to profane but not sordid use. Faithful who worshipped at one of these churches took recourse against the relegation of their church. The Supreme Tribunal found that the following conditions together constituted the grave causes required for relegation: (1) preservation of all the churches would impose an intolerable burden on the new parish; (2) the church in question was no longer of service to the pastoral care of the faithful due to changed circumstances; (3) the new parish was burdened from the beginning by a huge debt; (4) sale of the church would offer ready and effective assistance, otherwise lacking, to the urgent needs of the new parish; (5) the number of faithful contributing to the support of the parish was diminishing; and (6) charity and other assistance to the poor should not be neglected in order to preserve a sacred building.

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new parish from operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church and other buildings on the church campus.



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If maintained, for parish use, the campus of Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church will require more than \$587,000.00 in repairs. Of this amount \$335,000.00 would be for the church alone.

(2) Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church is no longer needed for divine worship for the 46 persons regularly attending Sunday Mass there before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of churches in the State of Illinois. The total number of worshippers in the new parish is well accommodated in St. Philip Neri Church, the nearby parish church.

(3) The total debt of the new parish is \$9,434,270.00. While none of the debt was carried over from the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, income from Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church will be too little to help service the large parish debt or sustain the new parish. The most recent annual income from the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish totaled \$70,093.00, insufficient to cover adequately the needs of the former parish or make a real financial contribution to the new parish.

(4) Sale or rental of the real property of the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, including Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church, will benefit the mission of the new parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings of at least \$45,000.00 annually from unspent maintenance expenses, and more from unspent capital repairs.

(5) As stated, the total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church was 46 in the last reported Fiscal Year. The combined weekly Sunday Mass attendance at the four churches of the new parish was approximately 500 in October 2019. The combined total attendance is more than comfortably accommodated at the 1600 seat parish church of St. Philip Neri.

(6) Preserving Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church for any other parish use will result in continued unneeded and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

Finally, arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19 has substantially diminished the United States economy, materially and negatively changing the financial well-being of the archdiocese, the new parish, and many poor, working-class, and middle-class families. There is a real concern for the long-term economic survival of our institutions.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the union of four parishes to maintain a church it cannot afford and is no longer useful for divine worship. There are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known funds available to keep and maintain Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church as a place of Catholic worship. Furthermore, there is no governmental financial assistance for maintaining churches in the United States of America. The reasonable and safe solution for the new parish is to relegate Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church to profane but not sordid use, allowing it and the rest of the church's campus to be sold or otherwise developed for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and the work of charity.



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THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, electronically convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* the Internet on August 28, 2020, and again on September 8, 2020. Hearing the council's deliberations and its September 8th vote of 31 for and 1 against the proposal to relegate Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church of Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that St. Philip Neri Church is sufficient for the needs of the new parish, I

decree the following:

1. Effective October 1, 2020, Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church of the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish on the Southside of the City of Chicago, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of the new parish, will assure the real property and other assets of the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish, including Our Lady Gate of Heaven Church, are secure for the benefit of the new parish;
3. The real property assets of the former Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish are to provide the new Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish with proceeds from alienation of the property or income from rental under lease;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meetings on August 28, 2020, and September 8, 2020, are to be attached to this decree and available upon request from eligible parties; and
5. Notification of this decree is to be made to the pastor of the new parish and to his parishioners through publication on the archdiocesan website and in the parish bulletin.

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, signed, and dated petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).

Given this 22nd day of September, A.D. 2020.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

ONCE AVAILABLE, DATA PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS OF AUGUST 28, 2020, AND SEPTEMBER 8, 2020, MAY BE REQUESTED BY ELIGIBLE PARTIES FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS