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Prot. N. 2020 RMC-19

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 at least 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 of 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 as personal foundations for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer live in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished.

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 faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors. The archdiocese cannot and should not continue this level of financial support. Parishes and Catholic schools 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 reasonable size, a growing or stable membership, and the financial 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.



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-19
Decree
December 10, 2020
Page 2

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 will join with some of its neighbors and plan together for the future. Careful planning will create a menu of possibilities. We are identifying parishes to be reconfigured through pastoral coordination with neighboring parishes, divisions, unions, and other structural and governance changes.

This decree concerns three parishes of the Back of the Yards Grouping. All are located within an area of approximately five and one-quarter square miles in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of the Southside of the City of Chicago.

The first of these parishes is St. Joseph Parish, 4821 South Hermitage Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60609-4195, originally established in 1887 as a personal parish for Polish-speaking faithful. In 1990 the former St. Rose of Lima Parish was extinguished, and its territory was assigned to St. Joseph Parish.

The second parish is St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 4821 South Damen Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60609-4050, established in 1898 as a personal parish for Catholic faithful of Slovak origin.

The third parish is Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 4541 South Wood Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609-3815, formed from the 1983 extinctive union of Holy Cross Parish, a personal parish formed for Lithuanian faithful in 1904, and Immaculate Heart of Mary Vicariate, a personal Claretian foundation for Catholic faithful of Mexican descent begun in 1947. At the time of the 1983 extinctive union no provision was made for the territorial status of the new parish. Both churches of the former foundations have remained active centers of Catholic worship.

Today the three parishes serve a community of predominately Hispanic origins. Mass is celebrated regularly in Spanish, Polish, or bilingually, at St. Joseph Church, and in Spanish, English, or bilingually at St. Michael the Archangel Church, Holy Cross Church, and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Due to changes in neighborhood demographics, the Slovak and Lithuanian missions no longer exist.

Following consultations earlier this year, lay and clergy members of the three parishes' Grouping Discernment and Feedback Team, with input from parishioners at large, submitted a report to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group of lay and clergy representatives from across the Archdiocese of Chicago. Recently, the Commission submitted its recommendations to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. The recommendations proposed that St. Joseph Parish, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new territorial parish within the boundaries of St. Joseph Parish, designating St. Joseph Church as the parish church. The proposal was submitted to the Presbyteral Council for its consideration and advice.



Prot. N. 2020 RMC-19
Decree
December 10, 2020
Page 3

The proposal is supported by the data and arguments mentioned herein or attached to this decree. The three parishes have long served a population of mostly Spanish-speaking faithful. The reasons for the founding of St. Michael the Archangel (Slovak) Parish and the Holy Cross (Lithuanian) progenitor of Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish ceased decades ago due to demographic changes in the neighborhood. Likewise, St. Joseph Parish ceased being a personal parish for faithful of Polish descent when it became the neighborhood's territorial parish in 1990.

There was a 45% decline in the combined Sunday Mass attendance across the three parishes during the twenty-year period beginning in Fiscal Year 2000, a period prior to recent dislocations caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19. This percentage encompasses a 70% decline in attendance at Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, from 2,882 to 866; a 14% increase at St. Joseph Parish, from 1,320 to 1,509; and a 52% decline at St. Michael the Archangel Parish, from 1,082 to 522.

Each of the parishes relies on a significant amount of rental income from redundant properties, income that can be unreliable year-to-year: \$288,882.00 at Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, \$319,440.00 at St. Joseph Parish, and \$153,386.00 at St. Michael the Archangel Parish. In Fiscal Year 2019 the operating income from offerings and fundraising was \$548,720.00 at Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, \$337,327.00 at St. Joseph Parish, and \$78,841.00 at St. Michael the Archangel Parish. However, the combined rental and operating revenues at each parish were offset by considerable operating expenses: \$916,785.00 at Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary, \$573,960.00 at St. Joseph, and \$328,087.00 at St. Michael, leaving a deficit of \$79,183.00 at Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary and \$95,860.00 at St. Michael the Archangel. Only St. Joseph Parish had an operating surplus (\$82,807.00) in 2019, alongside \$908,388.00 in accumulated savings.

The Claretians Fathers staffed Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish until 2019, and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who have staffed St. Joseph Parish in recent years, will be departing in 2021. This will place all three parishes in the pastoral care of a continually decreasing number of priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Uniting the parishes will reduce the number of pastorates from three to one and eliminate duplicate costs in maintaining three separate staffs and three payrolls. Further savings will be generated from combining the resources of three communities under a single structure of governance. Finally, five and one-quarter square miles of territory will form a parish of reasonable size in the City 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. Joseph Parish, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, all in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as separate juridic persons and united to form a single new territorial parish within the territory of St. Joseph Parish. St. Joseph Church is designated to be the parish church. Know also, that I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on October 27, 2020, and November 2, 2020.

Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 33 for the proposal and one against, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective April 12, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Joseph Parish, and St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, all in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of the City of Chicago, 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 Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish;

2. The missions of the three extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the three extinguished parishes and the faithful residing within the territorial boundaries of the new parish will be parishioners of the new Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish;

4. The territory of the new Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish will be the territory of the extinguished St. Joseph 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 three former parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the new Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish (see canon 121);

6. The churches of the former St. Joseph Parish, the former St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and the former Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish will be churches of the new Holy Cross and SS. Mary, Joseph, and Michael Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Joseph 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 meetings of October 27, 2020, and November 2, 2020, are to be attached to this decree and will be available upon request to those legitimately eligible to receive them;

8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the three former parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Joseph Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago; and

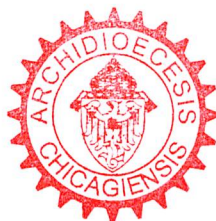
9. Notification of this decree shall be given immediately through the official website of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The decree shall be conveyed to the pastors of St. Joseph Parish, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and Holy Cross-Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, all in the Back of the Yards neighborhood. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners.


Prot. N. 2020 RMC-19
Decree
December 10, 2020
Page 5

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 10th day of December, 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 OCTOBER 27, 2020, AND NOVEMBER 2, 2020, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING
DECREE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON
REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM