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Prot. N. 2021 RMC-1

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 nearly 21% since 1970, from 3,366,957 to an estimated 2,686,530 in 2020. 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 (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) had an estimated total population of 5,881,250 in 2018. The 2018 *Annuario Pontificio* indicated 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 were 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 reside in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished.

Many of our parishes are unable or barely able to support themselves, and they 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 due to the generosity of the faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors. The archdiocese cannot continue this level of financial support. Our mission is 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 means to support themselves.

Nearly six 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), and with wide and continuing consultation among the clergy and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Chicago, particularly in the Presbyteral Council, we embarked on the inauguration of *Renew My Church (RMC)*, a multi-year process aimed at obtaining and preserving the vitality of our parishes. It has been the intention that every parish join with some of its neighbors (groupings) and plan 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 two parishes located within a territory of one and one-half square miles in the Old Irving Park neighborhood of the Northside of the City of Chicago: St. Viator Parish (founded in 1888), 4170 West Addison Street, Chicago, Illinois 60641-3913; and St. Wenceslaus Parish (founded as a Polish personal parish in 1912), 3400 North Monticello Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60618-5399. The campus of St. Wenceslaus is wholly within the boundaries of St. Viator Parish.

Today the two parishes serve an area populated by an increasing number of Spanish-speaking faithful (37% at St. Viator Parish and 76% at St. Wenceslaus Parish). Meanwhile, the Polish-speaking mission of St. Wenceslaus Parish has come to an end. However, the Polish personal parish of St. Hyacinth Basilica, also within the territory of St. Viator Parish, remains to serve the immediate area's declining Polish-speaking faithful. The Clerics of St. Viator will no longer be able to staff St. Viator Parish following the retirement of the current pastor.

There has been a 42% decline in regular Sunday Mass attendance at St. Viator Parish over twenty years and a 35% increase at St. Wenceslaus Parish over the same period. The increase is due mostly to the growing Spanish-speaking population. In Fiscal year 2019, St. Viator Parish had an operating deficit of \$65,185.00. This parish also carries an outstanding accumulated debt of \$1,549,334.00.

Following consultations last year with lay and clergy members of the parishes, including input from parishioners at large, a report was submitted 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. Viator Parish and St. Wenceslaus Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new territorial parish within the existing territorial boundaries of St. Viator Parish, with St. Viator Church designated the parish church. The proposal was submitted to the Presbyteral Council for its consideration and advice.

The proposal is supported by demographic changes in the area, and by data mentioned or attached to this decree. The two parishes now serve a population of increasingly Spanish-speaking Catholics, while the Polish mission justifying the founding of St. Wenceslaus Parish no longer exists. The union will save the expenses of funding two governing administrations for a people no longer needing a separate Polish foundation. Moreover, the territory of the proposed parish will be small for the total population it will be serving.

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. Viator Parish and St. Wenceslaus Parish, both in the Old Irving Park neighborhood of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new territorial parish within the existing territory of St. Viator Parish, with St. Viator Church designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on December 18, 2020. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 34 for and 2 against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Viator Parish and St. Wenceslaus Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new juridic person, a territorial parish to be known, *ad interim*, as SS. Viator and Wenceslaus Parish;
2. The missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed completely into that of the new SS. Viator and Wenceslaus 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. Viator and Wenceslaus Parish;
4. The territory of the new SS. Viator and Wenceslaus Parish will be the existing territory of the extinguished St. Viator Parish;
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. Viator and Wenceslaus Parish (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the former St. Viator Parish and the former St. Wenceslaus Parish will be churches of the SS. Viator and Wenceslaus Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Viator Church will be designated 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 December 18, 2020, are to be attached to this decree and will become available upon request to those 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. Viator Church campus,

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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 pastor of St. Viator Parish and to the pastor of St. Wenceslaus Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

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 14th day of January, A.D. 2021.
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 DECEMBER 18, 2020, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM