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Prot. N. 2021 RPU-6

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On January 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. Thecla Parish, St. Cornelius Parish, and St. Tarcissus Parish, all on the Northside of the City of Chicago. The union forming the new parish was effective July 1, 2020, and the new parish was named St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish, with St. Tarcissus Church designated the parish church. Parishioners of both the former St. Thecla Parish and the former St. Cornelius Parish sought hierarchical recourse before the Congregation for the Clergy against the decree of January 29, 2020. Having joined the recourses in a single case, the Congregation rejected the recourses by decree dated February 16, 2021 (Cong. Clergy, Prot. N. 2021 0305). Further recourse was not sought by any of the several recourants.

On August 23, 2021, after consulting with parish leadership, the parish pastoral council, and the parish finance council, the Reverend Michael Grisolano, pastor of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish since its founding on July 1, 2020, discerned that continued use of all three churches of his parish was not feasible. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar of his region of the archdiocese, asking that St. Thecla Church of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use (C/C 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 is a "grave cause" or "grave causes" indicating a church should no longer be used for divine worship and that 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, considered what constituted the grave causes required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of churches 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. The 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 to preserve a sacred building.

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining St. Thecla Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new parish from operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, St. Thecla Church will require more than \$311,350.00 in repairs.

(2) St. Thecla Church is not needed for divine worship for the average of 547 Sunday worshippers regularly attending there in FY 2020 (before COVID-19). This number of worshippers is now well accommodated in the 900-seat parish church of St. Tarcissus.

(3) The total debt of the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish was \$784,262.00 upon the union on July 1, 2020. The most recent regular annual operating income from the former St. Thecla Parish was \$287,288.00. Such an income is insufficient to help support the new parish, service the debt, and meet the foreseeable needs of maintaining St. Thecla Church for worship.

(4) Sale or rental of St. Thecla Church will benefit the mission of the new parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings of at least \$120,167.00 to \$137,681.00 annually from unspent maintenance expenses, and more from the \$311,350.00 in unspent capital repairs.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Thecla Church was 547 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), a near 55% decline over five years from the attendance of 1,149 in October 2014. The combined weekly Sunday Mass attendance at the three former parishes was 2,037 in October 2019. This combined total is well accommodated at the Sunday Masses celebrated weekly at the parish church of St. Tarcissus.

(6) Preserving St. Thecla Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

Finally, since March 2020, the arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19 diminished large parts of the United States economy, materially and negatively changing the financial well-being of the archdiocese, the new parish, and many poor and middle-class families. There is concern for the long-term economic survival of many institutions. Moreover, the regular schedule of liturgical services was transferred to the parish church of St. Tarcissus in August 2020, due in part to absence of volunteers necessary to regularly reopen St. Thecla Church once it was possible to do so after the total shut down. Nonetheless, St. Thecla Church remained available for occasional services, even though lack of parish activity on site resulted in some vandalism to the church.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the extinctive union of three parishes to maintain a church it cannot afford, does not need, and is no longer useful for divine worship. Furthermore, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to

keep and maintain St. Thecla Church as a place of Catholic worship. There is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of America.

The reasonable and safe solution for the parish is to relegate St. Thecla Church to profane but not sordid use, allowing it to be sold or otherwise developed for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and the work of charity.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on September 7, 2021, and again electronically via the Internet on October 14, 2021. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's October 14<sup>th</sup> vote of 27 for and one against the proposal to relegate St. Thecla Church of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Tarcissus is sufficient for the needs of the new parish,

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective immediately, St. Thecla Church of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish on the Northside 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 St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish will assure the real property associated with St. Thecla Church is secure for the benefit of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish;
3. If alienated, St. Thecla Church is to provide St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish with proceeds from sale of the property or rental under lease;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meetings on September 7, 2021, and October 14, 2021, are to be attached to this decree and available upon request to eligible parties; and
5. Notification of this decree is to be made immediately through publication on the Archdiocesan Website. It is then to be sent to the Pastor of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish for communication to parishioners through publication in the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 4<sup>th</sup> day of November, A.D. 2021,  
From Holy Name Cathedral,  
Chicago, Illinois

  
Archbishop of Chicago



  
Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

*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 or delivered to the Archbishop of Chicago within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.*

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 SEPTEMBER 7, 2021, AND OCTOBER 14, 2021, MAY BE REQUESTED BY ELIGIBLE PARTIES FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS