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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-2

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

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 2,693,976 in 2020. During the last decade, the total population of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) declined by less than 2%, from 5,903,190 in 2010 to an estimated 5,821,933 in 2020. Over the same ten-year period the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Chicago declined by nearly 7% (159,000), from 2,338,000 to 2,179,000.

A good number of our parishes were founded in the first half of the 20th 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. Today, many of our parishes are unable or struggling to support themselves. Consequently, from Fiscal Year 2012 through Fiscal Year 2021, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$187,818,176.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$49,452,924.00 to 119 parishes and \$138,365,252 to 99 Catholic schools. This includes \$10,708,494.00 during Fiscal Year 2021 alone: \$3,120,340.00 to parishes and \$7,588,154.00 to Catholic schools, mostly parochial schools. Completely due to the generosity of the faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors, these subsidies cannot continue at this high level. 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. For this mission, the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

More than six years ago, inspired by the experience of St. Francis of Assisi before the cross of the ruined church of San Damiano and 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)*. This is our multi-year process aimed at converting our parishes for mission. It is my intention that every parish join with some of its neighbors (groupings) to 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 less than two-square miles in the West Suburban municipality of Cicero, Illinois: Mary Queen of Heaven Parish (established 1911), 5300 West 24th Street, Cicero, Illinois 60804-2831; and Our Lady of the Mount Parish

(established within the territorial boundaries of Mary Queen of Heaven Parish in 1919 as a personal parish for Catholics of Bohemian origins), 2400 South 61st Avenue, Cicero, Illinois 60804-2698.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at Mary Queen of Heaven Parish was 1,893 (86% Spanish and 14% English). The same year, the average Sunday attendance at Our Lady of the Mount Parish was 2,315 (91% Spanish and 9% English). The combined Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 4,208 in late 2019, an increase of 26% over ten years (from 3,331 to 4,208). At Mary Queen of Heaven Parish there was a decline of 9%, from 2,074 to 1,893; however, there was an increase of 84% from 1,260 to 2,315 at Our Lady of the Mount Parish.

In Fiscal Year 2021, Mary Queen of Heaven Parish had an operating surplus of \$146,160.00, \$1,166,221.00 in debt, and savings of \$173,218.00. By contrast, Our Lady of the Mount Parish has had difficulty meeting its operating budgets with declining revenues and operating deficits in each of the last three years. In Fiscal Year 2021, the deficit was \$156,584.00, along with a total debt of \$678,653.00, and savings of \$40,257.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at Mary Queen of Heaven Parish included 52 funerals, 15 marriages, and 184 Baptisms. In the same period there were 16 funerals, 18 marriages, and 197 Baptisms at Our Lady of the Mount Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the two parishes were 68 funerals, 31 marriages, and 381 Baptisms, indicative of an above average tally for a single parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago and a younger than average population.

Both parishes have been serving similar populations of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Catholics within a relatively small territory. Moreover, the nature of Our Lady of the Mount Parish as a personal foundation for Catholics of Bohemian origins has long ceased, the decline in need for this specific national ministry began in the 1970s.

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 *Renew My Church* Executive Committee submitted its recommendations to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to significant debt in each parish, continuing difficulty in meeting operating budgets at Our Lady of the Mount Parish, capital needs at both parishes, and fewer priests to serve as pastors, change is needed. The Church in this area would struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources under the leadership of a single pastor and pastoral team is needed.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 121, canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the

Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned Mary Queen of Heaven Parish and Our Lady of the Mount Parish, both in Cicero, Illinois, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the territory of Mary Queen of Heaven Parish named, *ad interim*, Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish. Our Lady of the Mount Church is to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on November 9, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 35 for and one against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

I decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2022, the above-mentioned Mary Queen of Heaven Parish and Our Lady of the Mount Parish shall be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the territory of Mary Queen of Heaven Parish. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the two extinguished parishes, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish;
4. The territory of the new Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish will be the territory of the extinguished Mary Queen of Heaven Parish, as depicted and described on the map and in the document attached to this decree;
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 extinguished parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished Mary Queen of Heaven Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of the Mount Parish will be churches of the new Mary Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Mount Parish, retaining their own titles. Our Lady of the Mount Church shall 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 November 9, 2021, 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 extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the Our Lady of the Mount

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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 Mary Queen of Heaven Parish and Our Lady of the Mount Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners of the decree through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, dated, and signed petition, asking me to revoke or amend the decree, must be sent or delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop of Chicago, Archbishop Quigley Center, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Given this 20th day of January, A.D. 2022.
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
NOVEMBER 9, 2021, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE
AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**