



Office of the Archbishop  
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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-7

## 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 three adjacent parishes located in the far northwest side of the City of Chicago and in Norridge, Illinois: St. Eugene Parish (established 1948), 7958 West Foster

Avenue, Chicago, IL 60656-1651; Divine Savior Parish (established 1955), 7740 West Montrose Avenue, Norridge, Illinois 60706-7211; and Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish (established 1966), 8747 West Lawrence Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60656-2937. The churches of the three parishes are approximately one and one-half to one and three-quarters miles apart, drives of approximately four to five minutes. Together the parishes occupy a territory of approximately three-square miles.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Eugene Parish was 1,407, a 48% decline from the 2,696 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. The same year, the average Sunday attendance at Divine Savior Parish 536, a 64% decline from the 1,500 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. In Fiscal Year 2020 average attendance was 491 at Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish, a 50% decline from 989 in Fiscal Year 2000. More recently (Fiscal Year 2022), the average attendance at St. Eugene Parish was 764, while it was 288 at Divine Savior Parish, and 310 at Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish. Sunday Masses celebrated at the three parishes have all been in English.

In Fiscal Year 2021, St. Eugene Parish had an operating surplus of \$159,967.00. In Fiscal Year 2020 the operating surplus was \$154,967.00, and in Fiscal Year 2019, it was \$204,942.00. By contrast, Divine Savior Parish had operating deficits of \$190,154.00 in Fiscal Year 2021, \$96,755.00 in Fiscal Year 2020, and \$46,838.00 in Fiscal Year 2019. In the same fiscal years, the operating deficits at Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish were \$83,935.00, \$107,093.00, and \$58,752.00 respectively. In October 2021 St. Eugene Parish had savings of \$169,871.00 on deposit, no debt, and no recent formal assessment of capital needs. Divine Savior Parish had \$1,822,460.00 savings on deposit in October 2021, no church debt, and estimated capital needs of \$1,033,350.00 the previous July. That same October Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish had savings of \$145,031.00, no church debt, and estimated capital needs of \$669,400.00 the previous July.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Eugene Parish included 84 funerals, 12 marriages, and 58 Baptisms. In the same period there were 37 funerals, one marriage, and nine Baptisms at Divine Savior Parish. At Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish the figures were 48 funerals, one marriage, and 18 Baptisms. The combined Fiscal Year 2019 figures for the three parishes were 169 funerals, 14 marriages, and 85 Baptisms, suggesting an aging population and a declining number of younger families.

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 a recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to a continuing decline in population and attendance at Sunday Mass, fewer priests to serve as pastors, difficulty in meeting operating budgets, especially at Divine Savior Parish and Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish, and significant capital needs, the Church in this area will 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, 2, 2°, & 3, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. Eugene Parish, Divine Savior Parish, and Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territories of St. Eugene Parish, Divine Savior Parish, and Our Lady, Mother of the Church, named, *ad interim*, Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish. St. Eugene Church is to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago electronically *via* the internet on December 21, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 37 for and two 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 St. Eugene Parish, Divine Savior Parish, and Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish shall be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territories of the three parishes. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish;
2. The ministries of the three extinguished parishes will become those of the new Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the three extinguished parishes, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish;
4. The territory of the new Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished St. Eugene Parish and the extinguished Divine Savior Parish, and the extinguished Our Lady, Mother of the Church 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 three extinguished parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Eugene Parish, the extinguished Divine Savior Parish, and the extinguished Our Lady, Mother of the Church Parish will be churches of the new

Divine Savior, Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Eugene Parish, retaining their own titles. St. Eugene 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 December 21, 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 three extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Eugene 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. Eugene Parish, Divine Savior Parish, and Our Lady, Mother of the Church 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 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 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  
DECEMBER 21, 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**