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Prot. N. 2021 RMC-14

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 2,686,530 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 struggling to support themselves. Consequently, many have been receiving financial subsidies from the archdiocese. From fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2020, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$177,109,682.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$46,332,584.00 to 106 parishes and \$130,777,098.00 to 83 Catholic schools. This was an increase of \$14,777,155.00 over a single year: \$3,711,999.00 more to parishes and \$11,064,156.00 more to Catholic 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, especially in times of enormous economic strain. 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 the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial 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 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 the 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 the union of two parishes located within a territory of approximately five square miles in the Ravenswood and Buena Park neighborhoods of the Northside of the City of Chicago: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish (established 1892), 4640 North Ashland Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60640-4631; and St. Mary of the Lake Parish (established 1901), 4200 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, Illinois 60613-1621.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was 975 (28% English-speaking and 72% Spanish-speaking). The same year the average Sunday attendance at St. Mary of the Lake Parish was 726 (67% English and 33% Spanish). The combined total average Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 1,701 in Fiscal Year 2020, this is a total decline of 51% over 20 years (from 3,325 to 1,701). At Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, the decline over the same 20-year period was 55% (from 2,173 to 975). At St. Mary of the Lake Parish, the decline was 37% (from 1,152 to 726).

In Fiscal Year 2019, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish had an operating deficit of \$206,503.00, capital needs of \$1,882,750.00, church debt of \$512,715.00, and savings of \$1,231,587.00, mostly due to proceeds from the sale of the parish convent. In the same fiscal year St. Mary of the Lake Parish had an operating deficit of \$19,593.00, capital needs of \$1,035,450.00, no church debt, and savings of \$4,450,617.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019 liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish included 18 funerals, nine marriages, and 111 Baptisms. In the same period there were 13 funerals, eight marriages, and 63 Baptisms at St. Mary of the Lake Parish. The combined totals for the two parishes are 31 funerals, 17 marriages, and 174 Baptisms, below average in Chicago for funerals and marriages and above average for Baptisms. The ratio of total funerals to the combined total of marriages and Baptisms, 31/194, indicates a young population in the parishes.

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. Due to the financial struggle of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, declining participation in Sunday Mass at both parishes, fewer active diocesan and religious priests to serve our parishes (from 602 in 2010 to 541 in 2020), and significant capital needs at both parishes, changes are in order. The Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish. For evangelization and discipleship to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation 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 the recommended proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, that the above mentioned Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and St. Mary of the Lake Parish, both in the Ravenswood and Buena Park neighborhoods of the City of Chicago, 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 Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and St. Mary of the Lake Parish, with St. Mary of the Lake Church to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on January 18, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 30 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, 2021, the above-mentioned Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and St. Mary of the Lake 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 Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and St. Mary of the Lake Parish. The new parish is to be called St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish;
2. The present missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes 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 St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish;
4. The territory of the new St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish will be 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 St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and the extinguished St. Mary of the Lake Parish will both be churches of the new St. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Mary of the Lake 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 January 18, 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 St. Mary of the Lake 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 Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and St. Mary of the Lake 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 delivered or sent 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 18th day of March, 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 JANUARY 18, 2021, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM