



Office of the Archbishop
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312.534.8230
archchicago.org

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-22

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.

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

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-22

Decree

April 22, 2021

Page 2

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 approximately four and one-half square miles of the West Little Village neighborhood on the Southside of the City of Chicago. The two parishes are Epiphany Parish (established c. 1901), 2524 South Keeler Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60623-3609; and Good Shepherd Parish (established 1907, personal parish for faithful of Polish origins), 2735 South Kolin Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60623-4355.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at Epiphany Parish was 1,139 (17% English-speaking and 83% Spanish-speaking). The same year the average Sunday attendance at Good Shepherd Parish was 2,605 (7% English and 93% Spanish). The combined Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 3,744 in late 2019, this is a total increase of 36% over 20 years (from 2,745 to 3,744). At Epiphany Parish, there was a decline over the same 20-year period 38% (from 1,846 to 1,139). At Good Shepherd Parish there was an increase of 190% (from 899 to 2,605). Combined, the Spanish-speaking faithful constitute 90% of the 3,368 individuals regularly attending the two parishes. The original mission of Good Shepherd Parish to faithful of Polish origins began to give way to Spanish-speaking faithful in the late 1970s, and no longer exists. Today, Epiphany Parish and Good Shepherd Parish together serve a large single community of Hispanic origins.

In Fiscal Year 2019, Epiphany Parish had an operating surplus of \$4,549.00, church debt of \$704,973.00, and savings of \$49,170.00. That same year, Good Shepherd Parish had an operating surplus of \$111,396.00, no church debt, and savings of \$603,815.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at Epiphany Parish included 10 funerals, 11 marriages, and 46 Baptisms. In the same period there were 20 funerals, 16 marriages, and 227 Baptisms at Good Shepherd Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the two parishes were 30 funerals, 27 marriages, and 273 Baptisms, below average for funerals, average for marriages, and considerably above average for Baptisms at a single parish within the City of Chicago. The ratio of total funerals to the combined total of marriages and Baptisms, 30/300 indicates a very young population among the Catholic faithful of the West Little Village neighborhood.

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 a large debt at Epiphany Parish, fewer priests able to serve our parishes, the close proximity of the parish campuses (about four blocks), and the long-ended need for a personal parish for Polish-speaking faithful within the territory of Epiphany Parish, change is needed. The Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish.

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-22

Decree

April 22, 2021

Page 3

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 the proposal that the above-mentioned Epiphany Parish and Good Shepherd Parish be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the territory of Epiphany Parish west of Pulaski Road (approximately half the territory), with Epiphany 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 March 2, 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 Epiphany Parish and Good Shepherd Parish shall be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the portion of the territory of Epiphany Parish west of Pulaski Road. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Good Shepherd and Epiphany Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Good Shepherd and Epiphany 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 Good Shepherd and Epiphany Parish;
4. The territory of the new Good Shepherd and Epiphany 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 Good Shepherd and Epiphany Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished Epiphany Parish and the extinguished Good Shepherd Parish will both be churches of the new Good Shepherd and Epiphany Parish, retaining their own titles, and Epiphany 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 March 2, 2021, are to be attached to this decree and will become available upon request to those eligible to receive them;

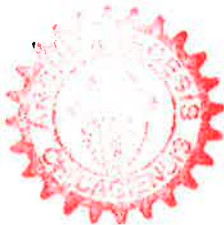
8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the two extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the Epiphany Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the 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 Epiphany Parish and Good Shepherd 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 22nd day of April, 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 MARCH 2, 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