



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

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-19

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

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 within the 10.3 square miles of the City of Chicago Heights in South Suburban Cook County, Illinois. These three parishes are St. Agnes Parish (established 1895), 1501 Chicago Road, Chicago Heights, Illinois 60411-3424; St. Paul Parish (established 1897 as personal parish for Slovak faithful), 206 East 25th Street, Chicago Heights, Illinois 60411-4258; and St. Kieran Parish (established 1960), 724 West 195th Street, Chicago Heights, Illinois 60411-1246.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Agnes Parish was 570 (100% English-speaking). The same year the average Sunday attendance at St. Paul Parish was 2,104 (9% English and 91% Spanish), and at St. Kieran Parish it was 441 (100% English). The combined Sunday attendance at the three parishes was 3,115 in late 2019, this is a total decline of 10% over 20 years (from 3,467 to 3,115). At St. Agnes Parish, the decline over the same 20-year period was 41% (from 968 to 570). At St. Paul Parish there was an 173% increase in attendance (from 1,214 to 2,104), and at St. Kieran Parish there was a decline of 66% (from 1,285 to 441). From these figures, 61% of the combined total of those attending Sunday Mass at the three parishes are Spanish-speaking faithful, a clear majority (1,914 of 3,115). All these attend Mass at the 300-seat church of St. Paul Parish. The church of St. Agnes Parish seats 450, and that of St. Kieran Parish seats 750.

The mission to Slovak faithful at St. Paul Parish no longer exists, having given way to an active ministry within a majority Spanish-speaking parish. For many years the same priest has served as pastor of both St. Agnes Parish and St. Kieran Parish. The St. Paul Parish community needs space, while the St. Agnes and St. Kieran communities need faithful worshippers.

In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Agnes Parish had an operating surplus of \$18,942.00, capital needs of \$666,450.00, total church debt of \$594,735.00, and savings of \$276,687.00. That same year, St. Paul Parish had an operating deficit of \$15,500.00, capital needs of \$311,350.00, no church debt, and \$23,274.00 in savings. At St. Kieran Parish the figures were an operating surplus of \$53,441.00, capital needs of \$942,570.00, total church debt of \$484,246.00, and savings of \$60,836.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Agnes Parish included 41 funerals, three marriages, and 46 Baptisms. In the same period there were 21 funerals, 13 marriages, and 102 Baptisms at St. Paul Parish, and 28 funerals, three marriages, and nine Baptisms at St. Kieran Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the three parishes were 90 funerals, 19 marriages, and 157 Baptisms, above average in funerals and Baptisms and below average in marriages for a single parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The ratio of total funerals to the combined total of marriages and Baptisms, 90/176 indicates a younger and increasing total population, but only in St. Paul Parish.

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 and continuing decline in Sunday Mass attendance at two of the three parishes, at or near deficit spending at these two parishes, fewer priests able to serve our parishes, and need for space for the growing Spanish-speaking community of St. Paul Parish, change is needed. 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 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 St. Agnes Parish, St. Paul Parish, and St. Kieran Parish, all in Chicago Heights, Illinois, 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. Agnes Parish and St. Kieran Parish, with St. Kieran 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 25 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, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Agnes Parish, St. Paul Parish, and St. Kieran 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 St. Agnes Parish and St. Kieran Parish. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish;

2. The missions of the three extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran 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 SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish

4. The territory of the new SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran 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 SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish (canon 121);

6. The churches of the extinguished St. Paul Parish, the extinguished St. Agnes Parish, and the extinguished St. Kieran Parish will be churches of the new SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Kieran 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 three extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Kieran 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 the above-mentioned St. Paul Parish, St. Agnes Parish, and St. Kieran 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 8th 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