



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

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-27

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 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 includes \$14,777,155.00 during Fiscal Year 2020 alone: \$3,711,999.00 to parishes and \$11,064,156.00 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 adjacent parishes located within approximately three-square miles of the Southside of the City of Chicago: St. Denis Parish (established 1951), 8301 South

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-27
Decree
May 13, 2021
Page 2

St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60652-3223; and St. Bede the Venerable Parish (established 1953), 8200 South Kostner Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60652-2196.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Denis Parish was 594 (35% Spanish, 35% Spanish-English Bilingual, and 30% English). The same year, the average Sunday attendance at St. Bede the Venerable Parish was 2,534 (64% Spanish, 9% Spanish-English Bilingual, 27% English). The combined Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 3,128 in late 2019, a total decline of 11% over 20 years (from 3,526 to 3,128). At St. Denis Parish the decline over the period from 1999 to 2009 was 54% (from 994 to 457); however, from 2009 to 2019 there was a rebound of 30% (from 457 to 594), revealing a 20-year decline of 40%. At St. Bede the Venerable Parish the attendance has been steady over the same period. Starting from an attendance of 2,532 in 1999, there was a low of 1,800 in 2009, a high of 2,764 in 2014, and 2,534 recorded in October 2019.

In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Denis Parish had an operating surplus of \$169,836.00, no debt, savings of \$1,421,468.00, and capital needs of \$1,494,500.00. The surplus and savings are the result of income from the leasing of the former parish school building and good financial stewardship. That same year, St. Bede the Venerable Parish had an operating surplus of \$59,477.00, \$412,979.00 in church debt, \$836,870.00 in total school debt, savings of \$120,281.00, and capital needs of \$2,242,500.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Denis Parish included 11 funerals, two marriages, and four Baptisms. In the same period there were 50 funerals, 24 marriages, and 228 Baptisms at St. Bede the Venerable Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the two parishes were 61 funerals, 26 marriages, and 232 Baptisms, above average for a single parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago and indicative of a younger than average population.

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 large debt at St. Bede the Venerable Parish, low Sunday Mass attendance at St. Denis Parish, significant capital needs at both parishes, and fewer priests, 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 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 St. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable Parish, both in 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 St. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable Parish, with St. Bede

the Venerable Church being 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, and May 4, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its May 4th vote of 27 for and four 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. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable 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. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable Parish. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Saints Denis and Bede Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Saints Denis and Bede 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 Saints Denis and Bede Parish;
4. The territory of the new Saints Denis and Bede 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 Saints Denis and Bede Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Denis Parish and the extinguished St. Bede the Venerable Parish will be churches of the new Saints Denis and Bede Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Bede the Venerable 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 meetings of March 2, 2021, and May 4, 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. Bede the Venerable 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. Denis Parish and

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-27
Decree
May 13, 2021
Page 4

St. Bede the Venerable 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, signed, and well-argued 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 13th day of May, 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 MEETINGS OF MARCH 2, 2021, AND MAY 4, 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