



Office of the Archbishop
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Prot. N. 2021 RMC-29

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 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. This support was due to the generosity of the faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors. Nonetheless, financial support 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.

Almost seven 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 a parish located within approximately one and one-half square miles of the Southside of the City of Chicago: St. Thomas More Parish (established 1946), 2825

West 81st Street, Chicago, Illinois 60652. In October 2019 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance in the 1,200-seat church of St. Thomas More Parish was 302 (80% English and 20% Latin). This represents a 70% decline in Sunday attendance over the 20 years between 1999 and 2019 (from 994 to 302). In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Thomas More Parish had an operating surplus of \$1,911.00, church debt of \$212,478.00, savings of \$33,879.00, and capital needs of \$791,490.00 (under a current lease, the school tenant is responsible for 100% of capital repairs to the school building and a proportional amount for repairs to common systems).

A majority of the 61 individuals attending the Latin Mass at St. Thomas More Parish, celebrated according to the extraordinary form of the Roman Missal of 1962, and a large number of the 241 attending the Sunday Masses in English come from outside the parish territorial boundaries. During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Thomas More Parish included seven funerals, 14 marriages, and 22 infant Baptisms. Considerably below average for a single parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Although the parish is located within a neighborhood of the Southside of Chicago where the population is 85% African American and African immigrants, those served by its ministries and who worship at the parish are predominantly White Catholics of European origins. Unlike the two larger neighboring parishes of St. Denis and St. Bede the Venerable, St. Thomas More Parish does not provide a ministry for Spanish-speaking Catholics. Consequently, this affords the St. Thomas More community an opportunity to develop the capacity for intentional outreach and evangelization among the African American and African immigrant communities of the neighborhood.

Following consultations last year with lay and clergy members of the parish, 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 recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to the small size of the population now served by St. Thomas More Parish, the parish's existing debt relative to income, low Sunday Mass attendance, significant capital needs, and fewer priests, change is needed. The Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain St. Thomas More Parish's present structure.

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, canon 515 §2, and canon 516 §1 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. Thomas More Parish on the Southside of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as a parish and re-established as a quasi-parish, a territorial mission dependent upon and associated with the new parish to be formed on July 1, 2021, from the extinctive union of the neighboring St. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable Parish, with a priest to be assigned as director of the mission and rector of St. Thomas More 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, 2020. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its May 4th vote of 29 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. Thomas More Parish shall be extinguished as parish and re-established as a quasi-parish, a territorial mission dependent upon and associated with Saints Denis and Bede the Venerable Parish, the new parish to be formed from the union of St. Denis Parish and St. Bede the Venerable Parish;

2. The ministries of the new St. Thomas More Mission will encompass, among other things, a renewed commitment to the African American and African immigrant populations of the mission neighborhood;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the extinguished St. Thomas More Parish, along with the faithful domiciled within the new mission territorial boundaries, will be members of the new St. Thomas More Mission;

4. The territory of the new St. Thomas More Mission will be the territory of the extinguished St. Thomas More Parish;

5. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the extinguished parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new St. Thomas More Mission (canon 121);

6. The church of the extinguished St. Thomas More Parish will be the church of the new St. Thomas More Mission, retaining its own title;

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, upon request, will become available to those eligible to receive them;

8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the extinguished St. Thomas More Parish will be remain and be maintained at the St. Thomas More Mission 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. Thomas More Parish, St. Denis Parish, and 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.


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Decree
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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 20th 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**