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Prot. N. 2023 RMC-1

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 21% since 1970, from 3,366,957 to an estimated 2,693,976 in 2020. In the decade between the census of 2010 and that of 2020, the total resident population in the territory of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) declined by less than 2%, from 5,903,190 to an estimated 5,821,933 in 2020. Over the same ten-year period, the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Chicago declined by 7% (159,000), from 2,338,000 to 2,179,000.

A considerable number of our parishes were founded more than 100 years ago, in the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century. Many were established for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer reside in the Archdiocese of Chicago or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished. Some parishes have been struggling to support themselves or are unable to do so. Consequently, from Fiscal Year 2012 through Fiscal Year 2022, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$198,651,631.00 in grants to parishes and Catholic schools: \$52,913,911.00 to 119 parishes and \$145,737,720.00 to 99 Catholic schools. This includes \$10,833,455.00 during Fiscal Year 2022 alone: \$3,460,987.00 to parishes and \$7,372,468.00 to Catholic schools, mostly elementary schools. These contributions are due to the generosity of the faithful people of the archdiocese and other gracious donors. However, with rising costs and fewer active parishioners, these subsidies cannot continue as before. 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 seven years ago, inspired by the experience of St. Francis of Assisi before the cross of the ruined church of San Damiano and by 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 has been 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, as well as through possible divisions, unions, and other structural and governance changes.

This decree concerns two parishes located within approximately one and one-half square miles of the northwest side of the City of Chicago: St. James Parish (established 1914 as a personal parish for Catholics of Polish origins), 5730 West Fullerton Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60639-2354; and St. John Bosco Parish (established 1934), 2250 North McVicker Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60639-2723. The churches of these two parishes are approximately one-half mile apart, a drive of three-four minutes. The campus of St. James Parish is located entirely within the territorial boundaries of St. John Bosco Parish.

Since January 1998, St. John Bosco Parish has been under the pastoral leadership of the Salesians of Don Bosco. In July 2020, the Salesians also assumed the pastoral care of St. James Parish. Since then, there evolved a quasi-union of the parishes through the person of the priest who now serves as pastor of St. John Bosco Parish and administrator of St. James Parish. Following recent consultations with the parish pastoral council and the parish finance council of each of the communities, the pastor/administrator asked for the canonical union of the two parishes.

Today both parishes serve a growing Spanish-speaking population. Seventy-eight percent of the combined total of 2,696 regularly attending Sunday Mass in the two parishes in Fiscal Year 2022 did so at one of six Spanish Masses on Sunday, one at St. James Church and five at St. John Bosco Church. Six percent attended one of two Sunday Masses in Polish at St. James Church. The remaining 16% attended one of three English Masses, two at St. James Church and one at St. John Bosco Church.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. James Parish was 955 (56% Spanish, 32% Polish, 12% English). This is a 59% decline from the 2,324 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. In the same fiscal year (2020), the average Sunday attendance at St. John Bosco Parish was 2,854 (82% Spanish, and 18% English), an 87% increase from the 1,525 attending in Fiscal Year 2000.

In Fiscal Year 2022, St. James Parish had an operating surplus of \$193,047.00, savings of \$954,580.00 on deposit, and no church debt. The same year St. John Bosco Parish had an operating deficit of \$23,589.00, savings of \$697,915.00 on deposit, and no church debt. In June 2019 St. James Parish's needed capital expenditures were assessed at \$951,850.00, those at St. John Bosco Parish were assessed at \$1,225,900.00.

During Fiscal Year 2022, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. James Parish included six funerals, two marriages, and six Baptisms. In the same period, St. John Bosco Parish recorded 27 funerals, eight marriages, and 40 Baptisms. The combined totals of the two parishes were 31 funerals, 31 marriages, and 46 Baptisms. Consistent with many individual parishes in the City of Chicago.

Due to the reported decline (59%) in the number of faithful at St. James Parish, alongside the reported increase (87%) at St. John Bosco Parish; the care both parishes have been receiving from a common pastor/administrator and a common house of Salesian Fathers; the

declining Polish-speaking population of the area alongside the increase in the area's Spanish-speaking residents, and significant needs resulting from unmet capital expenditures in both parishes, the Church in this area of the Archdiocese of Chicago will struggle financially and administratively to sustain two parish structures. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources within one new parish is the recommended course of action.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 121, canon 127 §§1, 2, 2°, & 3, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. James Parish and St. John Bosco Parish, both on the Northside 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 named St. John Bosco—St. James Parish, located within the territorial boundaries of St. John Bosco Parish. St. John Bosco Church is to be designated the parish church of the new parish. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois, on January 16-17, 2023. After hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its January 16th vote of 32 for and none against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

I decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2023, the above-mentioned St. James Parish and St. John Bosco Parish, both on the Northside the City of Chicago, shall be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the territory of St. John Bosco Parish. The new parish is to be called St John Bosco—St. James Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will become those of the new St. John Bosco—St. James 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. John Bosco—St. James;
4. The territory of the new St. John Bosco—St. James Parish will be the territory of the extinguished St. John Bosco Parish, 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. John Bosco—St. James Parish (canon 121);

6. The churches of the extinguished St. James Parish and the extinguished St. John Bosco Parish will become churches of the new St. John Bosco—St. James Parish, retaining their own titles. St. John Bosco 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 16-17, 2023, are to be attached to this decree and will become available upon request to those eligible to receive them;

8. The existing sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research pertaining to the two extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. John Bosco 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 pastor/administrator of St. John Bosco Parish and St. James Parish. As soon as possible, the pastor/administrator shall inform the parishioners of both parishes of this 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 10th day of February, A.D. 2023.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

**ONCE APPROVED, CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE
AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
CHICAGO AND THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF
JANUARY 16-17, 2023, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON THE REQUEST OF ELIGIBLE
PARTIES TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**