



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

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-12

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 barely able 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. While 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.

Nearly 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 the union of three parishes located within a territory of approximately two square miles in the West Town area of the City of Chicago: St. Mark Parish (established 1894), 1048 North Campbell Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60622-3538; Holy Rosary Parish (founded 1904 as personal parish for faithful of Italian origins), 612 North Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60612-1216; and St. Helen Parish (founded 1913 as personal parish for faithful of Polish origins), 2315 West Augusta Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60622-4841. At Holy Rosary Parish, Sunday Mass is no longer celebrated in the Italian language, indeed Mass in Spanish is now offered every Sunday. St. Helen Parish has continued to serve Polish-speaking faithful; however, there are other Polish personal parishes in the area and most parishioners attend the English Sunday Masses. All three of the parishes are served by the archdiocesan clergy.

In Fiscal Year 2019 the average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Mark Parish was 537 (20% English-speaking and 80% Spanish-speaking). The same year the average Sunday attendance at Holy Rosary Parish was 396 (68% English and 32% Spanish), and at St. Helen Parish it was 265 (63% English and 37% Polish). The combined total average Sunday attendance at the three parishes was 1,198 in Fiscal Year 2019, this is a total decline of 60% over 20 years for the three parishes combined (from 3,015 to 1,198). At St. Mark Parish the decline over the same 20-year period was 55% (from 1,184 to 537). At Holy Rosary Parish the decline was 23% (from 515 to 396). At St. Helen Parish there was a decline of 80% (from 1,316 to 265).

In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Mark Parish had an operating deficit of \$13,660.00, capital needs of \$861,150.00, no church debt, and savings of \$120,000.00. In the same year Holy Rosary Parish had an operating deficit of \$87,020.00, capital needs of \$560,450.00, no church debt, and savings of \$612,129.00. For St. Helen Parish the Fiscal Year 2019 figures show an operating deficit of \$79,604.00, capital needs of \$1,499,200.00, church debt of \$95,677.00, and savings of \$78,842.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019 liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Mark Parish saw 10 funerals, seven marriages, and 21 Baptisms. In the same period there were 15 funerals, six marriages, and 20 Baptisms at Holy Rosary Parish, and at St. Helen Parish there were 12 funerals, four marriages, and 24 Baptisms. The combined totals for the three parishes are 37 funerals, 17 marriages, and 65 Baptisms, below average for a Chicago parish, but a good ratio of total funerals to the combined total of marriages and Baptisms, 37/82.

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 Commission submitted its recommendations to the

pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to the relatively small size of each of the parishes, fewer active diocesan and religious priests to serve our parishes (from 602 in 2010 to 541 in 2020), and significant capital needs at each of the three parishes, changes are in order. The need for personal parishes within this territory has passed, and the area would struggle to sustain more than one parish to serve the local community of changing demographics. For evangelization and mission to be the focus of future ministry, the Church in this area of the Archdiocese of Chicago, must consolidate resources under the leadership of a single pastor and pastoral team.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me the recommended proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, that the above mentioned St. Mark Parish, Holy Rosary Parish, and St. Helen Parish, all in the West Town area 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 within the territory of St. Mark Parish and the portions of the territory of Holy Innocents Parish and St. Malachy + Precious Blood Parish west of Damen Avenue and north of the railroad tracks at Kinzie Street, with St. Helen 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 January 15, 18-19, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 32 for and one against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Mark Parish, Holy Rosary Parish, and St. Helen Parish, 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. Mark Parish and the portions of the territory of Holy Innocents Parish and St. Malachy + Precious Blood Parish west of Damen Avenue and north of the railroad tracks at Kinzie Street, and called, *ad interim*, Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen Parish;
2. The present missions of the three extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen 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 Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen Parish;
4. The territory of the new Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen 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 three extinguished parishes, together with any

obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen Parish (see canon 121);

6. The churches of the extinguished St. Mark Parish, the extinguished Holy Rosary Parish, and the extinguished St. Helen Parish will be churches of the new Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen Parish, and St. Helen 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 15, 18-19, 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. Helen 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. Mark Parish, Holy Rosary Parish, and St. Helen 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 to revoke or amend the decree must be delivered or sent 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 11th day of March, 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 JANUARY 15, 18-19, 2021, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



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March 11, 2021

Congregation for the Clergy
Prot. N. 2021 0546
Prot. N. 2021 0547

Archdiocese of Chicago
Prot. N. 2020 RMC-14

Your Eminence,

In reply to your letter of June 10, 2020, requesting the acts of the cases and my *votum* and in these matters, please accept the enclosed acts and my *votum*.

Since these matters are related and objects of a single decree of extinctive union dated December 10, 2020, I ask that they be joined and decided together in a single decision.

Renewing my esteem and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Chicago

His Eminence Beniamino Cardinal Stella
Prefect
Congregation for the Clergy
00120 Vatican City State
(EUROPE)