



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

Prot. N. 2021 RMC-5

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. 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 two parishes located within a territory of less than two and one-quarter square miles in the Logan Square and Avondale neighborhoods on the Northside of the City of Chicago: St. Sylvester Parish (founded in 1884), 2915 West Palmer Street, Chicago, Illinois 60647-3856; and Our Lady of Grace Parish (founded 1909), 2455 North Hamlin Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60647-2229.

Today the two parishes serve an area of the City having a significant Spanish-speaking Catholic population for more than 40 years. Recently the area has been experiencing the phenomenon of gentrification, with properties being improved for sale and occupancy by mostly English-speaking and more affluent individuals and families. In 2019 the average Sunday assembly St. Sylvester Parish was 1,031 (28% English-speaking, 64% Spanish-speaking, and 8% bilingual). In the same year the average Sunday assembly at Our Lady of Grace Parish was 982 (15% English and 85% Spanish). There were significant declines in Sunday attendance over the last 10 years in both parishes: 37% at St. Sylvester Parish (from 1,637 to 1,031) and 33% at Our Lady of Grace Parish (from 1,474 to 982).

In Fiscal year 2019, St. Sylvester Parish had an operating deficit of \$128,807.00, unmet capital needs of \$1,620,950.00, a total debt of \$979,047.00, and savings of \$40,841.00. In the same fiscal year, Our Lady of Grace Parish had no operating deficit, unknown capital needs (assessment being completed February 2021), a total debt of \$432,291.00, and savings of \$87,291.00. Neither parish had sufficient assets or income to meet either its present or future needs.

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 small size of the territory of each parish, fewer priests to serve a pastors, significant and ongoing decline in active participation at Sunday Mass, operating deficits, declining incomes, and unmet capital needs, the area can no longer sustain two parishes serving the same demographics. Consequently, the recommendations proposed that St. Sylvester Parish and Our Lady of Grace Parish 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 the two parishes, with St. Sylvester Church as the parish church.

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 proposal that St. Sylvester Parish and Our Lady of Grace Parish, both on the Northside of the City of Chicago, be extinguished as a separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territorial boundaries of the two parishes, with St. Sylvester 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 34 for and 1 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. Sylvester Parish and Our Lady of Grace Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territorial boundaries of the two parishes, and called, *ad interim*, Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish;
2. The missions of the extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the extinguished St. Sylvester Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Grace Parish, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish;
4. The territory of the new Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish will be as described and depicted in the documents and map 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 extinguished St. Sylvester Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Grace Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish; (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Sylvester Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Grace Parish will be churches of the new Our Lady of Grace and St. Sylvester Parish, and St. Sylvester Church will 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 December 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 extinguished St. Sylvester Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Grace Parish will be collected and maintained at the St. Sylvester 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. Sylvester Parish

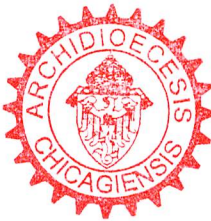
Prot. N. 2021 RMC-5
Decree
February 11, 2021
Page 4

and Our Lady of Grace Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, dated, and signed petition to revoke or amend the decree must be delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).

Given this 11th day of February, 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