



Prot. N. 2018 RMC-7.2

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

Following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, my decree of May 11, 2018, extinguished the separate juridic persons of St. Ailbe Parish, St. Felicitas Parish, and St. Joachim Parish, each serving predominately African American Catholics on the Southside of the City of Chicago. By extinctive union, I joined their missions, territories, assets, and liabilities into one new juridic person called St. Katharine Drexel Parish.

In acquiring the assets of the three former parishes, including the churches and other property, St. Katharine Drexel Parish now has real estate it cannot use and is incapable of supporting and maintaining. Although the eventual closing of two of the three churches was foreseen and recommended in the local and archdiocesan consultations held before the extinctive union of the parishes, time was given to determine how things might settle following the union.

Over the last fiscal year and during the present fiscal year St. Ailbe Church has had an average of between 571 and 461 worshippers attending Mass on Sundays. By contrast, St. Felicitas Church has had between 169 and 134, and St. Joachim has had between 91 and 48. It was anticipated that the number of worshippers would fall in all these churches during the first year of the union. Indeed, St. Felicitas Church and St. Joachim Church continue to slip well below the numbers required to ensure continued vitality.

Combining the figures, the number of Sunday worshippers regularly attending the three churches of St. Katharine Drexel Parish is below the benchmark of 800 the archdiocese believes necessary to sustain a vibrant parish community, one capable of supporting all aspects of the evangelical mission of the Church. It is hoped that the number of regular worshippers will grow as they begin to assemble in one location, namely, St. Ailbe Church.

The financial numbers also fail to justify the maintenance and operational costs necessary to keep three or even two churches open. Estimated needed repair and maintenance costs for the St. Ailbe Church campus are \$1,423,890.00. With such estimates at \$1,305,750.00 for the St. Felicitas Church campus, and \$673,150.00 for the St. Joachim Church campus, these costs are too much for the new parish.

Recently recorded numbers of Baptisms, Confirmations, marriages, and funerals in each church indicate possible future increase and potential growth at St. Ailbe Church, where there were 21 Baptisms, 14 Confirmations, seven marriages, and 50 funerals over the past two years. A total of 28 funerals versus only six Baptisms and one marriage were recorded over the last two years for the church of St. Felicitas. St. Joachim Church reported 11 Funerals and six Baptisms in fiscal year 2017.

At present, the pastoral care of St. Katharine Drexel Parish is in the hands of two Dominican friars, assisted by a diocesan priest and one female religious. The Reverend Paul D. Whittington, O.P., was appointed pastor in May 2018. With experience in leading African American Catholic communities, including those recently formed from the union of two or more Chicago parishes, Father Whittington can grow his parish, but not with continued logistical, operational, and maintenance costs associated with three campuses and real property no longer useful to the parochial community, especially the churches of St. Felicitas and St. Joachim.

It must be said, there are not sufficient funds available to maintain St. Felicitas Church and St. Joachim Church for divine worship or as centers for any other ecclesial or evangelical purpose. Neither the new St. Katharine Drexel Parish nor the Archdiocese of Chicago can supply the money required. No one has been able to identify an able and willing patron. The *major et sanior pars* of those worshipping at these churches have already prepared to begin anew at St. Ailbe Church. There the livelihood and financial wellbeing of a new St. Katharine Drexel Parish will find a home

From before the extinctive union of the three parishes, St. Ailbe Church has been home to a welcoming and vibrant community. The church is capable of seating more than 500 worshippers and is more than adequate for the needs of the new parish.

Anticipating the addition of more parishioners from both the three former parishes and new evangelization, St. Katharine Drexel Parish will struggle to support and maintain its remaining structures, including St. Ailbe Church. It would be both uncharitable and unrealistic to ask this new parish to support and maintain churches and other structures for which there are no reasonable parochial uses, only costs. The new parish's ability to provide charitable outreach, faith formation, and decent incomes for its staff are compromised if the churches of St. Felicitas and St. Joachim remain open.

Relegation of St. Felicitas Church and St. Joachim Church to profane but not sordid use, according to canon 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, enhances the possibility that alienation or long-term lease of the real property of the former parishes of St. Felicitas and St. Joachim will be beneficial sources of income for the new parish.

The Reverend Paul Whittington, O.P., Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Parish, rector of St. Felicitas Church and St. Joachim Church, and representative of the juridic person of the new parish, supports the relegation of both these churches to profane but not sordid use, and the use of St. Ailbe Church as the sole parish church.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, mindful of the norms of canons 50 and 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, having convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at Our Lady of Hope Parish in Rosemont, Illinois, on November 26, 2018, having heard the said Council concerning the relegation of St. Felicitas Church to profane but not sordid use at the same meeting, and having invoked the Holy Spirit and satisfied myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment,

decree the following:

1. Allowing a month to prepare and celebrate the closing of the church, St. Felicitas Church of St. Katharine Drexel Parish, located at 84th Street and Blackstone Avenue, in the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, will be relegated to profane but not sordid use from January 1, 2019;
2. That officials of the archdiocesan curia, in cooperation with the Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Parish proceed, according the norm of law, to make certain the real property assets of the former St. Felicitas Parish, including St. Felicitas Church, are secured and preserved for the benefit of the said St. Katharine Drexel Parish;
3. That the said church be relegated to profane but not-sordid use in such manner that the real property assets of the former parish of St. Felicitas, including the church, provide St. Katharine Drexel Parish with proceeds from the alienation of the assets or income from their use under lease;
4. That the report given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with other relevant documents, and the minutes of the Council meeting of November 26, 2018, be attached to this decree; and
5. That notification of this decree be made immediately to the Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Parish, on the Southside of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, and to the parishioners of the same parish through publication in the parish bulletin.

Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider 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 3rd day of December, A.D. 2018.
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago





Rev. Mr. Daniel G. Welter, J.D.
Chancellor

Attachments

**THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE RELEVANT MEETING OR MEETINGS OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL
ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO THE OFFICE OF THE
CHANCELLOR OR THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**