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Prot. N. 2021 RPU-3

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On January 3, 2020, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of Assumption Parish, Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish, and St. Roman Parish, all in the East Little Village neighborhood of the Southside of the City of Chicago. The union forming the new parish was effective July 1, 2020 and the new parish was called, *ad interim*, Our Lady of Tepeyac, Assumption, and St. Roman Parish. By decree dated May 6, 2021, the new parish was named Mother of the Americas Parish (*Parroquia Madre de las Americas*).

On March 1, 2021, after consulting with the parish pastoral council and other active parishioners, the Reverend Thomas J. Boharic, pastor of the then called Our Lady of Tepeyac, Assumption, and St. Roman Parish, discerned that continued use of all three churches of his parish was not feasible. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar of his region of the archdiocese, asking that St. Roman Church of Mother of the Americas Parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use (CJC c. 1222 §2).

A church may be relegated to profane but not sordid use when, after hearing the presbyteral council, the diocesan bishop determines there are “grave causes” suggesting a church no longer be used for divine worship and the good of souls suffers no detriment from the relegation. A Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura given May 4, 1996, considered what constituted grave causes required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (Ministerium Iustitiae: *Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527).

As related in the Definitive Sentence, a new parish formed from the extinctive union of five parishes sought to relegate three of its five churches to profane but not sordid use. Faithful who worshipped at one of these churches took recourse against the relegation of their church. The Supreme Tribunal found that the following conditions together constituted the grave causes required for relegation: (1) preservation of all the churches would impose an intolerable burden on the new parish; (2) the church in question was no longer of service to the pastoral care of the faithful due to changed circumstances; (3) the new parish was burdened from the beginning by a huge debt; (4) sale of the church would offer ready and effective assistance, otherwise lacking, to the urgent needs of the new parish; (5) the number of faithful contributing to the support of the parish was diminishing; and (6) charity and other assistance to the poor should not be neglected in order to preserve a sacred building.

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining St. Roman Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new parish from operational and maintenance

expenses associated with the church and other buildings on the church campus. If maintained, for parish use, the campus of St. Roman Church will require more than \$499,400.00 in repairs, \$374,050.00 for repairs to the church/school building alone.

(2) St. Roman Church is not needed for divine worship for the average of 639 Sunday worshippers regularly attending there in FY 2019 (before COVID-19). This number of worshippers is now well accommodated in the nearby 1,100 seat parish church of Our Lady of Tepeyac.

(3) The total debt of the new parish was \$2,145,321.00 at the end of December 2020. The most recent regular annual operating income from the former St. Roman Parish was \$69,659.00 (not including rental income). Even including annual rental income of approximately \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00, the income is insufficient to help support the new parish, service the debt, and meet the foreseeable needs of maintaining St. Roman Church.

(4) Sale or rental of real property of the former St. Roman Parish campus, including the St. Roman church/school building, will benefit the mission of the new parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings of at least \$60,000.00 annually from unspent maintenance expenses, and more from the \$499,400.00 in unspent capital repairs.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Roman Church was 639 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), an 18% decline over five years, 41% decline over 10 years, and 54% decline over 15 years. The combined weekly Sunday Mass attendance at the three former parishes was 2,160 in October 2019. This combined total is comfortably accommodated in the parish church of Our Lady of Tepeyac.

(6) Preserving St. Roman Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that would cripple the ability of new Mother of the Americas Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

Finally, since March 2020, the arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19 has substantially diminished the United States economy, materially and negatively changed the financial well-being of the archdiocese, the new parish, and many poor and middle-class families. There is a real concern for the long-term economic survival of many institutions.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the extinctive union of three parishes to maintain a church it cannot afford, does not need, and is no longer useful for divine worship. Furthermore, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to keep and maintain St. Roman Church as a place of Catholic worship. There is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of America.

The reasonable and safe solution for the parish is to relegate St. Roman Church to profane but not sordid use, allowing it and the rest of the church's campus to be sold or otherwise developed for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and the work of charity.


Decree  
Prot. N. 2021-RPU-3  
May 13, 2021  
Page 3

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, electronically convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* the Internet on March 2, 2021, and again on May 4, 2021. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's May 4<sup>th</sup> vote of 31 for and one against the proposal to relegate St. Roman Church of Mother of the Americas Parish to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that Our Lady of Tepeyac Church and Assumption Church are sufficient for the needs of the new parish,

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective July 1, 2021, St. Roman Church of Mother of the Americas Parish on the Southside of the City of Chicago, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of Mother of the Americas Parish, will assure the real property and other assets of the former St. Roman Parish, including St. Roman Church, are secure for the benefit of Mother of the Americas Parish;
3. If alienated, the real property assets of the former St. Roman Parish are to provide Mother of the Americas Parish with proceeds from sale of the property or rental under lease;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meetings on March 2, 2021, and May 4, 2021, are to be attached to this decree and available upon request from eligible parties; and
5. Notification of this decree is to be made immediately through publication on the Archdiocesan Website. It is then to be sent to the Pastor of Mother of the Americas Parish for communication to his parishioners through publication in the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 13<sup>th</sup> day of May, A.D. 2021.  
From Holy Name Cathedral,  
Chicago, Illinois

  
Archbishop of Chicago



  
Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

*Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, signed, dated, and well-argued petition, to reconsider or amend the decree, must be sent or delivered to the Archbishop of Chicago within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.*

ONCE AVAILABLE, DATA PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS OF MARCH 2, 2021, AND MAY 4, 2021, MAY BE REQUESTED BY ELIGIBLE PARTIES FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS