



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

Prot. N. 2022 RPU-16

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On March 11, 2021, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of three neighboring parishes in the West Town area of the City of Chicago: St. Mark Parish, Holy Rosary Parish, and St. Helen Parish. The decree took effect July 1, 2021. By decree dated November 22, 2021, St. Aloysius Parish was extinguished as a separate juridic person in the Church and added to the new Holy Rosary and SS. Mark and Helen Parish on January 1, 2022. By the same decree of November 22, 2021, the resulting union of the four parishes was given the permanent name of Our Lady of Unity Parish, also effective January 1, 2022. Parishioners of the former St. Mark Parish and the former Holy Rosary Parish sought hierarchical recourse before the Congregation for the Clergy against the decree of March 11, 2021. The Congregation rejected the recourses by decretal letters dated May 27, 2021, and May 29, 2021 (Cong. Clergy, Prot. N. 2021 1804, Prot. N. 2021 2041), further recourse was not sought. No parishioners of St. Aloysius Parish sought to revoke or amend the decree of November 22, 2021.

On December 29, 2021, and February 24, 2022, after consulting with parish leadership, including members of the parish Unification Committee (a joint parish council), the Reverend Claudio Diaz, Jr., pastor of Our Lady of Unity Parish, discerned that continued use of all four churches his parish was not feasible. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar of his region of the archdiocese, asking that St. Mark Church of Our Lady of Unity Parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use (*CIC* 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 is a "grave cause" indicating a church should no longer be used for divine worship and that 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 the 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. The 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 cause 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 to preserve a sacred building.

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining St. Mark Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new Our Lady of Unity Parish from operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the St. Mark Church campus will require \$860,000.00 in repairs, \$397,500.00 for the church alone.

(2) St. Mark Church is not needed for divine worship for the average of 537 Sunday worshippers regularly attending there in FY 2020 (before COVID-19). This number of worshippers is well accommodated in the parish church of St. Helen, and the other two churches of the parish.

(3) The total debt of the new Our Lady of Unity Parish was \$1,293,905.00 on December 31, 2021. The most recent regular annual operating income from the former St. Mark Parish was \$107,315.00. Such an income is insufficient to help support the new parish, service the debt, and meet the foreseeable needs of maintaining St. Mark Church for worship.

(4) Sale or rental of St. Mark Church will benefit the mission of the new parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings of between \$92,352.00 and \$109,721.00 from unspent maintenance expenses, and more from the \$860,000.00 in unspent capital repairs when the church campus is sold.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Mark Church was 537 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), a more than 55% decline over 20 years from the attendance of 1,184 in October 1999.

(6) Preserving St. Mark Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of new Our Lady of Unity 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 diminished some segments of the United States economy, materially and negatively impacting the financial well-being of the archdiocese, the new parish, and many poor and middle-class families. There is concern for the long-term economic survival of many institutions.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the extinctive union of four parishes to maintain a church it cannot afford and that is no longer needed for divine worship. Furthermore, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to keep and maintain St. Mark 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 is to relegate St. Mark Church to profane but not sordid use, selling or developing the property for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and charity.

Decree
Prot. N. 2022-RPU-16
May 17, 2022
Page 3

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at St. Bernardine Parish, Forest Park, Illinois, on March 1, 2022, and again on May 3, 2022. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's May 3rd vote of 25 for and one against the proposal to relegate St. Mark Church of Our Lady of Unity Parish to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Helen and the other churches of the new parish are sufficient for its needs,

I decree the following:

1. Effective immediately, St. Mark Church of Our Lady of Unity Parish in the City of Chicago, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of Our Lady of Unity Parish will assure the real property associated with St. Mark Church campus is secure for the benefit of Our Lady of Unity Parish;
3. If alienated, St. Mark Church is to provide Our Lady of Unity 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 1, 2022, and May 3, 2022, are to be attached to this decree and available upon request to 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 Our Lady of Unity Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 17th day of May, A.D. 2022.
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, and dated petition to reconsider or amend the decree, must be sent by mail 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 1, 2022, AND MAY 3, 2022, MAY BE REQUESTED BY ELIGIBLE PARTIES FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS