



Summit Renew My Church Update: January 21, 2021

Discernment Process

St. Blase and St. Joseph Parishes engaged in the Renew My Church (RMC) discernment process through the fall of 2020. The Grouping Feedback and Discernment team (GFDT), which was made up of members from each parish community, met to review and discern the future parish structure for the area. Our deepest appreciation goes to the GFDT who prayerfully discerned the parish grouping structure during this challenging time.

Based on their meetings and feedback gathered from the larger parish communities, they submitted feedback to the archdiocese. The Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, which includes representatives from across the Archdiocese of Chicago, reviewed the feedback and other information, including financial summaries, capital needs and parish trends.

Cardinal Cupich and Bishop Wypych are grateful to Fr. Wojciech Kwiecien, Fr. Bob Stuglik and the Grouping Teams who gathered throughout the past few months, and all parishioners who offered feedback through the recent discernment process.

Outcome

In the past few weeks, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, the archdiocese's auxiliary bishops, and the archdiocese's Presbyteral Council met to discuss the Commission's recommendation. Based upon those discussions and prayerful consideration, Cardinal Cupich made the following decisions regarding the parish structure in the Summit grouping.

- **St. Blase and St. Joseph will unite to form a new parish with a new name, one pastor and pastoral team, worshiping at two sites, effective July 1, 2021. Both churches will continue to have a regular schedule of Masses, which may differ from their current schedule.**
- **St. Blase will be the designated parish church where sacramental records are kept.**
- **The united parish will continue to support trilingual ministry in Polish, Spanish, and English.**
- **St. Joseph School will be closed permanently at the end of the current academic year.**

Further:

- Due to long-term concerns about financial sustainability identified during the discernment process, the RMC Commission has asked the united parish to focus first on uniting as one parish for the next three years.
- Beginning in 2024, a formal annual review process will be initiated to determine the sustainability of maintaining both campuses. At that time, both sites will be reviewed annually regarding operational efficiency, ministerial capabilities and spiritual outreach.

Additional information will be forthcoming regarding the assigned pastor. We hope to share this information within the next few weeks.



Parish Structure Rationale

- Uniting as one parish allows parish finances to be used most effectively to support mission and ministry and helps address the reduced number of priests available for pastoral leadership positions.
- Given the robust ministry and large Mass attendance at each current parish, continuing to use both churches as active worship sites allows the united parish to have sufficient space to continue those ministries.
- The decision to initiate an annual review starting in 2024 allows sufficient time for the two parishes to unite as one new parish, while ensuring the concerns raised during the discernment process about future sustainability will continue to receive attention.
- The RMC Commission heard very clearly the importance of continuing tri-lingual ministry as the two parishes unite as one new parish. The Priests' Placement Board similarly heard that feedback and is considering it as it evaluates priest assignments for the parish.
- As communicated separately to school faculty and families, St. Joseph School has faced declining enrollment in recent years which has created significant financial strain. Despite strong fundraising efforts, St. Joseph has operated with a deficit of more than \$300,000 for the last two years and cannot cover its debt.

Next Steps

Once a pastor has been named, parish leadership and parishioners will discern possibilities for the name of the new parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit their considerations to Cardinal Cupich for his decision on the permanent name of the new parish. The new Mass schedule at each worship site, effective with the formal union of the parishes, will also be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish leadership in the coming months.

The united parish community will embark upon the next phase of renewal, focusing on strong evangelization to the world around us. The renewal process calls us to become a stronger, more sustainable presence for the future, capable of reaching more people in their work of making disciples of Jesus Christ, building communities with one another and inspiring witness in the world around us.