



Office of the Archbishop
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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-17

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 2,693,976 in 2020. During the last decade, the total population of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) declined by less than 2%, from 5,903,190 in 2010 to an estimated 5,821,933 in 2020. However, over the same ten-year period, the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Chicago declined by nearly 7% (159,000), from 2,338,000 to 2,179,000.

A good number of our parishes were founded more than 100 years ago, in the 19th Century or the first half of the 20th Century. Many were established for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer reside in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished. Today, many are unable or struggling to support themselves. Consequently, from Fiscal Year 2012 through Fiscal Year 2021, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$187,818,176.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$49,452,924.00 to 119 parishes and \$138,365,252.00 to 99 Catholic schools. This includes \$10,708,494.00 during Fiscal Year 2021 alone: \$3,120,340.00 to parishes and \$7,588,154.00 to Catholic schools, mostly parochial 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. 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 mission, the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

More than 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 my 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 adjacent parishes located within approximately three and one-half square miles of the West suburban municipality of Cicero, Illinois: St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish (established personal parish 1895, given territory 1990), 3010 South 48th Court, Cicero,

Prot. N. 2022 RMC-17
Decree
March 28, 2022
Page 2

Illinois 60804-3622, and Our Lady of Charity Parish (established 1954), 3620 South 57th Court, Cicero, Illinois 60804-4235. The churches of these two parishes are approximately two miles apart, a drive of seven minutes.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish was 1,214 (52% Spanish, 25% English, 23% Polish), a 35% decline from the 1,858 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. The same year, the average Sunday attendance at Our Lady of Charity Parish was 956 (78% Spanish, 22% English), an 18% decline from the 1,170 attending in Fiscal Year 2000.

In Fiscal Year 2021, St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish had an operating deficit of \$63,109.00. On October 31, 2021, the parish had savings of \$175,868.00 on deposit, and no church debt. In Fiscal Year 2021, Our Lady of Charity Parish had an operating deficit of \$61,381.00. On October 31, 2021, Our Lady of Charity Parish had savings of \$56,249.00 on deposit, and no church debt.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish included 29 funerals, 19 marriages, and 36 Baptisms. In the same period Our Lady of Charity Parish had 12 funerals, six marriages, and 26 Baptisms. The combined totals of the two parishes are 41 funerals, 25 marriages, and 62 Baptisms, a moderate total for a suburban parish.

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 *Renew My Church* Executive Committee submitted the Commission's recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to the 20-year decline in the number of faithful at both parishes, the continuing decline in the number of priests able to serve as pastors, and recent annual operating deficits at both parishes, the Church in this area of the Archdiocese of Chicago will struggle financially and administratively to sustain two parishes. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources within one new parish is the recommended course of action.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 121, canon 127 §§1, 2, 2°, & 3, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish and Our Lady of Charity Parish, both in Cicero, Illinois, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish named, *ad interim*, St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish, located within the combined territories of the two parishes. St. Mary of Czestochowa Church is to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago electronically *via* the internet on January 18, 2022. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 32 for and one against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral

Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

I decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2022, the above-mentioned St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish and Our Lady of Charity Parish, both in Cicero, Illinois, shall 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. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will become those of the new St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the two extinguished parishes, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish;
4. The territory of the new St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Charity Parish, as depicted and described on the map and in the document 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 two extinguished parishes, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish and the extinguished Our Lady of Charity Parish will be churches of the new St. Mary of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Charity Parish, retaining their own titles. St. Mary of Czestochowa Church shall 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 January 18, 2022, 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 two extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Mary of Czestochowa 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. Mary of Czestochowa Parish and Our Lady of Charity Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall

Prot. N. 2022 RMC-17
Decree
March 28, 2022
Page 4


inform their parishioners of the decree through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

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

Given this 28th day of March, A.D. 2022.
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 18, 2022, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE
AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**