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Prot. N. 2023 RPU-2

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On April 25, 2022, 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 South Suburban Cook County: Infant Jesus of Prague Parish, Flossmoor, Illinois, St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish, Matteson, Illinois, and St. Irenaeus Parish, Park Forest, Illinois. The union of the three parishes was called, *ad interim*, Infant Jesus of Prague and SS. Irenaeus and Lawrence O'Toole Parish. The effective date of the extinctive union was July 1, 2022. By my decree of November 11, 2022, the union of the three parishes was given the permanent new name of St. Veronica Parish.

On September 19, 2022, after consulting with parish leadership, including members of the parish Unification Committee (a joint parish council), the Reverend Krzysztof Paluch, pastor of the then Infant Jesus of Prague and SS. Irenaeus and Lawrence O'Toole 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. Irenaeus Church of the now St. Veronica 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. Irenaeus Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new St. Veronica Parish due to operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the St. Irenaeus Church campus will also require \$614,450.00 in capital repairs, \$162,150.00 for the church alone. As of August 31, 2022, the total debt of the new St. Veronica Parish was \$2,535,871.00, \$133,270.00 of the debt originating from the former St. Irenaeus Parish.

(2) St. Irenaeus Church is not needed for divine worship for the average of 438 Sunday worshippers regularly attending there in FY 2020 (before COVID-19). The church has not been used for regular Sunday worship since August 2022. Moreover, the worshippers then attending are now well accommodated in the 550-seat parish church of Infant Jesus of Prague.

(3) The most recent regular annual operating income from the former St. Irenaeus Parish was \$307,580.00 (Fiscal Year 2021). Such an income is insufficient for the foreseeable needs of maintaining St. Irenaeus Church as well as for contribution to the support of the new St. Veronica Parish.

(4) Sale or rental of St. Irenaeus Church will benefit the mission of the new parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate annual savings of at least \$120,000.00 from unspent regular maintenance expenses, and more from the \$614,450.00 in unspent capital repairs when the church campus is sold.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Irenaeus Parish was 438 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020). In Fiscal Year 2021 average Sunday attendance was 135. In May 2022 the Sunday attendance was 175. This latest figure is more than a 60% decline from the pre-COVID-19 attendance in October 2019.

(6) Preserving St. Irenaeus Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of new St. Veronica 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 three parishes to maintain the churches it cannot afford and that are no longer needed for the divine worship of the new parish. Furthermore, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to keep and maintain St. Irenaeus Church as a place of Catholic worship. There is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of

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America. The reasonable course is to relegate St. Irenaeus Church of St. Veronica Parish to profane but not sordid use, selling or developing the property for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and charity.

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 the St. Giles Church campus of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy and St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on September 27, 2022, and again on November 4, 2022. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's November 4<sup>th</sup> vote of 32 yes and none against the proposal to relegate St. Irenaeus Church of St. Veronica 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 Infant Jesus of Prague, is sufficient for its needs,

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective immediately, St. Irenaeus Church in Park Forest, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of the new St. Veronica Parish will assure the real property associated with the St. Irenaeus Church campus is secure for the benefit of St. Veronica Parish;
3. If alienated, St. Irenaeus Church is to provide St. Veronica 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 September 27, 2022, and November 4, 2022, are confidential documents and will be appended to this decree upon approval and made available upon the request of 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 St. Veronica Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 19<sup>th</sup> day of January, A.D. 2023.  
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 APPROVED, CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS OF SEPTEMBER 27, 2022, and NOVEMBER 4, 2022, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON THE REQUEST OF ELIGIBLE PARTIES TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**