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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-5

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. 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 in the first half of the 20th Century or earlier. 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 of our parishes 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 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 in the North suburban municipality of Evanston, Illinois: St. Mary Parish (established 1872), 1012 Lake Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201-4203; and St. Nicholas Parish (established German personal parish 1887, territorial

Parish, 1927), 806 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202-2219. The churches of the two parishes are less than one mile apart, a three-minute drive.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Mary Parish was 527, a 45% decline from the 954 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. The same year, the average Sunday attendance at St. Nicholas Parish was 1,177, a 12% increase from the 1,048 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. In October 2021, average attendance at St. Mary Parish was 310, while at St. Nicholas Parish was 763. In October 2019, 2% of those attending Sunday Mass at St. Mary Parish attended the French Creole Mass, while 98% attended the English Masses. That same month, the attendance at St. Nicholas Parish was 47% Spanish and 53% English.

In Fiscal Years 2019 through 2021, St. Mary Parish had operating deficits of \$165,624.00, \$173,486.00, and \$136,908.00, respectively. In Fiscal Year 2021 the parish had savings of \$950,983.00 on deposit, no debt, and estimated capital needs of \$2,461,050.00. St. Nicholas Parish had an operating surplus of \$191,481.00 in Fiscal Year 2021, savings of \$1,614,292.00 on deposit, no debt, and estimated capital needs of \$2,361,950.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Mary Parish included 14 funerals, nine marriages, and 18 Baptisms. In the same period there were 36 funerals, 14 marriages, and 76 Baptisms at St. Nicholas Parish. The combined totals of 50 funerals, 23 marriages, and 94 Baptisms indicates an average number for a single suburban parish, with 96 Baptisms indicating a parish trending younger.

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 a recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to a continuing decline in the number of priests to serve as pastors, difficulty in meeting operating budgets at St. Mary Parish, despite significant rental income, and the capital needs at both parishes, the Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources under the leadership of a single pastor and pastoral team is needed.

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 Parish and St. Nicholas Parish, both in Evanston, Illinois, 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 St. Mary Parish and St. Nicholas Parish, named, *ad interim*, St. Mary and St. Nicholas Parish. St. Nicholas 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 December 21, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 38

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 Parish and St. Nicholas Parish 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 and St. Nicholas Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new St. Mary and St. Nicholas 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 and St. Nicholas Parish;
4. The territory of the new St. Mary and St. Nicholas Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished St. Mary Parish and the extinguished St. Nicholas 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 and St. Nicholas Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Mary Parish and the extinguished St. Nicholas Parish will be churches of the new St. Mary and St. Nicholas Parish, retaining their own titles. St. Nicholas 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 December 21, 2021, 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. Nicholas 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 Parish and St. Nicholas Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners of the decree through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.


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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 21st day of February, 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
DECEMBER 21, 2021, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE
AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**