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Prot. N. 2018 RMC-7

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

“Every effort is to be made that parishes, in which apostolic activity can be performed only with difficulty or less effectively because of the excessive number of the faithful or too vast a territory or for any other reason, be suitably divided or dismembered according to the various circumstances. Likewise, parishes which are too small should be united insofar as the situation demands it and circumstances permit.” Blessed Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae*, n. 21, (1), August 6, 1966

Over the past several decades, many things have changed in this particular church. 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 has decreased by more than 20% since 1970, from 3,366,957 to an estimated 2,736,000 today. We also have many vacant and underused parochial buildings, and, as elsewhere, fewer priests to pastor our faith communities. For the number of parishes we have, our human and financial resources are spread very thin.

According to the 2017 edition of *Anuario Pontificio*, the Archdiocese of Chicago had a total population of 6,390,000, with 351 parishes for a Catholic population of 2,497,000. In the same year, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had a total population of 11,599,000 and 287 parishes for a Catholic population of 4,392,000, more than twice the number of Catholics per parish than Chicago. Also, many of our parishes were founded for national, linguistic, and ethnic groups that no longer live in the neighborhoods where their churches once flourished.

Too many of our parishes have been unable to support themselves and are receiving financial subsidies from the archdiocese. Between 2012 and 2016 these subsidies amounted to \$116,900,000.00, including \$27,600,000.00 in unpaid receivables at 106 parishes, \$36,800,000.00 in payroll advances and unpaid receivables at 90 Catholic schools, and another \$52,500,000.00 in grants to 92 Catholic schools. For the last fiscal year (2017) these subsidies increased by \$5,571,048.00 for parishes and \$12,606,861.00 for Catholic schools. Little, if any, of this money will be recovered by the archdiocese. The Archdiocese of Chicago cannot continue this level of financial support for parishes and Catholic schools. Parishes will become more vital, able to support themselves when possible. Above all, they must be active centers of Christian discipleship, evangelical mission, and charitable outreach.

Inspired by the experience of St. Francis of Assisi before the cross of San Damiano, and by Pope Francis's dream of “a missionary option ... capable of transforming everything”

(Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 27, November 24, 2013), I consulted widely and announced in early 2016 the inauguration of *Renew My Church (RMC)*, a multi-year process aimed at obtaining and preserving the vitality of our parishes. It is my intention that every parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago join with some of its neighbors and plan for the future. Careful planning will create a menu of possible options for greater vitality. It will also identify parishes likely to be reorganized through pastoral coordination, mergers, and other significant alterations, including closing churches no longer useful for divine worship.

During most of 2017, the priests, deacons, lay ministers, and other representative members of St. Ailbe Parish and School, St. Felicitas Parish, and St. Joachim Parish, met as the Stony Grove Grouping of RMC to plan and make recommendations for their future. These institutions are all located within an area of approximately seven square miles in the Chatham and Avalon Park neighborhoods of the Southside of the City of Chicago. After considering other possibilities, a single Scenario A took shape among the participants in the Grouping. On December 7, 2017, the Grouping presented its Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary to the Standards and Recommendations Commission (see Submission of December 7, 2017, attached to this Decree).

Under the preferred scenario, St. Ailbe Parish, St. Felicitas Parish, and St. Joachim Parish will unite to form a single new parish, with St. Ailbe School remaining to serve the new parochial community. For the immediate future the churches of the three parishes would all remain open for worship. However, the intention to close both St. Felicitas Church and St. Joachim Church and retain only St. Ailbe Church as a place of worship will be considered over the course of the next year.

The three parishes are relatively small in the number of worshippers, and the financial support for each has been adequate in recent years. Nonetheless, only St. Ailbe Parish has the indicia of maintaining vitality over the coming years. Uniting the parishes will enhance the vitality of the Catholic Church in the area and allow a new and larger parish to grow in outreach and evangelization. The existing St. Ailbe School has only 134 pupils this academic year; however, the school is under archdiocesan financial support in the amount of nearly \$120,000.00 annually. This expenditure will not become a financial responsibility of the new parish.

Each of the three parishes has had its own clergy and lay staff, its own programming, and its own separate administration. Combining these elements will provide significant savings and other efficiencies as the parishes are joined together under a single pastor and a dynamic staff, all working together for the common good.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on January 16, 2018, at the O'Hare Campus of DePaul University. There, the proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission to alter the status of St. Ailbe Parish, St Felicitas Parish, and St. Joachim Parish according to the scenario advanced by the Stony Grove Grouping was presented to the Council. Having heard the Presbyteral Council at the same meeting, I now, after invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2018, St. Ailbe Parish, St. Felicitas Parish, and St. Joachim Parish, in the Chatham and Avalon Park neighborhoods of the City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new juridic person to be known as SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish;

2. The missions of the extinguished St. Ailbe Parish, the extinguished St. Felicitas Parish, and the extinguished St. Joachim Parish will be subsumed completely into the newly established SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the three parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish;

4. The territory of the new SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish will be the sum of the territories of the three parishes to be extinguished, namely the territory located within these boundaries:

Start at 87th Street and State Street,
East on south side of 87th Street to Langley Avenue,
North on east side of Langley Avenue to 83rd Street,
East on south side of 83rd Street to Illinois Central R.R. Tracks,
North on east side of I.C.R.R. to extension of 81st Street,
East on south side of extension of 81st Street to Kenwood Avenue,
North on east side of Kenwood Avenue to 78th Street,
East on south side of extension of 78th Street to Penn Central R.R. Tracks,
South on west side of Penn Central R.R. Tracks to 87th Street,
East on south side of 87th Street to Yates Avenue,
South on west side of Yates to 95th Street,
West on north side of 95th Street to Constance Avenue,
South on west side of extension of Constance Avenue to extension of 100th St.,
West on north side of extension of 100th Street to I.C.R.R. Tracks,
North on east side of I.C.R.R. Tracks to 95th Street,
West on north side of 95th Street to Forest Avenue,
North on east side of Forest Avenue to 93rd Street,
West on north side of 93rd Street to Dunbar Avenue,
North on center line of Dunbar Avenue and extension of Dunbar to C, RI & P—Belt Line
R.R. Tracks,
West on north side of C, RI & P—Belt Line RR Tracks to State Street,
North on east side of State Street to 87th Street.

5. At least for the next year, the churches of the three extinguished parishes will be parochial churches of the new SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish, retaining their own titles;

6. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, with due regard for acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the three extinguished parishes and any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the newly established SS. Ailbe, Felicitas, and Joachim Parish (see canon 121);

Prot. N. 2018 RMC-7
Decree
May 11, 2018
Page 4

7. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of January 16, 2018, will be attached to this decree;

8. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the three extinguished parishes will be commended to the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago for safe keeping and suitable access; and

9. Notification of this decree will be given to the pastoral leadership of the three extinguished parishes and to their parishioners. Notification will be given through the parish bulletins, and generally on the archdiocesan website.

Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).

Given this 11th day of May, A.D. 2018.
From the Archbishop Quigley Center,
Chicago, Illinois



David Cardinal Quigley
Archbishop of Chicago

R. W. Mr. Daniel G. Welter
Reverend Mr. Daniel G. Welter, J.D.
Chancellor

Attachments

**THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF
THE RELEVANT MEETING OR MEETINGS OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL
ATTACHED TO THIS DECREE ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO THE OFFICE OF THE
CHANCELLOR OR THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**