



Office of the Archbishop
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Prot. N. 2018 RMC-5

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 *Annuario 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.

In 2017 the priests and lay leadership of St. William Parish, 2600 North Sayre Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60707; St. Celestine Parish, 3020 North 76th Court, Elmwood Park, Illinois 60707; and St. Cyprian Parish, 2601 Clinton, River Grove, Illinois 60171; the three parishes of the Elmwood Park Grouping, worked together to present its findings to the archdiocese. These parishes, each with its own parochial school are located within approximately 7.2 square miles of the Northwest Side of the City of Chicago and two adjacent suburbs. On December 1, 2017, the parishes presented their Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary to the Standards and Recommendations Commission (see Submission of December 1, 2017, attached to this Decree).

After considering three separate scenarios, the Grouping Team recognized Scenario B as the most viable. Under this scenario, St. Celestine Parish would join with St. Cyprian Parish to form a single new parish, retaining both churches, but closing St. Cyprian School after the close of the present academic year (2017-2018). St. William Parish would retain its parochial status, with St. William School remaining open as the parish school.

Among the data informing the recommendation for the union of St. Celestine Parish, Elmwood Park, and St. Cyprian Parish, River Grove, are the following facts:

- Due to declining demographics St. Cyprian School has failed to meet the essential benchmarks in enrollment and revenue that would allow the school to continue after the present academic year. St. Celestine School has the capacity to take in many of the students now attending St. Cyprian School. However, apart from school, the area demographics have also affected level of current revenue for parochial operations at St. Cyprian Parish. An existing operating debt of \$163,443.00, means that additional measures are needed to keep the church open. Uniting the parish with St. Celestine Parish will reduce costs and, hopefully, allow for the united communities to thrive. With recent Mass attendance at only 443 persons, St. Cyprian Church would soon be unable to sustain its operations as the church of a standalone parish.

Each of the two 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.

Having considered the work and representations of the Grouping Team, and after further discussion, the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission decided to advance the aforesaid Scenario B.

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. Celestine Parish, Elmwood Park, and St. Cyprian Parish, River Grove, 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. Celestine Parish, Elmwood Park, and St. Cyprian Parish, River Grove, both in 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 St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish;

2. The missions of the extinguished St. Celestine Parish and the extinguished St. Cyprian Parish will be subsumed completely into the newly established St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the two parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish;

4. The territory of the new St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish will be the sum of the territories of the two parishes to be extinguished, namely the territory located within these boundaries:

Start at Belmont Avenue and Elm Street,
East on south side of Belmont Avenue to Pacific Avenue,
North on east side of Pacific Avenue to School Street,
East on south side of School Street to Ozark Avenue,
North on east side of Ozark Avenue to Roscoe Street,
East on south side of Roscoe Street to Oketo Avenue,
South on west side of Oketo Avenue to Belmont Avenue,
East on south side of Belmont Avenue to Harlem Avenue,
South on west side of Harlem Avenue to Diversey Avenue,
West on north side of Diversey Avenue to 74th Court,
South on west side of 74th Court and extension of 74th Court to C.M. St. P & P. Railroad,
East on south side of C.M. St. P & P Railroad to extension of 74th Avenue,
South on west side of extension of 74th Avenue to Belden Avenue,
West on north side of Belden Avenue to 78th Avenue,
South on west side of 78th Avenue to Armitage Avenue,
West on north side of Armitage Avenue and extension of Armitage Avenue to extension of
Elm Street,
North on both sides of extension of Elm Street to Grand Avenue,
East on south side of Grand Avenue to Elm Street,
North on east side of Elm Street to Belmont Avenue.

5. The churches of the two extinguished parishes will be parochial churches of the new St. Mother Theodore Guerin 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 two extinguished parishes and any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the newly established St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish (see canon 121);

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 two 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 two 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




Archbishop of Chicago


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**