RENEW MY CHURCH

Called by Jesus Christ, we are making disciples, building communities and inspiring witness.
Dear Friends,

In 1205, while praying in the Church of San Damiano, St. Francis heard the Lord calling him to *rebuild my Church*. St. Francis immediately set out to repair the church, which had fallen into disrepair. But over time, St. Francis realized that the Lord was calling him to something much broader and bolder than what he initially understood. Jesus Christ was asking him not to rebuild, but to renew His Church.

Like St. Francis, the Archdiocese of Chicago has been called to rebuild. *Renew My Church* is our response to Jesus Christ’s call and our invitation for renewal.

**Called by Jesus Christ, we are making disciples, building communities and inspiring witness.**

We are evangelizing and forming new and existing Catholics. We are strengthening the leadership of our local Church by promoting vocations and cultivating the spiritual generosity of our laity. We are strengthening our parishes and offering faith-based education that prepares young people to enter the world with a sense of purpose, values and Jesus Christ-like compassion. We are following the lead of Pope Francis in making our Church a “field hospital,” reaching out with love and commitment to those on the margins of society.

Wishing you every blessing, with kind regards I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago
When Jesus Christ called His disciples, He did not ask them to maintain a building, or even a community, but rather He invited them on a journey and entrusted them with a powerful life-changing mission. Participation in that mission changed the lives of those whom Jesus Christ called 2,000 years ago and has the power to change the lives of those whom He calls and sends on His mission today.

Today, we face a crisis of faith. Fewer people than ever are connected with organized religion. Those who identify as Catholic do not attend weekly Mass. Overall, we see an increase in the signs of a broken world. As a result of this crisis we face a multitude of challenges.

We are preparing to overcome the challenges we face today, and in the centuries to come, by carrying out the work of the three imperatives of Renew My Church – making disciples, building communities and inspiring witness.

The Renew My Church imperatives will be brought to life by new plans, programs, efforts, and materials focused on:

• EVANGELIZATION AND FORMATION;
• VOCATIONS;
• LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT;
• PARISH MISSION VITALITY;
• SCHOOL MISSION VITALITY;
• FAITH IN ACTION; AND
• SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT.

Some of this work is already underway, but we know more and continued efforts are needed in order to fully answer Jesus Christ’s call to renew the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Chicago.
MAKING DISCIPLES

_Renew My Church_ fosters belonging, particularly among young people, and invites them to have a true, intentional encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the past, Catholic young people grew up in a society that was very supportive of faith, and they grew into faithful Catholics through attendance in Catholic schools and regular participation in the life of their parishes. Today things are different. We can no longer assume children will grow into an active faith life.

We know the greatest predictor of adult faith practice is engagement with the faith during the teenage and young adult years. This is why the Archdiocese is focused on identifying and carrying out new ways of bringing youth to a relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

We know our evangelization efforts will require us to identify new ways to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. We will need to be more specific in addressing the specific reasons preventing people from pursuing an active faith life today, and we will need to be more intentional in fostering intentional faith lives as committed members of our Church. We will do this by thinking anew about the formation of children, families and young adults through parish catechetical programs, youth ministry programs and marriage preparation.

Vocations are also critical to the evangelization of our society. The Archdiocese is focusing on new ways for our faithful to hear and respond to God’s call to commit their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our new approaches to reaching young adults have shown early signs of success. We are hopeful that through increased efforts and dedication, we can introduce Jesus Christ to current and future generations.

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**THE ARCHDIOCESE IS MAKING DISCIPLES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:**

- **Evangelization and Formation:** Evangelizing and forming new and existing Catholics in the faith.
- **Vocations:** Increasing vocations by helping people recognize and respond to the calling of Jesus Christ.
**BUILDING COMMUNITIES**

*Renew My Church* supports vibrant parishes and schools that are life giving and sustain and form existing and new members.

Many of our parishes face resource constraints that prevent them from achieving strong mission vitality, including low parishioner counts, low priest availability, unsustainable operations and significant deferred maintenance. While these important constraints must be addressed, we also know many of our most resourced parishes often face the same struggles as other parishes in engaging youth and young adults. Accordingly, we must reconsider what parish vitality means and focus our efforts on: the leaders of our Church; creating compelling liturgies that invite people to participate actively in Mass; providing true faith formation programs that help form true disciples of Jesus Christ; and reaching out to people and inviting them to Jesus Christ rather than wait for them to come to us.

Catholic schools across the Archdiocese form children in their faith and offer strong academic programs. In many areas of our community, our Catholic schools provide a critical alternative to schools that are not as academically sound or safe. Overall, our schools make a significant contribution to our area in developing compassionate and engaged citizens. Nevertheless, we need to continue to work to ensure our Catholic schools remain vibrant centers of Catholic faith formation and academic excellence, particularly in areas of Catholic identity, principal and teacher leadership development, and academic curriculum.

The majority of our Catholic children are enrolled in religious education. Parish vitality today means also developing new ways to engage our children in our parish communities and to help them truly encounter a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

While we have grown in the areas of leadership, parish mission vitality and school mission vitality, there is still much to be done to ensure our leaders, parishes and schools are equipped for the future and the continued challenges we face.

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**THE ARCHDIOCESE IS BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:**

- **Leadership Development and Support:** Providing lifelong training and development for priests, as well as providing ongoing professional development for staff and lay leaders.

- **Parish Mission Vitality:** Helping our parishes achieve strong mission vitality by ensuring adequate resourcing; carrying out a deliberate planning and discernment process that looks at the resources and needs of the community; supporting their pastoral initiatives through sharing best practices; and helping supporting sustainable operations.

- **School Mission Vitality:** Ensuring our Catholic schools achieve strong school mission vitality by building the Catholic identity of schools to engage today's youth; enhancing the academic offerings of schools; and promoting the ongoing development of school leaders.
INSPIRING WITNESS

Renew My Church asks us to come together in solidarity and bring the light and hope of Jesus Christ to a world in need.

Today’s times call us to put our Catholic faith into action more than ever before. The breakdown of the family, growing violence and lack of respect for life and human dignity, and the social ills of unemployment, racism, and poverty all point to a world in need of witnesses to the compassion and redemption of Jesus Christ.

We are taking our rightful place in society and boldly responding to the challenge Jesus Christ gave us to reach out to the ends of the earth, making sure no one is left behind or overlooked because he or she lives on the periphery of society.

To help combat violence and bring peace, we have launched a comprehensive anti-violence initiative. We have also embarked on efforts to help support immigrants who have settled here in hope of making a better life. Additionally, we have been increasing our two-way communications between the Archdiocese and the greater community. These efforts are critical and must continue to grow in order to meet the needs of our changing world.

THE ARCHDIOCESE IS INSPIRING WITNESS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

- **Faith in Action**: Putting our faith into action by helping those in need, and building solidarity and peace among all.
- **Society Engagement**: Increasing engagement with the broader society in order to bring Jesus Christ to the world.
A PRAYER FOR “RENEW MY CHURCH”

Lord Jesus, you speak to us today,
as you spoke to holy men and women
who have gone before us.
In every age and in our own time,
you call to us and say: Renew My Church.
Pour out the gift of your Holy Spirit upon us,
and so enable us
to hear you clearly
to listen to each other attentively
to imagine our future boldly
to discern your direction wisely
to persevere in your holy will courageously
to stay together in charity
to surrender our own plans readily
to embrace the greater good
to hand on your gifts to future generations.

May we remain in the holy company of
the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles, and all the saints.
May their example and presence
inspire us with patient confidence
in the work of your grace.
We ask this of you who live and reign
with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever. Amen.
The Archdiocese of Chicago, pastored by Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, is the third largest diocese in the United States. The Archdiocese includes Cook and Lake Counties, a geographic area of 1,411 square miles.

**Catholic Population**

- **2,200,000**
  - 37% (Catholic population as a percentage of total population of Cook and Lake Counties)

**Parishes**

- **344** Parishes
- **28,021** Baptisms
- **23,828** First Communions
- **19,974** Confirmations
- **12,008** Funerals

**Scheduled Masses**

- 1,648 weekend Masses scheduled in parishes and missions
  - English: 1,218
  - Spanish: 286
  - Polish: 96
  - Other Languages: 48

**Catholic Schools**

- One of the largest private school systems in the country
- **181** elementary schools
  - Enrollment: **55,342**
- **33** secondary schools
  - Enrollment: **21,133**
- **96** U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Awards
  - (more than other school system of any type)

**Religious Education**

- Enrollment in elementary school programs: **85,375**
- Enrollment in secondary school programs: **4,366**

**Catholic Higher Education**

- **6** colleges and universities
  - Enrollment: **48,500 students**

**Seminary System**

- **Saint Joseph College Seminary**
  - Enrollment: **28**
- **Mundelein Seminary**
  - Enrollment: **206**
  - (one of the country's largest seminaries)

**Catholic Charities**

- Over **1 million** served annually
- **155** programs
- **164** locations
- The region's **largest** nonprofit social service agency

**Catholic Hospitals**

- 16 Catholic hospitals
- **2.6 million** assisted annually

**Catholic Cemeteries**

- **39** Catholic cemeteries
- **16,000** annual interments

**Dioecesan Priests, Deacons, Women and Men Religious, and Lay Personnel in the Archdiocese**

- **15,000** Employees across all systems and ministries
- **767** Diocesan priests
  - (active and retired)
- **569** Religious priests
- **188** Religious brothers
- **1,384** Women religious
- **540** Deacons
  - (active and senior deacons)
- **92** Certified pastoral associates

Latest information and data as of October 2017.