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Prot. N. 2018 RMC-1

## 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 early 2017 three parishes and a mission, all located within less than four square miles of the West Humboldt Park neighborhood of the City of Chicago, were designated to form one of two pilot groupings to initiate *RMC*. The parish priests and delegates from St. Francis of Assisi Parish, 932 North Kostner Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60651-3450; Maternity B.V.M. Parish, 3647 West North Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60647-4745; and St. Philomena Parish, 1921 North Kedvale Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60639-4900, along with representatives from Our Lady of the Angels Mission Center, 3808 West Iowa Street, Chicago, Illinois 60651 (home of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago, a fledgling religious institute of diocesan right), and Maternity B.V.M. School, met regularly as a Grouping Feedback and Discernment Team. On July 6, 2017, they presented a Community Engagement and Planning Feedback Summary to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, a group formed by lay and ordained representatives from across the archdiocese (see Submission of July 6, 2017, attached to this Decree).

Narrowing their work to five possible scenarios, the Grouping Team chose to recommend Scenario A to the Archdiocesan Commission. Under this scenario the three existing parishes of the Grouping would be merged to form a single new parish, the existing parochial school would become the parochial school of the new parish, and the Mission Center would retain its existing status. Among the data informing the recommendation are the following facts:

- St. Francis of Assisi Parish was established in 1909 to serve Polish speaking Catholics within the territory of the then existing Our Lady of the Angels Parish. Through ups and downs and the closing of its parochial school, the parish now has a Sunday Mass attendance of 561 persons, an increase of 39% from the 405 in 2007. However, 79% of the parishioners are of Hispanic origin, and no Polish speaking Catholics attend the church. Moreover, the parish revenue last year was \$185,602.00, while expenses were \$483,313.00, an annual deficit of \$297,711.00.
- Maternity B.V.M. Parish was founded in 1904 as a mission of St. Genevieve Parish. In 1909 it became a territorial parish in its own right. Sunday Mass attendance last year was 988, a 23% decline from 2007. Today at least 92% of parishioners are Spanish speaking Catholics. The Maternity BVM School now has only 190 pupils, down from the 972 enrolled in 1960 and the 360 enrolled in 1978. The parish had a modest operating deficit of \$1,363.00 last year; however, the parochial school had an operating deficit of \$560,156.00. The parish operating debt is \$1,105,938.00.
- St. Philomena Parish was first organized for German speaking Catholics in 1888, a mission from existing German personal parishes. In 1894 the parish became a territorial parish, eventually serving more than 1,700 families with a school of more than

1,000 students. As late as 1978 the parochial school had 460 pupils; however, the school closed in 2005 due to a steadily decreasing enrollment. Today, the parish is 91% Spanish speaking with a Sunday Mass attendance of 2,589, a 169% increase from 962 in 2007. This remarkable growth is not matched by the financial ability of the parish. While the operating income is now \$728,780.00 annually, this includes \$359,180.00 in short term rental income, an amount that may not be available in the future. Total operating expenses in the last fiscal year were \$676,562.00. The parish operating debt is now \$176,172.00.

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 with a dynamic staff working together for the common good of the West Humboldt Park neighborhood and its people.

Having heard the recommendation of the Grouping Team, and after considering other possibilities, including four other scenarios, the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission decided to advance the aforementioned Scenario A.

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 November 9, 2017, at St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois. There, the proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission to alter the status of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish 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. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V. M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish, all in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood of the City of Chicago, will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form a single new juridic person to be known as San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish;
2. The missions of the extinguished St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish will be subsumed completely into the newly established San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish;
3. Each and all the parishioners of the three parishes to be extinguished will be fully and equally parishioners of the new San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish;
4. The territory of the new San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish will be the sum of the territories of the extinguished St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish, namely the territory located within these boundaries:

Start at Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific railroad tracks and extension of Luna Avenue,

East on south side of C.M.S. & P Railroad to Keeler Avenue,  
North on the east side of Keeler Avenue to Armitage Avenue,  
East on the south side of Armitage Avenue to Kimball Avenue,  
South on the west side of Kimball Avenue to Bloomingdale Avenue,  
East on the south side of Bloomingdale Avenue to Kedzie Avenue,  
South on the west side of Kedzie Avenue to C & NW Railroad  
West on the north side of C & NW Railroad to B.R.C. Railroad,  
North on the east side of B.R.C. Railroad to Division Street,  
West on the north side of Division Street to Pine Avenue,  
North on the east side of Pine Avenue to Hirsch Street,  
West on the north side of Hirsch Street to Luna Avenue,  
North on the centerline of Luna Avenue, including its irregular crossing of North Avenue,  
to C.M. St. P & P railroad tracks.

5. The churches of the extinguished St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish, will be parochial churches of the new San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish, retaining their own titles;

6. Subject to the intention of founders and donors, and with due regard for any acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the extinguished St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V. M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will become those of the newly established San José Luis Sánchez del Río Parish (see canon 121);

7. Our Lady of the Angels Mission Center will retain its present canonical status and remain a member of the West Humboldt Park Grouping for purposes of continuing formation and the evangelical activity of the new parish;

8. The documents given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the Council meeting of November 9, 2017, will be attached to this decree;

9. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the extinguished St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish will be commended to the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago for safe keeping and suitable access; and

10. Notification of this decree will be given immediately to the pastoral leadership of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Maternity B.V.M. Parish, and St. Philomena Parish, all in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood of the City of Chicago, to their parishioners, and to members of Our Lady of the Angels Mission Center. Publication will be made 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).*

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Given this 11<sup>th</sup> 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