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Prot. N. 2021 RMC-21

## 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 2,686,530 in 2020. The archdiocese has many vacant, old, and underused parochial buildings and fewer priests to pastor our faith communities.

According to the US Census Bureau, the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) had an estimated total population of 5,881,250 in 2018. The 2018 *Annuario Pontificio* indicated our archdiocese had 345 parishes serving a Catholic population of 2,512,000: an average of 7,281 Catholics per parish. According to the same source, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had a total population of 11,519,517, with 287 parishes for a Catholic population of 4,362,000: an average of 15,199 Catholics per parish. For the Archdiocese of New York, the figures were 2,656,987 Catholics in 294 parishes, an average 9,037 Catholics per parish. A good number of our parishes were founded in the first half of the last 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.

Many of our parishes are unable or struggling to support themselves. Consequently, many have been receiving financial subsidies from the archdiocese. From fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2020, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$177,109,682.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$46,332,584.00 to 106 parishes and \$130,777,098.00 to 83 Catholic schools. This was an increase of \$14,777,155.00 over a single year: \$3,711,999.00 more to parishes and \$11,064,156.00 more to Catholic 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, especially in times of enormous economic strain. 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 the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

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 the 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 within approximately eight square miles of the West Suburban Cook County, Illinois, in the suburbs of River Forest and Forest Park: St. Luke Parish (mission 1865, parish established 1887), 528 Lathrop Avenue, River Forest, Illinois 60305-1835; and St. Bernardine Parish (established 1911), 7246 West Harrison Street, Forest Park, Illinois 60130-2067.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Luke Parish was 602. The same year the average Sunday attendance at St. Bernardine Parish was 339. The combined Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 941 in late 2019, this is a total decline of 59% over 20 years (from 2,306 to 941). At St. Luke Parish, the decline over the same 20-year period was 57% (from 1,408 to 602). At St. Bernardine Parish the decline was 62% over the same period (from 898 to 339).

In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Luke Parish had an operating deficit of \$30,837.00, no debt, and savings of \$3,337,169.00. That same year, St. Bernardine Parish had an operating surplus of \$42,836.00, no debt, and \$974,422.00

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Luke Parish 37 funerals, 17 marriages, and 39 Baptisms. In the same period there were 10 funerals, two marriage, and 19 Baptisms at St. Bernardine Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the two parishes were 47 funerals, 19 marriages, and 58 Baptisms, near average for a single parish of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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 its recommendations to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to significant and continuing decline in Sunday Mass attendance at both parishes, the present low attendance at St. Bernardine Parish, and fewer priests to serve our parishes, change is needed. 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 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me the proposal that the above-mentioned St. Luke Parish (River Forest) and St. Bernardine Parish (Forest Park) 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. Luke Parish and St. Bernardine Parish, with St. Luke Church to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago *via* video conference over the internet on March 2, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 26 for and two against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective July 1, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Luke Parish and St. Bernardine 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 St. Luke Parish and St. Bernardine Parish. The new parish is to be called St. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new St. Luke and St. Bernardine 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. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish;
4. The territory of the new St. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish will be 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. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished St. Luke Parish and the extinguished St. Bernardine Parish will be churches of the new St. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Luke 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 March 2, 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. Luke 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. Luke Parish and St. Bernardine Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners of the

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decree through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

*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 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April, A.D. 2021.  
From Holy Name Cathedral,  
Chicago, Illinois

  
Archbishop of Chicago





Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

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THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF MARCH 2, 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