

Explanation of the Decree of Unification

Dear parishioners,

In this weekend's bulletin, you will see information about a decree signed by Cardinal Cupich. A decree is a pronouncement or document that formalizes a decision within the Church. In this case, the decree included here concerns the decision for our parishes to unify as a new parish after our grouping's Renew My Church discernment.

The decree states that St. Hugh, St. Mary, and Mater Christi will form a new parish on July 1, 2021. The decree states the new parish will have an *ad interim* name. This means that the parish will be called St. Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish until we propose a new name to Cardinal Cupich for his consideration and approval.

When you read the decree, you will notice the decree states St. Mary Church will be the parish church of the new parish and that the churches of St. Hugh and Mater Christi will be churches of the new parish. A couple of notes on this:

One implication of St. Mary being designated the parish church means that the sacramental records of the new parish, as well as the past sacramental records of each of St. Hugh, St. Mary, and Mater Christi will be maintained at the offices on the St. Mary campus in the future. Rome requires that a united parish's sacramental records be kept in one place and for that location to be designated in the decree as the parish church. For the current time, each parish's records will remain at their current locations, and we will update everyone when the records are fully brought together at the office on the St. Mary campus. The hours and activities at each of the three offices after July 1 will be important matters discussed in the coming months.

Second, the decree states that each of the churches of St. Hugh, St. Mary, and Mater Christi will be churches of the new parish. When a new parish is formed, all the assets of each former parish become part of the new parish. This includes the churches. As shared at the announcement on Jan. 22, the united parish's Masses will fully transition to St. Mary and Mater Christi, with regularly scheduled Masses ceasing at St. Hugh. Until the procedure for formally closing a church occurs, a church remains available to use for occasional worship even if regular daily or Sunday Masses are not scheduled at the church. The specific Mass schedule after July 1 is an important topic we will discuss with parish leadership in the coming months.

Regarding the permanent name of the new parish, there will be a process to include everyone. We will keep you updated on the timeline of when this process to consider a parish name will begin.

Until then, let us hold fast to the Lord's promise that He is with us always, and trust in the fact that He is at work in a special way within our faith community and is creating something new for all of us.

Certainly, the process of renewal is an emotional one. For many of us, it is a time of significant change. So, let us also keep each other and our neighbors in prayer as we continue our journey forward.



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Prot. N. 2021 RMC-8

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 barely able 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. While 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.

Nearly 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 three parishes located within a territory of approximately eight and one-half square miles in the West Suburban municipalities of Lyons, Riverside, and North Riverside, Illinois: St. Hugh Parish, (established 1925), 7939 West 43rd Street, Lyons, Illinois 60534-1533; St. Mary Parish (originally established in Lyons in 1885), 126 Herrick Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546-2015; and Mater Christi Parish (from 1950, a mission of St. Mary Parish, Riverside, established as a parish 1953), 2431 South 10th Avenue, North Riverside, Illinois 60546-1120.

In 2019 the average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Hugh Parish was 390. The same year the average Sunday attendance at St. Mary Parish was 960, and at Mater Christi Parish it was 422. The combined total average Sunday attendance at the three parishes was 1,772 in 2019, this is within a total decline of 38% over 20 years for the three parishes combined (from 2,868 to 1,772). At St. Hugh Parish the decline over the same 20-year period was 23% (from 504 to 390). At St. Mary Parish, the decline was 32% (from 1,406 to 960), and it was 56% at Mater Christi Parish (from 958 to 422). The most significant declines took place in the decade between 1999 and 2009.

In Fiscal Year 2019, St. Hugh Parish had an operating deficit of \$117,542.00, unmet capital needs of \$1,220,100.00, no posted debt, and savings of \$55,234.00. Parish savings of \$691,682.00 held in Fiscal Year 2011 has been depleted steadily to cover operating deficits posted in each of the last 10 years. In 2019 St. Mary Parish had a small operating deficit of \$36,260.00, unmet capital needs of \$1,244,250.00, no debt, and savings of \$627,675.00. For Mater Christi Parish the Fiscal Year 2019 figures show an operating surplus of \$38,450.00, unmet capital needs of \$502,950.00, no debt, and savings of \$216,829.00. Mater Christi Parish had operating deficits in seven of the last 10 years, the last in Fiscal Year 2018

During Fiscal Year 2019 and part of Fiscal Year 2020, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Hugh Parish included 21 funerals, two marriages, and 13 Baptisms. In the same period there were 19 funerals, nine marriages, and 58 Baptisms at St. Mary Parish. At Mater Christi there were 31 funerals, four marriages, and 22 Baptisms. It is indicative of decline whenever the number of funerals in a parish exceeds the combined number of Baptisms and marriages. In 2019-2020 a total of 76 children were enrolled in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade religious education at St. Hugh Parish, 335 at St. Mary Parish, and 104 at Mater Christi Parish.

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 Commission submitted its recommendations to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to fewer priests to serve as pastors, recurring deficits in two of the parishes, declining savings used to cover current operating expenses,

decline in the number of those participating at Sunday Mass, declining parish incomes, and aging populations, changes are in order. The area is unable to sustain three parishes serving a small and decreasing community of Catholic faithful. For evangelization and mission to be the focus of future ministry, the Church in this area of the Archdiocese of Chicago, must consolidate resources under the leadership of a single pastoral team.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 127 §§1 & 3, canon 166, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me the recommended proposal of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, that the above mentioned St. Hugh Parish, St. Mary Parish, and Mater Christi Parish, all in western suburban Cook County, be extinguished as a separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within combined territories of the three parishes, with St. Mary Church, the original mother 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 January 15, 18-19, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 32 for and 2 against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2021, the above-mentioned St. Hugh Parish, St. Mary Parish, and Mater Christi Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territory of the three parishes, and called, *ad interim*, Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish;

2. The missions of the three extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish;

3. Each and all the parishioners of the extinguished St. Hugh Parish, the extinguished St. Mary Parish, and the extinguished Mater Christi Parish, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish;

4. The territory of the new Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish will be as described and depicted in the map and 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 extinguished St. Hugh Parish, the extinguished St. Mary Parish, and the extinguished Mater Christi Parish, together with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish (see canon 121);

6. The churches of the extinguished St. Hugh Parish, the extinguished St. Mary Parish,

and the extinguished Mater Christi Parish, will be churches of the new Mary, Mater Christi, and St. Hugh Parish, retaining their titles, and St. Mary Church will 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 December January 15, 18-19, 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 extinguished St. Hugh Parish, the extinguished St. Mary Parish, and the extinguished Mater Christi Parish will be collected and maintained at the St. Mary 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. Hugh Parish, St. Mary Parish, and Mater Christi Parish. As soon as possible, the pastors shall inform their parishioners of the 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 to revoke or amend the decree must be delivered to me at my office within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737).

Given this 25th day of February, A.D. 2021.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

**THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING
OF JANUARY 15, 18-19, 2021, ARE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE
AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**