

Explanation of the Decree of Unification

March 28, 2022

Dear parishioners,

In this weekend's bulletin, you will see 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 Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parishes to unite as a new parish after our grouping's Renew My Church discernment. This note is intended to address what have been common questions in other groupings when they received their decree.

The decree states that Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette will form a new parish on July 1, 2022. The decree states the new parish will have an *ad interim* name. This means that the parish will be called Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish until we propose a new name to Cardinal Cupich for his consideration and approval.

One detail in the decree is that the territory of Most Holy Redeemer Parish bounded by 98th Street on the north, Kedzie Avenue on the east, Spaulding Avenue on the west, and 99th Street on the south is being added to the united Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette. This is being done because uniting parishes must be geographically contiguous. The goal was to re-assign the smallest amount of territory possible from Most Holy Redeemer Parish to provide a contiguous geography for Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette.

Additionally, the decree states Queen of Martyrs Church will be the parish church of the new parish and that the churches of Queen of Martyrs Parish and St. Bernadette Parish will be churches of the new parish. A couple of notes on this:

When two or more parishes unite as one parish, Rome requires that the united parish's sacramental records be kept in one place and for that location to be designated in the decree as the parish church. Practically speaking, the location of sacramental records is the only implication of the parish church designation. Beginning on July 1, the sacramental records of the united parish will be maintained at the offices on the Queen of Martyrs campus. Until such time as the two church campuses are united into a single parish campus at Queen of Martyrs, each location will maintain their existing sacramental records. An update will be provided when the records are brought together at the parish office on the Queen of Martyrs campus.

Second, the decree states that each of the churches of Queen of Martyrs Parish and St. Bernadette Parish will be churches of the new parish. This could raise questions in light of what was shared at the announcement in January that within the next two years, the parish's regular schedule of Masses will fully transition to Queen of Martyrs and the regular schedule of Masses at St. Bernadette Church will conclude. The decree is written as it is because under church law, when a new parish is formed, all of the assets of each former parish become part of the new parish. This includes the churches. Until the procedure for formally closing a church occurs, a church remains a church of the parish even if regular daily or Sunday Masses are not scheduled at the church.

Regarding the 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.

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.



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Prot. N. 2022 RMC-15

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 2,693,976 in 2020. During the last decade, the total population of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois) declined by less than 2%, from 5,903,190 in 2010 to an estimated 5,821,933 in 2020. However, over the same ten-year period, the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Chicago declined by nearly 7% (159,000), from 2,338,000 to 2,179,000.

A good number of our parishes were founded more than 100 years ago, in the 19th Century or the first half of the 20th Century. Many were established for national, linguistic, or ethnic groups that no longer reside in the archdiocese or in the neighborhoods where they once flourished. Today, many are unable or struggling to support themselves. Consequently, from Fiscal Year 2012 through Fiscal Year 2021, the Archdiocese of Chicago provided \$187,818,176.00 in support to parishes and Catholic schools: \$49,452,924.00 to 119 parishes and \$138,365,252.00 to 99 Catholic schools. This includes \$10,708,494.00 during Fiscal Year 2021 alone: \$3,120,340.00 to parishes and \$7,588,154.00 to Catholic schools, mostly parochial 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. 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 mission, the parishes need a growing and stable membership and the financial means to support themselves.

More than 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 my 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 primarily two adjacent parishes located within approximately 2.3 square miles in Evergreen Park, Illinois: St. Bernadette Parish (established 1947), 9343 South Francisco Avenue, Evergreen Park, Illinois 60805-2536, and Queen of Martyrs Parish

established 1952), 10233 South Central Park Avenue, Evergreen Park, Illinois 60805-3717. It also touches on a small portion of the approximate 1.5 square mile territory of Most Holy Redeemer Parish (established 1941), 9525 South Lawndale Avenue, Evergreen Park, Illinois 60805-2128. The churches of the three parishes are approximately 1.2 to 3.4 miles apart, a drive of between seven and fourteen minutes.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at St. Bernadette Parish was 455, a 63% decline from the 1,245 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. The same year, the average Sunday attendance at Queen of Martyrs Parish was 773, a 53% decline from the 1,655 attending in Fiscal Year 2000. Meanwhile, the average Sunday attendance at Most Holy Redeemer Parish was 862 in Fiscal Year 2020, a 58% decline the 2,044 attending in Fiscal year 2000.

On October 31, 2021, St. Bernadette Parish had savings of \$205,055.00 on deposit, debt incurred prior to Fiscal Year 2012 of \$121,522.00, and capital needs of \$539,150.00; Queen of Martyrs Parish had savings of \$479,991.00 on deposit, no church debt, and \$1,057,550.00 in capital needs; while Most Holy Redeemer Parish had savings of \$929,969.00 on deposit, no church debt, and capital needs of \$2,305,850.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019, liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at St. Bernadette Parish included 31 funerals, seven marriages, and 19 Baptisms. In the same period there were 33 funerals, seven marriages, and 45 Baptisms at Queen of Martyrs. At Most Holy Redeemer Parish there were 39 funerals, 12 marriages, and 70 Baptisms.

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 the Commission's recommendation to the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. Due to the decline in the number of faithful at all three parishes, continuing decline in the number of priests to serve as pastors, and significant capital needs at all three parishes, the Church in this area of the Archdiocese of Chicago will struggle financially and administratively to sustain three parishes. If the care of souls, evangelization, and discipleship are to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation and conservation of resources within two parishes is the recommended course of action.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of canon 50, canon 121, canon 127 §§ 1, 2, 2°, & 3, and canon 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, have before me a proposal that the above-mentioned St. Bernadette Parish and Queen of Martyrs Parish, both in Evergreen Park, Illinois, be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish named, *ad interim*, Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish, located within the combined territories of

Queen of Martyrs Parish and St. Bernadette Parish, with the addition of that portion of the territory of the Most Holy Redeemer Parish bounded by 98th Street on the North, Kedzie Avenue on the East, Spaulding Avenue on the West, and 99th Street on the South. Queen of Martyrs Church is to be designated the parish church. Know also, I convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago electronically *via* the internet on January 17, 2022. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 31 for and three against the proposal, I accepted the Presbyteral Council's advice and now, invoking the Holy Spirit,

I decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2022, the above-mentioned St. Bernadette Parish and Queen of Martyrs Parish, both in Evergreen Park, Illinois, 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 Queen of Martyrs Parish and St. Bernadette Parish, and the portion of the territory of Most Holy Redeemer Parish between 98th and 99th Streets and Kedzie and Spaulding Avenues. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish;
2. The ministries of the two extinguished parishes will become those of the new Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette 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 Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish;
4. The territory of the new Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish will be the combined territories of the extinguished Queen of Martyrs Parish and the extinguished St. Bernadette Parish, together with the small portion of the territory Most Holy Redeemer Parish, 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 Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish (canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished Queen of Martyrs Parish and the extinguished St. Bernadette Parish will be churches of the new Queen of Martyrs and St. Bernadette Parish, retaining their own titles. Queen of Martyrs 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 January 17, 2022, 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 Queen of Martyrs

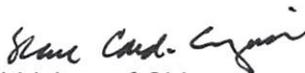
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Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff of the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago; and

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 Queen of Martyrs Parish and St. Bernadette Parish, as well as to the pastor of Most Holy Redeemer 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, 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 28th day of March, A.D. 2022.
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 17, 2022, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE
AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS
UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM**