

Explanation of the Decree of Unification – Bulletin on May 2, 2021

Dear parishioners,

In this weekend's bulletin (SEE NEXT PAGES), 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 our parishes to unify as a new parish after our grouping's Renew My Church discernment.

The decree states that Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus 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 Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus 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. Linus Church will be the parish church of the new parish and that the church of Our Lady of the Ridge will be a church 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. Thus, in the future the sacramental records of the new parish, as well as the past sacramental records of each of Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus will be maintained at the offices on the St. Linus campus. 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. Linus campus.

Second, the decree states that each of the churches of Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus will be churches of the new parish. When a new parish is formed, all of the assets of each former parish become part of the new parish. This includes the churches. As shared at the announcement in January, both Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus will continue to have a regular schedule for Mass. The specific Mass schedule after July 1 is an important topic we will discuss with parish leadership in the coming months.

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.

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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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.

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 two parishes located in Chicago Ridge, Illinois, and Oak Lawn, Illinois, respectively, and encompassing approximately four and one-half square miles of Southwest Suburban Cook County. These two parishes are Our Lady of the Ridge Parish (established 1948), 10811 South Ridgeland Avenue, Chicago Ridge, Illinois 60415-2154; and St. Linus Parish (established 1955), 10300 South Lawler Avenue, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453-4715.

In Fiscal Year 2020 the pre-COVID-19 average Sunday Mass attendance at Our Lady of the Ridge Parish was 802. The same year the average Sunday attendance at St. Linus Parish was 1,310. The combined total average Sunday attendance at the two parishes was 2,112 in late 2019, this is a total decline of 52% over 20 years (from 4,420 to 2,112). At Our Lady of Ridge Parish, the decline over the same 20-year period was 57% (from 1,884 to 802). At St. Linus Parish, the decline was 48% (from 2,536 to 1,310).

In Fiscal Year 2019, Our Lady of the Ridge Parish had an operating surplus of \$56,930.00; a capital debt of \$678,258.00, paid in full on April 13, 2021; and savings of \$358,294.00. That same year, St. Linus Parish had an operating surplus of \$53,406.00, no capital debt, and savings of \$1,325,986.00.

During Fiscal Year 2019 liturgical life outside Sunday Mass at Our Lady of the Ridge Parish included 87 funerals, six marriages, and 29 Baptisms. In the same period there were 84 funerals, 20 marriages, and 83 Baptisms at St. Linus Parish. The 2019 combined totals for the two parishes were 171 funerals, 26 marriages, and 113 Baptisms, average for a suburban parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago for marriages and Baptisms, well above average for funerals. The ratio of total funerals to the combined total of marriages and Baptisms, 171/139, indicates an aging population in the area, particularly at Our Lady of the Ridge 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. Change is in order due to significant and continuing decline in Sunday Mass attendance at both parishes and fewer priests able to serve our parishes. The Church in this area will struggle financially and administratively to sustain more than one parish. For evangelization and discipleship to be the focus of future mission, the consolidation of resources under the leadership of a single pastor and pastoral team is required.

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 of the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, that the above-mentioned Our Lady of the Ridge Parish, Chicago Ridge, and the adjacent St. Linus Parish, Oak Lawn, 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 Our Lady of the Ridge Parish and St. Linus Parish, with St. Linus 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 19, 2021. Then, after hearing the Presbyteral Council and receiving its vote of 32 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, 2021, the above-mentioned Our Lady of the Ridge Parish and St. Linus 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 Our Lady of the Ridge Parish and St. Linus Parish. The new parish is to be called, *ad interim*, Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus Parish;
2. The missions of the two extinguished parishes will be subsumed into those of the new Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus 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 Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus Parish;
4. The territory of the new Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus 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 Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus Parish (see canon 121);
6. The churches of the extinguished Our Lady of the Ridge Parish and the extinguished St. Linus Parish will both be churches of the new Our Lady of the Ridge and St. Linus Parish, retaining their own titles, and St. Linus 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 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 two extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Linus Church

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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 Our Lady of the Ridge Parish and St. Linus 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 delivered or sent 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 22nd day of April, 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 19, 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