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Prot. N. 2026 RPU-1

DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On May 11, 2018, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago on January 16, 2018, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of two parishes in the neighboring Northwest Suburban communities of Elmwood Park and River Grove: St. Celestine Parish, 3020 North 76th Court, Elmwood Park, Illinois 60707, and St. Cyprian Parish, 2601 Clinton Street, River Grove, Illinois 60171. Having been extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church, these two parishes were united as a single juridic person, a territorial parish named St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish. The effective date of the union of the two parishes was July 1, 2018.

On February 24, 2026, the pastor of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish, the Reverend Paul Cao, wrote to me indicating, “our parish leadership formed a Multi-Site Review Team, including members of the parish finance and pastoral councils, to discern the right path forward for our parish facilities to meet our ministry needs and exercise prudent financial stewardship.” The Multi-Site Review Team concluded that the necessary path forward would be to close St. Cyprian Church, relegating the church to profane but not sordid use (*CIC* c. 1222 §2).

A church may be relegated to profane but not sordid use when, after hearing the presbyteral council, the diocesan bishop determines there is a “grave cause” indicating a church should no longer be used for divine worship and that the good of souls suffers no detriment from the relegation. A Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura given May 4, 1996, considered what constituted the grave cause required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (*Ministerium Iustitiae: Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527).

As related in the Definitive Sentence, a new parish formed from the extinctive union of five parishes sought to relegate three of its five churches to profane but not sordid use. The faithful who worshipped at one of these churches took recourse against the relegation of their church. Ultimately, the Supreme Tribunal found that the following conditions together constituted the grave cause required for relegation: (1) preservation of all the churches would impose an intolerable burden on the new parish; (2) the church in question was no longer of service to the pastoral care of the faithful due to changed circumstances; (3) from the beginning, the new parish was burdened by a huge debt; (4) sale of the church would offer ready and effective assistance, otherwise lacking, to the urgent needs of the new parish; (5) the number of faithful contributing to the support of the parish was diminishing; and (6) charity and other assistance to the poor should not be neglected to preserve a sacred building.

In this case, I find the following: (1) Retaining St. Cyprian Church as a place of divine worship for St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish, imposes a financial burden on the parish due to the operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the St. Cyprian Church campus will require \$562,749.00 in capital repairs, out of a total of \$1,318,029.00 estimated for the entire parish (\$755,280.00 will be required for capital repairs on the St. Celestine Church campus). These estimates are based on 2025 costs for needed capital repairs assessed in 2018 by WJE, a third-party engineering firm.

(2) St. Cyprian Church of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish has a seating capacity of 250. It is not needed for divine worship to accommodate the faithful attending the regular schedule of Sunday Masses offered by the parish. Seating capacity at the parish church, St. Celestine Church, is 1,000 persons. It is located less than 1.5 miles from St. Cyprian Church and can easily accommodate the total weekend Mass attendance of the united parish, which was 953 across five Sunday Masses in October 2025. Other Catholic churches within a two-mile radius of St. Cyprian Church are at St. Francis Borgia Parish and St. William Parish, both in Chicago.

(3) In Fiscal Year 2025 the combined operating deficit of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish was \$126,181.00, more than the total of \$92,920.00 Sunday and Holy Day offerings received at St. Cyprian Church in the same fiscal year, and the largest of the operating deficits over the four-year period of 2022-2025. The parish's annual operating deficits of near \$100,000.00 and more will continue if St. Cyprian Church were to remain open.

(4) Sale or leasing of the St. Cyprian Church campus will benefit the mission of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish with ready cash proceeds. In addition, there will be immediate annual savings of at least \$100,000.00 from unspent regular maintenance expenses.

(5) In 1990 the total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Celestine Parish was 3,024, at St. Cyprian Parish the total was 1,148. The combined total for the then two parishes was 4,424. In October 2025, the combined Sunday Mass attendance at the two churches of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish was 953 a 78% decline over 35 years. From the total count of 2,833 persons in October 2000 to a combined count of 953 in October 2025 the decline was 67%, and from a combined count of 1,737 in October 2019, the last count prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the decline through October 2025 was 45%.

(6) Preserving St. Cyprian Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

There are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other funds available and sufficient to keep and maintain St. Cyprian Church of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish as a place of Catholic worship, and no government assistance available for such purposes.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of

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Chicago at the St. Bernardine campus of St. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish, Forest Park, Illinois, on March 17, 2026, and again at the St. Giles campus of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy and St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on May 12, 2026. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's May 12th vote of 27 yes and one against the proposal to relegate to profane but not sordid use St. Cyprian Church of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish; now invoking the Holy Spirit; and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Celestine in Elmwood Park is sufficient for the needs of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish.

I decree the following:

1. Effective immediately, St. Cyprian Church of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish in Northwest Suburban River Grove is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish, will assure the real property associated with the St. Cyprian Church campus is secure for the benefit of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish;
3. If alienated, the real property of the St. Cyprian Church campus is to provide St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish with the proceeds from sale or rental of the property;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meetings on March 17, 2026, and May 12, 2026, are confidential documents and will be appended to this decree upon approval and made available upon the request of eligible parties; and
5. Notification of this decree is to be made immediately through publication on the Archdiocesan Website. It is then to be sent to the pastor of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 8th day of June, A.D. 2026.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, signed, and dated petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent by mail or delivered to the Archbishop of Chicago within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

ONCE APPROVED, CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS OF MARCH 17, 2026, AND MAY 12, 2026, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON THE REQUEST OF ELIGIBLE PARTIES TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS