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December 4, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This letter begins with a word of thanks to all who have participated in the Lincoln Square Grouping for the Renew My Church parish grouping process. In your conversations and gatherings over the past six months, you learned more about each other and the reality we face on the parish and archdiocesan levels, all the while listening to Jesus' call to renew His Church.

This call – the very mission given to each of us at this place and time in the life of the Church – is to imagine new ways of inviting people into a life-giving encounter with the Risen Lord, so that they in turn can invite others, especially their children, to do the same. Achieving this end will require that we work together to build strong parish and school communities that are sustainable well into the future. That is no small task, but we have the Lord's assurance that we are not alone on this journey, for He told us: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ... And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).

You have already begun this journey by taking into account the resources in your area, with an eye to determining the best way to organize your efforts in achieving greater ministerial vitality which can be supported by a reasonable level of staffing and financial stability.

Having reviewed the feedback generated from the process and heard the archdiocesan Presbyteral Council, I have decided to accept the Archdiocesan Renew My Church Commission's recommendation that Queen of Angels and Saint Matthias Parishes will unite as a new parish, effective July 1, 2020. Queen of Angels Church will serve as the parish church where the pastor's office and parish records are kept.

Saint Matthias and Queen of Angels Schools will remain in their current programs, contingent on maintaining independence from archdiocesan financial support. Queen of Angels School will be the parish school of the new parish formed by Saint Matthias and Queen of Angels Parishes. Saint Matthias School will be governed as an archdiocesan school. The archdiocese's Priest Placement Board is working to identify a pastor whose gifts and skills will fit well with the particular needs of the new community.

I am grateful to Monsignor Jim Kaczorowski and Father Larry McNally for their leadership throughout our journey of renewal, thus far. Your parish leaders, who gathered as a grouping team over the recent months, and all those parishioners, who provided input to the feedback and discernment process, also deserve our appreciation.



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For the people of Saint Matthias, I know that you have given much of yourselves to the beautiful Saint Matthias Church. The recommendations of the Renew My Church Commission have not been done lightly, but rather with a view to achieving the long-term sustainability of current parish communities, making it possible to invest our limited human and material resources in ways that will guarantee ministry to future generations.

Now, it is important that everyone be encouraged to continue in the spirit of working together, much like St. Paul urged the Christians of Thessalonica many years ago: "Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up" (1 Thes 5:11). Over the next few months, the archdiocese will invest in the transition to the new parish structure by providing needed human resources. The archdiocese's Renew My Church Accompaniment Team will work alongside the priest leaders to ensure that the uniting parish communities and staff members are supported through this time of change. The aim of this next phase of renewal is to build the capacity of your new parish, so that it will be a stronger and more sustainable community, capable of being present to and reaching out to more people in the work of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly, the renewal you are undertaking will require the patience to change and the courage to let go of what is familiar in exchange for a new reality that is yet to be realized. It will also require us to trust in the Lord, confident that He is with us as we put out into the deep, even if it seems at times to be contrary to our own thinking. At this time of uncertainty and change let the Lord's words spoken to the Prophet Jeremiah center us: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you ... plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope" (Jer 29:11).

Again, I thank you for the work, time, dedication and love for the Church you have brought to this process. You are in my prayers, and I ask you to keep me in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blase Cupic".

Archbishop of Chicago