



Evanston Renew My Church Update: January 2022

Discernment Process

St. Athanasius, St. Joan of Arc, St. Mary and St. Nicholas Parishes and the Sheil Catholic Center engaged in the Renew My Church (RMC) review and discernment process over the past few months. The Grouping Feedback and Discernment team (GFDT), which was made up of members from each community, met to review and discern the future parish structure for the area. Our deepest appreciation goes to the GFDT who prayerfully discerned the parish structure during this challenging time of the pandemic.

Based on their meetings and feedback gathered from the larger parish community, they submitted feedback to the archdiocese. The Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, which includes representatives from across the Archdiocese of Chicago, reviewed the feedback and other information, including financial summaries and parish trends.

Cardinal Cupich and Bishop Bartosic are grateful to Fr. Cuevas, Fr. Anderson, Fr. McCray, Fr. Baldonieri, Fr. Zamora and the Grouping Team who gathered together, and all who offered feedback through the recent discernment process.

Outcome

In the past few weeks, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, the archdiocese's auxiliary bishops, and the archdiocese's Presbyteral Council met to discuss the Commission's recommendation. Based upon those discussions and prayerful consideration, Cardinal Cupich made the following decisions regarding the parish structure in this grouping.

- **St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc will unite as one parish with two worship sites, one pastor and one pastoral team, effective July 1, 2022.**
 - Both churches will continue to host a regular schedule of Masses. The specific schedule will be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish leadership.
 - St. Athanasius will formally be designated the parish church where the united parish's sacramental records will be kept.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new permanent name of the united parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich. Each church retains its name.
 - Fr. Kenneth Anderson will serve as pastor of the newly unified parish.
 - As part of the regular review process between the parish leadership team and the Episcopal Vicar and his team, the viability of continuing two church sites will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
 - St. Athanasius will be the parish-governed school.
 - The Academy at St. Joan of Arc will remain in its current structure with its own governing board independent of the parish.

- **St. Mary and St. Nicholas will unite as one parish with two worship sites, one pastor and one pastoral team, effective July 1, 2022.**
 - Both churches will continue to host a regular schedule of Masses. The specific schedule will be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish leadership.
 - St. Nicholas will formally be designated the parish church where the united parish's sacramental records will be kept.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new permanent name of the united parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich. Each church retains its name.
 - The Archdiocese of Chicago's Priest Placement Board will continue its discernment of a candidate to recommend as pastor of the newly unified parish, with particular attention given to bilingual capabilities. More information will be shared when it is available.
 - As part of the regular review process between the parish leadership team and the Episcopal Vicar and his team, the viability of continuing two church sites will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
 - Pope John XXIII School will be the parish school.

- **There are no structural changes at the Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern.**



Rationale

- Uniting the parishes as indicated will enable developing cohesive pastoral and evangelization plans for each of their parish territories, build on existing relationships between the parishes, help address realities of the declining number of pastors available to staff parishes and provide a structure to most effectively build full parish staffs to support ministry in the area.
- Questions came up throughout the discernment process about how each potential scenario would impact school programs and relationships. The Grouping Team noted the area's rich diversity and existing partnerships as important elements in their discernment. Subsequently, the RMC Commission considered these factors in their recommendation regarding the pairings of parishes.
 - The shared ministry of Pope John XXIII School offers a foundational relationship from which St. Mary and St. Nicholas can build as a newly uniting parish and allows continuity for the school.
 - St. Athanasius and St. Joan of Arc have begun offering a joint Religious Education program and share similar demographics in their local areas. These provide foundations for uniting as one parish.
- The Academy at St. Joan of Arc's structure as an independent academy and St. Athanasius School's structure as a parish-governed school will provide for a clean governance structure. St. Athanasius will continue as a parish-governed school under the united parish. The Academy at St. Joan of Arc will continue with its current governance and structure, receiving pastoral support from the parish.
- Sheil Catholic Center will remain in its current structure, allowing its mission to focus on campus ministry to the students and wider Northwestern University community.
- Long-term capital needs are a concern of the RMC Commission however the current financial strength of the parishes, along with the expected timing attached to many of the capital needs (5-7 years), provided confidence to the Commission since this timeline provides an opportunity for fundraising. This resulted in the recommendation for all churches to remain open, with ongoing review by parish leadership with Bishop Bartosic and his vicariate team.
- Each of the churches remaining open as worship sites will allow each newly united parish to live into its new structural reality while beginning the ministerial work of Building the New Reality.

Next steps

- The renewal process calls us to become a stronger, more sustainable presence for the future capable of reaching more people in their work of making disciples of Jesus Christ, building communities with one another and inspiring witness in the world around us.
- The newly united parish communities will embark upon the next phase of renewal, focusing on strong evangelization to the world around us. We know that this structural change is just the beginning of our journey of renewal.
- Renewal of our Church means that every Catholic, every searcher, and everyone who loves Jesus and his Church, will have to look anew at what it means to be Jesus' disciple and to live out that discipleship.
- Profound gratitude to all involved in the process to date, and prayers for all those who will take up the next phase of renewal, sharing faith and evangelizing those searching to know Jesus more deeply.