

St. Walter Parish

11722 South Oakley Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60643-4726

March 11, 2021

Dear Parishioners of St. Walter,

First of all, I wish to thank our parishioners who were able to view to the Renew My Church virtual meeting on March 9th in regards to the future of our parish. I wish to apologize to those who attempted to log on but were unable to do so.

The Renew My Church process which began last October has been a long and different one, especially during the pandemic. Our parish team of Michelle Mims, Henry Spight, Trinidad Mendez, Toi Dugar and our principal Veronica Skelton Cash worked very well together to represent our parish in the Blue Island Grouping. I wish to express my personal thanks for their work as we moved through this process. When we were coming to the end of our work, a writing team comprising of one parish representative from the grouping presented our scenarios to the Renew My Church Executive Committee. In turn, it was presented to the Renew My Church Commission, and then to the representative priests from the Archdiocese who comprise the Presbyteral Council. The Cardinal then made the final decision.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of our team who participated so well during this process and always made our parish their first priority. I also wish to thank all of our parishioners who make up our parish family and have been so faithful in sharing their time, talent and treasure that has made us “the small parish that does things in a big way.”

For those parishioners who have been here for 20, 30, or 40 or more years, and to those who have recently joined St. Walter, it is necessary to share with all of you a very difficult and sad decision that affects all of us.

Effective July 1st of this year, St. Benedict, St. Walter, and St. Peter Claver Mission will unite as one parish. It will have a new name, one pastor and one pastoral team. All parish Masses will take place at St. Benedict. All sacramental records will be kept there as well. Last week, Cardinal Cupich has assigned the current pastor of St. Benedict, Monsignor Dennis Lyle, to be the new pastor of this new parish. I have personally had various conversations with Monsignor Lyle over the last few years and I know he will be a very good pastor when this unification of parishes begins.

While our church will continue as a sacred space, no regular Sunday Mass will be held here. We are deeply saddened by this, but the church can be used for school Masses, funerals and other special occasions.

(Continued on next page →)

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Meanwhile, St. Peter Claver's Gospel Mass will be incorporated into the parish life of the combined parishes at St. Benedict.

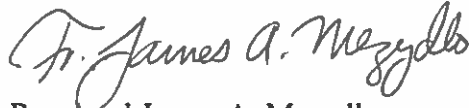
St. Stanislaus, Bishop & Martyr, parish will join the St. Christopher and St. Damian grouping to discern their future. Their current pastor, Fr. Pius Kokose will be assigned to another parish beginning July 1st. A temporary priest administrator will be assigned to St. Stanislaus to lead the parish in their new grouping.

St. Donatus, the other parish in Blue Island, will continue in their current structure with Fr. Diego Cavidad continuing as their pastor.

For all of us, I am sure there will be much grief and sadness for a parish we love so much. We hope that our Holy Week services and upcoming celebrations of Confirmation and First Holy Communion will offer some solace and healing. Monsignor Lyle and myself are aware of the "dying" we all must go through. With our faith and trust in the Lord, we hope we can move forward through this difficult and challenging time in our life as a Catholic.

I am including the formal announcement from the Archdiocese in this mailing as well. I know it may seem like a lot of information to take in so please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I can always be reached by phone at (773) 779-1515 or after Mass.

Peace in the Risen Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. James A. Mezydlo". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Reverend James A. Mezydlo

**Blue Island, Posen, Robbins and St. Walter Renew My Church Update: March 9, 2021****Discernment Process**

St. Benedict, St. Donatus, St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr, St. Walter Parishes and the St. Peter Claver Mission engaged in the Renew My Church (RMC) review and discernment process during 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 grouping structure during this challenging time.

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 Perry are grateful to Msgr. Lyle, Fr. Cadavid, Fr. Kokose, Fr. Mezydlo and the Grouping Team who gathered throughout the past few months, and all parishioners 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:

- **Effective July 1, 2021, St. Benedict, St. Walter and St. Peter Claver Mission will unite as a new parish, with a new name, one pastor and pastoral team.**
 - Regular parish Masses will be held (only) at St. Benedict to support the vision of building a united community worshipping together in one church. Additionally, uniting as one parish will support focused investment in ministry.
 - St. Benedict will be the parish church where the sacramental records are kept.
 - As has been announced, St. Benedict and St. Walter schools will unite for the next school year as one school with two campuses.
 - St. Walter will continue as a sacred space but will not have a regular Sunday Mass. The church may be used for school Masses, funerals and other special occasions.
 - St. Peter Claver's Gospel Mass will be incorporated into the style and schedule of Masses at St. Benedict Church and the St. Peter Claver site will remain available for occasional events.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new name of the parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich.
 - Msgr. Lyle will be the pastor of the newly-united parish.
- **St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr will join the St. Christopher and St. Damian grouping to continue discernment to the west.**
 - Fr. Kokose will receive a new assignment in another parish effective July 1, 2021. A priest administrator will be assigned to St. Stanislaus to lead the parish through the continuing discernment.
- **St. Donatus will remain in its current structure.**
 - Fr. Cadavid will continue to serve as pastor.



Parish Structure Rationale

- **St. Benedict, St. Walter, St. Peter Claver Mission:**
 - St. Benedict has sufficient capacity to truly unite as a new parish vs. maintaining separate locations for regular Sunday worship.
 - St. Peter Claver Mission community members are excited to bring their Gospel Mass to a wider audience. Details of this transition will be determined by parish leadership, e.g., incorporating elements of the Gospel Mass into regular Masses or establishing one Mass time dedicated to the Gospel Mass as part of the parish's Mass schedule.
 - Though St. Walter will not have a regular schedule of Masses for the parish, the church will remain available as sacred space. This will allow the school access to a sacred space for school Masses and the parish access for funerals and special occasions. Additionally, formally closing St. Walter Church would not save the united parish significant expenses.
- **St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr:**
 - St. Stanislaus' discernment with parishes to the west addresses the geographic barrier of the train tracks between Posen and Blue Island on Western.
 - Additionally, St. Christopher and St. Stanislaus have a history of working together, e.g., St. Christopher's Knights of Columbus helped St. Stanislaus begin its Hispanic Knights of Columbus and families from St. Stanislaus went to St. Christopher School after St. Stanislaus School closed.

Next Steps

- Parish leadership and parishioners will discern possibilities for the name of the new parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit their considerations to Cardinal Cupich for his decision on the permanent name of the new parish.
- The RMC staff will work with St. Stanislaus to begin planning for discernment with St. Christopher and St. Damian.
- The parish communities will embark upon the next phase of renewal, focusing on strong evangelization to the world around us. 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.