



“West Blest Side” Renew My Church Update: January 2022

Discernment Process

St. Agatha, St. Martin de Porres and Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica Parishes 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 Lombardo are grateful to Fr. Dowling, Fr. Mgimba, Fr. Krymski and the Grouping Team who gathered together, and all who offered feedback through the recent discernment process.

The grouping’s excitement for the possibilities of how powerful a Catholic presence could be on the city’s West Side shone through in the feedback. The Grouping Team set forth a compelling vision for how the parishes could work together as a bridge and link for the communities of North Lawndale, Garfield Park, and Austin to support initiatives addressing:

- Youth and Young Adult ministry & Evangelization,
- Social justice & community outreach, including engaging in a powerful way the issues of:
 - Poverty,
 - Crime/violence,
 - Food deserts,
 - Mental health,
 - Education, and
 - Supporting the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of individuals and families

The Grouping Team also expressed a vision for honoring the richness of African American spirituality and what it can offer to the greater Catholic community.

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.

In alignment with and affirmation of the Grouping Team’s proposed scenario to best support strong future ministry on the West Side:

- **St. Agatha and St. Martin de Porres will unite as one parish with two worship and ministry 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. Martin de Porres 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, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich.
 - St. Angela School will continue in its current structure, now associated with the united parish.
- **Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica will continue in its current structure, with enhanced collaboration between Our Lady of Sorrows and the united parish to be formed by St. Agatha and St. Martin de Porres.**



Areas for collaboration between Our Lady of Sorrows and a united St. Agatha and St. Martin de Porres include:

- Co-supporting a Youth/Young Adult Minister, Religious Education Director, and Evangelization Director for ministry to the West Side
- Coordinating the Mass schedules across the three churches
- Identifying opportunities to intentionally come together as one West Side Catholic community for holy day and other sacramental celebrations.

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 community 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' intentional disciple and to live out that discipleship faithfully, humbly, and generously.
- 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.