

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



RENEW MY CHURCH Parish Session #1



Parish Name

Date

Pastors welcome the people, lead with an opening prayer and then introduce the grouping feedback discernment team representatives.

Note: Intros are quick and this is not time to get into detail of the role of the GFDT reps' - simply, introduce them and say that they will learn about their role shortly and they will be sharing with you what they have been working on.

Before session make sure you have worked out how data dashboards will be picked up at the end of the meeting.

Slides 4-20: Some are quick transitional slides to build on and some require some pause and elaboration. While the GFDT and some of the parishioners have seen some of these slides and the message, it is best not to assume that all who are attending the parish meeting have been exposed to what RMC is and what the Discernment & Decisions process is all about.

A note about repetitive messages: Reminders help individuals catch and understand content that they didn't the first time they heard it, especially during times of change and transition. Research shows that people need to hear a message 7 times before they begin to connect to it and more fully understand it. Just when you feel you are tired of hearing the message this often is when other are just starting to connect to it and understanding it.

Hopes for tonight

1. Be grounded in the overall vision of Renew My Church, the parish grouping rollout, and the process for Discernment and Decisions
 - ✓ We'll review the overall process and have Q/A
2. Begin to understand our grouping's current realities
 - ✓ You will be introduced to key realities to be considered
 - ✓ The Grouping Feedback & Discernment Team will report out what they have done at their meetings to date
 - ✓ More Q/A

Note: Scenarios will not be discussed until our next parish meeting.



Read slide. Regarding the note about scenarios being presented at the next parish meeting, emphasis that before we can even begin to entertain possibilities we need to understand the “what-why-how” of the process and pause to understand some of our grouping realities. This will help parishioners be better prepared to offer feedback on possible scenarios.

Note: If you think the majority of your participants have attended an RMC 101, you can offer a comment such as, *“For some of us we may be hearing about Renew My Church for the first time and for others, while some of the message tonight will be a review, it is opportunity to open our hearts and minds to new understanding or clarity God has for us. For all of us, in addition to what is RMC and the current process called Discernment & Decisions, we will be reviewing key information that helps us better understand the currents needs and opportunities of our grouping of parishes and schools and it will be an opportunity to ask questions”*

Ground rules for engagement

- Model respect, collaboration, and openness to the Spirit speaking through all of us
- Turn off/silence mobile devices
- Refrain from taking pictures or video recordings of slides or presenters
- Questions/comments are limited to 1 minute each to allow that the time shared among your fellow parishioners. One of the team members has been assigned as timekeeper and will keep us to that time.



Read slide – to support time frame do not elaborate, just read slide, except for:

3rd Bullet: Say – Out of respect for those here, please [read the bullet point]. This is a parish family conversation. If there are any working media here you are welcome to stay and participate as a parishioner. If not, we ask that you respect the intent of this meeting and leave it as a safe place for parishioners to learn about our parish and Renew My Church. Please do not quote comments/questions or report on this meeting. Our parishioners need to have the freedom to ask questions and make comments without outside concerns.

Last bullet point – say something like: We want to make room for as many people as possible to ask questions and share comments. A minute is a longer time than it sounds!

Why are we here?

We are called




Say: Why are we here? (advance the slide animation) We are called. Called and invited by Jesus to renew our walk with Him and to renew His Church.

We are here tonight to discuss Renew My Church. Renewal is a part of being Catholic, part of the universal church. This is inherent to our journey as a Christian, to the paschal mystery, there's a continual dying and giving to new life. God has deemed it the best way. [give a few examples: prayer life, deepen our faith, trust, desire for growth]

Rhetorical question: How have you been called to renew aspects of your Catholic Journey in the past?

Transition: *Why is renewal particularly critical for today?*




Where we were

Culture **was more Christian**, **open** to faith, **enabled** people to live out their faith, and **recognized** religion as avenue for spiritual life

Where we are

Culture **is more secular**, **ambivalent** to faith, **dissuades** people to live out their faith, and **undermines** religion as avenue for spiritual life

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO 

5

We have moved from a time of when our faith, Christianity was central to our culture. All of the presumptions we used to make about how faith was handed down, how children and families were formed and found strength and refuge in the faith are no longer applicable.

Read the slide and consider giving an example, e.g. there was a time when everything was closed on Sunday's because it was "the Lord's day" and we honored it.

A decline in faith life

	Mass attendance in our archdiocese has decreased by 27% over the past 20 years
	Across the U.S., 2 in 5 children baptized are not confirmed
	85% of children confirmed stop practicing their faith by age 21

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO  4

When we look within we see a sharp decline in active faith life within the Church. Again, with ambivalence toward religious practice and an active faith life, the fact that Mass attendance has declined by 27% over the past 20 years, a statistic that is sobering and sad, may not be surprising. Again, many of us see this in our families and amongst our friends.

Today, approximately 40% - 2 out of every 5 children baptized are not confirmed. The ritual of baptism is seen merely as a family tradition to be completed or families drift away and formation in our Christian faith is abandoned at an early age.

Perhaps most shocking for those of us within the Church ... of the 3 out of 5 children that are confirmed, 85% stop practicing their faith by the age of 21. They simply drift away.

Now, some of those young adults may come back for different reasons and at different times, such as once they are married and become parents of their own; however, to know that 85% stop practicing - as a conscious decision to walk away from the faith of their family and heritage - should stop us all in our tracks. It begs the question: What must we do?

How did this happen?

There are many opinions and studied reasons on why people leave the Church, but the statistics that we see here show trends that have been in place for several decades. It is not enough to point to any one thing of the past 10-15-20 years.

Fundamentally, it comes down to one word: mission. We have lost focus on our mission as Church and with that, we have lost the joy of the Gospel. Mission and joy. Purpose and true happiness. This is the fulfillment that our human hearts seek. If people can't find that in their Church, they're going to search for it somewhere else.

Ask these rhetorical questions and briefly pause to let them connect to their answers

...that does not know or accept the love of Jesus?

...who has left the Church and that you hold in hope will return?

Our Response

Called by Jesus Christ, we are

- Making Disciples
- Building Communities
- Inspiring Witness



Say: Renew My Church is the Archdiocese's response to Jesus' call to renewal during these particular times of today. Renew My Church has three mission imperatives – then read the slide.

Emphasis – We need to assess and build on ways are we currently responding well to today's environment.

And we must also ask the question, "What renewed ways do we need to consider for today's environment?" This includes looking at the structure of our parishes/schools in our grouping and considering how we can best align our resources in order to best respond to Jesus' call to renewal.

To enter into this renewal, back in January 2017 the Cardinal sent out an announcement to all of us in the archdiocese about groupings and what grouping your parish was in. If you are interested in knowing what the other groupings are, you can go to the Archdiocese of Chicago website. So, what is the goal of a grouping?

Overall goal for groupings

Build a renewed, vital, and sustainable Catholic presence for the good of all people in the collective communities within the grouping.

- What do we need to change structurally, given resource realities?
- How can we be more effective through collaboration?

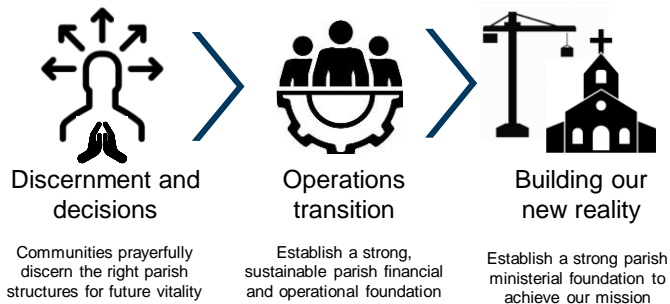


At the heart of our Renew My Church efforts is the parish grouping process – the goal of which is to ensure that all parishes across the archdiocese have the vision, leadership, resources, and operational foundation necessary to create an effective culture of evangelization that makes disciples, builds communities, and inspires witness.

Our Grouping includes: Name the parishes and schools of your grouping

Read the slide

Parish Grouping Process



The parish grouping process has three main movements to it:

- **Discernment and Decisions (summarize this phase)**
 - This phase is focused on addressing the organizational and structural challenges faced across the archdiocese. Each grouping will discern vital input to Cardinal Cupich's decision making and concludes when the Cardinal makes a decision about the future structure of the grouping after having considered the grouping's input, as well as considerations from advisory groups such as the RMC Commission and Archdiocesan Priests' Council.
- **Operations Transition (summarize this phase)**
 - Support provided by the archdiocese to transition to whatever future structure will be. This includes elements such as bringing budgets together, setting facilities plans for auxiliary buildings, etc.
 - This typically involves 6-12 months of support to reach a firm foundation to begin any new parish structures
- **Building our New Reality (summarize this phase)**
 - This is when focus turns to how to revitalize ministry in whatever structure is decided in the first phase, with emphasis on developing a culture of evangelization.
 - Core areas of focus to support a culture of evangelization during this phase include
 - Creating entry points for people who have been away from the Catholic faith or

have never encountered Jesus

- Radical hospitality
 - Vibrant and transformative liturgies
 - Readiness-based formation
 - Re-orienting our focus outward to be a field hospital in the world
- This phase is still in its pilot stages across the archdiocese, but parishes can expect it will be at least 18-24 months of intense effort to begin building the culture of evangelization.

Say: Our grouping is currently in the Discernment and Decision Process

Objectives of this phase of the process

- **Connect to the larger RMC vision** and begin building toward a culture of evangelization
- **Build relationships** across communities within the grouping
- Understand the **current realities** in the local community
- Evaluate **structural options** for moving forward
- Tangibly: **Provide the RMC Commission with a feedback report** to help inform a recommendation for Cardinal Cupich



Discernment and Decisions Overview

Say: *To ensure that all parishes across the archdiocese have the vision, leadership, resources, and operational foundation necessary to create an effective culture of evangelization and renewal, the Discernment and Decisions process has five key objectives:*

Connect to the larger RMC Vision and begin building toward a culture of Evangelization – *we are called to attune our hearts and minds to Jesus' call to renew and address the current crisis of faith.*

Build Relationships across communities within the grouping – *we need to serve together as a greater Catholic presence within the geographical area of our grouping rather than as siloed, individual parishes.* [Note: some parishes in groupings do collaborate. If this is the case, restate this as we need find more efficient ways to serve better, together]

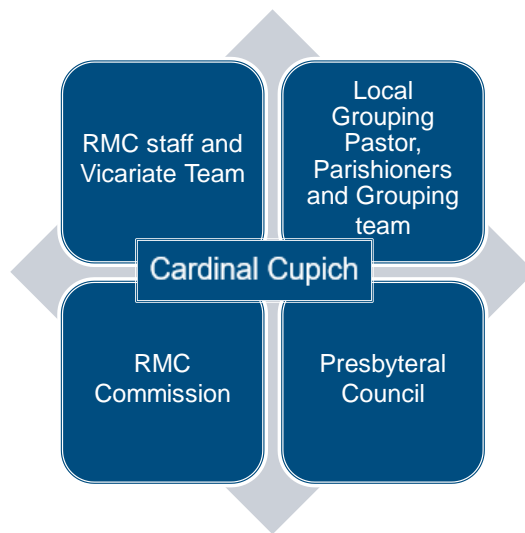
Understanding the current realities in the local community – *this includes looking at demographically who we serve and what resources we have to serve them. We'll be talking more about that in a bit.*

Evaluate potential structural renewal options – *Keeping in mind our realities, our role as parishes and schools in this process is to consider the strengths and challenges of possible structural scenarios, collaboratively offered by archdiocesan staff and the pastors of our grouping.*

Provide the RMC Commission with a feedback report to help inform a recommendation for Cardinal Cupich – *Our scenario feedback is discerned by our Grouping Feedback and Discernment Team which includes the invitation to create alternative scenarios that may serve all within our grouping. Our feedback is compiled in a report and submitted to the RMC commission made up of both lay and clergy who make a structural recommendation to the cardinal. Ultimately, the cardinal makes the final decision on the structure of our parishes and schools.*

Then say: *While it is the cardinal's final decision on the structure of our parishes and schools, Cardinal Cupich wanted to make sure he has various sources of feedback to help him decide– transition to the next slide.*

How will structural decisions be made?



The purpose of this slide is to emphasize that there are multiple sources of feedback, each and everyone source vital to this communal discernment.

Review the slide.

Say: Cardinal Cupich has the ultimate responsibility as our bishop to make decisions on changes to parish, school, and church structures. He can only make those decisions after considering the feedback from a number of sources. The grouping feedback and discernment team will provide him with critical input on the realities of how various scenarios would work in practice in our local area. The Cardinal must also consult diocesan-level advisory groups who bring the whole diocese perspective and ensure consistency in how scenarios are evaluated across all groupings in the archdiocese.

Transition with: *This Discernment & Decision process has two types of meetings which will help shape our grouping's feedback – then go to the next slide*

Two types of meetings through the process

Grouping conversations

- Discern scenario feedback
- Incorporates feedback or insights heard at the parishes
- Submit a Feedback Summary Report to the Commission

Grouping Feedback & Discernment Team

Parish conversations

- Enable input-gathering from the broader parish
- Keep the parish informed about what is being discussed

Parishioners, staff, school families, GFDT



Briefly pause and read slide.

Say: There will be 8 grouping sessions and 2 parish sessions. Your thoughts, comments and concerns shared here at our parish meetings will be taken into consideration by the Grouping Feedback & Discernment Team as they discern the feedback for the commission.

Transition: We've mentioned structural scenarios several times. Let's take a closer look what these are.

What are scenarios?

Scenarios = possibilities regarding new parish and school structures within the grouping that enable spiritual renewal among those communities.

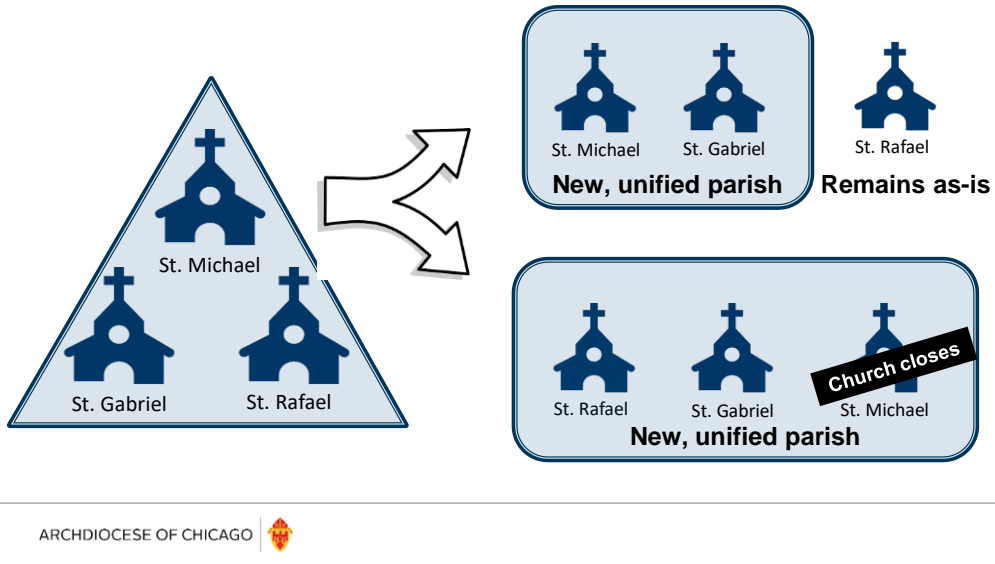
Includes:

- **Status of the parishes and church buildings**, e.g.:
 - Remain in current parish structure
 - Unite with another parish and all church buildings remain open
 - Unite with another parish and some church building(s) close
- **School status** (i.e., remain open, close, merge with another school and explore multi-campus possibilities)



Do not pause on questions or have a long discussion at this point. Q/A is coming up shortly.

Possibilities ...



This is a simple illustration on what scenarios could like. This is a generic example provided for all groupings. We will receive the specific scenarios for our grouping before the next parish session and will discuss them at the next parish session.

Review the slide with emphasis that no decisions have been made yet.

Remind them: *This process is about understanding the current needs, opportunities, and resources of the grouping and gathering discerned thoughts about what structures can best address these needs, opportunities and resources. We need to look at better ways to organize our parishes, so that each has the resources needed to invest in the mission ... not simply in the upkeep of physical structures, but rather to invest in what will achieve our Lord's commission to "go make disciples."*

Key to remember

Our Renew My Church journey is both:

Spiritual - to re-encounter Jesus Christ
as disciples and parish communities

and

Structural - to ensure our parishes have
adequate resources for vitality



Say: Throughout this Discernment & Decision process we are now engaged in, it will be important to remember that – read the slide- then say:

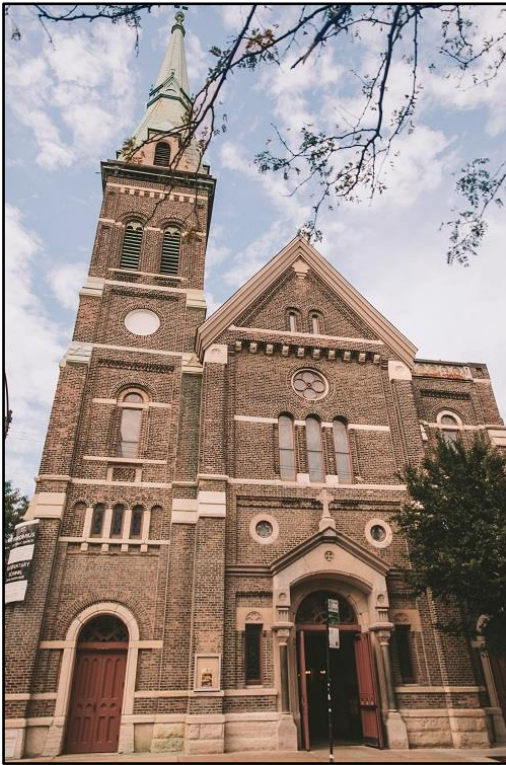
In this process will we be looking at various sacramental and operational data about each of our parishes. And when we do, at times, we may forget that the structure is key to supporting mission – the spiritual journey of Renew My Church. It will be important that, together, we remind each other that it is not just about structure for the sake of structure, rather, structure is to support spiritual renewal. Let's also keep in mind that we are called to our own spiritual renewal right now!

Why structural renewal?



Say: A natural question is, “Why structural changes?” ... “Why do we need to mess with parish configurations, and focus on buildings, if what we’re after is essentially cultural – the parish culture?”

This is, after all, what we see focused on in the news ... the changes to parish structures, closings, mergers, etc.

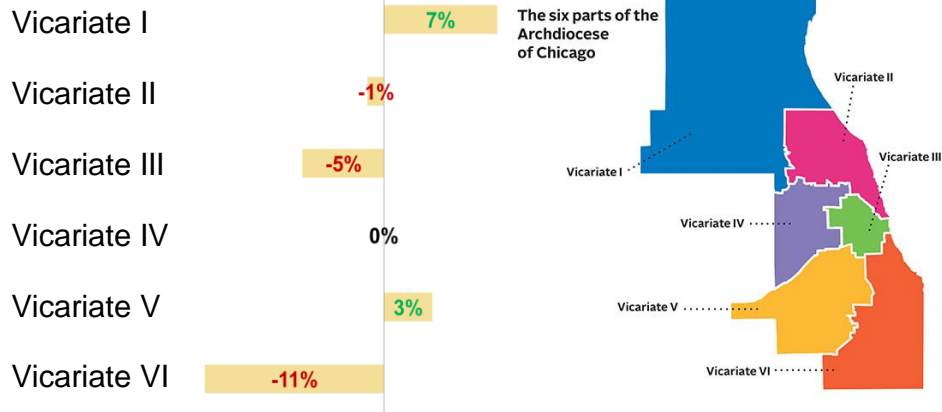


Our model of parish life was built for a different time.

First of all, our model of parish life was built for a different time and maintaining the status quo is diverting time, energy and resources away from what we need to invest in the new methods we need to reach people today.

Population Shift

Percent change by vicariate, 2000 to 2014



ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

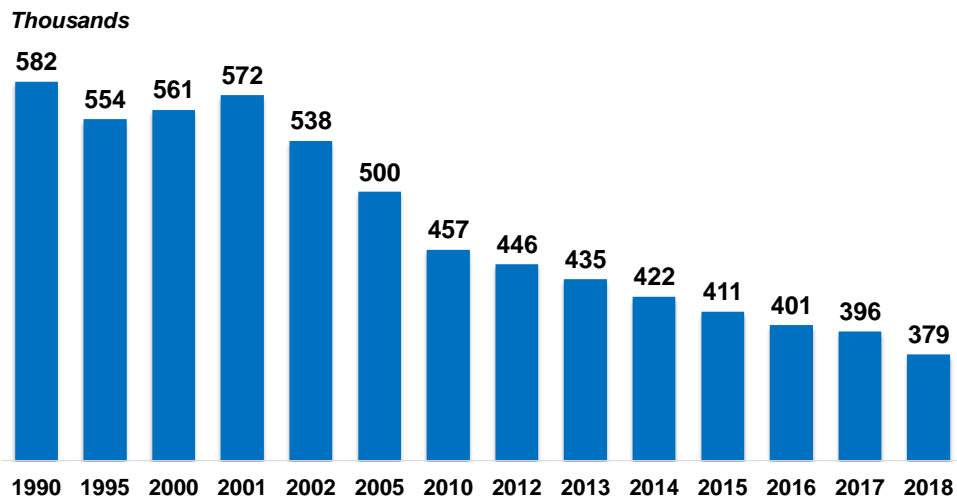


NOTE: Population is geographic population, not Catholic population

Secondly, the shift in demographics has been significant. There are so many population shifts within the boundaries of our archdiocese. And in those areas where there are fewer people, there are fewer disciples, providing fewer resources ... and those that are left are simply maintaining. They're not growing.

Another data point to consider is how Cook and Lake Counties are aging. Comparing 1990 to 2017, 32.5% fewer children were born in Cook and Lake Counties.

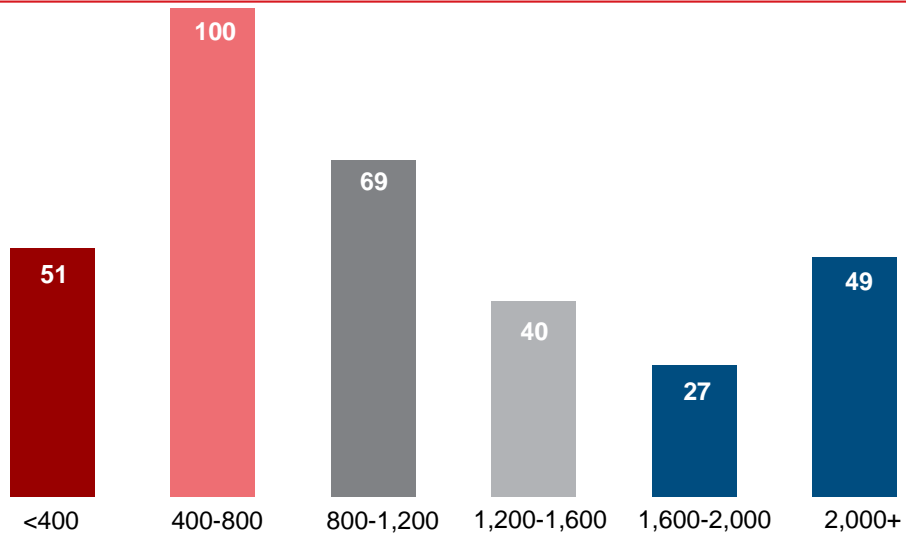
Mass attendance (October Count) has declined significantly



With many of the demographic shifts, we also see participation in our parishes on a decline. A telling measure is something called the October Count, which represents the average weekend Mass attendance, based on an annual count taken the first four weekends in October.

The trend reaches back nearly 30 years.

Parishes by October Count

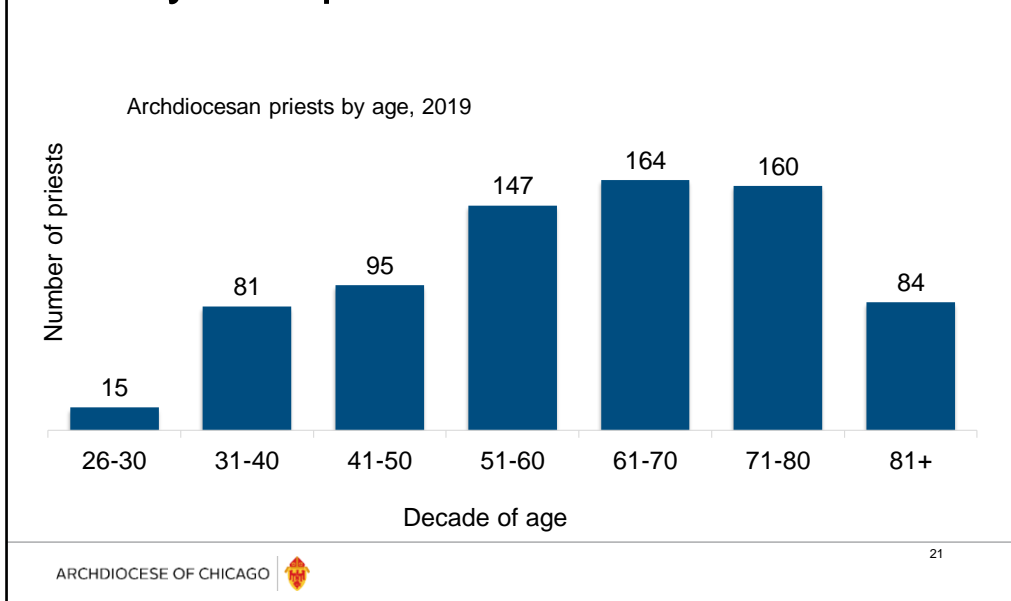


ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



A significant number of our parishes fall below the 800-count range, which is a marker for a parish to be able to sustain itself – this is why it is one of the factors – not the only one – but one of the factors that’s part of the discernment and decision phase for determining the most sustainable parish configurations.

Nearly 200 priests to retire soon



Additionally, the number of pastors we will have in the very near future. A parish needs a pastor, a shepherd for the community who can work with lay leaders to enliven a culture that fosters evangelization, forms disciples in community, and sends them out to bring others in. With fewer pastors, we need to reassess our structures and parish models.

Retirement age for priests is 70. You can see we have many priests who will soon retire and there are not nearly enough ordinations to replace them.



Invest in ministry to make disciples.

Invest in people to build community.

Invest in ways that inspire witness.

Together, as One, Local Church.



We must constantly reassess and renew how it is that we, as stewards of the resources God gives us, are investing in ministries that invite people into an encounter with Jesus Christ and form them as disciples in His Church ...

How we are investing in people to build pastoral leaders that can foster community ...

And how we are investing in programs that bring the light of Christ to a world that is marked by so many different troubles, yet areas of possibility.


Why spiritual renewal?



So, the past several minutes were spent on answering the question, “Why structural renewal? ... why changes to our parishes?”


If we merely change the structures and save money and divert that to programs is that the answer? Is that enough to renew our local Church?

The short answer is No.



Where we were


Culture **was more Christian**,
open to faith, **enabled** people
to live out their faith,
and **recognized** religion as
avenue for spiritual life



Where we are

Culture **is more secular**,
ambivalent to faith, **dissuades**
people to live out their faith, and
undermines religion as avenue
for spiritual life

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



24

Once again, it all comes back to just how radically different our world is today than it was merely 60 years ago. The cultural factors we face in this New Apostolic age require a radically different approach to evangelizing the world – not changes in what the Church teaches and celebrates. To repeat, not changes in what the Church teaches and celebrates.

Rather, changes in how she SHARES the Good News and INVITES people into the community.

As an archdiocese, we need to address structural realities to position ourselves to focus on ministry as much as possible. But the structural changes will not solve the underlying challenges by themselves...they are for the sake of positioning our communities to focus on mission and ministry for the future.

Questions???



GFDT leads Q/A using FAQ's. Facilitator makes sure people are called on, don't take too much time, get off track or get stuck in negativity.

Keep the goal of the evening in mind, reminding parishioners when necessary so the conversation stays on track.

Current realities

Before we can begin to consider grouping scenarios, we need to:

- Pause and consider current realities in our national Church, Archdiocesan Church, and in our grouping and individual parishes
- Identify our ministerial and operational strengths and challenges



Read the slide – This is a set-up for the next video.

Let's watch a brief video to help you better appreciate and understand how considering the current realities of your parishes and schools will support your feedback to the Archdiocese.

Current realities video

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Play the video.

Transition with: *Reflecting on local statistics and other information, your Grouping Feedback & Discernment Team has been prayerfully identifying the operational and ministerial strengths and challenges within our grouping*

Making Disciples, Building Communities, Inspiring Witness

Keeping before us our mission imperatives, we answer the questions:

- *What are current strengths within our grouping?*
- *What are challenges that present opportunities to unite resources and minister in renewed ways?*



The GFDT to use as an introduction to what they have been doing.

Say: At this point of our conversations we have begun to explore the strengths and opportunities in our grouping. - Then read the slide.

Our Grouping's Strengths and Challenges

Strengths identify...

- Effective mission (ministry, outreach and community)
- Ability to grow
- Operating budgets, buildings and resources that support current and future sustainability



GFDT members read the slide to explain what is meant by a strength.

Our Grouping's Strengths and Challenges

Challenges identify ...

- Needs to strengthen mission (ministry, outreach and community)
- Ways to address current challenges for growth
- Ways to better align resources (finances, buildings) to invest in ministry



GFDT members say: *Opportunities come from identifying challenges we are experiencing in our parishes. When we identify challenges, we are presented with opportunities to address them.*

Read the slide to explain what is meant by a opportunities.

Transition with: *We started this process by first visiting each other's parishes over the summer [Elaborate on the specific method you used to do so]. Then at our last meeting, we were introduced to sacramental and operational data to help us better understand our current resources and trends within our grouping. While we will continue to discuss, discover, and discern here are our initial thoughts on our groupings strengths and challenges.*

Our grouping's strengths and challenges

Our Grouping's Strengths:

GROUPING FACILITATOR CREATE BULLET POINT LISTS AND REMOVE THE YELLOW HIGHLIGHTING



Based on the strengths and opportunities shared by each of the parishes in our grouping, we identified common themes. Here are our grouping strengths.

Our grouping's strengths and challenges

Our grouping's challenges:

GROUPING FACILITATOR CREATE BULLET POINT LISTS AND REMOVE THE YELLOW HIGHLIGHTING



Here are our opportunities.

Questions or Comments

Strengths and Challenges



Say: We'd like to take the next few minutes for any questions or comments you have about the strengths and opportunities we have shared.

What comes next?

- Pick up a copy of the data shared tonight
- **NEXT PARISH CONVERSATION:**
- **DATE:[]**
 - Receive draft of conversation-starting structural scenarios
 - Provide feedback on the scenarios



Renew My Church Prayer

*Lord Jesus, you speak to us today,
as you spoke to holy men and women who
have gone before us.
In every age and in our own time, you call to us
and say: Renew My Church.*

Close with RMC prayer – split up on 3 slides so people can read it.

Renew My Church Prayer

*Pour out the gift of your Holy Spirit upon us,
and so enable us to hear you clearly
to listen to each other attentively, to imagine our
future boldly
to discern your direction wisely, to persevere in
your holy will courageously
to stay together in charity, to surrender our own
plans readily
to embrace the greater good, to hand on your gifts
to future generations.*



Renew My Church Prayer

*May we remain in the holy company of
the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles, and all the saints.
May their example and presence inspire us with patient
confidence in the work of your grace.*

*We ask this of you who live and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever. Amen*

