



November 13, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Bartholomew, St. Constance, Our Lady of Victory, St. Pascal, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Viator, and St. Wenceslaus,

First, thank you to all who have participated in the RMC discernment process. We know RMC discussions are often challenging, especially in the midst of a global pandemic. We offer particular gratitude to your pastors, principals, and leaders who are on the Grouping Feedback & Discernment Teams (GFDT) and have devoted many hours for these difficult conversations on top of their day jobs, home duties, and - for our principals and pastors; - re-opening school and parish life. Here is a recap of the process to date, current recommendations, and next steps for your groupings:

Your parishes have discerned in two separate groupings: a grouping of St. Bartholomew, St. Viator, and St. Wenceslaus; and a grouping of St. Constance, Our Lady of Victory, St. Pascal, Pope Francis Global Academy, and St. Robert Bellarmine. Each of your GFDT's submitted a feedback report to the Renew My Church Commission and had a meeting with the Commission's Executive Committee comprised of your regional vicar Bishop Manz, Vicar General Bishop Robert Casey, Cardinal's Liaison for Renew My Church Fr. Jason Malave, and the archdiocese's Chief Operating Officer, Chief Strategy Officer, and Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The task of the GFDT has been to discern feedback on the scenarios you have discussed in your groupings. The task of the Executive Committee is to then recommend a scenario to move forward, and a wider RMC Commission reviews the recommendation for consistency in how decision-making principles are applied to all groupings across the archdiocese.

Summary of grouping feedback:

The Old Irving Park Addison grouping considered two ways the parishes could move forward: one in which St. Bartholomew, St. Viator, and St. Wenceslaus all unite as one parish, and another in which St. Viator and St. Wenceslaus unite as one parish and St. Bartholomew would discern with parishes to its west. This scenario for St. Bartholomew to discern west emerged because of an observed unmet need for Hispanic ministry west of Central. The GFDT's feedback reflected a consensus preference for the three parishes to become one parish.

The Jefferson Park Portage Park grouping considered five different ways the parishes could move forward. A scenario in which St. Constance and St. Robert Bellarmine would unite as one parish and Our Lady of Victory and St. Pascal would unite as another parish gained the most support.

RMC Commission's recommendation

The RMC Commission has asked St. Bartholomew and the four parishes of Jefferson Park and Portage Park to engage in additional discernment between now and the end of the calendar year to consider potential structural changes involving St. Bartholomew and the parishes of Jefferson Park and Portage Park that would allow a more fruitful response to Hispanic ministry needs to the west/northwest. **The Commission endorses that any final structure will include St. Constance and St. Robert Bellarmine uniting as part of the same parish**, consistent with the GFDT's preferred scenario.

The RMC Commission endorses St. Viator and St. Wenceslaus moving forward with the two parishes becoming one parish. As one parish, the community would continue to worship in both churches while moving quickly to explore sale opportunities for St. Wenceslaus School building.

Rationale:

The RMC Commission sees a need to address Hispanic ministry needs to the west and northwest of St. Bartholomew based on local demographic data, including enrollment at local CPS schools.

The Executive Committee considered asking St. Bartholomew to discern with St. Ladislaus and St. Ferdinand, however this may not be a practical path forward given how large the current Polish ministries are at both St. Ferdinand and St. Ladislaus Parishes. Creating a tri-lingual parish leads to a low likelihood of success for expanding Hispanic ministry west.



Since the Archdiocese of Chicago’s Polish Council recommends discontinuing the Polish Mass at St. Pascal when RMC changes are implemented, scenarios involving St. Pascal, Our Lady of Victory, and St. Bartholomew could support extending Hispanic ministry in a bi-lingual rather than tri-lingual parish.

The Commission asked all five parishes (St. Bartholomew, St. Constance, Our Lady of Victory, St. Pascal, and St. Robert Bellarmine) to discern together which scenarios among all five parishes could address Hispanic ministry needs and the ministry needs of all parishes. The Commission endorses that any final structure will include St. Constance and St. Robert Bellarmine uniting under the same parish given their geographic proximity. **Thus, the two scenarios for initial focus will include: (1) St. Pascal, Our Lady of Victory, and St. Bartholomew uniting as one parish, with St. Constance and St. Robert Bellarmine as a second parish. And (2) St. Pascal and St. Bartholomew uniting as one parish, with Our Lady of Victory, St. Constance, and St. Robert Bellarmine uniting as a parish.**

Additionally, the RMC Commission expressed significant concerns about the manageability of St. Bartholomew, St. Viator, and St. Wenceslaus all uniting as one parish while continuing to extend its reach for Hispanic ministry to the west. After reviewing the grouping’s feedback and data, the Commission believes St. Viator and St. Wenceslaus uniting as one parish and St. Bartholomew uniting to a new parish scenario west / northwest offers a more fruitful future.

What to expect next:

St. Bartholomew, St. Constance, Our Lady of Victory, St. Pascal and St. Robert Bellarmine will engage in **additional discernment** meetings, targeting a **full and final decision before Christmas.**

St. Viator and St. Wenceslaus: While Cardinal Cupich has not yet made a formal decision, he has indicated support for moving in the direction of **St. Viator and St. Wenceslaus uniting as one parish.** While awaiting a formal decision, leadership of the two parishes are encouraged to pray together and continue building relationships as best as possible given the restrictions on gatherings currently in place.

Schools

- Based on the current and potential enrollment of **Pope Francis Global Academy, St. Robert Bellarmine School, and St. Viator School**, the RMC Executive Committee does not see a need to reconfigure their school programs and recommends they **continue in their current programs and campuses.** Each school will be the parish-governed school of its final parish configuration.
- Based on dedicated financial support, **St. Constance School also is not recommended for structural change. This will remain dependent on ongoing donor financial support.** St. Constance School will shift to a new governance structure rather than being parish-governed to avoid having one pastor administrate two schools. The pastor and parish will still provide the school pastoral and Catholic identity support.
- Due to enrollment and financial concerns, **the Office of Catholic Schools will work with St. Bartholomew School leadership to review if there is a financially viable path forward** in 2021-22 and beyond and what its administrative governance structure would be in relation to a new parish structure.

We recognize the delay in decision is hard. Thank you for your continued dedication to your parishes and schools. We know the Lord remains with us, and we will be strengthened by keeping each other in prayer. You remain in our prayers. Please keep us in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend John Manz
Episcopal Vicar, Vicariate IV

Reverend Jason Malave
Cardinal’s Liaison for Renew My Church