

Renew My Church Frequently Asked Questions

Discernment & Decisions Process

DISCERNMENT & DECISIONS	
1. What is the objective of the parish grouping process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create and renew vital and sustainable parishes that have the appropriate vision, leadership and resources to create an effective culture of evangelization that makes disciples, builds communities and inspires witness.
2. What is the objective of the Discernment & Decisions phase?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For communities, equipped with a clear understanding of the current realities, strengths and challenges of their grouping parishes, to prayerfully discern the right parish structures for future vitality, and to share their feedback with their local vicariate bishop and Cardinal Cupich.
3. What is discernment?	<p><i>“A decision-making process that honors the place of God's will in our lives. It is an interior search that seeks to align our own will with the will of God in order to learn what God is calling us to.”</i> Joe Paprocki, D.Min.</p>
4. What is the role of discernment in Renew My Church?	<p>As part of a grouping team charged with reflecting upon current parish realities and providing Cardinal Cupich and the Archdiocese feedback on potential scenarios for the parish structures in your grouping, discernment is about cooperating in the interest of the whole. It is an invitation to listen deeply to one another by asking clarifying questions and engaging to determine what is happening in the group. The power of discernment rests on faith, the ability to pray, reflect and journey together to discover the collective truth of those gathered.</p>
5. How will discernment take place in our grouping?	<p>During discernment, the group weighs how each option is informed by our mission. This helps us to be sensitive to the movement of God and to make decisions based on how we can best implement our mission in this particular situation and through this specific decision. The power of discernment is in direct proportion to the group's determination to be enlightened by one another and by the commitment of all to the common good. Because participation in communal discernment carries serious responsibilities, some general guidelines for our discernment together are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an individual, pray for the grace of indifference, the grace to be detached from the outcome and spiritually free Use each other well...other people in the process may offer insight that you want to explore. Be respectful and honest. Throughout the process, structure quiet and space to pray for the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to find a leaning towards a clear recommendation which will foster mission vitality and inspire discipleship

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<p>6. Is our church or school going to close?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decisions have been made. The purpose of the parish grouping process is to provide Cardinal Cupich with as much feedback and information as possible to make the right decisions for each faith community. • During the process, the Archdiocese will put forth some possibilities of what final outcomes <u>could be</u>. But these are conversation starters only – the grouping team has the opportunity to offer other possibilities. • These conversation-starters will be shared at our second parish conversation. • School structures will be reviewed by the Office of Catholic Schools under a separate process.
<p>7. How many parishes and schools are going to close? I heard in the news 100 will close.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no pre-determined or targeted number of closures. • What the Archdiocese will do through this process is evaluate how to organize our parishes so that they are vibrant, vital and sustainable long-term, of course taking into consideration the reality of fewer pastors as well as other key factors.
<p>8. What is a grouping?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A grouping is a set of parishes and schools that will, together, build a renewed, vital, and sustainable Catholic presence for the good of all people in the grouping by first considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can we benefit from a more collaborative use of combined human and financial resources? ○ What are some of the structural challenges we face, i.e., building conditions, shrinking populations, parking? ○ How can we be more effective through collaboration to achieve our mission of making disciples, building communities and inspiring witness?
<p>9. Who is the Grouping Feedback & Discernment Team (GFDT) and what do they do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GFDT is a gathering of leaders from each parish in a grouping. These leaders are invited by their pastor to take on this role and are typically selected based on a level of prior experience in supporting the mission of the parish, their capacity to bring forth an open mind and heart as to what the Holy Spirit is asking of the community, and the ability to participate in the entire process, which spans several months. • The team meets for 3-4 months to discuss and prayerfully discern the ministerial and operational strengths and challenges of the parishes within their particular grouping. • Eventually the GFDT will provide feedback and information about its grouping for the RMC leadership to review and present recommendations to the Cardinal so he can make final decisions regarding potential changes to parish structures.
<p>10. How was our grouping determined (i.e., who is in our grouping)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupings were determined through a consultative process that includes feedback and input from the local Vicar (auxiliary bishop), deans, pastors, parish councils and other lay leadership. • Groupings are also based on recommendations from the Archdiocese taking into consideration geography (parishes and schools relatively close in proximity), commonalities (e.g., similar communities served), and relationships (e.g. occasionally attend Mass at more than one parish in the grouping).

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<p>11. How much impact will our feedback actually have? A decision has already been made, hasn't it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinal Cupich has made it clear that there will be no decisions on future grouping structures <u>until he receives the local input</u>. The process will involve giving feedback and offering alternatives to a draft of possible scenarios offered by the Archdiocese. • While Cardinal Cupich has the responsibility to make final decisions, he has insisted that local communities have the duty to provide input to help him understand the situation and which possibilities will be best for the future. • To get the discussion going on the local level in a way that is attentive to the realities of the parishes involved, the Archdiocese will offer potential scenarios during the process. However, these initial scenarios are intended to provoke discussion and do not represent the only possibilities. • The groupings will have the opportunity to offer alternatives scenarios. Feedback will be submitted on all viable possibilities discussed.
<p>12. Who is on the Commission? Is it the same Commission for all groupings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission consists of both laity and clergy from each of the 6 geographical archdiocesan vicariates. It is one Commission used for all groupings. • The Commission includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 lay representatives from each of the Archdiocese's 6 vicariates (12 people), ○ 1 representative from the Archdiocese's Pastoral Council ○ 2 pastor representatives ○ Vicar General and Chief Operating Officer (2 people) ○ Each regional vicar participates in the review of his respective groupings ○ 3 priest representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cardinal's Liaison for Renew My Church ▪ Vicar for Professional and Pastoral Development of Priests ▪ Priest Placement Board representative • An important role of the Commission is to ensure consistency in approach across all groupings.
<p>13. What does it mean to combine or merge or unify parishes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means that two or more currently independent parishes unite as one parish organization, led by one pastor and staff team, with one set of financial statements, one budget, one Parish Council, one Finance Council. • A combined or unified parish may retain some or even all churches as active worship sites of the combined parish. • In most cases, parish combinations in <i>Renew My Church</i> will take the form of creating a new parish with a new name. This means that Parish A and Parish B would come together to form a new Parish C. • We have also seen additional options during the last few waves of the RMC process, including parishes becoming missions of other parishes (rather than a completely separate entity) or a smaller parish merging into a larger parish without a name change and with minimal structural change to the larger parish.

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<p>14. What happens to our money if we close or merge?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assets and liabilities of a parish that closes or merges follow the people to the new parish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Parish A and Parish B merge and become Parish C, the assets and liabilities of Parishes A and B become the assets and liabilities of new Parish C. • If Parish A closes and merges into Parish B, the assets and liabilities of Parish A become part of Parish B.
<p>15. Isn't this all about the priest shortage?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. Our models of evangelization and parish life were developed for a different age and culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of faith is in decline and today our culture is increasingly secular and opposed to faith. • There is less understanding of Christian imagination and language, and Christian moral teaching is often rejected. • The breakdown of the family; violence and lack of respect for life and human dignity; social ills of unemployment, racism and poverty all point to a world in need of witnesses to the compassion and redemption of Jesus Christ. • Models of evangelization and parish life need to change – including evaluating many key factors e.g., changing demographics, the conditions and affordability of our buildings, and our human and financial resources. • <i>Statistics that may aid the conversation:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>1 in 5 children baptized Catholic do not receive 1st Communion</i> • <i>2 in 5 children baptized are not confirmed</i> • <i>85% confirmed stop practicing the faith by 21</i> • <i>36% percent of Millennials claim no affiliation with organized religion.</i> • <i>50% of Millennials raised Catholic no longer identify as Catholic today (Public Religion Research Institute)</i> • <i>In the Archdiocese of Chicago, Mass attendance has decreased by 27% over the past 20 years.</i>