

INVITATION TO PRESS CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CATHOLICS ORGANIZE TO STOP DESTRUCTION OF THEIR CHURCHES

SAY ARCHDIOCESE IS ENGAGED IN A “MONEY GRAB”

RECORD NUMBER OF APPEALS FILED IN VATICAN COURTS

- WHO:** [Saving Our Catholic Churches – the “God Squad!”](#), an ad hoc group formed by Catholic faithful from around the Archdiocese of Chicago
- WHAT:** Chicagoland Catholics are discovering that many parishes and churches that are vibrant and financially healthy are being closed under the Archdiocese of Chicago’s Renew My Church program. To date, 25 parishes and churches have taken their fight to the Vatican courts!
- WHERE:** In front of St. Anthony Church (Bridgeport)
518 W 28th Place, Chicago, IL 60616
- WHEN:** Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 11 a.m.
- WHY:** Representatives of more than **25 churches** targeted for closure by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago have come together to demand that Cardinal Blase Cupich stop their liquidation.

[Archdiocese of Chicago’s Renew My Church program](#)

<https://www.renewmychurch.org/>

- The Archdiocese of Chicago’s **Renew My Church** program began in 2013 and its goal was touted as a “strategic plan” for “renewal” but many parishioners say that it is anything but.

- The name itself implies that all churches will be renewed but parishioners soon discovered that the program was merging parishes and closing churches, regardless of their vibrancy or the vital role they play in meeting the needs of their congregations and the communities in which they exist.
- In many cases, parishes that are financially healthy with a vibrant congregation and parish social life, are being merged with parishes with debt,

Catholic canon law ignored

- Canon law, the law of the Catholic Church, requires that churches be transferred to Catholic groups willing to maintain them as Catholic sacred space. Instead however, the Archdiocese is focusing on their sale for secular uses, listing properties with commercial brokers who are marketing parish and church properties for **real estate development**.
- Saving Our Catholic Churches members are profoundly disturbed by the Chicago Archdiocese's seemingly singular focus on **liquidating the real estate of parishes** it has eliminated, in spite of the requirements of Catholic canon law.
- In cases where **funded plans** were presented to the Archdiocese which would have allowed former parish churches to continue to exist as chapels or shrines, the Archdiocese has ignored them and moved to sell them
- **Canon law gives parishioners rights** to take their churches into their own hands by forming groups dedicated to raising all of the funds necessary to care for them as Catholic sacred spaces. Parishioners **are not informed** of these rights by their pastors or by the Archdiocese, even when asked. This lack of information and what is believed to be intentional disinformation on the part of the Archdiocese regarding the status of churches, i.e. when they are actually "closed" has led to the faithful of the Archdiocese being constructively deprived of their rights under canon law, including their right to mount a valid challenge to the closure of their parishes and churches through the filing of a canonical appeal.

To Teach Who Christ Is ("TTWCI") fundraising campaign

<https://giving.archchicago.org/ttwci/historic-campaign>

- The Archdiocese of Chicago embarked on a historic and ambitious fundraising campaign to raise \$350 million for "capital and endowment" funds. The goal was exceeded and over \$423 million has been raised so far, with 65% being collected.

- Each parish was assigned a target goal, even parishes with significant debt. The campaign was designed to leave 60% for the parish and the remaining 40% to be diverted to the Archdiocese of Chicago. Many parishes used these funds to make capital improvements including roof replacements, new furnaces, tuck pointing, etc., only to find their parishes shut down a couple years later.
- Why would the Archdiocese create a program where 40% of the funds raised are diverted to the Archdiocese instead of allowing poorer parishes to use all of the funds raised, or allow them to use these funds to pay down debt?

Saving Our Catholic Churches – the “God Squad!”

- Our volunteers will continue to work with parishioners across the Archdiocese of Chicago informing them of their rights under canon law, as well as the rights of a “parish” and a “church”.
- We are in the process of establishing a **legal fund** for canon attorneys in Rome, which are needed if and when an appeal reaches the Vatican’s higher court, the Apostolica Signatura.
- Our ranks are growing not only in Chicago but across the country. Many of our God Squad live in other States and volunteer by helping us with research, social media, etc.

The St. Stephen Protomartyr Project – Brody Hale Esq.

- A nonprofit group dedicated to the preservation of historic, Catholic churches as Catholic sacred spaces led by Massachusetts attorney Brody Hale, also a canonical advisor who has been fighting parish and church closures for over 17 years
- Saving Our Catholic Churches is partnering with the St. Stephen Protomartyr Project to apply pressure to Bishops across the US stop treating churches like “poker chips in Vegas” and to start treating them like the sacred spaces they are. The St. Stephen Protomartyr Project will guide Chicago Catholics through the steps necessary to establish nonprofit entities which can raise the funds necessary to preserve their churches.

INTERVIEWS: All present parish representatives will be available for interview. Contact info may also be found below, or please contact us for specific info on any parish/church that has filed for an appeal. Interview arrangements can be made.

OTHER INFORMATION / VISUALS

List of Parishes & Churches Who Have Filed Canonical Appeals:

1. Holy Cross – Immaculate Heart of Mary (Brighton Park) – **orange rated**
2. Our Lady of Grace
3. Our Lady of Victory - **orange rated**
 - Susanna Ernest at email: susanna.ernst@sbcglobal.net
4. St. Adalbert Church (Pilsen) **orange rated**
 - Contact: Julie Sawicki, President – Society of St. Adalbert (“SOSA”) at email: SocietyOfStAdalbert@gmail.com or cell (312) 804-5113
 - **YouTube video:** <https://youtu.be/WDBDKIWfdSc>
5. St. Anthony (Bridgeport)
 - Contact: Brody Hale Esq. at brody.hale@alumni.tufts.edu or (413) 281-5421
6. St. Bartholomew (Portage Park)
7. St. Bride (South Shore)
8. St. Clotilde (Chatham)
9. St. Columba (Hegewisch)
10. St. Constance (Jefferson Park)
11. St. Cornelius (Jefferson Park)
12. St. Dorothy (Chatham)
 - Contact: LaShawn Cobb email: cobblashawn@gmail.com or tel (312) 593-7450
 - Contact: Desiree Sanders email: desireesanders7@yahoo.com or tel (773) 858-9367
13. St. Francis de Sales, 10155 S Ewing, Chicago (East Side)
14. St. Gerard Majella (Markham, IL)
 - Contact: Juan Degollado email: juanrdegollado@gmail.com or tel (312) 833-2514
15. St. George, 9546 S Ewing, Chicago (South Chicago) **orange rated**
16. St. Ignatius (Rogers Park) **orange rated**

17. St. Joseph (Summit, IL)

- Contact: Karen Sabatini, email: (708) 594-3405

18. St. Maria Goretti (Schiller Park)

19. St. Maurice (McKinley Park)

20. St. Matthias (Lincoln Square)

- Contact: Virginia Mann at email: Virginia@virginiamann.com or Cell (312) 420-3344

21. St. Michael the Archangel (Brighton Park)

22. St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr (Belmont-Cragin)

23. St. Victor (Calumet City, IL)

- Contact: George Grenchik at email: gigrenchik@aol.com or cell (708) 862-1568

24. St. Thecla (Norwood Park)

25. St. Wenceslaus (Avondale)

SPECIAL MENTION - URGENT

St. Joseph Catholic Church, Caybery, IL (Joliet Diocese)

A precious church, established in 1867 as a mission, is in danger of demolition. Despite an offer to purchase the church from the Diocese of Joliet, as well as a generous donor who would fund all repairs, the Joliet Diocese is refusing to allow Caybery residents to maintain their church.

VIDEO

<https://www.facebook.com/stjosephchurchcaberyillinois/videos/1255433407835734>

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