

EXCERPT FROM FR. TOM'S 2nd HOMILY – DECEMBER 9, 2018

First of all, I want to thank all of our Parishioners who were present on Thursday, November 29 at St. Colette's Church for the announcement of the Cardinal's decision. Of the four Parishes present, St. Thomas of Villanova had the biggest number of attendees. We were proud of you.

Secondly, I would like to again thank the Parishioners who are on the "Renew My Church" Committee—John Breit, Mary Brinkman, Theresa Hubert, Jane Murguia, Steve Korney, Father Marcin, Celeste Kerr (who has since stepped down) and Mike Nix (who has now replaced Celeste.) This Committee worked very hard and very many hours and attended many meetings and they should be applauded for their dedication to the future of St. Thomas of Villanova Parish. If anything, when we submitted our proposals last May, we thought we knew what the final decisions would be.

Thirdly, I would like to share with you that none of us knew what the Cardinal's decision was until that afternoon. The Archdiocesan officials—Bishop Alberto Rojas and Fr. Jason Malave—met with the Pastors and the Pastoral Staffs of our Palmeadow Heights Grouping at 4:30pm. Then, they met with the "Renew My Church" Committees at 6:00pm—followed by the meeting with the Parishioners from all four parishes at 7:00pm. I would like to share with all of you the decision statement which was announced, handed out and discussed that evening:

"The Archdiocese of Chicago has provided the following update on the PalMeadow Heights Renew My Church parish grouping, which includes Misión San Juan Diego (Arlington Heights), St. Colette Parish and School (Rolling Meadows), St. Theresa Parish and School (Palatine) and St. Thomas of Villanova Parish and School (Palatine). The PalMeadow Heights grouping began the review and discernment process in the Spring of 2018. The Grouping Feedback and Discernment Team, which was made up of representatives from each of the parishes, met to review and discern the future church, parish and school structures for these communities in Arlington Heights, Palatine, and Rolling Meadows. Based on their meetings and discussions with the larger parish community, they submitted a report for the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, which included representatives from across the Archdiocese.

The Commission met to review the feedback report and other materials and information, including demographic data, financial summaries, and parish and grouping trends.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, and the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council recently met to discuss the Commission's recommendation and other considerations. Based on that meeting, the Council raised additional questions that require additional time to allow for more discussion and discernment regarding the right future for this grouping. The Renew My Church team, with Bishop Rojas, and the vicariate team will re-engage the parish communities for further consultation. A decision regarding these parishes is expected no sooner than mid-January.

As previously communicated in September 2018 by the pastors of the grouping, with regards to schools, it was determined that the three schools would be given a period of two years – subject to hitting certain minimum benchmarks - to pursue independent

plans for growth and vitality after which the three schools will come together again (in October 2020) to discuss the best way forward. In two years, the new process to determine a way forward for schools would allow ample time for the communities of all four parishes to provide input. As always, the goal of any future discussions of our schools is to make sure we provide a strong and sustainable Catholic education option for our collective communities."

Needless to say, all of those present were very disappointed that our proposal was rejected primarily by the Presbyteral Council. The Presbyteral Council is one of the primary consultative bodies for the Cardinal and especially for the "Renew My Church" Program. The two issues which they would like us to focus on and resolve are: (1) With the current and increasing shortage of priests, can the Priest Placement Board come up with three new Pastors? (St. Colette's Pastor is on a medical leave and not returning there. Mision San Juan Diego's Pastor is also on a leave. And, I will be retiring in June.) They recommended our four Parish grouping needs to be reduced to three Pastors. (2) Mision San Juan Diego has outgrown their campus and needs more space! (Remember, for years now, they have used our Education Building for their Religious Education Program and they also utilize our facilities for retreats and other Parish events.)

Our four Parish "Renew My Church" Committees, while frustrated are determined to seek appropriate proposals and resolution of the issues for the Archdiocese of Chicago. Our next step is for the two Pastors (St. Theresa and us) and the two Administrators (St. Colette and Mision San Juan Diego) to meet with the Archdiocese to thoroughly comprehend the issues and then, to reconvene the "Renew My Church" Parish Committees for new and additional proposals. The Archdiocese wants our new proposals by January 15! Needless to say, all of the Committees feel this deadline is unrealistic. So, please, pray for wisdom and grace for us. I will keep you posted as to our progress and development.