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January 21, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As a new year begins, I want to assure you of my prayers for you, your families, and your parish communities. I also want to share some important information about *Renew My Church*.

As you may already know, *Renew My Church* is an archdiocesan initiative that involves all the people of the archdiocese and their faith communities. The goal of *Renew My Church* is to make our parishes more vital and more sustainable. We do this not on our own initiative but in response to the call of Christ, which was first heard by those disciples recounted in today's gospel. The call is the same as it was in those early days of the Church: to be His disciples and take responsibility for carrying on His mission in our time. The place to start is by working together to make our parishes vibrant communities that form missionary disciples of Jesus. This will also mean being realistic about our limited human and material resources and evaluating how our present structures may need to be organized differently to keep pace with changing realities.

A very important part of the process of *Renew My Church* are the parish groupings that will work to plan for the future and discern where God is leading us. After receiving consultation and feedback from you, the priests of the diocese, and parish pastoral councils, we are announcing the groupings today. Your parish will be part of a grouping that will enable you to assess, plan, and discern how best to meet the needs of the future in a way that is both reasonable and in conformity with God's will for us.

Each grouping will have guidance for its process of reflection and discernment. Everything, however, begins with building relationships across parishes in a given grouping. That means getting to know each other and perhaps sharing some common projects or events, such as retreats, lectures, or community service for those in need. With future guidance and facilitation, this will develop in more specific planning and discernment directions. Today, your pastor will share a list of the parishes in your grouping.

Renew My Church will undoubtedly involve leaving behind familiar patterns and demand that we move outside our comfort zones. In a word, it will require sacrifice, but that has always been true for the Church whenever we have taken up new challenges. I am convinced that we are up to the task, and willing to do whatever it takes to build our capacity to pass on our faith to future generations. That is what is at stake in the *Renew My Church* process. I encourage you to become involved and pray for its success.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Card. Blase J. Cupich".

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago