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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
**Archdiocese Bans Masses at Shrine of Christ the King, Threatening
Future of Historic Woodlawn Church**

CHICAGO, IL—Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich has banned the celebration of Masses and other sacraments at the Shrine of Christ the King, 6401 S. Woodlawn Ave. This effectively ends the Institute of Christ the King's activities in the city, [a sign at the property announces](#). Save the Shrine is alarmed at the implications for the historic church, concerned about the freedom to worship of its congregation, and troubled by the resulting impact on neighbors and the greater Woodlawn community. The organization is shocked by this announcement and is calling on the Archdiocese and the City to ensure the long-term safety of the Shrine.

"We know what happens to vacant properties in Chicago; they deteriorate quickly and put the property, the residents, and the community at risk," said Mike Medina, Woodlawn Avenue Residents Association president. In the six years following a fire that devastated the landmark building, preservationists, Shrine faithful, and community members have continued to show their commitment to a full restoration of the Shrine. The church has had two severe fires. The last, in 2015, devastated the property and destroyed the roof. All fire damage has been repaired, as well as the installation of additional safety features. The financial investment has been substantial, with the preservation organization Save the Shrine and the Shrine's congregation raising a collective \$3-plus million in the full expectation that congregants will be able to worship in the historic restored church, that it will remain protected from demolition or substantial alteration, and that it will function as a cornerstone of the Woodlawn community.

In 2016, the Archdiocese deeded the Shrine to the Institute of Christ the King. However, the deed includes the option for the property to revert back to the Archdiocese. Save the Shrine will monitor this situation and is committed to advocating for the Woodlawn community as many questions remain.

"In the past, the Archdiocese has not been a responsible steward of this property and recent developments are a cause for concern," said Save co-founder Gabriel Piemonte and past board president of the Southside Center of Hope, formerly St. Martin de Porres House of Hope. "We and other community stakeholders are requesting that the Archdiocese be transparent in the decision making process to ensure the future of the building reflects its highest and best use."

The Coalition to Save the Shrine formed in January 2016, after the Archdiocese of Chicago applied for a demolition permit for the historic landmark, which had suffered significant damage in an October 2015 fire. A steady stream of press coverage and more than \$650,000 in pledges in less than two months secured the property, which was then deeded to the Institute of Christ the King, the religious order that was occupying the property when it burned. The Shrine of Christ the King is a Chicago landmark; it was landmarked as St. Gelasius in 2003, and originally constructed as St. Clara Church in 1927.

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