

May 24, 2018

Dear Members of Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Joseph Parishes,

I am writing to explain the change in the Weekend Mass Schedule that affects our parishes. The starting point of this change is the reality that there are fewer priests available for service in the Diocese of Youngstown. Facing this reality, some parishes throughout the Diocese have already changed the schedule of Masses that are offered. Those parishes that have not yet changed the schedule will be doing so within the next few years. In my judgment the time to make this change is the present.

In December 2017, I appointed Jim Merhaut to lead a team of two parishioners from each parish to plan for the Mass schedule change to be implemented beginning the weekend of June 30-July 1, 2018. The Project Team consisted of Peggy Bennet and Tom McGahagan, appointed by Anthony Kobak of IHM, and Susan Paczak and Mike Metzinger of St. Joseph, appointed by me. The Team engaged in a variety of forms of listening to the members of both parishes. The most impressive form was the online and paper survey that had 759 responses!

The goal of the team was to facilitate vibrant Catholic worship and healthy spiritual formation through weekly Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated by the Pastor and the parishioners. The schedule that I have approved is Sunday Mass at IHM at 8:00 am and 11:00 am. The Saturday Mass is 4:30 pm at St. Joseph and Sunday Mass at 9:30 am. This schedule makes it possible for me to be present at the weekly Eucharistic Liturgies at both parishes. More than 55% of the parishioners who participated in the survey believe it is important to have one priest consistently preside at weekend Masses.

Our parishioners are far more concerned about worshipping at their home parish than they are about the time of day they worship. 64% of St. Joseph Parishioners prefer Sunday Mass and 71% of IHM Parishioners prefer Sunday Mass. 36% of St. Joseph Parishioners prefer Saturday Mass while 29% of IHM Parishioners prefer Saturday Mass.

Based on the recommendation of the Team I chose the new schedule while considering that some parishioners will not be pleased. I recognize change is difficult for all of us. Each parish will have to adjust and accommodate the loss of one weekend Mass. I acknowledge that parishioners will have to change their own weekend schedules. However, I also recognize that the schedule of Masses has changed throughout the more than 50-year history of each parish. There was a time when each parish had two priests assigned.

In closing, I am confident that the new schedule will become part of our everyday lives within a few months. I am hopeful that you will receive this new schedule gracefully and continue to actively participate in the life of your parish.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Very Rev. Gregory F. Fedor, V.F.