

Bulletin Article for May 6, 2018 (New Sunday Mass times)

In a training session for new pastors, Fr. Ron Hicks shared that pastors face a variety of challenges including: families in crisis, the unchurched, parish debt, etc. By far, Fr. Hicks shared, the most difficult challenge is a change of Sunday Mass times. He said, "Pray that you will never have to do this."

Significant life changes including a new residence, new school, new job or the loss of a loved one are stressful. We feel unnerved, unglued by grief and the struggle to establish a "new normal." This is also true in our spiritual life. Spiritual routines, including daily prayer and Sunday Mass, are the ground of our relationship with Jesus Christ. In keeping the 3rd Commandment, *Honor the Sabbath*, some Catholics create spiritual routines including an established Sunday Mass time, maybe with a particular pew. For other Catholics, Sunday Mass times are fluid depending on the plans for the day.

Hence, our new Sunday Mass times will affect us uniquely. Personal factors, from personality type to family plans to work responsibilities, will influence our reaction to the new Sunday Mass schedule. Some of us may have significant frustration and anger at how our lives will be impacted while others may simply post the bulletin clipping highlighting the new Mass times on their refrigerator door and adapt.

In every case, today's Scripture readings about love and the working of the Holy Spirit speak to our upcoming Sunday Mass schedule change. In the midst of our parish transition, the love of God (and neighbor) will make the difference in how we adjust. **God is love.** In Jesus' name, please invite the Holy Spirit into your experience of this change. Share with the Lord any frustrations or anger this change causes to your Sunday Mass routine. The Holy Spirit can guide you to a new grace-filled and efficacious Sunday ritual.

With much listening, deliberation and prayer, our new Sunday Mass times beginning the weekend of June 30-July 1, 2018 will be: Saturday at 5 pm; Sunday at 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 am, and 5 pm.

The parish poll gave no clear choice. Many parishioners requested the above new schedule, while many requested the other two possible schedules. There were two significant points that heavily influenced our decision. First, our Sunday 9:30 Mass is our highest attended on Sunday morning. Leaving this time intact meant the largest amount of people would be unaffected. Second, to lessen the impact of the schedule change, balancing the time change on both the first and last Mass was desired. On Sunday morning, beginning July 1, the first Mass will begin 45 minutes later and the last Mass 60 minutes earlier. However, the other options meant one of the Mass start times would be impacted disproportionately by 75 to 90 minutes. Rather than a lopsided time change, we attempted to "split the difference" of the impact between the earliest and latest Sunday morning Masses.

Please know that St. Damian is not alone in present or future significant changes. Throughout the Archdiocese, the Church is experiencing changes. Our neighbor, St. Julie Billiart, is changing their Sunday Mass times. They are reducing from 4 to 3 Sunday morning masses beginning July 1. Other neighboring parishes are discussing how to change Sunday Mass times soon (July 1, 2018) or later (January 1 or July, 2019).

From changes and transitions can flow great blessings too. Attending a new time may introduce you to new people or reconnect you to old friends. The increased congregation sizes at our Masses will strengthen our singing and invigorate our worship. When two or more gather in Jesus' name he is present!

Please pray for our St. Damian family as we prepare for the new Sunday Mass schedule to begin on July 1. Together, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we grow in faith, hope and love.