

Town Meeting Minutes - Monday, April 9, 2018 at 1:30 PM - St. Alphonsus Church

Questions with Responses:

1. Will the 5PM regional Mass be at St. Alphonsus Church?
Response: Yes.
2. Will weddings and other sacraments still be celebrated at our own home parishes?
Response: Yes, the priests will rotate within each cluster.
3. Will the finances be separate?
Response: Yes, each parish will continue to have their own accounts.
4. Was parking a consideration when making the new schedules?
Response: Parking was not an issue in Cluster 2, but in Cluster 1 it was a consideration with regards to the parking situation when comparing St. Patrick's in Cato and St. Joseph's in Weedsport.
5. Why does St. Mary's get so many Masses when the parking there is nonexistent?
Response: St. Mary's has a profoundly higher Mass attendance and number of registered parishioners, therefore that variable was given higher consideration than parking availability.
6. Nursing home ministry must be considered when making Mass schedule changes. The nursing homes have a strict schedule they must follow and changes in Mass schedule for some of the Churches would be a problem.
Response: Ministries such as this one will be coordinated after the final Mass schedule is chosen, this is an important part of the process and will take place prior to implementation of Mass schedule.
7. When will this schedule take place?
Response: When any of our priests move to senior priest status or a new appointment. There is no way to predict when that will be.
8. Will envelopes from different parishes put into different collections be sent to the correct parish?
Response: Yes, that is the procedure now and it will continue to be practiced.
9. Is this a cluster situation like what happened with St. Francis and St. Hyacinth churches becoming one parish and getting a new name?
Response: No, that was a merger, this is a cluster situation. In a cluster, it is the pastoral administration only that is consolidated. There still remain separate parishes and corporations.
10. It was mentioned that the Mass schedule needed to go down to 12-16 Masses, the schedules presented include 16 Masses, will there be another planning phase in the future to get to a 12 Mass schedule for each cluster?
Response: In the beginning of the Mass scheduling process we were asked to create Mass schedules with 12 Masses per cluster. As the conversation continued the priests in our area felt that they could and would celebrate 4 Masses/weekend to provide the least disruption to the parishioners; that is why we have created a 16 Mass schedule for each cluster. However, there are priests in the Diocese that may not be able to maintain that schedule, due to various reasons one being health issues, and at that time the schedule might have to be changed or the possibility of a retired priest helping that particular priest may be an option. Until that time comes, there is no way to predict the variables that will be involved. Therefore, this would have to be dealt with individually by each cluster and additional changes could take place.
11. A statement was made that "Every Parish has at least two Masses a weekend", that isn't true.
Response: Parish vs. church worship site

Example: In the Our Lady of the Snow **Parish**, the scenarios show a Mass at 2 of the three **Church Sites** each weekend, one at St. Patrick's and one St. Joseph's.

Our community would be transitioning to two clusters NOT mergers. Each parish would maintain their own name, bank accounts etc. Each cluster would be assigned one Pastor and one Parochial Vicar.

12. There are many foreign priests, why aren't we using this resource to solve the shortage?

Response: We are presently blessed with Priests from other nations serving in our Diocese; that needs to be an arrangement between their Bishop and ours. Other nations are also in need of more Priests.

13. In the past when Parishes have clustered the priests must resign and then re-apply, will that take place here? And if so will the remaining four priests receive first preference?

Response: This plan will not take place until one or two priests leave our community, meaning move to senior priest status or move/are re-assigned to another parish/community. This is a process that is decided with careful thought and consideration by our Bishop and the priest personnel board. Because we do not know when this may take place, we also do not have the answers to who would be leaving or would be staying or applying.

14. Was youth attendance considered in the Mass scheduling process? They are our future and need to be considered.

Response: Yes, young families were a consideration. Our youth population is very important as well, and our new religious education director, Carlo Stebbings, is heading up a community wide youth group now and has plans for a middle school youth group in the near future. Where the groups are held will play an important role in deciding where the regional Mass will be celebrated long term.

15. What is included in our "region"?

Response: Holy Family, Our Lady of the Snow, Sacred Heart, Ss. Mary & Martha, St. Alphonsus, St. Ann's and St. Mary's.

16. Was the decision made to eliminate Masses at certain churches based on attendance?

Response: Yes, attendance was one of the considerations used to make the schedule scenarios. With the new schedules there will be shifting in attendance numbers, will there be a reevaluation in the future taking the new attendance numbers into consideration?

Response: There will be an evaluation done after a full year in case any fine tuning of the Mass schedules is warranted. These Mass schedule plans will only take effect when the number of priests serving our community declines, because of the lack of priest availability not Mass attendance.

17. The new schedule will cause people to attend other churches than their own parish, have you considered the financial impact?

Response: Yes, our hope is that parishioners will continue to use their envelopes, with our present system of sending envelopes back to the home parish there will not be a substantial impact.

18. Regarding the foreign priests.... The Diocese needs to teach them how to speak English! Many can't understand what they are saying, so we are missing the entire homily. Vigorous training needs to take place.

Response: We are very grateful that our brother priests have come to the United States to help us and I believe you may be referring to accents as opposed to the English language. All the priests from foreign countries do speak English.

Comments/Suggestions:

19. Will still belong to our old parish or to the new cluster?
Responses: No, this is not a merger situation. Each parish will continue to have its own identity.
20. The recent use of incense on a regular basis is the reason many people have left certain parishes. My hope is that those parishes are not being punished because of low attendance due to the incense.
21. Why is Holy Family the parish that is chosen to have their Saturday evening Mass 1 ½ hours later? It is listed as a disadvantage so you obviously know it and still made this decision. But why? We are already losing a Mass AND we have to have our Mass moved 1 ½ hour later? It's not fair at all and we hope you will rethink these decisions. NO ONE will attend a 6:00PM Mass on a Saturday evening, so we are just left with one Mass option. You may as well shut the door and turn off the lights now.
22. Sacred Heart should be given the later Saturday evening Mass rather than Holy Family, since Holy Family is already losing a Mass. (This was mentioned by 4 separate attendees)
23. Is an hour and a half necessary for time between Masses?
24. The 6PM Mass should be at 5:30 PM or earlier because:
 - too late for our seniors
 - during the dinner hour
 - too dark in the winter months
 - musicians have other jobs to get to
25. Suggestions to help in travel time for priests:
 - Decrease the amount of time for Homily (8 minutes).
 - Shorten music by decreasing the number of verses sung
 - Greet parishioners before Mass rather than after and vice versa as schedule allows
26. Homilies should be kept short in general, approximately 8 minutes at most.
27. Would prefer St. Francis and St. Hyacinth sites each have a Sunday Mass time, not rotate.
28. Thank you to the Team members and all those involved in this difficult process, parishioners need to realize that our priests are over worked already and consolidating Mass schedules would actually help in keeping Churches open and give the priests the appropriate rest time for their mental and physical wellbeing.
29. The sudden use of incense over the past 4-6 months has caused a decrease in attendance at certain Churches.
30. Ss. Mary and Martha went through clustering process in 2005 and then a merger in 2012, they should not be made to sacrifice any more, they need to keep the 10 AM Mass time.
31. Will this "shifting" of parishioners influence CMA goals assigned?
Response: There are many variables in the formula of the CMA goal amounts assigned to each parish, that same formula will continue to be used.
32. Have order priests ever been considered?
Response: Order priests are presently serving in the Diocese of Rochester as pastors, assisting priests and in colleges and universities.
33. These new schedules and our existing Mass schedules in our community do not take into consideration those who do shift work or that work two jobs. A weekend Mass prior to 7AM is needed in our community. Please consider this population of our community.