

Building a Sustainable and Fair Mass Schedule

The Mass options before you are the result of many months of prayer, reflection, and extensive consultation. My goal in presenting these options is to ensure that all our parish communities continue to have access to weekend liturgies while creating a schedule that is fair, balanced, and sustainable for the long-term. Understandably, each community may experience both a sense of loss and a sense of gain. Our ultimate goal is greater than convenience it is to bring our three communities together into one parish family, united in mission and dedicated to the salvation of souls.

These options were developed with guidance from many consultants, as well as the combined Pastoral Councils of our parishes, who reviewed the proposed schedules and offered thoughtful input. In creating these options, we considered factors such as travel time between parishes, church capacity, parking availability, the number of available ministers, fairness to each community, and the overall impact on parish ministries.

After initially arriving at a tentative schedule, I was advised to reduce the number of Masses further, based on projected needs and the number of priests in the diocese by 2030. With this in mind, I'd like to explain why the schedule looks as it does:

- **Saturday Evening Mass:** Notre Dame has been chosen for our parish's Saturday evening Mass. Its large worship space makes it the most practical location to welcome parishioners from all three--and eventually four--parishes, anticipating the future inclusion of St. Stanislaus. Ultimately, there will be only one Saturday evening Mass in Michigan City.
- **Sunday Morning Masses:** Minimizing travel time for the priest is crucial. Staying in one location for a morning block strengthens unity and pastoral care, allowing the priest to be fully present greeting parishioners before Mass and visiting with them afterward. Queen of All Saints will continue to have more Masses because it serves a significantly larger congregation--more than twice the size of the other sites. St. Mary's schedule has been adjusted to accommodate either an early morning or later evening Mass to suit its smaller space.
- **Parish Unity:** It is important to remember that we are now one, single parish. While the Queen of All Saints campus may no longer have a vigil Mass at that site, our parish still has a vigil Mass--it is simply celebrated at a different campus. We must begin thinking and living as one parish rather than as three separate entities. What happens at Notre Dame, St. Mary, or Queen of All Saints belongs to all of us. If Notre Dame has a Mass, then the whole parish has a Mass at that time. If Queen of All Saints has a Mass, that Mass belongs to the entire parish community. I know that this represents a paradigm shift, but one that is essential in the long run. We no longer have the luxury of viewing each campus as its own parish. Our strength now depends on seeing ourselves as one body, united in mission and worship.

- **Spanish Mass:** I recognize that the Hispanic community had hoped for an earlier morning Mass. With only one priest in Michigan City in the future, this will not be possible. While it could work now with two priests, it would not be sustainable long-term. Currently, a morning Spanish Mass is possible at a different campus, but if I were stationed alone here, it would have to be moved to an afternoon slot. This schedule provides stability and consistency while still offering a Spanish Mass each week. Sustainability: This schedule is designed to be sustainable with two priests. In full transparency, if I were alone, Weekend Masses would be reduced to a total of four: One on Saturday evening at Notre Dame and three Sunday morning Masses (two in English, one in Spanish). Making this comprehensive adjustment now helps avoid repeated, smaller changes and allows our parish communities to settle into a stable routine.
- **Parish Assets and Collections:** For the time being, parish assets and collections will not be combined. No matter where you attend Mass, the envelope you place in the collection will be returned to your home parish according to the name printed on it. If this process makes you uneasy, I encourage you to consider electronic giving as a simple and secure alternative.

Voting for the New Mass Schedule

Voting will take place next weekend during the homily. Ballots will be distributed immediately before the homily, and you will be invited to rank the four schedules from 1 to 4; 1 being your preferred option and 4 your least preferred. Ballots will be collected after the homily and counted during the week. Voting will take place only during Mass. The results, along with the final schedule, will be announced in the coming weeks. The new Mass times will take effect on the first weekend of January 2026, giving all communities an easily remembered start date.

This process is designed to ensure that every parishioner has a voice. Given the diversity of our communities, we may not have a schedule that satisfies everyone perfectly. If one option emerges as a clear favorite, it will be adopted. If no clear majority is reached, I will use the feedback gathered to make the best possible decision for the good of the entire parish family.

Please be aware that changes to the Mass schedule may affect other areas of parish life. Ministries connected to specific Mass times may need to make adjustments as we transition. I ask for your patience, understanding, and prayerful trust as we take this important step together for the good of our shared faith community.

By making this thoughtful adjustment now, we can let the dust settle and focus on what truly matters: evangelizing our communities, nurturing our faith, and growing together as one parish family.

Peace, Fr. Dave