

**New Mass Times Announcement  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, 2022**

Dear parishioners of St. Mary’s, St. John’s, St. James, and St. Boniface:

I heard it said recently that if a priest had to choose between a nuclear holocaust and changing Mass times, he should choose the holocaust. We all have opinions on what would be the best time to offer Mass and I want to thank the Parish Councils for your work in submitting to me a proposal from your parish. Each proposal showed a lot of thought and I carefully considered all of the ideas presented.

I wanted to present my rationale along with my decision for Mass times, hoping that you will be able to understand the process that went into this. If you don’t care to understand then you can just skip to the back page. I realize each parish is unique and in many ways they should be equal. However, in being the pastor for 4 parishes I had to consider all of you together as one flock. How can I provide the opportunity to attend Mass to as many Catholics within my 4-parish boundaries as possible?

The 1<sup>st</sup> question is whether to have 3 or 4 Masses on a weekend. When the bishop announced the clustering of the parishes he went to lengths to explain that even 3 Masses on a weekend for one priest was an exception, while not completely closing the door on the possibility of 4 Masses. After much prayer and consulting with many priests as well as recognizing my own limitations, I have decided on a 3 Mass schedule—one on Saturday and two on Sunday. This will still allow weddings and funerals on Saturdays.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> question is where and when. I considered many things, including parish size, location, distance from another parish, current schedules, as well as times that allow families and the elderly to get ready. I mapped out distances from one church to another.

<b>SE Iowa Parish Cluster Drive Distance (miles)</b>				
	<i>Houghton SJ</i>	<i>St Paul SJ</i>	<i>West Point SM</i>	<i>Farmington SB</i>
<b>Houghton SJ</b>		5.4	12.1	16.6
<b>St Paul SJ</b>	5.4		8.5	20.1
<b>West Point SM</b>	12.1	8.5		20.7
<b>Farmington SB</b>	16.6	20.1	20.7	

St. Boniface is the only Catholic church in Van Buren county. Though not the largest by number of families, I believe its parish boundaries make it the largest geographically. Some parishioners already drive 15-25 miles to get to the church from parts north and west.

St. Mary currently has two Masses each weekend and has the most number of families. Consolidating those two Masses into one should fill the pews. I look at all the parishes for their potential which may be different than their actual attendance at this time.

St. James and St. John are the closest together and already share Masses on a rotating basis. While not all their parishioners are happy about this, they are the most comfortable attending Mass at the other parish and can most easily drive to the other parish.

**New Mass Times Announcement**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, 2022**

Given these considerations and more, the Mass schedule starting July 1, 2022 is as follows:

Monday	No Mass
Tuesday	8:30AM at St. James, 7:00PM at St. Boniface
Wednesday	8:30AM at St. Mary or whenever the HTC School has Mass
Thursday	8:30AM at St. John
Friday	No Mass
Saturday	5:00PM at St. Boniface in Farmington with Confessions at 4:00PM
Sunday	8:00AM at St. Mary in West Point, the same as the current schedule
Sunday	10:00AM at St. James in St. Paul OR St. John in Houghton, to be rotated every two months on the same schedule they currently have:

February—March	St. James
April—May	St. John
June—July	St. James
August—September	St. John
October—November	St. James
December—January	St. John

**The Future:**

This schedule will be reviewed in 6 months and the parish councils consulted. It is my firm belief that all the parishes have the ability to grow and fill their churches to capacity. If I see consistent, standing-room only attendance, it may be necessary to add a 4<sup>th</sup> weekend Mass time. Likewise, if churches that have Mass every weekend cannot fill their pews then they may be put in the rotation of not having a weekend Mass. It is up to you. Do you attend regularly? Do you invite others?

I am also looking at priests who will retire in July of 2023 and hopefully we can welcome one of them to live in one of our vacant rectories as a “Senior Priest” that would help with liturgies.

Contrary to what some parishioners think, not having a Mass at your church does not put your church at risk of closing. The bishop has made it clear that discipleship, vitality, and participation are key determining factors in closing a parish. That the parishes need to be clustered under one pastor is a direct result of parishes failing to produce priests for the future. I do not believe any of these four parishes has produced a priest to serve the diocese in over 40 years. Any parish that can produce a vocation to the priesthood will guarantee a weekend Mass at their parish as long as the man is in seminary formation and I am still the pastor. Together, we can protect the legacy of our parishes and grow our faith communities by the Christian witness of our lives and how we worship as God’s children.

*Fr. Dan Doran*