

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, following hours of prayer, collaboration, and study of the sacramental needs of all the faithful, we implemented the first city-wide Mass schedule for what would become Blessed Michael McGivney Parish.

The primary objectives then remain the same today:

- to allow the priests assigned to our city to meet the ever-changing needs of the faithful in a sustainable and reasonable way
- to allow us to be present to you in your encounter with Christ today, and in such a way that reflects what the Catholic Church in New Haven will look like tomorrow
- to help us all move closer to becoming **one parish family**, which flows from the High Priestly Prayer that Jesus prayed on our behalf to God the Father, praying “that they all may be one” (John 17:21)

At that time, we said there would be ongoing revisions based on the number of priests assigned to the parish, Canon Law governing the number of Masses priests can celebrate, and Mass attendance. This next revision is based on those factors, and will continue to be evaluated by them in the future:

**Number of Priests:** Currently, there are seven priests assigned to Blessed Michael McGivney Parish. With the transition of Fr. Joseph Elko to Senior Status on April 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be six priests assigned to the Parish. Although support from our local senior priests is welcomed and appreciated by all, a sustainable long-term Mass schedule cannot be dependent upon their ministry and availability, but on clergy who are assigned to the parish. Even with the revised Mass schedule, the ministry of our senior priests will be necessary for the immediate future.

**Canon Law** limits the number of Masses priests can celebrate per day.

- Can. 905 §1: A priest is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist more than once a day except in cases where the law permits him to celebrate or concelebrate more than once on the same day.
- Can. 905 §2: If there is a shortage of priests, the local ordinary can allow priests to celebrate twice a day for a just cause, or if pastoral necessity requires it, even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation

The revised schedule enables priests to celebrate 1 to 3 Masses on Sunday, in addition to their other pastoral responsibilities, which include meetings and events, pastoral visits, and emergency calls.

**Mass Attendance:** Each year every church in the Archdiocese of Hartford conducts the “October Counts,” which counts the number of people at each Mass and compares it to seating capacity. Please see the October Count graph on the following page. Our 8 churches, 7 of which were built for hundreds, have on average 100-200 people in attendance, only utilizing on average 37% of church capacity. There are exceptions - Spanish Masses are consistently full, sometimes past capacity, while some of our churches have consistently 100 or less attendees at Sunday Mass. As Archbishop Blair and Coadjutor Archbishop Coyne recently wrote in a joint letter requesting that priests evaluate their current parish Mass schedules and revise accordingly, “the multiplication of Masses with low attendance undermines good liturgy, leads to additional costs of utilities, takes a toll on the physical and spiritual health of the priests, affects the good of the parish community and weakens the effectiveness of the pastoral effort.”

The reverse is also true. Consolidating Masses brings us together for the Sunday celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, which builds us up as the Body of Christ. We think you will all agree that a full church shows life and vibrancy.

**The New Revision of the Mass Schedule**, which can be found on the following page, is the result of a good deal of prayer, study, and consultation with parish staff and leadership, including our parish Trustees, Finance and Pastoral Councils. This schedule will be effective on April 6/7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Divine Mercy Sunday, and will ensure:

- 1 English Mass celebrated in each of our 8 churches
- 1 city-wide Saturday Vigil
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> Mass celebrated in another language at our ethnic churches
- Some remaining Mass times adjusted to cut down on the amount of duplicate times and allow for better priest availability

**What Do We Gain by This?** There is undeniable disappointment when our favorite Mass time at our favorite church changes. However, we will continue to look at ways to make this easier for all, including physical-needs accessibility and parking. While we know the impact of change, there is much to be gained by the new Mass schedule. We continue to transition to a “we” parish model. We will see and know more people in our parish, while experiencing the vibrancy and diversity of larger Masses. We will be better stewards of our parish resources, from utility costs to liturgical ministers. Priests will be enabled to spend more time with parishioners after or outside of Mass.

The spiritual needs of the people of God in our communities are our top priority. We are proud to serve you as your priests. Be assured of our prayers for you and for all, for a blessed Lent as we prepare together to experience anew Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection at Easter.

*Fr. Ryan Lerner, Fr. Sebastian Kos, & Fr. Hector Rangel, Pastors in Solidum*