

Dear Parishioners of St. Margaret Mary,

I write to you today with a heart full of care for our parish community and a deep understanding of how meaningful our Mass times are to each of you. The decision to modify our Mass schedule has not been made lightly, and I want to share with you the thoughtful process that led us to this point.

Our Collaborative Approach

Our parish leadership team, parish council, and members of the collaborative team from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee have worked together to carefully review our current Mass schedule. Rather than making changes in isolation, the parish council and I decided that your voices needed to be heard in this important decision. That's why we conducted the ballot process on Sunday, August 23rd and 24th, seeking input directly from you, our parish family.

I recognize that changing Mass times at any parish is difficult, especially when parishioners have developed attachments to particular Masses that have become part of their spiritual rhythm and weekly routine. Your preferences, your family schedules, and your spiritual needs are not just logistics to us—they are sacred considerations that deserve our utmost respect and attention.

The Path to This Decision

At our recent parish council meeting, I brought this matter to our council members, knowing that their wisdom and your eventual input would be essential. Fr. Francis and I have had extensive discussions about our Mass schedule, paying particular attention to the evening Mass and questions about its long-term sustainability. The guidance we received from the archdiocese has also been instrumental in helping us understand the broader context and recommendations for moving forward.

The Challenge of Sustainability

I want to be transparent with you about the challenges we've been facing. Over the past several weeks, securing substitute priests to cover Masses—particularly our 7:00 PM service—has become increasingly difficult. While I could have simply discontinued this Mass without consultation, that approach would have been contrary to everything I believe about pastoral leadership and community involvement. You deserve to be part of these conversations because this is your parish home.

Looking toward the future, we must also consider that Fr. Francis will be with us for only two years before a new associate pastor arrives. If we don't address our Mass schedule comprehensively now, we would likely find ourselves revisiting this entire challenging

conversation again in the near future, potentially causing repeated disruption to our community's worship life.

Our Decision and Its Foundation

After carefully reviewing every piece of feedback from the ballot process and thoughtfully considering our parish's future needs, I have made the difficult decision to discontinue the 7:00 PM Mass. This choice weighs heavily on my heart, particularly knowing that some of you have found deep meaning in that evening service.

However, this decision was made with a vision toward establishing a sustainable Mass schedule that will serve our parish well into the future—one that won't require us to frequently reopen these challenging discussions. Mass time changes are inherently difficult for all parishioners to navigate, and I wanted to implement a solution that provides the long-term stability our community deserves.

Moving Forward Together

I understand that change is never easy, especially when it touches something as personal and sacred as your weekly worship routine. Some of you may feel disappointed or frustrated, and those feelings are completely valid. What I ask is that you trust in the care and prayer that went into this decision, and that you remain open to discovering new ways that our adjusted schedule might serve your spiritual needs.

Our parish community is strong because we support one another through changes and challenges. I am confident that, together, we will adapt to this new schedule while maintaining the vibrant faith community that makes St. Margaret Mary such a special place.

Please know that my door remains open to anyone who wishes to discuss these changes further. Your continued participation in parish life, your prayers, and your understanding during this transition period mean everything to our community's future.

May God continue to bless our parish family as we move forward together in faith.

With pastoral care and appreciation for your understanding,

Fr. Mark Payne

Pastor, St. Margaret Mary Parish
