

Dear St. Robert Family,

I want to share with you a recent decision that I made for our parish. I believe it will help us respond to Bishop Boyea's Made for Mission initiative to make disciples and fulfill our parish vision of inviting everyone to grow as a child of God. After much prayer and discussion with our leadership team (currently Fr. Prabhu, Hannah Turchi, Sarah Bushey and me) and parish council, in considering both opportunities in our school and in our parish, and also Bishop Boyea's call to us priests to grow in praying and working together, I have decided to make the following change:

New Daily Mass Schedule Beginning August 23, 2023:

Monday - Saturday 8:30 AM daily Mass

All School Mass on Wednesday

No Wednesday evening Mass

No Wednesday evening Confessions

**New Exposition of the Eucharist and Benediction schedule for Wednesdays,
starting August 23, 2023:**

1st Wednesdays of the month (during the school year): Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament starts immediately following communion. School children will come for adoration with praise and worship time at 1:30 PM. Benediction at 2:15 PM, concluding at 2:30 PM.

Other Wednesdays of the month (2nd-5th): Exposition will start after Mass, with adoration until 2:15 PM. Benediction at 2:15 PM, concluding at 2:30 PM.

N.B.: this means, starting August 23, Exposition on Wednesdays will end with Benediction at 2:15 PM not 6:30 PM.

Making these changes allows for our students, their families, and our parishioners to all worship together outside of Mass. Everyone is invited!

(Please note that following Benediction, our school children will be dismissed from the church. During dismissal, traffic is dismissed by a designated adult in an orderly fashion once students are all safely in cars. Please follow this pattern to ensure the safety of our students.)

I want to briefly share the four main reasons that led to this decision.

First, our bishop has formed new deaneries and groupings in each deanery. (For the sake of space, I am including more details on this in a separate letter next week.) One of the tasks of each group is to make a written agreement between the priests to gather, among other things, for regular prayer, meals and work. The priests of our group—Fr. Prabhu, Fr. Louis Ekka, Fr. Michael O'Brien and me—are finding Wednesday evenings to be the best time (only time!) to do this.

Second, in talking with Fr. Prabhu and reflecting on our bishop's call for us priests to grow in health and holiness (part of the work of Made for Mission), it has become clear to me that our current evening schedule makes it impossible for us to regularly have a weekday meal together and have good time for discussion. It also makes it very challenging for both of us to

get the proper exercise and healthy eating that we need or to be involved in parish catechetical or evangelistic activities.

Third, in my planning with Sarah Bushey and Hannah Turchi for our school, one activity that we all think is important for our children is a regular time for Eucharistic Adoration, with praise and worship, silent prayer, and Benediction. Our current sacramental structure presents difficulties in making this happen without over burdening Fr. Prabhu and myself.

Finally, this past week, as our leadership team was discussing our staffing changes, and the many new staff members we will have, we agreed that having a monthly meeting with the staff toward the end of a weekday in a relaxed setting, which would help us build our relationships while we work, would be ideal. Currently, with Fr. Prabhu's and my schedules, there is no way to do this without changing our Wednesday evening Confessions and Mass.

Obviously, these changes effect those who currently come to our Wednesday evening Sacraments. I believe the benefits to our parish from this change are overall greater than what we will be losing.

We will be moving the Mass time on Wednesday, not canceling Mass, and our Wednesday evening Mass is the most lightly attended Mass we have at St. Robert. So this is actually a benefit for the common good of the parish. I know that there are a handful of those who come to Wednesday evening Mass who cannot attend a morning Mass.

Having a shortened time of Exposition by a few hours still leaves our parish with not only several hours every week on both Wednesday and Friday for Exposition, but also over 12 hours *every day* of the week for folks to come and spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament still reserved in the tabernacle. *The greater involvement of our children and families for adoration and Benediction is a reason for ending earlier.*

While I am saddened to be losing a time during the week for Confessions, we still have weekday confessions offered at Good Shepherd on Tuesdays from 5:30 - 6:30 PM, along with our weekend Confession times. I am still looking at other times throughout the week that might benefit both those in need of Confession and also work with our priest schedules. If we decide that there is such a time, you will be the first to know!

As I came to this decision with the help of our leadership team and Bob Vance, our parish council chair, I have been reminded in my prayer of the words in our sanctuary: *Jesus, I trust in You.* I trust that Jesus is behind our bishop's call to us as priests and a diocese to pray and work to gather in new ways. I trust that Jesus is always with us, and that in sincerely trying to do God's will *all things* work for our good, even the decision we make on when Mass or Confession is.

Please join me in working to make these changes peacefully, successfully, and joyfully, leading all of us to a deeper intimacy with Jesus, especially in the Eucharist, and a greater love for one another, expressed in a humble imitation of Jesus' love for us.

May God bless our parish abundantly in the months ahead.

—Fr. Jonathan