

Dear Parishioners of Saint Thomas,

Over the past year, our Archbishop has urged us, through the Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning process, to respond to the Holy Father's challenge to guide our church from a status quo approach of the past to a more vibrant future by embracing *"a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for self-preservation."*

St. Thomas has been identified by the pastoral planning process as one of those parishes in the archdiocese that has a "low probability to remain as is." Therefore, we need to put aside any complacent attitude which suggests *'we have always done it this way'*, in order to meet the challenges set before us involving a number of areas of parish life.

The celebration of 'good liturgy' is one area which will help with the transformation of Saint Thomas parish. It should be evident to all who attend our Masses that a better liturgical experience would be had by all attendees if more people were present at Mass to interact, participate, pray, sing and worship together. The immediate solution is to adjust the Sunday Mass schedule to include fewer Masses until such time that increased attendance demands another review of the schedule. Many parishes have had to change their weekend Mass schedules due to declining attendance and decreasing availability of priests. I believe that a revision of our Mass schedule will enhance our Sunday Eucharistic celebrations, regenerating a conscious and active participation of all who worship.

I recognize that any change in the Mass schedule may impact parishioners' Sunday routine and family patterns. It was imperative for me to consider a new schedule that will: have minimal effect on you, permit continuation of religious education, enhance the music ministry, ensure reasonable distribution of attendance at Sunday Masses, and allow opportunity for any new parish activities/programs that we might initiate in the future. Therefore, beginning September 11th, we will offer only two Masses on Sunday at 8 AM and 10 AM. The Vigil Mass on Saturday will remain at 4 PM.

I am, of course, aware that change is difficult and thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding as we anticipate this new schedule. No pastoral decision that I am responsible for instituting is ever made lightly. It is my hope that all of us will support each other as we move forward. I welcome all those who currently attend the 11:30 Mass to join us at any of the other Masses, and pray that this decision will help us grow stronger as a worshipful community of faithful followers of the Lord.

Yours in Christ, Father Hellwig