

Elmira Parishioner Church Hall Meetings

March 27, 2017

Welcome and
Opening
Prayer:

Fr. John
DeSocio



Responding to two Questions:

Karen
Rinefierd

- **Does the Bishop know what we are doing and what is happening here?**
- **When will we know who our priests will be? Will we still have Fr. Rick and Fr. Scott?**

Purpose of this meeting:

(rest of this meeting facilitated by Fr. Rick Farrell)

- Address questions about the proposed merging of the three Elmira parishes
- Receive parishioner input on possible Mass schedule times and locations



Proposed Merger of the 3 Parishes

Why did the planning team recommend clustering and then merging the parishes?

- Builds on present sharing of ministries, staff positions, the faith formation center
- One pastor means one leader making decisions regarding staffing, buildings and finances
- The parochial vicar would have more time to devote to ministry
- The merger process takes about 18 months, allowing time for people to adjust to changes
- Financial burden is too great to stay as separate corporations or to merge just two parishes

What process needs to be followed to merge parishes?

1. Education process for parishioners/ consideration at the local level
2. Pastor consults with pastoral and finance councils
3. Pastor petitions the Bishop
4. Bishop seeks the counsel of his Presbyteral Council
5. Bishop issues a decree which is communicated to the Pastor and parishioners
6. A petition is submitted to the appropriate court to initiate the process of civil merger

Questions?

(orally or via
the response
form)

- Some will be addressed today
- Others may be responded to later through the bulletin and website



The Weekend Mass Schedule

Why the Mass schedule needs to change this July

- We will have two full-time, active priests serving our 3 parishes rather than the current three
- Therefore, in addition to the regional Sunday 5:00 pm Mass, we can only schedule 6 Masses rather than the current 9

Principles guiding decision making

- Maximize Mass attendance and participation in Mass by offering a variety of times and family Masses.
- Minimize the disruption to parishioners in their current Mass attendance patterns as much as possible given the challenge of fewer Masses.
- Mass times and locations will displace as few people as possible.
- Consider the financial impact of whatever decisions we make.
- Allow enough time between Masses so that the priests can spend some time with parishioners after a Mass, occasionally visit faith formation classes, and then, if necessary, travel to another church.
- Acknowledge that some families need to be able to attend Mass and have their children participate in faith formation classes on Sunday mornings, while recognizing that other faith formation options are available.
- Mass times and locations that help unify the parishioners of the Elmira Catholic Community.
- Maintain the Sunday evening regional Mass.

Other considerations suggested by some members of the planning team

- In the interest of fairness, have two Masses at each of the 3 current parishes
- Give each of the 3 current parishes a Mass at one of the most popular times: Saturday evening or Sunday in the 9:00-11:00 am timeframe

Saturday
evening

Options proposed by the planning team

1. Two 4:00 pm Masses (at Ss. Peter & Paul and St. Mary's)
2. 4:00 pm (St. Mary's), 4:30 pm (Ss. Peter and Paul)

Questions for Parishioners

- Is it better to offer Masses at the same time (4:00) which people are used to?
- Are Masses at 4:00 and 4:30 a better option?
- Is there any interest in having 4:00 and 5:00/5:30 to allow more variety of times and allow one priest to preside at both Masses in emergencies?

Sunday (in addition to the 5:00 pm regional Mass)

- **Option A:** 8 am (St. Casimir), 9 am (Our Lady of Lourdes), 10 am (St. Mary's), 11 am (St. Patrick)
- **Option B1:** 8 am (St. Patrick), 9:30 am (Our Lady of Lourdes), 11 am (St. Mary's), 7:30 pm (St. Casimir)
- **Option B2:** 8 am (St. Casimir), 9:30 am (Our Lady of Lourdes), 11 am (St. Mary's), 7:30 pm (St. Patrick)

Pros and Cons
already
identified by
the Planning
Team

Option A – Advantages

- Masses provide a variety of times & locations within a reasonable window for maximum attendance
- Each current parish will have a Sunday Mass
- Locations and times accommodate children and youth programs, children's Liturgy of the Word, a monthly children's/family Mass

Pros and Cons
already
identified by
the Planning
Team

- **Option A – Disadvantages**
- No Mass at St. Charles Borromeo
- If one priest is sick or away, we would have to rely on a retired priest
- With a “new community” with more people at fewer Masses, the presider may need more time between Masses to talk to people

Pros and Cons
already
identified by
the Planning
Team

Options B₁ and B₂ – Advantages

- Masses are scheduled at a wider time spread, allowing one priest to cover all Masses in the event the second priest is unavailable
- Sunday am locations and times accommodate children and youth programs, children's Liturgy of the Word, a monthly children's/family Mass
- The 7:30 pm Mass might attract young adults and families with teens, particularly those who do not already come regularly

Pros and Cons
already
identified by
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Options B1 and B2 – Disadvantages

- No Mass at St. Charles Borromeo
- Are we expecting too much from our priests—starting in early morning and going to 8:30 pm or later?
- The 7:30 pm Mass removes one Mass from the morning schedule and may be lightly attended
- Taking away a Sunday morning Mass may decrease attendance from those already coming and financial contributions

Questions for Parishioners

(please respond orally or via the response form)

- What additional advantages/disadvantages do you see regarding the Mass schedule options presented by the planning team?
- What has the planning team missed or overlooked in their work to create a healthy weekend Mass schedule which serves the needs of all as best as is possible?
- Do you have specific ideas for ways to improve any of the Mass schedule options that have been presented?

Next Steps

- The planning team will decide the schedule at their April 5th meeting after input from parishioners
- The schedule chosen might be one of the options presented or a modification depending on the input received
- The schedule will be evaluated after it has been in place for one full year

Prayer for
Wisdom:

led by Fr. Scott
Kubinski

Good and gracious God,
we know that change is coming to the Elmira
Parishes,
but we are uncertain as to what shape it may
take.

Help us work together prayerfully,
mindful of all the parishioners of Elmira.
Give us the grace to be good listeners,
empathetic and compassionate,
and grant us the wisdom
to keep us from being swayed by emotion.



Lord, help us maintain a positive and encouraging attitude as we work together. May Your Spirit guide our hearts and minds, fully realizing that You are an ever-faithful God.

May our work give You glory, for You are Lord forever and ever.

Amen.