



232 West 9th Street, Connersville, IN 47331
Phone: 765-825-8578

March 16, 2019

Dear Parishioners,

I pray that your Lenten Seasons are all off to a good start! I want to update you on decisions that have been made by myself and our combined parishes' liturgy committee. In short, we will be adjusting our weekend Mass schedule on the weekend of May 11-12. The schedule will change in both the number of Masses offered at St. Gabriel and the Mass times at St. Gabriel and St. Bridget. The reasons for this are important.

Two frequent critiques I have received since we last changed our Mass times in June of 2016 is that the Saturday evening Mass at St. Gabriel begins too late and the Sunday morning Mass at St. Bridget begins too early. Both are being taken into account in our new schedule.

Another reason is that we must consider that we simply do not have enough priests to offer Masses according to convenience nor more Masses than necessary. By July of 2024, over 25% of our currently active priests will be at or past the age of retirement. This is to say that we must plan for the fact that our deanery will have 25% less full-time priests (or 1 less pastor). This difficulty is further amplified by the fact that we will only ordain two men this summer followed by two years without a single priestly ordination, as well as the only retired priest regularly able to offer our deanery sacramental assistance is 89-years old.

Also, both parishes have been experiencing declining Mass attendance. The liturgy committee has been tracking this since January 2015. St. Gabriel peaked with a 2016 weekend attendance average of 656 people. St. Bridget peaked in 2015 with 129 people. St. Gabriel now averages less than 600 each weekend and St. Bridget right around 100 people. Considering that St. Gabriel can seat up to 1,350 people over three Masses, we are simply offering more Masses than is necessary. Beginning in mid-May, St. Gabriel will reduce its weekend Masses to 2 Masses and still have ample room to grow with 900 seats available over those two Masses.

Finally, and the most important reason, is that by having fewer Masses between our two parishes, there will be larger numbers in attendance at the Masses we do celebrate. Our liturgy committee and I sincerely believe that this can be a game-changer for the liturgical and spiritual livelihood of our linked parishes. In fact, St. Bridget can testify to this fact as their parish only has one Mass that all parishioners attend. Singing improves, participation improves, community improves, and our sense of being one body gathered in prayer absolutely improves. It's always better to have more people (rather than less) when it comes to lifting up our prayers and praises to God!

Below will be the **Mass schedule beginning May 11, 2019** for our two parishes:

ST. GABRIEL:

Saturday: 5:30 PM

Sunday: 10:30 AM

ST. BRIDGET:

Sunday: 8:15 AM

Sincerely,

Fr. Dustin Boehm, Pastor