

25 April 2024

Dear Parishioners,

All who attend our 10 am and 12 pm Masses know that we have a problem with parking capacity, leading many to park illegally, sometimes even blocking the fire lanes. This problem came to its crux this past Sunday with a fire alarm and the inability of emergency service vehicles to access the building, and then unable to exit our parking lot.

While no one was hurt and our church was okay, the captain on scene was direct: the fire lanes must be kept clear to ensure the church can continue operating. A stop operating order, a measure within the authority of the Fire Marshall, would severely debilitate our parish, causing irreparable harm to you, our parishioners, and our Catholic community. So we need everyone's help to make necessary adjustments.

Not everyone will be aware of the many ideas that St Thomas More Parish has tried over the last 27 years to address this same problem. These attempts included volunteer parking attendants, hired police traffic control, shuttle buses from nearby large community parking lots, notes left on windows, appeals in parish bulletins, second Masses with seating in the hall, capping capacity during Covid to the regulated limits, and the list goes on. Thus far, none have been particularly effective or desirable long term.

Recent ticketing on the second week of Easter by city bylaw enforcement, who issued \$150 fines on vehicles in the fire lanes, saw a 2 week improvement in reducing illegal parking, but this improvement disappeared by the 4th week of Easter. This ticketing was not at the request of the parish administration and was presumably at the request of concerned parishioners.

Ours is in some ways a wonderful problem to have - too many practicing Catholics! Thanks be to God! And we don't want to lose a single one of you!

Still we must take action now. The parish, at the direction of the pastor, and with the consultation of many of our parishioners and the Parish Pastoral Council, is changing our Sunday Mass times. Why? Because 10 am and 12 pm Sunday Masses are an overloaded knot that needs its parking to spread out. Like a knot, those two Masses need to be pulled apart so that the attendance of two Masses goes to three. Will this work? It will, but only with your help. We need our 10 am and 12 pm Mass congregations to spread out over our new Sunday morning Mass times of 8 am, 9:30 am, 11 am, and 12:30 pm. Conversely, for example, if all our current noon families were to switch only to 12:30 pm, this plan will fail.

Options are available for a less congested experience. Please use them.

Effective June 1/2	
Saturday	4 pm
Sunday	8 am
	9:30 am
	11 am
	12:30 pm
	5 pm

This change will take place the weekend of June 1st.

What else is changing June 1st? **The Saturday 5 pm Mass is moving to 4 pm, with Confessions 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm.** Why? To move away from the supper hour. 4 pm is also the earliest we can schedule a Saturday evening Mass. Our new schedule represents our best effort to accommodate our regular parishioner attendance. By evening out our attendance, our parking lot congestion should ease, everyone should find a seat, and our worship should be prayerful, safe, and meaningful for everyone.

For this to work, that is, to keep our fire lanes clear, and with only 30 minutes between Mass times, we will need to clear the church quickly after each Sunday morning Mass. Therefore, activities like coffee after Mass and the communal recitation of the Rosary before Mass will be suspended. However, Rosary before 8 am Mass can happen, as can coffee/juice/cookies after 4 pm Saturday Mass (*subject to parishioners willingness to give of their time and talent to help out*).

On July 7th, the Sunday 5 pm Mass will be retired. This change is deferred to July 7th to help facilitate those attending 5 pm Sunday to **adjust** to the new Mass times. Ultimately after July 7th, there will be the same number of Masses as there are now.

Effective July 6/7	
Saturday	4 pm
Sunday	8 am
	9:30 am
	11 am
	12:30 pm
	NO 5 pm MASS

Summer daily Mass times (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday) will change to 8:30 am from July 1st to August 31st. This time was chosen to support our **Vacation Bible School** and **Confirmation Intensive** summer youth programming.

These changes are not made lightly. We have prayed, discerned, and consulted with our parish communities and tried to work within our broader Edmonton Catholic community to solve this problem. These changes will not be easy, and may not solve the problem entirely. However, we are confident that this plan represents a good first step to untie the knot and ensure St Thomas More Parish remains compliant, safe, and welcoming for all our parishioners.

Some of you will be unhappy. We acknowledge your frustration and are grateful for your patience as we try to solve this fundamental problem.

And, these changes will be a short-term challenge for our liturgical ministry coordinators and volunteers - please be patient as we adapt to these new times, so that our beautiful Masses may run smoothly and lead us into communion with God and His Church. We appreciate the efforts of everyone.

Many thanks, and may the many blessings of our fruitful parish continue forever. God bless you!

In Christ,



Father Mark McGee
Pastor




Paul Givens
Business Coordinator

Mark Jacka
Parish Pastoral Council Chair