

Update on Mass Schedule Planning Efforts, January 22, 2023

Overview of January 14th Meeting

The St. Isidore the Farmer Mass Schedule Team met on January 14, 2023 to review the work to date with members of the Pastoral Council, gather their feedback, and collaborate on the next steps in the process.

The entire work plan was shared and it was noted that the Team has worked through several different scenarios of Mass schedules. From this process, three models emerged for consideration and feedback after thoughtful review of the Mass schedule criteria and supporting data. These models will be shared with all parishioners in the January 29th bulletin prior to the parish assemblies.

It is important to note that these models of Mass schedule options are not necessarily final choices and are intended to engage parishioners in thoughtful discussion and responsible participation that will culminate in the development of a new weekend Mass schedule that best honors the Eucharistic celebration and serve the needs of the entire parish within the available resources.

Each member of the Pastoral Council had the opportunity to share their thoughts and ask questions on the plan and process, proposed scenarios of Mass schedules, the format of the parish assemblies and parish-wide survey, and the planned next steps.

Parish Assemblies

All parishioners will have the opportunity to learn more about the three models for a revised Mass schedule, ask questions about the models, and provide feedback on those models at two parish assemblies and through a parish-wide survey. A list of "Frequently Asked Questions" is included on the back of this insert to provide additional information on the assembly format so as to help you better prepare.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend one of these important parish assemblies listed below.

Monday, January 30th — 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

SNPJ Lodge 106
255 West Allegheny Road
Imperial, PA 15126

Saturday, February 4th — 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Pepsi-Cola Roadhouse
565 Rt. 18
Burgettstown, Pa 15021

All of the communication to date is listed on the parish website, so please continue to watch the bulletin and website at:

<https://www.stisidorethefarmer.org/mass-schedule-planning>.

Please join the Team at this time with your prayers.

God of love, in this time of change and uncertainty, we pray for one another, that each of us and all of us may be open in our search, imaginative about our future, daring in our faith, genuine in our devotion, tireless in our commitment, patient in our discernment, and loving in our communion.

As we enter into new phases of our communal journey as Saint Isidore the Farmer Parish, we do so with some anxiety, yet with trust in You.

Grant us the grace to bear in mind Your compassion, presence, and abounding love.

We thank You for the experiences that have brought us to this moment.

We thank You for the faith, hope and love with which You have blessed us to this stage.

Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with You and supporting one another.

May our hearts be encouraged, being knit together in love, that we might reach all the riches of the full assurance of God's mystery, which is Christ. Amen.

St. Isidore the Farmer Parish Assemblies Questions & Answers

1. *Why do we have to change the Mass Schedule?*

It is our collective responsibility and faith-filled desire to bring people closer together in union with the Eucharist as a worshipping community. We need to do everything we can to make this happen. Making adjustments to the Mass schedule to celebrate Mass with fuller churches and vibrant liturgy will help achieve that goal. In addition, we need to account for the decline in the number of available priests throughout our diocese and our reality of celebrating weekend Masses with only two priests assigned to our parish. For the good of all, we need to ensure the sustainability of a new weekend Mass schedule for the future.

2. *What is the purpose of the parish assemblies?*

The purposes of the assembly are:

- a. To inform all parishioners on the reasons for revising the Mass schedule and to provide a better understanding and awareness of the criteria and data involved in developing proposals for a new weekend Mass Schedule
- b. To gather feedback from *all* parishioners in attendance. This will involve each individual providing written feedback as well as table discussions among parishioners. Because an “open mic” format limits participation (and can even skew the feedback when only a few speak), reports to those in the assembly will be based on the table discussions.

3. *What will be the format of the assemblies?*

- a. Father Bielewicz will welcome all parishioners, provide an opening prayer and facilitate introductions.
- b. Members of the Mass Schedule Team, who will serve as presenters at both assemblies, will review the process, the criteria, the data and the three models for a new Mass schedule.
- c. After the large group presentation, each person in attendance will provide written

feedback on the presentations which will then be shared with the others at their table. One person from each table will offer a summary of the key points raised at that table as well as any questions that emerged.

- d. All individual and table feedback will be collected and compiled. Since there may not be time to respond to every question raised and because not every parishioner will be able to attend one of the assemblies, a list of “Frequently Asked Questions” will be created based on the feedback and provided to the parish after the assemblies.

4. *How should I prepare to participate?*

These types of decisions are very difficult and evoke a range of emotions. Our parish is dealing with a very real but unfortunate challenge. No one wants to cease offering weekend Mass in all of our churches. Nevertheless, we do what is required in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

We encourage all parishioners to prayerfully review the series of bulletin communications and the initial letter from Fr. Bielewicz to all parishioners and to reflect upon the significance of the Eucharist in our lives. All of the communication to date is listed on the parish website at:

<https://www.stisidorethefarmer.org/mass-schedule-planning>.

5. *Does this mean my church may end up closing?*

While there may not be weekend Mass at every church, there are **no plans to close any church building permanently**. Even though some churches may not be used for regular Sunday worship, those churches will still be available for weekday Masses, to celebrate baptisms, weddings, funerals and other special occasions such as feast days. As long as faithful parishioners generously respond in supporting the annual operating budget and the capital needs of our six church buildings, there is no need, nor is there any clear benefit, to close any churches permanently.