

Appendix 15: Scheduling of Masses

The pastoral practice of offering more than one or two or even three Masses on any given day has changed the expectations of some of our Catholic people. The Bismarck Diocese grants the habitual faculty to binate on any given day, if there is a pastoral necessity, these faculties allow for the offering of three Masses on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation. It is not a good practice to regularly and routinely celebrate more Masses than are pastorally necessary.

I have observed that because of the goodwill of all of you, there are more Masses offered on a weekend than may be necessary. A Mass offered, which fulfills one's obligation to attend and participate in Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, is necessary. As Church law makes clear, the Catholic faithful have the right to the sacraments at all reasonable times. We priests have an obligation before God and the Church to make Mass available for our people at reasonable times. An extra Mass celebrated on a day along with a Mass or Masses of obligation is neither encouraged nor required.

Obviously, the size of a parish can determine if one Mass of obligation is sufficient, or perhaps more Masses are necessary. Since the Bismarck Diocese does not have an adequate number of priests to staff all our parishes, priests are to coordinate a reasonable Mass schedule among the parishes in the cluster so that the parish priest is not regularly offering more than two Masses on any day.

Thus, with this letter, I am giving the directive to all priests and to all parishes, those clustered and those not clustered, that only Masses of obligation may be scheduled and celebrated in any parish, oratory, or other setting. Wedding and funeral Masses are not included in this directive. If an extra Mass is desired, permission for it must be given by me, the Diocesan Bishop. It is my hope that this directive will be of assistance to you and to our good Catholic people and will help facilitate cooperation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives.

I wish to formally inform priests of the rules and procedures for implementing Holy Mass *Ad orientem* in your parishes. First, priests must write a letter (not email or text message) to me outlining the pastoral necessity and requesting my permission to move forward. Second, along with the letter, priests must send me their written instructions to all the parishioners on the reason for doing this, as well as the minutes of their parish pastoral council meeting where it is discussed with the members of the council (priests do not need their permission but should get their advice).

Third, once I receive all of this information I will give the request consideration. Fourth, if I grant permission the following conditions will apply without exception: Mass offered *Ad orientem* may be done every weekend at one Mass for the parish or parishes if it is a cluster; all ritual Masses are to be offered facing the congregation; and parish weekday Masses may be offered *Ad orientem*. **This directive and these regulations are effective for the Bismarck Diocese as of October 16, 2023.**