

Chaplain's Bulletin October 30, 2022



Dear Folks,

At the priests' conference the bishop talked to us about the shortage of priests, and how things look to get more challenging in the near future. One thing the bishop said was that priests are still celebrating too many Masses. He expressed concern for multiple Masses that are more empty than full, and that people need to understand.

One priest said that he had more Masses than were necessary for the number of people who come, but to cut a Mass "would be pastoral suicide." What does that say about the state of people's discipleship?

I remember when I was in Muskegon, we went from four Masses on a weekend to three (there was more than enough room for all the people who came), and a bunch of people left abruptly, and the collection went down sharply. The next question was, what was it accomplishing by having all those Masses if it did not build stronger relationships than that? Later, of course, when that parish had to share priests, the schedule got cut further.

If we want our faith communities to flourish long term, do we not want to develop more reasons for people to come, even if the Mass schedule is inconvenient?

I'm really enjoying what I'm doing now, but it is taking everything I have, and there are good and important things that are not getting done because I can only do so much. There is a question of how well I can keep up this pace when I get older (as I plan to do). A lot of priests share they can barely do what they are doing now.

There are those who celebrate Mass with very little energy. Their voice is monotone, if not mumbled, their gestures feeble, their homilies read without enthusiasm. That may be the best that they can do, but is this really helping the Eucharistic revival?

Can we make a shift from the idea that people should have Mass at their preferred place at their preferred time, to planning their weekend around when Mass is available. There are some whose work schedule limits what they can do, but for many it's a matter of preference. As long as people have access to the Eucharist, can that be enough? Do people see themselves as customers or disciples and coworkers in mission? If God is testing us, what might He be asking of each of us? What if sacraments become less convenient but taken more seriously?

I do not have any plans to fiddle with the schedule but know that this issue was mentioned by the bishop and speaks to realities that will not go away. It carries first the question: how can we build our church to be able to flourish with less priest power?

Blessings,

Fr. Jim