

NW2 Bulletin Letter May 1, 2022

Dear Parishioners of NW2 Family of Parishes,

This is an update of planning steps currently underway for the new NW2 family of parishes including IC, Celina, Holy Rosary, St. Marys, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Montezuma, St. Patrick, Glynwood and St. Teresa, Rockford. Fr. John Tonkin will be pastor, Fr. Rob Muhlenkamp parochial vicar and another parochial vicar yet to be assigned. The implementation of NW2 goes into effect July 1, 2022.

While the bulk of the pastoral planning for each family of parishes will begin early Fall, there are initial steps already underway in NW2 for getting to know one another and two primary processes regarding finances and the Mass schedule.

An initial gathering of staff was held March 10th to meet one another and share backgrounds and roles. The regularly scheduled Celina Cluster Parish Council meeting was held March 17th with some members of the St. Marys Cluster Council joining the meeting. The regularly scheduled St. Marys Parish Council was held March 28th with some members from the Celina Cluster joining the meeting.

The finance personnel from each parish have also had an initial meeting regarding finances. Funds will remain in each parish as they have, but finance personnel are working on an expense sharing agreement, primarily for clergy salary and living expenses, and for other shared expenses that may arise.

The other critical piece of pastoral planning underway is the Mass schedule for the NW2 family of parishes. A planning committee of staff and parishioners has been established and had the initial meeting Thursday, April 21st.

There are several Beacons of Light guidelines the Mass schedule must follow. Each priest is to preside at no more than three weekend Masses. Some may wonder why only three, but if you consider the number of weddings, baptisms, anointings of the sick and funerals as well as times offered for confessions, priests often have more weekend commitments than many parishioners see. Secondly, there needs to be at least an hour between Masses a priest celebrates on Sunday so there is time to prayerfully prepare before, greet parishioners after and have time to safely travel to a second Mass. Parishes further apart may require one and a half hours between Masses. (You may be surprised to know that some Mass schedules in the Archdiocese are so tight that priests are driving from one church to another while wearing their vestments.) A third guideline is to assess the utilization of each parish church to determine how the Mass schedule can be reduced, while still accommodating the parishioners and not over extending the clergy. Mass utilization looks at the capacity of each church and how many people are attending. The Archdiocese mandates that any utilization under 40% should be seriously looked at and possible Mass reduction implemented. A fourth and very important guideline is the celebration of Mass. When a church is closer to capacity, the Mass is more fully celebrated as the Body of Christ on earth participating in the heavenly liturgy.

Currently, there are 10 weekend Masses in the NW2 family of parishes. (IC – 5 PM Saturday, 8 & 11 AM Sunday; Holy Rosary 4:30 PM Saturday, 8 & 11 AM Sunday; OLG 7 PM Saturday, 9 AM Sunday; St. Patrick 9:30 AM Sunday; St. Teresa 10 AM Sunday) With three assigned priests, we need to reduce to 9 weekend Masses. The weekly attendance of each of our parishes from July 1, 2021 to March 2022, along with the average attendance for 2021 and 2019 has been reviewed by the planning committee. Based on attendance, we already know that St. Patrick and St. Teresa are usually near capacity for most weekend Masses. IC utilization of space for two Sunday Masses is 29%. The Holy Rosary utilization of space for two Sunday Masses is currently 47%. The OLG utilization of space for both weekend Masses is 49%. This means that according to average attendance, IC would be able to reduce to one Saturday night Mass and one Sunday morning Mass and accommodate those attending.

The weekday Mass schedule is also being reviewed, taking into account the Masses that are better attended as well as the proximity of churches that would allow parishioners to attend a nearby church.

The planning committee will be meeting again soon to discuss and propose a Mass schedule for the weekend and weekday Masses. These schedules will be reviewed with each Parish Council and other parishioners with implementation the beginning of July. The new Mass schedule will be reviewed this Fall as the full planning process continues.

We realize that parishioners may have their “favorite Mass time” and that change can be difficult, but we also have realized throughout the Beacons of Light process that the current number of Masses cannot be sustained with the availability of priests.

We ask your understanding, patience and openness to not only consider your own needs and desires, and those of your parish, but also of the whole NW2 family of parishes, as we strive to best serve the needs of all.

May we truly be devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who has shown us the way to live in this life, leading to the fullness of everlasting Life.

Blessings and prayers,

Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S. Fr. John W. Tonkin Fr. Alexander Witt

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.