

Rev. Matthew B. Wetsel

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Dear Parishioners of Holy Trinity Church and Church of the Holy Spirit,

I am writing to let you know of an upcoming adjustment to the weekend Mass schedule for our parishes.

Beginning with the weekend of July 1st/2nd 2023, the new schedule will be as follows:

Saturday: 4 pm Vigil at Church of the Holy Spirit (Gloversville)

Note: Confessions will still be offered from 2:15 pm – 3:45 pm preceding the Vigil

Sunday: 9 am Mass at Holy Trinity Church (Johnstown)

Sunday: 11:30 am Mass at Church of the Holy Spirit (Gloversville)

As you can see, the adjustment being made is to consolidate the two Sunday morning Masses at Holy Trinity (currently 8 am and 10 am) into a single Mass (9 am). The decision to adjust the Mass schedule has been discussed with the linked parish pastoral council during the current school year. I am grateful for their vision and support of this update.

I would like to take a moment to share the benefits that this adjustment can provide us with as well as the backstory.

As you may recall, the current Weekend Mass schedule for Holy Trinity and Holy Spirit was created during the time when Fr. Don Czelusniak was the pastor and Fr. Jim Davis was the parochial vicar (Summer 2014 – Summer 2016).

Both parishes had separate faith formation programs that held sessions immediately before Mass was offered at the respective parishes (10 am Mass at Holy Trinity and 11:30 am Mass at Holy Spirit). This allowed our parish young people to be able to attend and participate at Mass at their home parish on a regular

basis. Likewise, it gave the pastor the opportunity to visit with the children during their faith formation meetings at Holy Trinity in between the Sunday morning Masses.

In the Fall of 2021, the parishes began sharing a single faith formation program in order to best serve our communities with the resources available at the time. This included the number of volunteer catechists who could commit to the program, the number of young people enrolled in the programs, parish payroll availability for faith formation salary, etc. I am very pleased with how the venture has worked so far in the two years since. It has surpassed my expectations.

While reviewing the current Mass schedule with the pastoral council during the 2022-2023 school year, we discussed some of the drawbacks that it presents. Parishioners at Holy Trinity do not regularly see young people attend Mass. This is largely because faith formation meetings take place at 10:15 am at the Church of the Holy Spirit campus. On a related note, the current Mass schedule does not allow the pastor to have opportunities to interact with the elementary school-aged children in between Masses like in the past. Another factor that was considered is the challenge in obtaining substitute Mass coverage for the few weekends each year that the pastor is away (being present at the overnight confirmation retreat as well as the pastor's personal vacation time). As it has been mentioned in the past, the generous retired priests who provide the bulk of weekend coverage sometimes have a challenging time with a four Mass weekend schedule. I also admit that having a reduced Sunday Mass schedule would lighten my load a little. This would be especially helpful during the winter months when there are Sunday afternoon confirmation retreat planning meetings and evening faith formation sessions for our middle school and high school age parishioners that I try to attend regularly.

I understand that change is difficult. Some may not be pleased with the new schedule ("I like to start my day early", "This is the time that my family has always attended", "Why does the other parish get to keep two Masses and we only have one", etc). Many factors were considered before the new schedule was created.

As you may have noticed, the 8 am and 10 am Masses have routinely drawn only about 70 – 80 parishioners per Mass since public liturgies resumed after the pandemic public gathering restrictions were lifted in June 2020.

Holy Trinity Church can accommodate around 200 parishioners per Mass. Another reality is that during the summer and early fall months, many of our community regulars enjoy attending Mass at the Kateri Shrine in Fonda and the Auriesville Shrine. Therefore, it creates an unintentional burden for the remaining attendees to contribute enough to the offertory to pay for the utilities and other expenses that need to be taken into account (music ministry, altar supplies, etc).

On a related note, I was advised to not adjust the 4 pm Mass location even on a rotating basis because of the possibility for causing confusion for those who normally attend that particular liturgy. That contributes to the reason why the Gloversville parish Masses have not been adjusted at this time.

In reviewing these various factors, my hope is to create a sustainable Mass schedule that makes sense to as many of our linked community members as possible. I am hopeful that this will allow more of our young people to be able to attend and participate at Mass on a regular basis, which will be beneficial for them as well as for the other attendees. I am also hoping to be able to have more opportunities to interact with our elementary age children during their Sunday morning sessions. Likewise, this should hopefully allow the pastor a little more flexibility when he needs to have the occasional weekend off.

Thank you very much in advance for your prayerful support. I look forward to a blessed summer with you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Matthew Wetsel

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