

## Part I - Linked Parishes: Pastoring

A WestWord from Fr. Joe

I have to recognize, on a sad note and yet with a tribute, those staff and volunteers who do so much to make a community function. My official appointment began at noon on July 6<sup>th</sup>, and 16 days later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> I was presiding at the funeral of Karen Wohlleb, St. John's Business Manager and primary staff person who died unexpectedly. Exactly one month after that Terry Boaz, the sacristan, maintenance and all-around good guy of Navilleton, died of auto accident injuries. We are still learning to cope without these two knowledgeable and dedicated servants of the church. I am thankful in both cases for those who stepped up and gave of their time freely.

When I am approached about a matter involving either parish, I cannot give as quick a response as I would like, or was accustomed to doing, because from now on more things need to go through each parish's Parish or Finance Councils. They will be coordinating a lot of activities for their parish. Yes, the buck stops with me, but I have to rely on them to look into and coordinate matters a full-time pastor may otherwise have done himself.

### Communication and Information

A key change I have made is the way information flows. I have been using this method for the last 10 years and enjoy the benefits immensely. If you read the Sunday Bulletin you have noticed the changes. The change is seen directly on the front page on every edition and looks like this:

#### If you are interested in

1. **Registering** as a member of the parish
2. the **Baptism** of a child
3. the sacrament of **Confirmation**
4. getting **Married** in your church
5. the **Anointing of the Sick**
6. becoming a **Roman Catholic**
7. certification to **work with youth**
8. sending your child to a **Catholic school**

stop after Mass and introduce yourself to our pastor, Fr. Joe, and he will be happy to assist you with these and other interests you may have.

Participating in a weekly Mass is how Catholics follow God's commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day. Those desiring any sacrament, or one of these eight items, should be doing just that, except the anointing of the sick, but it is easily available to those able to attend Mass.

I now have in both church buildings the documents and forms to accomplish these things and can now be more involved with parishioners, and others, allowing an opportunity to meet people at the key points in a faith journey and that leads to more effective ministry as a priest. It provides inquirers with quick, complete, accurate and personalized answers and it makes me as accessible as

possible. Don't be shy in approaching me about any interest you may have. To speak more privately, just ask.

This gets the information out of the office, into the church, and out to those seeking it. Hold the phone! Save the trip! This stuff is not in the office. Mass is now the "one stop shopping place" for these and other common inquiries!

If you want more time in a confidential setting, please just email me at [frjoe@nym.hush.com](mailto:frjoe@nym.hush.com). Send me your phone number if you want me to call you soon. Please let me know if the matter is urgent and when you are available to meet. Usually, I am at the Navilleton office on Mondays and Wednesdays and at the Starlight location on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and where needed on Saturdays.

## Part II - Linked Parishes: The Holy Mass

All of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis went through a "Connected in the Spirit" process in 2016-2018, and representatives of each parish entered into discussions with the other parishes in the "cohort" to which they were assigned by the pastoral leadership of the archdiocese. St. John, Starlight and St. Mary, Navilleton were placed in the same cohort along with St. Mary of the Knobs, which had just built the largest church facility in the entire New Albany Deanery (Clark, Floyd and Harrison counties). The pastoral leaders of the Archdiocese also stated, that Starlight and Navilleton would be "linked" parishes.

The Archdiocesan web site describes it this way, "*Linked parishes share a single pastoral leader and cooperate in as many ways as possible, since the pastor or administrator is striving to serve two separate parishes.*"

One of the key ways in which linked parishes must cooperate in sharing a priest is through a coordinated Mass schedule that realistically allows him to carry out this sacramental mission.

Goal #1 given to this cohort for implementation stated "*Develop a coordinated Mass Schedule with effective communication between the linked parishes. Present the New Mass schedule in a ready-to-implement format.*"

This goal listed only one objective. To: "*Recommend a "ready-to-implement" plan that will allow a transition to a total of three (3) Masses between the linked parishes.*"

In fact, the cohort here defied the pastoral objective it was given and proposed a four (4) Mass weekend schedule. The schedule proposed five years ago was:

- Saturday 4 pm at Starlight, then 5:30 pm at Navilleton
- Sunday 8 am at Navilleton, then 9:30 am at Starlight

For several reasons, this is not a workable schedule that I will consider, but notably, the Archdiocese did not kill the four Mass proposal.

Let me state clearly that I am willing to pray four (4) Masses on weekends so that each parish may continue on a path that preserves its unique cultural, traditional, historical and familial ties. These are all important values.

Concerns about this Proposal

- 1) There is not adequate time allowed between the morning Masses for things like a Baptism, a 1<sup>st</sup> Communion, Palm Sunday or any commissioning or recognition at the first Mass due to the priest having to hurry to the next church.
- 2) If held after Mass, Starlight’s Faith Formation program would not be over till around noon which can interfere with family and other activities.
- 3) The last Sunday Mass for the two parishes is at 9:30 am, compared to the current 11 am. That leaves little time to allow someone to make a later Mass at the linked parish.
- 4) Confessions at St. Mary could only be scheduled after Mass for 6:30 pm or later on Saturday which is just too late.
- 5) Our present weekend Mass schedule shows that St. Mary prefers later Masses (8:30 & 11) and St. John earlier Masses (8 & 10:00). Why is this reversed in this plan?
- 6) There is not a realist amount of time allowed between Masses! Someone must have expected the priest to drive wearing his vestments.

**A plan we can live with.**

I intend to move forward in the following way. Keep the Saturday schedule as earlier developed. While it is a tight squeeze, I will make it work, even if we have to modify it for special occasions. But Sundays will change as shown and here is the complete schedule, factoring in Confessions and the Faith Formation programs.

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**Saint John the Baptist  
Starlight, Indiana**

	Confessions	3:00 pm
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Mass</b>	<b>4:00 pm</b>
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<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Mass</b>	<b>8:30 am</b>
	Faith Formation	9:30 am

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**St. Mary of the Annunciation  
Navilleton, Indiana**

	Confessions	4:30 pm
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Mass</b>	<b>5:30 pm</b>
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	Faith Formation	9:00 am
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Mass</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>

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The Advantages of this Plan

- 1) Faith Formation in Starlight can take place after Mass; in Navilleton before Mass.
- 2) Moving the proposed 9:30 am Mass to 10:30 am allows St. John to hold an event as noted in item number 3 above.
- 3) Confessions will be at St. John on Saturday at 3 pm, and at St. Mary on Saturday at 4:30, as long as I have a priest helping me. When I no longer have that help, the Navilleton confessions will be moved to another time.
- 4) St. John keeps the earlier Mass, St. Mary the later Mass.
- 5) This Sunday schedule will be more prayerful and much less of a hassle for current and future priests. He also follows the same circuit Sat. & Sun. promoting consistency and reducing the possibility of confusion i.e., showing up at the wrong place!

It is my hope, and my plea to you, that if you cannot make the Mass at your home parish, support your linked parish! Truly the future of these parishes is linked together. You help your parish when you support your linked parish! This is our version of “buy local” and avoid the “big box” stores. Please, turn to your linked partner before going elsewhere.

Having had to alter Sunday Mass times in the past, I realize this is a sensitive subject for a few. This new plan is not an ideal solution because **there is no ideal solution!** However, it is something we can grow into, and live with.

Therefore, let us proceed with resolute determination to begin this new chapter on **November 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>**, the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent.

**Part III - Linked Parishes: A Holy People**

**Thank You Fr. Day!**

For the foreseeable future, Fr. Wilfred “Sonny” Day will continue as Sacramental Assistant but with a schedule befitting his retirement. The two of us will continue to alternate parishes each week but Fr. Day will preside at one of the Saturday Masses, and be done. I will preside at the other Saturday Mass and then at both Sunday Masses. I am grateful for Fr. Sonny’s continued service.

**Fewer Mass Intentions**

Fewer Masses = fewer Mass intentions, at both parishes. Keeping in mind that one weekend Mass must be offered for the intention of all the members of a parish, the number of available weekend Mass intentions at each parish will be cut in half from 104 to 52 per year. To be as fair as possible to all parishioners, both parishes will limit the number of Mass intentions in calendar year 2023 as follows. Each parish household (each parish has 300+ households) will be limited to,

- 1) one weekend Mass intention.
- 2) and two weekday Mass intentions.
- 3) each intention must be limited to 25-character spaces.

Additionally, Mass intentions will only be excepted from registered members of the parish. These may change after we get into the new routine.

### **Set-up and clean-up**

Setting up for Mass and cleaning up afterwards - someone has to do it. I have done it often, but it is edifying when a parish's members think enough of their church to take care of the day-to-day activities and tasks. We have some people who volunteer currently, but we need more.

Each parish needs to act now to establish a small group of individuals who can open up the church, setup for Mass, and cleanup and lockup afterwards. It is not difficult but does take time and commitment. Those who do it often find it to be a quiet and peaceful time in the church.

I will not get into specifics because each parish is different. But those who may want to make this commitment should contact the parish's business manager and let us know of your interest.

### **One Bulletin**

St. John's bulletin editor is now doing St. Mary's bulletin and this was only natural given that so much identical stuff goes into both bulletins, such as the date, the list of daily Bible readings, my articles, youth activities, everything from the archdiocese, deanery, Catalyst Catholic and other Catholic stuff. Most of the parish staff is shared along with the instructions to see me after Mass for many inquiries. The primary differences are the address, phone numbers, Mass ministry roles, Mass intentions, council members and prayer lists.

There are three parishes in this deanery served by one pastor and they share one bulletin! Two sets of two other parishes (one with a school) share a bulletin. Two more will soon combine their bulletins. Our two Parish Pastoral Councils have agreed to head in this direction as well.

### **Conclusion**

These changes will put us on the track of being "linked parishes". But keep in mind that each parish will still operate independently in all matters financial. Each will continue with its own Pastoral & Finance Councils and other various committees. Each will continue with its unique customs and festivities. But in all this I do hope that the members of both parishes will keep one another in mind and support one another whenever possible.

-- Fr. Joe