

Potential Weekday Mass Changes at Christ the King in 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Peace be with you. Christ the King has been blessed to have two, three, or even, remarkably, four priests assigned to her during different periods since her inception. Those priestly resources allowed for a myriad of Masses and services through the years. Sadly, the shortage of priests is finally hitting the Archdiocese and now our parish. Fr. Catania, who has served us part-time this past year, taking a daily weekday Mass, visiting Religious Education classrooms, assisting occasionally on weekends, and covering the brunt of the emergency calls and other Catholic needs at nearby Methodist and even Children's hospitals, will be reassigned to full-time status at St. Barnabas Church on North 40th Street as of July 1. Despite attempts to procure a replacement for him from the active priests, Archdiocesan and consecrated, there are simply no priests available who can fulfill his duties on any regular basis. Even the number of retired priests have dwindled and many of them, though magnanimous and generous of heart, have suffered diminished health and have earned the right to actually retire. The truth is, with approximately 1,300 registered households, we are blessed at Christ the King to even have two priests this coming year: a pastor and a full-time parochial vicar. Unless things change in the future, there will most likely come a day when there will be a sole priest assigned here to Christ the King and her care of patients in nearby hospitals. It is an urgent time to pray for vocations because the lessening of priests bears direct consequences.

With only two of us priests here this coming year and beyond, Fr. Boyd and I, we cannot sustain three daily Masses on weekdays long-term. The Archdiocese drafted the following statement to guide us in moving forward:

As we go through the process of evaluating priestly assignments throughout the diocese, resources will be considered such that a priest not be expected to habitually offer more than one daily Mass, or four holy day/Sunday Masses between the vigil and the actual day. Even with this change, access to the sacraments locally remains rich and convenient.

With only two priests in the long-term, we can only offer two weekday Masses down the road. I know this is a hard and painful reality. Those who attend weekday Masses do so not out of obligation but out of a generous love and devotion to the Lord. To remove one of our longstanding weekday Masses is no easy decision.

Of our three weekday Masses at 6:30 a.m., 8:15 a.m. and 12:10 p.m., the 8:15 a.m. Mass must and will remain since it is our parish school Mass. In looking at the remaining 6:30 a.m. and 12:10 p.m. Masses, certain facts are helpful. The congregations at both of these weekday Masses are a blend of parishioners and non-parishioners but the 12:10 p.m. Mass crowd is consistently larger. There are also 16 other parishes in the metro area that offer weekday Masses beginning between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. while only 6 other parishes in the same area offer

weekday Masses that begin between 11:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. Practically, this means people seeking early morning Masses have a great many options, in fact, many of those options exist in nearby parishes and in churches en route to work. These facts also show that our 12:10 p.m. Mass is unique and provides a special service: it draws many over the lunch hour as well as a considerable number of parishioners, especially our seniors. Moreover, retaining the 8:15 a.m. weekday Mass still offers a morning Mass to parishioners so inclined, even if it is admittedly a little later in the morning. I took this information to the parish Pastoral Council at our last meeting on May 30th for their consultation. After many questions and much discussion, the members of the council unanimously recommended that, if we had to cancel a weekday Mass in the future, it be the 6:30 a.m. Mass.

Having said all of this, please note that **no change to our weekday Mass schedule will happen until January 1, 2018.** For one, we must keep our current schedule to honor those who have procured Mass intentions throughout the remainder of 2017. Moreover, I still hold out hope that something may change between now and next year that will allow us to keep all of our Masses, that some additional priest may be found. Unless something changes, however, as of January 1st, 2018, we will no longer offer the 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass here at Christ the King except on most Holy Days of Obligation and Ash Wednesday.

Your Servant in Christ,



Fr. Damien Cook

Pastor

The following metro area parishes have early morning Masses year round, Monday-Friday:

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| 1. 6:20 a.m. - Mary Our Queen | 9. 7 a.m. - Immaculate Conception
(Boys Town) |
| 2. 6:30 a.m. - St. James | 10. 7 a.m. - St. Adalbert |
| 3. 6:30 a.m. - St. Margaret Mary | 11. 7 a.m. - St. Cecilia Cathedral |
| 4. 6:30 a.m. - St. Robert Bellarmine | 12. 7 a.m. - St. John Vianney |
| 5. 6:30 a.m. - St. Stephen the Martyr | 13. 7 a.m. - St. Mary (Bellevue) |
| 6. 6:40 a.m. - St. Leo the Great | 14. 7 a.m. - St. Mary Magdalene |
| 7. 6:45 a.m. - St. Vincent de Paul | 15. 7 a.m. - St. Pius X |
| 8. 6:45 a.m. - St. Wenceslaus | 16. 7 a.m. - St. Thomas More |

The following metro area parishes have Masses around noon year round, Monday-Friday:

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| 1. 11:15 a.m. - St. Cecilia Cathedral | 4. 12:05 p.m. - St. Mary Magdalene |
| 2. 11:40 a.m. - Immaculate Conception
(Boys Town) | 5. 12:10 p.m. - Our Lady of Guadalupe |
| 3. 12 noon - St. John (Creighton
University) | 6. 12:15 p.m. - St. Gerald (Ralston) |