

GATES-CHILI CATHOLIC PARISHES

Frequently Asked Questions about the Draft Pastoral Plan October 2009



MASSES

Why does the Sunday Mass schedule have to change? What factors were considered when developing the new schedule?

The Mass schedule needs to change because we will have four priests serving our five parishes rather than the current five. According to canon law, priests may preside at up to three Sunday Masses which includes the Saturday anticipatory Mass. Some of the factors considered in creating this particular Mass schedule were attendance numbers for our current Masses, church capacities, and the time needed between Masses so that the priests in the cluster could travel between churches, prepare to preside at Mass, and interact with parishioners afterwards.

Is the Mass schedule negotiable?

What is contained within the draft pastoral plan is the best version the Catholic Council could devise. If another schedule is developed that better meets the needs of parishioners and respects the factors listed above, it could be adopted and inserted into the next draft of the pastoral plan for the pastoral councils to review.

SACRAMENTS

Where will sacramental preparation take place? Will our children/teens receive the sacraments in our own parish?

The pastoral plan does not make any changes in faith formation although increased collaboration is envisioned over time. At the present time children and teens receive sacramental preparation and sacraments at the parish where they are registered.

FINANCES

Will my donations stay in my own church? What happens to my envelope if I attend a different parish?

Each parish—including the three parishes of the cluster—remains a separate legal entity. Therefore, your donation goes to your own parish. If you attend Mass at a different church and place your envelope in the basket, it will be returned to your home parish. Loose change stays with the parish where it is donated.

Why should I continue to support my parish financially if it is clustering with others?

Your parish will still depend on your generosity and stewardship to fund its expenses—for salaries and benefits, ministries, facilities, etc.

PRIESTS

Who will the four priests be?

We do not expect any changes in the priests serving St. Theodore and St. Pius the Tenth. Sometime in the spring we will learn which two priests will be appointed to serve the new cluster of Holy Ghost, St. Helen, and St. Jude. These may be priests currently ministering within our parishes or different ones.

Where will the priests reside?

The pastoral plan does not dictate where the two priests serving the cluster live. Once they are appointed, the priests will work together to decide.

STAFFING

How is staffing going to be handled/affected? Will staff members work in more than one parish?

No changes have been made. Typically when parishes cluster, job responsibilities are shifted over time with some being cluster-wide and some designated for a particular parish.

What happens with the deacons currently assigned to one of the clustering parishes?

Our expectation is that they will remain in their current positions. In the future the bishop could change their appointment to serve all three parishes, depending on the wishes of the deacons involved and the needs of the parishes.

CLUSTERING

What does it mean to cluster? What will be the legal structure of the churches?

Clustering means that two or more parishes are served by a single leader. Each parish keeps its own identity according to both church and civil law. Ministry programs and staffing can be autonomous within each parish or may involve partnerships with other members of the cluster. Typically clusters move toward more integrated ministries.

What is the difference between clustering and merging? What is the process for determining when clustered parishes merge?

In our diocese clusters ordinarily move toward merging. Merging means that they are joined together to become a single entity under both church and civil law and that all financial assets and liabilities are held in common. The new parish may have as many worship and ministry sites as it needs and can support. Generally parishes move toward merging anywhere between 3 and 5 years after they cluster, depending on how much they have grown in feeling and acting like a single faith community. The primary advantage of merging is administrative, since processes and reports need to be done for only one entity.

THE FUTURE

Will my church close? What can we do to prevent a church from closing in the future?

We know that none of our parishes are immune from fiscal difficulties or changing circumstances. Your role is important. Be a good steward—contribute your time and talents to the needs of your parish. Give to your parish as generously as you can. Have a positive attitude as your parish undergoes change—offer your help, your ideas, and your prayers.