

Beginning at noon on July 6, 2022, the following changes will occur at St. Michael and St. Thomas.

Emergency calls, involving danger of death for those who come to Hancock Regional Hospital, should use the St. Michael's emergency line. If you or your loved one is at Community North or another hospital in that area, you should call either the emergency lines at St. Simon or Holy Spirit at Geist.

Regular sick calls should contact the parish offices during normal office hours, and I will do my best to get there within 24 hours. Please do not wait until the last minute to call as there are fewer priests to go around and we are not always able to respond immediately.

Weddings can take place any day of the week except Sunday or Monday. If the wedding takes place on a Saturday, they will need to begin no later than 1pm.

Funerals will continue as normal for both parishes. We can't do funerals on Sunday, and we will try and stay away from Mondays if possible.

Religious Education programs for both parishes will continue as they are. Confirmation at the cathedral will take place on the same day for both parishes when the diocese assigns the date.

Fr. Aaron's day at the Fortville parish office will be Thursday, but this will be adjusted as needed for funerals and other events. Office hours at both parishes will remain the same. Both parishes will retain their financial councils, although meetings will be less frequent. Other committees at both parishes will continue except for the parish councils. Both parish councils will be dissolved, and a new combined pastoral cabinet will be formed with members from both parishes. Committees at both parishes with similar missions will be encouraged to find ways to work together throughout the year.

#### Mass schedule

I certainly understand that any time the Mass schedule is changed it causes consternation for all involved including myself as the priest. I am only one person, and I cannot do it all. We simply do not have enough pastors to cover all the parishes we currently have in our diocese. Since coming to St. Michael's seven years ago I have been clear with the people of St. Michael that there is a real possibility that I or another pastor will need to take over both parishes in Hancock County. It seems that this has also been communicated to St. Thomas according to the building plan. This reality is now upon us. It was communicated that when St. Thomas began to share a pastor, they would go down to one weekend Mass. Ideally, a pastor is not to say more than three Masses on a weekend and one on other days during the week. When the need arises for weddings and funerals, we can make temporary exceptions to this, but it is not intended to be a regularly scheduled occurrence. There is the possibility that I might have a retired priest to routinely help with one Mass on the weekend, and from time to time one priest will need to cover all four Masses when I am away. Having a retired priest help is welcome, but also temporary as this will eventually go away and the pastor will need to cover all the Masses at both parishes. The other reality is that St. Thomas has a number of parishes that are within easy driving distance which provides the folks in the Fortville area with many other Mass options at other parishes while Greenfield has no close options for Masses. To illustrate this point, see these charts.

Milage to surrounding parishes			
Neighboring parish	Number of weekend masses	Miles from St. Thomas	Miles from St. Michael
St. Thomas	3	X	11
St. Michael	3	11	X
St. John Vianney	3	4.6	16
Holy Spirit Geist	5	6.1	17
St. Simon	4	7.3	17
St. Louis de Montfort	5	12	29
St. Lawrence	3*	13	21
Holy Spirit 10 <sup>th</sup> street	4*	16	14
OL of Grace, Noblesville	5*	15	27
St. Joseph, Shelbyville	3*	31	20
*Spanish mass available in addition to those listed			

Number of Masses at available at neighboring parishes		
Within	St. Thomas	St. Michael
7 miles	12	0
11 miles	15	3

The new schedule for all Mass is below:

For the weekend:

Saturday Vigil Masses-

4pm at St. Michael

6pm at St. Thomas

Sunday morning Masses

8:30am St. Michael

11:00am St. Michael

Weekday Masses

Monday no Mass

Tuesday 6pm at St. Michael

Wednesday 6pm at St. Michael

Thursday Noon at St. Thomas

Friday 8:30am at St. Michael

Baptisms will normally take place after the 6pm Mass at St. Thomas and 11am at St. Michael.

Christmas and Easter Masses are still to be determined.

I know that while this is a rational explanation for these changes, some will still have an emotional response to their Mass time being changed, and in the case of St. Thomas, their Mass is going away. I am sympathetic to these feelings, but I must stay within the bounds given to me by Cannon Law, and ultimately, I have to take care of myself so that I can continue to minister as long as the Lord allows while doing so in a healthy way. I have done this schedule before with two Masses on Saturday and two on Sunday and while it is tiring, it is doable. As many people are aware combining parishes is becoming a common occurrence and will continue to increase as priests retire and fewer are left to do the work.

Please know of my prayers for all as we move forward, and I ask for your prayers as I begin to pastor at two parishes.

Sincerely,

Fr. Aaron Jenkins