

Dearest Assumption Parishioners,

One of my first undertakings as pastor of Assumption was a review of our daily Mass times. Partly this was logistical: our daily Mass schedule was originally based on the pastor taking Tuesday as his day off (we had a Mass on Monday until Fr. Scott's mom fell ill), but I had chosen to take Monday instead, so that Fr. Ross and I would not be off on the same day. This meant that I needed to add a Mass on Tuesday, and if I was going to change one day, it seemed appropriate to revisit all of the days.

But more than logistics, I realized early in my transition that the city of Bellingham, the 12th largest city in Washington State, only had one daily Mass that working people and school children could attend during the week. Given that the vast majority of our population is occupied from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. each day, relatively few Catholics in our city could participate in the Eucharist during the week. This struck me as an important pastoral priority that I should work on right away.

Amazingly, Assumption Parish is uniquely situated to offer daily Mass for school children and working people, since we are sandwiched between an elementary school and a high school, with a middle school very close by. More than a thousand families drive to or near our campus each morning. If we time our Masses correctly, we can ensure that any Assumption School family, Whatcom Middle School family, or Bellingham High School family can go to Mass regularly during the week, not to mention anyone who works in downtown Bellingham.

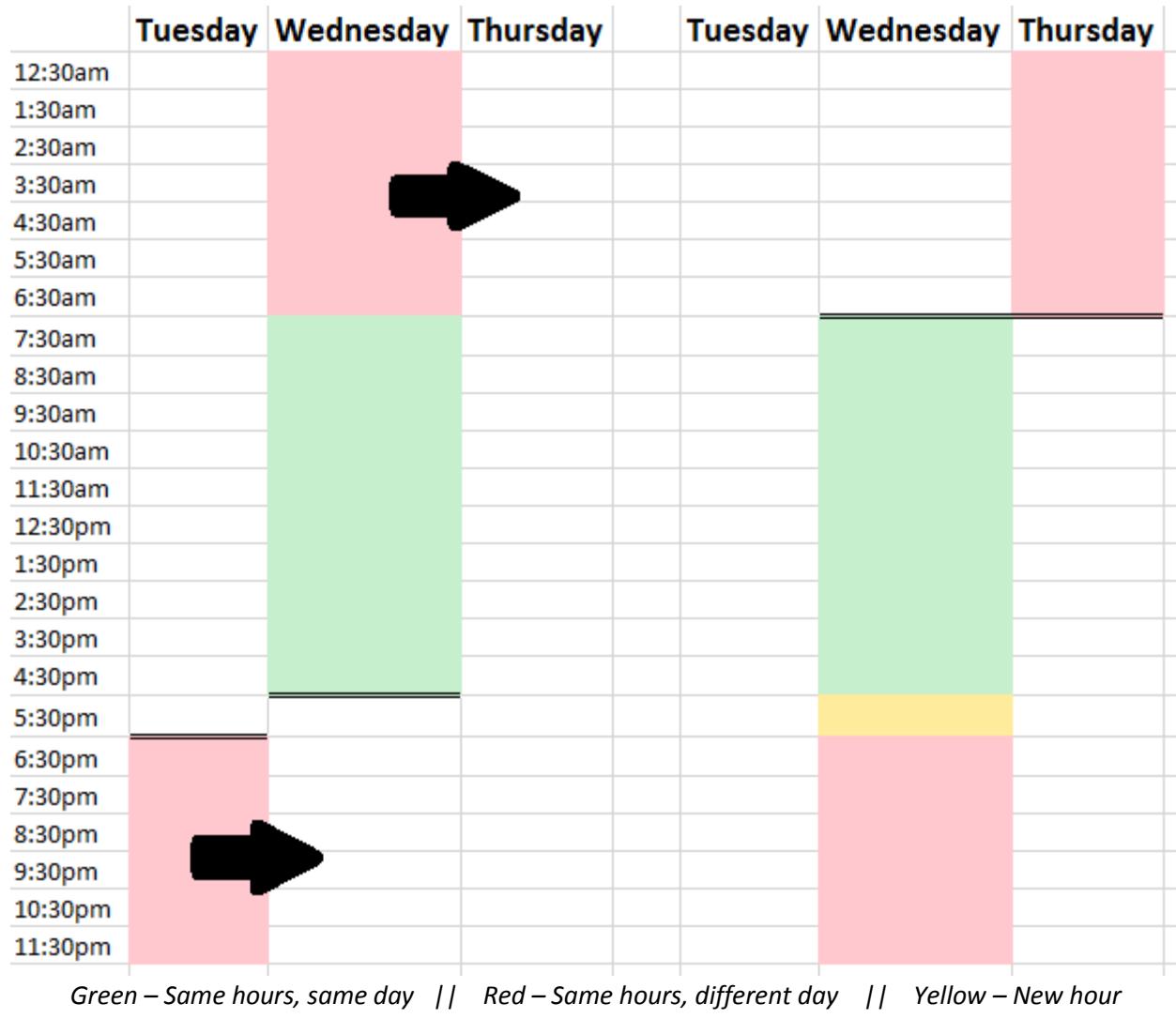
Given all of this, starting in mid-July, I began consulting with our parish staff, our daily Mass community, and our Spiritual Life and Worship Commission. I originally proposed a 7:15 a.m. Mass for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, with an 8:15 a.m. school Mass on Fridays. (The early Masses had to be at 7:15 a.m. because our own parish school begins at 8:00 a.m., and a daily Mass is only guaranteed to finish in 45 minutes, though they will usually last for 30.) In the process of consultation, our school asked for a year of planning before significantly changing their daily Mass time (school scheduling is *hard*), so that Mass remains relatively unchanged this year. In addition, a group of parishioners convinced me that retaining a daily Mass in the evening was necessary for a subset of our population. Though it would not capitalize on our nearness to local schools, it did still allow working people and school children access to daily Mass, so I agreed with them, save two changes: (1) that we place the evening Mass on Tuesday, so that I have additional freedom to travel on Monday, my day off, and (2) that we move it to 5:30 p.m., which will allow people to attend Mass on their way home from work, rather than having to go home after work, just to come back out again.

Thankfully, many people have engaged in the consultation process, and this has helped me make the best decision I can. Unfortunately, there is one piece of feedback that I am getting from many people that I have not been able to accommodate: that the Wednesday and Thursday Masses will be too early. I do not disagree! I am not looking forward to waking up for those Masses, either. But the choice I am faced with is this: keep all the Masses later in the day, when it is *impossible* for many people to attend, or move a couple of Masses very early in the day, where it is merely *inconvenient* for other people to attend. I chose the early Masses because even if it is hard to wake up early, it is still possible to do so. Additionally, two of our Masses remain later in the day and Sacred Heart continues to have 9:00 a.m. daily Masses.

Given all of this, on October 1, our daily Mass schedule will become the following:

Tuesday: 5:30pm; **Wednesday:** 7:15am; **Thursday:** 7:15am; **Friday:** 10:45am

Regarding exposition, I am working with our Adoration Committee to make sure we can still maintain 24 hours of exposition each week. I would like to move it between the Wednesday and Thursday Masses (7:45am Wednesday to 7:00am Thursday), but we will not make that change until we can be sure all of our hours are covered. That shift would look like this:



There are, of course, many other parts of our parish life that we will need to adjust because of this change. Over the next month, our parish staff will be reaching out to anyone we think will be affected, to work with them to make this change go smoothly.

Many people have also been asking about whether we will continue our Word and Communion Services. After our daily Mass changes have settled a little bit, I will begin a consultative process to address this question.

Thank you for working with me to address the pastoral needs of all of our parishioners, and the people of Bellingham as a whole!

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Moore