**Consideration of Consolidating Mass Times**

**Responding to Changed Circumstances**

Over the past decade, Holy Rosary Parish has gone from having three Dominican priests available for Sunday Masses to one. However, the number of Masses has not changed. Holy Rosary parish has four ‘Sunday’ Masses: 5pm Saturday Vigil and 8am, 10 am and 5pm on Sunday.

Post Covid, the number of Mass goers, especially at the Saturday 5:00pm Vigil Mass and the Sunday 8am Mass, has declined. For example, the 8am Sunday Mass typically has only 50-60 parishioners. Also, the number of acolytes, lectors and video projector operators for these Masses has significantly declined, through age, illness and ‘migration’, leaving an undue burden on a few people.

**Reviewing Mass Numbers & Mass Times**

Over the coming weeks, the Parish will be seeking input on possible changes to both the number and times of weekend Masses celebrated at Holy Rosary. The table below shows current Sunday & vigil Mass times for Holy Rosary and the five parish churches within 6.5km (by road) of Holy Rosary.



Initial thoughts are that the 8am Sunday Mass would be discontinued, given that there are four nearby options for either 8am or 9am Masses. However, the possibility of discontinuing the 5:00pm Sat Vigil Mass (which also has nearby alternatives) will also be canvassed.

**Reasons for Mass Times Consolidation**

* To start the process of reviewing and adjusting to the reality that the Dominican Order is withdrawing from Holy Rosary later this year and handing the Parish back to the Archdiocese.
* To bring our Mass times into line with neighbouring parishes which are of similar size and demographic make up, taking into account the fact that we now have only one priest.
* To build up the Masses which are more popular so that the larger congregation helps build a greater sense of community.
* So that the remaining Masses have a larger pool of volunteers for the variety of liturgical ministries.

**Implications of the Dominican Order leaving Canberra**

The Dominican Provincial recently advised parishioners that the Dominican Order will withdraw from Holy Rosary in November 2023 and pass responsibility of the Parish back to the Archdiocese. In a recent Catholic Voice interview, Archbishop Prowse said: *“While this news is disappointing and deeply regretted, it is now time to start contemplating the future. We need to ask some fundamental questions about the shape of parishes, their locations and how the Archdiocese can best cater for the needs of the people.”*

The Archbishop will shortly establish a working party to consider the pastoral needs of the inner north of Canberra and how these might be served in the future. We are assured that there will be consultations with the Holy Rosary community.

It is noted that 17 parishes in the archdiocese are in some form of ‘twinned’ arrangement. As well as the shortage of priests in the archdiocese, including the very recent ‘loss’ of two north Canberra priests, the archdiocese will consider the high population growth in both Gungahlin and Tuggeranong as well as urban consolidation taking place along Northbourne Ave and in North Watson. The final decision could be a twinning of parishes (where Holy Rosary would remain canonically a parish but the parish priest would have responsibility for two or more parish churches) or there could be two priests looking after a number of churches. Regardless of the outcome, from November this year the number of weekend Masses at Holy Rosary will almost certainly be a maximum of two.

**An Opportunity for Renewal ...**

Rather than being disheartened by these changes, we should see this as an opportunity for renewal, evangelisation and community building. Ideas, which parishioners might consider working towards, include:

* Ongoing adult & youth Alpha or other renewal programs;
* Increased involvement in ecumenical activities including Lenten and Advent reflection groups;
* Increased involvement in existing parish activities including St Vincent de Paul, Parish School of Religion (Catechists), Craft Group, Women’s Faith Circle, Meditation Group, Scripture Formation, and environment groups Laudato Si Movement and the Australian Catholic Response To Climate Change.
* New outreach ministries for youth, parish ethnic communities, etc.
* Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Parish this year.

Fr Mannes & members of Holy Rosary Renewal Team

