

Dear Parishioners,

Before I get to the subject of our new and improved Mass times, might you have the gifts to help with a new outreach to our brothers and sisters in the Payne County Jail? I'm organizing a group to help support and evangelize there. We need both English and Spanish speakers. There would be training provided. If you're interested, please email me at frobrien@sfxstillwater.org.

As we grow into our new church building and as we seek to evangelize Payne County for Jesus Christ and His Church, some change is needed in certain aspects of our parish life. Some daily and Sunday morning Mass times will be changing beginning the weekend of August 25-26th. This will give us time to get the news out and for everyone to adjust as needed.

These new Mass times reflect prayer and discussion on the part of [Parish Pastoral Council](#) taking into account the survey recently conducted which had both an online and paper format. About 1/3 of parishioners returned the survey which gave us good data to work with.

Over half of the submitted surveys indicated a need to move Mass times to better fit the needs of our new and growing parish. There are several trends which these new Mass times will be able to address:

- 1) Stillwater is growing. Many of those moving to Stillwater will be Catholic and looking for a church home. We need to plan for the arrival of new parishioners from all over our part of Payne County.
- 2) Our new church building and an increasingly dynamic community are attracting people in wonderful ways. We're seeing a lot of interest from non-Catholics wanting to become Catholic and of fallen away Catholics to return to their faith. We need to plan for the arrival of these new parishioners as well.
- 3) Among current parishioners of all ages, there is a hunger to grow in their Catholic faith. Our summer faith opportunities have been well received. Every ministry we have is growing.

In the survey, especially in the comments section, there are a few issues that I feel need to be addressed.

1) "Don't change my Mass!"- Understanding that there are routines and schedules, I would caution any of us from seeing the life of our parish as something that should be built exclusively around an individual's preference. We want Mass times that are accessible but the Mass does not belong to anyone. There is give and take and the best interests of the whole must be taken into account. These new times do not reflect any particular person's interests, but rather what is best for the whole.

2) "We should have a bilingual Mass"- Some parishes around the country have gone this route. Some have found it successful, others not. In my experience, it doesn't work. There is great complexity in putting it together each week and frequently English speakers and Spanish speakers find the whole experience unfulfilling.

3) "Just add another Mass"- With the exception of the current 10am Sunday Mass, our church is not full at the other three Masses. Even with a second priest (which we're blessed to have Fr. Robert Duck for next 7 weeks), five Masses is too many. What many don't see are the demands on priests during the week and on the weekends. Adding a fifth weekend Mass could be considered only should the other four Masses be at capacity and another priest is permanently assigned to the parish.

4) "Have Mass on Monday"- Adding on to my comments above about an additional Sunday Mass, priests need a day of rest. Frequently, priests (at least this priest) work 12-14 hour days to meet the needs of the parish. I'm not complaining one bit (I hope you can see how much I love being a priest!) but there is a need to rest for at least a day. The vast majority of parish priests in the Diocese of Tulsa and Archdiocese of Oklahoma City take Monday as their day of rest. This allows for priestly fraternity, rest, the ability to run needed errands, and to see friends who may not live in Stillwater. I do celebrate a private Mass on Mondays where ever I am often making my intention the people of Payne County.

With all that in mind, I'm pleased to share with you the new Mass times for St. Francis Xavier that will begin the weekend of August 25-26. Those new Mass times are:

Saturday 5pm (English)
Sunday 8:30am (English)
Sunday 11:15am (English)
Sunday 1pm (Spanish)

Tuesday 7am
Wednesday 7am
Thursday 7am
Friday 12:10pm
1st Saturday of the Month- 9am

Confession times will remain the same:
Saturday 3:00-4:30pm
Wednesday 5:30-6:30pm

A few observations and benefits of this new Mass schedule:

-You'll notice that the Saturday Mass and the Sunday Spanish Mass are unchanged. The Friday daily Mass and 1st Saturday Masses also remain the same. Confession times are also unchanged.

-As we grow as a parish, it is essential that we have time for parishioners to grow in their faith. Sunday mornings are a wonderful time to do this. Many are already at the church for Mass. The time between the 8:30 Sunday Mass and the 11:15 Sunday Mass (approximately 9:45-11) will allow for increased opportunities for Bible studies, adult classes, children's religious education, Confirmation classes, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes, and so much more.

-The Mass schedule we currently use was taken directly from the old St. Francis Xavier schedule when the parishes merged in March. It was done so for ease as there were so many changes already and Mass times were not addressed in the run up to the merge. Ideally, we would have changed Mass times when the new parish opened but that ship has sailed. Having now been in the new church for almost five months there has been the time and energy to have this discussion and make a decision.

-The change from an 8am to a 7am Mass time will allow many more people to come to daily Mass. Every growing and evangelizing parish has a large daily Mass crowd. I'm hoping our daily Mass crowd will as much as triple with the new schedule. Please consider making daily Mass a regular part of your spiritual life.

Change isn't easy and we've had a lot of it lately with a new church and a new pastor. I am hopeful that, as a parish, we will embrace this new Mass schedule and that it will allow us to be a stronger, more Christ centered, more outward looking evangelizing parish for years to come. As always, I welcome your comments and concerns. As you can see each week, we are constantly growing and seeking to address issues as they arise. We are in this together for the glory of God.

May God bless you this week!

In Christ,

Rev. Brian O'Brien
Pastor