

June 22/23, 2019

Dear Parishioners,

A year ago, the Reading Catholic Community began a very challenging journey as we entered into the *Disciples in Mission* process, sharing the resources of both St. Athanasius and St. Agnes Parishes to grow in our faith and move closer to become a Collaborative. Over the past year we created a joint bulletin and the phone system has been upgraded, connecting the two parish offices and the rectory. Both staffs have been meeting regularly to pray and to discuss ways to bring the staffs together to better serve the Collaborative. As challenging as this is, I'm still full of hope for the future of the Reading Catholic Community because people are so faith-filled!

For the past year, I have mentioned the need to change the Mass schedules due to the diminishing number of priests in the Archdiocese. This past year we had been blessed with a number of wonderful priests who have been able to help out on weekends, but that luxury will not last. It's time to make a change. To be honest, changing the Mass schedules has been the most difficult decision that I have ever had to make in my 45 years as a priest, as I know how people feel about "their Mass." I want to thank the Parish Pastoral Councils for their very challenging deliberations in trying to balance the needs of both parishes. The discussions were very lively as we compared attendance records with church capacity. They concluded that the parishioners that go to St. Agnes could be taken care of with 2-3 Masses and St. Athanasius could be taken care of with one Mass. However, I don't want to go to that extreme! The overall question that we faced was, "How do we set up a schedule that is best able to serve the needs of the Reading Catholic Community?" It was very helpful to see the results of the Mass Schedule Survey, especially the comments section. Many thanks to all who participated! So many parishioners were very positive in recognizing the need to move forward. One of the recurring comments was: "If, in an emergency, one priest will have to say all the Masses, how can we have two 4pm Masses!". They are right!

Thus, starting on the first weekend of July, the 6th & 7th, this new schedule for the Reading Catholic Community will begin:

**At St. Athanasius: Saturday, 4pm
 Sunday, 10am**

**At St. Agnes: Sunday, 7:30am
 Sunday, 9:00am
 Sunday, 11:00am**

Please note that the Sunday 5:30pm Mass will continue during the school year but will not be held on Holiday weekends. Its location has yet to be determined.

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper at which time he prayed "that all would be one, as we are one". I hope that all of us can keep our focus on Jesus Christ through this important process and open up our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit. If we can do that, then we *will* be of one mind and heart, not only with the new schedule, but, more importantly, *being the Body of Christ to those we encounter.*

In Christ's peace,

Fr. Steve