

A letter to the parishioners of the Malvern, Malvern East & Glen Iris 'family of parishes'

14/15th October 2023

Dear parishioners,

It has been an interesting few weeks since Monsignor Hall moved to the cathedral and while I was waiting until Wednesday 11th October to assume the office of Parish Priest of Malvern and Malvern East. I have enjoyed meeting many new people and getting a sense of how we might start working together as a family of parishes. After much prayer, thought and conversation, I am ready to announce the new arrangements for Mass and confession in our parishes.

I was guided by the words Archbishop Comensoli wrote to us on 26/27th August, that we were to engage with the Archdiocesan *Take the Way of the Gospel* mission plan:

- “The mission of the Gospel is at the heart of our life, worship and outreach;
- Local faith communities are arranged to allow them to flourish;
- Our faith communities are effectively resourced spiritually, ministerially and materially.
- In the first place, I ask you that you consider what are the needs for Sunday Mass, so that the vibrant gathering of God’s household might flourish through the talents, gifts and ministerial resources among you.”

Considering these points, I concluded that it would not be good to have concurrent Mass times within the family of parishes such that churches were ‘competing’ with each other for attendance. It would be good to make each Mass a significant gathering in size so that people feel part of a vibrant worshipping community. Significant numbers also make possible social time after each Mass (eg. cup of tea, wine and cheese).

In deciding upon the new timetable, I have also taken note of the last official Mass count in May 2023, which appears below:

By individual Mass time	(Average)
10:00am Sunday St Roch's	158
10:00am Sunday St Joseph's	123
5:00pm Saturday Holy Eucharist	120
5:00pm Sunday St Roch's	118
9:00am Sunday St Mary's	117
10:30am Sunday Holy Eucharist	82
6:30pm Saturday St Roch's	52
6:00pm Saturday St Joseph's	33

By church

St Roch's	328
Holy Eucharist	202
St Joseph's	156
St Mary's	117

By time of day

Saturday evening	205
Sunday morning	480
Sunday evening	118

We are also dropping from three priests to two, working across our three parishes. Obviously, this means there needs to be changes to Mass times, but taking into account the points mentioned above, I see for opportunities for parishioners to experience vibrant parish gatherings with fewer Masses across the family of parishes.

In our new reality parishioners may be able to attend their preferred Mass time or preferred church, but possibly not both. I understand that this may be a considerable adjustment for some parishioners. I encourage parishioners from each parish to attend the other churches to build the relationships within the family of parishes. Fr Stephen Francis, Assistant Priest at Malvern and Malvern East is now also the Assistant Priest at Glen Iris. Fr Stephen and I will swap Masses each weekend.

New Sunday Mass timetable beginning Saturday 21st October

5:00pm Saturday	Holy Eucharist
8:30am Sunday	St Mary's
9:30am Sunday	St Roch's
10:30am Sunday	St Joseph's
5:00pm Sunday	St Roch's

In effect, each parish reduces its current Mass schedule by one Mass, each Sunday morning Mass shifts by half an hour, and the evening Masses remain at the same time. We shall conduct regular Mass counts in the coming months, and I shall review the timetable at an appropriate time next year.

With regard to weekday Masses, we similarly need to reduce the number of Masses given only two priests, and many other responsibilities during the week with Masses for funerals, schools, Cabrini hospital, nursing homes, anointing, etc. Priests should only be saying one Mass each weekday unless a second is necessary; and cannot say more than two. I also have

other responsibilities with the Archdiocese that take me away at times, including serving on the MACS Board, working as a Vocations Promoter and occasional canon law work. With Fr Stephen and I having our separate times of annual leave, conferences and annual retreat, there are nearly three months a year when there will be only one priest in the parishes. We need a weekly Mass schedule that is predictable for people and can be maintained by one priest when necessary, without changing times each week. The new timetable also presents an opportunity for more vibrant weekday Mass gatherings as parishioners attend weekday Mass in each other's churches.

New Mass weekday times beginning Saturday 21st October

Monday	5:30pm	St Roch's	
Tuesday	9:15am	St Joseph's	
Wednesday	5:30pm	St Roch's	(Exposition til 7pm)
Thursday	9:15am	St Mary's	(Exposition til 10:30am)
	12:00pm	Cabrini	
Friday	9:15am	Holy Eucharist	
Saturday	9:15am	St Mary's	

New Confession times

Confessions will be heard before each Sunday Mass, and after each weekday Mass until the last penitent leaves. Therefore, there will be confessions available every day across the family of parishes.

Monday	6:00pm	St Roch's
Tuesday	9:45am	St Joseph's
Wednesday	6:00-6:50pm	St Roch's
Thursday	9:45-10:20am	St Mary's
Friday	9:45am	Holy Eucharist
Saturday	9:45am	St Mary's
	4:30-4:50pm	Holy Eucharist
Sunday	8:00-8:20am	St Mary's
	9:00-9:20am	St Roch's
	10:00-10:20am	St Joseph's
	4:30-4:50pm	St Roch's

I hope and pray that these new arrangements will enable our family of parishes to flourish, that we may all grow closer to Christ, for the sake of our souls and the souls of those to whom the Lord is sending us.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,
Fr Michael Gallacher PP