



Our Parish Family

Our Lady Help of Christians
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A welcoming Catholic faith community who gathers to celebrate the Word of God as a Eucharistic People.

Pastoral Letter – Grey-Lockdown Capacity Restrictions

Hey folks,

As mentioned in last week's Newsletter, (attached for your convenience), we are in a **Grey-Lockdown** zone. Thankfully, unlike previous Grey-Lockdowns, we are able to be open for Mass, but limited to 15% of the total church capacity.

With the above in mind, though the current Wednesday Masses are okay, Sundays are the challenge. When looking at the numbers, **36 for OLHC** and **63 at SC (78 if the hall is used)**, after conversations with several people seeking their input, including our Deanery Episcopal Vicar, for practical reasons only, and upon prayerful reflection, I have come to the conclusion that both OLHC Sunday Masses will be offered at St. Christopher's at their usual times of 7:00 pm Saturday and Sunday at 09:00 am.

Please note that this is only for the Grey-Lockdown. The moment the colour changes allowing 30% capacity, I assure you Sunday Masses will resume at Our Lady Help of Christians.

I am aware that some will not be happy with this decision, and it may well cause a few to say such things as "see I told you the diocese wants to close our church!" I doubt there will be anything that I could possibly say to appease these voices, so I will simply say this: from the moment I got here I made it perfectly clear that my task was, and continues to be, getting our two parishes ready for the role out the Family of Parishes expected to be announced later this year. At that time, the incoming pastor will likely be named as well. The incoming pastor will put together his personally selected Transition Team from within our parishes. That said, between now and then, we have been putting together a small Development Team responsible for gathering information in preparation of the 'hand-off' to the Transition Team. I am pleased to say that Carolyn Cornelissen has agreed to lead this Team on behalf of Our Lady Help of Christians along with Mark Étienne from St. Christopher's. We have weekly conversations which I feel are already helping me develop a deep appreciation of the farming history in our parishes. It has been an eye opener, and I am grateful for that.

Getting back on point, given the short period of time to respond to this new Grey-Lockdown accommodation, of which we were not given any advance notice of, the only other practical solution would

be to have Mass at OLHC but go 'first come first serve' and literally lock the door when we reach 36. This is not something I am inclined to do. At this point in time adding additional Masses is not an option either.

Given that I had asked for suggestions, I am grateful for the two I received. However, given the short timeline, and the lack of admin assistance, neither suggestion is possible at this moment.

Unfortunately, we are in a challenging position for we cannot permanently hire a new secretary due to the fact that this is the privilege of the incoming pastor as he gets to assemble his pastoral and administration team as needed.

It is disappointing that I have to say this, but I will. Connie is now the bookkeeper for all four parishes in our eventual Family of Parishes. Though she has, and will continue to help as her workload permits, please know that we are working on getting some support from a neighbouring parish, I will keep you posted.

We have begun discussions as to how best facilitate the four Passion Sunday Masses enabling as many people as practically possible to attend. I can say that like this weekend, all four Masses will be at St. Christopher's. It's the Mass times that are up for discussion, and what we can and cannot complete within the timeframes we typically have.

In the meantime, if it helps, we are aware that this is a challenging time for us all as we strive for a balance between being able to worship our Lord, and do what we can to keep us all safe and healthy. To that end, please remember that we have been dispensed from our Sunday obligation up to and including Easter Sunday. If you are nervous about attending, and truly believe in God, I am pretty certain our Lord will understand.

In summary, this coming 5th Sunday of Lent, both OLHC Sunday Masses will be at St. Christopher's and at their usual times (Saturday at 7:00 pm and Sunday at 09:00 am). In the spirit of doing what we can to love God and love our neighbour I would like to ask that both parishes to keep to their respective Mass times please.

Peace be with you and your families,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mark B. Maloney'.

Fr. Mark B. Maloney