

Appendix 15: Scheduling of Masses

The pastoral practice of offering more than one or two or even three Masses on any given day has changed the expectations of some of our Catholic people. The Diocese of Bismarck grants the habitual faculty to binate on any given day, if there is a pastoral necessity, these faculties allow for the offering of three Masses on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation. It is not a good practice to regularly and routinely celebrate more Masses than are pastorally necessary.

I have observed that because of the good will of all of you, there are more Masses offered on a weekend than may be necessary. A Mass offered, which fulfills one's obligation to attend and participate at Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is necessary. As Church law makes clear, the Catholic faithful have the right to the sacraments at all reasonable times. We priest have an obligation before God and the Church to make Mass available for our people at reasonable times. An extra Mass celebrated on a day along with a Mass or Masses of obligation is neither encouraged nor required. This means that Catholics can attend a scheduled Mass of obligation in a parish, but wish to have an extra Mass celebrated for their convenience. One example of such an instance is a camp ground or resort area Mass offered for the convenience of those present when they can easily attend a scheduled parish Mass.

Obviously the size of a parish can determine if one Mass of obligation is sufficient or perhaps more Masses are necessary. Since the Diocese of Bismarck does not have an adequate number of priests to staff all of our parishes are to coordinate a reasonable Mass schedule among the parishes in the cluster so that the parish priest is not offering regularly more than two Masses on any day.

Thus, with this letter I am giving the directive to all priests and to all parishes, those clustered and those not clustered, that only Masses of obligation may be scheduled and celebrated in any parish, oratory or other setting. Wedding and funeral Masses are not included in this directive. If an extra Mass is desired, permission for it must be given by me, the Diocesan Bishop. It is my hope that this directive will be of assistance to you and to our good Catholic people and will help facilitate cooperation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives.