

The New Sunday Mass Schedule for Arundel and Storrington

Dear Parishioners,

I am sure you remember our consultations a little while ago about bringing our two communities of Arundel and Storrington together, looking firstly at broader matters, and then focusing particularly on the key issue of the Sunday Mass schedule. I am very grateful to every one of you for all your prayers and contributions to this discernment process. They have been invaluable in helping us to find the most positive way forwards.

Within the last few weeks—and some time after our consultation meetings—we have received some good news from Bishop Richard: he has managed to find another priest who can celebrate Mass for the Poor Clares in Crossbush (but we don't yet know what time or day that will be). This means that I will be able to celebrate three Masses for the parish communities, at least for the present. In the light of this news, we contemplated restarting the whole consultation process from scratch, but decided against that because (a) you have already let us know your principal wishes and concerns, and (b) it would slow the process down considerably. I hope you agree with that decision.

The results of both consultation meetings and subsequent written contributions were passed onto a team of six lay people—three from each of the core teams for Arundel and Storrington—to identify the best solution. They have put a tremendous amount of hard work and prayer into the process. Their deep commitment to the spiritual welfare and practical needs of all people, young and old, from each of our communities has been admirable—and has made the decision-making process all the more difficult! However, I am delighted to say they have recently reached a joint conclusion. That was passed on to Bishop Richard, who has approved it. So the schedule now being proposed is:

- Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm at Arundel
- Sunday 9.00 am Mass at Storrington
- Sunday 10.45 am Mass at Arundel

This will involve change for everyone—some more than others—and we all find change quite challenging. But it also provides new opportunities as we share our gifts and resources. I hope and pray that we will all have a generous spirit in engaging with these changes, and will encourage each other to do the same. We need to remember that every parish in the diocese will be experiencing similar changes over the coming months. Let's resolve to be a beacon of hope to them by our positivity, and not a source of discouragement! In particular, I would like to encourage you to think whether going to Mass in a new place—but with many of our old friends—could be the best option for you. I know you will all make a very special effort to make new people feel genuinely welcome—that's a particular privilege for us as followers of Jesus, who welcomed all into His company.

We will implement the new schedule on the **weekend of 11-12 May 2024**. So do have a think and a pray about which Mass will be best for you. Do chat with your friends about it and maybe make a joint decision. Also, do feel free to experiment. It could be a new adventure! Once we have got used to the new places and times, we can review them and make any adjustments if they turn out to be necessary—probably around October.

In the coming weeks we will need to have meetings with those who organise readers, servers, welcomers, children's liturgy leaders, ministers of Holy Communion, musicians and singers, etc., as well making sure we have put in place everything we need for safeguarding and health and safety. So there's lots to do. But most important is to stay close to Jesus, and ask Him to give us all a new and ever more heartfelt love for Him in the Holy Eucharist.

God bless you all,
Fr Stephen