

Concerning the awaited merger decree and proposed Mass times:

Many of us have been waiting intently on the formal merger decree from the Bishop's office concerning our four parishes. Especially so since we have already received news that Fr. Oswaldo Roche has been assigned to help at the Haven of Mercy ACC parishes in and around Little Falls. Although we do not yet have the decree I have been given permission to proceed according to the merger proposal initially approved by the Bishop. Namely, that our four parishes will be merged into one newly formed parish of Saint Mary's, with regularly scheduled Saturday evening and Sunday Masses celebrated on the two Catholic campuses of Saint Mary's in Melrose and Saint John the Baptist in Meire Grove.

Unless instructed otherwise, I intend for the church buildings of Saint Michael's, Spring Hill and Saint Andrew's, Greenwald to remain open for occasional use, with the Blessed Sacrament still in reservation. However, they will no longer operate with a weekend Saturday evening or Sunday Mass. Other occasional celebrations, such as weddings and funerals, will continue to be permitted in at Saint Andrew's and Saint Michael's, beyond June of 2026, until further notice. The annual Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mass at Saint Michael's and Barley Day celebration on the campus of Saint Andrew's will be continuing.

Concerning a weekly Mass schedule, please know this: There were multiple plausible options, and none of them were ideal. Everyone was certain to have to sacrifice somehow and some way. Many of us prefer being able to celebrate Mass at a particular place, time, with a preferred community and even with a preferred minister. While knowing this proposed schedule would affect us in any one of these ways, even still, a decision had to be made. The proposed Mass schedule, beginning Tuesday, June 30, 2026, is:

<u>Day</u>	<u>St. Mary, Melrose</u> <u>(St. Mary church)</u>	<u>St. Mary, Meire Grove</u> <u>(St. John church)</u>	<u>St. Michael & St. Andrew</u> <u>churches</u>	<u>CURA Center,</u> <u>Nursing Home</u> <u>Melrose</u>
<u>Saturday</u>	—	4:00 PM vigil (English)*	—	10:00 AM** (rotating priests)
<u>Sunday</u>	9:00 AM (English) 11:30 AM (Spanish)	—	—	—
<u>Monday</u>	No daily Mass			
<u>Tuesday</u>	6:30 PM (Spanish)*	—	—	10:00 AM
<u>Wednesday</u>	—	8:00 AM	—	—
<u>Thursday</u>	—	—	8:00 AM June-August: St. Michael September – May: St. Andrew (Mass with SJSA school)	—
<u>Friday</u>	Summer: 8:00 AM Academic yr: 8:30 AM (Mass with St. Mary's school)	—	—	—

* Times marked with a single asterisk are still being confirmed.

** Subject to change.

Though the Mass times at 9 AM and 11:30 AM in Melrose are remaining the same, please do not think that Saint Mary's, Melrose doesn't have to sacrifice anything. When I was first here in 2014, there were three weekend Masses in English here, and now we are reduced to the one on Sunday morning. And while the Mass in Spanish could have been moved to Saturday afternoon/evening, this would mean that no Saturday evening Mass in English would be available with me.

Preserving the 9 AM Mass time allows for a staggered Mass schedule across our One In Faith ACC churches, with an anticipated 8:00 AM Sunday Mass at Sacred Heart, Freeport, 9:00 AM at Saint Mary, Melrose, 10:00 AM at St. Rose of Lima, St. Rosa, and 11:30 AM Mass in Spanish at Saint Mary, Melrose.

I understand that with the two Masses being celebrated at the nursing home in Melrose, that makes for six Masses in Melrose. However, the Masses celebrated there, although open to those who are also visiting residents, is primarily intended for the residents and therefore does not operate like an ordinary parish Mass. I will be in communication with the Diocese and CURA concerning the future of the Mass on Saturday mornings. That

FATHER MITCHELL'S PASTORAL BULLETIN

Sunday, June 7, 2026

To the parishioners of Saint Andrew's, Greenwald,
Saint John the Baptist's, Meire Grove, Saint Mary's, Melrose &
Saint Michael's, Spring Hill, of the One In Faith Area Catholic Community

said, although the total number of Masses in Melrose is six, the Masses on campus amounts to four, with only two of these being in English.

An updated Mass intention policy is currently being reviewed. This cherished custom of requesting the celebration of Masses for the benefit of souls is an important and time-honored tradition. Parishioners will be notified when the updated policy has been approved and people can begin requesting Masses again within our parishes. Obviously, the availability will be greatly reduced.

I would have rather presented this much sooner but I was waiting on the merger decree. When it was not yet ready, and felt I could wait no longer, I am choosing to present this proposed schedule. Please know this has been carefully considered and is not being presented lightly. There will be more information in the weeks to come, and I will continue to be available to answer any questions I can.

Lastly, on Thursday, June 11, the bishops of the United States will consecrate our nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus — the day before the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart on June 12. This act is part of the Church's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Through it, the bishops seek to renew devotion to the Sacred Heart and to recognize the kingship of Christ, perfecting the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel.

The Cathedral of Saint Mary in Saint Cloud will celebrate a consecration Mass at 12:05 PM. Here in our own parishes, I will offer the same consecration prayers at the 7:30 AM Thursday morning Mass at Saint Mary's, Melrose, on June 11. Let us join our bishops in entrusting our nation to the Heart of Christ. As always, please join me in praying for each other, the people of our Diocese and this process.

Mary, Patroness of the Americas, pray for us.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

Greetings.

We rejoice with the whole Diocese of Saint Cloud as five men were ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Patrick Neary. A couple of the newly ordained have ties to our own communities:

- Deacon Chad Middendorf was ordained a permanent deacon. Chad is a longtime business owner in Melrose who is well known and respected among us. His witness of faith lived out in family, work, and now diaconal ministry is a gift to our diocese.
- Deacon Scott Kahler was ordained a transitional deacon, taking another step toward priestly ordination. Scott is related to many of the Meyers from the Meire Grove and Melrose area, and we are proud to count him among our extended parish family.

We also congratulate Deacon Tobias Ellis was also ordained a transitional deacon, advancing toward the priesthood, and Deacon John Bell and Deacon Ruben Uribe Mejia, who were ordained to the permanent Diaconate.

Let us hold all five of these new deacons, and their families, in our prayers. May they be faithful servants of Christ and His people for many years to come.