

“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens”  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1).

This well-known saying from the book of Ecclesiastes applies to our lives in many ways. Sadly, it also applies to my recent announcement that Msgr. Cas Bogniak would be joining us for Masses here at St. Boniface. Just before he was set to begin his time with us last weekend, he received a call from Bishop Persico’s office asking him to cover the sacramental ministry at another parish as the pastor takes a leave of absence. Msgr. Bogniak is still very much interested in coming onboard here at St. Boniface, but that will have to wait until the pastoral situation of the other parish is resolved, which could take weeks or even months. Until then, we will continue our current Mass schedule and refrain from adding any Masses on Mondays.

While this new development is disappointing, it serves as a reminder of the increasing urgency of the priest shortage in our diocese. The recent round of parish restructuring has helped alleviate the pressure somewhat, buying our diocese some time, but the practice of calling priests like Msgr. Bogniak out of retirement to plug the holes in the dam cannot continue indefinitely. We all need to redouble our efforts to address the priest shortage by first and foremost offering ceaseless prayers and spiritual sacrifices for an increased response to God’s call to the priesthood. Secondly, we need to extend that call by personally inviting the young men of our parish and families to consider the priesthood as their vocation.

Finally, we need to begin preparing ourselves, spiritually and emotionally, for the fact that sooner rather than later there will be days when Mass will not be celebrated here. Whether I come down with a sudden illness or am out of town for a wedding or am working a cursillo or whatever, there will be days that I won’t be able to celebrate Mass here and there will be no priests available to cover for me. That reality isn’t twenty or thirty years down the road; it’s five or ten. We need to start planning ways to keep the liturgical life of St. Boniface vital while also opening our hearts to new ways of celebrating liturgy that the changing circumstances of our diocese will demand. What does that look like? I have no idea. But together perhaps we can begin imagining that and start laying down the groundwork for it. So pray for a greater response to God’s call to the priesthood, extend that call to others, and prepare for the day when the priest shortage comes to St. Boniface, beginning now.