

Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Brooklyn

310 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York 11215

November 3, 2023

To the Clergy, Staffs and the Faithful parishioners of Brooklyn and Queens,

Recently, I met with our Vicar General, Regional Vicars, local Deans and priests during our annual Priest Convocation in Douglaston. During this gathering, we discussed important issues that we will need to address in the near future, like new models of parish life, possible collaborations among parishes regarding Religious Education and other ministries, as well as assessing the current Mass schedules at all our parishes.

Allow me to share with you some statistics that were shared with the priests:

- In 2017, Mass attendance in our Diocese was reported at an average of 205,502 people per weekend. In 2022, the average was reported at 124,031. Due to demographic changes as well as the overall national trend of fewer Catholics attending Sunday Mass regularly, we see a decrease of nearly 40 percent in Mass attendance in our diocese in the last 5 years. This decline in Mass attendance means that we have in many parishes throughout the diocese large capacity churches with a significantly reduced Mass size.
- Due to a high number of priest retirements and deaths in recent years, there are fewer priests serving in our 175 parishes.
- In our diocese Mass is celebrated in 14 different languages on a weekly basis and in 26 languages monthly. This unique pastoral challenge in combination with the reduced number of clergy with bi-lingual skills further complicates the ability to best serve our parishes with specific language needs.

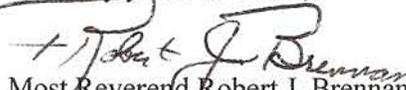
There is no simple solution to these issues. In many of our parishes it is evident that we do not need so many separate Masses to accommodate the number of parishioners in attendance at Sunday Eucharist each week. We are asking pastors and administrators throughout the diocese in Brooklyn and Queens, in consultation with their pastoral councils, to review and evaluate their Mass schedules. In many parishes, the number of Masses celebrated each weekend could be reduced by at least one or maybe more Masses, depending on the number of people attending and the capacity of each church.

Additionally, your pastor in coordination with your Regional Vicar and local Dean, are beginning discussions at the deanery level concerning possible collaborations among neighboring parishes regarding Religious Education programs and other ministries, that could possibly lead to formal parish partnerships.

I ask for your openness and cooperation with these possible changes. Not every parish will be affected, but most will go through some sort of adjustment, in order to be able to most effectively serve the current needs of the People of God in our great Diocese.

Be assured of my prayers for each of you, and may I humbly ask for your prayers, especially for our pastors and administrators, and all those who will be part of these discussions taking place throughout our parishes and deaneries.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan
Bishop of Brooklyn