



I love to watch sentimental movies at Christmas time. I tear about every time I watch the ending scene of *It's a Wonderful Life*, and Tiny Tim saying *A Merry Christmas to us all God bless us everyone* can warm the heart of any Scrooge moments I may have. Another favorite Christmas movie of mine is *The Bells of St. Mary's*. Father O'Malley, the unconventional priest from 'Going My Way', continues his work for the Catholic Church. This time he is sent to St. Mary's, a run-down parochial school on the verge of condemnation. He and Sister Benedict work together to save the school, though their differing methods often lead to good-natured disagreements. Father O'Malley is played by Bing Crosby and Sister Benedict by Ingrid Berman. It is a three-handkerchief movie. The semi villain in the movie is Henry Bogardus. He is the owner of a beautiful new building that the sisters want him to give to them for a new school. Bogardus is trying to have the St. Mary's Catholic School condemned so he can buy for further development. The nuns pray and pray that Bogardus will soften his heart and give them the building as a new school at no cost.

I feel a bit like Henry Bogardus. I know some parishioners have been praying fervently to touch the heart of the pastor to change his decision about cancelling the 7:00 p.m. Saturday Mass. The prayers have been heard and I am going to update my decision about the 7:00 p.m. and have it continued. I am not sure if I am a weak leader who bends at the prayerful requests of parishioners, or a wise man who listens to information and is open to change his mind. I may be a mix of both. Here is why I changed my mind:

- A couple of parishioners came to me in great sincerity and explained that the 7:00 p.m. Mass was the only Mass that was easy for them to attend since they worked on weekends until 5:00 p.m. They love the parish and did not want to have to seek a Mass elsewhere. I had not been aware of this information when I initially made the decision.
- When we were discerning the decision to change the Mass schedule, we had three priests on staff. With the unanticipated addition of Father Denis, we now have four. All the priests here are happy to celebrate Masses for the parish.

- I have noticed that the Mass attendance at the 7:00 p.m. is like some of the Sunday Masses, and was left wondering if I should have chosen a Sunday Mass, rather than a Saturday Mass for closure. Currently, I have no intention to change our Mass schedules unless there are unforeseen circumstances.

I still do believe our parish does not need eight Masses on the weekend for the same reasons I gave: a) priests should not say numerous Masses on the same day unless there is a very good reason b) a Mass has more spirit when more people attend. This is not to suggest that a few people cannot have a deeply spiritual Mass. They can and do, but I do believe a fuller church lifts all of us.

Since there will be new pastor in St. Martin's in the summer of 2019, I will let him decide what, if any changes, he would seek to make in the Mass schedule. If the new pastor feels the need to do so, I know you will be fair to him since I think such changes are inevitable and most of us do not like change.

If we were to have a priest transferred, something I do not anticipate but one never knows, then I may move to cancel a Mass.

I do not want the 7:00 p.m. to become locked in with Mass intentions so Mass intentions can be obtained the last week of the month for the upcoming month at the parish office. So, in the last week of December 2017, you can have a Mass said in January of 2018, and this process will continue month to month.

Spoiler Alert! In the movie the Bells of St. Mary's, the sisters promise to pray for Mr. Bogardes health since he has a heart condition. For those who have been praying for me to change my mind about the 7:00 p.m. Mass, I ask you to pray that I live to see that Jets win a Super Bowl...that will guarantee me a very long life. Merry Christmas and God bless us everyone. Father Patrick Bogardes