



St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Parishioners of St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church:

Having had *eight* masses here at St. Mary's on each Day of the Lord, on each Saturday/Sunday, it has often seemed to me that we have *eight* parishes here at St. Mary's! Meeting at eight different (or even the same!) times, in two different places, in two different languages, on two days of every weekend – it has been most difficult for the priests whom we have had serving here, and those we have borrowed from elsewhere, to handle all of those masses in the way that they all should be handled. Then, there are Saturday confessions, masses, weddings and funerals. Then, there is St. Williams of Ward every Sunday, and St. Gerard's and Our Lady of the Valley on occasion.

As for me, as pastor of St. Mary's, our weekend mass schedule has really strained my capacity to be present to my "*eight parishes*" in the many ways that I should be and that I wish to be. It is not uncommon for me to hear from parishioners leaving from one of the masses to which I have not recently assigned myself, and only half-jokingly, "So good to see you! Have you been away on vacation!" When, in fact, I haven't been anywhere other than St. Mary's on any weekend, but one, in these last nearly four years.

We at St. Mary's are very far from having experienced the ideal of Christian Sunday worship, which is that the entire congregation will come together as one body and worship together at one time and in one place. While that ideal has not been commonly achieved in our American Catholic experience, it remains a great ideal towards which we all could be striving. Our having had eight masses at St. Mary's (plus one other mass at St. Williams) has left us a very long way indeed from meeting that ideal. We members of the One Body of Christ at St. Mary's need to consolidate ourselves more closely together as one congregation, meeting at fewer weekend masses, while taking maximum advantage of the worship spaces that we have now, and at the same time we need to accommodate our growing parish population.

In the past, we have had some support from retired priests, priests from other countries, and priests from neighboring parishes. That support, when and if available, is always tentative and temporary; and it is impractical to rely upon such support when making our long term plans. At best, as in this past year, it has provided us with four priests able to say some one or more of the masses on our current schedule and the masses at St. Gerard's and at St. Williams in Ward. However, after Fr. Charles Kawesi goes home to Uganda on June 10 for two months' vacation, and after Fr. Ven Amidar goes to his next assignment in California on June 14, we are only

