



November 10, 2023

Dear Parishioners,

Since being assigned to the churches of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Robert Bellarmine, Fr. Schumacher and I have found that our hearts are already burning with love for all of you. I cannot adequately explain how grateful we have been for your overwhelming kindness and patience. As you are well aware, neither of us are experts in combining two parish communities into one parish family, and yet, the grace of God has been working in our midst.

These are but some ways in which I have been inspired by your faith in Jesus Christ and your desire to foster a spirit of welcome and collaboration as we become one parish family:

- all the “new faces” attending the 8:15am daily Mass
- the time people are taking to visit with one another after Mass
- the increased number of Eucharistic Adorers since we expanded the hours in September
- the continued regional reach of our school, PSR, and youth ministry programs
- the creation of an RCIA program involving team members & presenters from both churches
- the willingness of several of our organizations to share resources and work together

I write to you now so that I can begin to lay out a vision for our united parish, considering Archbishop Rozanski’s decree last spring. With heartfelt honesty and sincerity, I hope to explain the reasons behind my decisions, clarify concerns, and give enough information to avoid confusion. Your participation in our listening sessions was truly a gift. Not only am I more informed, but I was also able to empathize with your concerns as we take up our crosses together. I have been listening to you, and I have been listening to Jesus by weighing heavy topics in prayer.

My most difficult decision centers around the most sacred and vital component to our spiritual lives: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. *All Things New* was initiated primarily because the ratio of priests to lay faithful was no longer viable within the model of so many church structures. I want the weekend Mass schedule to be the core of our new shared reality, reflecting a parish that can pool our collective resources and thrive together. I envision a Sunday experience where both your priests are present at every Mass: distributing Holy Communion, greeting people afterwards, and even hearing confessions between the Masses. As a result, I have decided that beginning in January of 2024, it is in the best interest of the parish to have all weekend Masses on the campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

What about the church and other buildings at St. Robert Bellarmine? Currently there are no plans to sell or change the campus in any major way. The Blessed Sacrament will remain in the tabernacle, and the church will be available for Masses on occasion. We will certainly continue to have weddings, funerals, and baptisms as they are requested. The campus currently has three tenants: St. John Paul II School, St. Elizabeth Adult Day Care, and the offices of the Archdiocesan Western Vicariate. We have a good relationship with all our tenants, and we plan for that to continue. We will also continue to have access to the building and kitchen for certain other needs and traditions – examples being the periodic Knights of Columbus breakfasts and the monthly Senior Luncheon, both of which will continue to serve the wider St. Charles Community.

At the listening sessions, I also often heard about a desire for the return of a Sunday evening Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The Sunday evening Mass was originally geared towards our regional youth ministry program and to Catholics in the area who relied on a later Sunday option. This Mass, I understand, was shared among the priests from St. Elizabeth, St. Robert, St. Peter, and at one time Sts. Joachim and Ann. This allowed a priest to offer this Mass once every six to eight weeks. We now have fewer priests. I did reach out to our neighboring priests, and we all concluded that there are already a good number of regional Sunday evening options that include: Immaculate Conception in Dardenne Prairie, Assumption in O'Fallon, Lindenwood University (during the school year), and Incarnate Word in Chesterfield. I have, therefore, concluded that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will not have a Sunday evening Mass going forward.

It is important to note that though our parish will be named "St. Elizabeth Ann Seton," the configuration is that of a vibrant new parish, enhanced by the presence of the people from St. Robert Bellarmine. While the weekday Mass times will remain the same, you will find that the weekend Mass times have been adjusted to serve our new needs.

Beginning in January of 2024, this is the official weekend Mass schedule:  
Saturday 5:00pm  
Sunday 6:30am, 8:00am, 9:30am, & 11:30am  
All Masses will be on the campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Beginning in the New Year, all bank accounts will be combined under one parish umbrella. Neither church is a financial liability to the other; both have numbers in the black. Thanks to your generosity, as well as to the capable administration of Fr. Bob Burkemper and Deacon Phil King, we can pool our resources and become more financially secure than ever. Just recently, we held a joint meeting of our finance councils, and I witnessed firsthand how these talented people are motivated to serve our parish together. If you have not already done so, I humbly ask you to begin making your checks out and changing your online giving donations to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton; the money will continue to benefit the same people. Your continued generosity will enable us to find new and creative ways to be the hands and face of Jesus. There will be more specific information forthcoming about finances, and I will make sure to continue to communicate it to you.

I just want you to know that while this process has not been easy, I truly believe that we are stronger together. As we unify, I ask you to join me in the mission to pray your daily rosaries and in your silent meditation for three very specific intentions:

1. For our continued healing and coming together as one loving parish family
2. For an increase in priestly vocations and for the holiness of our priests
3. For our country to draw near to Jesus particularly through ending abortion, sanctifying marriage and family life, and proclaiming that humanity's primary identity is that of being beloved sons or daughters of God

If we unite in the mission of prayer for these things, we will unite in all things.

May St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Robert Bellarmine continue to pray for us!

In Christ,



Fr. Tom Vordtriede  
Pastor



**Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton**  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Advent 2023

Dear Parishioners,

The Advent and Christmas Seasons lead to peace. Peace on earth and to people of good will is a result of brothers and sisters joining their voices to give God glory in the highest. We ask you to give Him glory especially through these following celebrations:

Extra Advent Confession Times:

- Thursday, December 7th from 6:00-7:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
- Thursday, December 21st from 6:00-7:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church

Eucharistic Miracles Exhibit:

- Thursday, December 7th 7:00-9:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Holy Day of Obligation):

- Friday, December 8th Masses:  
6:15am, 8:15am, & 7:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church  
12:00pm St. Robert Bellarmine Church

Novena leading up to Christmas

- December 15th – 23rd 7:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church

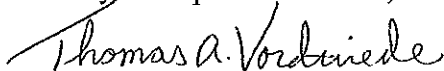
Christmas Mass Schedule:

- Sunday, December 24th
  - 4th Sunday of Advent: Regular Sunday Schedule (EXCEPT NO NOON MASS)
  - Christmas Eve Masses:
    - 4:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
    - 4:00pm St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Gym
    - 4:00pm St. Robert Bellarmine Church
    - 12:00am St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
- Monday, December 25th
  - Christmas Day Masses:
    - 8:00am St. Robert Bellarmine Church
    - 10:30am St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (NOT a Holy Day of Obligation This Year):

- Monday, January 1st Mass:  
9:00am St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church

In Joyful Hope of the Savior,



Rev. Thomas Vordtriede  
Pastor



Rev. Stephen Schumacher  
Associate Pastor