



# NEW CHURCH MASS TIMES FOR ST. BEDE'S

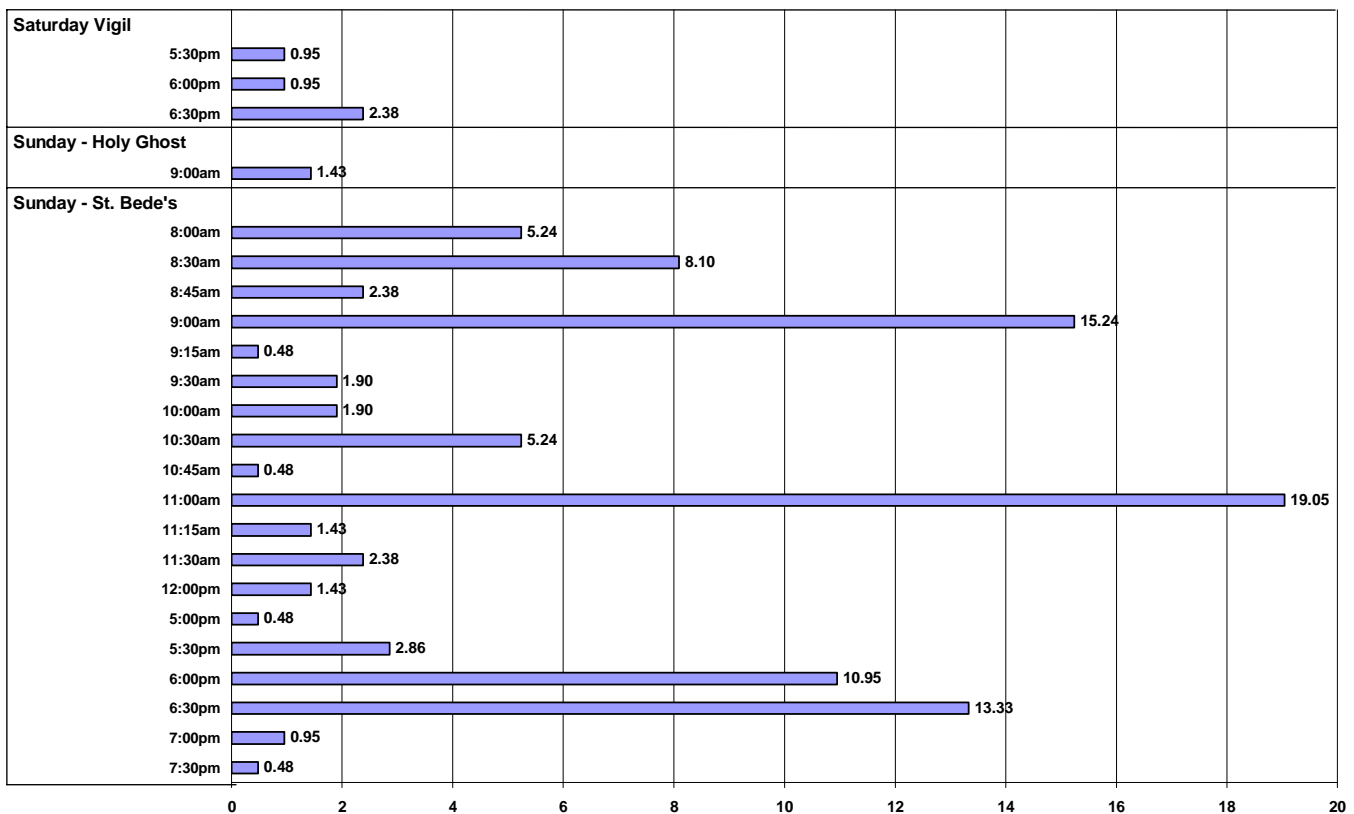


The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) has recently consulted Holy Ghost Parish about possible Mass times for St Bede's Church. In this consultation the PPC proposed that there be three Sunday Masses, all on Sunday, and asked the Parish to consider a number of factors when deciding upon the Mass times:

- Provision of good Mass coverage throughout the wider Basingstoke area, to enable 24 hour coverage for Sunday Masses.
- Provision of enough time between Masses to allow for gathering after Mass, prior to the next Mass beginning.
- The possibility of one priest being able to cover most Masses at two Parish Churches in the case of an emergency or illness.

The results of this consultation are given below.

Percentage of votes cast for each proposed Mass time



A wide variety of Mass time suggestions were received, from Saturday 5:30pm, through to Sunday 8:00pm. The largest percentages were clearly in favour of Mass times of 9:00am, 11:00am and 6:30pm, therefore these times have been adopted as the new Mass times for St. Bede's.

The PPC acknowledge that there was a particularly close vote for the Sunday evening Mass, with 13.38% voting for 6:30pm, compared to 10.95% for 6:00pm. In light of this, and the fact that 13.34% of votes were for a Mass earlier than 9:00am (8:00 and 8:30am), compared to 15.24% for that time, the PPC propose to further review Mass time at St. Bede's after they have been established for a year.

We know, from the comments received with the consultation questionnaire, from letters and personal comments that the new Mass times will not suit everyone. However, as Fr. Vincent has stated in the Parish newsletter, the new times are an honest breakdown of the votes received. Our aim was to achieve consensus of the Parish with respect to the new Mass times.

## RESPONSES TO PARISH COMMENTS

In addressing the comments received the PPC has taken the liberty of grouping them into a number of themes, that were readily apparent, and responding to those themes.

### Retention of a Saturday Evening Mass

During the consultation on Mass times the PPC identified a number of key points, two of which are very relevant here; the need to make the Priest's work load more manageable and the provision of 24 hour Mass coverage in the wider Basingstoke area.

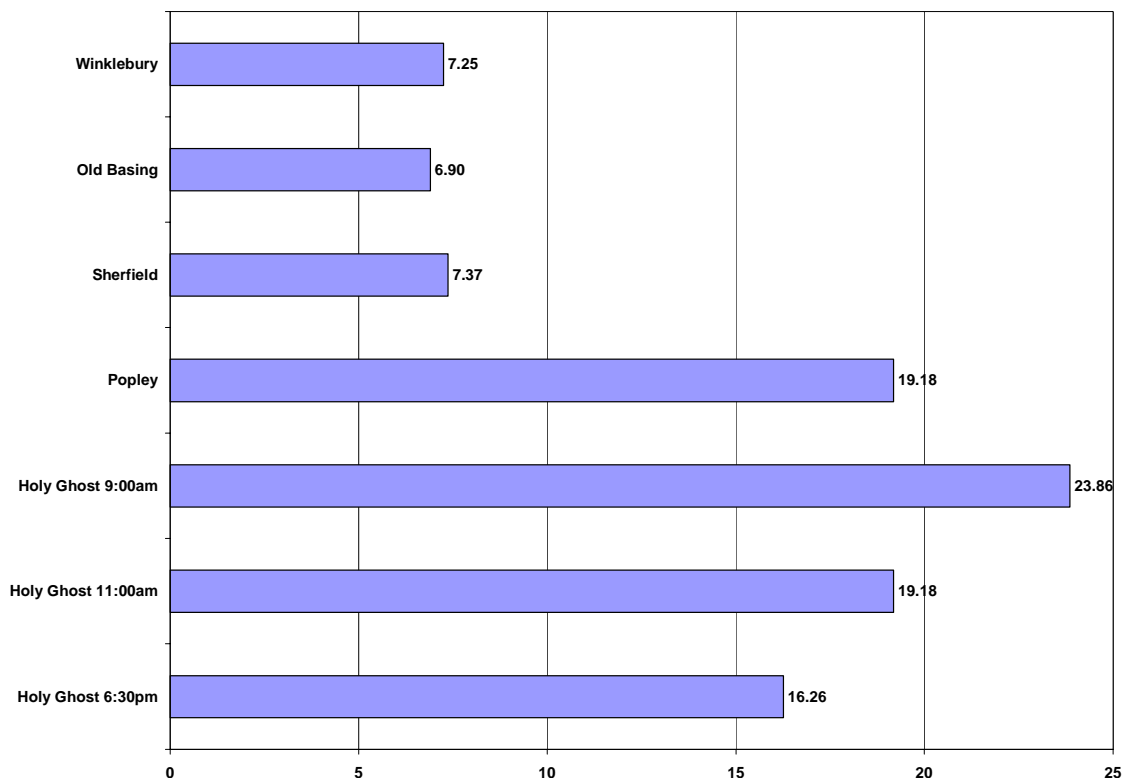
Undoubtedly, once we are in St. Bede's we will be down to one Parish Priest. By reducing the number of Sunday Masses that the Priest has to celebrate we are obviously helping to reduce his workload, hence the decision to have only three Sunday Masses.

The provision of 24 hour Mass coverage in the wider Basingstoke area is achieved by us retaining a Sunday evening Mass, whilst St. Joseph's retain their Saturday Vigil. In making the decision to retain the Sunday evening Mass two factors were of importance. Firstly, within Holy Ghost Parish the Sunday evening Mass is extremely popular, this can be seen in the graph below, which is based upon the October 2005 Mass counts. Secondly, in our Deanery, and this part of North Hampshire, we are the only Parish that has a Sunday evening Mass, whilst many other Parishes offer a Saturday evening vigil. The closest other Sunday evening Masses are in Farnborough, Reading or Winchester.

Furthermore, within the Bishop's Diocesan Plan, "*Go out and bear fruit*", we are urged to consider our Parish as part of a Larger Pastoral Area (LPA). In our case the proposed LPA equates to our Deanery, so we must think beyond our immediate boundaries – we have the only Sunday evening Mass, without it there would not be 24 hour Mass coverage available.

Finally, by not having a Saturday Vigil, it is possible for one Priest to cover most of the Masses in two Parishes in the case of sickness or other emergencies.

Percentage of Mass population at each Mass centre



## **Finance**

Concerns have been raised with respect to the finances required for the upkeep of two churches within our Parish, St. Bede's and Holy Ghost.

With respect to Holy Ghost, it is planned to isolate the current Presbytery from Holy Ghost church and let it on a residential basis. In this way it is hoped that Holy Ghost church will become essentially self-financing, with income from the Presbytery covering maintenance costs for Holy Ghost church, and indeed the Parish as a whole.

With respect to St. Bede's there are concerns that we will lose some financial income when we move, with some Parishioners "voting with their feet" and going to other Parishes for a more suitable Mass, particularly current Saturday Vigil Mass goers. In this respect, we will not know the precise impact until we are in St. Bede's.

However, it is probable that we will gain some new Parishioners as well as lose, and we again have to think in terms of the Bishop's Vision and Larger Pastoral Areas. Whilst Parishioners will move about, they will still be in the same Pastoral area, and ultimately finances within the LPA will have to be considered in wider terms than just individual Parishes.

## **Variable Mass Times**

A number of comments were raised with respect to the possibility of a variable Mass timetable, particularly with reference to both earlier Morning and later evening Masses in the summer, to better facilitate family days out.

The PPC feel that this concept needs to be considered further before any decision can be made. It is therefore proposed that this issue be reviewed as part of the proposed Mass time review at St. Bede's after the first year of the new Mass timetable.

## **Shift Working**

A number of requests were made for an earlier morning and a later evening Mass to accommodate shift workers. However, it is clear from the votes cast that the vast majority of Parishioners prefer an evening Mass around 6:00 to 6:30pm, rather than later. With respect to the morning Mass, the time will be subject to review after one year, due to the overall number voting for times between 8:00 and 9:00am, compared to 9:00am itself, although 9:00 was clearly the favoured time.

## **Holy Ghost Church**

The use of Holy Ghost Church, and frequency of use, is still undecided. The possibility of Sunday Masses at certain times still exists and is the subject of discussion.

## **Community**

The PPC is acutely aware that a number of distinct communities exist within the Parish because of the nature of our Parish and the existence of Mass centres, and that these communities could be broken up by the closure of Mass centres. However, the very existence of these communities represents a fragmentation of our larger community. The existence of St. Bede's will enable us to once more be part of a true Parish community and enjoy the advantages that the larger community can bring.

It must be remembered that the move to St. Bede's means upheaval and disruption to community for ALL 7 Mass centres. The PPC is keen to do all that it can to maintain individuality of communities, but a new community must evolve – rather than fragmenting our current dispersed communities this must be seen as an opportunity to recombine our Parish to the joy of celebrating Mass as a whole community.

## **Transport**

It is realised that people who currently walk to Mass may need transport. The PPC is already considering car sharing schemes and looking at ways to implement them. This has to be looked upon as another opportunity for building of community.

Many comments were received relating Mass times to bus timetables. However, it must be remembered that bus times are a variable, and that if we selected times now to meet the current timetable, they would be of little use in the future.

There were a number of comments with respect to the central location of Holy Ghost and the relative isolation of St. Bede's. In response to this it should be borne in mind that the demographic centre of our Parish is currently adjacent to the Aldermaston Road roundabout, and that with the completion of the new development in Popley it will move to St. Bede's. The establishment of St. Bede's must be, and has been, forward looking, it is a church for the future, not only the present.

Additionally, the development in Popley, once completed, will have new bus routes of its own. These buses will then provide additional transport option for St. Bede's itself.

## **Mass Styles**

The styles of the individual Masses at St. Bede's are still to be determined. They are currently the subject of debate, but they will evolve from discussion and from the Masses themselves as they become established.

Currently, the various music groups within the Parish are discussing the different music styles they use and how to blend/implement them at St. Bede's. Now that the Mass times at St. Bede's have been established the PPC will be approaching every group within all Mass centres covering all ministries, e.g. readers, eucharistic ministers, welcomers, cleaners, children's liturgy, etc., to enter into discussion as to how to implement these ministries at St. Bede's.

In this newsletter there is not room to go into detail, but during these discussions current volunteers will be polled to see if they wish to continue in their chosen Ministry and which Mass they propose to attend. We have the opportunity to establish new traditions in our new church and this will be addressed during these discussions, e.g. all readers to have attended a readers course before undertaking their ministry. Whatever solution we arrive at will be reviewed after a minimum of 6 months, but within a year, to enable revision/refinement as deemed necessary.

A number of responses raised concern with respect to the loss of the Saturday Vigil Mass and the effect it would have on young people, especially teenagers attending Mass. The experience within the Parish is that the majority of them attend the Sunday evening Mass. Indeed, the 2003 Parish census identified that 30% of all Mass goers under 30 years of age attended the Sunday evening Mass.

## **Information Sources**

The Parish web site – [www.vinntec.co.uk/hg](http://www.vinntec.co.uk/hg) – has details of all Parish and Deanery Mass times.

Should you have any further questions please check the web site to see if they are answered there. Alternatively, contact the PPC via the Parish office, or directly through individual members.

Any additional feedback can also be made through the web site or PPC.