



THE BISHOP OF LEEDS
The Right Reverend Marcus Stock

Bishop's House, 13 North Grange Road, Leeds, LS6 2BR
www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk

Delivered via email to: [REDACTED]

26 June 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 23 June 2022 regarding the change in the time of the celebration of Mass in the parish of St Bernard, Halifax. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Regrettably, it is no longer possible to sustain the number of Masses in this diocese with the reduced number of priests, a significant number of whom are approaching or are already over 70 years of age. Although the parishes in Halifax are currently blessed with serving priests of a relatively younger age, their present number may not be sustainable in the future.

It would be misguided for me to try and impose detailed solutions regarding the precise timings for the Mass schedules throughout the parishes of the diocese, particularly when it is the local clergy who must try and make those solutions work on a weekly basis and be sustainable for the near, and for the long-term future. This is why practical decisions which impact upon the pastoral and spiritual life of a local parish community should be made at the most immediate level whenever possible.

Respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the decisions which need to be taken about the frequency and the timing of liturgical celebrations in individual parishes and deaneries, and the consideration of the legitimate needs of the parishioners involved, are left to the governance of those who hold office and responsibility at a local parish level; that is, the Parish Priests and the Vicar Forane (Dean) of the Deanery.

It is my understanding that all of the priests in the Halifax deanery, including Fr Owens, would keep their parishioners informed about the discussions for Mass provision locally. I am unclear therefore why you had to find out information from other parish newsletters or announcements made at Mass.

I am aware though, that even with the proposed amendment to the Mass times, there remains a considerable number of Masses being celebrated and made available at a wide range of times in the churches within the Deanery of Halifax, including the provision of a Sunday evening Mass at St Alban's church.

Inevitably, there will be disagreements whenever changes are made to the local provision of Sunday Masses in any parish or deanery. Rarely can a complete consensus be attained. Despite the initial sense of loss that such changes often bring, I have witnessed the greatness of heart and the generosity of spirit that has been shown by the parishioners of many communities within the diocese where similar modifications have been made to Mass times.

Notwithstanding your disagreement with the proposed changes, I sincerely hope and pray that you will continue to give your support to your local clergy. They are keenly aware of the vibrant Catholic community you describe which exists in many areas of the Halifax area and are

anxious to do all they can to maintain the pastoral care of your parish and the others entrusted to their priestly ministry.

On a separate but related note, a significant number of the priests of our diocese are unwell currently and many of them are burdened with long term illnesses of various kinds; nevertheless, they strive to continue to faithfully carry out their ministry either in full-time parochial office or in retirement. I would be very grateful if you would be kind enough to keep them in your prayers.

Assuring you and your family of my prayers and every blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ

+ *Marcus Stock*

✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds