

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS! To BETTER understand !

Why is your Mass different from other Catholic Masses I have attended?

Our Parish was founded when many members of a local Protestant Episcopal church and their Pastor decided to come into the Catholic Church together as an intact congregation (see "[Our Story](#)" for more details). When this occurs, the Catholic Church graciously allows parishes such as ours to retain many of their longstanding traditions, as long as they are consistent with Catholic faith and practice. So, [our Mass](#) is a little different from most, but it is still a fully valid Catholic Mass; any Catholic can fulfill the Sunday or Holy Day obligation by attending here.

Isn't it unfair that your priest is allowed to be married, while other Catholic priests must be celibate? When a Protestant minister who is already married believes he is called to the Catholic priesthood (and when this calling is confirmed by the Catholic Church), he is granted permission by the Pope himself to be ordained through a special arrangement called the [Pastoral Provision](#); as the title indicates, this is a special allowance made for unique pastoral circumstances. The celibate priesthood in the western Catholic Church is not a *doctrine*, but a *discipline*; doctrines can never be changed, but disciplines can be relaxed on a case-by-case basis for pastoral reasons.

Like the married priests of the twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome, a married man may become a priest, but a priest, once ordained, can never subsequently marry; nor may any Bishop be married; and, should our Pastor's wife predecease him, he can never marry again. As to the fairness question, the Catholic Church understands both marriage *and* celibacy as gifts, rather than marriage as a gift and celibacy as a burden. Since both married and celibate priests have unique gifts, neither is privileged or burdened in comparison to the other.

So if your Mass is different and your Priest is married, are you sure you are real Catholics?

Yes... but don't just take our word for it! Our Priest was ordained with permission from the Holy Father himself; our Bishop was appointed by the Holy Father himself and sits on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; and our liturgy is a valid, fully approved variation of the Roman Rite Mass.

Are you a Parish of the Diocese of Scranton? No. Even though we are located within the geographical diocese of Scranton, due to the unique circumstances of our founding we are members of a sort of "blanket" Catholic diocese that overlaps all the other territorial dioceses in the U.S. and Canada, called the [Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter](#). (This is similar to the Military Ordinariate, another "blanket" diocese that includes all Catholic members of the U.S. Military, wherever they serve in the world.) Parishes and members of our Diocese all have a similar history as ours: they are former Anglicans, Methodists, and other Christians descended from the Church of England who were reconciled to the Catholic Church, and/or are family members. We have our own [Bishop](#), and our own [Cathedral](#), located in Houston, Texas. None of this, however, precludes any Catholic from participating fully in our worship and ministries!

Why does your priest spend much of the Mass with his back to the people? This is one of the traditions we have brought with us from our days as Anglican Christians. Properly understood, this posture for celebrating the Mass does not require that the priest "turn his back on the people," but rather, it ensures that the priest and the people are all facing the *same direction*, with their focus upon Jesus.

The Most Rev. Steven J. Lopes, Bishop

Though the Main church is located in Scranton, Pennsylvania - and any Catholic is free to participate fully in our worship, ministries, and community life - we are not a parish of the Diocese of Scranton or Allentown,, but of the **Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter**, essentially a nationwide diocese for congregations like ours (formerly Anglican parishes that have come into the Catholic Church as intact congregations) that overlaps all the territorial dioceses in the United States. Just as we have a nationwide Diocese (or more properly, Ordinariate), we also have a Bishop whose jurisdiction overlaps that of all the other Catholic Bishops in the U.S. to oversee our parish and all the others like it.

Fr. Eric Bergman, Pastor, St. Thomas More Parish Scranton, Pa

Fr. Bergman was born in Tennessee and raised as an Episcopalian in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He studied German and International Affairs at James Madison University, and after graduation in 1991 he was briefly employed by a law firm in London, England. Upon returning to Pennsylvania he worked with mentally handicapped adults, with the urban elderly as a local coordinator for Project CARE, and finally as Youth Director at the Episcopal Cathedral in Bethlehem.

In 1994 he began studies at Yale Divinity School, where he received his Master of Divinity in 1997 and was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood the same year. He served as curate at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in downtown Scranton until 1999, and then as rector of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd until the end of 2004.

Perceiving a call to be reconciled to the Catholic Church, in consultation with Bishop Joseph Martino and Auxiliary Bishop John Dougherty, Fr. Bergman renounced his Episcopal priesthood and founded the St. Thomas More Society in January 2005, whereby he and half of his former parishioners at Good Shepherd were **received into the Catholic Church** as an intact congregation, under the care of Msgr. William Feldcamp at St. Clare Catholic Church.

Fr. Bergman was ordained to the Catholic Priesthood under the **Pastoral Provision of Pope John Paul II** on April 21, 2007.

In accordance with Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* in 2009, Fr. Bergman became the first Priest incardinated in the **Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter** in May 2012, concurrently with the St. Thomas More Society's erection as St. Thomas More Catholic Parish.

As a former Anglican clergyman with special dispensation according to the Pastoral Provision, Fr. Bergman is married; he and his wife, Kristina, are blessed with ten children.