

# *Church of the Nativity*

1225 Alta Vista  
Dubuque, IA 52001-4328  
(563) 582-1839

December 10, 2020

Dear Nativity Parishioner(s),

I pray that your Advent Season has been blessed thus far as you prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few things that I want to bring to your attention:

**PARISH CENSUS.** I had hoped to do this census earlier, however, doing it now affords a couple of things. First, it is timed scripturally and historically, Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem from Nazareth specifically because Caesar declared a Census. Second, it allows us to do some planning for Christmas with a better idea of the full situation, trends in case numbers, etc. So, I am asking you, more like begging you, to please fill this census survey as soon as possible! Plus, I know how easy it is to just put something like this off and it gets buried, so please complete it right now, if at all possible. The paper survey can be returned to the office or to the collection basket next weekend, and the online survey as soon as it arrives in your inbox. If it didn't arrive in your inbox, that means we don't have an email address on file for you, here is the link: <https://tinyurl.com/NativityCensus>

**CHRISTMAS CONSIDERATIONS.** There is no question that Christmas will have a different feel to it. Here are some considerations to pray and reflect on.

**First Consideration:** We should (must!) celebrate Christmas! Seems obvious, but this year poses the question of how to do so wisely. Large communal gatherings with heightened music, décor, and solemnity have been typical of Christmas, but cannot be offered the same way this year. So, we need to be even more intentional about bringing the preparations of Advent and the celebration of Christmas into our homes and immediate households.

**Second Consideration:** Last year we had 1,100 people at the 4pm Christmas Eve Mass, so we have added a Mass at 5:30pm to hopefully alleviate the crowd, and there will still be Christmas music at both, but unfortunately no singing at either. There is a risk that everyone will think, "other people will change and go to 5:30" but then too many attend at 4pm, so please consider changing yourself. Even with two Masses, we would not be able to accommodate all 1,100 in those two Masses. As we cannot accommodate large gatherings on Christmas Eve, consider attending a Mass during the Season of Christmas instead. Like Advent, Christmas is a *season!* The season of Christmas begins with Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Also recall, Catholics are still dispensed from the obligation to celebrate the solemnities within Mass. Note the Christmas schedule, and consider attending the 10pm, or a Mass within the "Octave" (the first 8 days) of Christmas, especially that first weekend. Depending on your situation, it may even be prudent to avoid liturgical celebrations altogether.

**Third Consideration:** Devotional practices are excellent ways to celebrate our faith, in a personalized way! There are many resources for incorporating prayerful practices into your household. You can find many online resources for praying the Advent and Christmas seasons. For example, household prayers for the blessing of a Nativity scene and reflections on each of the mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary, especially the Glorious mysteries, would be good places to start.

**Fourth Consideration:** Be extra intentional about your connection to the parish. We are a pilgrim people, a people always on a journey for holiness. Consider making a mini pilgrimage to the parish grounds, simply to offer prayer at the sight of the Nativity scene. Physically connecting with the sacred space is a powerful reminder of our connection to the parish. The Church is open until 3pm on weekdays, and until after Mass on the weekend.

**Fifth Consideration:** Pray for the grace of joy for yourself and for all the parish. In many ways, these considerations contradict one another! We need holiness, only achievable by God's grace. Lord Grant us wisdom, hope, and joy through His Incarnate Son! May the Advent Season prepare us well for a joyful celebration of Christmas.

**PARISH DINNER AND EQUIVALENCY DRIVE.** Thank you for your generous response to the drive, we are only a couple thousand off what we planned for in the budget. If you have yet to donate, please consider donating along with an end of the year donation. At this point we are about 10% behind budget for the fiscal year and it is important to make that difference up now rather than wait to the end and be forced to make deeper cuts.

**FAITH FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES.** New options for 2021, check bulletin for more details:

- Starting in January we will have monthly young adult date nights for married or engaged couples! Unfortunately, because of Covid we're unable to provide dinner and babysitting. Some details need to be finalized, but plan on joining us on 4th Sundays from January to June. While this is designed for young adults, all are welcome to attend.
- Matt Selby is leading a bible study beginning on January 11th with in person and virtual options, check the bulletin or website for additional information.

I hope to see everyone at some point during Christmas, but if not, know of my prayers for you and your family!

Sincerely in Christ,

*Fr. Andy*  
Fr. Andy Upah, Pastor