

From the Pastor—December 10, 2017

Dad's Walking! I spent some time with Mom and Dad at the Good Samaritan Society on my day off last week. Dad is able to walk with a walker and the supervision from the great staff there. He shuffles his left foot a little to compensate for the pain in his healing hip. When I arrived at Dad's room, a man from our crop insurance company was talking business with him. We had a loss on our dryland corn this year. I was glad to hear how the insurance will provide coverage. It is surely good for Dad to engage in these normal parts of our farming operation during his abnormal time of not being at home on the farm. I could tell he enjoyed talking shop with the insurance man. *** Please know of my gratitude for your prayers for my dad's recovery. In fact, Dad even told me on Monday, "Tell your people I am thankful for their prayers." Dad does suffer some amount of dementia, but his thanking you for your prayers shows that he still has his wits about him pretty well. Praise God!

Beauty additions The sense of having beauty in our lives is something we know to be good, almost instinctively. I want to mention a couple of beautifications to our houses of the Lord. This past week, an outdoor wreath was added beside the main doors at St. Mary's. It has lights which come on automatically at night. At St. Joseph's, miniature Christmas trees were placed in the planters at the front door. Thank you!

"Father's Purple!!!" One of our young parishioners was in rapt attention when she saw me come out for Mass last weekend. She pointed and told her parents, "Father's purple!!!" I didn't hear her, but her exclamatory remark was apparently heard by others besides her parents...which is fine by me. I don't mind the little ones expressing what they see and hear, because they show us adults a beautiful way of noticing things that we might miss. *** Always on the Third Sunday of Advent, the Church celebrates with rose-colored vestments. The rose is a sign of joy that Christmas is almost here. I have encouraged parishioners in the past to wear pink to Mass that weekend to match the priest's vestments. IN NO WAY is this anything official that the Church asks us to do...it is just my own way of drawing people into living liturgically and loving Jesus by matching his Church's colors. So, if you want to wear rose/pink to Mass on December 16-17, consider yourself invited. Maybe we can even get a picture together to show our joy in pink!!!

Pot-Luck and More! I want to thank St. Joseph parishioners for your goodness in recognizing my birthday with the pot-luck dinner after Mass last Sunday. We also observed a sort of "new parishioner" Sunday at the same time by welcoming several new families to our community. Also, some of our young parishioners helped lead the singing in the choir loft. They were happy to help, and I think they enjoyed a whole new viewpoint on the beauty of the Mass below and helping us all to praise God better. Thank you, one and all!

St. Joseph Masses The Wednesday and Sunday Masses at St. Joseph have been beautiful lately because of the angle of the sun in the sky. Assuming that our church doors face directly east, the sun is at an angle in the southeast sky which makes it shine into the very back column of stained glass windows. The hues of pink, red, orange, and yellow come streaming across the nave/pews and shine onto the sanctuary and altar. It makes me

almost want to halt that part of the Mass and stay frozen in the beauty. It is more noticeable at the 7:30 a.m. Wednesday Mass. God paints beautifully with sunbeams!

Daily Mass Swell Thank you, from Jesus, for helping our daily Mass attendance swell a bit this week! To reiterate to you our schedule, St. Mary's has daily Mass at 7:30 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and at 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays. St. Joseph's has daily Mass at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesdays.

Ad orientem I continue celebrating daily Mass "toward the east" at St. Mary's. I encourage you to prayerfully consider this way of celebration which embraces and includes ancient customs in the Church. Bishop Conley has encouraged this way of praying Mass for several years in the diocese. For me, celebrating Mass toward the east, which in Latin is rendered "ad orientem", gives me a greater sense of spiritual fatherhood. It places in my mind that I am leading the flock toward the second coming of Christ. Facing the east, no matter which direction a church is built, is a symbolic posture. In this celebration of Mass, I face Jesus along with the people. It is as if the priest is leading the charge, toward Jesus, and as the shepherd, I can navigate the tough journey that life sometimes provides us. At the head of the congregation in this posture, the priest leads his people. Please see last week's bulletin at our web site for more about what Bishop Conley says about Mass celebrated in this way.

RCIA Update Is the Church's teaching on Purgatory and eternal life confusing to you? This will be our RCIA class's topic this week. All are welcome to join us on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

Six Holy Days in the U.S. This year, Christmas falls on Monday. The obligation to attend Mass on Christmas remains when Christmas falls on a Saturday or Monday. It should be noted that if you attend a Christmas Eve Mass in the evening at 4:00 p.m. or later, that Mass does not suffice to fulfill the Mass obligation for both the 4th Sunday of Advent **and** the Holy Day of Christmas. As your pastor, I wish to inform you that there are two obligations to attend Mass; one obligatory Mass for Sunday and another Mass for the Christmas Holy Day. All Catholics follow our faith by attending Mass twice in these days. *** One of our traditional six Holy Days in the United States is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on January 1. However, the bishops in the U.S. decided in the 1990's that when this day falls on a Saturday or Monday, it is not a Holy Day of Obligation in the United States. The day remains a Solemnity (with Gloria, Credo, etc.), and it is a great way to start out the New Year of 2018.

The Star Movie On the reverse of this page are details to see The Star movie here in Aurora. Parishioners Jason and Liz Peterson and family invite you to see this wholesome movie about the joy of the first Christmas. Show up when the ticket window opens to be assured of getting your seat! You can buy tickets for any of the four weekend shows beginning Friday at 6:00 p.m.

God Bless You!
Father Grell