

From the Pastor—December 17, 2017

Mom and Dad I haven't seen my parents since my last writing to you, but I have spoken by phone with them a number of times. The caregivers at Good Samaritan are so good to take a cordless phone to Dad any time that I want to talk to him. It gives him a boost, I think, to hear my voice and know that I am thinking of him. Sometimes I call when Mom is there too. Dad continues to work hard on rehab and Mom continues to keep our family farm and residence responsibilities going. She checked the percentage of propane in the tank this week, which is usually a Dad-job. A neighbor who farms for us stopped by and helped with a couple of jobs around the yard this week, for which I am grateful. Dad's next appointment with the hip surgeon is during Christmas week, so that will be a chance to see how exactly his recovery is progressing. Thank you for all of your prayers!

Reading What I Write I am edified by how many of you comment to me about reading my bulletin column. Some priests like to write in their bulletins, while others do not. This space gives me a chance to communicate in ways that come outside of normal homilies and conversations. I like you to know of my family goings-on and of items of interest in our Lincoln Diocese and in the Church universal. A while back, I saw one of our young people (about a sixth grader) reading my bulletin column prior to Mass. That was particularly edifying to me. Thank you all for your encouragement to me!

Christmas Program Our Christmas program was a smashing success last Sunday. The church filled up quickly, and the young people were very excited to show us their Christmas-filled hearts. It was gratifying to see the 12th grade seniors helping to coordinate the proceedings; their example to the younger students is a great life lesson. Thank you to all adults who helped in a special way, especially our CCD program, Godteens, Music Ministry, and church decorators. We also had a visit from jolly old St. Nicholas. To see some of the reactions of the kids when he came walking in was just priceless. Many memories were captured on cell phones of Santa, and of the whole day, which I think is just great. Thank you, one and all!

Spirit 91.5 FM I am blessed this week to be on the radio! Please listen, if you are able. First of all, the Good Book Club asked me to provide commentary on chapter 5 of the Book of the prophet Hosea on Monday morning. This interview will be on, live, at around 8:10 a.m., and then it will be available later to listen to at spiritmornings.com. Also, I am providing meditations for the Morning Prayer segment, which will air three times each day this week. Listen Monday through Friday at 7:05, 8:05, and 10:15 a.m. These times are approximate, so it may 7:09 or 8:08 actually, depending on how the live show that day is going. *** Be aware of Spirit Radio's "Three Days of Christmas", which I look forward to each year. Here is how the radio station describes the Three Days of Christmas: "*Hear Christmas music, when it's meant to be played! Tune in for Spirit Catholic Radio's annual Three Days of Christmas Music—Dec. 27, 28 & 29 from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. CDT. We play a mix of beautiful,*

traditional Christmas music, classic favorites and songs from local Catholic choirs. Find your nearest station, online at spiritcatholicradio.com or on our smartphone app."

RCIA Update Feel free to come by RCIA (Catholic Study Class) this week when the topic will be "Sacred Liturgy and the Seven Sacraments." I think you will enjoy this overview of these seven signs which visibly bring us the invisible reality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It will be a great refresher for anyone who wants to attend. Join us on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

Actual Christmas I watched a video chat between Dr. Eve Rosno and Alexandra "Alex" Kuykendall, who is the author of "Loving My Actual Christmas: An Experiment in Relishing the Season" Dr. Rosno is a friend of mine and works for Catholic Social Services, Hastings office. Her visit with Alex was inspiring and resonated with me. While the presentation is tilted toward a mom's perspective, I found myself nodding in agreement with much of what I feel as a spiritual father. Perhaps you may realize that sometimes a priest can feel that providing Advent and Christmas Masses and confessions leaves him a bit bereft, that he has given a lot without actually living the blessings and mystery of the season in his own heart. And moms may feel this way too, trying to manage all parts of their families so that the iconic Christmas is imprinted on each family member's heart. So, I encourage you...don't let the opportunity pass you by for your "actual Christmas." In other words, the planning and preparation that you do for others needs to be founded upon your own awe and wonder of that little Divine Child in the manger. You can learn more about this book at: alexandrakuykendall.com.

Six Holy Days in the U.S. [*re-published from last week's bulletin*] 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.

God Bless You!
Father Grell