

From the Pastor—January 7, 2018

My Family The Grells have made it into the New Year, thankful that the dear Lord strengthened us throughout a 2017 filled with trials. I think that with the death of my brother-in-law, Bob, and the hip fracture suffered by my Dad, we can see the grace of God lifting us up and through many a day, and many an hour of each day. It is all grace, all of the ability to look through any situation and see the beautiful Face of God in it. I don't mean to make it sound desirable in a worldly sense, as if suffering trials is in any way easy. But we are called to live in an eternal way even now, making the coming of Christ at Christmas our great reward as Christians to know that Jesus walks with us. "Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death," as King David wrote in Psalm 23, we know that the Lord is with us with his rod and staff to keep us safe, and give us courage. *** Dad is continuing to heal well. The week of Christmas, his orthopedic surgeon released him after X-rays showed his hip healing well! The physical and occupational therapists have reached a plateau where Dad is grading out level on their various exercises and practices. Dad's scoring on assessing his dementia is a concern, as it shows he needs care 24 hours a day. The concern is that Mother cannot keep up that rigorous of care during these winter months, and especially until his hip is fully healed. So, even though Dad can't quite grasp our reasoning fully, it is clear that he is best served and loved by remaining at the Good Samaritan for now. Please continue your prayers for our family, for which I am so grateful.

Christmas Masses I wanted to report to you on my first Christmas Masses with you in St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. They were beautiful in so many ways. I thank you for providing your prayerful preparation and presence at these liturgies. I know a number of you were called to go to Christmas at other churches, where your families originated or where they live now. *** We certainly had interesting weather for these Christmas Masses. It reminded me of the Christmas blizzard in 2009 when I was assigned to the parishes of Lawrence and Deweese. I remember arriving at the Deweese Our Lady of Assumption Church and having one parishioner tell me that he had pulled several cars from the ditch as he drove from Fairfield. I enlisted a parishioner with a four-wheel drive truck that evening to get me from Lawrence to Deweese and back. We ended up cancelling the 9:30 p.m. Mass that evening at St. Stephen's. The Christmas morning Mass at Sacred Heart was NOT for the faint of heart, as the front steps of church were piled with snow. *** Back to our 2017 Christmas, I was pleased with the number and repentance of the Confessions I heard. I saw many graces flowing to people, especially those who were most in need of them. I estimate that our Christmas Masses, despite the inclement weather, had attendances of 260 for the 5:00 p.m. at St. Mary's, 50 for the 8:30 a.m. at St. Mary's, and 40 for the 10:30 a.m. at St. Joseph's. This year, 2018, when Christmas falls on a Tuesday, I would be inclined at this time to schedule a later Mass after dark. Maybe not straight-up midnight, but something like 10:00 p.m. There is a beauty to that Mass in the night that is very edifying and memorable. *** I am not sure who all cleared the snow prior to Christmas Masses, but please know of my gratitude for taking time from your family in order

to serve our parish families.

Christmas Cards I have a practice of posting my Christmas cards along the doorways of my rectory. This year, I have also kept up my birthday cards from November as well. At this writing, I am blessed to still have a number of Christmas cards to open! With the beautiful and expansive rectory that St. Mary's and St. Joseph's have provided for me, I think I have enough doorways to post all of the cards I have received! I have a separate place for pictures of families given to me. The cards will come down soon, but the pictures of families remain up for the whole year. I call these pictures my "Wall of Fame"! My gratitude goes out to all of you for your love and support expressed to me during this Christmas season.

New Year's We held a Holy Hour to bring in the New Year. A handful of hearty souls braved the frigid outdoors to gather with me in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at 11:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve. We prayed the Rosary for peace in the world. We had Adoration, the recitation of the Divine Praises, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. I included the intentions of all of you as I gave the benediction blessing of Jesus. We ended the Holy Hour at exactly about 12:00 midnight! I heard a few fireworks going off here in Aurora. I wish I had our bell tower up and running, as I would have cranked on the bells to shout glad tidings to the town of the New Year of God's grace come upon us! The St. Joseph bells in Giltner, too, I would have liked to arrange to be rung at midnight. Oh well, we can always plan that for next year!

Pause for Silence I am slowly adding a couple of liturgical practices to our Masses. The Church in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (which is on-line for anyone to read) states that "*For in the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him.*" For our readers of the Word of God, and for our musicians, I ask you to lead the way on what the Church terms as "sacred silence" to be observed after the First Reading and after the Second Reading. For those of you in the pew, please don't think the readers or musicians are falling asleep on the job! Rather, the idea is that we are to recollect ourselves at these times of the Holy Mass. *** The same document goes on to speak of silence in this way, "*Even before the celebration [of Mass] itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner.*" I think we all know that we all need the silence and quiet demeanor we are given at Holy Mass. Let's help each other to live this part of our worship of God very well.

Epiphany The reverse of this sheet provides the way to bless your home with blessed chalk for Epiphany. See the instructions and pick up your blessed chalk in a little baggie as you leave Mass today.

God Bless You!
Father Grell