

## **From the Pastor—December 16, 2018**

**Mass Times Survey** The survey I conducted at Holy Mass last weekend yielded the following results:

1. 8:00 a.m. at St. Mary's and 10:30 a.m. at St. Joseph's (St. Mary's—28; St. Joseph's—21).
2. 8:30 a.m. at St. Mary's and 11:00 a.m. at St. Joseph's (St. Mary's—80; St. Joseph's—2).
3. 8:15 a.m. at St. Mary's and 10:45 a.m. at St. Joseph's (St. Mary's—10; St. Joseph's—0).

Where does this leave us? It mainly gives evidence that people like the Mass times the way they are scheduled right now. I don't blame anyone for that response, in other words, of keeping things the same as all are accustomed to. But I do hope that people can see my desire to be watchful of my health, and my desire to form the prayerful atmosphere for Holy Mass to which I feel called. I know I cannot satisfy all preferences, but I was very curious as to your responses to this survey. I will have the surveys available this weekend for anyone who missed out on their chance last weekend. It may be that I sit down with the two trustees of each parish, all together, and have them help form my decision. I will make the best decision that I can, and I thank you for your patience.

**Church Calendars for 2019** [re-printed] I changed the front wording of church 2019 calendars to reflect our Catholic mission here in Hamilton County. While we may have a narrow section of parish boundary that edges into York and Clay Counties, the vast majority of parishioners are Hamilton County residents; this binds our two parishes together as the Catholic presence for all who live here. \*\*\* One interesting thing to note in the calendar is that each Friday of the year is shown to be a day of fasting. This provision is something I have found to be not well known about, even among Catholics who go to Mass every Sunday. \*\*\* The web link below has stringent copyright restrictions, such that I feel only that I can give the link to it. It is a document issued on November 18, 1966, by the United States bishops about fasting laws within the Church in our nation. I encourage you to read it and to be informed on why we fast, and when we are to fast. I hope to preach on this topic, as a good share of the responsibility for the faithful in the pews to know about fasting rests upon their shepherds. \*\*\* It is important to note that one should not say to oneself, "Don't tell me about this, I'd rather not know." To which I would respond that the Church given us by Jesus Christ works in the world of today for the main goal of helping us to spend all of eternity with our Savior. And the more we know about how to live in such a way now so as to live with our Savior forever, the better and easier will life be for us on "this side of the veil", i.e. on this side of eternal life. \*\*\* Bottom line: we cannot do enough to voluntarily fast and make amendment for our sinfulness. Let no one think he or she is not in need of continuous spiritual encouragement and renewal. \*\*\*

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/us-bishops-pastoral-statement-on-penance-and-abstinence.cfm>

**St. Mary's A.S. Christmas** The Christmas gathering of St. Mary's women on December 4<sup>th</sup> was a true joy. The gift-giving (and gag gift-thefting!) made everyone get to know each other better...lots of good sports among all those involved! Please, plan next year to attend. What

would be really great is if through our efforts of and discipleship that child care could be provided for those with young ones, and that transportation could be provided for those who are homebound.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe** We had a beautiful celebration of Mother Mary this past Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. The parish decorated for Our Lady, and the musician who visited provided the festive spirit that is so much a blessing of another culture. I was glad to experience it, so much so that I became a bit emotional toward the end of Mass. I hope we can replicate the beauty of this feast from year to year, and even increase it.

**My Trip Home** Since Thanksgiving brought with it my noticeable bad chest cold and cough, I was able to finally see my parents for the first time in over a month last Sunday. I set out from Giltner, directly after the 10:30 Mass. I cut down gravel roads, cross-country to Harvard, then jumped on Highway 14 to Clay Center. From there, it was Highway 41 over to Geneva. Geneva to Bruning, Bruning to almost Beatrice, down to Ellis from Highway 4 to Highway 136, and finally Highway 77 to home! Confusing? Not when it is **home!** My parents and I spent a good deal of time visiting. We also drove to Odell to a funeral visitation for a dear family friend who died last week at age 88. It was sad, but I was glad to pray in the presence of his mortal remains and to see some of his family. Before I drove back to Aurora, I took a picture of a great view to the southwest of our family farm. It was the sliver of the moon descending, with the combination of the sun setting—gorgeous! I drove through Beatrice on the way back to Aurora, and saw our wonderful Gage County Courthouse lit up by a gazillion white Christmas lights. It was a peaceful drive, and I was very glad to see my parents and our farm kitties.

**Breaking Bread** I have noticed some turning pages to find the Opening Prayer (Collect) of Mass, as well as the Offertory and Prayer after Communion. I don't think they are included. I guess I would encourage you to listen carefully as I recite them, because they are so beautiful. Perhaps some way to include these prayers in the bulletin could be sought?

**Total Consecration** I was so blessed to experience a personal spiritual renewal with my consecration to Jesus through Mary. It is still a matter of living it; it is never "one-and-done" with spiritual exercises of any type. I hope Bishop Conley's encouragement of this total consecration to our diocese helps us all to be closer to Jesus, to depend upon Him as He depended upon Mother Mary.

**When Weather Comes** [edited and re-printed] In situations like recent weekends, I expect people to make their best decision on whether to head out to Mass. It is a personal decision, prayerfully made, where it is quite possible to discern that you need to stay home. My parents did not go to Mass for several weekends, and I think that was the right decision and not sinful on their part. I don't like to cancel Mass; we need the spiritual renewal each week for the community (even those not able to attend), as the celebration of Mass consecrates these holy Hamilton County grounds we live upon.

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**