

## **From the Pastor—December 23, 2018**

**New Family Pet** I was in Lincoln a couple of Mondays ago, and stopped by my sister's house. She wasn't home. I called her and she said that she and Will had just adopted a cat at the animal shelter in south Lincoln. Little did I know that I would be able to meet this new creature of God that day! She is a black kitty, with a partial white nose and some white underfur. She is named Faye and is about four months old. The day I was there, Faye was pretty frightened with the new surroundings. In fact, after I drove home to Aurora, Mary and Will could not find her in the house (Mary's house is fairly large). They had looked everywhere. Finally, my sister's 14-year old dog, Rudy (a beagle), had captured the scent of the kitty-cat. Turns out the kitty climbed into a mattress box-spring and was sitting there, scared. Mary was thankful to find Faye, and thankful that dear old Rudy's sniffer still works well! Faye and Rudy are somewhat of an odd couple—spunky, young kitty combined with old, tired puppy. We will see how it goes. Animals can be therapeutic, of course, and I hope that Faye adds some lifting of spirit to Mary and Will's household. \*\*\* My sister formerly had a kitty named Scruffy, or just Scruff, for short. That cat lived a long time with Mary and Bob and was perhaps not even around long enough for Will to experience her. She became a pretty fat-cat, and I think had to be treated for diabetes (whatever that looks like in a kitty). Rudy had come into the family about the time that Scruff was getting older and toward death. \*\*\* For my sister, brother, and I, we are used to farm cats. Our kitties on the farm stayed outside, either in the barn or in one of the other out buildings. It was always so fun to find the litters of baby kittens in the spring time. I remember well lazy days of summer, myself taking a nap or daydreaming alongside one or another of our purring kitties on our back-door steps. \*\*\* Mom and Dad still have about six or seven farm cats. A couple of them are super-old, and are tomcats, and so have entered into disabled-status because of years of tomcat vs. tomcat fights. These old guys would have long ago needed physical therapy if cats had such things in their insurance plans! One of the funniest incidents in recent years for my parents was when one of the young kitties climbed a tall linden tree beside our back door of the house. The lowest branches of this tree are well above where human hands can reach. This cat climbed the tree and was afraid to climb back down! One time, she was rescued by a neighbor who backed up his truck and stood close enough to coax her down. Another time, I was at home visiting my parents. I found a long stick that I remembered from my childhood. I pointed the stick up toward the kitty and basically poked her down—in essence, giving her the courage that her claws would work as well on the way down as they had on the way up! It was funny to see. I don't think she climbed up that tree any more.

**New Signs on 14** I am so happy with the addition of new pro-life signs south of Aurora along Highway 14. Have you noticed them? When I arrived here in June, 2017, I noticed that the signs were faded and sorely in need of updating. I asked around and found that the Knights of Columbus had initiated this project and that replacement signs were already purchased and ready to

install. A couple of months ago, this replacement happened. The signs are in a small piece of pastureland, fenced in from tillable farmland. I love it that many eyes each day travel down Highway 14 and have a chance to see the pro-life message promoted. Who knows what good may come of something as simple as a road sign? Thank you to our KC's for promoting this project, as well as great thanks to the landowner for giving the pro-life cause a worthy place on his land.

**Explanation of January 1<sup>st</sup>** The first day of January and of the New Year is always the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. This day is a holy day of obligation. It is one of the six holy days of obligation. Some years ago, in the 1990's, the United States bishops voted that if January 1 falls on a Saturday or Monday, the obligation to attend Mass is removed. But the obligation remains when the day falls on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. This same situation affects two other holy days, namely, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) and All Saints Day (November 1). Holy days are determined from the universal Church calendar by each nation's conference of bishops. I know of countries which have only two holy days (Canada) and others which have nine or ten (like Italy). The next little article explains holy days a bit.

**Why Holy Days?** Someone on Catholic radio called in and asked how to explain holy days to their non-Catholic friends and family. The caller said that Sundays are something people are accustomed to as the Lord's Day; so why does the Church add holy days? The answer was informative for me, from a perspective I hadn't considered. It lies in the way that our Christian faith is based so much upon the Jewish faith. Important catechetical note: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were Jewish. So, it stands to reason that the early Christians down to our own day would integrate Jewish feasts and customs. In the ancient Jewish world, many days were considered holy besides the Sabbath day (modern-day Saturday). Feasts were observed monthly for the cycle of the moon. Other feasts were based upon other commemorations of faith, like the Passover from Egypt into the Promised Land or the dedication of the Temple. The custom, then, of observing holy days is very Christian because it is very Jewish. Jesus Our Lord, himself, would have observed all of the Jewish holy days along with Mary and Joseph. Does it not make sense, then, that we have holy days, too? And that we should observe them, as Jesus did his Jewish holy days?

**Breaking Bread** [edited and re-printed] 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?

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**