

## **From the Pastor—December 22, 2019**

### **Adoration Schedule**

*No Adoration this week in St. Mary's.*

*No Adoration this week in St. Joseph's.*

**Our Bishop** If you missed the letter I read last weekend at Mass, please know that Bishop James Conley has taken a medical leave of absence. We priests were called to the seminary to meet with His Excellency on December 13, a week ago Friday. Most all of us had no idea of the reason for the meeting, only that we were to make every effort to attend. There, Bishop told us how tinnitus (ringing of the ears) has been causing him insomnia, which has led to exhaustion. His mental health and physical health are linked, as for all of us, and so he shared how depression and anxiety had affected him in the past year or so. Our Diocese has had difficult situations for which he was called upon to exercise the service bestowed upon him by his authority as bishop. Bishop Conley's leave of absence is temporary; this point was very much emphasized. In the meantime, Archbishop George Lucas of Omaha has been appointed apostolic administrator of the Lincoln Diocese, as per the decree of Pope Francis. Many of the daily operations of our Diocese will happen very well and very smoothly. But for occasions requiring the decisions and authority of a bishop, the Archbishop of Omaha has been given jurisdiction to serve our Lincoln Diocese, for which we are grateful. This situation is uncharted territory for everyone involved. Bishop Conley will reside at a retreat house near Phoenix while he receives medical care. His letter, which can be found at [lincolndiocese.org](http://lincolndiocese.org), emphasized that he loves our Diocese of Lincoln and looks forward to returning. Please pray.

**My Aunt Gretchen** Those of you who participate in our parishes' prayer chain (and you are all welcome to join) will know that I requested prayers for my Aunt Gretchen Hajek about a week ago. She had an aggressive cancer, and she passed away on December 19 at age 75. Gretchen was proud to be an Okie; I think her birth town was Ada, Oklahoma, and much of her growing up years were Ponca City. She and my mom's brother, Francis, married in 1969; I am told that "toddler-me" created a stir pre-wedding when I almost crawled into the hotel swimming pool—Yikes! Somehow, Aunt Gretchen must have convinced Uncle Francis that Oklahoma was the "better life" over The Good Life of Nebraska, for that is where they settled and lived. They welcomed my cousin Angela into their, and our, family when I was 8 or 9 years old. I still remember meeting her the first time they brought her to Nebraska; we were so excited for a new baby cousin! Francis, who Gretchen preferred to refer to as Frank, taught at Lawton's Cameron College (later Cameron University). He achieved a Ph.D. in Math, which our family was very proud of. Aunt Gretchen worked for many years in their Catholic parish, Holy Family. You may know of Lawton from Fort Sill of the U.S. Army being located there. Gretchen's office duties often included assisting military families for whom Lawton was a short assignment, and she welcomed them graciously. She also had a heart for people with English as a second language and became quite fluent in Spanish to serve the Latino population prevalent in the parish and the community. In post-retirement, Francis and Gretchen had been even more involved in their parish, especially through the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Francis LOVES playing golf, and he had been on the links 2-3 times per week until Gretchen's cancer started to take its toll. Gretchen had a special love for me in my priesthood; she

loved to talk about the Church and how my parish responsibilities compared to her parish priests and deacons. In fact, I think I can remember Gretchen's mother, Ruth, encouraging me as a little boy to consider becoming a priest. \*\*\* Having a death at Christmastime is not new for our family. My Uncle Stan Hajek died on December 21, 1992; his funeral was held December 26. My Grandma Emilie Hajek died on December 23, 2006; her funeral was on December 27. In each case, the death of a loved one brought our larger family together for Christmas in a way that we wouldn't have otherwise. So, there are blessings even amidst the sadness and grief. Thank you in advance for your prayers.

**Our Christmas Program** I was so pleased with the students of our CCD program, and the Senior Class of 2020 Godteens, for the wonderful Christmas program last Sunday at St. Mary's. It was a top-notch performance, for which the planning and preparation paid off. I thank everyone who served our youth to help make it all be such a grand success for our parish and for the many visitors to our parish. I have a heart for people who aren't Catholic, and maybe have misconceptions of Catholics, and events like a Christmas program can break down any wrongly conceived stereotypes of our beautiful Catholic faith.

**My Health** If you noticed the odd Mass time last Monday, it was because I had an appointment with my doctor which required three hours of fasting. I underwent a fibroscan of my liver in the Lincoln office of my gastroenterologist. The results were good, I am happy to report. They could be even better with diet and exercise improvement. They also did blood labs, which showed my liver enzymes slightly elevated. I was diagnosed, prior to coming to be with you all, with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis. In more common terms, this is called fatty liver. The diagnosis took me by surprise in 2014, when many tests ruled out certain diagnoses. I know I can still live a long and healthy life with the aforementioned improvement of lifestyle. I so enjoy teaching and being with you, the people of God, making it easy to leave self-care as a low priority. I know I can count on your prayers...thank you!

**EWTN TV highlights** So much great programming is available to you, if you are blessed to receive EWTN on your cable or satellite TV. Look for EWTN, too, on Roku and Apple TV, or by streaming on their web site of [ewtn.com](http://ewtn.com). Here are just a few highlights to look for:

Tuesday, Christmas Eve, at 2:30 p.m. – SOLEMN MASS OF CHRISTMAS EVE IN ROME (Live), celebrated by Pope Francis

Wednesday, Christmas Day, at 12:00 midnight – MIDNIGHT MASS FROM THE HOLY LAND

Wednesday, Christmas Day, at 7:00 a.m. – SOLEMN MASS OF CHRISTMAS – from EWTN in Irondale, Alabama

Wednesday, Christmas Day, at 11:00 a.m. – SOLEMN MASS OF CHRISTMAS DAY from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

**Jesus is born a baby, for us! Merry Christmas!!!**

**Father Grell**