

## **From the Pastor—December 29, 2019**

**Adoration Schedule** Adoration this week in St. Mary's on Wednesday, December 31, 11:00 p.m. – 12 midnight; and in St. Joseph's on Thursday, January 2, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

**Travels through Kansas and Oklahoma** Thank you for lifting me up in prayer as I traveled to my Aunt Gretchen's funeral in Lawton, Oklahoma. My brother, Mark, went with me; he handled a majority of the driving, so that was quite helpful. We left from our parents' farm on Sunday morning. On the way through Wichita, we stopped at the assisted living facility where my dad's sister, Doris, lives. She is quite far into dementia, and it didn't help her clarity that we woke her up in order to visit with her. She remembered growing up on the farm, the same farmstead that us Grell kids grew up on. But she couldn't place us. She remembered her parents and my Dad and her twin sisters. For reasons only the Lord knows, the mind is so mysterious and hers can't reach the thoughts and memories that we might wish. I am sure it is a cross for her three sons (my cousins), their wives, and her ten grandchildren, for them all to experience her in this way. Her husband, Keith, died on New Year's Eve; I think the year was 2004. Doris will turn 87 on this week's New Year's Eve. \*\*\* After Wichita, we drove through Oklahoma City and then on to Lawton. My brother noticed that the NBA's LA Clippers were playing the OKC Thunder at home that night, so we were a bit concerned about running into game traffic. But we didn't. \*\*\* We did not arrive in Lawton in time for the Rosary/wake for my aunt. We were able to join my uncle, Francis, and my cousin, Angela, and other friends and family at a restaurant in Lawton. The next day, Monday, we celebrated the funeral Mass at Holy Family Church in Lawton, where my Aunt Gretchen had worked for 33 years as a data entry specialist. She enjoyed updating the database and keeping information current. And, she was so good at being a church "office lady", as she had a great compassion for anyone and everyone who stopped by. Her pastor, who gave the funeral homily, remarked that Aunt Gretchen would help wayfarers from her own funds when the parish was not able to contribute. The Holy Family Church is one of two Catholic parishes in Lawton; they are blessed with five deacons, and all of them concelebrated the funeral Mass. Father Phil Seeton, pastor, asked me to lead the graveside service for Aunt Gretchen; this was a real honor for me. There was no funeral dinner after the burial, so Mark and I headed north back to Nebraska as soon as we were done visiting at the cemetery. We had a couple of near-miss traveling follies as we went through Oklahoma City; thankfully, Mark maneuvered as well as other drivers' skills so that no accidents occurred. Guardian angels were at work!!! \*\*\* We arrived into our Grell family farm around 8:00 p.m. I stayed the night, while Mark went home to Lincoln. Then, on Tuesday, I slept late from the long trip and drove back to Aurora, arriving back at the rectory at 2:30 p.m. If I seemed to be here-and-there-and-everywhere during the Christmas Masses, I was just that! Thank you for your patience; hopefully you couldn't tell that I was out of sorts. I actually felt blessed to feel as good as I did. Again, my brother helping to drive, and your prayers, made all the difference. \*\*\* Please keep my Uncle Francis and Cousin Angela in your prayers. Here is the link to Aunt Gretchen's obituary, if you wish to read it: <https://www.beckerfuneral.com/obituary/gretchen-hajek>.

**Our Parishes' Christmases!** It was so enjoyable to be with all of you for Christmas Masses. I estimate that about

350 men, women, and children attended our three Masses. The largest was the 5:00 p.m., with about 200 adults and 60 children. It was beautiful to lead the children to the manger scene, to bless it with them, and then to pray a Hail Mary. We did the same ceremony at the beginning of the 10:00 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph's. To those who attended St. Joseph's 10:00 p.m. Mass, I am so sorry that I started the Mass late. I was just not myself, and I even felt physically ill prior to the Mass. But I regained my composure and I hope you were not distracted too much by my tardiness. I want to be sure to show my appreciation and gratitude to all who decorated our churches, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, especially since I was not around on the weekend to give you guidance that you may have otherwise asked me about. I am also grateful for Father Tom Walsh for providing coverage for me. I am sure you enjoyed his gentle way, yet strong spirituality and love for the Holy Mass.

**Family Christmas** After I completed our three Christmas Masses, I was able to drive into Lincoln for family Christmas at my sister's home. Mark went to the farm and brought Mom and Dad into town. It was tiring for my parents, but they enjoyed themselves. I then took Mom and Dad home and stayed a few days with them. I am even writing these very words from the Beatrice Public Library, and on their wi-fi in order to make our bulletin deadline!

**Excerpts from Christmas Homily** On the reverse side of this note, I am including a few excerpts from my Christmas homily. Also, below is the way to say the Angelus, which I encouraged in my homily.

### **The Angelus**

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

HailMary...HolyMary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

HailMary...HolyMary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

**Father Grell**