

## **From the Pastor—December 13, 2020**

**Year of St. Joseph** Pope Francis declared on Tuesday this past week that he was dedicating an entire year to St. Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the earthly father of Jesus, Our Lord. This year will last from December 8, 2020, until December 8, 2021. Other years like this have been dedicated by popes in the past. Back in the 1980's, John Paul provided a Year of our Redemption in 1983 and a Marian Year in 1987-88. You may recall that in the lead up to the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope St. John Paul declared Years of God the Son, of God the Holy Spirit, and of God the Father. He also declared a Year of the Rosary and a Year of the Eucharist. Pope Emeritus Benedict declared a Year of Faith, a Year of St. Paul and a Year for Priests. Pope Francis has declared a Year of Mercy, in 2016. All of these gestures are meant to inspire the people of God to focus more fully upon important aspects of the Christian faith. Each of these years has provided special indulgences to encourage our entering into and receiving the sacraments more often and worthily. Some of these special years have included pilgrimage destinations for the faithful to devoutly visit. \*\*\* I am particularly excited for you, our St. Joseph parish of Giltner, as we are graced with the Year of St. Joseph. We will have to pray to the Holy Spirit to help us in our observance of this specially dedicated year.

**No public Christmas CCD program** The CCD staff and I made the decision not to have a public CCD Christmas program this year, due to the Covid restrictions. The alternative, I think, is going to be a happy replacement. The senior (12<sup>th</sup> grade) Godteens and their godparent couple filmed the lower and middle primary grades after helping these students produce a Christmas-themed message. These recordings are being made available to parents and grandparents of the students. I hope this effort helps to edify our students and families to make this year's Christmas celebration more joyful and profound.

**When A Baby Dies** Christmas time sometimes evokes memories of losing a child. Our Diocese of Lincoln has a dedicated staff to assist if you have had such a loss, either recently or long ago, either of a child in utero or a young already-born child. Referred to as Healing Hearts, this diocesan ministry can be accessed by calling the Family Life Office at 402-473-0620. The web site address is <https://www.lincolndiocese.org/bereavement-healing/when-a-baby-dies>. One loving way to remember your child is on the feast of the Holy Innocents, during Christmas week. A Mass in Lincoln that week, which you do not have to attend but are welcome to, includes your child's name. If you didn't name him or her, their name is Baby (your last name). Please know of the prayers of the people of God for these painful losses.

**Aurora Borealis** Did you hear in the weather forecasting this past week that we in North America could have seen the wonderful light show called the aurora borealis? These lights originate at the North and South Poles. Somehow, the effects of solar storms on the Sun made this recent aurora borealis come close to being visible for us here in Nebraska. I think we ended up having cloud cover or some other prohibitive factor. It is cool that Aurora as a town has this famous light show with the same name—and that the light show could have (and maybe again will someday) be visible to us here!

**Rose/Pink Sunday** This Sunday, we celebrate the joy of Christmas coming nearer. To emphasize this joy, priests who have access to rose/pink vestments wear them at

Mass. I sometimes call for a “pink-out” at Mass, inviting people to wear their best pink clothing. Am I a little goofy or what?! I forgot to put out the summons in time, as of this writing, although I may be able to spread the word via our Facebook page. If you are watching Mass on TV, feel free to make your church clothes be pink this weekend!

**Christmas Movies** While a case can be made for comedy movies that many people like to watch at Christmas, I hope we can do better than the easy guffaws of Chevy Chase and National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. (Don't send me to the Christmas “bah-humbug” corner if that is your favorite Christmas movie!) How about watching with your family the classic Jimmy Stewart movie, It's a Wonderful Life. Or, recent movies like The Star or Mary of Nazareth are also good. You may be shocked that I have never seen the classic Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street; I need to take care of that omission. While not a movie, A Charlie Brown Christmas is a must-see as well. Just my two-cents worth for you on Christmas viewing.

**Covid Affects Priests** You may know that priests have come down with the Covid virus. I have heard of more priest-deaths from Covid in Italy and Europe than here in the U.S. A priest known to many Lincoln Diocese priests passed away in the Peoria Diocese last week, due to Covid. His name was Msgr. Richard Soseman, and he was 57 years old. Please pray for his soul and his family. Also, my priest-friend in the Arlington Diocese in Virginia tested positive for Covid last week. I would appreciate prayers for him too, as he is pastor of a large parish and is staying isolated in his quarters while other priests serve the people with the sacraments.

**5 Masses** I decided to schedule five Masses for Christmas. The idea is that we want to limit large congregations; having more Masses will help to spread people out. Please see the rest of this bulletin for the exact schedule.

**E-mail News Beginning** When the Covid hit last spring, I successfully communicated for a few weeks via sending e-mails to those for whom I have addresses on our parish database. However, my gmail system started massively kicking back my communications as “undeliverable”, which irritated me to no end. I am thankful to deliver to you what I think is a great solution, via an e-mail service called Constant Contact. Our members should begin soon to receive parish e-mail messages. At first, you may need to check your “spam” file in case your computer doesn't recognize the Constant Contact as being part of your primary senders. The e-mails will contain links to the parish bulletin, familiar pictures of our churches, and ways to click to places on our web site that are helpful to you. I am looking forward to this new communication!

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Stay well, stay strong, in Christ!
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**God Bless You!!!**

**Father Grell**