

## **From the Pastor—December 27, 2020**

**My Dad** My father continues to fare well, post-Covid infection. The nursing home did the most wonderful thing: they had my Dad sign a Christmas card and included a picture of him in front of their Christmas tree! Dad is not the Christmas-card-sending type, as Mother always has handled that. So imagine my surprise to see a return address from Kenneth Grell and a wonderful Christmas card inside! It was truly joyful. Thank for your prayers for him; it is a gift to have him here at Christmas.

**Formed.org** Maybe over the holidays, you could take some time to check out the subscription that our parish has to the platform called “Formed”. It is found at Formed.org. It is from the Augustine Institute in Denver. When Formed was first launched, it required a 6-digit alphanumeric code to enter. This 6-digit code is no longer needed. Logging in is much simpler. The key step that could be confusing is when you have a choice to “sign in” or “sign up”. If you have not logged in since the 6-digit code was done away with, you should choose “sign up”. You will have a choice given “sign up as a parishioner”. From there, you will type in “St. Mary Aurora Nebraska”—this works whether you are in St. Mary’s or St. Joseph’s. Once you click on St. Mary, 1419 10<sup>th</sup> Street Aurora NE, you should be able to form a password of your own choice to match your e-mail address. Thereafter, you will only have to click on “sign in” at the beginning of the process and enter your password. I hope I am explaining this clearly...I have directions via screen shots that I could e-mail you if you contact me. \*\*\* Formed has many great resources of Catholic media, including Bible studies, movies, audio talks, and age-appropriate material for kids. There are also selections in Spanish of these materials. \*\*\* Please check out Formed.org!

**Living Liturgically** This period of time after Christmas and into the New Year is rich in celebrations of our faith.

**December 28**—Feast of the Holy Innocents. This day commemorates those children who were killed in the Bethlehem area after Jesus’ birth, by order of King Herod. The Magi had told him of coming to visit a newborn king, and Herod could not stand any king but himself. To make sure his kingship was untarnished, he ruthlessly ordered the killing of babies of Jesus’ age. This is a sad feast, in many respects; yet, these children died for Christ and are regarded as martyrs. We can pray to them.

**January 1**—Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. We believe so intently on Jesus being fully human and fully divine. For his human nature, it required that he be born of a woman. Some say that many Jewish young women prayed that they would be the one chosen to bear the Messiah in their womb. This day celebrates that Mary was thus chosen and that she is our mother and protector in heaven.

**January 3**—Solemnity of the Epiphany. Traditionally, this day was celebrated on January 6. However, our United States bishops decided some years ago to transfer the Epiphany to the closest Sunday. We celebrate this day the Magi, or Wise Men, coming to bring Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Did you know that the Bible does not say how many Wise Men there were? We believe there were three, partly because of the three gifts. Also, we have the relics of the three Wise Men in the Cologne Cathedral in Germany (I have visited here, at World Youth Day, 2005); these relics for three men give credence to the belief that there were indeed *three* Magi. Epiphany is the day that we

can mark the doorways of our homes with blessed chalk. The first initials of the names of the Wise Men are used in the blessing: “C” for Caspar, “M” for Melchior, and “B” for Balthasar. The year is inscribed in chalk, with “20” going in front of the C and “21” going after the B. I will include more instructions next week in the bulletin.

**January 10**—the Baptism of the Lord. This day celebrates Jesus’ baptism by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The Jordan River is where the Chosen People entered the Promised Land after their 40 years of wandering in the desert. It is therefore significant that John was baptizing there, and that Jesus’ baptism shows a new Promised Land, i.e. heaven, by which our own baptism leads us toward.

**Jupiter and Saturn** Did any of you have a chance to look southwest in the sky after sunset on December 21 (Monday)? I was disappointed on December 20 because it was too cloudy to see the congruence of the planets Jupiter and Saturn. But on Monday, the skies were clear. I drove out on a random road somewhere south of the ethanol plant to witness this great astronomical event. It was breathtaking! I noticed other cars on the road, doing some stargazing like me. I heard of someone getting a good view at the Pioneer Rec Area northeast of Aurora. My iPhone took a mighty good picture of the congruence; I posted it on my personal Facebook page.

**Holy Hour for Peace** For some years, I have invited people to a holy hour to bring in the New Year. You might feel somewhat tentative about venturing around town on New Year’s Eve at 11:00 p.m. till midnight, but you are welcome to stop by and pray in front of Jesus’ True Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. This will be at St. Mary’s for both parishes.

**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.

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

**Father Grell**