

## From the Pastor—January 3, 2021

**My Brother and Sister** I was blessed to receive my siblings for a visit last Sunday. It was our chance to exchange gifts and celebrate Christmas. Mary, Mark, and I went out to eat after I returned from Giltner, and then we drove around town a while. It was really fun to see them; we haven't gotten together for a long time. I wish I could share them with all of you; they are special to me. My parents are well; I couldn't see them for Christmas, though Mary and Mark were able to have a short visit with Mother on Christmas Day.

**Christmas Masses** I was pleased with our Christmas Masses, especially not knowing what to expect due to Covid restrictions placed upon us. Our congregations were larger than I expected. We held the traditional procession with children at the beginning of the 5:00 and 10:00 Masses on Christmas Eve, which is always a favorite moment for me. If you recall, I scheduled one extra Mass in each parish, for a total of five Masses. Without my asking or persuasion, we had music provided, wonderfully, in each of the five Masses—for this I was pleased! I would say that the spirit of the people who attended was buoyant and radiant, as if we were so happy to have made it to Christmas after a year of struggling through our circumstances. The attendance at Christmas is always interesting with people who grew up here returning here, and sometimes I don't know them because I see them so rarely on their trips home. At the same time, many of our regular parishioners attend Mass with their native congregations and families. So, an interesting mix of people is always fun to experience.

**Darkness** Last Saturday, the rectory and church experienced a power failure. It lasted from about 7:00 – 8:40 p.m. I called in to NPPD, and they had received a number of calls already. I noticed that some homes in the area had electricity; others did not. The customer representative said that she thought a transformer had blown; it obviously was a localized outage. \*\*\* It was quite a spiritual time for me as I awaited the good NPPD workers to make repairs and restore power. On the farm growing up, we had numerous times where we lost electricity. We could usually see when the truck from Norris Public Power drove by to work the pole which was in need of repair. Last Saturday was different for me than childhood and other adult times of electricity outage. I felt very all alone. I was fearing how cold it might get in the house; I was fearing if my cell phone would run low on its charge; I was fearing if we would have power restored in time for Mass in the morning. I turned to prayer, and that definitely helped. In this season of light, celebrating the Light of the world being born for us, the darkness of the 100-minute power outage gave me some time for facing up to my fears. I don't know if I did as well with facing my fears as I would have hoped. It was certainly a lesson for me. And, it made me grateful for what we take for granted, namely, our electricity. I could not have lived in pioneer days, I don't think!

**Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street** I finally watched this classic movie, from 1947. It was certainly well-acted and well-plotted. I enjoyed it a lot. Older movies like this have a certain learning curve, to try to adjust to different ways of

speaking our English language and to differing cultural mores and means of the times.

**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.

**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. Please see instructions in this 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.

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Stay well, stay strong, in Christ!
---

**God Bless You!!!**

**Father Grell**