

## From the Pastor—January 17, 2021

**Popes Francis and Benedict, and me** So, what do I have in common with Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict? All three of us received our first of two vaccinations last week for Covid-19. Francis is 84 and Benedict is 93, so they meet the age prioritization. I was pleasantly surprised last week to receive an e-mail via our Hamilton County Ministerial Association which offered the vaccination to the pastors of churches here in the Aurora area. It turns out that ministers, because of our close interactions with people, were placed in a priority group to be vaccinated. I also saw people besides the ministers at the scheduled time, such as one of our Aurora Police Department officers and someone who works in dispatch for first responders. I feel very blessed to receive the vaccination. Please prayerfully consider being vaccinated when your turn arrives.

**Daily Mass and Confessions** Every day, people in our area have the opportunity to attend daily Mass. We have 7-9 people on average at St. Mary's, and 4 at St. Joseph's. I want you to know that anyone at any time can attend daily Mass. An objection that people might raise in their minds is that somehow they are not worthy to attend. But this is a dark temptation because all are welcome. If you have not been in the practice of daily Mass, it can seem daunting to begin coming. Just coming once or twice, though, can ease your concerns. Getting in a habit of attending becomes a great gift. The Mass in St. Mary's is almost always over by 8:00 a.m., which seems a good time in case you have appointments or work obligations to get to immediately afterward. At St. Joseph's, the Mass is 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday. This seems a good time for those who maybe like a little later time. Also, please note that St. Mary's people can attend the St. Joseph's Mass and St. Joseph's people can attend the St. Mary's Mass. I know of people who like to attend Mass on a day where they are especially grateful, like the occasion of their wedding anniversary. Or, you may be wrestling with God about something in your life and attending daily Mass helps you to clear your mind before Jesus in the Eucharistic sacrifice. \*\*\* The bulletin that there are confessions offered prior to daily Mass...and this is true. My presence in the confessional has been erratic or even non-existent on some days. Please know of my apologies for this and that I have been doing better lately. I would suggest that you could seek confession without attending daily Mass. You can be on your way to school or work, around 7:00 – 7:20 at St. Mary, make your confession, and then be on your way. Or, I can be available for confession at St. Joseph's prior to the 9:00 a.m. Mass or you could ask me to go to confession after the Mass. \*\*\* I don't mind sort of being a "cheerleader" for the Catholic faith, and to encourage you with enthusiasm to take advantage of daily Mass and regular confession.

**Great Opportunity** We had a short discussion at Parish Council last week about encouraging people to return to Sunday Mass after the Covid pandemic is over. While it may seem something of a conundrum to wonder if people will return, we can also see it as a great opportunity to think of ways to be in closer contact with fellow parishioners and welcome them. I know that Bishop Conley mentioned to us priests that he wants to brainstorm a sort of re-evangelization to people to encourage them to come to Mass. If you would like to be a part of a working committee to welcome people back to Mass in our parishes, please let me know. Perhaps

we could canvass many parishioners by personal phone calls or visits. You never know what a simple invitation can provide for the Holy Spirit to work in a soul. With this great opportunity, we could even end up with greater Mass attendance than ever. We pray God's grace upon our efforts.

**Day of Prayer** This Friday, January 22, marks the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of abortion being made legal in our nation, according to rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court. To commemorate this solemn occasion, our bishops have called for Friday to be observed as a Day of Prayer of the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. You are asked to pray and do penance on Friday. I would especially recommend praying the Rosary for this intention. The Collect (Opening Prayer) of the Mass on this day states: *"God our Creator, we give thanks to you, who alone have the power to impart the breath of life as you form each of us in our mother's womb; grant, we pray, that we, whom you have made stewards of creation, may remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever."*

**Signs of Hope** I am blessed with signs of hope that God privileges me with, and that I want to share with you. On New Year's Eve, I received a random phone call from a man traveling I-80 toward Omaha. He wanted to go to confession to begin the New Year on the right foot. I was happy to accommodate him. Also, a former parishioner contacted me recently to work with him on a marriage case to see if the Church would consider his previous marriage annulled; he wants to be right with the Church. More locally, I celebrated a marriage at the turn of the New Year for parishioners who had been civilly married but not married in front of the Church's minister; they can now return to receiving the Eucharist. An engaged couple I'm working with went on the Engaged Encounter weekend last weekend in preparation for their June wedding. I am in marriage prep classes with young couples for their weddings in July and October. I am working with families who are returning to the practice of the Catholic faith or joining us in full communion from other traditions. I think most you reading this bulletin really want to grow in faith and long to be together as a community of faith at Holy Mass. People are genuinely seeking the Lord, in good times and in bad, and I am so happy to be the Lord's instrument to help them. You can join in with these signs of hope, through your own journey with and in the Church, or by praying for these signs of hope of people seeking out Jesus in their lives. Please contact me if you wish to walk the journey with your priest in the graces of the Catholic faith.

**Jesus Christ is the same,  
yesterday, today,  
and forever!**

**God Bless You!!!**

**Father Grell**