

From the Pastor—February 21, 2021

One God, forever and ever. Amen.

[re-published...did you notice the difference?] This wording is how the prayer at the beginning of Mass will now conclude, as of Ash Wednesday. It is only different by one word, namely, the word “one”. The priest has usually prayed the prayer as directed to God the Father and concluding with “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.” The word “one” is not included in the official Latin of the Mass; we in the English-speaking world have included the word “one” as a mistranslation. So, the Church is correcting the error. The reasoning for omitting “one” is that it is thought to lead to thinking that Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit are not each a Person of God. Or that God is not one God. Words matter.

The Parish Church It came to me this week about how cherished our home church is to us. I have written before how my home parish of St. Joseph, Beatrice, has a distinct smell to it which floods my heart when I walk in. In that church, I have experienced beginning of life to end of life experiences—all while walking hand-in-hand with Jesus and the community of believers there. I hope our parishes of St. Mary’s and St. Joseph’s are always for you the same way mine is for me. And if you live here as not having grown up here, which is true in my case, I hope our Aurora and Giltner churches are everything you would want them to be. I hope we are a welcoming community that you want to be a part of and that you look forward to attending Mass, times of teaching, devotions, and social activities. I hope you feel you can stop by any time to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament to talk to Jesus, truly present in the tabernacle.

Ash Wednesday Reflections We had good Mass attendance on Ash Wednesday. I noticed some people for whom the schedule seemed to fit well into their day; I hope it offered flexibility to you. If you attended Mass in another town, that is great. Our biggest Mass was the 7:00 p.m. With the pews marked off for social distancing, we really filled the church narthex and the parish hall. I mentioned at my homily that, looking out at the congregants, I felt like Jesus at his Sermon on the Mount as he gazed upon his disciples. It was cool. *** The giving of ashes was, of course, different because of the pandemic. I was moved by the devotion with which you all received your ashes. I was moved toward amusement after Mass, when the CCD students were looking at each other’s heads to see how many ashes they had each received 😊. Our Lord Jesus is pleased with our Lenten kick-off; may it be fruitful to all and provide for you greater peace and security in your journey with God as he holds you tight by the hand.

My Second Vaccination I received my second of the two shots for the Covid vaccination on February 11. I must say that, while I had virtually no reaction to the first shot, I was not so fortunate for the second. At about 24-36 hours after the shot, I had symptoms that really slowed me down. I placed a call to the clinic’s on-call doctor who said that my reaction was similar to others they had seen. I determined that I didn’t need to go to the hospital emergency room. Thankfully, I became stronger and was able to celebrate the weekend Masses February 13-14. I do sense a peace and security at having been vaccinated. I realize that no vaccination is ever a “silver bullet,” providing guaranteed health. But given all that we have experienced since last March, it is good to be vaccinated with great hopes toward being able to serve my parish and to see my family more

safely.

A Regular Study Day This Week Our diocesan presbyterate will meet for one of our four Study Days on Tuesday this week. It will be our first in-person meeting this school year, and our first opportunity to be all together with Bishop Conley since his return from medical leave. We are meeting at a large venue in York instead of our usual gathering at the seminary in Seward so as to provide great social distancing. There will probably be 125 priests gathered with the bishop. I am looking forward to it and the sense of normalcy it will provide.

Cold, Ice, and Snow If you’re reading this, that hopefully means you made it through the harsh cold of these past days. It was quite the weather pattern to adjust to as it moved through. Around the St. Mary parish hall, we experienced ice jammed up and long icicle formation over top of the north doors. Several times, I have tried to open the metal door leading into the hall, but it is froze-tight-stuck. The two glass doors have had the same issue. For now, we are awaiting some melting to solve the problem. The icicles, if they fall in a wrong way, could bust out the glass in the doors. Please be watchful of signage to indicate if the doors are usable.

Bishop’s Lenten Letter Here are some excerpts from the letter of Bishop James Conley, which I read last weekend at Holy Mass: *“As a diocesan family, I am asking that we focus on the gift of the sacraments this Lent. I invite you to deepen your friendship with Jesus Christ and with your brothers and sisters by making a good, heartfelt sacramental confession. In the sacrament of penance, we will encounter Jesus himself and his merciful love. This Lent, I urge you to attend Mass and adoration more frequently, to turn off the noise of the media and entertainment, and to hear the Word of God. I ask you to invite at least one other person who has not been attending Mass regularly to come with you. Join your pastor and fellow parishioners in discerning ways that your parish can grow in providing a warm welcome to returning and new members.*

This Lent, I ask you to practice charity in a more intentional way. The source of your charity flows from your intimate relationship with God. Take everything to him in your daily prayer—everything—your joys, sorrows, victories, challenges, gratitude, and frustrations, and let him speak his works of truth, compassion, hope, and love into your heart. Pray with your families, spouses, and friends. Once you have opened your heart to receive God’s love in the sacraments and prayer, then take what you have received to the poor and needy—especially those who, in the words of Pope Francis ‘suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic.’”

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

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell