

Dec. 19-20, 2015

Thoughts from the pastor,

First and foremost I want to wish all of you a Blessed Christmas. As a child I was more about a Merry Christmas. I wanted it to be fun and exciting. I did have a sense of what my parents went through to make it as merry as possible. Two things about the situation of our family reduced the “fun” part of Christmas. Being on a dairy farm meant we never had a day away from chores. There was always a minimum of four hours of work for each of us. That is why I still think of any day that I have less than eight hours of work as a day off. The other reduction of fun came with our Catholic faith. Since we were all in a church choir or two and Mom was the organist for many years, we were very involved in all of the liturgies. We knew that they didn’t just happen by magic. A lot of work went into making the beauty and serenity of the Christmas message touch so many people. Don’t get me wrong, there were times when that was fun but that was not the point. It was meant to touch our hearts and souls and not humor us. So what I want for you is that this Christmas season will touch the soul and heart of each of you and that Jesus will bless you in special ways, especially those who helped make it special.

It was good to see many of you at the opening of the Holy Doors last Sunday. The rain was probably an answer to my prayers. Because of it, there was no outdoor procession which I do not look forward to in the cold months. I have had plenty walks in the cold as we did chores during the winter months. They were not spiritual experiences, just miserable. But the Jubilee of Mercy ceremony was very well done and beautiful. The Catholic Voice has had and will continue to have other opportunities to be a part of this special year of grace. I will also try to keep you updated.

This time of mercy has a lot to do with the main vehicle of God’s mercy, which is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This Monday, 12/21, is the parish penance service. Many of you have been a part of this so what I share here is old hat for you but for those of you who have not been at one of these for a while, here is the rundown. Including myself it looks like we have nine priests available that night. There will be a ten minute service at 7pm to get focused on what it is all about. These are usually my shortest homilies except for when I am doing the Mass for Shut-ins. Then there will be some music playing while people have the opportunity to line up for confessions. After each person finishes with their personal confession they are invited to take a few minutes in the chapel to complete the penance that they received from the priest and join in a small communal prayer of gratitude and blessing. It is not a problem if you can’t stay for that. Those prayer services will be done every few minutes so you can participate and head home. You do not have to wait until everyone else in the church is finished.

Some of you may even have to come late. That is not a problem. My guess is that if you get here by 8pm you will still be able to catch a priest for your confession. But if you do come after the beginning service try to let the priest know so that you will be given an opportunity to make your act of contrition during the confession. Those at the beginning service will do it together and not need to repeat it individually. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the most important things you can do to prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Savior.

Most of you should have received an e-mail from me Wednesday night. It was a test run. There are so many things that happen in our parish life and around the Omaha area that people miss because they don’t have the information in a timely way. Please don’t worry, I will not be e-mailing you all that info. I will simply be giving occasional highlights and ways of finding out more if you are interested. You can “unsubscribe” at any time or just let me know if you think it is too much. The delete button is also available for e-mails.

God bless you,  
Fr. Frank