

Christmas 2022

Dear Parishioners,

**Christmas Blessings to All!!** - As we come together to celebrate and remember the Savior's birth, please know of my prayers and thoughts for each of you. I am blessed to be your pastor and you have shown me so many ways that the Lord loves me. Thank you to each of you that has shown me some particular kindness this season, be it something to wear, something to eat, or your abundant thoughts and prayers. Barring emergency, I hope to spend these weekdays between Christmas and New Year's with my mother, sister, and brother-in-law in Little Rock, Arkansas. I will be back for the weekend Masses before I depart again to Philadelphia. Please know that I will be keeping you all in prayer and that I will be celebrating Mass most days and offering up some of your requested intentions while I am away.

**St. John Vianney Institute** – As I mentioned from the pulpit one weekend, the Bishop has presented me the opportunity to have a stem-to-stern evaluation (medical, psychological, spiritual) to assist me in being the best person and pastor that I can be. The Vianney institute is outside Philadelphia in Downingtown, PA and their evaluation service takes two weeks. I will depart early Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and return late Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, so hopefully, if all goes well, I will only be gone one weekend. While there, at least initially, I will not have the opportunity to communicate with others whenever I want, so please do not take offense if I do not respond to emails and phone calls while I am away. It is just part of their comprehensive process and evaluation to get things accomplished as quickly and efficiently as possible. While I am away, Fr. Anthony Onyeihe from Immaculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City will live in one of the rectories and will celebrate all of the scheduled Masses, be available for sacraments and other emergencies, and will generally hold down the fort while I am away. He is one of our missionary priests from Nigeria. I am grateful that he is able and willing to come here, that the Bishop arranged for this coverage, and that his pastor in Jefferson City is willing to help out too, by letting him come here temporarily. Please be generous and welcoming to Fr. Anthony as I imagine he knows no one in Cooper County.

**Finance Council** (at Pilot Grove) – Forgive me for writing a combined letter this time, but I have limited time this week. The St. Joseph Finance Council met Thursday evening and reviewed some of the parish financial data including bank balances and parish finance activity fiscal-year-to-date. It was agreed that we would meet regularly (probably at least every two months) and have set our next meeting for the middle of January after I return. We reviewed some of the suggested repairs and improvements for the parish grounds. We also realized that we lacked some desired information, both parish financial data and about possible expenses, that we will need review before and at the next meeting. No decisions were made on any items other than to meet again soon. One future agenda item is to decide how and how often to present some of the parish financial info in the bulletin.

I know there is much more that I could write, but time limits me. Again, please know of my thoughts and prayers for each of you. Our Savior's birthday is a great time to ponder all of our blessings, especially the blessing of being able to respond to His grace. May each of you be abundantly blessed, that you may be able to realize your blessings, and that you may have abundant opportunities to share those blessings with those around you and with the Body of Christ as a whole.

God bless and Merry Christmas,

Fr. Mark