



Merry Christmas 2009

from Father John Vakulskas Jr.



My Dear Friends,

Greetings of the Advent and Christmas season from Saint Andrew Church in Sibley, Iowa, and Saint Mary Church in Ashton, Iowa. I always look forward to this time of the year to hear from so many of you and to keep in touch.

This is the year I turned 65 and almost from the very day of my birthday, February 28, it seems that my mailbox is now filled with all kinds of offers and coupons for medicare supplement insurance ads, ads for adult diapers, Geritol, senior programs of health and debilitation. Then there is a whole new group of instant products. Instant coffee, tea, pudding. Instant breakfast, instant results from surveys. Sounds like they think that once you get to this age things can happen fast and so be cautious about making long-term plans. One of my parishioners likes to say: at our age, life is short, eat your dessert first.

I celebrated my 40th year in the priesthood this past summer and I heard from so many of you honoring this. Each of my parishes had celebrations for me with Mass and picnic in the park where whole families could come and enjoy. I also celebrated 40 years of outreach to the spiritual needs of the carnival workers of the United States. What comes to mind is the old adage that time flies and where does all this time go and this is so true. At this age we all have our aches and pains but I thank God for my health and strength. This past summer my ordination class of 1969 held an anniversary gathering which proved to be immensely fruitful since I had not seen many of my brother priests for many years. After spending a few days together it sure recharges one's spiritual batteries. Out of our class of 23 priests who were ordained on May 24, 1969, there are already six who are deceased. I continue to serve as a chaplain to the fine folks at the Iowa State Patrol. I admire their dedication and professionalism in protecting and serving the people of Iowa.

Throughout these years one appreciates his family more and more. My mother continues to live in Sioux City, Iowa, and continues to get joy beyond measure from the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sister, Janet, continues nursing in Sioux City. Brother, Tom, in Sioux City practices law. Maria is on the farm in Harlan.

trips

Holy Land, Germany and Alpine Europe

I am so excited about 2010 and the tours I have scheduled. The first is to the Holy Land from January 19-28, 2010. We will be in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee, Masada, Dead Sea and much more. Time is running out on this so if you are interested in receiving more information on this please call or email me immediately for more information. Come with me as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, the apostles, Abraham, and see what Moses saw and be at the Jordan River where Jesus was Baptized by John. There is only one Holy Land. For all people of all faiths as well as for all people of history the Holy Land holds a wealth of place of distinction where historical and faith-filled events took place. Remember the wedding feast of Cana? We are planning on having Mass there and include a blessing of all married couples in honor of the miracle Jesus performed there. This trip will let the Holy Bible come alive in our hearts and souls. Total cost out of Chicago is just \$2599 per person. A \$400 down payment will guarantee your seat.

From September 27 to October 7, 2010, I will be leading a tour to Germany and Alpine Europe. This includes Austria, Switzerland and the World renowned Oberamgau Passion Play held only once every ten years. Group travel is the cost effective and value-plus way to have a wonderful time and I am honored to be leading tours for almost 40 years. Having excellent contacts in this industry gives us the opportunity to have first class tours at value prices. Write, call or email for information on either of these tours since all seats are on a first-come first-served basis. A down payment will guarantee your seat.

Future trips will be to Rome, the shrines of Lourdes and Fatima, and Greece and Turkey.



Travel can be like the sun, words.
It can do for the heart what light can do for a field.
- Saint John of the Cross

Throw your dreams into space like a kite,
and you do not know what it will bring back,
a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new outlook on life.
- Anais Nin

I pray this Christmas season is a time of grace for you and your family. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes to bring peace and good will to all. This Christmas... Mend a quarrel... Seek out a forgotten friend... Write a love letter... Share some treasure... Give a soft answer... Encourage youth... Keep a promise... Find some time... Forgive a friend... Forgive an enemy... Listen... Apologize if you were wrong... Think first of someone else... Be kind and gentle... Laugh a little more... Express your gratitude... Gladden the heart of a child... Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth... Speak your love... Speak it again... Speak it still once again!



Please remember that you are always most welcome to stop by at any time. Sibley is North on U.S. 60, just a few miles from the Minnesota border. I also look forward to hearing from you and I want you to know I read each card and letter with anticipation. God has blessed me with so many close friends. I will remember you and your intentions in my Christmas Midnight Mass.

I close with the words of Saint Teresa of Avila.



*Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing frighten you,
all things are passing.
God never changes.
Patience always conquers.
Whoever has God lacks nothing,
for God alone suffices.*

Blessings always.

Father John

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