

# Merry Christmas and Blessings for the New Year

December 1, 2018  
 Christmas Letter ~ Volume 31  
 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition



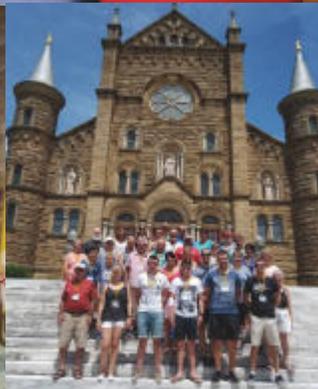
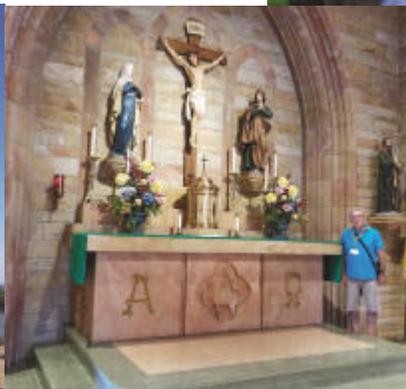
Dear Family and Friends,

I feel very blessed to have celebrated my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood on September 15<sup>th</sup>. During my 40th anniversary Mass, Frs. Dave Martin, Tony Ernst, William Traylor, Mike Madden, and Deacons Frank Zolvinski, Mike Helfter, Joe Siewers, Charles Johnson, Ken Johanning, and David McDaniel celebrated with me on the altar. Holy Family gifted me a Bavarian-style cross pictured in the left photo. I began my celebration year with Mass in the Black Madonna Chapel at Maria Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.



Several Jasper friends invited me to take them on a tour of Europe. To the left, my friends are visiting the Schulers at their own 400 year old home in Switzerland. To the right, we visit a *still* where the German Locher Family cooks German Schnapps in the wintertime!

While in Europe, to my surprise, I met my former seminary rector in Innsbruck, Austria. I had not seen him in 41 years. He was celebrating 55 years of priesthood at age 88. In Salzburg, I met a classmate of mine, Pater Gottfried OSB. Notice how much taller he is than me! Pater Ansgar Shuler, who is a monk of Einsiedeln, and I celebrated Mass in the picture on the right. Ansgar has Schuler relatives in Jasper.



During the 1950's, the Sculptor Herbert Jogerst of Wagshurst, Germany created "Christ over the Ohio" in Troy; the altars of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Haubstadt; and many of the statues of St. Meinrad Archabbey. Pictured in front of the Abbey Church, 20 visitors from Wagshurst came in June for the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Celestine. Celestine and Wagshurst established a friendship-partnership in 1993. I established this relationship with the help of Werner Stueber pictured next to the altar.



During Celestine's 175<sup>th</sup>, I decorated my 1952 International Pickup for the night parade. A small group of the Wagshurst German band played during the Sunday parade. Three members of the Band were here in 1993 for Celestine's 150<sup>th</sup>. After the festival, five members toured the West Coast for three weeks.

The rest of the 14 German guests and I went on tour through Indiana and Chicago. We traveled to Shipshewana where we took a buggy ride to an Amish farm. We were astonished by their modern dairy farm, even though we had to ride by horse and buggy just to get to there! We toured downtown Chicago on July 4<sup>th</sup> visiting some skyscrapers. That night we spent our evening viewing the fireworks from Navy Pier. Our German guests flew home from Chicago after a ten-day visit.



I was honored by the Jasper German Club for my work promoting the German heritage of Dubois County. I have served as a priest in the county for 31 years. In the far left picture I am holding a heritage trophy. The local Jasper K of C #1584 honored me with the *James Seger Award* for my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I serve as the local chaplain for the K of C. Bishop Alangaram Durairaj SVD from Khandwa, India came to visit me in June. I took him to meet the family of Fr. Jerry Ziliak, who had served in his Diocese in India some 50 years ago. As a sign of his appreciation, Bishop Durairaj presented me with a silk friendship-shawl.

Just before I was celebrating my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest, my sister celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in August. I was grateful that my only sister could celebrate this special occasion. Lexi Elpers, a great-niece of mine, married Brandon Michel in October. We are signing their marriage license in the middle picture.



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Vic Luong was ordained a priest for the Oklahoma City Diocese in June. Pictured in the above right photo, he blesses his father after his ordination. Fr. Vic Luong will return to Vietnam on January 15, 2019 for the first time in 11 years. He has invited me to go home with him to concelebrate several first Mass celebrations for his family and friends. He also wants me to experience Vietnamese New Year. If my health allows, I will be going. I ask that you pray for our safe journey. 2018 was a special year of blessings for me. I cannot thank the Lord enough. I wish you blessings for a grace-filled Christmas and New Year. **If I hear from you**, then I know that you want to receive my annual Christmas letter!