

## **“BEING EASILY AMUSED”**

### **ENJOYING THE SIMPLE PLEASURES OF LIFE**

There is an Italian phrase that suits me as well as any other I’ve encountered— *“Mi diverto con poco.”* Simply put, “I am easily amused.” It fits me to a “T” (short for tittle, as in jot and tittle) because, it is often the **simple pleasures in life** that provide me the most joy. I write with trepidation because I am frankly admitting a quality about myself that is shared by few, though occasionally someone has the courage to admit similar predilections. A few examples will suffice. On October 18, 2018 at a little after 8:00 p.m., I pulled over to the side of MN Highway 13 to capture the precise moment that my car hit **100,000 miles**, accompanied by a priest classmate. True, I ever so slightly manufactured the milestone by intentionally driving past the exit for the restaurant and then doubling back on the freeway after calculating the remaining distance. I ended up at precisely 100,000 miles just as I turned into the parking lot at the same restaurant where we had dined ten months earlier when he achieved the exact same milestone with his car! Talk about a couple of “wild and crazy” guys!

I have had a love of geography for decades—well, geographical oddities to be more precise. I enjoy going to “out of the way” places: the northernmost point in the USA, **Point Barrow, AK**, the Falkland Islands and Antarctica, and most recently to Mount Everest Base Camp. I am actively researching a way to travel to the Canadian Arctic some day without draining my savings account! Perhaps they need Mass help at the North Pole? Last March’s trip to Nepal was surprisingly affordable, but approaching the North Pole? It would be fascinating to retrace the Northwest Passage of the early explorers who sought a route from Europe to the Far East by means of the Arctic waters. So, why do I care about these things, why do they even matter to me? It may have something to do with my utter lack of interest in what passes for typical entertainment today. Take video games for example— are you kidding me? I couldn’t possibly care less. Nor do current Hollywood films hold any attraction for me whatsoever. I categorically reject out of hand the moral underpinnings of so many of them and cannot recall the last time I have been to a film. I think it may have been “42,” the story of **Jackie Robinson**.

I am wearied by the politics of Washington D.C., uninterested in the incessant in-fighting and “gotcha” politics of personal attacks. Have we forgotten that our elected officials work for us? Perhaps carefully crafted **term limits** (two six-year terms for senators, four two-year terms for the House) would influence the attitudes of those who have made a career “inside the beltway,” if they actually had to apply for regular jobs. Nor am I a “night owl,” much more comfortable with the **“Early to bed, early to rise”** advice of old. I despise shopping and have no inclination to visit the malls. I am much happier in the outdoors, though I neither golf nor play tennis. In short, many of the typical diversions hold little interest for me, and I have accepted that, almost reveled in it. I’ve come to realize that it is the **simple pleasures** in life that provide me the greatest joy: a game of cribbage with family or friends, watching a classic musical on television, a brisk walk around Como Lake, etc.

Joy is found in reading a book (though I certainly fell short in this department this past year), attending an occasional baseball game or watching an interesting documentary. It is leading a tour for first-time Cathedral visitors, or preparing the perfect cup of coffee, reveling in the glorious sound of the coffee grinder at 5:00 a.m., hoping the noise does not travel too far down the hallway! It is praying the **Chaplet of Divine Mercy** on Fridays from the back of the Cana Chapel, amidst a serene atmosphere provided by our Cenacle. It is hiking in the summer and fall, drinking in the beauty of God’s creation. It is coming across an ancient Roman inscription or document that captures my attention, marveling at the precision of the Latin language, even as I am continually confounded by the language’s complexity, solidifying my status as a perpetual beginner. Like you, my list could go on and on.

With each Christmas, my thirst for nostalgia grows, even though I seek no retreat to the halcyon days of old. I desire to live amidst the world as I see it today. Each of us is called to engage the world as it is, not as we imagine it to have been at some point in the past. This is the time that God has given to us and the culture into which we have been placed. We seek to **transform our culture** by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this presents tremendous challenges, and yet our faith demands that we engage an increasingly questioning and searching millennial generation. Young adults today have already experienced so much change in their lives, an

explosion of modern technology just in their lifetime, and an increasingly hostile world. For today's college seniors, one of their earliest memories would have been of September 11, 2001. That is the only world they have known.

But I saved the best "simple pleasure" of all for last—gazing upon our **newborn Savior** in the Manger. There is no oil painting, no mosaic or fresco so engaging in the world than kneeling before a manger, however small or grand, and offering a humble prayer of thanksgiving to the heavenly Father for sending Jesus to redeem us from sin and darkness. Our God has come to visit us in the person of a tiny child, and one gaze at the Manger speaks more eloquently than the best homily you have ever heard or most sublime theological treatise ever written. In our prayer and in our hearts, we encounter the living God. May this Christmas bring tremendous joy and peace to you and your family. I especially remember in my prayers those who are experiencing their first Christmas following the death of a loved one. I am honored by your presence at the Cathedral this Christmas, and I am deeply grateful for your support. God bless you!

- We will offer one Mass on the **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**, January 1, 2018 at **10:00 a.m.** While the holyday obligation has been lifted because it falls on a Monday, nevertheless it remains a solemnity worthy of our observance and a great way to begin the **Year of our Lord** 2018 in prayer.
- Special thanks to all who assisted with our pre-Christmas church cleaning, decorating, and any other ways in which you have stepped up to assist in our liturgies. The vibrancy of the Cathedral depends upon such generous people as you and I am most grateful. Your financial support is critical, and I want you to know how deeply I appreciate your sacrificial giving.
- Many Twins fans will recall with amazement the masterful 1-0 shutout that **Jack Morris** pitched in **game 7 of the 1991 World Series**. He led the Twins to victory, hurling **126 pitches** over 10 innings. That's right—126 pitches! He will be inducted this summer to the Baseball Hall of Fame, becoming the third St. Paul native to be so honored, alongside **Dave Winfield** and **Paul Molitor**.
- We are blessed to welcome both Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens to celebrate Christmas Mass with us See the schedule listed in the sidebar on this page.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector