

From the Pastor

My Pilgrimage I was in Oklahoma City last weekend for the Beatification of Father Stanley Rother. I thank Father George from the Diocese of Satna, India, for being here to celebrate Holy Mass and hear Confessions while I was away. Thanks also to all who helped with Father's transportation and accommodations. Here are some highlights about my time away.

Mary It was so good to spend many hours in the car with my sister, Mary. The total of 991 miles driven flew by as we chatted and conversated and prayed together. Mary is 27 months older than me, and we have always been good friends. She had been interested in going to this event in Oklahoma City, and it worked out for both of us to go.

Okarche While traveling to OKC (Oklahoma City), we stopped by the home town of Father Rother, Okarche. This little town and its Catholic church and school, Holy Trinity, is where this priest of God was raised and grew in his faith. I had been in Okarche once before. When we arrived, it was already past sunset. The doors of the church were locked; no one answered the door at the rectory. Mary and I walked around and took some pictures, especially of a statue of Father Rother beside the church. We had one last hope to speak to someone when we saw a car and some activity inside a building on the campus. Walking up to the door, we were surprised to see the pastor and two volunteers stocking the shelves of the new gift shop. They let us in, graciously, and let us shop! The pastor is Father John Peter from India; he was so kind to show us around this new building which houses parish offices in addition to the gift shop. The two volunteers cautioned us that the items that said "Blessed" Stanley Rother were not to be shared before the actual ceremony on Saturday. We assured them that we understood the "Blessed" part of Father Rother's title would not be legitimate until Saturday and that we would not break their confidence. It was truly a blessed time to be in this small, rural town of about 1,300 people.

Relatives My mother's brother has lived in Lawton, Oklahoma, most all of his married life. Uncle Francis, and his wife, Gretchen, traveled into OKC and saw us. Their daughter, Angela, and her family live in Edmond, and we saw them both Friday and Saturday. It was great to get caught up with these "Okie" relatives. On the way back home to Nebraska on Monday, we also arranged to see my dad's sister, Doris, who lives in Wichita. Seeing all of these dear relatives was a real perk to the entire pilgrimage.

The Beatification Mass The Mass which raised Father Rother to the altars of the Church was held on Saturday at the Cox Convention Center in downtown Oklahoma City. Crowds were standing outside the doors as early as 7:00 a.m. The hotel where Mary and I stayed was right across the street, so that was a great convenience to not have to worry to find a parking space. The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City had things well-orchestrated and planned.

At precisely 10:00, a premier of a documentary about Father Rother, "An Ordinary Martyr," was shown on the big jumbotron screens. It moved me to tears. The Mass began with the main celebrant being Cardinal Angelo Amato, who serves Pope Francis as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. After the Penitential Rite (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy), the Rite of Beatification was held. This consisted of Archbishop Coakley of Oklahoma City reading the Apostolic Letter from Pope Francis which officially named Father Stanley Rother a "Blessed" in the Church. After the letter was read (in its original Latin and in English), the relics of Blessed Stanley were carried forward and placed beside the altar and incensed. Then, a beatification hymn was sung, Holy God We Praise Thy Name. Then, the Mass continued with the Gloria. I should mention that after the letter was read, a huge banner was revealed with Blessed Stanley Rother's official portrait behind the altar. I have seen this ceremony on TV for canonizations of saints but had never seen it in person. Part of Blessed Rother's portrait showed my common seminary to him, Mount St. Mary's in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Father Rother has a younger brother and sister still living; he would be 82 had he not been martyred. They were able to come on stage and greet the cardinal from Rome. His sister, a consecrated religious of the Most Precious Blood order from Wichita, read the First Reading. Father Rother's two nieces and five nephews brought up the offertory gifts during the Mass. Among other dignitaries present were the retired archbishop of Oklahoma City and a bishop from Guatemala, where Father Rother had served. Some of Father Rother's parishioners from Guatemala were also in attendance. I was so glad to be at this holy event, a historic happening. It was only the second Beatification Mass on U.S. soil. Father Rother is the first diocesan priest born in the U.S. to be beatified and the first martyr of the United States of America. His feast day will be celebrated on July 28, which is the day of his heavenly birth (i.e. the day of his martyrdom). The Archdiocese has plans to build a beautiful shrine to Father Rother so that generations to come can witness his holy life. I took all of your prayers to the Mass and treated it as a pilgrimage to holy ground.

OKC Bombing The most other significant part of the trip for my sister and me was to visit the site of the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. This terrorist attack happened in 1995, as many of you remember. For me, the OKC bombing seems to be one of the leading pre-cursor events leading to 9/11 and all that has happened in the 21st century in our fallen world. To be at the place where 168 lives were lost was moving to me. I didn't know that adjacent to the federal building stands St. Joseph Old Cathedral. It withstood much damage during the bombing. The Archdiocese has built a memorial on its grounds to the bombing. It depicts Jesus with his Sacred Head buried into his right hand. His left hand rests on his

chest. And the statue is titled, "And Jesus Wept." The statue is positioned with Jesus looking away from the bombing site. The enclosed memorial area in its wall has 168 niches (empty spaces) for each of the lives lost. We didn't go through the museum, but it surely would be worth seeing on my next trip to OKC.

Bishop's Appeal for Vocations I want to encourage broad support for the Bishop's Appeal for Vocations in our St. Mary and St. Joseph Parishes. I launched this appeal by reading the letter from Bishop Conley on September 16-17. The September 22nd edition of the Southern Nebraska Register had a cover article about the appeal. Our CCD students were given my homily on Wednesday evening and the debut of this year's seminarian brochure, featuring our 39 seminarians for the Diocese of Lincoln. A number of you have already given through envelopes in our parish packets...thank you! You are helping us toward our goal of \$4,410 for St. Mary's and \$900 for St. Joseph's. A distinction I would like to make about the Bishop's Appeal for Vocations is that it is money raised for the schooling expenses of each seminarian. When I went through seminary, 1991-1996, the Diocese of Lincoln picked up the educational expenses. My parents and benefactors helped with my traveling expenses, car insurance, and other smaller expenses. But you, the people of God in the Diocese, paid for me to become a priest. The Joy of the Gospel campaign in 2015 went toward a building and mortar expansion of our diocesan seminary, St. Gregory the Great in Seward. The Joy of the Gospel did not cover educational expenses for seminarians. It is up to us to step forward and help our current seminarians become priests. Each new seminarian, in a policy initiated by Bishop Conley two years ago, has to pay \$5,000 of his first year's education expenses. After that, for the remaining 6-7 years of his formation, his education is paid for by the people of the Diocese. I hope a large number of you are able to contribute something toward this appeal.

Bell of St. Mary's From the previous St. Mary's Church, we have installed the "call-to-worship" bell. See it along the back wall near the back sacristy. When I was a young altar server at St. Joseph, Beatrice, it was always a great joy when Father Danko let me ring the bell at the beginning of Holy Mass. Our St. Mary's bell has great volume, so I have been ringing it softly so as not to frighten anyone! I enjoy having this piece of our heritage and its use again in our newly-remodeled church. Does anyone of St. Joseph's know if we have used such a bell there for the beginning of Holy Mass? Please let me know if you know of such a bell. It may be a good addition to have a call to worship bell at St. Joseph's.

Spirit Catholic Radio Last week, I ended up not giving the Morning Prayer meditations. The Fall Care-A-Thon disrupted the normal schedule. However, I will be on the air this week for morning prayer, three times each weekday at: 7:05a.m., 8:05a.m., and 10:15a.m. Please listen in!

Driving on Roadways I remember being so proud in childhood when my Dad let me drive our 1962 Chevy grain truck to the Beatrice elevator during harvest. I was especially aware of his admonition that it would take me a longer distance to stop than when driving a car. Certainly I felt the great load of several hundred bushels of milo or soybeans when I clutched and braked at stop signs. I want to encourage all to be so very careful when driving during the grain harvests. I think most every farmer and farmhand knows the big equipment they are entrusted with and how to be extra-cautious. For all of us not in a tractor or semi or truck or combine, we must watch out for the slower equipment and treat those vehicles and drivers with respect on the road. Patience is a special virtue during harvest traffic. We need not be in such a hurry, perhaps, or we ought to allow more time to arrive at our destinations so that the slow moving vehicles do not cause us to make imprudent driving decisions. If you see me on the road with my Chrysler 200 car, I will try to lead by example!

Living Liturgically Two great feast days are this week. The Holy Guardian Angels are celebrated on Monday. Be sure to brush up on the traditional Guardian Angel prayer and perhaps add it to the daily regimen of prayers you say. Place Guardian Angel pictures in your home and G.A. medallions in your vehicles. On Wednesday, the great St. Francis of Assisi is celebrated. Remember his giving up of everything for Jesus, and that much credit goes to him for bringing the idea of the Nativity scene to churches as well as the Stations of the Cross. Of course, he had a special relationship with animals, too, so you could find a blessing for your pets or livestock to pray over them on Wednesday.

RCIA (Catholic Study Class) I am assembling a wonderful team of coordinators who you will love learning from and with. And I will be heavily involved as well. Please come on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at St. Mary's hall for the kick-off of this year's classes. All are welcome!

Jesus in Adoration St. Mary's Church is open during the day for you to pray. And Jesus loves it when we come to visit him. He will grant you peace!

God Bless You!
Father Grell