

## From the Pastor

**Real Life...and Death** My sister's husband, Bob Huggenberger, died this past week on Wednesday. He was 51. Things came at us in quick succession because of the sudden manifestation of an unknown illness and his rapid decline from health to health emergency. I am writing the following to you, dear reader, while all of this is still quite raw in my heart. But it is therapeutic to my mind and heart to provide the following account of the real life and death circumstances in my family this past week.

**Friday Night** Bob, my brother-in-law, has worked for a number of years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a technology troubleshooter on campus. He has always enjoyed all things electronic and computerized, and has helped me personally to get up to speed with modern technology. Bob told my sister, Mary, that he had been dizzy at work and while traveling home across Lincoln. Mary and Bob started watching a movie; Will, their 14-year old son, was at a friend's house. Bob's symptoms persisted during the movie, and Mary suggested that they needed to go the Emergency Room at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Lincoln. St. E's, as many refer to it, is the only Catholic hospital in Lincoln and it is the one closest to Mary and Bob's home. Mary was able to get Bob to the ER, and she stayed with him there until the wee hours of Saturday morning while doctors and nurses tended to his symptoms.

**Meanwhile...** On Saturday morning, our St. Mary's Church held the funeral for Mr. Maurice Weller. I received my sister's text on Saturday morning that Bob was in the hospital. As these things sometimes go, I didn't at first realize the seriousness of what was happening to Bob and my sister. At some point after the funeral, after communicating by text with Mary, I decided to drive in to Lincoln to see Bob. He was in the critical care unit at St. E's. He was obviously sick, but he was conscious. He squeezed my finger, nodded his head to questions, and was able to bear weight when a physical therapist lifted him to the edge of his bed. He even was able to shake his head "no" when asked if he thought Nebraska would beat Ohio State that night! I stayed at the hospital only a short time and came back to Aurora for the 5:00 p.m. Mass.

**Saturday Night** At some point on Saturday night or Sunday morning, Bob took a bad turn. I hesitate to say exactly what happened in a medical way, but he became

unconscious and unresponsive. Our best diagnostic connection was with the neurologist who said that Bob had suffered stroke (or strokes) and that his chances of surviving this medical emergency were very slim from the beginning of the episode. I found out about Bob's turn between the 8:30 and 10:30 Masses on Sunday morning. I couldn't believe, really, what my sister was telling me, and neither could she. Since I was so flabbergasted, and didn't know what was really happening, I chose not to ask for people's prayers during the Masses at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. I hurriedly drove back to Lincoln after the morning Masses were over. Interstate 80 has seen much of me and my car these past days.

**Bob's Family** I need to mention that Bob is one of 12 kids, six girls and six boys. Bob was born 8<sup>th</sup> in the line-up. The Huggenberger family hails from Emerson, Nebraska, up in the great northeast part of our state. Sioux City, Iowa, is their closest bigger town. Bob's dad and most of his siblings came to see him over the days that he was hospitalized. Bob's mother died in 2006. With the size of Bob's family, I wouldn't be at all surprised if one or another of our parish members knows somebody who knows the Huggenbergers.

**Parish Family** Mary and Bob belong to St. Teresa's Parish in Lincoln. My nephew, Will, just graduated St. Teresa's School in May and is now a freshman at Pius. The friends of the Huggenbergers from St. Teresa really were gracious in their prayers and visits to the hospital. They also did lawn work and housekeeping at Mary and Bob's home, and brought food over.

**Bob's Friends** I was deeply touched by the outpouring from my brother-in-law's friends over these terrible days of anguish. They came to the hospital and shared stories and memories. They highlighted his love of sci-fi movies and, really, most any kind of movies/TV. They spoke of his willingness to help on fix-it projects and clean-up projects, or being generous in helping with transportation and any other needs of people.

**Mary and Will** Through it all, I was drawn to my sister to help her handle all of the decision-making. Then there was Will, too, who in his teenage mind and heart showed a maturity beyond his years. Mary and Will both came to a certain peace with one momentous, yet agonizing, decision: to enlist the assistance of the medical team who coordinates organ recovery and transplants. This was

quite the experience, to see the unfolding of how Bob's rapid health crisis and death will be able to help others live with his donation of organs.

Holy Mass A priest-friend of mine suggested to me that we ought to have Holy Mass at Bob's bedside. And so we did. My parents were able to join us, as were a number of Bob's family. It was a very emotional Mass for me to offer. Since Bob needed a ventilator to breathe, and was unconscious, my priest-friend had suggested that a tiny bit of the Precious Blood of Christ could be placed in Bob's mouth. I cleared this with Bob's nurse. At Holy Communion time, I dipped a Q-tip into the chalice and swathed the Precious Blood into the corner of Bob's cheek. As much as he was able to assimilate the Blood of Christ, he received his last Holy Communion, which is Holy Viaticum.

The Church Provides In all, Bob received the sacrament of the sick (Holy Anointing) as well as the Apostolic Pardon. This pardon removes all punishment for sin which must be made up for prior to entering Heaven. As the Bible tells us, nothing unclean can enter the presence of God, so God purifies us before we can be in his presence for everlasting life. Bob was cleansed of all punishment for any sins...wow, what a gift! I was able to pray prayers for the dying and prayers after death. The Church provides great solace in these times; the prayers are so beautiful. Be sure to ask me or priests of your loved ones in other places to provide all of the prayers of the Church. It is our joy and privilege to serve all families in this way.

"Today is the Day" My sister was occupied almost constantly with visiting friends and family, and with working with the organ recovery team. Mary texted me on Wednesday, "Today is the day." We knew then that this was the day Bob would be first taken off of the ventilator, that he would breathe on his own as long as his body was able to, and that then he would die a peaceful death. Dear readers, it was a truly beautiful thing. I cried and cried, tears of sadness and joy all conglomerated with no distinction. We all walked out of the hospital and drove over to Mary's house, where we talked and had supper and talked some more.

Your Love and Prayers I appreciate your love and prayers, now and into the future. I will probably share more with you as time goes on. Keep our family in your prayers as we pray the Rosary service at 7:00 p.m. on

Sunday and the Funeral Mass at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, both at St. Teresa's Church, Lincoln.

My Pilgrimage on Podcast I was interviewed for a podcast about my recent pilgrimage to Oklahoma City for the Beatification of Father Stanley Rother. The link to the podcast is found at <http://goforthpodcast.com/>. My accounting of the pilgrimage is episode #81 of this podcast. I hope you are able to listen to it! There is also a video located there about Father Rother which is very well done.

Football and Volleyball Postseason From my priestly years, and my love for high school sports, I know that the Holy Day of Obligation of All Saints Day is often at the same as sub-state, sub-districts, and districts competitions for football and volleyball. If our area teams are playing, please remember our Mass times here at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. And if the competitions are in other area towns or cities, please check with parishes at your destinations so that you can make sure that Holy Mass is given over to Our Lord for the Holy Day. It could be that some or another of our sports teams might approach me as to offering a special Mass time for them as a group...I would consider this if I were able to.

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**