

From the Pastor

Graces Outpouring for Bob

Your Goodness I was so enwrapped in your prayers and goodness at the sudden illness and death of my brother-in-law, Bob Huggenberger. Your warmth and well-wishes and cards...they mean a great deal to me. I am blessed with all of you at St. Mary and St. Joseph for your goodness and kindness to me, and especially your prayers, which are uplifting our family more than we can measure. Thank you.

The Rosary The Rosary service last Sunday was prayed from the Vigil for the Deceased in the Order of Christian Funerals. This Vigil service is composed of Scripture, a homily, intercessions, and blessings. Following the Vigil prayers and service, we recited the Holy Rosary. I estimate that nearly 200 people attended the Rosary. Bishop James Conley was in the St. Teresa Parish that evening for the Sisters' Appreciation Banquet. Our family was honored that his Excellency stopped by to pray at Bob's casket and to wish my sister and me his sympathy. The Bishop had been on pilgrimage when Bob's illness struck, and he offered Holy Mass at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (where Christ rose from the dead) for Bob's intentions. After the Rosary, we had a light social of cookies and coffee in the church basement.

The Funeral Mass The Mass of Christian Burial was held on Monday, October 23. I was blessed to be given the opportunity to preach and preside at the Holy Mass. For this, I thank the pastor of St. Teresa, Father Jamie Hottovy. He was ordained three years after me, and so we have known each other well for many years. I was calm as I celebrated the Mass, but so torn at the same time. It was difficult to see the hurt and sadness in my sister and nephew's faces, and to see the sorrow of so many of Bob's relatives and friends. Yet, we all knew the importance of solemnly celebrating these funeral services. I preached in such a way as to place Bob into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. My main theme was the unity we strive to forge with Jesus in this life so as to live in union with him forever in heaven. A priest-preacher does not seek to eulogize the deceased nor to place them in heaven...that decision is in God's hands. But with the sacraments that Bob received (Anointing, Apostolic Pardon, and Viaticum, as I explained in last week's bulletin) and with his faithful attendance at Mass on every Sunday and Holy Day, it seemed from my theological training to be a case where we can speak of Bob's heavenly reward. But again, as I said above, this is—obviously—up to our dear Lord. *** The church pews for Bob's funeral were almost completely full, except for the "wings" to the sides of the nave (the main body). So in my estimate, there were 300+ people at the funeral Mass. *** The altar servers were classmates and/or friends of my Will's. *** One of the main examples of unity in my

homily was how Bob and Mary had adopted Will in 2003 as a newborn. I spoke of how their matrimonial covenant and unity was necessary in order to welcome this wonderful child into their family. Will's birth-grandma and birth-aunt were in attendance at the funeral, as they and his birth-dad have been a big part of his life.

The Burial My sister was able to purchase a plot in the Calvary Cemetery in Lincoln, located at 40th and O Streets. The cemetery is only 8 or 9 blocks from St. Teresa's. While we were waiting for the long procession of cars to arrive, I chanted psalms from the funeral book, psalms that I uttered quietly in order to prepare a prayerful atmosphere for Bob's burial. The burial itself was emotional; I think the final closure, however, is so important to everyone. I visited Bob's burial site several hours later, and it was really consoling to me to pray there and visit his grave.

The Luncheon After the burial, we all headed back to St. Teresa for the funeral luncheon. Mary oftentimes is involved with funeral luncheons because of her participation in the Altar Society. It was probably rather surreal for her to be the recipient of the efforts of the ladies (and men) who put together a great meal for all of us. A video of Bob's life had been put together and it ran as people went through the serving line. I found myself glancing at the video but not really wanting to watch it. It was something that I am not ready to see quite yet.

Priests and Relatives I am so grateful for the priests who con-celebrated Bob's funeral Mass, namely: Father Jamie Hottovy, Msgr. Joseph Nemecek, and Fathers Scott Courtney, Adam Sparling, Joseph Bernardo, Christopher Kubat, James Meysenburg, Lee Jirovsky, and Samuel Beardslee. In addition, the pastor of Bob's home parish of Sacred Heart in Emerson, NE, was a con-celebrant, Father Gerald Leise. One of my predecessors here, Father Craig Doty, attended the Rosary and we had a good conversation. Also at the Rosary were Fathers Gary Coulter, Justin Fulton, and Shrivankumar Raminedi. *** Many of our relatives were present at the funeral, such as first cousins of my mother and my dad's two living sisters. Several of my first cousins were also present, one who I had not seen for probably 10 years. We were grateful for the outpouring from our side of the family, not to mention the great number of Bob's relatives and friends from northeast Nebraska. Remember, Bob was one of 12 children born to Jim and Pat Huggenberger. Such a large family has a tremendous effect of love and connection to many, many people.

Mary and Will At the funeral, my sister sat in the front pew as is the custom. One of Bob's sisters sat with Mary. Will sat in the second pew with my brother, Mark. Mark was also a pall bearer, along with Bob's five brothers. Some of Will's classmates and their parents were also at the funeral Mass. My sister has

worked at several different jobs in her career of accounting spanning almost 30 years, and many current and former co-workers of hers came either to the Rosary or the funeral Mass.

Mom and Dad My parents received a ride to the funeral Mass on Monday morning from a friend of Bob and Mary's. They were glad to be present and pray with and for Mary and Will, and for Bob and his family. Mom and Dad navigated the emotional side of things well, still teaching me in their prayerful way as they have all of my life.

Huggenberger Family I can't conceive perfectly the closeness that a large family has, but I know the Huggenberger kids have such a closeness among each other. Their age range spans about 22 years from oldest to youngest. Their mother, Pat, died in 2006, and their dad is 82. We pray especially for them; they have surrounded my sister with love and support these past days.

Hold His Hand The image I want to conclude this note with is that the Savior's hand is there to be grasped onto. I as a priest have had many funerals over 21.5 years of my priesthood, including a number of relatives a generation or two above me in age. This one hits the closest to me. The counsel I may have given other people in the past now has to be realized by me myself. I am resolved to stay in love with Jesus, and to love him more. I want to grab his hand, because I know that he is reaching down to hold onto me. The prayers of the faithful people of God, such as you who read this, continue to be a beautiful and essential part of the healing which our family needs. I know you will be here for us. And I thank you.

Fall Festival I hope that our Fall Festival was enjoyed by many of you. We were blessed with a beautiful day for weather! I didn't really know what to expect, so I tried to roll with what has been customary. I saw parts of the meal being set up and served. I enjoyed seeing a bit of the kids' games as I departed to go to St. Joseph for 10:30 Mass. I know that the raffle and silent auction winners were glad to claim their special prizes. The decorations for the Festival were just beautiful! The yellows, browns, and oranges accented our hall and made it festive. I liked the candy corn theme found in much of the décor; candy corn was a favorite of mine in childhood, but I tend these days more toward chocolatey, peanut butter based treats. Well, I admit that I like cakes and pies too, probably way too much! *** Thank you to all who made our parish come to life to serve so many people and have such a fun time at our Fall Festival.

Football and Volleyball Postseason [I am repeating this note from last week's bulletin.] 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.

Living Liturgically I like Halloween. The dressing up as superheroes, princesses, minions, and the like is all very entertaining. To see parents dressing up the wee little ones is especially great! Remember that the name of Halloween can also be said to be All Hallow's Eve. Just as we say in the Lord's Prayer "hallowed be thy name," so we are to think of the hallowed (holy) souls who are saints. And that's why All Saints Day is on November 1st, the day after All Hallow's Eve. All Souls Day follows on November 2nd. We pray for all deceased loved ones on this day, and we remember that they may need our prayers to become totally purified to be in the presence of God in heaven. A Holy Halloween is wished to all! *** Besides the liturgical high point of the Holy Day of November 1st, please consider starting or continuing your First Saturday devotions, which I preached about a couple weeks ago. The Saturday morning Mass on November 4th and Confessions are a great way to grow closer to Mary and Jesus through this devotion from Our Lady of Fatima.

Jesus in Adoration When you stop by in church to make a visit, consider that you are looking upon the Holy Face of Jesus in the tabernacle. He really is present, in his Eucharistic Love, and we can be close to him and keep him company. In all of the errands that we run all over the place, I encourage making a little diversion over to our church in Aurora or Giltner to pay Jesus the King a visit.

God Bless You!

Father Grell