

From the Pastor—November 19, 2017

My Week My dear father, Kenneth, fell and broke his hip on his birthday. Here is how it happened.

Dad's Birthday and Fall I drove home to see Mom and Dad this past Monday, November 13. As I wrote in my last column, November 13th was Dad's 90th birthday. We had a nice visit, and Mom started baking a special supper for us. In the meantime, Dad and Mom have a couple of young kittens who they keep in an old chicken house. When Dad came back from choring these pet cats, he fell off our back door stoop and found himself lying at the bottom of the concrete steps. He called out for Mom and me, but we were inside and didn't become aware of the seriousness of his plight for probably 10 minutes or so. When we came to his aid, it quickly became apparent that we needed EMT's and an ambulance. Our farmyard was quickly descended upon by about eight of Gage County's finest men and women who serve just these kinds of situations. They loaded Dad onto a stretcher (remember that Monday was a cold day, around 40 degrees), and carried him down the hill to our driveway where they placed him in the warm ambulance. They began treating Dad on the way to the Beatrice hospital (the official name is "Beatrice Community Healthcare") while Mother and I drove into town in my car. X-rays and evaluations showed a broken hip. Many of you know that a constant question asked of patients in hospitals is their name and date of birth. Dad had to say many times that THAT VERY DAY, November 13, was his date of birth. I gave Dad the anointing of the sick in the emergency room. This is a great gift of the Church, but not the gift I was planning to give my Dad for his birthday. Dad's fall occurred about 5:30 p.m.; Mom and I did not go back to our farm until well after 11:00 p.m. I stayed overnight with Mom, which I had not planned on doing.

Come Into This Space I write these words to you, calmly at my keyboard. But when Dad's mishap was unfolding, I felt destitute at certain moments. My heart was so conflicted with many thoughts...how could this injury happen to my DAD? At a certain point, when we were in the hospital room, I had the thought come to me, "Jesus, come into this place. I need you. Dad needs you. Mom and my siblings need you." It wasn't quite this crystal-clear, like an actual voice or these exact words. But I know that I invited Jesus to come and be there. And a peace came to me which I am so grateful for. I wanted to share this with you.

Medical Staff Being in the hometown hospital has its benefits. This week, we have seen and made connections with various workers of the medical staff. That is comforting to Dad, and all of us, to know the people

who are caring for us. I have sensed that it may be confusing to some of the healthcare workers to see me in my priest clothing; they might not have experience that in my case, I am not visiting a family...I AM part of the family. The Beatrice hospital is new, on the north end of town. It was constructed around 2011. We are blessed to have such a great, new facility.

On the Road Again As I did last month with the illness of my brother-in-law, Bob, I have been on the highways of Nebraska this week. Driving to Beatrice is a little over 100 miles from Aurora. Please know of my prayers and concern for all of you as I travel to care for my family. I am doing the best I can to balance my parish family with my personal family.

Keeping Things Straight My dad has been experiencing a type of memory loss since 2011. He had his gall bladder taken out that year, and the narcotics and other medications affected him. But he is still very sharp in many ways. My mother is trying to keep all of the family farming business in order. My sister, brother, and I were all able to be together with Mom and Dad on Tuesday at the hospital for a good portion of time. Those of who have doctored for physical ailments, or who have helped family members, know the kinds of situations that we are dealing with. Please keep us in your prayers.

The Next Steps As of this bulletin writing, Dad is progressing really well from surgery on Tuesday. He is being given rehab, and we are planning to move him to the Good Samaritan facility in Beatrice. He is alert, he has a good appetite, and he still knows and loves us all! He gave me a blessing on my forehead as he has done for years. Your prayers are precious to us! If the Lord so wills, Dad may be able to rehab out of the Good Samaritan program and go back home. We will keep praying (I don't like to say "keep our fingers crossed", unless one is thinking of the Cross of Jesus) for God to direct us as to the best way to take care of our dad. One estimate which I think I have heard the medical staff say is that it could a 6-8 week journey of in-house rehab at the Good Sam.

Beauty of Daily Mass While I was at home with Mom and Dad this past Tuesday, I joined Father Barnhill at my home parish of St. Joseph, Beatrice, for daily Mass. My mom attended, and a handful of other people. It was a beautiful, meaningful Mass to me. I have said thousands of Masses over these 21 years of the priesthood; it is so good to know that the Mass is my refuge to return to. The Mass is the same because Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. I so encourage all of you reading this, please feel welcome to drop in at daily Mass whenever you are able to. It is a

safe refuge, a place for you to commune with our good God. He loves you and speaks to you anywhere, but especially at Mass.

Spirit Mornings I am blessed to be the Morning Prayer priest on Spirit Catholic Radio this week! Please listen in as you are able to. I believe my pre-recorded short talks will be on Monday through Friday, at 7:10 a.m., 8:10 a.m., and 10:15 a.m. The radio station's schedule could be altered somewhat because of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Judas' Communion I was listening to Spirit Catholic Radio this week when the topic of the first Mass at the Last Supper was addressed. A caller on one of the programs questioned about Judas Iscariot and his receiving of Holy Communion. I hadn't given much thought to this. The radio host responded by mentioning a couple of places where the Scripture says that Satan entered into Judas. This was brought about by Judas' willing it. And when he received the Body and Blood of Jesus, under form of bread and wine, he was NOT in holy communion with the Lord. The point was further elaborated on by saying that Judas had more sins after his sacrilegious communion at the Last Supper. He turned in Jesus to the chief priests and scribes. He kissed Jesus with a kiss of friendship. He despaired of his own existence and intentionally took his own life. The lesson for us, and there is more that could be said than I am able to in this note, is that Jesus always offers us himself. We are broken, bruised, sometimes trampled down by the world and by our own sinful tendencies. But at any moment, repentance is just a breath away, a breath which God's grace prompts us toward in making an Act of Contrition, in going to Confession, and in being sorry for our sins at every Mass. Invite Jesus in!

High School Servers? I want to take a moment for the people of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's to consider altar servers of high school age. To me, my pastoral experience is that the older young men of high school age provide such an example for the elementary and middle school age boys. In schools, it is common to encourage the younger students to look up to the high school students in many school-related activities. Personally, I have seen great fruit when high school aged men serve at Mass. They form an ownership for passing on this ancient custom of Mass serving; they take pride years later that they were an "altar boy." I also know that some young men become self-conscious in their teen years and that altar serving may not be comfortable in some cases. Besides being a great forming of maturity and leadership, altar serving can lead to considering a seminary education and formation. Future priests often enjoyed serving at the altar...I am one example! If we want to be blessed with priests in

the future to care for us, to bring us Jesus, then I think the parish encouraging its young men in high school to be servers is a winning idea. Please pray on this and see what God says to you and to our parish families of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's.

Formed App Our parish is blessed through February 1 to have a free subscription to formed.org, via the Joy of the Gospel campaign. At that time, I am planning to purchase a new subscription, at our own parish cost for several hundred dollars. Please know that formed.org is now available on an app in your Apple app store. It is not on Android yet, but will be soon. When getting the app, you may need to remember our parish code, which is: V7W3TZ. So many great Catholic resources are available at formed.org. Please take advantage! I listened last week to a great talk by Crystalina Evert about the brokenness and healing that God wants to do in young women. Many topics for men and women are available to enrich you and help you on our journey through this life toward heaven.

Living Liturgically Some great liturgical days come on the calendar this week to help you live with the heart and mind of the Church. *** November 21 is the Presentation of Mary. The Church has celebrated this feast for many centuries to show our belief that Mary was specially dedicated to God from a young age. This feast follows upon her being conceived without sin, through a singular grace from God almighty. On this day, you can pray especially to make of your life a gift to God as Mary did. You can pray her "fiat" of "Let it be done to me according to your word" as she responded to the angel. Ask Mary to be your mother, and she will come to your aid more and more and in ways you will be amazed at!

God Bless You!
Father Grell