

From the Pastor—November 26, 2017

My Birthday! I told my mother last week that having my birthday fall on a Saturday is probably the least likely day for me to celebrate it well. This is because Saturdays are my preparation day for the Sunday Mass. My spiritual fatherhood gives me a deep desire to make every Sunday Mass—from the homily, to the Eucharist celebrated and received, to the hospitality shown—a truly amazing encounter with the Living Lord Jesus for each person attending. So I willingly and joyfully give over to Saturdays my preparation for my vocation of service. That being said, I tried to make my Saturday birthday on November 18 truly special. I ate some good foods, and I spent some time watching the Huskers and playing my favorite computer game, Words With Friends. Of course, the great privilege of celebrating Holy Mass on my birthday is always a supernatural, otherworldly experience for me. *** The party thrown by St. Mary's on Sunday night last week was very good. I enjoyed myself, and you all were so kind to me. I am getting to know more and more names to connect with faces. I also enjoy getting to know you better than the brief greetings at weekend Mass. The birthday cake was fabulous, as was the meat provided. The side dishes that were brought in provided a great and tasty selection for me and everyone. The Circle ladies had reached out to my family to invite them to attend, but my Dad's fall nixed any chance of them coming to join the festivity. Thank you for all of the cards and well-wishes, either from the gathering on Sunday, or via the mail, or hand-delivered. I have gained a number of you on my personal facebook page as friends, and so many "likes" and/or messages that were posted kept me full of joy with seeing people remember me in thought and prayer. *** I am 49 now, and it feels great! Technically, I am in my 50th year, which has a biblical significance. In the 50th year, a jubilee was celebrated by the Hebrew people. Debts were forgiven and the land was given a chance to replenish itself. I am hoping my 50th year will see me being more grateful to dear Jesus for His payment of my debt for my sinfulness. I am hoping that this, my 50th year, can see me become more of the child of God that I am called to be. I look forward to growing with you in my 50th year as I grow into my pastorate of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's.

My Week I went home to Beatrice to see my Mom and Dad on Monday. We had a meeting with Dad's social worker at the Good Samaritan Society. The facility provides in-house medical care, so we were able to meet Dad's doctor and nurse. This set-up (i.e. an on-site medical staff) is apparently a rather new innovation in medical care. We have temporarily switched Dad's primary care physician for the doctor who is assigned to staff the Good Samaritan home. The doctor was pleased with Dad's progress up to this point. He quoted the Bible to Dad in

an uplifting way, which I appreciated. Good Samaritan has a chapel, and it has Christian affiliation from its origins. My father is confused due to a surgery he had six years ago, and the recent hip fracture repair surgery has brought on this confusion more markedly. We patiently tell him where he is at and that Mom is on the farm keeping watch over things. Dad has always been a very affable fellow, so he has already made a new friend at the table where he eats in the facility! The man is from Wymore and is a year older (91) than my father. Dad also enjoys teasing with the nursing staff, and with us family, when he is feeling up to it. The pain in his hip area where the surgery was performed seems to be subsiding. He is still totally reliant upon a wheelchair and walker. In addition, they provide him a contraption that I have never seen anywhere that he steps onto and upon which he is then rolled into the bathroom. I appreciate the prayers and concern that you all have shown. Probably the hardest part of all of this is entrusting my Dad over to the medical staff at the hospital and now at the nursing home. My heart is stretched from here to Beatrice, wanting to care for all of your spiritual needs in our parishes and wanting to be as present by phone or by traveling to Gage County to help out my parents. I must trust in God through all of this. The Lord God is so good, and I know that He is watching over and protecting me and my family and you as my spiritual family.

Meals A couple of weeks ago, I was entered into the system at the Aurora Senior Center for their daily noon meal. This dinner at noontime has been a radical blessing to me thus far. They are willing to deliver the meal to my doorstep, for which I am very grateful. The meal is nutritious and is often of large enough portions to provide for supper in the evening. The meals fit the need that I have of wanting something that is prepared and ready-to-eat such that I can have a good meal and then get back to the day's duties. It fits my need of not enjoying cooking! It is also consistently cooked by the same personnel at the Center, which is good for my health. It is also not a 9'x13' of baked food which would take me a long time to eat and might have half or more go to waste because I have a tendency to forget such things in the back or bottom of my refrigerator or freezer. The cost to the parishes to provide this service from the Senior Center is \$7 per day, for which I thank you all. The meals I am receiving have brought me much happiness, both in their deliciousness and in the mental relief they provide to me. This seems like the solution to what I need.

Pope Francis Please pray for the Holy Father this week as he travels to Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh. These are countries unknown to most of us, and yet the Pope is their Holy Father, too. I believe Pope Saint John Paul visited both of these nations.

Special Week of Prayer This week, November 26 through December 2, has been named a special week of prayer for Christians in the Middle East. This is from our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and they are joined in co-sponsoring the observance by several other groups, such as the Knights of Columbus. The Knights have a great web site to learn how you can donate to help Christians in need: <https://www.christiansatrisk.org/chrs/en/index.html>. Please take some time to read the attached bulletin insert and to consider how you might pray and support those brothers and sisters of ours who we love in Christ, even though we will never meet most of them on this side of eternity.

Living Liturgically Thanksgiving always falls on the fourth Thursday of November. Usually, the fourth Thursday is also the last Thursday and we go right into Advent during Thanksgiving weekend. However, this year's Thanksgiving gives a little more opportunity to consider our Advent preparations. To live liturgically this week, consider how you want to prepare your heart for Baby Jesus to enter in. What can you do with your family, perhaps over supper during the days of Advent? Can you dedicate a day that your family will gather to decorate your home for Christmas? Are there apps or web sites that might help you decide on your way of celebrating Advent? I especially exhort parents to direct their children toward a blessed celebration of Advent. Even if you think your kids don't hear you or see your example, they do. The dear Lord gives you the beautiful opportunity to form the hearts of your children! And even if you have feel deficient in the past in having served your family to the standard that is most pleasing to God, know that He is always giving new chance after new chance to you as parents to start all over again. Make this an impactful Advent!

High School Servers? [I am re-running this note from last week, in case you didn't see the bulletin.] 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 [I am re-running this note from last week, in case you didn't see the bulletin.] 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.

God Bless You!

Father Grell