

From the Pastor—December 3, 2017

My Family Thanksgiving After the Thanksgiving Masses here in the parish, I drove home to be with my family for the day. The Good Samaritan Society in Beatrice provided our meal as they care for my dad in his re-hab time there. It was a great meal! We even had a dining room to ourselves, and they practically waited on table for us! Dad has maintained a good appetite throughout his hip injury and recovery, which is very good. My brother, Mark, was there with my parents and me. Mary and Will went to the traditional Thanksgiving Huggenberger family gathering in Emerson. This was the first year for Mary to be without her husband, Bob. I remember when they were newlyweds in 1989 that it was really difficult for me to deal with my sister not being with our family for Thanksgiving. I haven't talked to my sister much this past week, but I think they had a time of healing while in northeast Nebraska. One of the people who benefited from Bob's organ donation is known to the Huggenberger family, and Mary was able to meet her. (This young woman received one of Bob's kidneys.) *** Despite the unexpected trials of the past couple of months, our family still gives thanks and still loves God. I know that I have a great deal to be thankful for in all of you, my new friends and family, who have entered my life and been such a support for me. We have to have a certain detachment from the unplanned parts of our lives so as to be able to attach to our good God and his promise of eternal life to us. I hope you see what I mean. I am grateful in so many ways for being a priest, for being assigned at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, for just being ALIVE. I pray your Thanksgiving was fruitful for you!

Wednesday Night Lights! If you ever want to feel a boost of energy and enthusiasm, please attend one of our Wednesday evening CCD Masses. Some 94 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade from our parishes of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's gather on these occasions to pray and learn and love Jesus. And this past Wednesday, a number of our high school students and Godparents from our Godteens joined us as well. It was a beautiful congregation to behold! My title of this paragraph, Wednesday Night Lights!, shows how much goodness these young people have in their hearts as they gather. Our church and hall and parking lot are not only lit by electric lights and by the many headlights from vehicles, but moreover, the light of Christ emanating from the hearts of our youth is enough to be like a constellation shining in the dark skies. You really must join us some time! I have been placing in the bulletin when the CCD Masses are scheduled. Please know of my great appreciation for all of the volunteer teachers and staff, and all of the parents and car pools which make our Wednesday Night Lights! a grand occasion here at 9th and P Streets in Aurora.

Fructose Intolerance I may have written a bit about this in a previous bulletin. I have recently been doctoring for something called "fructose intolerance." Have you heard of this? This is the operative diagnosis which the medical professionals are working through with me. I am discovering that a lot of food has fructose added to it as a sugar. Also, many naturally-growing fruits and vegetables have fructose within them. Eating too much of fructose-laden food causes me to have various stomach and digestive symptoms. I am scheduled to see a dietitian later this month to help me address my meal planning strategy. *** Another way this condition is referred to is "fructose malabsorption." It seems like the primary provoker of my symptoms is that my digestive system cannot absorb great amounts of fructose at one time. I have been reviewing a list of approved and unapproved foods which commonly contain fructose. Not every food necessarily will affect me, so it is a trial-and-error process to figure out my best-eating plan. *** As I write this, I am well aware that many Christmas celebrations involve GREAT food cooked and baked by many of you. I need to ask you to be aware of my current dietary status by what you may offer to me in dining situations. However, this can also be taken as an opportunity that any of you who have some great low-fructose recipes for foods could really help me out! *** As I understand and have learned, I am NOT suffering a food allergy. I don't break out with hives or have such symptomology such as those sufferers of food allergies. I am optimistic that I will find out more and more about how to eat well and maintain my health. Thank you for your concern!

Daily Mass for Advent Worshiping God is good for the soul. Please consider making daily Mass a part of your preparation for Christmas. The more we can worship God through his Word and the Word made Flesh, the more our hearts will absorb the fact that "for unto a child is born." If you cannot attend daily Mass, a great idea is to read the daily Mass readings for each day of Advent, as posted on our bulletin cover or contained on many apps or web sites. These readings are specially chosen by the Church to guide our prayer and preparation for the holy Christmastime which will soon be here. To reiterate to you our schedule, St. Mary's has daily Mass at 7:30 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and at 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays. St. Joseph's has daily Mass at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesdays. *** I especially think the Saturday daily Mass is a great opportunity for starting your weekend in a holy way. For those of you with young families, spouses could alternate attending the Saturday morning Mass, or instill a great lesson into their children's hearts by bringing them to Mass, too! The Saturday morning confession time (7:15 till 7:45 a.m.) is also a great way to let Jesus heal your heart, and it shows great example to your children if you bring them along. I would especially encourage for those of our parishes who are acolytes and readers to consider daily Mass during Advent to

prepare themselves to serve Jesus at the altar worthily and well for their weekend assignments. Again, the Saturday morning daily Mass is also a splendid way for acolytes and readers to beg from God a clean heart so that they can be brilliant lights to shine for us in their service in the sanctuary.

Ad orientem I began celebrating daily Mass “toward the east” this week at St. Mary’s. It is a way of celebration which embraces and includes ancient customs in the Church. Bishop Conley has encouraged this way of praying Mass for several years in the diocese. For me, celebrating Mass toward the east, which in Latin is rendered “ad orientem”, gives me a greater sense of spiritual fatherhood. It places in my mind that I am leading the flock toward the second coming of Christ. Facing the east, no matter which direction a church is built, is a symbolic posture. I can tell you that the Mass becomes much more impressive upon my soul as I stand at the altar. I face Jesus along with the people. I have had people tell me in the past that they miss seeing my face...but that is part of the point that Mass ad orientem emphasizes, that is, that the Mass is not about the facial expressions of the priest. As the Latin suggests, the orienting of ourselves together as a congregation, with the priest leading, readies our hearts to receive Christ with joy when he comes again. I am placing a couple of quotations below from Bishop Conley’s article, written for Advent of 2014. The entire article can accessed at: <http://www.lincolndiocese.org/op-ed/bishop-s-column/3004-looking-to-the-east>.

Bishop Conley: *“Since ancient times, Christians have faced the east during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to remember to keep watch for Christ. Together, the priest and the people faced the east, waiting and watching for Christ. Even in Churches that did not face the east, the priest and people stood together in the Mass, gazing at Christ on the crucifix, on the altar, and in the tabernacle, to recall the importance of watching for his return.*

“More recently, it has become common for the priest and the people to face one another during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest stands behind the altar as he consecrates the Eucharist, facing the people. The people see the face of the priest as he prays, and he sees their faces. These positions can have important symbolism too. They can remind us that we are a community—one body in Christ.

“But the symbolism of facing together, and awaiting Christ, is rich, time-honored and important. Especially during Advent, as we await the coming of the Lord, facing the east together—even symbolically facing Christ together at the altar and on the crucifix—is a powerful witness to Christ’s imminent return. Today, at a time when it is easy to forget that Christ is coming—and easy to be complacent in our spiritual lives and in the work of evangelization—we need reminders that Christ will come.”

RCIA Update We had a great class last week in RCIA! Remember, this is a Catholic Study Class that is a great opportunity for you to stop by and take part in at any time. We talked about the lay faithful this past week, which are those members of the Church who are not clergy or living consecrated life. Below is one of the slides of the power point from last week. Please join us this week, Tuesday at 7:00 p.m., when the topic will be the “Communion of Saints and Mary.”

God’s people participate in Christ’s kingly role first because they receive from Jesus the power to overcome sin in themselves and the world.

“One is rightly called a king who makes his own body an obedient subject, and by governing himself ...refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul” (St. Ambrose)

They practice self-denial, virtue, holiness, concrete charity, hospitality, etc.

They fill the institutions and activities of society with moral values.

They offer a remedy for unjust social conditions.

Leaf Whisperers! While I was resting a few days ago, a team of people showed up at the rectory and whisked away almost every leaf on the grounds. They came so fast and worked so efficiently that I thought I would refer to them as “leaf whisperers” for their special talent is making leaves disappear. Thank you!

St. Joseph Parking Lot Paving? The trustees at St. Joseph have received a bid from the asphalt paving company who has been in town doing much work for the Village of Giltner. Our parking lot could be re-paved at a cost of \$13,700 next spring. We will have to meet as a Parish Council and discuss the feasibility of this project. Any project which comes at a cost of greater than \$10,000 requires that a corporate resolution with the Diocese would have to be completed. Let’s pray about this. Admittedly, our parking lot has seen lots of wear and tear through the years and this upgrade would be a great way keep God’s house safe, beautiful, and welcoming.

God Bless You!

Father Grell