

## **From the Pastor**

**Eclipse Reaction** I drove to Beatrice the evening PRIOR to the eclipse. I was so enthralled by what the pastor of my home parish, Father Bob Barnhill, had scheduled for the event. He invited in Father Ron Homes to speak about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fatima apparitions. The culmination of those apparitions included the miracle of the sun, which fit in very thematically appropriate with the eclipse. A barbecue chicken dinner was held at the parish, and I took to-go dinners home to our family farm to have supper with my parents. Mom and Dad also enjoyed Father Homes' talk with me in church...it is pretty cool to attend events as an adult with your parents. As I drove from Beatrice back to Aurora, I intentionally went past the Homestead National Monument. Bunches of cars and people were there, as the Homestead was the prime area in Beatrice where people gathered on Monday. Even as I approached Beatrice earlier in the day, I saw all sorts of out of state license plate, including a car from Alaska!!! \*\*\* The day of the eclipse was surreal for me. I took short naps both before and after the eclipse. Seeing the eclipse sapped my energy. I think that sitting in the sun, then the darkness of totality, and all the anticipation added up for me. I think by biggest take-away was the piercing, absolutely PIERCING, light that shone down during the diamond ring phase of coming out of totality. It was enough to make me turn away my face and exclaim, "Oh my!" I also enjoyed very much the darkness itself, how it spiritually added up in my heart to be God showing His majesty and splendor by taking the sun away and then giving it back. I could hear people cheering around the courthouse as I watched the eclipse in the church parking lot. I was also on the phone with my parents, to see what they were seeing and to make sure they were ok. Their totality hit about 7 minutes after we received it in Aurora. Mom and Dad went to the south screen door of our house and were able to see the world turn dark. \*\*\* I loved the road sign of a local business this past week, which says, "Did you see it?" I think this aptly describes what a lot of us want to ask each other and talk about for weeks and months to come. We all want to know what our friends and family saw, what their reaction was to it. A pretty cool experience was the eclipse; let us be thankful to God for giving it to us. I could write more...and maybe I will next week.

**Opening School Year Mass** Last Wednesday saw the opening of our school year of learning, living, and loving the Lord Jesus through our CCD program. We had Holy Mass, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, as is customary for beginnings of school years in the Church. Many parents came and joined their children. I was so pleased with the entire evening. The teachers and teacher aides who have volunteered for this school year are to be commended and are very much appreciated by their pastor and the entire parish. After Holy Mass, I dismissed the students, class-by-class. It was great to see the confidence level of each class grow, as I began with Kindergarteners and worked my way up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I told everyone what CCD stands for: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. I said that some places describe their religious education as PSR: Parish School of Religion. I have to admit that PSR is a more contemporary and perhaps more accurate way to describe what I hope to have CCD accomplish during the school year. I desire that we have a school of religion, to know God better through studying the doctrine and the Bible so as to love Him and serve Him better.

**St. Mary Roof** As I mentioned in last week's bulletin, wet ceiling tiles were found in the office area of the hall and in the south central area of the dining room after the 5-inch rain a week ago. A parish council member called Ziemba Roofing, whose representative came on Thursday. He explained to me, and I know this to be true, that repairing leaks on rubber membrane rooves with rock ballast is challenging. Mike, the Ziemba repairman, applied some patches to areas around the south HVAC roof unit that he thought were the source of our leaking. So, we will wait and see if the leaking continues or if this fix is sufficient for now.

**Spirit Catholic Radio** I am blessed this week to share with you meditations on Morning Prayer. Tune in Monday through Friday at 7:05a.m., 8:05a.m., and 10:15a.m. to listen. Please pray that my monthly outreach via this great resource of Catholic radio will lead many to encounter Jesus. Tune in at 91.5 FM or 102.7 FM, or at **[www.spiritcatholicradio.com](http://www.spiritcatholicradio.com)**, or search for the app which Spirit offers for free.

**St. Joseph CCD** As spiritual father to our parish family at St. Joseph's, I am confident that you, as dear sheep of the flock, will follow where the shepherd (me) leads you. It is

in this spirit of loving fatherhood that I am joyful to tell you that I am prayerfully certain that our best choice is that the students from St. Joseph will join with the students from St. Mary for CCD this school year of 2017-18. \*\*\* I spoke to Father Andrew Heaslip this week, and his associate, Sister Mary Angela Karmann, CK. They are Bishop Conley's appointed delegates to serve the Office of Religious Education in our Diocese of Lincoln. When I drove to Lincoln to meet them, I was very aware of what is happening "on the ground" here in our parish. I ask that you trust my pastoral assessment of how best our children can learn and love Jesus this school year. Considering many facets of our 2017-18 school year, the decision to bring the St. Joseph students to St. Mary for CCD on Wednesday nights brings great peace to me, a peace which I had not felt up until this week. \*\*\* The Diocese of Lincoln has a wonderful curriculum for each grade level, and St. Mary CCD program is blessed to have children in each grade, Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup>, and teachers who are lovingly committed to serve the diocesan curriculum for each grade level. Having the St. Joseph children join the St. Mary children will be a winning combination in many ways. The St. Mary CCD teachers and staff are happy to include the St. Joseph children. \*\*\* This effort to bring the St. Joseph children to St. Mary on Wednesday evenings will require a sacrifice of time and transportation, from the parish of St. Joseph. Even if you do not have children of CCD age in St. Joseph, please consider being part of a rotating car pool to and from Aurora for the scheduled CCD times on Wednesday evening of 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. A sign-up sheet to volunteer for this important service is in the back of St. Joseph Church on the bulletin board, as well as details of the Diocese of Lincoln safety requirements for those who drive for church-related activities. \*\*\* As spiritual father, I have always sensed a special calling to reach out to children. When I was a seminary student, many, many children in families were praying for my discernment and perseverance to become a priest. My priestly heart seeks to return the gift of those prayers and sacrifices to teach and lead our children to learn and love Jesus, as their Friend, in a way that I strive myself to know Him in His loving friendship with me. Without seeming to exaggerate, I have seen many fruits of the rapport I build with young people and that fruit has extended to their families. This relationship is what I

desire for all the youth of our two parishes, and this can best be accomplished for 2017-18 by joining the students together on Wednesday evenings in Aurora. \*\*\* To those of you who are parents of our Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at St. Joseph, I see your love for the Lord. I see you sacrificing your time and effort to raise these children to be friends of Jesus, to bring the children to Holy Mass, to be parents in union with the Holy Family of Nazareth of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I can envision the great coming together of St. Joseph elementary and junior high students at St. Mary Church on Wednesday evenings. And I can envision the unity of the high schoolers from both parishes joining together in the family structure of the Godteen/Godparents for each individual class of grades 9-12. \*\*\* I trust that you will follow me in my leadership as your shepherd. \*\*\* Questions or concerns may arise, and you should know that part of my fatherhood involves addressing what you may want to ask. But the basis of any questions or concerns should be founded upon a sense of "Father knows best." If I were asking something outlandish of St. Joseph, I trust that Jesus would be showing me my foolishness. But He is not doing this. Just the opposite, as I mentioned, the Lord is giving me peace, true peace. \*\*\* I thank you and pray for you in advance. I ask parents of students in grades K-8 at St. Joseph to find in the back of church a registration sheet for CCD. I ask parents of students in grades 9-12 to contact Molly Elge (402-631-8985) about which Godteen/Godparents are working with your age of children. I ask anyone who is able to give time and transportation toward this journey of faith by driving to and from the Wednesday evening times of learning and loving Jesus to see the bulletin board and sign up to help.

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**