

## From the Pastor

**Will's Schedule** My nephew, William, is entering Pius X High School in Lincoln for his freshman year. Will is the only child of my sister and brother-in-law. My sister, Mary, sent me Will's schedule of classes. At Pius, the big question is always, "Who do you have for Religion?" Our Lincoln Diocese is quite unique in that we are blessed to have all Catholic high school Religion classes taught by priests and sisters. Will's Religion teacher will be Father Samuel Beardslee. Father Beardslee is one of our newly ordained priests. I taught at Pius, too, when I was newly ordained. For three years, I walked the expansive campus of Pius and had 75-80 students spread out over three class periods each day. Only by God's grace did I persevere! My sister helped me grade papers, and other faculty members covered my classes when I took my day off. I am hoping I can stop by Pius when I am in Lincoln and visit Will during the school day.

**Nina Flood** For years, my father has talked about the teacher he had in his one-room school house. Her name was Nina Flood. Dad was a 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader when Miss Flood taught him. In those days, the teachers had often completed Normal Training and were quite young when they were hired by rural school districts. Dad's school was called Maple Grove, and he and my aunts walked the one mile to and from school each day. I think my dad had a bit of a boyhood crush on Miss Flood! He speaks of her coming to dinner at my grandparents' home, and of the Grell Family going to Pawnee City to visit her family. My dad has mused in the past several years as to whether Miss Flood was still alive, and has asked me to try to locate her on the Internet. Well, I found her this past week by searching. The search was fruitful because Nina Flood recently died and so her obituary "connected" more easily to my search. She died in May of this year; she was only five years older than my dad. Nina had married a doctor and they raised their family in Oregon. Even though both she and her husband were Nebraska natives, none of the surviving members of her family live here. My dad was happy to have me locate her, even though she is deceased. I may reach out to Nina's children to see if they would have any interest in knowing one of her former students still remembers her with great affection.

**Going to School** Every year since the 1974-75 school year, I have entered school as either a student, teacher, or administrator. My elementary years were at Blue Springs Elementary and St. Joseph School in Beatrice. I went to Southern Junior/Senior High School in Wymore, graduating in 1987. I entered the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that fall. I graduated from UN-L in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy. I then entered into five years of seminary study and was ordained in 1996. Then, I taught for three years at Pius and six years at Aquinas in David City. For the past 12 years, I was the chief administrator officer at the Catholic elementary schools in Lawrence and Plattsmouth. This year, 2017-18, is the first year I "have off" from school and so I don't quite know what to make of it! Priests in our diocese gain actual teaching or administrative

certificates from the Nebraska Department of Education. I presume the diocese will want me to keep my certificate current in case I ever am called back to school work. Meanwhile, please know that my school heart joins with all of you who are attending or working in our area schools. I know and have seen all the emotions at this time of year, as children enter Kindergarten or move to a new building for junior high or high school. I also know of the emptiness felt when children or grandchildren leave home for college. I keep all of you in prayer, no matter your level of connection to school life and culture.

**More Hawaii** One point I failed to mention in last week's bulletin note on my Hawaiian vacation was the weather. It was consistently within about a 15-20 degree span of temperature while I was there. I don't think it fell much below 70 nor rose too much above the low 90's. Also, it rained...A LOT. But the rains were generally soft, with no thunder or wind. It would rain like from out of nowhere and then the sun would shine, producing...RAINBOWS! The rainbows were really, really cool. Another cool thing to share with you is seeing the Hawaii State Bird, called the Nene Goose, or just nene for short. These birds wandered around in certain areas, just like chickens. But the nene, it turns out, is an endangered species. We were up close to a couple of nene's and I clicked good pictures of them on my phone. Their "honking" noise resembles that of Canadian geese, but is softer. They were not afraid to come right up to a human, hoping for a bit of bread. They must not realize they are an endangered species and that some humans might act as a predator toward them! Finally, I also wanted to mention the Diamond Head Lighthouse that I saw. It turns 100 years old this year. Despite GPS and all the modern technology, this lighthouse is still functional by the US Coast Guard to help ships come safely into shore.

**Poverty versus Misery** I came across a great meditation that I want to see if I can explain succinctly. Our culture tends to equate poverty with misery. Yet, Jesus was said to have no place to lay his head; can we say he lived in misery? Did Joseph and Mary wail aloud each day of the misery they lived in? No, true poverty is not equal to misery. Poverty is how we all must strive to live because poverty is being attached only to God. Misery, on the other hand, is when we try to attach to other things than God. Power, pleasure, prestige...we may think we are happy when these things enter our life, but we actually live in misery when we are attached to anything other than God.

**Rectory Update** More of my personal art collection is hanging on the walls in the rectory! It is feeling more like home. I am so grateful to all who are helping me in any way, great or small.

**Godparents/Godteens** I am grateful for this program of instructing and forming our high school youth. It is something I have been looking forward to, as I have not

experienced this way of embracing our youth in my priesthood. Past parishes have grouped all the high school youth (grades 9-12) together, which has its advantages. But grouping the youth class-by-class gives them a greater comfort and greater rapport through their times together. The Godparent couple who sacrifices much to bring the youth together also gains much—much more than they could ever have hoped for. It is a leap of faith to say “yes” to this calling to be Godparents. It is understood that the students will not necessarily arrive at the home meetings to a serene household. In fact, the real life nature of the household leads the high schoolers to appreciate even more the normal-ness of the couple who is leading them. A toddler may come in upon the meeting and state factual information that might not be what the Godparents would hope for—but these words out of the mouths of babes only help to enrich the setting of learning about our real-life God in a real-life sort of way. \*\*\* Our high schoolers, who have studied their faith through younger grades, look forward to the high school years being a more relaxed setting for learning. Topics are tackled in a more inquisitive way, as is suited to the growing maturity of the kids. I enjoy high schoolers’ questions and grow in my knowledge along with them and the Godparent couple. \*\*\* I as a priest realize, truly, that some are not in life situations to be able to sponsor Godteens. I also like to adhere to St. Paul’s teaching in Second Corinthians that “God loves a cheerful giver” and that the decision to be a Godparent couple should not be made under compulsion from others. I am hoping someone is able to help out with our freshman class. If not, I am also certain that God has a great plan for how our parishes can adjust. \*\*\* As I familiarize myself with the lay of the land, I am hopeful that the two parishes and several high schools which our parishioners attend can come together in one Godparent/Godteen grouping. Being with fellow Catholics from our parish, and from other high schools, can be a wonderful way for youth to form great friendships.

**Assumption Holy Day** My dad used to say how the August 15 Holy Day of the Assumption would often produce a great rainfall for the crops. I remember this coming true so often. Mother Mary wishes to bless us in this annual August feast day of hers. She places herself right in the middle of August in the middle of our lives, like a good mother, and asks us to come to her Son and our King, Jesus. Especially by asking her Immaculate Heart to be our guide, we can learn the ways of Jesus that she herself taught Him as a child. Don’t forget to ask Mary to help you, to be a mother to you. Beg her help! She will not fail you! \*\*\* Please check on Mass times in other parishes if ours do not work for you.

**St. Joseph’s Welcome** Thank you to St. Joseph for the wonderful welcome last Sunday! The smell of the pot-luck dinner was making me hungry during the Mass! You are so good to have made the sacrifice to bring something good to eat and to sacrifice your time to join in the fellowship. I appreciate your kindness and goodness shown toward me.

**Eclipse** I preached a little last weekend about the upcoming eclipse. You may know that the path of the eclipse goes

through my home territory of Beatrice and Gage County. My parish of baptism is St. Joseph, Beatrice, and Father Barnhill and the community there is really planning a great day. I asked my parents if they are going to the parish to watch the eclipse or stay at home on our farm; they didn’t know yet. Part of me would like to go to Beatrice to view the eclipse with my parents and home town family, but part of me wants to experience what you all experience here. \*\*\* Spirit Catholic Radio will broadcast their morning show from Beatrice that morning, August 21st, from 6:40 till 9:00 a.m. \*\*\* I want to encourage you to approach the eclipse as a wonderment of God’s power and love and majesty. How could things line up in the heavenly skies, perfectly, for such an occurrence to be seen? And how fortunate are we that we live in the just-right-place to see it? \*\*\* When we see the sun, the moon, and the stars, we are gazing upon the same celestial bodies that the eyes of Jesus gazed upon. He saw the moon in the night sky; He knew a star had shown over His birthplace as angels sang. The Lord Jesus knew the hot midday sky and the cool of the evening as the sun set. Most likely, at least a partial solar or lunar eclipse occurred while the Lord Jesus walked the earth—and His human eyes saw it! He must have marveled at the goodness of His Father in heaven, and so ought we. \*\*\* I hope that those who see the eclipse can prayerfully see God’s hand in it, and be grateful to God’s hand gifting us and our area with such a great wonderment from heaven.

**God Bless You!**

~Father Grell