

From the Pastor—January 21, 2018

My Family I traveled home to Gage County on January 8th to see Mom and Dad. The Good Samaritan Society has ended Dad's formal therapy period for his fractured hip, which is good because it means it has healed well and that he has made a lot of progress. However, his walking is still supported by use of a walker. Time will tell if he is able to make further progress to walk independently as he did prior to his 90th birthday on November 13. Dad wants very much to return home to our family farm; who can blame him? But the care plan personnel who are assisting our family recommend 24/7 supervision for Dad...which seems to be a lot to ask of my mother, who turns 82 this week. Mary, Mark, and I are in the process of helping Mom and Dad determine our more permanent course of action. *** Mom drives her car well and is traveling into Beatrice almost every day to see Dad. Mom shares the newspapers and other mail with him. Dad's common question, even from my youth, is "Did we receive any first-class letters?" He was a rural mail carrier out of the Beatrice Post Office for over 30 years, so the mail is always of great interest. The day I visited Dad, one of the farmers who oversees our ag operation on a custom-paid basis stopped by. He told Dad about the chemical they had recently applied to our fields. Dad enjoyed the conversation so much, as did I! My 90-year old Dad still loves his farmland and all that goes along with it. Please know that the Grell's continue to appreciate your prayers in this paradigm-shift transitional time in our family.

Culligan Water In my past two pastoral assignments, I had Culligan water systems installed for my drinking water. I decided to do the same here at St. Mary's Rectory. For me, the consistency of water from parish-to-parish is important. It gives regularity to what is a fluid (notice the pun?) residential situation in my priestly ministry around the Diocese. I happily called "Hey, Culligan Man!" and he came to see me. The Aurora City Water Department had to help the Culligan technician on a cold day with the rectory's water shut-off, so I thank these public servants for their assistance.

Office—Rectory and Parish Diane, our parish secretary and bookkeeper, and I have been discussing and planning how our office space best serves our two parishes. When St. Mary's Church beautifully constructed its addition in 2012-2014, the main office for parish business was transferred from the rectory to the hall. It seems appropriate at this time, with a new pastor and new secretary/bookkeeper, to develop further the office space which we are blessed with. For my office work, such as typing this bulletin column, I am using the former secretary office in the rectory. To that end, I have recently ordered a new office chair and desk, as well as computer hardware and software, to update the space and accommodate it to my needs. At the same time, Diane in the parish office in the hall is making that space suit her needs as directed by the evolution of her position to serve what best suits my pastoral style. We have ordered a new printer, and Diane's husband helped add a new desk to increase work space. We also want to transfer some of the parish sacramental records from the rectory office to the office in the hall. This change makes sense to me, as the hall has

a sprinkler system and fire alarms which the rectory is lacking. In the event of a fire, which we hope NEVER happens, the records (even though housed within a locked, fire-proof file cabinet) would be safer in the hall. These records will also be closer at hand for when Diane needs information from them. *** I wanted to let you know, all St. Mary's and St. Joseph's parish members, how we are working to make your parish offices better serve you in our corner of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Presidential Chair, Role of Servers At St. Mary's, I am trying a new arrangement of our beautiful sanctuary. As pastor, I do not wish to confuse the customary and familiar order for the Holy Mass from what you have been accustomed. But I have prayerfully visualized the placements of chairs and roles of servers and acolytes in the different format you first saw last Sunday. One of my thoughts is to draw the servers to flank the priest chair (called the presidential chair) on my left and right-hand sides. This will give me better opportunity to direct them if they have questions. One of the great opportunities for altar servers at Mass is to prayerfully consider the great vocation of the priesthood—really, this is the most heroic way any young man could live his life—and by being in closer proximity to the priest, our young men can better discern if they are called to become priests. Also, the servers will be standing and kneeling in front of the altar after they have presented the water and wine and washed the priest's hands. This gives them a straight-on, VERY close, view of the holy consecration at the altar of the precious Body and Blood of Jesus. Finally, the servers will hold the Roman Missal at the introductory rites of the Mass and at the concluding rites. I have fond memories as a young server for Father Danko at St. Joseph's, Beatrice. Father had tri-focal glasses, so he was rightly particular about the angle and height the book was held! I enjoyed peering overtop the page and trying to read (albeit upside down) the prayers he was reading. Thank you for your patience with these adjustments which I have prayerfully made.

Miraculous Medals Last fall, Bishop Conley asked that all youth in our Diocese be given Miraculous Medals. A generous benefactor provided thousands of medals as well as a blue string with which to hang the medals around the neck. This past week, under "Wednesday Night Lights (a.k.a. CCD)", the medals were distributed to our young people. Along with the medal, the Bishop desired that the youth consecrate themselves and the parishes to Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom. A prayer for this purpose of consecration was provided by the School Sisters of Christ the King. I am so grateful to our CCD staff for helping me make this medal presentation a great experience. I have personally worn a Miraculous Medal for over 25 years. Medals such as these are not magical or worn in a superstitious way. Rather, through living a life of prayer and faithfulness to Jesus, medals of this type give us a shield of goodness and holiness. And they publicly trumpet our desire to follow and be conformed to Jesus. Think of it this way: if you are a Husker fan, you probably wear red clothing on football Saturdays. You might have a Husker jersey, or a sweatshirt for cold-weather ballgames. Even if you don't attend the game, your wearing of red on Saturdays shows who your team is. You live your

devotion to what is faithful and appealing to being a Nebraskan. In the same way, when we wear exterior signs of faith (medals, crucifixes, religious t-shirts, etc.), it shows our faithfulness to God and the Church. *** If you want to know more about the Miraculous Medal, here is a great article on-line: <https://churchpop.com/2016/03/03/5-reasons-wear-miraculous-medal/>. It is called "Five Reasons I Wear a Miraculous Medal...and Why You Should Try It Too!"

Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade The promotion of the Miraculous Medals (see above note) is leading us spiritually into the preparation in 2019 for a special event across the Diocese of Lincoln. Bishop Conley has discerned that we will hold a Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade. This event was publicized in a very informative article in the January 5th edition of the Southern Nebraska Register (see: <http://www.lincolndiocese.org/news/diocesan-news/10462-diocese-launching-rosary-crusade>). In a couple of months, part of our preparation here in St. Mary's and St. Joseph's will include an opportunity to pray the Rosary more frequently in your families. Also, men will meet in small groups called "Saints on Tap" while women will meet in small groups called "Vino et Veritas". Once per month for six months, these small groups will watch short videos from youtube and then discuss saints who were very devoted to praying the Rosary. One of the coordinators for the Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade, Wayne Ringer, is making phone calls on my behalf to organize the promotion of the Rosary and the small groups. Please be generous as your means allow if you are called upon to serve our parishes in this important work provided to us by our Bishop.

Pope Francis in Chile and Peru I have enjoyed watching Pope Francis in South America this week. I don't know much about the countries of Chile and Peru. This makes it amazing to see these nations celebrate Holy Mass and gather around the Holy Father in ways that are unique to their cultures, but also in ways that are universally familiar to our Catholic faith. Especially impressive was the Holy Father's address to youth in Santiago, Chile. It was a windy, summer day there in the southern hemisphere. The pope's white zucchetto (beanie-style hat) kept blowing off, so he finally took it off. He improvised, off-script, portions of his talk. Francis shows such comfort in relating with youth, despite his age of 81. He told them that adults so often give in to being pessimistic, and that they as youth act oppositely of that attitude, eagerly looking for new challenges to conquer. Pope Francis asked them to be like this in their faith as well, seeking Jesus in their local schools and communities.

Walk for Life, Lincoln Being my first year, I don't know if there is a custom of people from St. Mary's and St. Joseph's attending the Walk for Life in Lincoln. I want to encourage you to attend it this year. It will be held on Saturday, January 27th. The day begins at 10:00 a.m. on the north side of the State Capitol; or you can begin earlier, at 9:00 a.m., with Holy Mass at the Old Cathedral of St. Mary's Church at 14th and K Streets. I especially hope many of our high school, middle school, and upper elementary school youth can attend. It always is fruitful for kids to see other like-minded kids when it comes to

important issues like being pro-life. The State Capitol speeches will include our local, state, and federal law makers who are pro-life. A balloon release will be held to signify the babies who have died through abortion, pink balloons for little girls and blue balloons for little boys. We will then Walk For Life through the streets of Lincoln, with law enforcement shutting down traffic while we make our way to the UN-L campus and the Student Union. There, we will have a chance to hear a speaker named Ann McElhinney. Ann and her husband, Phelim, tell the story of Kermit Gosnell's abortion facility in Philadelphia through a book called "House of Horrors" and a movie "Gosnell". Kermit Gosnell is now serving a life sentence in prison for manslaughter of a woman who sought an abortion and for the infanticide of unborn babies. Even if Ms. McElhinney's talk may not appeal to you because of its content (who wants to think about the deaths of innocent, precious babies?), the Walk for Life itself is faith-filled, prayerful, and joyful. And I would suggest that we need to hear about how grotesque abortion can be in any situation, and especially in Gosnell's facility which received national media attention when it was closed down. *** If anyone wants to carpool from Aurora or Giltner, feel free to park in our church lots and go together. I will be celebrating the regular 8:00 a.m. Mass here at St. Mary's, and then heading into Lincoln.

Soup Dinners I really enjoyed the Soup Suppers put on by St. Joseph Altar Society at the Giltner vs. Osceola basketball games, and the soup provided by the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary's for the scholarship fund. Thank you to all who helped serve, and all who attended!

Fire Extinguishers I have been working with Centra Fire and Safety out of Kearney to update and tag our fire extinguishers at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. I had noticed that this update was necessary, and I am pleased with this company's service. It is an insurance liability matter that our parishes be well-protected by fire and safety companies.

Valentine's Day/Ash Wednesday Rather awkwardly, Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday coincide next month. I suppose this has happened before, but I can't remember when. Please plan ahead of time your St. Valentine's Day celebrations to accommodate our entry into the holy season of Lent. Remembering that adult Catholics ages 18-59 are bound by the law of fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday, you may want to avoid treating yourself or a fellow Catholic to a box of chocolates or a prime rib dinner on this day. Perhaps your Valentine's Day celebration, honoring Saint Valentine's love for Jesus, could be moved to the day or weekend prior to Ash Wednesday.

Foreigner/Easter Vigil Even though I grew up with the rock band "Foreigner," I was disappointed that their concert in Grand Island has been scheduled for March 31st, at almost the same time that the Easter Vigil will begin on that Saturday night. Hmm...one will have to prayerfully decide how to handle this. The Easter Vigil is so amazingly awesome to attend, so I think you can figure out my position☺.

God Bless You!
Father Grell