

## From the Pastor—January 28, 2018

**A Woman's Age** The adage of not asking a woman's age is busted by my telling you that my mother turned 82 this past Thursday☺. Our local radio station in Beatrice, 1450AM KWBE, has had for many years a "birthday line" where you can call in and speak live over the airwaves your birthday or anniversary greetings to anyone you wish to. So I called the station and told the whole world (in the Beatrice area) about my Mom's birthday! I didn't say her age, however, but now you know it. With my Dad's continued stay at the Good Samaritan, I also called him to make sure he remembered it was my Mom's birthday. He was glad for the reminder! Mother was born on the Hajek family farm, four miles northwest of Odell. That day in January of 1936 was cold and snowy, and Doc Rice went off the road as he drove to the house. All must have ended well that day, as here is my mother, 82 wonderful years later! Thank you for your prayers for my dear family!

**March for Life, D.C.** I was captivated by the March for Life a week ago Friday, January 19. Having attended this March during my seminary days in the 1990's, I feel such a connection to what everyone who ever attended it feels. Over the years, EWTN (Mother Angelica's network) has continually upgraded their live coverage of the March. And with the advent of social media since the 2000's, it makes it so possible to spread the goodness and the momentum which the March for Life brings about. I was amazed with the speakers who spoke from the National Mall, in the shadow of the Washington Monument. One young college student from Alabama likened the civil rights movement to outlaw abortion on demand to the civil rights movement in her home state, which was moved forward profoundly by Miss Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus. What we are saying in the pro-life movement is that we love the mother, we love the father, and we love the baby which our good God has conceived. People tend to gravitate toward the difficult questions, like what about cases of rape or incest? Or what about difficult pregnancies? In the cases of rape or incest, as horrific as the situations are, as repulsive as these situations are to me, it does not justify attacking the baby which the Lord has brought into being by the criminal act. In the case of difficult pregnancies, I have heard of many women and men who prayerfully give over the difficulties into the hands of our good God. If the life of the mother is truly in danger, then the exact moral/ethical situation needs to be viewed in specific cases for the Catholic, pro-life way to approach the situation. Bishop Conley made a great point in his Jan. 19 column in the Register that the City of Lincoln in 2017 reported zero homicides; which is great. But his Excellency reported that 382 abortions in 2016 (the latest reporting year) were performed in Lancaster County, i.e. Lincoln. We cannot trumpet the good news of zero homicides without reporting the sadness of so many little babies' lives being ended. \*\*\* One thing that I learned during the March for Life coverage was a texting way on your phone to support the pro-life movement with our lawmakers. To take part, you text "MARCH" to 73075. I did it and it is super-easy to do. It makes our voices heard with our elected officials. I

encourage you to take part in this easy texting way.

**Catholic Schools Week** Since my childhood, this last Sunday of January has always been special as the kick-off to Catholic Schools Week. It was (and is) a week where Catholic school students get a break from straight academics to celebrate our Catholic faith and schooling. While we do not have Catholic schools in our St. Mary and St. Joseph parishes, I would ask you to be always supportive of Catholic schools. I imagine a large number of our current parishioners either grew up in Catholic schools, or have grandchildren/nieces/nephews/cousins who now attend Catholic schools. So, we are connected in a vital way to this great tradition in our nation of Catholic schools. Here are a few points that I gleaned about Catholic schools from our U.S. bishops' web site: *"National Catholic Schools Week 2018 (CSW) will be observed in dioceses around the country January 28–February 3. This year's theme, 'Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.'* focuses on the important spiritual, academic and societal contributions provided by a Catholic education. Nearly 1.9 million students are currently educated in 6,429 Catholic schools in cities, suburbs, small towns and rural communities around the country. Students receive an education that prepares them for higher education, a competitive work environment, and most importantly, living a Christian life of virtue in a challenging society. The observance of CSW began in 1974. Schools and parishes around the country will hold activities such as Masses, open houses, and pot luck gatherings to celebrate the communities they represent. The week also highlights the educational and community successes of Catholic schools nationwide. Ninety nine percent of students graduate from high school and 86 percent of Catholic school graduates attend college. This percentage has been consistent over the past 20 years."

**Twitter** Partly, or mostly, because of last week's aforementioned March for Life, I am venturing into being more active on Twitter. It is such a blessing to have social media to put out good, life-affirming messages and photos. I am on facebook, and I navigate it pretty well...I welcome being your friend! On Twitter, it may take me more time to get accustomed to it. I think my "handle" is @loras\_grell. You can follow me there. I even have an Instagram account, which I am not very active on, but maybe I will grow that up as well. You younger folks reading this probably get a giggle of hearing your pastor partaking in these platforms of social media☺. I am trying to be, as St. Paul says, "all things to all men (and women)".

**Finance Council** Our St. Mary's Finance Council met this past week. I am trying to form the vision for how I want to use this canonically-required body of parishioners. I appreciate their service very much, and I need to review my guidelines from the Chancery (the Bishop's office) as to how to best utilize the talent we have in our parish representatives on the Finance Council. Please know that I am working toward this goal. One thing I am sensing is a perception of overlapping roles of the Finance Council and Parish Council. Organizationally, it is important for me as pastor to understand what the members of both councils have been accustomed to in the past versus how I see their roles as given by Bishop Conley since he arrived in 2012. It is a learning process for all of us; I am confident

we will get to where we need to be. Please ask questions of me or any members; I may or may not be able to answer them, but the question itself gives me greater knowledge of how these councils are perceived in our parish. \*\*\* I should mention, too, that our St. Joseph Parish has a Finance Council, distinct from the St. Mary's group. St. Joseph is its own "juridic person", in the lingo of church law, and so I need to get a grasp of how the members of our mission parish work in their roles of service. \*\*\* All will be well, in both parishes, for the greater glory of God!

**Priest Deanery Day** The priests of the York Deanery met this past Tuesday for one of our quarterly gatherings. We study a certain topic each time, pray together, and enjoy a meal and fraternity. Our topic this time was the Catholic Church's outreach to people who have suffered divorce. One of the things I learned from the video we watched is that people want the priest to listen to them. I think I try to do this. Our diocesan Family Life Office recommends the "Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide" from Ascension Press. This 12 week program features 30-minute DVD segments that cover topics of shock, denial, anger, grief, guilt, forgiveness, money, the courts, kids, the ex-spouse, annulment, dating, sexuality, spirituality, remarriage and much more. Whether your divorce happened recently or 30 years ago, this program offers valuable insight for everyone. The next 12 week program will begin February 5, 2018. To register, or for more information on how to bring the program to our parishes, contact the Family Life Office, call: 402-473-0620

**Stations of the Cross Re-oriented** Last weekend, I held up the 7<sup>th</sup> station to give a visual explanation of how I wish for our Stations of the Cross to be hung at St. Mary's. The artist who made these stations intended for the Stations to be prayed in the direction of Jesus carrying the cross, throughout the entirety of the 14 stations. In the way the Stations are currently hung, as we pray them in order numerically, Jesus is "running into Himself" from station-to-station. It is as if the Lord is in "reverse" gear as we "drive" through the Stations from beginning to end. Therefore, the first Station needs to be changed to the south wall, and the crucifixion and death and burial of the Lord need to be moved to the north wall, such that we will pray them counter-clockwise. This is difficult to explain in words, but I am sure of what I am saying because I encountered this situation in my last parish. Please note: I am not stating dissatisfaction with the presentation of the Stations nor their appearance on the walls...they obviously have been affixed to the walls very professionally and prayerfully. I am extending a request for someone who has the agility and skill to be raised above and through the pews and switch the Stations, hopefully before Lent begins. Please, and thank you!

**Presidential Chair, Role of Servers** [re-printed from last week] 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 trifocal 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.

**Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade** 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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. Please be generous as we serve the Lord in St. Mary's and St. Joseph's through this important work asked of us by our Bishop.

**Valentine's Day/Ash Wednesday** [re-printed from last week] 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** [re-printed from last week] Even though I grew up with the rock band "Foreigner," I was disappointed that their concert in Grand Island has been scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup>, 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**