

From the Pastor—September 9, 2018

Pastoral Planning Here is an update on pastoral planning, which I first reported in this bulletin space on August 19, 2018. You can find what I originally wrote archived on our parishes' web site: go to stmarysaurora.org; click on the drop-down tab "Get Informed"; click on "From the Pastor"; and then click on "2018-08-19 From the Pastor".

New Missals and Hymnbooks in One This combined hymnal and missalette from Oregon Catholic Press (OCP) called "Breaking Bread" has not arrived yet. This one book will cover everything in our current system of two books. Please know this was a decision that I felt was best. The transition will begin this Advent.

New Hours at St. Joseph's Our St. Joseph caretakers have agreed to leave the church open during daylight hours. I hope that people will take advantage of this during the day to stop in and pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On the way to the elevator or the bank, on the way to a noon meal or the Community center, before or after school...all of these situations and more are times that I want for you to have access to Sweet Jesus in the tabernacle. Pray for a good harvest, pray for loved ones, pray for your friendship with Jesus to grow.

Acolytes to the Homebound I have received positive feedback on sending our Acolytes to the homebound, but haven't had time yet to organize training and procedures. Parish Acolytes (from either of our parishes) would be given the set of prayers needed to be said when they visit homebound parishioners to give them Holy Communion. A volunteer in either St. Mary's or St. Joseph's could arrange on Thursdays to call the homebound to arrange for the visit of the Acolytes on Fridays. Those who wish to receive the Acolytes' visit would need to contact the parish, as I might not know everyone who is homebound. I need generous hearts and availability from St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Acolytes, to consider prayerfully if they could assist me in this ministry to the homebound. On average, there are at least four to five people in the homebound category, who (temporarily or semi-permanently) can't make it to church on Sundays. They may live on their farm, or be residents of the Villages of Hampton, Giltner, or Marquette, or live in our biggest population area, the City of Aurora. I have been visiting people at our two skilled-care nursing homes in Aurora, but I feel I need help for this homebound outreach to bring Jesus to all.

High School Altar Servers We have several young men in St. Mary's and St. Joseph's who are serving at the altar for Holy Mass. Some of them need larger-sized cassocks to serve. I haven't had a chance to work on the organizing and training that needs to be done for high school serving to become the norm, joined with middle schooler and elementary-aged young men. I will need the support of families with high school young men. To you young men: I hope you will see this as a great way to show the middle and elementary boys that serving Jesus at Mass is a cool and sublime privilege. With high school servers coming on board, I need to go over some of the unique ways that I ask of young men to serve at the altar.

Ladies First! Our parishes are moving toward a "ladies first" policy through the doughnut line on coffee and

rolls' Sundays, and for other parish occasions. My aim here is what you might call "chivalry". The young men have to realize the grace and beauty of giving the young ladies priority, such as they might learn by opening doors or carrying books for them. The young ladies, for their part, must be gracious and allow the young men act in this chivalrous way. Please, adults, help me to do this practice.

Time Frame of Fall Festival! I could see the Fall Festival running more as an early or late afternoon event. Having this event take place after the 8:30 a.m. Mass makes it virtually impossible for me to be present as the spiritual father of you, our people, and of our guests. The feedback for changing this year's Festival showed me that a change in timeframe is not advisable. So, the St. Mary's Fall Festival will remain in the same time frame as it has been held in recent years.

Parish Office New Equipment Movement of the St. Mary's and St. Joseph's parish office to be housed in the St. Mary's Hall is slowly taking place. I have new computer equipment in my rectory, as we were sorely in need of keeping up with the technology of our time. I also have posted for hiring a new secretary of all non-financial responsibilities so as to give Diane primary attention to our financial records.

Priest Abuse Scandal—Q & A Here are some questions and answers to allegations of sexual misconduct facing our diocesan priests and parishes. If you have young eyes in your family, please use discretion in what you want them to read...I am trying to word things as carefully as I can.

Where can I find out what exactly is going on? Our Diocesan newspaper, the Southern Nebraska Register, has been publishing everything which Bishop Conley is doing to bring healing. The diocesan web site, www.lincolndiocese.org, is very helpful. Another good option is the Catholic News Agency, which is under the guidance of Mother Angelica's EWTN Global Catholic Network. Secular news sources could certainly be read, but be aware of discrepancies. For example, I read a story this past week by a reporter from the Associated Press (AP). Most of what he reported was correct, but a few details having to do with timeframes and years of the alleged abuse were inaccurate. To this reporter's credit, he may not have researched these details with a "Catholic eye" so to speak, and so the small discrepancies of his reporting were more apparent to me than to most.

How many priests are involved? A total of six in our Diocese of Lincoln. One of them died in 2008, so the allegations against him are from over two decades ago. Another one retired from active ministry in 2017; he by the Bishop's directive is not to exercise his priesthood in public, such as celebrating Masses and confessions in ordinary parish life. The remaining four have been removed from parishes where they had been serving as pastor; each of these four, as well as the two previously mentioned in this note (for a total of six), are being investigated by the Diocese and by law enforcement. This is how I understand it.

What will happen to the four priests who have been removed from their parishes as pastor? I don't know. They are being investigated so that the truth will be known. If the investigation turns up criminal actions according to

state law, the process will move forward the same as any criminal prosecution. The Church universal is governed by Canon Law; if the priests in question have violated this Church law, their cases will move forward in the system of tribunals which the Church provides for these cases. A distinct possibility would be that no civil law has been broken, but Church law has been broken. It is all confusing. I tremble to write these words to you, as you may indeed tremble to read them.

What is the "bottom line"...where does this all end?

Bishop Conley has stated in several different ways that he wants the truth to be told. He wants the Light of Christ to shine upon all of these dark situations. He is determined to see these situations through to gain the truth. I agree and concur with the Bishop. He is our Shepherd, and a Shepherd does not run from the sheep at signs of danger. Bishop Conley and all of us, priests, religious, and lay faithful, need to pray for the grace to become saints, to say "yes" to this grace.

You don't seem to be mentioning those who have been abused by a priest...what about them?

I have put myself in the place of those who have been abused. I have thought of how I would feel if I, as a child or a young man, had been victimized by abhorrent sexual approaches from a priest. I shudder to think about this...I shudder and I tremble. Where would I be today, if this had happened to me? What if atrocious, criminal, sexual deviancy had happened to my brother or my sister? It is unspeakable what my heart feels for all the victims. This entire situation, especially the effect upon victims, has led me to pray more and better...it has also at times made me feel ill.

How are we to pray for the victims? Bishop Conley announced the following in his Register column on September 7th: "On Friday, September 14th at 7 p.m., the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, I would like to invite those who can to join me at the Cathedral of the Risen Christ for a Eucharistic Holy Hour of reparation, to pray for the victims of sexual abuse and for their healing." If Lincoln traveling and distance inhibits your being able to go to this Holy Hour, pray from home or stop by St. Mary's or St. Joseph's during this time period. When we recite the St. Michael Prayer at the end of Mass, especially offer this prayer to God for the evils done to young people, evils that have been done by trusted priests. Pray for our Church to be cleansed, for the evil to stop, now, and for healing.

Pause, pause, pause... Please transition with me to a more pleasant set of notes, as follows.

Silly Old Bear! At the strong recommendation of my closest priest-friend, I went to see Disney's Christopher Robin. Oh my, it was SO good! I loved most everything about it. It was great to view it at our very own hometown 12th Street Cinema. The adult story line and plot line was deeply moving. It seems Christopher Robin in his adult life had lost his way from the innocent joy of his boyhood in the 100-Acre Wood. Winnie-the-Pooh and friends enter Christopher's adult life to save him, to help him find himself and what really matters in life. The movie may end up in a homily or two! If you have never been introduced to Pooh Bear, Tigger, Piglet, Eeyore, and the whole gang, this movie may not strike you as it struck me.

Red Burns Brighter Oh my, who in the world has ever heard of a Husker game being canceled by

weather??!! And yet, it happened. What a crazy, emotional, topsy-turvy night it was last Saturday for those of us who enjoy Husker football. I was primed for it. I had season tickets when I was a student in the late 1980's. This September 1st game, which actually kicked off for a touchback but with no time elapsing from the clock, is one that none of us who care will ever forget. I stayed up and watched the progress of things, checking in on Twitter for updates, watching the television of the action going on in Waco with the substituted Baylor game. I finally decided that I needed to go to bed; I had preaching and teaching and Holy Mass to prepare for all of you, and that took precedence. I was concerned for my sister, who has season tickets and was at the game with a friend. She and Mary got soaked! They left the stadium around 9:30 p.m. *** One of the most interesting factoids that I read about after the game was that the amount of days from our last game of the 2017 season to the (weather-permitting) game versus Colorado on September 8th will be the longest layoff between games (288 days) for the Huskers since between the 1968 and 1969 seasons. That is interesting to me especially, because I was born at the end of the 1968 season! *** I think from a God point of view, this game showed all of us that the dear Lord is ultimately in charge. He calls us to have patience in His ways, even when His ways seem agonizingly against our wills and hopes. The lightning that struck near Memorial Stadium, and the unrelenting stormy nature of the weather system, was just out of our hands. And that is our lesson that for the 2018 season opener, a lesson our Lord Jesus must have wanted all of us to learn.

Priest-Family Day I had an enjoyable time last Sunday in Lincoln with the priests of our Diocese and our families. Lots of moms, dads, brothers, sisters, and nieces/nephews of priests were present. My sister was the lone attendee from my family, but we sure had a good time. Some name-dropping of the priests present at the dinner included our two Bishops, Conley and Bruskewitz, as well as Monsignors or Fathers: Reinert, JEickhoff, MSeiker, DSeiker, LSeiker, Current, Huber, Coulter, Eckrich, Hall, Daro, and Fleck (I am missing some, just because I can't remember). The latter two in my list are our newest priests, so they were recognized in a special way. Also, we prayed for several priest-parents who died in the past year since our last gathering. It was really enjoyable to be together, like a family reunion atmosphere.

Game at GISH My nephew is out for football this year at Pius X High School in Lincoln. He played in a reserve game on Tuesday of last week versus the Islander reserves, at Grand Island. Will has worked hard over the summer in the weight room, and I was able to see him on several kickoff returns and at least one play from scrimmage. I saw former parishioners from Martyrs parish in Lincoln. It was fun to watch the Thunderbolts play at GISH (I never had thought of Grand Island Senior High being pronounced and referred to as "GISH" before I came to Aurora...it is something of local flavor that I enjoy knowing about). Pius was handily beaten by the Islanders.

God Bless You!

Father Grell