

## **From the Pastor—September 16, 2018**

### **Red Burns Brighter**

**Volleyball versus Creighton** I think I have mentioned that I am a big Husker volleyball fan. I watched on NET-TV most of the Husker versus Creighton volleyball game on Thursday, a week ago. It was fun to see these student-athletes battle so valiantly at the newly-christened CHI Health Center (the former Qwest Center, the former CenturyLink Center) in front of the largest regular season women's volleyball game ever in the United States. Nebraska lost the first two games but then roared back to win the final three for a 3-2 win. On the Creighton roster is a player named Jaela Zimmerman, whose family attends North American Martyrs in Lincoln. I became good friends with them when I served at that parish during 1998-99.

**Football versus CU** It was a return of a Big 8 and Big 12 rival as the Buffaloes came to Memorial Stadium. The 2:30 kickoff was a hard balance for me to follow the game and prepare for Holy Mass. But I was able to catch much of the first quarter, and I saw the final minute play out live. The final score was disappointing for us who are Husker fans. But a comment from Coach Frost struck me where I think things matter most. He said (and I paraphrase), "For the first three quarters, that was the most fun I have had in coaching." This is what college athletics should be about—having fun, but not only having fun; rather, having that fun be the result of hard work and shared goals. If the student-athletes see Scott Frost and his staff having fun, even while pushing them to high standards of excellence, things will be well and success will follow. I am impressed with Scott Frost as a coach and as a man; I pray and hope that he can be a great role model for many men (young and old) in our State of Nebraska. \*\*\* I enjoyed a moment from the ABC broadcast of the game. The sideline reporter was doing a short interview with Coach Tom Osborne. It was a familiar scene, with Tom dressed in his red suit jacket. As the reporter asked him a question or two, Tom was cordial as always. But at one point, he paused, as he craned his head to see what the play from the line of scrimmage had yielded. It was so genuine to see, that, while he was giving his time in the interview, he truly wanted to see what was happening on the field. I loved it!

**Local Athletics** I was able to attend most of the Aurora vs. Wahoo football game on Friday a week ago. I hope this to be the first of many activities I attend involving our parish family and the schools in our area. Thank you for your gracious welcome of me from those who greeted me at the game; you make me feel much more important than I am. I am just me, but your kindness shows your faithful heart toward the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

**Family Reunion** My family on my mom's paternal side celebrated a family reunion last Sunday. It was for the Hajek family, at the Plamor Ballroom located just west of Lincoln on West O Street. The meal was pot-luck and began at 12 noon. After the 10:30 Mass at St. Joseph's, I ate a snack and headed east on I-80. When I arrived at Plamor a little before 1:00, I was able to see and talk to many of my relatives. \*\*\* My sister, Mary, came, but we were the only ones from my immediate branch of the Hajek family. Mom and Dad are not able to travel quite so far and invest energy in big social events. My mom's brother

and his wife, who live in Lawton, OK, are also unable to put together a big trip. And my mom's sister-in-law in the Denver area is not usually able to make the trips for family reunions. \*\*\* Our Hajek family came from the Bohemia area of current-day Czech Republic in 1866. My great-grandpa, Joseph, and his two siblings were small children at the time. They lived in a couple of places in Iowa before moving to Odell, NE, in 1878. The little sister (my "two greats" aunt) died at a young age. The two brothers each had a large family, one with eight children the other having nine. One of those American-born children became my Grandpa Frank Hajek. He died when I was 14, and, of course, I loved him lots. All of these first-generation American-born Hajeks are now deceased, the last having died in 2016. \*\*\* Our actual first reunion of this kind was held in 1978, in the parish hall of St. Mary Church in Odell. It was significant that year, being the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the family arriving in Gage County Nebraska. I remember attending that reunion as a nine-year old. We meet every other year, and I have probably attended ¾ of the reunions. \*\*\* From such a vast array of ancestors, I have had relatives in each parish I have served...including here, in St. Mary's!

**Husker Harvest Days** I spent several hours at Husker Harvest Days last week. It was great to be among fellow Nebraskans and people close to the land. I am interested in the innovational equipment and agronomic practices that are the great attraction for thousands of people to attend this event each year. But my real love is seeing in the steady throngs of people an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with them. To that end, I stood at the vendor's booth of Spirit Catholic Radio, which was housed in one of the cream-colored metal buildings (I forget what it was called). I was there with several other volunteers, handing out Rosaries and prayer cards, explaining Catholic radio, and otherwise being friendly in witnessing to Christ Jesus. By the end of my time at the booth, Bishop Joseph Hanefeldt of Grand Island joined us. His Excellency, I can tell, also enjoyed the event as an opportunity to offer Jesus to the passing multitudes by his presence and conversations with people. \*\*\* I kept track of students from different schools that engaged our group at the booth. Schools represented included: Aurora, Cody-Kilgore, Elba, Tri County (near DeWitt), Cambridge, Blue Hill, Boyd County, Stanton, and Shelton. One of the attendees from the upper Sandhills said that their bus had left their school at 4:00 a.m. that morning! People that I spoke to at the booth or on the HHD grounds from various Nebraska towns included: Spalding, Dwight, Bee, Manley, Louisville, Hampton, Hastings, Lawrence, Beaver Crossing, and Ericson. \*\*\* It was an uplifting experience to see so many people in our great State coming together to support our rural way of life and all things Agriculture.

**Confessions** Msgr. James Reinert from York came and helped with our school confessions on Wednesday evening. Many of our youth signed a card to thank him for helping out. His schedule may not allow him to come as much in the future, but hopefully priests from the Seminary in Seward will be able to help.

### **God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**