

From the Pastor—September 30, 2018

Priest Study Day Our priests of the Diocese of Lincoln gathered last Monday in Seward at St. Gregory the Great Seminary. We annually have four times per year where the entire presbyterate gathers together with our Bishop. Priests from far-away parishes were present...Grant, Benkelman, McCook, Holdrege, Alma, Lawrence, Tecumseh, Rulo, Falls City, and Plattsmouth... as well as most of the closer parishes. It is so good for us to be together as priests. *** Our topic of study was the law of the Church, called “canon law”, which is distinguished from civil law. The speaker was a priest from the Archdiocese of Omaha, named Father Scott Hastings. He works directly with Archbishop George J. Lucas of Omaha, rather than in a parish. One of his titles is “Judicial Vicar”, which means that he heads the marriage tribunal of the Archdiocese. He also serves as the Vicar for Clergy, which means he is a helper of priests for their concerns with their priestly lives. *** Father Hastings’ goal was to share with us what canon law teaches about the rights and responsibilities of priests. This information was especially helpful because of the investigations of priests’ conduct in our Diocese, our State of Nebraska, and in the universal Church. Father Hastings gave us an overview of what canon law teaches about the processes that govern what happens when a priest has a credible allegation made against him. He spoke about the seriousness of the Bishop’s duties to investigate these allegations. The day of study was somber, to say the least. We as priests (about 120 of us in total attended) were probably all thinking of our brothers/friends who have had to step away from ministry while their case is being investigated. Since these investigations are ongoing, we did not receive any new information on specific cases. *** One point which I learned from Father Hastings is that mental health *is* health. In my lifetime, a negative stigma has surrounded the idea of mental health. When I was growing up, people whose mental health was unsound were an easy target for being teased and the sometimes emotional abuse of gravely uncharitable acts and attitudes toward them. Now, the fields of medicine and psychology tell us that mental health is something that is treatable and not to be ashamed of in any way. *** Still, the consequences of priestly misconduct and sin is not something to be lumped into the realm of mental health as a sort of scapegoat. *** My focus through the crisis in the Church, as suggested by Father Hastings, is to serve you, the people of St. Mary’s and St. Joseph’s, as best I can. This is what I *want* to do, what I have been *called* to do, and really the only thing I *can* do. What I mean is that we all *can* and *should* pray, for our Holy Father, our Bishop, and foremost, for all who have been victimized by the sexualized actions and deplorable decisions of priests and bishops. But we can’t directly “fix” the problems, all of the deep wounds...these are in God’s hands. Please pray and voluntarily fast for all of these intentions.

Upcoming at Mass

September 29-30 – Parish Catechists/Godparents for grades K-12 will receive a certificate and a blessing.

October 6-7 – The Bishop’s Appeal for Vocations will be promoted, and you can make your pledge.

October 13-14 – Adoration Sunday will be

promoted, and you will be given the opportunity to commit with your family to the spiritual blessings of spending time with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Harvest is Here! [*re-printed from last week*] It is that time of year when combines, grain carts, and big trucks are in the fields and on the gravel roads and highways. Please know of my prayers for you all. I frequently give a priestly blessing from my car as I travel and see farmers out in the field. Please, everyone who is on the highways, be very respectful and slow down when you are dealing with the extra harvest traffic. Just. Slow. Down. Nothing could be more important than you arriving safely to where you are going, even if you find yourself delayed by harvest traffic.

Aurora 4R Middle School [*excerpted and re-printed from last week*] The parish of St. Mary’s has agreed to be a “safe site” in the event that the Aurora middle school has to be evacuated. In the case of an evacuation being necessary, the students and staff would *walk* to our hall, which would then become a reunion site for parents/guardians to pick up their children. An evacuation drill was conducted two weeks ago. I am happy we can provide such a service to all students in the District 4R middle school. The elementary and high school students have similar sites in town where they would go in an evacuation circumstance. Just like fire drills and tornado drills, we hope these types of drills for evacuation due to any cause never have to be enacted.

Bishop’s Appeal for Vocations [*excerpted and re-printed from last week*] The Bishop’s Appeal for Vocations has been changed to the format of the Charity and Stewardship Appeal (DDP). Your donations will be arranged like the Charity and Stewardship Appeal (held in May), by finding your pledge card from our parish representatives after weekend Masses. The Bishop’s Appeal for Vocations will happen on October 6-7.

Liturgical Outlook [excerpted and re-printed]

Lord’s Prayer Posture At a CCD Mass, I asked the students and teachers to pray the Lord’s Prayer with their hands folded. I acknowledged that some families hold hands during this prayer at Mass, and that I preferred this gesture to be reserved for Sundays within those families who choose it. Within CCD classes, my thought is that it may be uncomfortable or awkward for the students to hold hands. According to Safe Environment training, it could be seen that a child holding hands with an adult who is not a parent could be remembered later in an unsafe way for the child. As pastor, I wanted you to know by way of bulletin that this is how I perceive the best practice for our parishes.

Why I Sing The reason you have seen me sing the entire Eucharistic Prayer is that sometimes my voice seems so low and gravelly. In these occasions, it is more comfortable for me to sing, and I think it may be a more beautiful way for you to hear the sacred words of consecration.

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God Bless You!

Father Grell