

From the Pastor—January 27, 2019

My Priest-Friend's Visit When I arrived at my seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, for new student orientation in 1992, the first fellow classmate I met was Matthew Zuberbueler. In fact, we arrived at the exact same time to ride the shuttle bus together to the main resident hall of our seminary on the sprawling campus. By God's Providence, we became fast friends and we remain friends of the best kind to this day. I am not in touch with most of my brother seminarians, now priests, as real life and the distances between us across many dioceses in the United States inhibit our continuing friendships. But Father Matthew and I have remained close; we enjoy each other's company and have visited each other's parishes on numerous occasions since our ordinations to the priesthood in 1996. *** I last saw Father Matthew shortly after I joined you all here in Aurora and Giltner. He attended the Beatification Mass of Blessed Father Stanley Rother in Oklahoma City. For him, he was "in the neighborhood" at that time, visiting his family in Texas. *** This past Monday afternoon and Tuesday, Father Matthew flew in from his parish in Falls Church, Virginia, to visit on what he called a "lightning-strike" trip. I picked him up at the Lincoln Airport and we had lunch with my sister. We also met up with a brother priest of our diocese, Father Joe Steele, and got caught up with his assignment as chaplain of Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln. Father Matthew and I drove back to Aurora, taking a slight detour to visit the Carmelite Monastery at Agnew (between Lincoln and Valparaiso). We enjoyed over his stay here a couple of area restaurants. *** When it came time on Tuesday for him to catch his flight back to the D.C. area, he received unfortunate news—the flight was delayed by a WHOLE DAY. We thought through things a bit, and I suggested checking if any airlines flying out of Omaha were on schedule for him to book a flight back east. There was such a flight. So, I agreed to take him to Omaha. We drove through snow...and lots of it. Father Matthew assured me he could be late getting back to his parish by staying and waiting out the snowstorm which battered our area. But I told him that the snowy driving was ok with me. I guess I feel like my dad taught me well how to drive, especially in snowy conditions, as dad was a rural mail carrier for many years and drove many a treacherous road in winter time. By God's grace, we got to Omaha safely and he boarded the plane. Within minutes, the plane was above the clouds and snow and Father Matthew texted me a picture of the sun shining up above the horizon of planet earth. It was fitting and consoling to see the sun while below we all were fighting the snow. *** I hope that you and your loved ones were not too badly affected by last week's weather. Please know of my prayers, and please know that my priest-friend, Father Matthew, wishes he could have seen you all. As things stand now, it is my turn to go see him in Virginia.

Mom's Birthday My mother turned 83 on Friday, January 25th. She tells the story of Dr. Rice coming from Odell to deliver her at the Hajek farm, and that he went off the road due to the snowy conditions. Mother also tells how that summer of 1936 was one of the hotter ones of that Dust Bowl era. Mom's mom (my Grandma Emilie) placed wet cloths against the windows of the house so as to let there be air circulation without the dust coming in on newborn little baby Dorothy. Happy Birthday to one of my biggest supporters, along with my Dad; I love you both!

Soup & Pie We gathered last Sunday for the annual Knights of Columbus Council 8010 soup supper, with pie and other desserts. It was a good time for visiting with friends and

seeing many families enjoy time together. I appreciate all who contributed in any way to this event.

Confirmation Parent Meeting We grouped together for a gathering of parents of those students who are in the Confirmation class. I announced that I plan to spend time with each family by enjoying a movie from Formed.org. You might call Formed a Catholic "Netflix", and I am looking forward to visiting people's homes or having them come to our hall to view and discuss their movie of choice. It will be a great time for me to welcome each family into this important, prayerful time of preparation for their child's reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. *** An update for all in our parishes is that we continue to carry a subscription to Formed.org for all to utilize to your benefit. I have an easier way to access the site. The Formed web site is now built into our parishes' web site as a URL address. Type into your browser this address: stmarysaurora.formed.org. Then, you will be prompted to enter your e-mail address and choose a password. From there, your Formed content should be accessible from wherever you have internet access.

Punch List With the completion of any construction project, there is always what is called a "punch list" of items remaining to be completed before the contractor is finished. I believe that such a punch list probably existed upon completion of our St. Mary's parish hall, dedicated in 2014. But it seems that I could make a case for a sort of "internal" punch list of things that I've noticed to be completed or to enhance our beautiful new facility. I haven't looked at the plans/blueprints of the church and hall with any intense scrutiny, so I can't vouch for these projects having been in the minds of you, the parishioners. Let me give you some examples of what I've noticed. When we took down the Christmas decorations, it left the back wall of the sanctuary "blank", if you understand what I mean. Could there be some decorative, interior designs included in this wall space to enhance the depth and beauty of the sanctuary? Another example is that the classrooms and the walls of the hall seem to be somewhat empty and without depth. Could art work or other enhancing additions be used in these spaces? When I walk into the kitchen, I notice pictures framed and leaning against the wall. Could these be hung, as it seems they are meant to be? Also in the kitchen, I have noticed the large, hook-ended "wands" with which the serving line sheeting is declined to close and then to open again...these two "wands" sit against the serving line toward the doorway, and I am afraid someone (maybe me!) is going to catch their foot on them in an unexpected way. *** Perhaps what I am saying is expected and you are nodding as you read this. While the hall is still new, and my eyes upon it all are still "from the outside-looking-in", it would be great if we could convene some interested parishioners to address some of these projects.

Catholic Schools Week Please keep Catholic schools in your prayers, January 27-February 2.

God Bless You!

Father Grell