

From the Pastor—November 24, 2019

Adoration Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no Adoration this week in St. Mary's or St. Joseph's.

My Birthday I really enjoyed my birthday this past week. Thank you for your prayerful goodness toward me! The pot-luck supper in St. Mary's was quite enjoyable, including the extra efforts to meet my dietary needs. I was hoping that I might drive home to see my parents, on my birthday, but I didn't seem to have the energy (maybe because I am 51 now?!); I instead stayed home in the rectory and relaxed. *** I have had many birthdays which stand out in my mind. On my 10th birthday in 1978, Nebraska lost to Missouri, 35-31, a week after Coach Osborne's first win over Oklahoma. That loss to Mizzou stung! Those of you who can remember know the Blackshirts had no answer to stopping James Wilder and Phil Bradley that day, even in the friendly confines of Memorial Stadium. *** That same day, November 18, 1978, was also a horrific day that I came to know and be repulsed by—the Jonestown massacre in Guyana. Cult leader Jim Jones directed a mass killing of his brainwashed followers; over 900 people died. A United States congressman, Leo Ryan, was murdered. Just this week, I heard on Catholic radio that a book has been written by someone who escaped from the cult and did not die that day. Most of her family perished. I want to read that book, despite its ignominious shadow upon that year's birthday. *** In 1990, my Grandpa Grell died a day before my birthday. That birthday was not very celebratory for me. I was the first one in the family to stop by the Beatrice Mennonite Hospital and discover that he had just died, probably of a stroke. *** In my priesthood, one of my birthdays was in essence muted because of a tragic fatality accident in which a 17-year old parishioner died. Her death on November 16th made my birthday immaterial. *** On another occasion, a parishioner became very upset with me, on my birthday, over a parish issue that I had no control over. *** I share these sorrowful times to emphasize that no matter what happens on my birthday, I remain ever so grateful for the gift of life. Life is beautiful! My parents are so gracious to have welcomed me into the world on November 18, 1968. I was born at 10:45 p.m., in the Mennonite Hospital. I think I was 8.5 pounds—a chunker! I am happy to be alive, to turn 51, to be the pastor of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. God be praised!

Burn Pile Extraordinaire! Most of you know the location of our church cemetery for St. Joseph's. It is straight east of town, within the first mile on the black top road. It is adjacent to, but not connected to, the Giltner town cemetery. Its maintenance and upkeep is solely our parish's, and not the Giltner Village. The trees outlying the border of the cemetery have been in sorry shape, not to fault of anyone. Almost half (or more) of the trees were diseased and had died, and the remaining living were shagging over some burial plots. The church board approached me and spoke of a plan with the manpower to take out ALL the trees, living and deceased. I was in favor of this. This transformative event happened toward the end of last week, on about November 14 or 15. It certainly makes the horizon look different as you drive past. As of my last pass, the trees which were excavated are sitting on a ginormous burn pile north of the cemetery. The burn pile is on land of a parishioner, for which we are grateful for their permission to push all the trees there until we set fire to them. Trained and professional fire department staff of the Giltner Village will be setting afire this big pile of brush, twigs, trunks, and branches with fir needles. It will create quite a spectacle when the fire is set! If anyone took pictures of the excavation

process, or can photograph the fire, it would be cool to post some of those on the parish web site. Please know of my profound gratitude for this project; to pay someone to do this project would have been, I am sure, in the thousands of dollars, maybe even into a 5-digit expense. You all have given of your time and talent on behalf of the Lord. He as our God can never be outdone in generosity! (I hope I am describing this note and this tree-excavation accurately; please forgive any errors of description for which my ignorance is to blame.)

Teaching I have been thinking and praying a lot lately about how much I like to teach. As you may know, many of us diocesan priests of Lincoln receive a teaching certificate, and a teaching assignment, when we are newly ordained. Then, at the Bishop's bidding, we take our "book-knowledge" of the Catholic faith and try to impart it daily to religion classrooms of middle-school and high school students. (Also, to elementary students, but not on a daily basis.) I have been a faculty member at Pius X High School for sophomore religion and at Aquinas/St. Mary's School in David City for 6th grade religion. I have also taken the training, as directed by the Bishop, to attain an educational administration degree, which places me at the level of competency for the Nebraska Department of Education to serve as a principal of a Catholic school. While I am not currently teaching or in administrative service to a Catholic school, and while I maintain a current and valid certificate with the State of Nebraska, I am greatly satisfied and happy when I can teach...to teach anyone, anything about the Catholic faith, is a great joy to me! Dear reader, if I am to find fulfillment in teaching, I need students. What I mean is that as I am able to offer mini-classes, or full-length classes, for things like Advent preparation for Christmas, or for RCIA, or for training new Acolytes and Lectors, you would fulfill the niche I feel to teach by simply showing to learn. *** To punctuate what I am saying here, I can tell you that when the students arrive at St. Mary's Hall for Wednesday night CCD, I am brimming with joy! I always hope that I can do a drop-by in the classrooms or give a quick mini-lesson. Or, I enjoy interacting with the students in a way that priest-teachers in our diocesan Catholic schools are trained to do. It is very much enjoyable to me. Just an FYI for you.

CCD Mass Our Mass this week was especially efficacious for me. Our KinderKids through 8th grade students and teachers were joined by our 11th and 12th grade Godteens and their sponsors. It was joyful, prayerful, and beautiful to pray together, to reflect on the Word of God, to feast and nourish ourselves upon the Word of God made Flesh. Your children and grandchildren are precious to St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. Please know of my great esteem for you who welcome these children into the world and parent them to the best of your ability. And please, all of us, be thankful for the CCD teachers and staff, and the Godteen sponsors and staff, who have stepped forward in faith to guide these children throughout this 2019-2020 school year.

Braces Off You may not have noticed, for the period of about July-October, that I had braces on my bottom teeth. I was having a bit of an overlap of two of my teeth, and my dentist and I deemed it worthy of bringing everything in line. But, having braces is not for sissies! I had to be careful of what I ate, as many of you know who have had braces. A handful of times, I either knocked off a bracket by chewing too hard, or a ligature was loosed off of the wiring. When the dentist and his assistant were working my braces at each appointment, it felt to me like helping my dad and grandpa fix

fence when I was a kid! I was very accustomed to what needed to be done when our cattle were getting out. Fixing fence was not my favorite thing, because usually Dad and Bopper (Grandpa) were not too happy with our cattle. *** So, I am back to being able to chew properly since the braces are now gone. Even the smallest of things, like one's teeth, and those who are trained in dentistry/orthodontics, are cause for gratitude to almighty God!

Legion of Mary Auxiliary Members Our Legion of Mary is proud to announce that our title will be: Our Mother of Perpetual Help praesidium. This title needs to be ratified at the Curia (diocesan) level, but I am pretty sure of its passage. We are looking for auxiliary members. Some have already indicated to me that they will serve as auxiliaries, essentially as our prayer warriors. Please see me if you are ready to make that commitment official by being included on our roster. A sign-up for all interested in auxiliary membership will be offered on December 9th.

St. Mary's North Doors Locked I made official a policy that I had already informally instituted, namely, keeping the north doors of the parish hall/church of St. Mary's locked before, during, and after CCD on Wednesdays. The reasoning is for safety. Having only one entrance for students to be dropped off and picked up at is safer for everyone. I sent a text to our Parish Council members about this policy and received only positive feedback. I ask your patience if you like using the north doors. In addition, I generally keep these north doors locked throughout the day. For our parish staff, and for those who stop by on parish business or to visit Jesus in the tabernacle, it creates a safer environment.

Pews for Program For our Christmas program this year, which you are all invited to, I have given permission to remove a couple of pews to facilitate the students to sing and act in the front of church. My concern about moving our altar of sacrifice for the program was confirmed in an e-mail correspondence I had with Father Rayer, Chancellor of our Diocese. He agreed with me that the altar should be stationary, immovable. While it could be moved, I had a fear of an accident happening that might damage it, even with the most conscientious of workers. I had also noticed that the altar being moved placed some of the students within touching distance of the main overhanging crucifix. Even with the most well-behaved of students, such proximity to our Sacred Lord's image upon the Cross is not appropriate. I ask your patience when you see the pews removed; it will be temporary.

Husker Catholic Live! The Newman Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is something to behold. Architecturally, it blows your mind. Dedicated in 2015, it sits as a beautiful gateway to the downtown campus at 16th and Q Streets. The inside happenings of the Newman Center, if you knew the full effect, would blow your heart wide open to the goodness that emanates from what is happening there. Students are being saved from the secular, atheistic, relativistic culture. To celebrate all the good at our Newman Center, an event called Husker Catholic Live! was held on November 15th. Anyone is welcome to attend, so look for it next November. Around 470 guests celebrated in the Centennial Ballroom of the downtown Student Union. Father Matya, my good friend and pastor/chaplain of Newman since 1998, led the celebration. His assistant pastor is Father Steve Mills, a wonderful young priest from Nebraska City. Father Mills, when he was student Mills, was NU's L'il Red mascot inside the costume—true story!!! *** A couple of guest

speakers gave their testimony for how Newman has affected them. I think a search on your computer could probably yield you their talks in full. *** The occasion was especially joyful this year, considering that Cardinal John Henry Newman was proclaimed Saint Newman last month by Pope Francis. Two miracles attributed to Cardinal Newman, both happening in the U.S., had been verified to lead the way to his canonization. *** A cool thing that I just love is that the Newman Center chaplains from UN-K and UN-O were also in attendance, along with some of their students. To see the leaders of the Omaha and Kearney Newman clubs is a show of solidarity that I don't think would have happened 20 years ago. These two priests—Father Neal Hock for UN-K (Grand Island Diocese) and Father Dan Andrews for UN-O (Omaha Archdiocese)—are friends who have a special gift of working with college youth. *** If you get a chance, and you can persuade without overreaching, encourage your loved ones who are in college at Lincoln, Omaha, or Kearney to become involved at the respective Newman Centers. Newman clubs also can be found at Peru State, Wayne State, Doane, and probably other campuses that I don't know of. It is so important that college kids get their heads and hearts formed for Jesus in these times.

Investiture I was invited to the Investiture of Brian C. Buescher as the newest judge on the Nebraska District's United States District Court. I may not be explaining this clearly. But the point is that Brian is someone I have known basically all my life. To be named to the U.S. District Court bench, he had to be nominated by Nebraska's two U.S. Senators, selected by the President, and confirmed in the Senate after being vetted through congressional hearings. And you may remember, that, about a year ago, Brian's membership in the Knights of Columbus came under fire in the congressional hearings. Some wrong-headed elected officials (NOT from Nebraska) tried to make membership in the KC's into a litmus test that would have automatically disqualified Brian. Thank God that this attempt failed. The Knights is all about charity as their first and foremost pillar. *** Brian was born in Beatrice, as I was, about 6 years after me. His family lived in Wymore for a short time. When I became pastor of Lawrence and Deweese in 2005, his parents were in my parish! And in between, I have known Brian and his three sisters, and his grandparents, for many, many years. It was a joy to be invited to this event, and to see Judge Brian Buescher promoted to such an honor. The Investiture happened at the Roman L. Hruska United States Courthouse in downtown Omaha on November 15.

God Bless You!

Father Grell