

From the Pastor—November 3, 2019

Adoration Come and adore Our Lord, on Wednesday, November 6, at St. Mary's, from 8:00 - 9:00 PM!

Adoration [first-time event] Come and adore Our Lord, on Thursday, November 7, at St. Joseph's, from 4:00 - 5:00 PM!

Confirmation Our big day in the parishes, to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation upon our class, was very close to my heart. I was edified by the outpouring of faith and support shown to our youth, by their families, and by our parish families. Please know that in addition to the 30 students from St. Mary's and the three from St. Joseph's confirmed at St. Mary's on October 28th, three additional students were confirmed at Sacred Heart in Beaver Crossing on October 24th. These three are from two families who recently moved into our parish and Diocese from the Archdiocese of Omaha. Since each Diocese has its own policy on age of Confirmation, these families had approached me about their children receiving this Sacrament since their move caused them to miss the normative cycle of the Archdiocese. I was happy to work with them, and it was joyful to see them confirmed, giving our parishes a total of 36 confirmands. I hope to list them for you in a future bulletin. *** When the Bishop comes for Confirmation to a parish, the priests in the deanery are expected to try to attend a dinner prior to the Mass. My rectory was full of priests, therefore, on Monday evening! A good number of us attended both the Beaver Crossing/Utica Confirmation and our Aurora/Giltner Confirmation. In total, I think we have 14 priests in our York Deanery, including six who are assigned full-time at St. Gregory the Great Seminary. It was great to enjoy the conviviality of each other's company, at the dinner and at the Mass. *** I was so grateful to all who helped to prepare music for Confirmation. A number of people served as ushers and welcomed our parishioners and visitors to the Mass. The church was decorated with beautiful floral arrangements, which the very smell of heightened the sense of the sacred which occurred during the Mass. The women who helped serve the meal to us priests did such a great job of being kind and generous in their presence. I am also appreciative of the photographer who snapped both posed and spontaneous pictures of the evening; perhaps we will place an album of these on our parishes' web site. Our parish office produced a wonderful program, which I am sure many will keep as a commemoration of this day. The four altar servers were able to choose from our brand-new, bigger cassocks and surplices. We were blessed with two acolytes and our lector who served so well at the altar. To all who helped in any way, thank you, and I appreciate you! *** One unique occurrence is that snow fell on Confirmation Day! St. Therese of Lisieux was happy from heaven, as she prayed for, and received, snow on the day of her First Holy Communion. *** Bishop Conley spoke to our students in Classroom C prior to the Mass. It was great to see him interact with the students. He mentioned the 92 Questions, which has been a staple of catechetical instruction in our Diocese for over 40 years. Bishop asked the students if they had studied these questions, and they said yes. He then said, "So, what's the answer to #89?" I froze. But one intrepid student

raised his hand, and said, "10!" I guess this is a frequent teaching tool that the Bishop asks, so maybe the young student had been tipped off as to its possibility. The question was, "How many Commandments are there?," referring to Moses and the Law received on Mount Sinai. It was a fun, light-hearted moment. *** For those of you who were not able to attend, the Confirmation rite of the Mass happened after the Bishop's homily. Bishop Conley chose to read the scripted homily as provided by the Church in the Roman Pontifical. Then, the students stood and renewed their baptismal promises. This part is so cool, to me, as it shows that what their parents and godparents had promised at their baptism, the youth now made the same promises by their own volition. The Bishop prayed the prayer of consecration over the students, as a group, calling down the Holy Spirit and invoking the gifts of the Spirit. Finally, each student came to the altar, knelt before the Bishop, and received the chrism oil from His Excellency. The pastor is given the opportunity to hold the gremial which contains the Sacred Chrism. It is such an honor to see each student, with the light of faith upon their countenances, as they receive the Holy Spirit. Some looked a little timid, others looked very confident. I am not sure how I looked so many years ago; my 40th anniversary of Confirmation is this Friday, November 8.

Living Rosary Our CCD students, of which we are blessed with over 100 between the two parishes in grades K-8, formed and prayed a living Rosary last week. A living Rosary can be prayed in many ways. Our CCD coordinator and teachers had the oldest students form the crucifix and they led the opening prayers in the center aisle of church. Then, in descending class order, we formed a complete ring around the main (i.e. non-wing) pews. The number of students was almost exactly perfect to form this ring! The KinderKids and 1st grade students did not form part of the ring; they stayed in their pews to continue their learning of the prayers. I applaud and am proud of the older students for their diligence to make the living Rosary work. Some of them had a hard time staying prayerful, but I saw them come back to prayerfulness if they lost focus temporarily. I was proud of our students. Hopefully, it will light a flame in their hearts to want to pray the Rosary with their families or on their own.

Seven Sisters Please find more information at: <https://sevensistersapostolate.org/home>.

Unplanned Movie As you deliberate whether or not you wish to view the Unplanned movie, here is some information from Abby Johnson, upon whose true story the film is based, and from Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Archbishop Naumann "It (the movie) shows how pro-life advocates that pray and respectfully interact with those involved with abortion or that are thinking about having an abortion, that they can really have an impact."

Archbishop Naumann encouraged priests to talk to their congregations about the film. "Talk about it from the whole idea of a conversion story," he said. "Tell them this is a film you can invite people to go with you (to see), and it can help open up conversations. It isn't a judgmental

film, but a film that speaks the truth about this issue.”

Archbishop Naumann admitted that priests “sometimes get shy on this issue because we think its political. This (film) isn’t a political event. It’s a chance to invite someone to a see conversion story, and that makes a big difference.”

Abby Johnson “Don’t let the R rating scare you. Nothing is over dramatic” in the film, she assured. “Abortion is bad enough — we didn’t have to embellish anything.”

Archbishop “I never thought I’d promote an R-rated film,” he admitted. “But the great irony is that a 15-year-old girl can’t go to this movie, but she could have an abortion and her parents will never know it.”

Abby “If a young person has watched a PG-13 movie or cable television, they have seen far worse than they will see in ‘Unplanned.’” While she acknowledged that parents need to consider the readiness of a junior high student to see the film, she said for high school students the movie is “a must see because that’s who the abortion industry is targeting.”

Abby “I’ve heard parents say they don’t want to expose their kids to abortion. We performed abortion on girls as young as 10 and 11,” she continued. “You’re not doing your children any favors by sheltering them from abortion and not having these conversations. If you’re not talking with them about this, somebody else will, and 99 percent of the time the message (the children) get is not what you want them to hear.”

Abby credited God with the timing for the film’s release. They were ready five years ago, she said, “but the Lord said, ‘Wait.’” She said none of those involved with the film could have foreseen how much abortion would be in the news right now, on both the state and national level, as lawmakers debate expanding abortion laws, or in some states, restricting it. “I think this (film) will really change the dialogue about abortion in this country,” Johnson concluded. “For far too long people haven’t really known how to talk about abortion. People are scared of the topic. They don’t know what to say, so they don’t say anything.”

Abby “I think this film will equip people with truth.”

Discover the Truth It is precisely Abby Johnson’s last point, to equip people with the truth, that has brought together a coalition of people in our community to bring the event on November 9th to our area. I hope you will consider attending. You can see the details of the speakers in this bulletin insert. I think you will be surprised by some of what they say, because it will go against what other resources have informed you. But I feel that the truth of their message, in combination with the Unplanned movie, will appeal to your heart and bring clarity to what might otherwise be sort of jumbled up in your mind. Come with an open heart and pray the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. I think all could benefit from the evening/event which is planned for Saturday, November 9th, at the Aurora School Commons and Theatre. *** Want to help? Please ask me about needs that the Loving Life Coalition has formed as ways of helping the pro-life movement in our local area.

Young men, larger vestments Initiating with this year’s current freshmen class, I decided to extend the scheduling of altar servers into high school years, through

to graduation. With this policy, which seemed to be common among parishes in our Diocese, and which seemed well-received in speaking to parish leaders, new cassocks and surplices of larger size were needed. The occasion of Confirmation gave me the impetus needed to order these black robes with white tops. I reviewed the sizes that we currently had in our possession at St. Mary’s. I found the brand that we needed so that we could match the current robes. And then I phone-called the order in to Cosgrave’s church supply store in Omaha, who drop-shipped the cassocks and surplices to my rectory door step a few days prior to Confirmation. Please be supportive of our young men, with freshmen now on the normal cycle of scheduling, and let them know that you appreciate their willingness to help us all to pray better at Holy Mass.

My Recommended Web Sites I recently happened upon a web site I had never noticed nor visited before. It is CatholicSaints.info. Its tag line is: “notes about your extended family in heaven.” It boasts of information regarding 15,303 saints. One must realize that the current saint-declarations in the Church are governed by strict guidelines of a Vatican office, which is overseen by the Holy Father. But this process only accounts for about the past 500 years of Christian history. This web site goes back to the beginning and enlists early Church documentation to celebrate very ancient and sometimes obscure saints. The web site queries, “Who’s the patron of your state (political or spiritual)? Condition (physical or spiritual)? Vocation (monetary or spiritual)? Hobby? Maybe you can find out here.” With our students having recently chosen Confirmation saints, this site seems timely for us all to consider visiting, to learn more about our extended family in heaven.

Need Help? Our Hamilton County Ministerial Association has a “cheer fund” by which we assist those in need with a voucher system. The voucher is approved by members congregations’ ministers, and the bank account held by the ministers redeems the vouchers via the “keeper of the checkbook”. I have helped a couple of needy people recently via this system, and it is a worthy cause for all to know and be recipients of in time of need. I would add that those who receive assistance are not asked their religious affiliation, as it ought to be. *** If anyone in our membership of St. Mary’s and St. Joseph’s finds their family in dire straits, please know that I would like to assist you as I feel our bank account and cash flow are able to. It seems to me that we ought to be willing to help those with whom we share a pew bench during Mass. As pastor, I feel I am in a unique position to place this offer to you and your loved ones. Your need now should be aptly seen as a duty incumbent upon us to help you with; your abundance in the future can help the parishes’ coffers retain financial strength to be able to help others.

God Bless You!

Father Grell