

## **From the Pastor—August 25, 2019**

**Adoration** Come and adore Our Lord, on Thursday, August 29, at St. Mary's, from 7:30 - 8:30 PM!

**CCD and Godteens** Since I spoke from the pulpit on August 10-11, we have had a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher volunteer, as well as a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (for after Confirmation). I am happy to announce this week, and thank publicly, new Godteens' sponsors. Melinda Vlieger will be assisting Keli Margritz with our 12<sup>th</sup> grade class, while our freshman will be sponsored by Jacob and Chelsea Arendt. We are still in need for K-8 CCD in the positions of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (after Confirmation). We have one verified substitute teacher, and one verified classroom helper. We need more for these positions of support. The position of CCD Coordinator remains unfilled, this year being offered as a paid position. May I suggest and ask that each family reading this to choose to say the "Angel of God" prayer along with your Prayer Before Meals when you eat as a family? Our guardian angels can and will help us to build generous spirits for our school year of 2019-2020 CCD and Godteens apostolates, as we help our youth to learn and love Jesus.

**Unplanned Movie in Aurora** This well-produced movie addressing a timely, yet horrific, topic, was shown this past Wednesday at our very own 12<sup>th</sup> Street Cinema. Wednesday marked the third time I have seen it. Nearly 20 of our parishioners were in attendance, at least of those whom I specifically saw and/or greeted inside the theater. Almost all seats were full. One of the few empty seats was beside me, and probably some empty seats were in the very front (which is customarily is deemed too near the big screen). Let me share with you what I experienced.

**Demographic** It was interesting for me to see the various age groups which attended. I did not actively "count" people and age ranges, but I can tell you that, using my age of 50 as a sort of base point, the attendees were largely tilted toward my age and up. I did not see very many people in their 30's and 40's in terms of age, but there were a few. It was pleasant to see a number of high school youth, and one or both of their parents. I noticed the high schoolers congregating with each other before and after the movie, which is good for the sake of them being able to share with peers what they saw and experienced from seeing the movie. I also noticed past or present elected city officials in attendance, as well as area law enforcement (off-duty). It was uplifting to see several in attendance with physical disabilities, and their caretakers. Such people are truly pro-life; their daily witness through hardship that they love life.

**The Setting** The movie was shown through the generosity of Joe and Jill Sandmeier. I had never met them prior to Wednesday. Joe spoke to the theater-full of people prior to beginning the movie. While not specifically invoking a call to prayer, he set a prayerful and solemn mood for us. He offered that those who had name tags were available to pray or talk with anyone who approached them. The Collage Center of Grand Island was present, and Joe introduced their mission briefly; they are pro-life, pro-help for those experiencing difficult circumstanced pregnancies, but I don't know much more about them than that. One valuable takeaway from Joe's short introduction is that he and Jill hope the movie being shown here provokes conversation among the people of Aurora and greater Hamilton County. I would add to Joe's statement that such conversation cannot help but put forth great admiration for Abby Johnson's vulnerability in putting her story on the big screen, and that in response to her story, our conversations (and actions) will help more

people to understand what abortion is and how God is merciful to those who have been directly affected by abortion. As I referenced last week in this bulletin space, a great resource for post-abortion healing is [hopeafterabortion.com](http://hopeafterabortion.com). And making a good Confession is also a great step toward more healing, while showcasing God's great mercy; Confession only requires one visit to the Confessional in our St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Churches or another Catholic church in the area, or by making a special appointment with me or any Catholic priest.

**Bryan, Texas** The movie is based on Abby Johnson's true-life story of becoming clinic director at Planned Parenthood in Bryan, Texas. In real life, the pro-life action group, 40 Days for Life, was instrumental in prayer and outreach to bring Abby out of the abortion industry once her heart and mind were converted by the Spirit of God. Also in real life, that clinic closed not too long after Abby resigned her position. I have been praying for many years for the abortion facilities in our State of Nebraska to close. The killing of defenseless babies in their mothers' wombs happens, legally, at three locations in our Cornhusker State. One is in Lincoln, at the Planned Parenthood affiliate in the strip mall at 48<sup>th</sup> and Old Cheney Roads. About 20 surgical abortions are performed there every abortion Tuesday. The second facility is also run by PP, located at 3105 North 93<sup>rd</sup> Street. I went to their web site, just to see what it looks like. You can book your appointment with them on-line, among other options which make me sadly shake my head and pray. The third facility in our Good Life State is in Bellevue, across the street from St. Mary's Catholic School. Is your soul ever stirred to travel to Lincoln, Omaha, or Bellevue to pray for the complete ending of business in these facilities? Nebraska is better than to allow such evil into our boundaries. Many of us go to Lincoln and Omaha on a regular basis; ought we not consider such journeys to pray for life and to help convert those who place all their trust in the abortion industry? We must long for their souls to be converted, to make abortion not only illegal, but unthinkable!

**Prayer** While I was viewing the movie at 12<sup>th</sup> Street Cinema, I prayed three decades of a Rosary. I prayed the St. Michael the Archangel prayer a number of times. I also gave a priestly blessing, discretely, to all those present. I intend to show you by this example that we fight a battle against the principalities and powers which St. Paul bids us to beware of in Scripture. It is good vs. evil, light vs. darkness.

**Book and DVD** The Sandmeier family purchased the DVD of Unplanned for Wednesday's movie showing. They are donating it to the Aurora Public Library, where, for free, you can check it out and view in your own home. I imagine that there will be a waiting list of people wanting to check it out from the library's DVD collection. There is also a book, which was NOT mentioned on Wednesday, which Abby Johnson wrote with a co-author. I have a copy of it and I reading it for the second or third time now.

**Local Pro-Life Opportunities** Each year, cities across the nation sponsor a Life Chain on the first Sunday of October. Some time in the afternoon of that day, people line up along a high-traffic area to prayerfully stand and/or hold signs signifying our pro-life witness. I am working with a group of community members, mostly not from our parishes, who are trying to build support and attendance at the Life Chain, as well as sponsor special speakers and 2<sup>nd</sup> Aurora movie showing of Unplanned. Be listening and watching the bulletin for more details.

**The Movie's Production** Those of you who enjoy

watching the credits of movies, as I do, will have noticed that Unplanned was filmed in Oklahoma. I guess the State north of the Red River was deemed close enough geographically and culturally to Texas to make it work. From Catholic media, I have learned that the movie was filmed without fanfare, and even as anonymously as possible. Cast and crew of the movie were seen at daily Masses (even the non-Catholics) in the local Catholic parish (I believe it was in Ponca City or Stillwater). The priest at the church had been told by his Bishop, with a scarce amount of details, that he might see extra and unfamiliar people frequenting his church. As stated above, abortion is spiritual warfare. The enemy, Satan, is battling for the soul of our nation. It is hard to imagine anyone seeing the film not having chills from certain well-acted scenes, where the good of pro-life people were countered by forces of evil.

**Election Year** We of voting age in 2020 will have a decision to make for the next slate of leadership at the local, state, and federal levels. Please pray for me as I strive to give you all the best information, explained in the best way, so that we may see clear to elect those leaders who we believe will uphold the first and most basic of all human rights, that is, the right to live.

**Conclusion** If you have persevered to reading to the end of this long note, thank you. I would not be so passionate about this if it were not so much a part of the very essence of being a priest. I am called to witness to Jesus Christ, and the Good News of the Gospel, a gospel which Pope Saint JP II referred to as the "Gospel of Life." I cannot **not** be on fire in my preaching and teaching of the pro-life message. I will not tire, pray God, and I ask your prayers for my sustenance in preparing all of us to render an account upon our entry into eternal life, where our deeds will be judged. Our deeds will be measured most especially, according to Jesus, by how we treated those most in need in our society. And who is more needy than a precious, unborn baby in his or her mother's womb?

**Father Oseni** Wasn't it a treat to welcome our missionary priest last weekend? Father Oseni gave us a great explanation of the Sunday readings, as well as a clear picture of the needs of his congregation. Envelopes for supporting Father Oseni are in the back of each church and may still be returned in the collection. Please remember to pray for missionary priests and people every day.

**Greeting Before Mass** Because of Father Oseni's visit, I was able to greet many of you as you arrived at Mass. This is so enjoyable to me! However, with the importance of offering Confession prior to Mass, I am usually occupied in the Confessional or the sacristy as you arrive. A couple of our youth did a double-take as they approached the drinking fountain during Mass; they couldn't fathom how they were seeing me while Mass was going on!

**My Sister, My Parents** Because of Father Oseni, I was able to travel into Lincoln and see my sister and my nephew on Saturday evening. That very day was Mary's birthday, so we enjoyed having supper together. My parents are doing well, weathering the heat and rain mix which we all are dealing with. For one rain this past week, Mother said their gauge showed 2.5". I pray and hope all of you are doing ok with this yo-yo'ing of weather conditions. I heard of someone in our area with water problems in their basement. My parents, too, experienced this a few weeks ago. I imagine some of you are having similar problems.

**Diekman Trade** Were you here the weekend that I preached about Wymore native Jake Diekman being signed

by the Kansas City Royals in the off-season? I so enjoyed having on my favorite big-league team someone who graduated 18 years after me from the very same high school, Wymore Southern District #1. But, alas, it seems that left-handed relief pitchers are perennially a hot commodity. And baseball is a business at the MLB level, rather than the pastime we might hope it would be. The Royals saw fit to deal Jake to the Oakland Athletics for a couple of players. Ah, yes...life goes on☺.

**Catholic Social Services** Our new executive director of Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska is Father Justin Fulton. He has contacted me personally to see if any in our area need financial assistance from the March flooding and blizzarding. This past week, Father Fulton appeared on Spirit Catholic Radio as a guest speaker to build awareness of funds which are available to people in need. Could I ask you to contact me, or Father Fulton's office directly, if you know of people who could use financial help? There may be people who, for one reason or another, do not qualify for FEMA grant money. Their next best option might be CSS. Ideally, the monies available through our diocesan agency would go to people in our Diocese. CSS has helped the communities of Peru and Auburn a great deal already. But Father Fulton said they are willing to help any Nebraskans, of any faith background. Please direct anyone you know who might be in need to call CSS.

**Hamilton County Fair** I attended the Hamilton County Fair thrice last month. I enjoyed seeing the animals being shown by 4-H'ers and others. I visited or waved at a few of you. And, out of character for me, I watched the famed trailer races! I stood near the chain-link fence; at one point, a significant smattering of mud and dirt came flying my way as people ducked for cover! This might not be the right word for those of you who are serious about racing, but these trailer races made me laugh and laugh. The awkward nature of trailers and vehicles and people crashing and smashing and landing atop each other was just hilarious.

**Our Mary Statue** At the former entrance of St. Mary's Church, we now have the beautiful Mary statue and grotto/prayer area. Sondra Jonson, who sculpted our Mary statue sends this request: "For the upkeep of the Mary statue -- is there someone in the parish I could work with and show how to take care of it? It would be good if it were washed and polished once a year." Her e-mail address is sjonson@swnebr.net. I can give you her cell number if you call/e-mail/text me. This statue being well-cared would be greatly appreciated by its donor(s).

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**