

From the Pastor—September 1, 2019

Adoration Come and adore Our Lord, on Wednesday, September 4, at St. Mary's, from 12 noon - 1:00 PM! Feast upon Our Lord's True Presence during your lunch hour; you will be blessed by Him!

Abby Johnson in Omaha I was blessed to be able to attend the Celebrating Life banquet of the Nebraska Family Alliance on Tuesday. The keynote speaker drew me to the La Vista Events Center at the Embassy Suites, just off of Exit 442 as you enter the Omaha metro. She was none other than Abby Johnson, about whom the book and movie Unplanned is based. I have written extensively about Abby in recent bulletin notes.

Aurora Connection I sat at a table with several friends who I am working with on bringing greater awareness of the precious gift of human life. We have been gathering since January of this year, united in our pro-life mission. I am grateful for their friendship. We call ourselves the Loving Life Coalition (LLC). I hope to introduce you more and more to the Holy Spirit at work among my friends and me and to invite you to help us grow our cause of making Hamilton County aware and supportive of all issues pro-life.

NFA Everything has an abbreviation these days (see "LLC" above☺). The Nebraska Family Alliance goes by NFA. This group lobbies for pro-family, pro-life legislation at our Unicameral in Lincoln. You might think of them as being side-by-side with the Nebraska Catholic Conference, the NCC, which is jointly supported by Archbishop Lucas of Omaha, Bishop Conley of Lincoln, and Bishop Hanefeldt of Grand Island. This was my introductory exposure to the NFA. I am glad to get to know them. I guesstimate that around 800 people attended the banquet, which was co-sponsored by the NCC, Bott Radio, and Spirit Catholic Radio.

Elected Officials In attendance were Governor Pete Ricketts, Lt. Governor Mike Foley, Senator Ben Sasse, and Attorney General Doug Peterson. They had a panel discussion on stage, which was quite enlightening.

Abby After a banquet meal served to us in attendance, various short and longer talks were given. Finally, it was Abby Johnson's turn to take to the podium. She had our attention, with a gifted mix of real-life drama and sorrow, mixed in with her Texas-sized humor. She is a native Texan; if you know anything about people from Texas, you know before too long that they are, indeed, from Texas (no offense to any Texan natives reading this—I truly admire you and my best priest-friend hails from west Texas, near Del Rio, on the Rio Grande River). I couldn't possibly take notes on all that Abby spoke which touched my heart, but I want to give you a few highlights by these quotations or close paraphrasings:

--"What I didn't know led me into the doors of Planned Parenthood."

--"Sin happens a little bit at a time, until it finally seems to be no sin at all."

--"Surgical abortions are the most common surgery in the United States, and the only one where the surgeon cannot see what s/he is operating on."

--"I needed to count the number of abortions I had been complicit in. I heard God tell me that I could never make up for these tiny lives lost and the adult lives affected, that He had already made up for them on the Cross, and that He had won (my conversion)."

--"The movie was very gracious in its portrayal of me. I was mean to the praying pro-lifers at the fence. Yet, their persistence shows that NO ONE is outside the reach of Jesus Christ's mercy."

--"The Planned Parenthood providers and supporters are not offended by your prayers and contradictory views. Rather, they don't mind watching you take offense at their actions. Why should we worry about whether or not we offend them?"

--"You pastors who are here, it's great to see you. But I am not going to give you a hug for just being here. You need to be a shepherd to your people and tell them the truth about abortion."

--"The Christian church has been silent about abortion; shame on us!"

--"Don't place all your hopes in legislative action to stop abortion. It's great to celebrate legislative wins. But we seem to think that a great legislative cavalry is going to come riding over the hill and end abortion for us. No! You, the people of God, the Christian church, will end abortion."

--"I am a proud single-issue voter. You talk to me about the economy or any other issue, and I can take it back to the right to be alive and be born into this world."

--"One of the primary antidotes to abortion is fatherhood. Young men need to be taught how to be fathers because there are so many of them growing up in a mother-only household."

--"Our prayer ought to break our hearts open to what breaks God's heart—i.e. the sin of abortion."

--"Your prayers for the pro-life cause must lead you to take action, or I doubt your sincerity."

Healing after Abortion I never want to leave anyone in despair about their past sins, be it abortion or any woundedness that our life choices have caused. Abby Johnson herself found healing when she knew she could confess her sins to God. She eventually became Catholic and practices the faith now with her husband and families. She said, "Everyone's who behind is in the pew is a sinner—we need conversion!" We **are** all sinners, and we all need healing. Please avail yourself of the sacrament of Confession, either here at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, or to one of the nearby parishes. Also, for specific healing after abortion, both for women and men, go www.hopeafterabortion.com for great resources.

Life Chain, Unplanned DVD, action I was a whole lot inspired by Ms. Abby Johnson's talk on Tuesday. Her mother was in attendance, as well as her 4-month old baby, Fulton, who she named after Bishop Fulton Sheen. She and her husband, Doug, who is a stay-at-home dad, have eight children. Based on what I have written in this bulletin and earlier ones, I encourage you—I challenge you—to set aside the Life Chain day of Sunday, October 6, to join in an hour of silent prayer along Highway 34. If you live closer to Grand Island or to Hastings, they will have Life Chains, too. Aurora's Life Chain attendance the two years I have been with you has been abysmal. A parishioner from my Deweese parish years ago said simply, "You just have to make it a priority that you will be there." Also, remember that the Aurora Public Library has a DVD copy of Unplanned the Movie. Watch it and see your heart moved in ways that you might be surprised at. The Unplanned book is also very good and fills in many details which the movie was not able to address.

Godteens Kick-off I was happy to see our youth at the Godteens kick-off on Wednesday. This year, our numbers are at 36 students in grades 9-12. I know that perhaps new families have moved into our parishes, or that other families have not had Godteens work out in previous years—please consider coming to Godteens this year because I know it will support your faith and grow your love for Jesus and His Church and one another.

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.

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