

## **From the Pastor—April 5, 2020**

**St. Paul Street Evangelization** I launched a personal ministry last Sunday which has been a passion of mine for some time. It is called St. Paul Street Evangelization. It is a way of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ in a way that models how St. Paul traveled throughout the Mediterranean Sea nations and into Europe. Think of it: when St. Paul went to Corinth, or Ephesus, or Galatia, or Thessalonica, or Athens, he was approaching people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. A portion of these people were Jews of the Diaspora, meaning that they had been dispersed away from the Holy Land (mostly by force) who practiced their faith far away from the Temple in Jerusalem. But most of Paul's audiences had no belief in the one, true God. They had pagan gods, which greatly distorted any idea they had of the one true God. St. Paul would come to these people, preach about the teaching and miracles of Jesus, proclaim his suffering and crucifixion, and that he had risen from the dead. Those with childlike natures accepted Paul's message with wonder and awe. Other thought Paul was out of his mind...whoever heard of someone rising from the dead??!! In one of his letters, St. Paul said that if Christ is not risen from the dead, we are the most pitiable of fools. \*\*\* What St. Paul Street Evangelization does, therefore, is offer the Good News of Jesus Christ to people in a prominent place with ample foot traffic or auto traffic. The philosophy is not—I repeat, is not—to approach people and actively make them listen to you. This, I feel, is a wrong-headed approach and usually serves to turn the people away from you and harden their hearts toward anything you might say. Rather, the St. Paul's way is to simply be present, to engage people with smiles or waves of the hand or “hello's”, and to let them approach you if they so choose. If they do so choose, then they are asked what they know about Our Lord and his message of salvation, or what they desire to understand better. A relational evangelism is established, such that the person is open to what you have to say and might want to approach you again in the future. If the person wishes, they receive a Rosary or a Miraculous Medal, or a holy card, or a pamphlet explaining the Catholic faith. \*\*\* With my own personal funds, I ordered a starter kit of St. Paul Street Evangelization materials. And last Sunday, I rolled out this street evangelization on the west side of the courthouse! Two parishioners who spoke to me were supportive of my efforts. \*\*\* I don't know how often I might set up my evangelization station. Would any of you feel moved that this is something you think you would like to do? I really am trying to back away so that it's not me, but the Spirit of God at work in this endeavor. Please feel free to ask me about it; or go on internet to [streetevangelization.com](http://streetevangelization.com).

**Missed Events** Are you keeping a diary of missed events? I don't say this in a spiteful way. I mean it to indicate that each of us has, in our family or professional lives, been crossing off more and more scheduled events than we would have thought possible in a million years. Here is a sampling of my missed events. \*\*\* A young married couple who I met when they were students at the UN-L Newman Center have seven wonderful children. I have remained close to the mom and dad, and their kiddos, over the years. A few months ago, their daughter Emily asked me to be her Confirmation sponsor. I was honored; I said “yes!” Her Confirmation was to have taken place in Lincoln on Saturday,

March 28<sup>th</sup>. I was planning to attend, and stand as her sponsor as well as con-celebrate the Mass with the Bishop, and then return home for Saturday's vigil Mass. But the Confirmation was taken away by the virus's cancelling all public Masses in our Diocese. It will, of course, be re-scheduled, so that these youth can receive the fullness of God's Spirit in Confirmation. \*\*\* A priest Deanery Day on March 24<sup>th</sup> was cancelled, as was our Chrism Mass and priest jubilarian Mass on this Monday, April 6. The Chrism Mass is titled in this way because it is there that the Bishop blesses the oils to be used in the coming year by all the priests of the Diocese. Our Diocese, too, has a custom to celebrate priestly anniversaries of 25, 50, and upward years. We have a big banquet and toast the jubilarians; we all look forward to this gathering each year. I was looking forward because the 25-year men are all good friends of mine. They had been in seminary for a year or two when I joined. There are three of them: Father Jeff Eickhoff, Father Robert Matya, and Father Troy Schweiger. In regard to the oils, we have been told to use last year's supply for now. \*\*\* Finally, I will miss a couple of opportunities for penance services. Hearing Confessions when large numbers of penitents join with priests is always quite special. Another opportunity to hear Confessions was cancelled by way of a college-aged student retreat that I had been asked to help with at Grand Island Central Catholic.

**The Media** I happened quite by chance to come across on TV this past week a news conference about the virus. I learned a lot from the information given, and from the question-and-answer from the media after the main talks. As the news conference concluded, it occurred to me that I did not want to switch to news channels to watch their reactions. Nor did I feel inclined to go on the internet or read about the news conference in the next day's newspaper. I had seen the information, unfiltered, and that was enough for me. Have you noticed in yourself a tendency to despondency when you see news about the virus through a certain ideological filter or spun in a mean-spirited way? I guess I give this example that happened to me to show you a way of dealing with things as they are right now. Those of you with young children in your home, or who have taken in your college-aged youth for their on-line completion of the semester, know that the exposure to the news coverage and the reality of the situation has to be controlled in our own hearts and minds before we can help those who depend on us. Please see my next note about sources of hope in the face of dealing with this pandemic.

**Sources of Hope** Catholic Social Services is offering telehealth counselling; go to [immaculateheartcounseling.org](http://immaculateheartcounseling.org). It is helpful to pray the Liturgy of the Hours; down the free iBreviary app. Many priests (like yours truly) are videoing on Facebook Live their daily Masses or Stations of the Cross. Pray the Rosary, all together as a family. Pray with someone over the phone. Finally, read the Bible and be good to your family. Really listen, with intention, to each other.

**God Bless You!!!**

**Father Grell**