

From the Pastor—May 17, 2020

In the Blink of an Eye My last column to you was on April 19th. It seems like I blinked, and a whole month has passed! What follows is my attempt to catch you up.

Ascension Thursday Thursday, May 21, is the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Normally, it is a Holy Day of Obligation. Since the Bishops of Nebraska have maintained the dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, I will broadcast over Facebook Live one Mass from each parish on Thursday. The St. Mary's Mass will be at 5:00 p.m., while the St. Joseph's Mass will be at 7:00 p.m. Remember, too, that EWTN and other Catholic networks broadcast Holy Mass every day. Try to observe this beautiful Ascension Thursday, when we bring forward to our own day the mystery of Christ ascending to sit at the Father's right hand.

Public Masses Update Some parishes in Nebraska re-opened churches for public Mass on May 4th. Others are waiting to re-open, including our parishes. The St. Mary's Parish Council advised me to delay/wait another month then revisit the idea of having open public Masses. This is due to our location and close proximity to Grand Island and its large number of COVID-19 cases. When public Mass does start up again, our Lincoln Diocese Guidelines updated on May 4th call for protective measures which we will take. *** While public Masses are not being held here, I am offering Holy Mass each day. Most days, I offer this Mass at the usual time of 7:30 a.m. on Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday at St. Mary's and 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday at St. Joseph's. I am offering one Mass on Saturdays, the usual 8:00 a.m. one at St. Mary's. Please know that, in a way that is a mystery, the very offering of Holy Mass in our parish churches brings an ordering of holiness to our geographic area of parish boundaries. Our boundaries cover almost the whole of Hamilton County, except for 24 sections in Farmers Valley and Orville Townships. This mystery of Christ's saving death, Resurrection, and Ascension is applied to everyone who resides within our boundaries, whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic. Let this thought give you a measure of consolation.

What we can do...and what we can't The Archbishop has left it up to each pastor to assess with his parish leadership on when to continue public Masses. I am trying to read and analyze what I hear other priests and parishes doing in our State of Nebraska. For a sacrament as necessary for salvation as Baptism, it could be performed, in church, if people observed the May 4th guidelines of the Diocese for protocol such as social distancing. However, no reception of social nature could be held at church. Similarly, you may have heard of weddings and funerals being held in church in some parishes. These, too, could happen while observing the May 4th guidelines. For funerals, I would strive to respect the guidelines that funeral home directors are being given. And with a funeral, no luncheon could be held on church grounds. You may have noticed in the paper that several graveside services have been held in recent weeks. This is a suitable option, given the Covid-19 pandemic. At the first opportunity, for these deceased souls, we will have a memorial Mass at church. And even now, offerings that you contribute for the powerful prayers of Holy Mass applied to these deceased souls will be offered in a timely way in my private Masses. *** I have limited my in-person meetings to

parish staff. Other meetings, like Catechism class and counseling, have been done over the phone, or on Zoom with the Parish Council. *** I realize that for each one who reads this note that there might be as many differing opinions on what we can and cannot do right now. Please take these intentions of everyone to prayer, especially in praying the Rosary, even daily.

CCD and Godteen Finale, and Fatima While nothing was officially set on calendars, as would have been proper, I decided to use the celebration of Our Lady of Fatima as an "end-of-school-year" virtual gathering for our parishes' CCD (grades K-8) and Godteens (grades 9-12). This feast was on May 13. I invited via social media for anyone of our parishes to join in. During about a 45-minute broadcast on Facebook Live, I explained the basics of the Fatima message given to three shepherd children in 1917. We then prayed a Rosary together. The video of this time of prayer and learning was loaded onto our parishes' Facebook page for you to access anytime. *** It seems that I learn something new each year upon the celebration of Our Lady of Fatima. This year, I learned the unique way these three Portuguese children interpreted the "Russia" that the Blessed Virgin Mary asked them to pray for. The children, now-Saints Jacinta and Francisco, and now-Servant of God Lucia, thought that Russia was the name of a woman. So, they prayed for Miss Russia, not realizing "she" was a country! They were so poor that their families could not give them a school education to research and read about this Russia "lady" for whom they were asked to pray. *** This August, a major motion picture titled simply "Fatima" will be released in theaters (God willing). A number of movies and documentaries have been produced over the years about Fatima; this one looks and feels, though, like it will be the fullest and most well-produced film of them all. I can't wait to see it!

Zoomed, Over-and-Out: Now What? I realize that families with school-age children, and even our parishes' college-age students, have been doing much on-line work to finish the second semester of classes. The prevailing media of choice to connect educators with students, as I understand, has been Zoom. If you are feeling Zoom-fatigue, but yet you wonder about a good way to provide instruction for your family over the summer months, please consider our parishes' subscription to Formed.org. If you haven't stopped by this Formed platform for a while, you will be amazed at the new and improved content. Many programs are suitable for people of any age of learning. No longer do you need a parish code to enter the platform. You simply register by your e-mail address and a password of your choice. At an early point in the process of registry into the platform, a drop-down menu will give you the ability to choose St. Mary Church, Aurora (this is for St. Joseph's parishioners, too...and really for anybody at all). *** Another great option for nourishing your soul is via our kiosks in each church which contain books, audio recordings, and video recordings about the Catholic faith. *** I would also recommend our diocesan web site at LincolnDiocese.org. It has over 300 podcasts and video recordings about the Catholic faith. *** Also, utilize Catholic radio, over the air at 91.5 FM (the tower is near Wood River). If you have a listening device, like Sonos or Alexa, or a speaker to which you can connect to internet streaming, you will find a great amount of worthwhile programming. I especially recommend on weekdays from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. a program called Called To Communion on

Spirit Catholic Radio. Also on weekdays, from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., is a favorite show of many called Catholic Answers Live. These are both call-in shows; regularly, I hear people call in from Nebraska. *** Finally, on cable TV in towns of our county (if you have subscribed to the qualified package), you can find EWTN-TV. Sometimes, this network has devotions or commentary that are good to have playing in the background. You can quickly re-focus on the good, the true, and the beautiful when your mind might be inclined to go to other thoughts which will not uplift you. *** As a personal-to-you reminder, your prayers offered in your heart to Jesus and His Mother are very powerful. You can turn, anytime, anywhere, to prayer to God from your heart that will ground you in true happiness.

Parish Council Election Deferred Our elections for new St. Mary's Parish Council members has been held to coincide with our fiscal year, July 1 – June 30. However, due to the extraordinary circumstances, the election will be deferred to December. We thank the willingness to serve of everyone on our Council and the leadership of parish organizations.

John Paul II's 100th Birthday May 18, 1920, was the day that Pope John Paul was born. This dear pope, and now saint, would turn 100 years old this week. You can look at Catholic media and find lots of interesting materials and ways to celebrate the late Holy Father's life. JP II was a transformative reason for why I wanted to be a priest. JP II, we still love you!!!

SBA Loan Received SBA stands for the "Small Business Administration." This loan, which deposited into our account on May 7, provides eight weeks of funding toward payroll and benefits. It could also be used for payment of utility expenses. I feel fortunate that we have received this loan, which, if all documentation is approved, is 100% forgivable.

On-line Giving At this time when public Masses are suspended, the means of collecting your donations is in flux. At St. Mary's, the giving basket which is normally brought up at offertory has been placed at our main entrance. Some of you have stopped by and dropped in your envelopes. I have picked these up a couple times per day. What would be very helpful, at least temporarily, is if parishioners would consider giving to our parishes on-line. We have an "on-line giving" button on our web site: stmarysaurora.org. You can enter your donations as for St. Mary's or for St. Joseph's. It is simple to set up giving from your checking account, or a credit card. You can choose this mode of giving for a temporary time and then go back to envelope giving when public Masses resume.

Charity and Stewardship Appeal This appeal, known in former times as DDP, is ongoing.

At St. Mary's, the goal is \$9,110.00. Our total pledged thus far is \$38,345.00, of which \$35,715.00 has been paid. Out of 256 registered families, 42 have made pledges. Because we have met our goal, the refund anticipated to come back for use at the parish level is \$29,235.00.

At St. Joseph's, the goal is \$1,750.00. Our total pledged thus far is \$2,370.00, of which \$2,250.00 has been paid. Out of 53 registered families, 15 have made pledges. Because we have met our goal, the refund anticipated to come back for use at the parish level is \$620.00.

I have sent appeal letters via the U.S. Postal Service to most of our registered parishioners. If you misplaced the

letter, or to find out more information regarding the appeal, go on-line to lincolndiocese.org/diocese/charity-and-stewardship-appeal.

Facebook Pages Over the Years Last month, our parishes rolled out a new Facebook page. It is titled "St. Mary's, Aurora and St. Joseph's, Giltner". You may discover former Facebook pages, which are now dormant. Let me explain. Our parish secretary and I (well, mainly Navy!) have set up this new page in such a way that it should be more easily maintained into the future. Passwords and posting privileges for the now-dormant versions of the Facebook page could not be found and implemented. So we decided to start all brand new. *** Please note that the Godteens has its own Facebook page, of which title has remained the same over the years. I am grateful for that page's upkeep over the years.

Cobalt As mentioned in previous communications, the Facebook videos of Mass that I record are being uploaded, for free, to be viewed, for free, on Cobalt TV through Hamilton Telecommunications. I apparently could have/should have been utilizing this resource before now. On your remote control, you hit the "On Demand" button, which will prompt you to choose "Church Services". There you will find a separate tab to choose for St. Mary's or St. Joseph's.

New Priests' Bio's On our Diocese of Lincoln web site, you are welcome to watch the livestream of Ordinations on Friday, May 22 (Diaconate) and Saturday, May 23 (Priesthood), beginning at 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 a.m., respectively. Our six new priests include: Deacon Robert Froeschel is from Falls City—with Father Cy Rowan in the Class of 2015, that parish has been blessed with two native sons in the past five years; Deacon Caleb Hile is from Lincoln, St. Joseph Parish; Deacon Robert Johnson is from Lincoln, the Newman Center/St. Thomas Aquinas Parish; Deacon Alec Sasse is from Lincoln—you may remember a year ago that we prayed for his brother who died unexpectedly; Deacon Joseph Wahlmeier is from Hastings—his family was the Knights of Columbus international Family of the Year back in the 1990's; Deacon Brian Wirth is from Nebraska City and is the first new priest from St. Mary's Parish there in my memory. These six young men will be assigned to parishes; they probably won't know which ones until the day before Ordinations. *** Our deacon class includes: Dale Allder is from Lincoln, St. Peter Parish, and his aunt and uncle are Linda and Mike McQuiston of our St. Mary's; Matthew Kovar is from Appleton, Assumption Parish, and he was a student of mine in 4th grade at St. Mary's School in David City. *** Please pray for them!

Sources of Hope Catholic Social Services is offering telehealth counseling at ImmaculateHeartCounseling.org. Pray the Rosary.

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell