

From the Pastor—September 13, 2020

My Aunt Doris My dad's sister passed away in Wichita on September 4th. She was 87. Her name is Doris (Grell) Pascal. Her health had been declining in recent years, with especial difficulties caused by advanced dementia. She was happy and good-spirited throughout her long trial and was able to stay in her own home till near the end of her life. Of my dad's three sisters (he was the only boy), she moved the furthest away from home. Doris' husband, my Uncle Keith, passed away in 2007. He was from Morrowville, Kansas. Doris and Keith were married at my home parish of St. Joseph, Beatrice, in 1958. They lived most all of their married life in Wichita, raising their three sons there. *** My Aunt Doris' family was blessed to have all three of her sons get married to three wonderful daughters-in-law, each of whom was a Catholic. All together, the three sons and their wives gave to my Aunt Doris and Uncle Keith ten grandchildren. I call these cousins my "little cousins" as the children of my first cousins. I feel close to them, especially in following their young lives on Facebook. *** My Aunt Doris, who had a teasing, joyful soul, had said for many years that she wanted me to "do her funeral." Did you know that priests' relatives sometimes request such a thing? As I had reported in the bulletin, I was planning to be away from the parish this past week. When Aunt Doris died, therefore, it worked out that I was free on my vacation time to travel to Wichita for her funeral. *** My sister traveled with me to the funeral; Aunt Doris was her Confirmation and Baptismal sponsor. From our farm in Gage County, it takes about four hours to travel to Wichita. It's a trip that our family has often undertaken over the years as we remained close to these Kansas cousins on our Grell side. The funeral was at a parish called St. Francis of Assisi, in the western part of Wichita, just off of Central Avenue a few blocks. The parochial vicar there, who was just ordained for the Wichita Diocese in May, was my helper to get set up for the Rosary/Wake and the funeral Mass of Christian Burial. Even though I was sad at the passing of my aunt, it was therapeutic to my priestly heart to be able to lead the funeral ceremonies. I feel blessed in these circumstances to not usually get emotional at the import of my presiding as a priest. I focus upon the prayers and liturgy as laid out in the holy books; I just follow what is said and try not to catch eyes too much with those who may cause me to become emotional. *** As an added, totally non-liturgical gesture, I brought some soil from next to the house which Doris had grown up in; that house is on our farmyard with my boyhood house. After the burial prayers were completed, I told the relatives and friends present where the soil was from and then I placed it in Doris' grave. I thought this was appropriate for someone who always loved her Nebraska upbringing even though most of her life was lived in Kansas. *** After the burial, we went for a luncheon to my cousin Brian's home. We took family pictures and enjoyed visiting. The five great-grandchildren seemed to enjoy playing with Hot Wheels cars and farm equipment; perhaps they will grow up and feel as close to each other as I do to my first cousins! *** In your kindness, please keep my Aunt Doris and her family in your prayers.

Other Home Happenings While I was home, I

drove with my mother to our Ellis farm, which we call "Grandpa's" after my dad's Grandpa Hood. The corn and beans on those three 80's all looked pretty good, for dryland. Our home place crops look ok; the dry weather of about the past 4-6 weeks has probably set our yields downward trending, but we will still get a crop. *** I also enjoyed a little business work while I was home, like checking into my safety deposit box, and my parents', to look for some documentation which I needed. *** I enjoyed resting, reading, writing, visiting with my dear mother, and eating good food while I was away. As of this writing, I am happy to be allowed a quick visit to my dad at the nursing home; it will be joyful to see him, with restrictions of masking and distancing and such.

A Father Flashback Have I ever mentioned how much I enjoyed hanging out at the Beatrice Public Library in my childhood? It was one of the Carnegie Libraries, which many of you are familiar with. The building was beautiful and was very conducive to getting lost in a good book. It was only about two blocks from St. Joe's elementary school, so I could walk to the library after school and wait for my parents to pick me up. One unique piece of furniture in the library was a carpeted bathtub which you could climb into to read! With the building of a new Beatrice library in about the year 2000, the tub did not survive the move, but a bigger and technologically equipped facility was given to the community for many years to come.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy Here are the seven spiritual works of mercy, as I preached about last weekend. It would be a good exercise to commit these to memory and to prayerfully seek to live them out:

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Comfort the afflicted.
5. Forgive offenses.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

Spiritually Starving This series will be continued next week.

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell