

From the Pastor—March 7, 2021

My Parents, Our Farm For the first time in six months, I went home to our family farm on my day off this week. It was so good! I have tried to shelter myself from receiving or spreading the Covid virus, leading to my long exodus away from my parents and Gage County. *** As a backdrop, my Dad had gall bladder surgery in 2011. He had been told by the doctor that this was a possibility, but it came on by emergency. I believe it was that very spring that we sold out our entire herd of white-faced Herefords. This was good timing. When he was being treated and in the aftermath of the surgery, Dad developed a forgetfulness...call it dementia or whatever term you wish. He was not himself mentally. He was able to recover well from the surgery, with rehab and a nursing home stay. Upon returning home, he was able to still tool around on his tractor and drive his pickup to town and on our country roads for several good years. In 2017, after I arrived here, he broke his hip at our farm, requiring an ambulance call, surgery, hospitalization, and months of rehab in a nursing home. Dad returned home and was able to get around well using a cane, but he basically stopped driving at this point. From 2018 till the summer of 2020, Mom and Dad lived happily and injury-free on our farm. But Dad fell last June and this time broke his pelvis. Surgery is not generally a possibility for a pelvis fracture. So, Dad is probably not meant to come home to our farm, as much as he wants to and thinks that he can. With his memory loss, it is worrisome to think of him with Mother as his only lifeline to watch him and care for him. Mom is 85 years old herself, which is not an ideal age for being a caretaker! *** Back to this past week; the nursing home where Dad is in Beatrice allowed visitors to come in to see the residents. Mom and I signed up for a day and time. We sure had a good visit with Dad. We were able to visit with some of the workers and one resident in the same wing who is an old friend of Dad's. I anointed my parents and brought Holy Communion to them. *** One of the dietary aides in Dad's unit is named Sammi. Dad asked her last name. I recognized it and asked, "Are you related to Arnold?" Turns out Arnold was her grandpa, and, furthermore, he was my Dad's barber in Beatrice! He is long-deceased. He gave me my first non-mom haircut as a kid, which I remember well. *** Mom gained a new kitty a few months ago; she is orange, which is Mom's favorite color of cat! The kitty is very tame and probably wandered to us from a local farmstead. Mom called our neighbors; no one claimed it so she is keeping it with our two other cats. It was good to meet our new farm cat! *** It happened that some workers were on our land while I was home. They were doing drain tile work on one of our older waterways. I had known they were lined up to do the work, but I had no idea they would be there the same day I was. It was great to touch base with them, to show that even with our patriarch's decreased involvement, our family farm is still going and being productive in the important work of crop production and land conservation.

In case you noticed The red presence candle for the Blessed Sacrament at St. Mary's has a better visibility as of recently. The case of candles I had been using seemed not to have good strength of wick. The candles would burn well for a while but end up with a barely visible flame. Not all the wax burned. My order of new candles was from a different manufacturer, and I am well pleased with the flame visibility and "burnability" of the wax. You may have noticed a more vivid flame to see and notice, which is assuring to us to know

that Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle.

New Rooftop Units St. Mary's had some work done up top the roof of the original parish hall this week. The heating/air units were in need of replacement. Our parish corporate memory is that they were installed in 1984. In my four years with you, we have needed repairs on them a time or two. A couple weeks ago, I and others noticed a strange odor in the kitchen area of the hall. My first thought was that natural gas was escaping from our gas stove, that the pilot light had gone out or that someone had accidentally left the gas on for one of the burners. That might have been all that we investigated...but our church caretaker thought we ought to get the natural gas company (Black Hills) to inspect for sure what the problem was. Black Hills discovered carbon monoxide present in our system by using their sensor equipment. They wrote up a report to report their findings. We contacted a local contractor who identified our rooftops' problem of cracks in the heat exchanger (and perhaps more than that). Upon parish advisement, I decided to go with new units rather than repair the 30-year-old ones, which would have seemed like pouring good money into bad. The installation of the new units required the use of a crane truck to lift off the old and lift up the new. The contractor ultimately decided that two thermostats in the body of the hall would be more efficient than one, so you may notice the extra one. All in all, we were blessed with good weather for the project after discovering this problem during the cold snap. And, as Divine Providence smiled upon us, we received a major donation at the time of accepting the contractor's bid, a donation which was twice as much as the total cost...God is good!

Class of Fourteen! I was pleased to welcome 14 new 2nd graders from St. Mary's into the sacrament of First Confession on February 28th. Father Matt Rolling from the seminary in Seward came to help me with this large number of students, and to provide for any family members who wanted to receive Confession on the same day. Fourteen is the largest class in my four years with you. Does anyone reading this remember larger classes? After the penance service, we had a cookie reception in the hall. This was a fun way to end the morning. Congratulations to these students, as they look forward to First Holy Communion on April 11.

God Is It is so mysterious to think of God as simply existing. He is outside of time, outside of the material universe. He had no need to create you and me and this wonderful world we live in. Creating us neither overworked him nor was in any way necessary. God simply is. With anyone else, an adjective is needed to state that the person is _____ (fill in the blank). Our God is, and that's all we need to know. Kind of cool, yes?!

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today,
and forever!

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell