

From the Pastor—May 23, 2021

AHS, Hampton Catholic Graduates I was happy to attend the graduation ceremonies at Aurora High School last Saturday. It was announced that this class was the 137th in the school's history (hopefully, I am remembering that number correctly). It was cool to see parishioners graduating. One neat thing about commencements is that if the graduate's parent is in the high school's administration or elected to the school board, that parent gets to hand him or her the diploma on stage. Congratulations to the Husky graduates, including 10 from our Senior Godteens! *** We also had one parishioner graduate from Hampton High School, and who was also involved in Godteens. Unfortunately, I didn't make it over to Hampton's graduation ceremony.

St. Mary's May Crowning We had a wonderful May Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary last Sunday at St. Mary's. Thank you to our CCD coordinator and music ministry for taking the lead in organizing this important devotion. We sang a traditional hymn, "Bring Flowers of the Fairest", while the students placed long-stemmed, multi-colored carnations into a vase at Mary's feet. Two of our First Communicants crowned Mary. A fifth grader read a children's consecration prayer to Our Lady. Thank you to parents who responded and were free last weekend to bring your children to participate in this transformative faith event. I captured on Facebook Live some of the devout and concentrated reactions of the students as they approached the statue of Our Lady; see our Facebook page if you would like to see the May Crowning, located at about 8 minutes into the video for last Sunday's (May 16) Mass.

My Memory Lane (2013-2017) As a run-up to my silver anniversary of ordination, I thought I would take a trip down memory lane with you. Last week's bulletin spoke of serving as pastor of Lawrence (Sacred Heart and St. Stephen's) and Dewese, as well as serving as administrator of Sacred Heart School. This week's note will highlight the Plattsmouth years. *** When the Bishop called me for a move from Lawrence to Plattsmouth, I think it came in part because one of our priests was named a bishop. This was Father (now Bishop) John Folda, who now leads the Fargo Diocese in North Dakota. To fill his unexpected departure as rector of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, a ripple effect was created as the Bishop accounted for ending of service as a Lincoln priest. My call to Plattsmouth was a part of this domino effect of priest appointments in 2013. *** Plattsmouth as a town and parish was familiar to me in an interesting way. My mother took a teaching job in Plattsmouth as her first teaching assignment after her student years in the teacher's college at Peru State. She taught in third grade in the Plattsmouth Public School, 1956-1959. During those years, she became dear friends of a family with whom she went to Mass every Sunday, followed by Sunday dinner. When I was assigned to Plattsmouth, this family friend of my mother's still lived in town and turned 100 years old while I was there! The school building where my mother taught also was still being utilized as a pre-school during my time there. *** Plattsmouth for many years had two parishes. St. John the Baptist Church served the immigrants from

Germany, and Holy Rosary Church was begun by the Czechs. In the early 1970's, the Bishop decided to bring those two parishes into one under the name of Church of the Holy Spirit. However, the school has retained to this day the name of St. John the Baptist School. The very first structure which served as the original St. John's Church from the 1860's still stands, and I was blessed to be asked by the current residents (who are not Catholic) to bring the Eucharist in procession through their home and have Benediction on their front lawn. This was a great blessing to me. *** Church of the Holy Spirit was a very diverse mix of people. Some were long-time residents of Cass County for generations. A few were farmers. A significant portion of retired military members who had served at Offutt Air Force Base lived in the parish, as Offutt is only about 10-12 miles from Plattsmouth. The parish also served the significant lake community called Beaver Lake, and a couple of other lake communities as well. Some of the lake residents had their homes only for weekend and summer-time use and still considered their primary parish to be in South Omaha. The final major group of people, in my estimation, were those who were young with children at home who commuted into the Omaha metro for work. A goodly portion of these Catholics chose St. John's School for their preK-8th grade children. *** I was given charge by the Bishop to serve as chief administrative officer of St. John's School. This was quite challenging, but quite rewarding. We had a full-time equivalency (FTE) staffing of about 15.0. We also had a number of part-time support staff. Between the parish and school, the number of employees numbered about 32. I really enjoyed working with the principal of the school and with the teachers. Almost every year, new hires of teachers were needed. We also hired a new principal during my time after the retirement of the previous school head. That was a fascinating process to gain applicants and interview them, and then to collaboratively gain advice from the parish, school, and Diocese so I could come to a decision for this important position. I was assisted at Plattsmouth by a dear priest from Ghana in west Africa. His presence freed me often to greet students as they arrived at school in the morning; I really enjoyed being curbside during drop-off. The student enrollment during these years was anywhere from 130-170...this number increased when we added a younger section of pre-school during my final year. *** After students completed their St. John's education, our school was considered a sister school to Lourdes Central Catholic School in Nebraska City. The parish had purchased a bus and a van to transport students the 20 or so miles south to Neb. City. Some families chose Catholic schools in Omaha for their children, such as Duchesne, Gross, Mercy, and Creighton Prep. Many of our Catholic students went to school at Plattsmouth High School or Conestoga High School in Murray. The majority of Catholic students went to public school for elementary studies, but the parish remained very committed to support St. John's School a viable option, to provide a great education and formation of young Christian disciples within the school days. *** The parish of Church of the Holy Spirit included such features as perpetual Adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament, Altar Society, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of America, Legion of Mary,

Bible studies, and active Parish and Finance Councils. I honestly met myself coming and going while I was there, as the rectory, church, meeting rooms, and school were all connected. *** Next week, I will give the highlights of my time with YOU, from 2017-present at Aurora and Giltner, in my latest stop on this pilgrimage of the priesthood through this pilgrimage of life.

Swooning Over Jesus I meditated last week with a brother priest as he prayed on retreat for 8 days. In one of the meditations from his resource book, it spoke of the Blessed Virgin Mary as swooning in love with her Son, Jesus Christ. I just love that image! We don't use the word "swoon" often. I think when we do use that word, it's as if the expression of love and affection is almost too much, overdone, or over the top. But think of it: if Mary swooned over Jesus, in love with him, ought we not swoon over him too? It makes for a great meditation to ponder.

Holy Spirit in Poetry An ancient prayer is sung at Pentecost Mass each year. It is also sung at most Ordination Masses. It is called in Latin, "Veni Sancte Spiritus", which is translated as Come Holy Spirit. Please see the full text printed after my signature below; it is quite beautiful in its poetic description of the Holy Spirit.

Confession needed at every age At a recent funeral, I commented on how the deceased, who was elderly and lived in a local nursing home, often requested Confession from me. In my mind, this person was on target, in that we need Confession, even if we live alone, even if we are elderly, even if we don't get out and about much. Sins of thought, brooding on past sins, having unhealed and undealt with wounds can bring a certain kind of need into one's later years. Please know that I and every priest are happy to hear your confession, no matter your stage of life, whenever you ask it of us.

Rosary Leaders We have run a note in the bulletin for many months about the need for Rosary leaders prior to Holy Mass. Reciting the Rosary is a time-honored way for those gathering at Mass to meditate prayerfully on the mysteries of the lives of Jesus and Mary in order to prepare well for Mass. Is the Lord calling you to step forward?

Happy Pentecost! God Bless You!!!

Father Grell

Veni Sancte Spiritus—Come Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit, Lord of light,
From Thy clear celestial height
Thy pure beaming radiance give.

Come, Thou Father of the poor,
Come with treasures which endure,
Come, Thou Light of all that live.

Thou, of all consolers best,
Thou, the soul's delightful Guest,
Dost refreshing peace bestow.

Thou in toil art comfort sweet,
Pleasant coolness in the heat,
Solace in the midst of woe.

Light immortal, Light divine,
Visit Thou these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill.

If Thou take Thy grace away,
Nothing pure in man will stay;
All his good is turned to ill.

Heal our wounds; our strength renew;
On our dryness pour Thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away.

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

Thou, on those who evermore
Thee confess and Thee adore,
In Thy sevenfold gifts descend:

Give them comfort when they die,
Give them life with Thee on high;
Give them joys that never end.