

Jan 24-25, 2015

Thoughts from the pastor,

It seems like a month of two since my last letter, but it has only been three weeks. January is almost over and Feb. 18 is already Ash Wednesday. I am happy to report that I had a very restful vacation. I did some jogging on the walkway along the beach. It doesn't really seem like real jogging for there were no hills along the shoreline. There were a lot of skateboarders which is different than when I jogged years ago in California. Then it was all in-line skaters. That was over a decade ago so the trend may have changed. I finished reading the second volume of St. Pope John Paul's biography. I also prayed and watched the ocean and the sunsets. I did very few other activities. I wanted to rest.

I went to Mass almost every morning at the nearest parish, St. Brigid Church. It was interesting talking to the two priests there. The pastor is running the diocese because their bishop died a few months ago. He has about five jobs at their chancery, none of which I would want to have as a responsibility. The Associate Pastor is a few years younger than I am and is there to handle things at least until they get a bishop. We were comparing numbers for each diocese. They have about 1.2 million Catholics. We have less than 250,000. They have 104 active diocesan priests and we have about 135. They have about 100 parishes and we have about 130. I may have to go out there occasionally during the winters and substitute while one of their priests is on vacation. It would be tough duty but someone has to do it. I can dream can't I? There are times priests have nice options even when we are working.

As soon as I got back I was signed up to help present for an Engaged Encounter Weekend. I also had Masses here but it wasn't officially bi-location. That is fun to do when I have Mass on TV and have Mass here at the same time. The EE weekend was really nice. There were 24 couples, each struggling to get a good start on their marriage and do it in a way to include God. One of the signs to me of how it went is that over half of the participants took the opportunity to go to confession on Saturday night and those went until midnight. They were really wanting to take God's word seriously. It is great seeing that kind of faith.

We have had some amazing news in the past few weeks. Last week Fr. Paul Hoelsing, who gave the Lenten retreat at SEAS last year was named to be the next Dean of Men and Spiritual Formator for Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis. He has been the Vocation Director of the Archdiocese so he knows our seminarians very well. We also heard that Msgr. Joseph Hanefeldt will be ordained a bishop to serve the Diocese of Grand Island. Since he served as pastor here at SEAS, you can say that you helped train him for his work. We will have to figure out if we should photo-shop some kind of mitre onto his picture hanging in the pastor's gallery.

This week we are celebrating Catholic School's Week. The Archbishop will be coming to celebrate the Mass on Monday at the school as a special recognition of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the school. That is one other area that I was comparing with San Diego. They have about half the number of Catholic schools at each level as our Archdiocese. We have more students enrolled in those schools even though their Catholic population is so much larger. It is something that we should be very proud of. After all Jesus told us right before He ascended to heaven, "Teach them everything I have commanded you."

God bless you all,  
Fr. Frank