

March 21-22, 2015

Thoughts from the pastor,

Here are two quick reminders for this weekend. The town hall meeting will be after the 11:00am Mass this Sunday, 3/22. It is important for we will be looking at several issues, possible changes in the Sunday and weekday Mass times and the possible stained-glass window project. The other reminder is that the second collection after Communion this weekend and next will be for the Togo library that Fr. John is trying to set up. I gave more information on that in last week's letter. If you were at Mass this weekend you will have already noticed the Our Lady of Guadalupe image in the front of the church.

Now that Bishop Hanefeldt is officially installed as the bishop of Grand Island I thought it might be a good time to give you some hints as to what kind of things a bishop has to deal with in their career. Some of them you would be aware of but it is scary when you see them in one pile.

Each bishop is called to be leader. One of my favorite sayings was on a plaque that my mother had. "How many of them were there? How fast were they going? Which way did they go? I need to know, because I am their leader. The church is a big institution that also happens to be the family of God. From the very beginning God's family did not obey so well. It can give the family a bad name. It hasn't gotten any better over the centuries. One of his worst nightmares and blessings are his priests. We are a motley group. Most of us keep wondering what God was thinking when He called us. The rest of them need to be thinking that. The reality is that we are each uniquely flawed. I remember Archbishop Sheehan's comment after doing the funeral for two priests in two days. He said the first priest was one that no one ever complained about. The second one had a folder full of complaints in his files. He told us that he was actually happier with the second priest. Even though that priest often drove his people crazy, they had to grow in their faith. The first priest never made any waves so no one grew. So for each priest the bishop has, he either gets headaches from the people or from the priest. The result of this is that most parishes would be very happy to get a better priest, but it must be one without flaws and must think like they do. The problem is that we are short of priests and very short of ones who would be schizophrenic enough to think like everyone in his parish.

There are so many leadership styles. None of them are perfect in terms of making everyone happy. You have to presume that Jesus had the perfect leadership style and yet He made a lot of people very angry with Him. Bishops have to figure out how much to push and when to just pray and wait. Just look at the different styles between our recent popes and you get an idea. John Paul was very outgoing and constantly challenged people to not be complacent. Benedict was not outgoing. He was a teacher so his style was to write but not to be so "in your face." Francis is one whose style seems to be to welcome sinners and wait with rules and regulations.

Many people in the parishes have no idea of the kinds of decisions that a bishop or a priest can make that turn people against him. A simple one that Msgr. Joe made while he was at Christ the King parish was to not allow the selling of Girl Scout cookies at the church. He was trying to teach them that there are alternatives to this group that provides funds for Planned Parenthood. But those who have been a part of the Girl Scouts for decades were not happy because they feel that they personally are not supporting Planned Parenthood so it should be okay. Bishop Joseph will have to make the same kind of decision in Grand Island. Either way he will make some friends and make some enemies. So my message is that you need to pray for him and all our bishops.

God bless you all,
Fr. Frank