

May 6-7, 2017

Thoughts from the pastor,

First and foremost, don't forget the concert this Sunday, 5/7, at 2pm, here in the church. All donations toward stained glass windows this week will be doubled up to \$7,000. The concert should be fun. I hope you can attend.

Time is getting crazier for me every year. I remember how each year was an eternity when I was young. I was told that things would go faster as I got older. That was correct, but there has been a new wrinkle in time for me. It has to do with the weeks and how they go. I can't figure out the time-line for each week. I came back from Mundelein Seminary in North Chicago a week ago. Since that time the week has been typical in that it is hard to track the time. It seems like I came back a month ago. Maybe it is because of all the juggling that I am doing from day-to-day, as I attempt to keep the many different things on my calendar straight. I have even had the thought that maybe this is a little like what eternity with God may be like. I no longer think that we will be in a state of motionless prayer as I feared as a child. I do believe that the skills that God has put into us and then helped us to develop will be put to some use in heaven. I don't have a clue what that will be but I believe that it will put a different twist as to how time moves for us when we get there. The idea of doing wonderful things for and with God will make it a joy.

I bring this up because of my experience at the class on Spiritual Direction that I am participating in. That was what the time in Chicago was all about. Many of you have asked how it went. It has been very hard to describe. A lot of what I was mentioning about time was a factor in that week of pray and study. Even though there was definitely a routine to the schedule, the week was timeless. A major part of that had to do with what God was helping me feel. I had gone to the class in much the same way that I had taken the trips to Vietnam years ago. I had been asked and I had no excuse to avoid it. I actually felt God opening doors for me so that I could go and then gently pushing me through those doors. Because I didn't fight His (and Mary's) urgings; I was blessed with a very wonderful and powerful experience in Vietnam that changed my life in many different ways.

The experience of this class was so much like that. Doors opened so I could attend. I felt God urging me to go. This time Mary didn't seem to be involved. I had no reason to fight the urge so I attended. I knew that there were things that I would be taught at this class that could help me in my ministry, but all through the week I felt that there was going to be a whole lot more to what this will be about. I have this feeling that God is preparing me for something. The part that drives me crazy is that, as usual, I have no idea what it is.

I have learned very well that to argue with God in matters like this is silly. It is not that He forces me into things. It is just that the places that he leads me are so incredible that I really don't want to be the cause of missing any of the opportunities that He is offering. During the week at Mundelein I had very powerful experience of God letting me know that I was in the right place. That kind of experience of the Lord's presence has been with me more and more over the years. I presume it is the result of spending a lot of time with Him in prayer. I have not had the problem that St. Theresa of Calcutta is said to have dealt with. For much of her life she didn't feel the presence of God confirming her after he gave her the initial instructions on her job for Him. Maybe it is because my job has changed so much over the years that He has had to keep closer ties with me. For whatever reason it happens, it is a blessing. And it is a blessing that I hope is in your lives more and more each year. Even if it makes the week seem weird, it is an amazing experience. Now I just have to

continue with the next eight sessions of the class over the next three years. Then maybe God will show me why I am doing this extra work. It goes back to the motto of my priesthood: "Do whatever he tells you." Those were Mary's words to the servants at the wedding feast at Cana.

Since I have another page to work with this week I thought I would fill in the blanks on the Mass schedule vote. My letter last week was very limited because I was doing it long distance. Some of you have had the chance to see the graph of the votes that came with the email I sent out. I have added it to this letter so the rest of you can see it. It is fairly obvious that 8 & 11am are still the best times for the two Masses on Sunday morning. It is also obvious that it will not be perfect for many parishioners. In the next life we will not have these kinds of problems. It has to do with that timeless quality that I was talking about. But with this life it is not perfect for everyone. So Mother's Day, next weekend, will be the last of the additional 9:30am Sunday Masses for the foreseeable future.

Over the next month or so, you will be able to read about some changes that will be happening in the rural areas in terms of priest's assignments. You will notice that there will be some changes. This is because we have two ordinations and are losing more than two priests from parish ministry. This should be a confirmation of why we will have less and less Masses of convenience over the years. Over the next few years there will be more reconfigurations in our Archdiocese. The Sioux City Diocese is working on their plan to close 41 parishes. All of this is why Archbishop Lucas is working so hard to create a vision for the future of the Archdiocese of Omaha. I will do my best to keep you informed as that develops.

God bless you,  
Fr. Frank