

Bishop-Elect Clark: Personal Observations

Rome — "I really have my own way of doing things. I will have to be with the people. I can't conceive of ministry without living it out with people. By people I mean priests, sisters and brothers, as well as laity."

The bishop-elect of Rochester, Father Matthew H. Clark, was speaking off the top of his head about his new assignment.

The words were simple and straightforward and according to those who have known him, reflect the personality of the man himself. But if Matthew H. Clark is simple that does not mean he is shallow. His background belies that. In addition to his degree in Theology from the North American College here, he has a licentiate in canon law from the Gregorian. He has been an assistant pastor, a teacher, vice chancellor of the Albany diocese, chairman of the Priest Personnel Board in

Immediately upon learning of the selection of Father Matthew H. Clark as the next bishop of Rochester, Anthony J. Costello, publisher and general manager, and Carmen J. Viglucci, editor, traveled to Rome to interview and photograph him for the Courier-Journal.

John Dash, news editor, visited the bishop-elect's family in Waterford for a close-up view.

Costello and Viglucci spent the waking hours of more than two days with Father Clark. This story is the result of a collaborative interview with the new bishop. It also includes many of Father Clark's off-the-cuff observations.

The material is presented in the hope of providing an in-depth introduction of our new bishop to our readers. All the recent photographs were taken by Costello.

Albany, a Newman chaplain, and now spiritual director of the North American College.

So, as with most men we call "simple" — Pope John XXIII and Abraham Lincoln, for instance — Father Matthew H. Clark has multi-faceted talents and interests.

Reflective of this are his rooms at the North American College on Rome's Janiculum Hill which double as his home and office. Books abound, as one would expect, mostly with theological and religious themes, along with many on psychology or dealing with the human condition. There are many different versions of the Bible and right along with them is the Sporting News, baseball's bible.

His colleagues consistently characterize him as a "thoughtful" or "spiritual" person. Yet he is also a very active person. He eschews other ways of transportation to walk on his errands through Rome, "a city which I will miss, along with the college, although I am looking forward to Rochester."

"This has been a colossal

year in Rome," he said as he covered the traffic-clogged narrow streets with long strides. He was referring to the death and successions of two popes. "And now it ends with this immense excitement for me."

When does he plan to be installed?

"The sooner, the better. Hopefully by the end of June but it depends on the schedule of some others."

He is direct and clear on the type of installation he wants.

"I would like it to be a diocesan celebration with as many as possible participating."

Having spent 13 years in Rome, Father Clark has a good command of the Italian language although it merely "adequate . . . I am a linguist." Later he adds that he intends to learn Spanish to serve better Rochester's Spanish-speaking community.

He remembers Rochester where he spent two years at St. Bernard's Seminary and remembers Bishop Joseph Hogan.

"I appreciated him when he taught me and later when he was in Rome he usually stopped by and did more than say hello. He always took time for conversation. I appreciated that, too."

And for those whom he has not yet met in Rochester, he said, "I can't wait to meet them."

He said his first job is "to be a good pastor." And the spirituality his associates know so well spills forth. "If I had to go on my own human powers, I wouldn't go. It will be God's work and I have no reason to believe he won't do it through me."

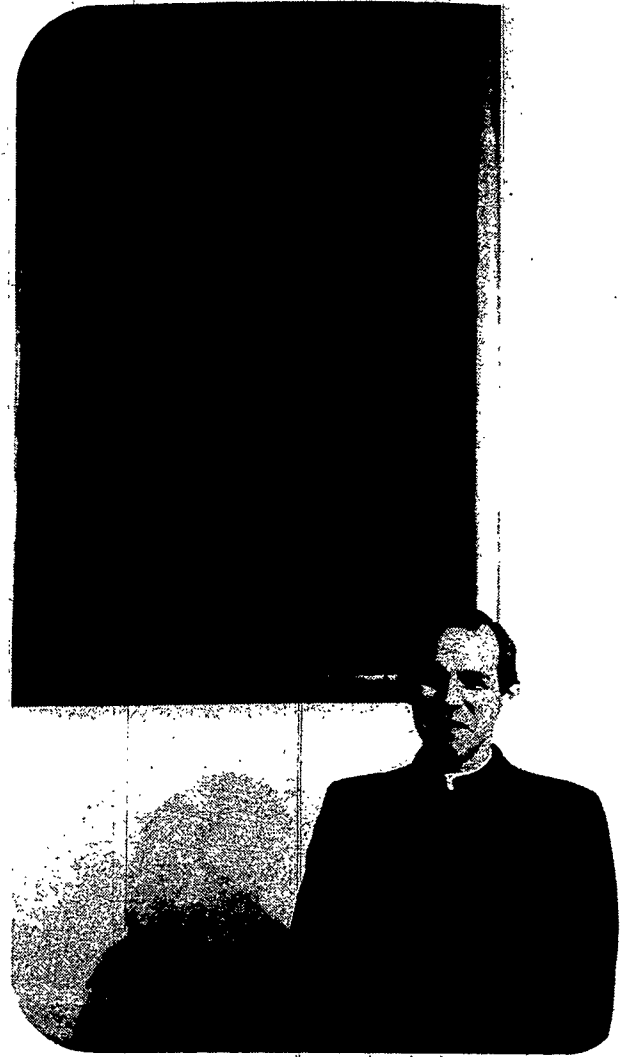
He offered some other beliefs. "I believe in ecumenism. I look forward to working with all my brothers and sisters in Rochester."

"I believe that the Good News is the source of freedom for us all. It's happy, positive news. Not to say there are no problems. There are those. But we must never lose sight of the hope which is the source of our own freedom."

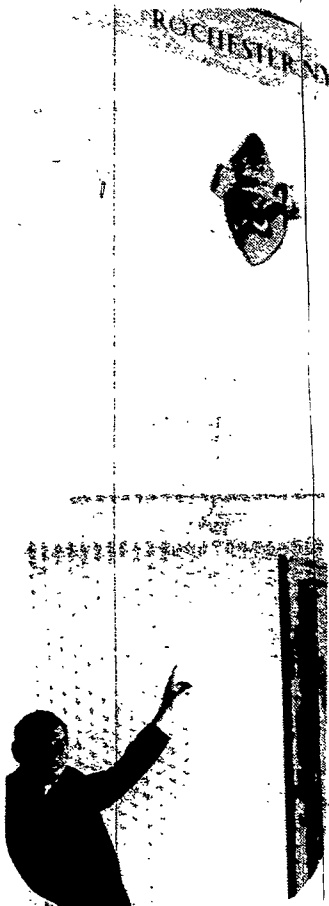
"I hope to be the kind of person who fosters conciliation — to heal wounds — to call people forward to productive and self-giving forms of activity."

"I hope to be with the young people — they are the hope of the future."

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In front of a portrait of St. John Fisher, patron saint of Rochester, which hangs in the English College in Rome.



Pointing to the heraldic device of the Diocese of Rochester which hangs in a hallway at the North American College.



Photos by Anthony J. Costello

A chat with Cardinal George Basil Hume, the archbishop of Westminster at

Our Warmest Welcome To Bishop-Elect Matthew H. Clark

