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At the Outset of the Bishop's Journey, He Gathers All in the Heart of Prayer

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It is very quiet tonight at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

This stillness and the hospitality of their common life are gifts from the sisters to me for these three days after Ash Wednesday.

I wanted to come to turn my heart to the Lord and to open it to you for the Crossroads to Life journey we shall share during the Lenten season.

You are with me tonight as I pray to the Father who loves us all. Especially are you with me in the people I met on Ash Wednesday, the first day of our journey.

I remember the generous, gentle man advanced in age and seriously ill. His has been a lifetime of service. Yet now in the loneliness of the hospital room he wrestles with the terrifying questions of death and the lasting meaning of his life — a life so beautiful to those who have known him.

When I remember him, I pray for you as you meet the challenge of realities in your life which test your faith and make you feel uncertain. An unsafe neighborhood? Unemployment or lack of job security? The threat of a horrible war? As the threat of death challenges the heart so can these reach deeply into our spirits. For your courage I pray and in the prayer am strengthened to face with more confidence the doubts of my own life.

The inmate facing murder charges is here too. As he left our prayer service at the jail yesterday, he said, "Thanks, Bishop; that was beautiful." He is afraid, I think. I know I would be.

He reminds me to pray for you in your fears —

for the health of a loved one? For a son or daughter on a dangerous path? For a parent enslaved by alcohol? And you remind me of the fears of my own life. What we all need to remember is that we have a Lord whose love casts our fear and allows us to live in new freedom.

My friend from Webster is part of my spirit tonight too. She wrote recently about the Crossroads to Life journey. She wondered, "Aren't you caught up too much in activity and not enough in prayer and solitude?"

At this moment I thank her for her question and pray for her and all of us as we seek to do the better thing in the service of God and of our brothers and sisters.

We don't always know with certainty that we've made the very best choices. So we need to give thanks now and then for a God and friends who so gently call us to a truer course. We need to acknowledge that alone we perish; more importantly, that joined to Christ, we share the company and strength of the saints, i.e., one another.

There are many more: the priest with whom I had the slam-bang interview; a friend beginning her retirement; the sisters here who are such witnesses to the faith; our young people in whom God so generously communicates His life; our older friends so ready to encourage those who come after them.

In these quiet moments you are all with me and I feel especially blessed to be aware of your goodness and holiness.

My hope is that you count yourself holy in the God who so loved us in Jesus. Lent is a special time to remember that love and a privileged moment in which to respond to God with the whole sweep of



Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

The Journey Begins

Bishop Matthew H. Clark began his Lenten Crossroads to Life journey at the Monroe County Jail last Wednesday, distributing ashes to inmates at the facility. The bishop continued his journey at another Ash Wednesday service at the Cathedral and at the first of five regional Family Life Conferences in Canandaigua. More photos, Page 5.

our lives: in the reconciliation we seek with God and neighbor; in the loving service we render in factory, office, school and home; in our love for spouse and children; in the quiet prayer of our heart; in the unseen sacrifices of daily life; in our effort to serve the poor.

Lent is a time for remembering God's love for us so that we can be strengthened to empty our hearts of illusion and idols and sin.

That is never easy, but it is made ever joyful by our sure faith that we have a God who knows us exactly as we are and who loves us with a love that endures forever.

I do pray for you tonight — and have tried to share with you something of what that prayer has been like.

When we meet along the road during the weeks ahead I hope that you will share your prayer with me and our friends.

In the meantime, I ask in particular that we join in prayer for our wonderful catechumens and for those who so generously introduce them to our community of faith.

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President Promotes Tuition Tax Credit

By Stephenie Overman

Washington (NC) — President Reagan met members of Congress Feb. 16 to urge quick passage of tuition tax credit legislation and to propose a tax credit bill similar to one which failed to pass Congress last year.

At a press briefing following Reagan's meeting with Congressmen, Department of Education Undersecretary Gary L. Jones said the bill would be introduced by Sen. Robert Dole

(R-Kan.), with Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), Sen. Robert Packwood (R-Ore.) and Sen. William Roth (R-Del.) as co-sponsors. The bill would amend the internal revenue code of 1954.

In a statement to Congress Reagan said the proposal would allow increased diversity in educational opportunity "by providing tax relief for parents who choose to send their children to non-public schools."

Reagan said parents who

send their children to non-public schools bear the double burden of paying private school tuition and taxes for the public schools.

"This additional cost has always severely limited the ability of lower-income families to choose, the non-public educational alternative for their children," he said. "Rising costs are now putting private schools beyond the reach of a growing number of middle-income Americans as well. If we are to provide a meaningful choice for those

for whom it is in danger of becoming an illusion, we must find a way to lighten the 'double burden' these families bear."

"We must also bear in mind that private schools do more than offer alternative educational choices to students and their parents," he added.

"Non-public schools also carry a significant part of the burden of providing primary

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Confession to Be Key Theme of Bishops' Synod

By Nancy Frazier

Vatican City (NC) — Individual confession and absolution, expected to be a key theme of the 1983 World Synod of Bishops, "responds to the deep psychological needs" of human beings, says the synod working document made public last week.

The document for the month-long event, scheduled to open at the Vatican Sept. 29, was released in Latin and in unofficial French and Italian translations at a Vatican press conference by Archbishop Jozef Tomko, general secretary of the synod.

The working document was

prepared by the synod's 15-member council on the basis of responses from 96 bishops' conferences. Catholic organizations or Vatican offices to the "lineamenta" or preparatory "framework" document issued a year earlier. The latest paper shows a much greater emphasis on the importance of individual confession.

The "lineamenta" devoted slightly more than a page to the topic, while the working document's treatment of the subject covers nearly five pages.

"It appears evident that the monthly celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation,

and in its sphere individual confession with the minister of Christ and the church, responds to the deep psychological needs of man and can contribute to the maturity and serenity of souls and to interpersonal relationships," the working document says.

"Some, having abandoned the celebration of penitence with individual confession, have begun to manifest the anxieties of their soul, and sometimes its guilts, to psychologists and with too much gullibility even to astrologers and others," the document adds.

The theme of the 1983

synod is "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church."

The working document reaffirms the long-time church stance that "individual and complete confession, with respective absolution is the only ordinary mode whereby the faithful can reconcile themselves with God and with the church."

General absolution is permitted only "if there is a great need, namely when in view of the number of penitents, sufficient confessors are not available to hear individual confessions properly within a suitable

period of time," the document says.

"A person has an interior need to open his or her soul to another," Archbishop Tomko told NC News after the press conference.

The 70-page paper is an expanded version of the "lineamenta," drawn up along the same lines, but devoting more space to the "promotion of reconciliation in the various spheres of personal and social life," Archbishop Tomko said at the press conference.

"This part is almost completely new, prepared at the request of several bishops, in order to create a space for

discussion of concrete solutions and to show once again that true interior conversion brings a fundamental contribution to renewal and reconciliation in society and the world," he added.

"Here," says the working document, "is a call for the work of the synod: may it declare in an incisive manner the obligation which Christians have to commit themselves to ways of penitence, which converts hearts, in order to eliminate the ferment of hate and violence which sustains wars, and to revive the flame of the

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