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## CROSSROADS TO LIFE

### Priest — A Man of Prayer

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

During the first week of Lent I met with the priests of the diocese at Notre Dame Retreat House. Our theme was "Growth in Ministry." In my talk to the priests I spoke of the theme in four components: Prayer, Emotional Growth, Physical Health, and Intellectual Development.

I have asked the Courier-Journal to publish the section on Prayer. I hope that it will help you in your own prayer life and be a reminder to you to pray with and for our priests during this Holy Season.

My theme today is Growth in Ministry. The talk I have prepared is fairly lengthy — although, if I go beyond the allotted hour, I am sure it will not be by very much. Let me introduce it briefly with a few background comments.

1. I am grateful to our Ministry to Priests team for their assistance in developing the theme and format of our gathering this year. They have been generous in their counsel and leg work and I believe they have built a program that will allow us to reflect upon and grow in the priesthood we share and love so dearly.

2. In developing my keynote talk I have chosen prayer, emotional/relational growth, bodily health, and intellectual development as essential components for personal and ministerial maturing. For each of these sections I have tried to develop questions and/or practical suggestions for your discussion here and for your consideration in the future. At the end I have added a brief reflection on my own ministerial experience as bishop, and how that continually calls me to growth. I will stay basically with the text, although I will probably branch away from it from time to time.

3. Third and lastly, what I have written comes from inside me and is directed to your spirit. I hope that we can share these Lenten hours together open to that change of heart to which Our Lord continually calls us.

**1. PRAYER.** Priesthood makes little sense in the life of one who is not praying. The plain and simple truth is that our people want us to be men

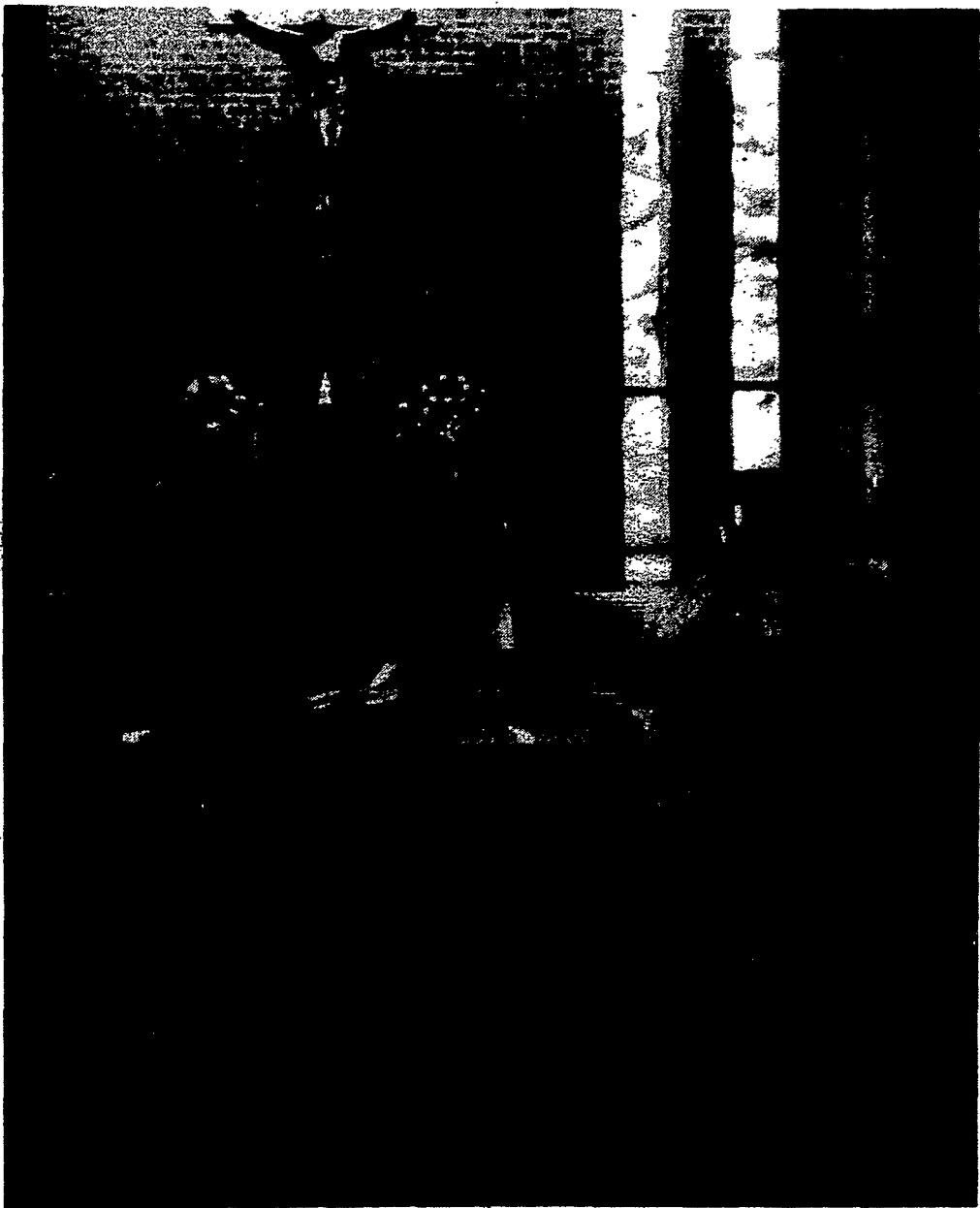


Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

Bishop Matthew H. Clark takes a moment for quiet prayer in the chapel at Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua, during the Clergy Conference last week.

of prayer. The Church wants us to be men of prayer.

I am not sure I can describe adequately all that this means, but please allow me to say a little about prayer and our ministry to God's people.

Prayer is a meeting with God in which we can finally be no one other than who we really are. In any encounter with Christ we know Him better and in Him we come to deeper knowledge of our brothers, sisters and ourselves.

Our moment of meeting with Him is the time when the idols of our life are shown to be what they really are, when our illusions begin to give way to reality, when we come face to face with the sin in our life.

In genuine prayer we cannot for long wear the

masks we can put on unthinkingly in the course of daily living. Before Christ in prayer we do not have to know all the answers; we do not need to rush about; we can relax our staunchly defended positions, and perhaps even smile at the vehemence with which we have held them.

The timing and manner may vary from person to person. But somewhere at the beginning of a recommitted prayer life, and, normally, with some regularity in an ongoing one, the Lord will lay the burning coal to the lips of His loved one to purify His servant for his life-giving mission . . . among the people of God.

When and as that happens we have received a precious gift. For at such times we

come in touch with our own hearts. That is to say we appreciate ourselves as God does. We become caught up in that joyful moment when we understand the beautiful words, "I have made you . . . I have called you by name . . . you are precious in my sight."

When that happens — and it happens over and over and ever more deeply in one committed to prayer — we are able to find room in our hearts for all of the people who fill our days. The sick and the well; the cooperative and the oh-so-demanding; the tender young ones who so brighten us and all those who encourage us; the suffering; the lonely; the poor.

They can come to be with us before the Father who loves us all because we are

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## Pontiff's American Journey To Begin

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II was scheduled to arrive in San Jose, Costa Rica, today to begin a tour of seven nations during his March 2-9 visit to Central America and Haiti.

The pontiff will celebrate eight Masses, lead six paralyturgical services and meet with the political leaders of the seven nations on his itinerary.

The nations he will visit are Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and Haiti. He will arrive back in Rome March 10.

In contrast to the programs for some of the 16 previous papal trips abroad, the itinerary in Central America and Haiti is heavy with strictly religious events such as Masses, and light on potentially controversial political meetings.

In each country except Belize, the former British colony which became independent less than two years

ago, Pope John Paul II will meet each nation's top politicians.

The meetings are scheduled to last an average of 40 minutes, except in Nicaragua March 4, where the schedule would allow him to remain in consultation with the ruling Sandinista junta for nearly four hours.

The only other non-religious events are a March 3 meeting with judges of the Interamerican Court for Human Rights at the apostolic nunciature in San Jose, Costa Rica, and a March 7 meeting with the "university world" at the nunciature in Guatemala City.

The pope is scheduled to meet with a variety of Church and social groups — women religious and youth in Costa Rica, laity in Nicaragua, rural peasants in Panama, priests in El Salvador; Indians, catechists and new religious in Guatemala, and Delegates of the Word in Honduras.

He will travel more than  
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## Will Pope Visit Lutheran Parish?

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II may mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King by visiting and preaching in a Lutheran parish in Rome.

A Vatican official active in ecumenical activities told NC News Service that an invitation to visit and preach has been received by the pope and is being seriously considered.

"Officially it has not yet been decided," said the official who preferred to remain anonymous. "But what is clear is that the pope has not

refused the offer. My opinion is that he is now looking for a suitable date."

Pastor Christoph Mayer of the Lutheran parish described the genesis of the invitation in the Feb. 23 issue of "Notizie Vangeliche," the newsletter of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy.

The parish is in the Via Veneto section of Rome and the pastor said that in January 1982 when the pope visited a nearby Catholic parish, he was greeted at reception by a board member of the  
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