

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



I have tried to find personal ways to respond to the invitations and challenges of the Holy Year of Redemption.

One path I have followed is to pray for the grace I need to be open to the Holy Spirit leading me to new life. And I try to do it unafraid of the awareness that for me such a grace is rarely an easy one.

It can require publicly changing my mind, surrendering positions I may have defended rather strongly or admitting I didn't really know all I thought I did.

A gift of that kind can also involve the recognition that, although I may have all the facts straight, my judgments can still miss the larger truth of things. (For this reason, I can understand both the umpires and Mr. MacPhail in the celebrated Brett-pine tar case. See how grace can soften the heart of even a die-hard Yankee fan!)

All of these things I find difficult and I suspect it's the same for you. We just don't like moving on from ways of acting or thinking which mean a great deal to us or which keep us feeling safe. We have invested too much of ourselves into

them. To leave them behind is like leaving part of ourselves behind.

But for me -- and I hope for you -- the whole enterprise becomes much less painful when we can believe that the journey away from the secure will lead to something more life-giving. And it can be positively joy-filled when we are supported by people who try to understand what we are doing and who love us -- even though they may disagree with our position.

Perhaps you have memories or present challenges which put you in touch with what I am trying to say.

It may be an experience of married life in which you realize that all things are not as they should be -- and the possibly frightening awareness that the situation won't change until you do.

It may be the insight that you can no longer blame everyone else in school for your discontent or lack of achievement -- and the challenge to take hold of things and begin the exciting business of really growing up.

If you are in any way wrestling with a call to change, let me recommend two ways of response to you:

1. I encourage you to place before the Lord in whatever way you can any challenge to change you may experience in yourself just now. Be easy about it -- just ask from your heart. Ask the Lord for the grace to know the way you should go and the courage to follow it.

2. Please tell someone who loves you -- your wife or husband, a son or daughter, a teacher or your bishop, if you run into him -- that you want to or need to change something in your life. You don't have to say much about it, although that often helps. Just commend yourself to his or her prayers.

I ask your prayer for my own spiritual growth and for the special grace during this Holy Year of Redemption to be unafraid of any ways in which the Lord may want me to change. You have my prayers each day.

Peace.

Tabasco Report

By Father Neil Miller

Tabasco is like discovering a new world. It has always been the name of a place in the distance, real but also unreal.

Our trip to Tabasco began with a stop of several hours in Mexico City of which we took advantage to do some sightseeing.

Our first stop was to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe just outside of Mexico City. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the advocacy by which the Virgin is venerated in Mexico. She is the one who unifies all Mexicans who

Father Miller is a member of the four-person diocesan mission team which will be serving in Tabasco. The others are Mark S. Kavanaugh, Valerie Smith and Yolanda Ramos.

come to her with their prayers and their needs.

It is at her shrine that we dedicated our mission to Tabasco.

The bishop of Tabasco, Don Rafael Garcia, is an energetic and holy man who is deeply concerned about his people. He is not only concerned about their spirit but also about their daily needs

such as food, health, etc., He is close to his priests, his seminarians, his people. He seems to know them all and they know him.

During our first day in Tabasco, we made a trip to Las Palomas, a rancharia of the parish of Macuspana where we visited with Father Mario Vizcaino and the missionary team.

Father Mario has been coming to Tabasco for the past 12 years, bringing with him a large group of volunteers to carry out three-week missions in the different rancharias.

This summer, he had 35 volunteers who were divided among three rancharias. They work among the people through home visits, teaching catechism, building Church, being the presence of the Lord to those who are his poor.

The next day, came our first visit to Oxolotan, where the Rochester diocese is to set up our mission. We -- the bishop; the pastor of the parish, Father Albino; three seminarians; and Lourdes and Evelio Perez-Albuera and myself from the Rochester diocese -- set out early in the morning.

The trip was more than exciting. We drove for miles in the Jeep that will be our mission vehicle, with the bishop or one of the seminarians driving. We had already gone for about 1 1/2 to 2 hours when we came to a river, which we had to cross to reach Oxolotan. There was no bridge, only a makeshift ferry that operates when two men pull the ropes. The river was too high, so the "ferry" was not operating, so we had to turn around and use another which would take us another 2 hours to get to the mission.

We finally arrived in Oxolotan, the home for the Rochester missionaries. The people had anxiously waited more than five hours for our arrival. Hundreds came out waving to us and reaching out their hands in a warm welcome.

The village is poor as are its inhabitants, but also beautiful because of its people.

Their homes, made of tree limbs and thatch roofs are lined in rows and spread throughout the hills. Food is very scarce during this time, yet we were welcomed like royalty. With pride, they showed us their 500-year-old church, the convent that is yet to be rebuilt, and the



Father Neil Miller speaks to the congregation at St. Dominic's.



St. Dominic Church in Oxolotan, built in the 16th century by Dominican missionaries, features stone walls six feet thick.



Bishop Raphael Garcia distributes communion to the people.

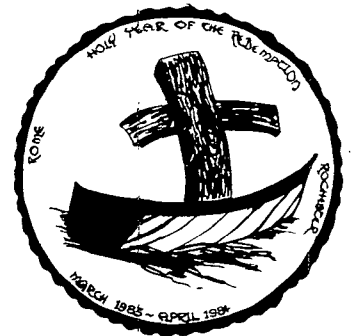
temporary, clean but simple, home that would house the missionaries. I celebrated the Eucharist with the bishop with about 900 people singing and giving praise to the Lord who has touched all of our lives. It was a joyful celebration.

A fiesta followed with tasty food and drink prepared by the people. It was truly a homecoming.

As we left the village, we took on another passenger -- a villager who had an infection in his foot and who was in great pain. The nearest medical facility would be two hours away and we would drop him off there as we returned to Villahermosa, the residence of the bishop.

So now Tabasco is no longer a mere name for me; it's a reality with the con-

fidence that the people of Oxolotan are eagerly awaiting our return.



Vespers Slated

A Holy Year vespers service for the Northeast Region has been scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 14, at Church of the Assumption, Fairport.

Father Robert Bradler, region coordinator, will preside; and Sister Mary Louise Heffernan, SSJ, Holy Year coordinator, will be the homilist. The choir from St. Stanislaus Church will also participate. Refreshments will follow.

The Church of the Assumption is the pilgrimage church for the Northeast Region.

Speaks for Refugees

New York -- The United States should resettle as many Indochinese refugees as possible, Auxiliary Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Brooklyn, said July 25, urging the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to consider the Indochinese political, not economic, refugees. Bishop Bevilacqua, chairman of the Migration and Tourism Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, led a delegation July 5-19 to refugee camps in Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong and the Portuguese-administered territory of Macao.