

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



One day a couple of years ago my oldest niece asked me what bishops did.

Grace was 13 at the time and seemed genuinely interested in hearing what I had to say. I didn't know how best to respond so I told her some of the things I had done in the two or three days before our conversation.

When I finished, she looked singularly unimpressed and said, "Oh, thanks. I really just thought you kind of sat around all day!"

Just so you won't think I just sit around all day, let me mention some of the people and events which have been a part of this week.

There were meetings concerning responsible investment of diocesan resources... sexuality and the problem of pregnancy among teenagers... remuneration for women religious... the Thanks Giving Appeal... support for public education... The Courier-Journal. And there were a variety of routine and not so routine administrative sessions.

In addition to the meetings, I had the joy of sharing visits and/or meals with a community of Sisters... the priests of our support group... the staff and kids at Camp Stella Maris... a family in Irondequoit... some friends from college days and

their families.

Other graced moments this week were celebrations of the Eucharistic Liturgy with the people of St. Joseph's, Penfield, and with those who gathered at Sacred Heart Cathedral for the commissioning of our permanent mission team to our sister diocese of Tabasco, Mexico.

As I remember this week in the quiet of Sunday evening, I thank our loving Lord most of all for your willingness to contribute to the life of our faith community and for your ready encouragement. I remember and give thanks for:

- The easy laughter and gracious hospitality of the Sisters with whom I shared a cook-out supper. They remained calm when the food blew off the table.

- The obvious but unspoken pride of a pastor in the way the parish community celebrates the Eucharist together,

- Enthusiastic young people who are considerate hosts and hostesses until they become your opponent in a video game. Did you ever think your brain was made of oatmeal and your fingers were of iron? Try a video game with an eight-year-old!

- The special moment of grace when Mark Gallagher, Valerie Smith, Yolanda Ramos and Neil Miller were acclaimed by the assembly at the moment of their commissioning as the

first members of our permanent mission team to the Diocese of Tabasco.

- The kindness of a priest who generously did some research for me and encouraged me to continue doing this writing.

Its this kind of experience of you and people like you who have made this Summer such a restoring time. I am very grateful for it.

Please join me this week in prayer for our Sisters of Mercy. They begin their General Chapter on Sunday morning. Theirs is a loving presence among us — one which bespeaks hospitality, compassion and generous service to us all. We have a chance in our prayer to tell them of our love and support.

Next week in this space, I'll tell you about what I'll be up to as the weeks of Summer draw to an end.

In the meantime, I hope we can pray for one another. Peace.

Statement by Bishop Clark

A Catholic Perspective on Public School Crisis

Recently, there has been much discussion about the needs of our urban public schools. Many people ranging from Gov. Mario Cuomo to Rochester Superintendent of Schools Laval Wilson seek new resources and methods of funding. Many proposals are suggested to bring needed help. Now, national leadership begins to discuss education.

Because of this discussion and that of local groups such as Genesee Ecumenical Ministries and United Church Ministries, I wish to offer a Catholic perspective on the current crisis within urban public schools.

A good education is necessary for a strong, healthy citizenry. The Catholic community in its long history in this country has demonstrated that belief in its conduct. Our community has supported public schools through taxes and participation and also developed a Catholic school system. At the present time of great financial need, however, it is vital to step forward and speak in support of urban public schools. Through this statement, I hope that the Catholic community will stand ready to share resources in whatever way that is feasible to achieve quality education for urban people.

OUR HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM EXPERIENCE

I believe that it is a matter of justice that quality education be available for all of the people of our community regardless of economic status. Therefore, the Catholic community should explore its own history in attempting to understand and respond to the situation of urban education today. In the Northeast, the Catholic population has been urban and placed a great emphasis on education. In examining history, we would underline nine specific points:

1. For us the neighborhood has been an important center of education. It provided an ethnic and cultural context of emotional and social support to people. The value of the neighborhood-support system should be weighed against the value of experiencing a neighborhood that offers a variety of cultures and integrates different peoples. Both are important. The choice may depend on the circumstances of particular groups.

2. Catholic people appreciate the importance of quality education for children. It strengthens their sense of identity and offers the skills needed for successful living.

3. Urban Catholic educational institutions traditionally worked with the economically-poor population groups not yet established within a city. Schools need to be adapted to that purpose.

4. The relationship between parents and teachers in parochial schools has always been very close. This has provided the teachers with a support system and a good understanding of the lives and the homes of the students.

5. Parents and teachers of Catholic school students have always worked hard and been generous to insure that resources demanded for a quality education were available.

6. Local ownership coupled with diocesan service has helped Catholic school administrators to be inventive in cost efficiency and the use of volunteers. In this way, costs were cut.

7. For most of our history, there have been parochial schools in virtually every neighborhood. This fact offered parents the choice of having their children educated in public or nonpublic schools.

8. Within the parochial school network there have been schools and programs of special excellence made available to all, thus offering parents a choice of different educational programs for their children.

9. Most Catholic schools in urban ethnic neighborhoods before World War II provided a cultural context to the educational curriculum. Language, culture and traditions were often taught along with the 4Rs (religion added). This provided a valuable, strong sense of identity to children from groups generally outside of the mainstream of American society. This phenomenon is again occurring in some urban Catholic schools with large Afro-American and Hispanic

student populations.

A CALL TO ACTION

Because of this tradition of Catholic Church commitment to urban education, it is important to call for continued involvement in issues of urban education today. These issues are many, but my overriding concern is that all students in urban public schools have an equal access to quality education. That access is in jeopardy today because of unique problems and circumstances. I wish to bring these to the attention of the Catholic community, in particular, and also to the entire community. These steps may help:

- I. Adequacy and Equity in Funding Urban Public Education -- The present method of financing public schools is inadequate and unfair for young people in our cities. The resources demanded for quality education should be made available. We urge that Catholics join with others working at local, state and federal levels to discover those resources. It could mean supporting legislation which would create an equitable and adequate formula for funding urban public schools by the State of New York. Federal cuts to education should be examined and there should be clear and strong federal support for educational needs of particular groups. The city and, in our situation, the county should examine resources cooperatively and produce adequate revenue for quality schools in the City of Rochester.

- II. Parent Involvement in Urban Schools -- Involvement by parents in the education of their children is a right and a responsibility. A close relationship between parents and teachers is essential for a quality education. Because of this, I recommend:

1. Catholic parents of children in public schools should exercise this right and responsibility to be involved. We cannot have effective education without a high level of parental

involvement.

2. Parish leadership might examine ways of encouraging all parents to be involved in the schools their children attend.

3. The administration of the various schools should take practical steps to facilitate and encourage this kind of involvement.

4. Catholic community leadership should support groups working to foster and protect parent involvement.

III. Race and Culture in Monroe County Schools -- The racial and cultural context of education in schools is an important and cultural dimension of quality education. Our tradition has shown us that the need is different depending on the circumstances of the group.

1. Generally, children who have not been exposed to the experience of Afro-American, Hispanic or other non-white cultures need access to programs of integration to insure that their educational experience is culturally diverse. We recommend that Catholics support programs such as the Urban/Suburban Transfer Program. This program operates through voluntary transfer of children between schools and school districts to facilitate this kind of educational opportunity.

2. Children from particular ethnic communities, in particular those who are non-white, need access to quality education in neighborhood schools. This allows for special cultural programs which aim at strengthening self-identity. I recommend that Catholics support this kind of program as a need and a right as well.

I have learned much through the discussion that has taken place up to now. I hope that this statement will be a springboard for all those who concerned with quality education for the children of urban families.

United States
Pilgrim

Virgin Statue

will be at

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

25 Center Street, Waterloo

Sunday & Monday August 21 & 22

Sunday, August 21, at 7:30 p.m.

- Mass
- Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- Scapular and Blue Army Enrollment

For: †The Conversion of Russia †World Peace †The Conversion of Sinners.

— ALL INVITED —

