

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



Sunday evening, the Third of Lent. Some reflections which I've been working on through this week:

Father Tom Valenti told me this week that thus far we have no applicants for September for the first year of theological studies leading to ordination to the diocesan priesthood. This means that we shall likely ordain no one in 1991, and that for the coming year we will experience a net loss of two or three seminarians.

This short-range news squares with the findings of the latest vocation research of which I am unaware, i.e., that by the year 2000 in the United States we will have half the number of active priests we have now. If those figures are verified in the Diocese of Rochester, we will have approximately 150 priests in service in the year 2000. If you remember that we have 161 parishes, you'll realize very quickly that we'll have at least 11 parishes with no resident pastor by the year 2000.

That figure does not take into account the fact that the average age of our presbyterate grows higher each year. It is altogether likely that the number of parishes without resident

pastors will be considerably higher than that.

It is also quite obvious the challenge will not begin in 2000; indeed it is here today.

For this reason, we as a community need to come to a greater sense of realism about the implications of our vocation picture. We must face the need to be courageous and imaginative and resourceful in establishing new patterns of ministries. We have done some of that work in three areas of our diocese. The parish communities on the east side of Cayuga Lake have done a superb job of responding to the challenge. After the initial and difficult work of reorganization, they are now working hard to integrate and deepen their initial experience of new relationships. The same kind of challenge is now being worked on by our parish communities in Cato, Red Creek, Weedsport and Wolcott in the northeast corner of our diocese. The communities of St. Francis Xavier and Holy Redeemer in Rochester are productively engaged in the similar task.

Such work is never easy, nor is it ever brought to a happy conclusion without a prayerful willingness to make particular

sacrifices for the common good. We are not 161 distinct and unrelated communities. Rather we are one family of faith having deep relationships with and serious responsibilities toward one another. Our decisions about how we use the spiritual and material resources available to us are never properly made without reference to the wider community and especially those among us most in need.

All of us must be a part of the effort if we are to respond to this challenge fully and richly as we're able to and as I believe the Lord wants us to.

I want to continue in this direction for the next two or three weeks. Please join your thinking to my own and ask yourself: what would our parish life be like without a resident pastor? What part of the work now being done by our pastor and would our community handle? Are we — am I — requiring of my pastor what others in the community could ably and readily provide?

There's much more to be asked. Peace to all.

Parishes Join Central America Week Events

Parishes in the Rochester area will observe Central America Week March 17-24.

Old St. Mary's Church, downtown, will celebrate its 12:10 p.m. weekday liturgies focusing on a single Central American nation each day. Its March 24 liturgies will

include a special commemoration of Archbishop Oscar Romero. The day marks the fifth anniversary of the archbishop's assassination in San Salvador.

St. Rita's Church in Webster will hold a prayer

service 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 19.

Good Shepherd Church in Henrietta will hold a prayer service 7 p.m., March 23.

St. Helen's Church in Gates will hold a prayer service 7 p.m., March 24.

According to Sister Christine Wagner SSJ of the

diocesan Department of Justice and Peace, "Many parishes in the diocese are planning special prayer services, education programs or highlighting Central America in a regular liturgy in order to promote awareness of the struggles in these war-torn areas, and the suf-

fering of the people."

In addition, "Special action steps are also being asked on the part of diocesan during this week," she said. "Especially important are letters and phone calls to legislative representatives stating views on Central America and concern regarding human rights violations.

She noted that "Of particular importance to our diocese also would be seeking legislative action granting 'extended voluntary departure status' to political

refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala."

She said, "A Salvadoran family has been in political sanctuary since June, 1984, and now is in danger of deportation, a move which would undoubtedly lead to persecution in El Salvador."

"Persons wishing to contribute to the Rodriguez (Gomez) legal defense fund can do so in care of Corpus Christi Church," she said.

Further information on the week and its activities may be obtained by contacting Sister Christine, (716) 328-6400.

SBI Launches Giving Campaign

St. Bernard's Institute has launched its second annual Giving Campaign which will run until May 31.

The campaign goal is \$35,000.

Under the theme, "A Tradition of Excellence — A Commitment to the Future," the campaign aims to provide faculty, students and staff broader opportunities to teach, learn and serve by means of improved resources, materials and equipment.

According to the Father Sebastian Falcone, president and dean of the institute, an annual campaign is necessary, "For three reasons.

"St. Bernard's receives no direct financial assistance

from any church or church-related source. Tuition income, as in all educational institutions, covers only a fraction of our operating expenses. Our tuition assistance program (more than \$25,000 was given in student grants last year) stand in need of critical support."

Since it opened its doors in 1981, St. Bernard's Institute's enrollment has grown from 45 to 182.

The institute staff all the educational programs run by the former St. Bernard's

Seminary, except for seminarians preparing for priestly ordination. Students at the institute include permanent deacon candidates, retroactive master of divinity candidates and candidates preparing for such Church ministries as religious education, counseling, youth ministry, and pastoral assistantship. Women account for 52 percent of the student body.

Last years campaign realized \$13,658, 36 percent of the goal.

Donations, which are tax deductible, are sent directly

to St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester, N.Y. 14620. All contributions will be acknowledged.

Evening Prayer Set in Regions

The diocesan Office of Liturgy announced last week that Father Otto Vogt of the Southeast Region has rescheduled his region's Lenten Prayer service for 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 18 at Corpus Christi Church. The date was changed due to inclement weather.

The Seneca-Cayuga Region will hold its regional prayer gathering 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 19 at St. Hyacinth's Church in Auburn. Mrs. Karen Prave will preach. Father Edward Zimmer, the regional coordinator, will be present to celebrate with the region members and to socialize with them following prayer, the office stated.

A celebration of Crossroads III Evening Prayer will be held by the North Region, 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 19 at St. Andrew's Church. Father John Zimmerman, regional coordinator, will preach. Refreshments and socializing will conclude the region's celebration.



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