

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



Some easy summer thoughts, expressions of gratitude and a reminder:

● We shall not be publishing next week. Much as I enjoy being in touch with you through this column each week, I'll not miss next week's deadline and all of the last-minute effort that can sometimes generate.

As we anticipate that break, let me thank you once again for your support of this renewed effort. We all want you to be proud of our paper and hope that you will follow us each week as we continue to develop it. I wish to thank as well our hard-working staff for their dedication and achievement.

We enjoy your comments and suggestions, so please keep in touch with us.

● Congratulations to all of the young men and women in our diocese who graduated from colleges and high schools during the weeks of spring and early summer. Your achievement is one which enriches us all.

As you move now to new locations and challenges, I hope that you will make yourself known to the local faith

communities where you will be located. I know that your goodness will be a blessing to them; I am equally confident that you will be strengthened by their hospitality and interest. We who remain here will try to extend that same kind of welcome to those who move into our area during these weeks of transition.

● Sincere thanks and congratulations to Father Ron Gaesser, the staff and all parishioners of St. Columba-St. Patrick in Caledonia and Mumford who celebrated one hundred years of grace at St. Columba's on Sunday.

Celebrations of that kind always express the personality of a parish faith community; Sunday's gathering did that in a rich and delightful way. Picnic and parade and splendidly celebrated Eucharistic liturgy all evoked a spirit of joy-in-community which should be the hallmark of all of our gatherings.

Surely we experience moments of suffering and pain as individuals and communities. What such gatherings of faith remind us of is the rich and unswerving fidelity of a loving God who even in the hard moments leads us to new life.

● I am going to be spending some days in prayer this week

and look forward to them as a restorative and strengthening time.

After a year which has been quite demanding, I am very much aware of my need to go apart for a while to ask for the Lord's guidance and strength.

I have already asked the people of Caledonia and Mumford to pray me through this week and they have graciously agreed to do so.

They will not mind, I am sure, if I ask your prayers as well. You will certainly be in mine during these privileged hours of grace.

You and your interests and concerns will be very much with and especially will you be in my spirit as I give thanks to God for the blessings of my life.

● Finally, my prayers go to all of our priests and other pastoral ministers who begin new assignments in these days. May you be given strength and courage by the beautiful people you'll be serving. I know that they will find the care of Christ in your ministry.

Peace to all.

'Trust Walk' Tests Communication, Cooperation

By Teresa A. Parsons

Last Thursday the mute spoke, the blind saw and the lame walked, and somehow they all got from point A to point B. Although it sounds miraculous, the scene was more often hilarious last Thursday at Kamp Koinonia, where teenagers taking part in a week-long leadership program embarked on a "trust walk."

Designed to help participants experience the meaning of concepts like "community" and "interdependence," the walk split the 48 campers into groups of about a dozen each. Half of each group was blindfolded to simulate blindness, and the remainder was unable to speak. Each group was then given its first instruction and sent on a course laid out through the camp.

Just getting out of the main lodge was a major obstacle, but was accomplished amid squeals and giggling — only from the blind sector of course. As each group reached its first destination — and all of them did — the mutes found their next instructions, which included the news that several members of each group were now afflicted with multiple handicaps, blind, mute and lame and in a few cases, all of the above.

Some groups fell apart in chaos, leaving individuals behind or splitting into factions. Others formed chains of blind members with sighted mutes leading and carrying the cripples, devising systems for communicating through signs and signals. Along their course, camp staffers were standing by to help when necessary, to pick up anyone who was abandoned and to observe each group for later comment.

Eventually all the campers returned to their starting point and, beginning with those who were blindfolded, shared their experience.

"I felt helpless ... I wanted the girls to take advantage of me," cracked one wise guy. "I had a lot of faith in my partner, and I just went where she led me," said one girl. "It

was nice knowing they trusted in you to lead them the right way," described one mute, but added that it was frustrating to be constantly questioned. Others variously called the experience scary, confusing, and bewildering.

The kids then broke into smaller groups to hear and discuss the observations of staff members who watched them.

Taking the discussion beyond what happened to what it meant, Pat Fox, diocesan director of youth ministry, and Anne Wegman, associate director, then tried to help campers draw conclusions and apply what they'd felt to life situations.

"You've all had experiences where you were interdependent with someone and how much easier it makes your life," Wegman said, relating how the recent death of a family member showed her that "even the leaders among us cannot do it alone."

The weeklong camp is based on a program developed by the Northeast Catholic Youth Leadership Institute, but has been modified by Wegman and Fox during the five years it's been offered in the Rochester diocese.

The daily routine begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast and morning prayer. Two major sessions are scheduled each day; the morning session concentrates on leadership skills and the afternoon on personal spiritual growth. One of the most effective features of the camp program, Wegman believes, is the evening planning session during which campers prepare the daily liturgy at 8:45 p.m. and the next morning's prayer.

The learning experience isn't limited to campers. "You need everybody to learn ... I

mean the staff learns from the kids, the kids learn from the staff ... you learn from everybody. It's not like you're learning by yourself. Everybody here is opening up ... talk to everybody," said Edwin Caraballo, from St. Michael's Church in Rochester, a senior staff member at camp.

Caraballo, 21, is just one example of the program's power to change lives. Last year, he recalled, he came unwillingly, and almost despite himself, began taking part. "I started getting a feeling inside that, you know, makes me feel good. I was always in the streets where I live and they'd tell me 'you going to church?' I'd go 'yeah, I'll meet you there,'" while adding to himself "you got a long wait ... I'm not going." Since then he's found himself wanting to go to Mass every Sunday.

Much of the actual work of the program falls upon the 15 junior staff members, who carry out activities, help in the kitchen and interact most directly with the campers. They are drawn from the previous year's crop of teens who attended the camp. This year, Wegman said, half of the 80 teens they trained last year applied for only 15 junior staff positions.

"It was one of the hardest decisions we've ever had to make," she said of the choice with which she and Fox were faced. Pointing out that every one of the applicants was a great kid, she said that the final criterion was which of the applicants needed camp the most.

Senior staff members — those who have graduated from high school more than one year before — are primarily there for

guidance and to provide backup for the junior staff.

One senior staffer, 19-year-old Joe Lynch of Chili, has attended all but one session of the camp in its five-year history as either a staff member or camper. He views the growth of the role and numbers of the junior staff as one important development over the years because "it's as powerful for them as it was the first time. It also touches on skills outside your faith life, giving you a sense of how to handle yourself, what to do with a group, and one-on-one," he said.

Luis Matos, a youth minister at St. Michael's Church, agreed. "I came here searching for something. I don't know how it happened, but I found it ... the name would give it would be confidence in myself. Somehow God spoke to me and it's affected me and I like it."

Another youth camp session focusing on "Living Ministry" is planned in August, Wegman said.



Pat Fox, diocesan director of youth ministry, ties a blindfold on Sally DeCarolis of Most Precious Blood Church



The blind really are leading the blind on the last leg of their journey back to the camp's main lodge.

Teresa A. Parsons / Courier-Journal

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



**EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR**

How do I help the elderly at the time of a funeral?

Death of a loved one is painful. There is a tendency to believe that the elderly adjust more easily because they "should" anticipate the loss. Having more time to prepare does not guarantee that grieving will be easier. The elderly may have fewer resources such as friends, money or good health. Losing a partner or long time friend may mean living life alone at a time when a person may be least able to be independent. Support from family and friends at this time is most important. Being over protective or taking away a person's independence by making decisions for them is not desirable and may be harmful. Help the elderly begin their adjustment by attending the funeral and offering specific help.

Preplanned Funeral Arrangements
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