

Saginaw bishop urges ministers to serve as Christ did

By Teresa A. Parsons

Although the image of Christ washing the feet of his disciples is not prevalent in today's world, Bishop Kenneth Untener recommended it as a model to professional ministers from around the diocese. Untener, the Bishop of Saginaw, Mich., was the keynote speaker Tuesday, Oct. 15, at the semi-annual diocesan Ministry Conference in Waterloo, which drew more than 300 participants. According to Father Jim Schwartz, an organizer, that is the event's largest turnout to date.

The day's topic was "Shared Responsibility," and Bishop Untener's morning address described some of the specific skills and qualities ministers need to implement that vision. His remarks at times drew such peals of laughter from the crowd that one observer compared the sound to a laugh track from a television sit-com.

Despite the Church's faults, a minister must love it to implement Christ's ideal of service, the bishop said.

"It's a Church that is just like the group of disciples that Jesus always loved. Even though they sometimes frustrated Him, He never stepped away from them. They were always His and He was theirs," Bishop Untener said. "I think there has to be that



Teresa A. Parsons/Courier-Journal
Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the keynote speaker, Bishop Kenneth Untener of the Diocese of Saginaw, Mich., compare notes during a break at last week's semiannual conference for professional ministers in the Diocese of Rochester.

kind of love for the historical, sinful, groping Church."

He added: "I think that a minister with vinegar in his/her veins is going to have trouble washing someone else's feet."

On a diocesan level, Bishop Untener disputed the idea that for every parish function there must be a chancery office or department. "Each parish is a magnificent, creative enterprise. No two are alike and what we're to do is the mystery of God anyway ... we each bring our own accent marks to the same paschal mystery."

Too often, priests are evaluated in regard to shared responsibility rather than the parish as an entity, Bishop Untener asserted, while at the same time, parishes try to be all things to all people.

"What we end up trying to do is produce a spiritual shopping mall ... we're trying to have something for everybody and then they come like consumers," he explained. "We have the illusion that we're doing the whole thing, when what we do is Eucharist and out of Eucharist comes different accents."

"A parish is most of all a feast," he maintained.

"We come together as sinful people who are most grateful for the gift of the Lord's unearned forgiveness. And we throw our hats in the air and celebrate that we are accepted. We celebrate the fact that the great question mark of every life has an answer, even though we don't fully grasp it; that life has sense and meaning. That's what we do best."

As his model of a parish implementing shared responsibility, Bishop Untener chose a three-ring circus because "you're turning people loose — there's a certain togetherness about it, but you can't control it all ... There's room for the Holy Spirit to work in everyone."

One of the changes the bishop described as necessary to implement the vision of shared responsibility was coordination of the three priesthoods of the Church — Christ's priesthood, the priesthood of all believers and the priesthood of the ordained, and he stated that the priesthood of the ordained needs to be demystified.

"That priesthood as such is not in the New Testament," he said. "We took those people who were selected or set aside for cultic and leadership functions and we applied that terminology to them."

"There is not anything necessarily wrong with that," he added, "except that it can be distorted. And it can intrude on the priesthood of Jesus Christ or the priesthood of all believers."

Describing Christ's priesthood as "absolutely unique and unrepeatable," the bishop contrasted it with the priesthood of all the baptized who live as Christ's disciples.

"It (the latter) is a fundamental priesthood that everyone shares, whatever you are," he said. "It is the priesthood that we all exercise and celebrate, all day and all night ... by which we are able to breathe the spirit of life into everything about us, even sin, even failure."

"As soon as you blur those distinctions, then you have problems in any direction," he added.

On an international level, Bishop Untener said he has neither high expectations nor fears in regard to next month's extraordinary Synod of Bishops. "I think that if you bring people from around the world who are in the field, that that's a step forward."

"As far as the direction of the Church, I think that we are in for a time of suffering," he added. "I thought that we had gone through that after Vatican II, and I see it coming back on us ... There's no question in my mind where we're going. But personally, I think the honest truth is that we're in for a difficult period."

On a more optimistic note, Bishop Untener described the present-day Church as being on the verge of what Karl Rahner calls its Third Age — the emergence of a World Church out of Hellenist-European roots and from the foundation of collegiality laid by the second Vatican Council.

"You and I are living at a time when something is happening in the Church that's only happened once before. That is a massive shift of the whole Church to being planted in new soil," the bishop said. "It is on the brink of becoming the whole world ... a Church planted in all cultures and blossoming in a diverse way, but always with a certain unity."

At the head of the Church, Bishop Untener sees, not the pope or the hierarchy, but rather Jesus Christ.

"We are in the same situation as the Church of the Acts of the Apostles," he said, describing the comparable shift of that day from a Jewish to a Gentile church.

"Where did they look for leadership? They tried to remember some of the things Jesus said, but they most of all tried to pray and talk together about what ought to be done," he explained.

In fact, the bishop pointed out, it wasn't until after Jesus' Ascension, when the Holy Spirit came to them at Pentecost, that they rose above the level of "rotten disciples."

A native of Detroit, Bishop Untener regularly leads retreats for priests and gives theological and pastoral talks around the country. After graduating from college and theological seminaries in the Detroit area, he served in the diocese's chancery and was subsequently sent to Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned a doctorate in theology.

In 1977, he was appointed rector of St. John's Seminary in Plymouth, Mich., and in November, 1980, he became bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw. His name was particularly familiar to readers of the National Catholic Reporter, for which the bishop wrote a series of articles last year during Lent.

Bishop Untener returned to the podium near the end of the conference to describe shared responsibility as it exists in the Diocese of Saginaw. There, representatives from all groups sit on one diocesan body, an amalgamation of what in the Diocese of Rochester are the separate Priests', Sisters' and Pastoral Council.

But regardless of the model, the bishop concluded, "shared responsibility is not an option anymore."

Two diocesan panels also addressed shared responsibility during the afternoon. The first included diocesan representatives from the Priests' Council, Sisters' Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Commission on Women as well as Sister Muriel Curran, diocesan vicar for religious, and Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Afterward, the parish staff of St. Christopher's Church in North Chili shared their experiences in trying to implement shared responsibility.

Mary Lou Coffey, St. Christopher's liturgy planner summarized the day with a telling remark. "One of the struggles and tensions of working together as people of God is that we don't all have the same gifts," she said. "But equality doesn't mean Beethoven has to play chopsticks."

Treats X-Rayed for Safety

St. Joseph's Hospital will again offer free X-Rays of Halloween treats this October 31.

The hospital's Department of Medical Imaging will provide this service 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Halloween night, and 10 a.m. to noon, November 1.

The hospital will also make available posters and treats bags providing special safety tips at all Elmira area schools and child care centers. Bags will also be available the Eastowne Mall and St. Joseph's Hospital.

William V. Wallace, manager of the Medical Imaging Department, assures readers that "the X-Ray procedure is perfectly safe."

World Community Day

Church of the United's World Community Day will be Friday, Nov. 1.

Events will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner at the Summerville Presbyterian Church, 4845 St. Paul Blvd., followed by The World

Community In Our Midst, featuring Sarwat Malik, MD, from the Islamic community, Meseret Bezuneh, of Ethiopia, and Haeja Kim, of Korea, as speakers.

A panel exploring less well-known nationality groups in Rochester will be moderated by Jean Bartlett.

Cost of the dinner is \$5 and reservations should be made at the CWU office, (716)454-1813, by October 25.

Bus Service Maintained

Through sacrifices and generosity, the parish of the Most Precious Blood School has maintained transportation for its students over three decades. This past September, facing the dilemma of having no bus driver, Father Sebastian took it upon himself to drive the bus every day. Until the last week of summer vacation, it was not definite whether the bus would operate this year.

But through the combined effort of the parents and clergy, a driver was found; Audrey Finazzo, a former Golden Arrow driver. She is now the full-time bus driver.

Music of Ireland Concert

The fourth annual "Music of Ireland" Concert, sponsored by the Irish American Society of the Finger Lakes, will be Saturday, Oct. 26, 8 p.m., at the Smith Opera House, Geneva.

Frank Patterson, internationally renowned tenor, will be featured, accompanied by his wife, Eily O'Grady, on the piano and Irish harp.

Also featured are the champion Irish Step

Dancers from the Butler Academy of Syracuse and Rochester.

Bill Cunningham, an Irish-American comedian who has appeared on the Merv Griffin Show, Alan King Show and Steve Allen Show, will round out the evening.

Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$9 the day of the performance. For information call Thomas Cunningham at (315)789-1035 or Richard Erwin at 789-8407.

Diocese sponsors Catechist Congress



Father John Aurelio, Maureen Gallagher and Mary Lu Walker will be featured at the Catechist Congress along with Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The diocesan Office of Religious Education will sponsor a two-day Catechist Conference Friday and Saturday, Nov. 8 and 9 at Our Lady of Mercy High School in Rochester. "Humbly welcome the word that has taken root in you" is the theme of the event, which will feature three speakers, a concert and two rounds of workshops with 30 different choices.

On Friday, registration opens at 6:30 p.m., followed by Father John Aurelio, who will speak at 8 p.m. on "Welcoming the Word." Father Aurelio, chaplain of the West Seneca Developmental Center, has earned national recognition for his work with the mentally and physically disabled.

At 9 p.m. Friday, Mary Lu Walker, a composer and performing artist from Corning, will present a concert, followed by a social.

Registration for Saturday begins at 8:30

a.m. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will address the gathering on "Sharing the Word" at 9:30 a.m. and the first round of workshops begin at 11:15 a.m.

After lunch, round two is scheduled at 1:30 p.m., followed by "Echoing the Word: the Ministry of the Catechist," a presentation by Maureen Gallagher, director of adult and family education in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. A book exhibit will also be on display all day Saturday in the school gym.

Fees for both days of the congress are \$15 for an individual and \$12.50 each for groups of eight or more from a parish. Friday's session is \$5 per individual and Saturday's, including lunch, is \$12.50. A limited number of scholarships is available for parishes that would otherwise be unable to attend. For more information, call Sylvia Mancuso, (716)328-3210, ext. 295.

Ve Interrupt These Ads To Bring You a Halloween news update...

Ve are up and running, fully stocked and have a wide selection of costumes to rent, in addition to our costumes, wigs, masks, make-up, accessories and party supplies for sale. Don't wait 'til the last minute...Hurry in today!

Stay tuned for our Dracu-weather Report at 11 ...

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