

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32.

The Book of Joshua speaks about the cessation of manna after the first Passover in the Promised Land. The food for the journey was no longer necessary as the traditional Passover celebration confirmed the ownership of the Promised Land. The prophecy of Moses had been fulfilled as the Israelites rejoiced in their "homecoming" in the land flowing with milk and honey.

Luke's Gospel presents another kind of homecoming. The loving embrace of a father for his prodigal son is the ultimate sign of reconciliation for Jesus. This story allows for all the sensitivity of Jesus to be shown. It becomes a symbol of the Church's reconciling love.

The Lenten season seems to echo the words of St. Paul in today's second reading: "We implore you in the name of Christ: be reconciled to God!"

Where is individual reconciliation today? There seems to be a crisis in society today that has influenced our Church/community. We get caught up in the social aspects of life together (as well we should), and some-

times we forget the need for individual reconciliation. Does a penitent feel embraced and welcomed home through the Sacrament of Penance? Is there a need to better extend an invitation to share in the sacrament?

Christians continue life's journey, moving toward the promised land. There is a need to pause and rejoice as we realize we are prodigals about to be embraced once again. This may be the week to encourage individual reconciliation ... add times to the normal

parish schedule ... encourage participation ... remind people that penance is not only a time for forgiveness, but also a time for rejoicing in God's mercy. Perhaps adults in families could be invited to share the sacrament with their children in school or religious education classes. Creative ways should be developed to invite and/or include in the Rite of Christian Initiation process adults who are preparing for initiation into the community at the Easter Vigil. Perhaps a parish renewal could be held in this fourth week.

This embrace is too important to reject!



CROSSROADS IV



Along the Way

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Some moments are special because they bring us to the edge of new experiences. Do you remember the first time you swam in deep water or dove from the high board or went out on your first date? How about the morning of your wedding or the birth of your first child?

I had an experience today that may have been of a different kind but which got my heart pumping and adrenalin flowing at an unusual rate. It came when I stood on the stage at Bishop Kearney High School to converse with 800 young people from all parts of the diocese. I was delighted to be there and knew it would be an exciting adventure even though I didn't know what shape the adventure would take.

Our young people were kind enough to give their responses to the five written questions I had submitted to them in advance. I list the questions below and, after each question, try to give you some flavor of the responses:

1) Q. How do you feel about your diocese? Your parish?

A. "Basically we feel OK ... We should be listened to more ... There should be more activities for youth and what events there are should be publicized in a more-effective manner... We want to be involved in the affairs of our Church, but sometimes we do not feel well-accepted."

2) Q. What have you found helpful to you in developing a life of prayer and a relationship with Jesus?

A. "We do pray and even have a certain ease in speaking about prayer with others ... Our retreats and the example of others are the greatest support."

3) Q. What one piece of advice or counsel would you offer to me so that I might do my best as your bishop?

A. "Spend more time with the youth of the diocese ... Get to know us better ... Hang out more ... Don't worry about being proper ... Be understanding about our problems and help all of our priests do the same."

4) Q. What is the biggest problem or obstacle to your growth?

A. "Drugs ... Family problems ... Violence ... Peer pressure, especially when that mocks me out for my religious convictions or practices ... Lack of receptivity to my ideas by church, family or society."

5) Q. What is your greatest hope? Your greatest fear?

A. "A peaceful world ... Church that is renewed and a home for everyone."

A. — "War and especially nuclear war ... We have to do something about war and violence."

In addition to the themes cited above, we talked about abortion, compassion, forgiveness, understanding, the importance of communication, the need for mutual respect, money and spending, growth and happiness.

Present with our beautiful young people were a huge number of their pastors, parents, teachers and other parish leaders.

Finally, I want to recognize and congratulate the 58 high school seniors who received our new Hands of Christ Award, given to those who exemplify the goodness of all of our young people in their generous willingness to serve I had the privilege of meeting each of these young people as he or she came forward to receive the award. It was a grace to be with them and a reminder of how God so graciously renews His people in every generation. Peace to all

Black Catholic reflects on growing up with racism and hopeful changes

By Gaynelle Wethers

I am sharing this experience with the hope that it will serve to open the minds and hearts of my readers to the evil of racism which exists in our society, even in the Church. Perhaps this confrontation with my past will heal some of the hurt that I experienced growing up in a white supremacist society, which in many overt and subtle ways attempted to impress on me the inferiority of my race. It is a call for recognition of the God-given gifts my people have to offer and for unity in a church that claims to be Catholic, all-embracing.

I was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. I was fortunate to belong to a loving family whose members had great pride in their race and heritage. From my family, I gained the pride and strength to maintain a positive self-image, despite the blatant expressions everywhere of prejudice against blacks.

Imagine the pain inflicted on sensitive children confronting the hated signs, "White only" or "Coloreds." Buses, public restrooms, hospitals, schools, even churches displayed these blatant signs of racism. Equally painful were the many other more subtle expressions of racism — in advertisements and commercials, in the inability to enroll in certain clubs, in employment and housing practices, in stereotyping blacks as happy-go-lucky, shiftless folk with less-than-average mental ability.



Gaynelle Wethers pauses a moment in a stairwell at St. Monica's School, where she serves as principal.

At age five, I enrolled in St. Mary's, a Catholic School operated by an all-black order of nuns, the Sisters of the Holy Family. For the children who were fortunate enough to come under their guidance, these sisters

were positive role models. They reinforced the positive self-image I developed at home, and because of their influence, I decided to become a Catholic. I received First Communion and made my First Penance. Despite the

fact that, even in the Catholic churches, blacks were relegated to the rear of the church, I maintained a faith in Christianity. Instinctively I knew church practices toward blacks were wrong and contrary to Christ's will for us.

Part of our school time was devoted to such manual labor as laundry, cleaning the chapel, and other household tasks. Here I

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Diocesan Appointments



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments:

Father Robert J. Donovan from chaplain St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester, to parochial vicar St. Lawrence, Greece.

Father P. Frederick Helfrich from parochial vicar St. Lawrence, Greece, to chaplain St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester.

Father Charles Mulhgan from sabbatical to temporary administrator St. Catherine, Mendon.

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