

**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 5:27-32; Revelations 5:11-14; John 21:1-19.

The spirit of being alive and together continues into the third week of Easter with readings which speak to the life of the early Christians. This life can become for us, the model for contemporary Christian life. The Acts of the Apostles projects a sense of joy at being part of Jesus' community. Even in bad times, when enduring suffering, there was an excitement of growing in the love and knowledge of Jesus.

The questioning of Peter in the Gospel speaks of the challenge of discipleship. How often we humans turn the tables, saying: God, do you love me? How can this be happening if you really love me? John's Gospel allows us to ponder these questions from God's point of view: how can you really love Me if you persist in acting wrongly?

The second reading taken from Revelation reminds us of the joy of fulfillment when all, even the elders, will come to know the power of God and how we have participated in that power.

The reconciling power of true joy cannot be estimated. Some would call it contagious. When we are in the presence of a very committed, loving person, for example, we come to experience reconciliation (oneness) with the world around us. Even though the going is tough and the world challenges the heart of our existence, joy can bind people together and enable them to draw sense out of non-sense.

We are challenged this Easter week to be joyful reconcilers. We must be willing to accept those things that cannot be changed, and revitalized for the struggle in those things which should be changed, and can be changed.

The joy of commitment and the exhilaration of knowing that our actions reflect our love for God are the life-breath of Eastertime. We are wonder-filled creatures proclaiming God's reconciling love. The life-death-resurrection of Jesus is embodied in the beauty of human life.



**Along the Way**

**Bishop Matthew H. Clark**

Second Sunday of Easter.

This week I received two letters which made a deep impression on me. Each did so because the writers spoke of themes I think about and which are important to me, but which I have not — and cannot — experience in quite the same way they do.

The first letter came from a young woman who is a senior in a well-known Catholic university. I have known her for a number of years, but have not had much opportunity to speak with her for quite a while. In her letter she shared with me her longstanding and deep desire to be ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church — and to be a married priest.

She speaks with maturity about what it means to be a priest and makes some observations about pastoral ministry which, in my opinion, indicate a rather sophisticated and realistic appreciation of what that's all about in the contemporary Church. She relates it strongly to service and indicates in several ways her realization that to be a good servant of the Gospel is not without its price.

In her opinion, celibacy is an attractive lifestyle for those who freely and actively choose it, but it should not be a prerequisite for ordination to the Church's priestly ministry.

Her concern is for those in whose lives celibacy seems more a pain and a burden than a source of freedom to love. She cares as well for communities of faith whose ministers are less loving than they might be.

She finds in the Church's position on ordination an example of what she calls the Church's failure to realize that we

live in the 20th century.

The second letter was written by a woman who has several children and now expects another. Her concern is the Church's position on artificial contraception and her way of sharing her view with me is to describe her experiences of pregnancy — the joyful and painful ones — over her years of married life.

It is a story of prayer and sacrifice and the kind of loving relationship which allows a husband and wife together to make decisions based in faith and ordered to the responsibilities of the sacrament which they live for their good, and the good of the whole community.

My correspondent was not complaining, nor was she asking for any action on my part. She was simply telling her story of struggle in the faith, giving thanks for support from friends and expressing the hope that the Church would be ever more compassionate and understanding of persons facing the challenges she and her husband had faced in recent years.

I had the sense when I was reading both letters that I had somehow been allowed to tread on holy ground. Two persons, obviously rich in faith and love for the Church, had shared with me something of the truth of their being.

The truth in these instances was born of life's experience and was communicated with wonderful generosity. I thank both persons for that gift. When any of us speaks the truth in love, we do great service to one another and that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peace to all.

**St. John the Evangelist parishioners show they 'give a dam'**

By Richard A. Kiley

Last spring, Cathy McQueen, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church on Rochester's Humboldt Street, read an article about a Connecticut-based priest's efforts to further famine relief in Ethiopia. Working under the supervision of Catholic Relief Services, the priest was able to assist in the construction of eight water catchment dams that would eventually revitalize the agricultural capabilities of the troubled nation.

McQueen's reading of the article happened to coincide with the efforts of her parish's Social Ministry Committee to "personalize" its collections for Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The committee wanted parishioners to actually see how money raised through monthly collections for the relief organization was helping a nation's long-range needs.

McQueen contacted the priest, Father Edmund Nadolny, of St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Naugatuk, Conn., and explained to him that her parish also might be interested in aiding the fight against African hunger. Father Nadolny sent more information to McQueen, wondering if the Rochester parish might want to help the situation by raising money to construct a dam.

"It was exactly the project we were looking for," said McQueen, who specifically joined the parish social ministry committee for this project. "It's a classic case of helping people to help themselves."

A year ago last fall, Father Nadolny had seen a British Broadcasting Company report on famine conditions in Ethiopia. He was so moved by the BBC program that he and members of his suburban Connecticut parish took immediate action, raising \$425,000 through radio and television appeals, according to McQueen.

The following spring, Father Nadolny took out a personal loan and went to Africa to survey the building of the catchment dams.

Recently, parishioners of St. John the Evangelist completed a concentrated Lenten

effort to finance a dam, according to McQueen. Money raised through such programs as Operation Breadbox was targeted for the project of building the dam.

Operation Breadbox, a supplement to the annual American Catholic Overseas Aid Appeal, is conducted by CRS. During Lent, Operation Breadbox collections are sponsored in each parish of the Diocese of Rochester by the diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission. The program provides parishes with information on hunger issues and looks to support Third World development and local emergency food projects with money raised by parishes.

According to McQueen, 10 percent of the money St. John's Parish raised through the program went to local hunger needs, while the rest was targeted for the catchment dam project.

Robert Genthner, a mechanical engineer who is a member of the parish's Social Ministry Committee, explained that the dam utilizes a 250-foot spillway, a long, narrow trench (basin) that will enable its users to route or direct the water where they want it to go. Proper use of the spillway will also allow the people to control the dam's water level, Genthner said.

The parish hopes to raise \$25,000 on its own, and get the additional \$25,000 from other local parishes, in order to fund the dam's construction.

Parishioners have taken the lead in organizing the fund drive, according to Father Kevin P. Murphy, co-pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church, who said he had "taken a back seat on the whole thing."

Father Murphy noted that the use of monthly "loose change" collections had enabled all parishioners to participate — regardless of their ages or pocketbooks. "The loose-change collection gets everybody buzzing," Father Murphy said. "Kids can contribute because it is loose change, and they can say they contributed toward helping world hunger."

Aiding with household chores is another way in which parish children are doing their part to help relieve African famine.

"Our daughter does errands around the house, like setting the table, and we pay her. She then gives it to the project," McQueen explained.

The collection of loose change had to be approved by the parish council first because of a "firm policy not to have second collections," McQueen noted, "but they (members of the parish council) couldn't be inflexible when people were starving."

Father Murphy added that the endeavor benefits the givers as well as the recipients of

the aid. "It says things to other parishes," he said, prompting them to "get turned on and give energy toward supporting a project like this one."

Parishioners hope to raise funds through the sale of buttons carrying Father Nadolny's tag line "Give a dam" Father Murphy said. Other fund-raising events scheduled for the next few months include children selling candy in the school, flower sales at the church and an autumn cider and donut sale.

Although the one-year goal of \$25,000 is an ambitious one, Father Murphy expresses confidence in the parish's ability to reach it. "Everything combined, we can raise the money," he said emphatically.

Father Murphy is in the process of involving other parishes by distributing a letter asking for assistance from local churches, a measure he hopes will raise the additional \$25,000.

According to McQueen, Father Nadolny's goal is to build 15 catchment dams and wells in the Ethiopian region. When the dams are completed, there should be plenty of food and water for development projects for years to come, regardless of weather conditions.

"We're giving them a fishing rod instead of a fish," McQueen concluded.

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Vol. 97, No. 26 April 10, 1986  
Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)  
Published weekly except week after July 4 and Christmas, by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 35¢. One-year subscription in U.S. \$15. Canada and Foreign \$20. Offices: 114 South Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607, (716) 454-7050. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

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