



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Through the eyes of Jesus

Several years ago, a priest who was guiding me in my spiritual life suggested that during Holy Week I should try to see all of the events of those days through the eyes of Jesus. Until then, I don't recall ever having prayed in that manner. I had always directed my mind and heart to Jesus as he healed, prayed, taught and shared with his friends. But I followed his advice at that time and have prayed in that way many times since then, most especially during the days of Holy Week each year.

It is a helpful kind of prayer. For one thing, I find myself challenged strongly in those areas within me that are competitive rather than cooperative, violent rather than peaceful, self-centered rather than concerned for others. It is not even possible to draw close to Jesus this week without being deeply taken by His peaceful, forgiving spirit, without being challenged to surrender all within us that runs counter to His spirit.

A second benefit of this kind of prayer is its call to recognize and revere the varied and marvelous ways in which God works in my sisters and brothers, and the wonderful patience with which God deals with every one of us. I am led to this by the way Jesus responds to Peter and John, to Pilate and Caiaphas, to those who mock him during his hour of intense suffering. I am drawn to this most strongly, I suppose, in the washing of the feet.

Thirdly, I find the effort to experience this week from Jesus' point of view to be a powerful call to surrender my own plans and designs to God's plan and power for my life. That surrender entails a kind of death for me, because it calls me from the known and the secure to that which is unknown and which, therefore, I can not control. Jesus knew that at Gethsemane, when — though his deepest personal desire would have taken him elsewhere — he surrendered everything he had and was to his Father's will.

In his total surrender, he found his deepest freedom and capacity to love. Having found that, he passed through the darkness of suffering — offering even to those responsible for his pain nothing but truth, compassion and love.

It is to that kind of freedom that Jesus calls us. It is not an easy road, but his promise and presence assure us that we do not walk it alone; they assure us that at the end of the journey we will know fullness and peace.

Last week I suggested themes of friendship for our prayer during this season. What I have suggested above, I hope, reminds us of the friendship God offers us through Jesus. He became like us in all things but sin, that we might become like God. If friendship finds its center in life shared, we can have no deeper friend than Jesus.

In the spirit of His friendship, which calls us to be a community, I wish you all of the the blessings and joys of these holy days.

Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

A dying wish

The case of Father Michael Peterson (see article, page 5) is both sad and heartening. I'm proud of the responsible and forthright manner in which the Archdiocese of Washington handled this sensitive concern. Rather than hiding behind a cloak of secrecy and waiting for the story to leak out, the archdiocese courageously announced the circumstances of the priest-psychiatrist's death.

This bold action not only proclaimed that the Church is not ashamed of Father Peterson, but also offered society a chance to reconsider some of its preconceptions about AIDS and its victims. As Archbishop James Hickey of Washington stated in releasing information on the nature of the priest's fatal illness: "His tragic death is a reminder to us of the personal and human dimensions of this growing epidemic."

I'm also edified by the selflessness Father Peterson demonstrated just one month prior to his death. Writing to bishops throughout the nation, he pleaded for compassionate treatment of AIDS victims.

"I hope that in my own struggle with this disease, in finally acknowledging that I have this lethal syndrome, there might come some measure of compassion, understanding and healing for me and for others with it — especially those who face this disease alone and in fear," he wrote.

Faced with social stigma, physical pain and the certainty of death, Father Peterson could have chosen to keep his illness private. Yet he agreed that the information be released — aware, I am sure, that cruel speculation on the source of his illness might overshadow the message he hoped to convey. Despite the risk of scandal, Father Peterson offered his love to other AIDS victims, and he hoped that by his death they might be treated with more respect and concern.

I don't mean to sentimentalize this case, but — at the midpoint between Passion Sunday and Good Friday — I can't help but see a link between Father Peterson's dying wish that Church and society learn to love AIDS sufferers, and the dying Christ's selfless prayer for his sinful brothers and sisters: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Letters

Liberal Catholic takes a public stand

To the Editor:

After reading the editorial (Editor's Desk, March 26), I twinged, dropped the paper on the desk, and forgot about it — almost. For several days it kept coming back to me. Finally, I dug through journals and a stack of notes to find it — I'm writing a term paper but can't concentrate until I attend to this. After some prayer, I find myself hammering away to the Courier-Journal. I am one of those "liberal Catholics" who is mostly anonymous because I get tired trying to convince the "right" of anything. There usually is no room for dialogue, so most time it becomes *either ... or*, rather than the possibility of *both ... and*. At any rate, I've decided to take a public stand. This will upset some and anger others, and my husband will just shrug.

At the moment, I am a seminary student. That of course, does not mean I will be ordained. Women's ordination is not the topic of this letter, though it is a burning issue in my heart. Most of my adult life I

have worked in some capacity for the Church. First, as a young mother with four children, two and under, I made banners and vestments while the babies slept. Later I became a catechist, a director of religious education, a religious education consultant for the Diocese of San Diego, and a consultant for Our Sunday Visitor Magazine. My experience in seven states, and as many dioceses, brings me to the point of this letter.

It is painful to see a group called "Concerned Catholics" lash out the way they have. I am also *concerned*, but make mine with a small "c." My concern is the building up, not the tearing down. That is not to say there should never be debate. Honest, open and prayerful dialogue always leads to growth.

I have not known Bishop Clark long. However, what I know of him, and what I see in his own writing is a prayerful, honest man. From my past experience with a number of bishops, Matthew Clark represents what I always hoped to find in a Church leader. As primary teacher

of the local church, his writings are thoughtful and provocative. It is obvious that he thinks and prays before he speaks. He is a good listener and encourages collegiality. His humanity is whole and manifests itself in humor, kindness and gentleness. In his priesthood, he is loyal, full of faith, open and pastoral.

People who are uncomfortable with this kind of bishop should ask themselves the following questions. Am I ready to take full responsibility and claim ownership for my faith walk, or do I need someone else to tell me how far apart those steps can be and how fast I can walk? Am I guilty of Gospel clichés instead of Gospel values? Am I interested in a life of prayer, or a life of prayers? These are questions one has to ask oneself every day. They are not liberal/conservative issues; they are life and death issues! Our survival as Christians depends on our answers.

Pat Pickett
Country Club Drive
Pittsford

Turning down the volume of negative rhetoric

To the Editor:

A few years ago, there was a movie called *Network*, in which a newscaster got fed up with what he was reporting and screamed on the air, "I've had enough! I'm not going to take it anymore!" This then became the battle cry of his viewers.

Well, after reading the editorial page of the Courier-Journal on

March 19, I feel like that should be my battle cry also. Haven't we had enough letters to the editor in which people find fault and are negative? If columnists don't say what certain people want to hear, they are branded as "errant" and "heretics."

I, for one, have had enough of this style. It seems like the editorial page has had more than enough of

the letters from people who have somehow been commissioned by God to be saviors of the faith. Some would think that the Holy Spirit has given them, *alone*, the means to determine "truth."

I wonder if the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5) wouldn't help all of us this time: "If what they have planned and done is of human origin, it will disappear, but if it comes from God, you cannot possibly defeat them. You could find yourselves fighting against God." So let's turn down the negative rhetoric that is so destructive and hurtful.

Father Kevin Murphy
Co-pastor
St. John the Evangelist
Humboldt Street
Rochester

McBrien balances reactionary rumblings ...

To the Editor:

I was appalled to read Joseph Murray's letter (C-J Letters, March 19: "Concerned Catholics speak out"). The man has passed all limits of charity and civility and descended to a vicious personal attack on Bishop Clark. He (Murray) says in effect that Bishop Clark should be removed as ordinary of the Diocese of Rochester because Bishop Clark does not conform to Mr. Murray's narrow, crabbed, anachronistic view of Church. The Courier-Journal simply encourages his viciousness by continuing to print his letters. Please cease printing them.

Bishop Clark is a holy man and an excellent ordinary, a bishop fully in tune with Vatican II. His job should not be made harder by irresponsible, reactionary people like Joseph Murray.

I wish to commend you for carrying Father Richard McBrien's column. It balances well the reactionary rumblings and sad sentiments of some of your other columnists.

Father Robert L. Collins, Pastor
St. Thomas More Parish
Rochester

... but does balancer need counterbalancing?

To the Editor:

It seems to me your newspaper management is remiss in not counterbalancing the column of nationally known Father Richard McBrien with one of similar stature representing views consonant with orthodox Catholicism. May I suggest Father Robert D. Smith or Father Paul Trinchard?

Also, your reply to Jean M. Guzzetta's letter (C-J, March 5: "Bishops issue sex-clinic call to arms") on the reason for not reprinting an article on the New York

State bishops' statement on education in sexuality is indeed anemic. Her point, I believe, is your failure to print even a reference to the statement. Your answer did not reply to that concern, but to the secondary concern (reprinting of the Buffalo newspaper article). Your priorities need reordering, when one realizes that you did not deem the statement newsworthy, as evidenced by its exclusion.

William T. Hammill
Clardale Drive
Greece

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1½ pages. We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters address to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

Reader poses question to disgruntled teacher

To the Editor:

In response to Deanne Delehanty's comments on the subject of Catholic Schools (C-J, Feb. 12: "Catholic school salaries force teachers to juggle conflicting values"), I would like to ask Ms. Delehanty one question. Why does she send her children to a Catholic school if the Catholic schools "can't be superior," and the teachers in the Catholic schools cannot or will not get other jobs because of complacency or lack of qualifications?

Patricia Clemens
Lake Road
Ontario, N.Y.



"I WISH YOU'D FIND ANOTHER WAY TO WRESTLE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE."