



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Priestly ministry

Happy Easter. I hope that these days find you consoled, encouraged and strengthened for our continuing journey of faith. And I express the deep hope that you are able to find some time each day to let the light of the risen Christ illumine and warm your daily human experience. Christ is always present in our lives, but that reality normally takes root in our hearts only when we stop to remember and savor His gracious presence.

Peter understood the suffering of the Passion when he rested by the lakeshore with the risen one. Thomas learned about faith even as he placed his hand in the wound in Jesus' side. The disciples understood all that had gone before in the breaking of the bread. What is real for them is real for us, because we often experience the suffering or doubt or confusion along the way. Christ's victory over death does not eradicate the limitations of our humanity; it gives us a share in His unending life and a promise that this life will one day be brought to completion within us.

My own Easter prayer thus far has led me to think about priestly ministry in the Church. I think I have been drawn to that because I have spent considerable time lately thinking about and preparing for Convocation '87 — the three-day gathering for all of our clergy — which will be held next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at the Marriott in Henrietta.

I am always happy when our priests gather and am especially excited about this year's meeting for three reasons: 1) it will be the first time in my years here that all of our priests have come together at one time for reflection on pastoral ministry; 2) our session will be longer than any of our previous meetings have been, and 3) our theme of ministry and sacramental life is one especially important to us all.

My own assignment, priest as presider, is an intriguing one. I am trying to approach that theme from the point of view of our relationships to Jesus and to the community to which ministry calls us. I want also to offer some comments about the deepest gifts: one exercising the ministry of priest/presider can offer the community he serves and about the gifts he in turn can hope to draw from the people.

I ask your prayers these days for all of our priests, that God will bless us all during Convocation '87 and that the good gifts we experience will be at the service of all of our people.

Priestly ministry is a vital, rewarding form of service that is taking new shapes and forms because of changing pastoral circumstances and renewed theological insights. All of us in the community need to understand and support that development. Please pray that we will have the wisdom to identify helpful directions and the courage to follow them.

I want to offer two specific suggestions about ways you can lend support for Convocation '87. When you meet your parish priest this weekend, please tell him of your prayers for him and all who will be at our gathering.

Secondly, please pray during our Convocation '87 that God will call some of our great young men to priestly ministry. The need we have now for such vocations will only grow stronger in the future.

Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

Of apathy and empathy

For city folk like me, it probably would be impossible to understand the emotional bond farm families have with the land. When I think of farming, I think of work — long, hard, back-breaking labor. Not one for athletics or gardening, I'll probably never know how farmworkers do it — how they stand the long days of sowing and of harvest, the necessity of rising before dawn and retiring before prime time, the hours of worry over a slim profit margin that depends on the whim of nature. No, I'd never make a farmer, and I can't feel whatever it is that makes farmers stay on the farm.

It's not that simple, I know. Farm families stay with the land because they have to — they're bound by tradition and family expectation, by loans taken out against future harvests, by the economic circumstances of their locales, and by that inexplicable emotional attachment to the land — to the life-giving soil.

I think the inability to reach some emotional empathy with farm families is one reason the "farm crisis" fails to excite city pencil-pushers like me. We've come to believe that it's easy for everyone to pick up and move from job to job or home to home. Besides, with merger mania raging on Wall Street, how can we expect family farms to escape from the conglomerates' clutches?

Another reason for the lack of interest in the plight of farmers is that media reports on the "farm crisis" are delivered in the same breath as dire pronouncements about the "drug crisis," the African "famine crisis" and the "AIDS crisis" at home. These reports have the effect of desensitizing listeners — of making them feel "crisis out." The world is entirely too frightening already, and we don't want to hear that the farm — which our popular mythology paints as a peaceful, pastoral refuge — is in trouble, too.

Yet another possible cause for our apathy toward the farm crisis is our national fascination with "high-tech" everything. Farm methods have certainly improved during the last 50 or 100 years, but farms can't command as much media attention as a new computer chip.

So the farmers — our greatest national asset — go on struggling and failing. I don't have any solutions to offer, but at least I'm listening. I can only hope that programs like the one covered in our page-6 article will succeed in alerting other city dwellers to the crisis that looms ahead — that of agri-monopoly. Small farmers have proven themselves valiant defenders of their land, but the foreclosure rate indicates that they can't go on indefinitely fighting all alone.

Letters

Keep focus on community worship

To the Editor:

A reader recently expressed her preference for keeping the original classic beauty of the interior of St. Mary's Church (C-J Letters, March 26: "Reader decries St. Mary's renovation effort"). She feels it is more conducive to quiet reflection and prayer. She added, however, that she really wouldn't mind the changes if they would mean bringing more young people into the church. Otherwise, she believes the money would be more wisely spent on the poor.

I, too, come from the "old school." I love beautiful old churches and think some should be preserved for posterity. And I hate to see money wasted when there is so much poverty.

But there is another side to the coin. The changes are intended to bring people closer to the altar. When Jesus was on this earth and preaching, His followers couldn't seem to get close enough to Him. They

wanted to see Him and to hear His words. They even wanted to touch Him or His garments. Isn't that the way it should be with us? Wouldn't it be nice if there never had to be any back seats at all?

Not long ago, I attended Mass in another city with my niece and her family. The church was of pre-Vatican II design, long and narrow, and we sat towards the back. I couldn't even see the priest on the altar, or what was going on, because so many heads were in the way. I was present, but I didn't feel like a participant. I could see why my young nephew seemed inattentive.

I later wrote to my niece, telling her what I had observed and recommended that they sit close to the altar from now on. I also said I hoped she wouldn't mind a meddling aunt suggesting that she impress upon her son the importance of watching all that happens during Mass and listen-

ing intently to God's word. She heeded my advice and thanked me. (At confirmation, this young lad said he hoped to be the first American pope!)

Your reader simply forgot, for a moment, that the primary purpose of the church is for community worship, and the closer we can get to the center of the action, the better. St. Mary's will have a separate chapel for individual prayer and reflection. After she gets used to the change, however, I'm sure she will find that the new setting is just as conducive to private worship — and perhaps more so — because of the greater intimacy.

We "old" people sometimes balk at change, and then when it happens and we like it, we hate to admit we were wrong!

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle
Rochester

Social Ministry board praises Bishop Clark

To the Editor:

On behalf of the board of directors of the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, I would like to share a letter that we sent to Bishop Matthew H. Clark in January.

"We the members of the Board of Directors of the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry would like to begin this New Year by sharing our feelings of appreciation and respect for you as our spiritual leader. You have been steadfast and

consistent on all of the life issues facing our community. You have persevered in facilitating awareness of these multiple issues that affect the rich, the poor, the disenfranchised and the disgruntled. You have demonstrated a depth of true Christian charity towards others that we not only cherish but hope to imitate in our decision-making tasks, as we go about the business you have entrusted to us. We publicly acknowledge and thank you for your prayerful diligence to detail, your honesty, your spiritual

leadership and your genuine humility.

"May God bless you as you continue to call us forth to join you in ministering, enabling and nurturing our society."

This letter was signed by all 19 members of the board and our executive director. We are indeed very proud to have Bishop Clark as our spiritual shepherd.

Kathleen Machi, President
Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry
Rochester

Archivist hopes to extend Sheen collections

To the Editor:

Many of your readers are aware that the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen bequeathed to Rochester's St. Bernard's Seminary (now St. Bernard's Institute) a rich collection of his papers, books and radio/television tapes. The Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Archives are housed at the Institute, 1100 South Goodman Street.

As archivist, I am now interested

in extending these collections. Firstly, I would like to record first-hand anecdotes of the archbishop's deeds and comments. Secondly, I would welcome photocopies of personal letters written by him. Since Archbishop Sheen was Bishop of Rochester from 1966 to 1969, there are doubtless many people in this area who possess personal correspondence from him, or have vivid recollections about him. I invite all such to write to me of these

anecdotes, indicating, as far as possible, the date and circumstances of the occurrences. In the case of letters, the date and recipient should also be included.

Your stories and your correspondence may be important contributions to our knowledge about this pioneer figure of the American "Electronic Gospel."

Father Robert F. McNamara
Archivist, St. Bernard's Institute
4536 St. Paul Blvd.
Rochester

Believes no 'liberal views' set forth at Southern Tier listening session

To the Editor:

According to the Editor's Desk column of March 26, there was some editorial concern that the coverage of the Southern Tier listening session would raise the hackles of a segment of your readers who would object to the front-page emphasis of "liberal views." I feel duty-bound to calm the editor's fears. There is no need to worry about this because, as far as I could tell from the report of the event, there were no "liberal

views" set forth.

I think I know what is meant by liberal Catholicism: the lives of the saints show us that ideal, time and time again. But the gaseous pandemonium of the listening session was in no sense liberal and in no sense Catholic.

Was there anything proposed there that would not have been warmly received at a Ku Klux Klan rally? No, because once certain bounds are crossed, one is not acting as a liberal Catholic, but as a de facto anti-Catholic.

Gregory R. Sampson
Thomas Avenue
Rochester

This diocese is blessed with perceptive leader

To the Editor:

Re Bishop Clark's column, "Along the Way" (C-J, March 26): besides faith, the good Lord endowed us with intelligence. This diocese is indeed fortunate to be blessed with a bishop who, in addition to acknowledging and accepting this endowment, exhorts his flock to use it!

I, for one, am thankful.

Judy Zicari
Laurelton Road
Rochester



"MY FAITH IS IN GOOD SHAPE. FIND SOMETHING THAT'LL GET ME THROUGH HOMEWORK, BROCCOLI, AND LEFTOVERS."

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 addressed 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.