



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Christ's healing presence

My spiritual center of gravity, at the moment, is the kitchen table in the home of Lottie Lester in Lyons, N.Y.

Late Sunday morning, I was Lottie's guest, sharing a meal of baked goulash and sliced ham with her and her son, John, who was visiting from Red Creek.

John visits often. I had never been there before. I went that day to pay my respects to Lottie, who had lost her husband in a tractor accident just two days earlier. Lottie and I had met once before at the diaconal ordination of her son, Claude, who works at our Pastoral Center.

It was an experience of Easter life to sit with Lottie that morning because, in the midst of what must have been considerable pain and sadness, she spoke of life, hope and loving relationships in such a way that she deepened in me a sense of what it is to be alive in Christ.

She spoke of her mother and dad — of how they immigrated to the United States from Poland after marriage and the births of three children, and of how they bore 11 other children in this country. Lottie spoke with deep affection and pride of how her father worked hard in a foundry all of his life, and of her mother's loving work in the home.

If she spoke with a deep reverence about those who had gone before, she spoke with a contagious sense of happiness about those who came after her. Claude and John are joys to her, no doubt about that, but there is a special charge about her when she talks about Claude's wife, Ellen, and their five children, the oldest of whom is 10 years old.

That morning at the kitchen table, Lottie told us with delight about trying to pass on to her grandchildren the household skills she'd had to learn at a very early age because of family circumstances. She told the stories of her husband's rituals with each of the children when they came to visit him — how he made each laugh, the special treats he had for them, the way he made each feel special. Her first concern this past Sunday morning was with how her grandchildren — who knew of her husband's death and who were expected to arrive very soon — would react when they came to this home they loved so much and experienced their grandfather's absence.

Lottie spoke of many other things during that hour and a half. I don't remember them all, and some others I shall hold to myself. As I think back on that time, I realize that I came away with strength and faith, encouragement to face the difficulties in my own life, and a fresh realization that, no matter how dark things may seem at times, Christ is always present, calling us to new life.

That's the way Lottie looks at life. She has been able, with God's grace, to pass on that vision of reality to two generations and to friends like me who are lucky enough to cross her path.

Thanks to Lottie.
Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

A daughter of Israel

I can't really understand the controversy surrounding the May 1 beatification of Edith Stein. As our article on page 4 explains, some Jewish leaders feel that Pope John Paul II should not have beatified the Jewish convert to Catholicism because, they believe, she died a martyr to Judaism, not to Catholicism.

Stein, who joined the Church in 1922, entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany, in 1933, taking the name Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She transferred to the Carmelite monastery in Echt, Holland, in 1938 because of threats of Nazi persecution. Despite this precaution, Sister Teresa was arrested by the Gestapo on August 2, 1942. Transferred to Auschwitz, she died in the gas chambers just one week later.

Her arrest and those of other Catholics of Jewish background followed a letter in which the Dutch bishops spoke out against Nazi policies. Pope John Paul II and the Institute for Carmelite Studies in Washington concur in their belief that the arrests and executions were made in retaliation for the bishops' letter.

Jewish critics of the beatification insist that Stein was killed because she was a Jew. I guess they feel the pope is stealing their martyr.

I have to wonder why these critics feel it has to be one-way or the other. Although the the Nazis arrested Sister Teresa with the idea of teaching the Dutch bishops a lesson, I suspect that the Nazi murderers — in their sadistic thinking — relished executing her as a double enemy of the Third Reich. It seems to me that the Jews and the Catholics who resisted the Nazis were united in their suffering, not in opposition.

Wisely, Pope John Paul II used the beatification ceremony as an opportunity to encourage such unity. He honored Edith Stein not only for her devotion to Catholicism but also for her loyalty to Judaism and the Jewish people.

Calling her a "great daughter of Israel," the pope said, "for Edith Stein, baptism as a Christian was by no means a break with her Jewish heritage."

I hope that those who have criticized the beatification can come to understand the faith continuum of which the Holy Father spoke.

Letters

Project Life calls for new volunteers

To the Editor:

Project Life of Rochester has worked tirelessly this past year to end abortion in our area. This Christ-centered ecumenical group is involved in many effective pro-life activities. I present some of these activities here with the hope that some readers will consider joining in the work of Project Life.

Early each Saturday morning, volunteers meet outside Highland Hospital and outside the Doctor's Office Building attached to Genesee Hospital. They try to reach the young women coming in for abortions, with a pro-life message and an offer of help and support. Some babies have been saved by this sidewalk counseling. More people — especially women — are needed, so that this effort can be expanded to other times and locations.

Around 9 a.m. every Saturday, after the sidewalk counseling ends, a demonstration is held in front of the Doctor's Office Building. Project Life members hope that these demonstrations and other actions will cause

Genesee Hospital to reconsider its policy on abortion. Everyone is welcome to join these weekly demonstrations.

One of the most ambitious efforts of Project Life has been the opening of the Problem Pregnancy Center at 3254 Lake Avenue last November. This center has saved many lives and has spared many young women the emotional and spiritual pain that can follow an abortion. The center is very much in need of committed women who can volunteer some time as counselors or support the work of the center in other ways.

Another important activity of Project Life is the distribution of pro-life literature in front of Planned Parenthood. It is an ideal place to present information about the development of the unborn, facts about abortion and alternatives to abortion. Another important place to distribute pro-life literature is outside the high schools. With the help of more people, these important projects can be expanded.

Prayer must accompany pro-life ac-

tion. Only God can change hearts, and that is ultimately what will end this holocaust. God must be greatly offended by the destruction of his innocent little ones. We must pray and sacrifice in reparation to God for the sin of abortion. A small group of concerned Catholics have been praying the rosary each Saturday morning from 9:30 to 10:30 in front of facilities where abortions are performed. At present, the group gathers in front of Highland Hospital. Please consider joining them. With more people, the rosary can be said at other times and locations.

If you would like to receive the Project Life newsletter, call their office at 235-1611 and get on their mailing list.

There is much to be done. There is a place for everyone in the pro-life movement. If any of the above activities interests you or if you have any questions, please call me at 621-3906.

Raymond N. Buonemani
Holcroft Road
Rochester

Father McBrien comparing apples and oranges

To the Editor:

Father Richard McBrien seems to have all the "modern" reasons for the many changes in the Church since Vatican II (C-J, March 26: "Essays in Theology"). He makes a good case for modern theologians by giving what we have so often heard before — an untruth, when repeated often enough, tends to become believable — but his arguments are no more valid today than they were when first presented.

Predictably, Father McBrien brought up the issue of birth control and, of course, linked it to eating meat on Friday. The surprise was that he also mentioned Mass on Sunday. As he pointed out, the pope did eliminate the meat on Friday (with the idea that a Catholic choose to perform that act of love for God voluntarily, or substitute another in its place). However, it must be noted that the pope did not eliminate Mass on Sunday, nor did he sanction birth control — even though a "large majority" of Catholics did so on their own and with "some support" from theologians.

First, these issues are not comparable to each other and second, the role of the theologian is not to back up the practices of those who are committing sin. Surely, even though Church theologians have gained a certain amount of prominence in our society, we must remember that the most visible ones are not always the most reliable. Monsignor William B. Smith of the Archdiocese of New York may not be thought of as the most "popular" theologian of our time, but he speaks out in defense of the pope and the official teachings of the Church. Do we have our priorities mixed up?

Also twisted around is the notion that Vatican II was convened for the

purpose of making the Catholic Church conform to modern society when, in fact, the members of the Roman Catholic Church, through Vatican II, are to be instrumental in bringing Christ's values into the secular world. More difficult, but a more noble pursuit!

Finally, Father McBrien refers to those who question the changes as "skeptical." How can those who accept the teachings of the Church of Christ be guilty, according to the dictionary, of "disbelief of a fundamental religious dogma?"

Mary Lou Reifsnnyder
Pittsford-Palmyra Rd.
Fairport

... but some like the compute

To the Editor:

Thank you for including the weekly column by Father McBrien. It has been a blessing to me. Recently, I have become uneasy at what seemed to me a stress on the far Right. We can still love our Catholic faith, even though dis-

agreeing with some of the Church's teachings and decisions.

I have missed Father Hohman's column!

Elsie C. Stabel
East William Street
Bath

Local SSJs enjoy 'excellent dialogue' with Vatican's CRIS

To the Editor:

We write to thank Sister Muriel Curran for her fine letter (C-J Letters, April 2: "Vicar for religious rebuts Murray's views") responding to a communication from Mr. Joseph Murray (C-J Letters, March 19: "Concerned Catholics speak out").

We write, also, to verify that the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, as a part of the formal renewal process called for by our Church, have been cooperating with the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (CRIS), which is the formal Vatican channel for congregations of apostolic vowed religious.

We have had excellent communication and dialogue with the members of CRIS. Our constitution has been approved, and we will soon receive the final communication on this.

As a part of the renewal process that resulted in our new constitution, sisters with a variety of expertise considered the history of our founding and the development of our tradition; they also considered the canons that relate to constitutions for apostolic congregations. At various stages of this project, we also employed a variety of consultants, such as canon lawyers and theologians. We undertook our task as a component of our

growth in service to the Church.

We stand accountable for our efforts in the arenas that have been formally set up by our church.

We second Sister Muriel in her support of Bishop Matthew Clark, and we continue to be grateful to God for his presence among us.

Central Administration
of the Sisters of St. Joseph
of Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter was signed by Sister Elizabeth Ann LeValley, superior general, and the other five sisters who comprise the SSJ's central administration.

'Rigorists' in throes of spiritual rigor mortis?

To the Editor:

Amen, amen, I say to Father William Lum's appraisal and terse designation of the so-called "Concerned Roman Catholics" of our diocese as "rigorists" (C-J Letters, March 26: "Critics of bishop termed 'rigorists'").

I would like to take Father Lum's evaluation of Bishop Clark's critics one step further, if I may, and consider our poor concerned brothers and sisters in Christ to be in the throes of a pious, spiritual rigor

mortis. I do so in recalling and reflecting on the words of our Lord in chastising the "concerned" Scribe and Pharisee rigorists of His day, somewhere in the 23rd chapter of Matthew — "Shame on you, hypocrites! You are like whited sepulchers which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones..." Amen.

James E. O'Brien
Park Acre Road
Pittsford

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They must be brief, typed (double-spaced, please) and no longer than 1½ pages.

Letters should be mailed to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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.

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