



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Moments of change

There are few experiences more pleasing than being around a person who is gaining confidence, coming to new insight, realizing a greater measure of freedom, celebrating a moment of special achievement or in any other manner discovering more deeply his or her God-given work or dignity.

To be in the presence of such a transformation is to delight in the greater sense of wholeness to which it brings the person experiencing the change. We know we are witnessing the birth of something fresh and new. Somehow, we come in touch with something more of the mystery of life.

Part of the delight of such experiences is the way in which these moments benefit not only the individual in question, but other people as well. I think, for example, of the sacrament of confirmation. When our young friends come forward to be confirmed, it is clear that this is a moment of joy for their families as well. At ordination, one experiences a sense of elation that is contagious in the parish community. And commencements offer another example of one person's achievement bringing happiness to others.

I have had the privilege during this Easter season of participating in all of the celebrations mentioned above and many more. They offer wonderful meditations on the mystery of Easter. Special moments such as these invite us to remember the life experiences that led to them, and call us to look to the future with joyful hope. Secondly, they are a loving invitation to a fresh awareness of how much we need one another. Do ordination, confirmation or commencement make any sense without reference to the community?

If you have a moment, why not spend it remembering some event or experience that brought special happiness to someone close to you? Let it come back to your memory in all its sounds and colors and spirit.

While you have a strong memory of the event, you might ask yourself some of these questions: What made the person so happy? Who contributed to this happiness? Will it have a lasting effect on the person's life? Did the individual communicate an appropriate sense of gratitude? What new understanding of life did this experience bring to you? Did it shed light on the past — or give encouragement for the future?

These questions are meant to be suggestive of ways in which we can reflect on our human experience. You may have other questions or much better ways, but I hope that somehow you do reflect on such events. When we reflect regularly on our continually unfolding human experience, we can realize three benefits.

First, we come to a greater sense of continuity in our lives. We are more able to link the present to the past, and because we can do that, we can understand both a little better.

Secondly, we develop a stronger realization of our bonds to others in community. We realize more how much we need one another. More importantly, we realize what richness we can give and have received from others.

Thirdly, we come in touch with deeper values that stay with us when the event that called them forth fades into the past. And we bring these values more consciously to other significant moments.

Thank you for considering all of this. Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

A tale of two cities

The other day, after learning that this issue would include an article on the renovations recently completed at St. Patrick's in Elmira (see page 6), a member of our staff commented: "Now I suppose you'll get all sorts of negative letters about this, too, like St. Mary's."

At first, that prospect was an unwelcome one. But as I thought more about the comment, I realized that — inversely — the comparison between the two parishes might yield a positive result. Perhaps, I thought, the lessons of St. Patrick's might be well-taken by those who are anxious about the outcome of St. Mary's renovations.

The two projects developed in a parallel fashion. The decision-making and planning stages at St. Mary's may, in fact, have incorporated perhaps even more efforts to build consensus than the St. Patrick's project contained. Like St. Patrick's, the St. Mary's community has carefully designed its project in keeping with liturgical directives and with an aesthetic tone that should promote reflective worship. And as Rich Kiley's article this week and Emily Morrison's earlier stories on St. Mary's demonstrate, a reverence for the past and its traditions was carefully maintained in both projects. The new worship areas incorporate — in part or in whole — various elements of the pre-existing structures and ornamentation.

I think "reverence" — not zealous tenacity — is the operative word here. Madison Avenue constantly tells us that newer is necessarily better, and all but the hopelessly gullible realize that this concept is erroneous. Yet the inverse of this statement — older is necessarily better — is equally fallacious. We cannot discard everything that is old simply to replace it with something shiny and bright, but neither can we refuse everything that is new simply to maintain traditions that have outlasted their usefulness. We must adapt the old to meet the needs of today, and I believe that is being and has been done at St. Mary's and St. Patrick's.

Perhaps rather than sending "more negative letters," those who are worried about a perceived trend toward abandoning the past will take heart in the comment that concludes our page-6 article on St. Patrick's:

"Now that it's done, even some of the people who didn't approve of what we were doing liked what they saw," (parish council chairman Donald) Nurnberg said. "I saw a woman who said she was going to go back to St. Mary's on the south side when we started the work. She told me today she couldn't believe how nice our church turned out."

Letters

Catholics lack sense of community

To the Editor:

A number of weeks ago in the Courier-Journal, a priest from the diocese likened to a family quarrel the differences among Catholics over the Vatican document on bioethics. But there are a few who do not realize that that dispute is simply a microcosm of the larger discussion concerning the content of belief of Catholicism, which has been expressed in so many emotion-filled letters published recently in the Courier.

And those letters illustrate a reality not mentioned. It is the human element — the loss of real community among Catholics. True community is based on a sharing of values that reflect the nature of the person and of what he has in common with others. Therefore no communion of persons is possible apart from the truth of the person. Moreover, in Catholic community, divine revelation has been given to ensure that God's people are true to their title.

It is the task of the Holy Spirit to select individuals to foster authentic charisms within the Church and to further understanding of truths that flow from the one revelation. The Church's prophets and saints have realized who is ultimately in charge of the Church and so have trusted that the Holy Spirit would lead the Church to "all holiness," with or without their help. They therefore have exercised heroic patience and faith in the channels of authority. The hierarchical Church they appreciated is God's instrument, and through it He could call upon their contribution when and if He saw fit. There was no question of disobedience.

The scarcity of that kind of trust is the source of dissent and the reaction that it engenders. The emotion evidenced by both sides in the debate over orthodoxy is beneficial, to the extent that it indicates the intellectual awareness that both sides cannot be right on such issues. The truth is not so conciliatory.

It unfortunately also illustrates what has become of Catholic community. When Christ's mystical body — which is intended to be the purest community on earth because of divine revelation — is no longer fulfilling the desire of Catholics for communion because of dissent from that revelation, the loss is not merely in the abstract form of truth. The resulting lack of peace cannot be denied. However, peace is the reward of the exercise of truth, and until there is again agreement as to how truth is determined in the Church, the peace of Christ will be wanting.

Nor should we be surprised that emotion penetrates a dispute that touches upon the very nature and challenges the bonds of that family that is called the Church. This quarrel involves many families and many casualties — and those who mourn.

Heleen Ann Wagner
Lark St.
Rochester

An eighth-anniversary salute to Bishop Clark

To the Editor:

On March 3, 1984, Pope John Paul II, speaking at the Pontifical Roman Seminary, reflected on how awesome it is to be called the Vicar of Christ. But he went on to tell these future priests that he is able to accept the title more easily because the Second Vatican Council declared that the title Vicar of Christ applied to all bishops. Each bishop is a Vicar of Christ in his own local Church.

In the spirit of this insight of the council cited by our Holy Father and on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's ordination as bishop and installation as our bishop, the members of the Priests' Council of the diocese take joy in saluting Bishop Clark as Vicar

of Christ in our local Church of Rochester. In the eight years that he has served in our midst, we have come to know him as a man of prayer whose depth of spirituality has impressed us and as a person of warm humanity whose compassion and love have touched the lives of countless numbers of people in our 12-county diocese.

We take this occasion as an opportunity to affirm our respect and thanks for the kind of leadership he has given to priests and people of this diocese: a leadership that has been firm yet flexible, creatively open to the Spirit of God yet at the same time unwaveringly loyal to the faith and tradition handed down to us from the apostles.

We salute Matthew H. Clark not only as our own bishop but also as a member of the college of bishops throughout the world who, in union with the Holy Father and under him as their head, share a common "solicitude for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28).

As members of the Priests' Council, we are proud to collaborate with Bishop Clark in helping to build the local Church of Rochester ever more fully into that model of Church that St. Augustine described when he said: "We are Easter people, and alleluia is our song."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter was signed by 19 members of the Diocesan Priests' Council.

Inveighs against treating Holy Eucharist as 'door prize'

To the Editor:

Holy Communion is the last major step in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the consummation of the sacrifice by which we become incorporated with Christ in a mystical union which transcends all other human experiences.

Even before we attend Mass, we ask ourselves if we have on the wedding garment of divine grace and, if not, we seek sacramental forgiveness through a good confession. At the opening of the Mass and again before

we go up to the altar, we openly declare our unworthiness to be there. After hearing the Word of God and before the sacrificial rites begin, we stand up in the assembly of the faithful and proclaim our belief in the tenets of the Catholic faith.

Those who seek to join us must follow the same path, with approved acceptations. To treat the Holy Eucharist as a door prize is not only to dishonor Christ but it is also an act of non-love against the soul from whom Jesus is about to ask a great

deal. When one or many seek to approach Christ in His Church — and the two are inseparable — we joyfully welcome them and invite them to frequent attendance, prayer, observation, instruction, spiritual counseling, fellowship and sharing in good works.

All of this should precede the glorious day of one's First Holy Communion.

Mary R. Locke
Park Avenue
Rochester

Doctoral student values timeliness of Fr. McBrien's column

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my appreciation and excitement about your decision to carry Father Richard McBrien's column. Last February, I participated in a Continuing Education for Religion Teachers (CERT) seminar about the Church, taught by Father Joseph Jankowiak at Immaculate Conception parish. One of the books we referred to throughout the course was by Father McBrien. I found the course very valuable. Im-

agine my delight when, immediately after the seminar was finished, I found the Courier-Journal had picked up Father McBrien's column. I feel it allows me to keep in touch with current theological and doctrinal issues in a very convenient way.

Lest your more conservative readers think that I am a radical who wants to repudiate Catholic history and tradition, let me assure them it isn't so. I am getting my Ph.D. at Cornell University in medieval philosophy and history, and my dissertation is about

13th-century theological study at the University of Paris. I study and treasure ancient and medieval Christian thought, and plan to spend my life teaching and researching the subject. But, from an almost 2,000-year perspective on the Church, I feel that Vatican II is one of the most momentous and positive turning points in our history.

Nancy Spatz
Highland Place
Ithaca

On entering 'the McBrien era,' reader balks at the threshold

To the Editor:

Why Father McBrien? With the prominent, prolific "Roman" Catholic writers to choose from, did not the Courier-Journal act irresponsibly in allowing Father McBrien to be a regular contributor to the paper?

There are still many loyal Roman Catholics who follow the teachings of his Holiness and the magisterium. I heaved a sigh of relief when Father Andrew Greeley's column came to its conclusion, and now are we entering into the McBrien era?

With the ever-present moral collapse in the Church, thanks to the teachings of Father McBrien, Father Curran and other dissenters, credence is given by the Courier-Journal in allowing him to further his dissenting views.

I urge you to reconsider and pray that his writings will be discontinued, or God help us!

Deborah Dries
Belden Drive
Rochester

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.