



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

A history of grace

If you are blessed by the presence and ministry of any Sisters of Mercy in your parish or neighborhood, you won't be seeing much of them for the next few days.

When this *Courier-Journal* arrives at your home on Thursday, the sisters will be gathering at their motherhouse on Blossom Road to begin their "Graced History Assembly." This will be a four-day program of prayer, reflection and sharing, during which the sisters in a spirit of faith will remember and celebrate the ways in which the Lord has loved them and led them through the years.

Five members of the congregation have prepared talks, which are designed to help all of the sisters remember the events — happy and sad, pleasant and painful, onetime happenings and continually unfolding realities — through which God has spoken to the congregation. In addition to the presentations by the sisters, there will be time for personal prayer, communal prayer and opportunities for all to share the fruits of their reflection in small groups and plenary sessions. And, if I know the Sisters of Mercy, ample provision will be made for song and laughter and fun together.

Why do all of this? The purposes are several. Among them: to come to greater interior freedom; to rediscover the common ground of their lives as Sisters of Mercy; to enable all members to participate in the ongoing, life-giving development of the congregation.

It is my conviction that this will be a gathering of special significance in the history of the congregation and that, therefore, it will be a rich grace for our local Church. I say that because of the depth and breadth of the preparation behind the event, but most of all because of the spirit of faith with which our sisters will enter it. When those gifts are present, we can expect that the Lord will give such other gifts as reconciliation, insight, courage, peace of heart, new freedom and a greater thirst for justice.

Please pray for the congregation and the sisters you know that the Lord will open their hearts to a rich sense of love and strengthen them in their vocation and mission.

I shall have the great privilege of being present for most of the assembly and will join in my own way in the prayer and reflection of the congregation. If it would be helpful, you might like to walk a parallel path with all of us by making the following questions a part of your prayer over the weekend:

What are the experiences, events or relationships in my life that seem never to fade in significance for me as time goes by?

Are there among these some to which I consistently return for encouragement or deeper understanding? What are they? How and why do they strengthen me?

Are there others that tend to sadden, discourage or constrict me? What are they? Do I have some sense of why they lead to confusion?

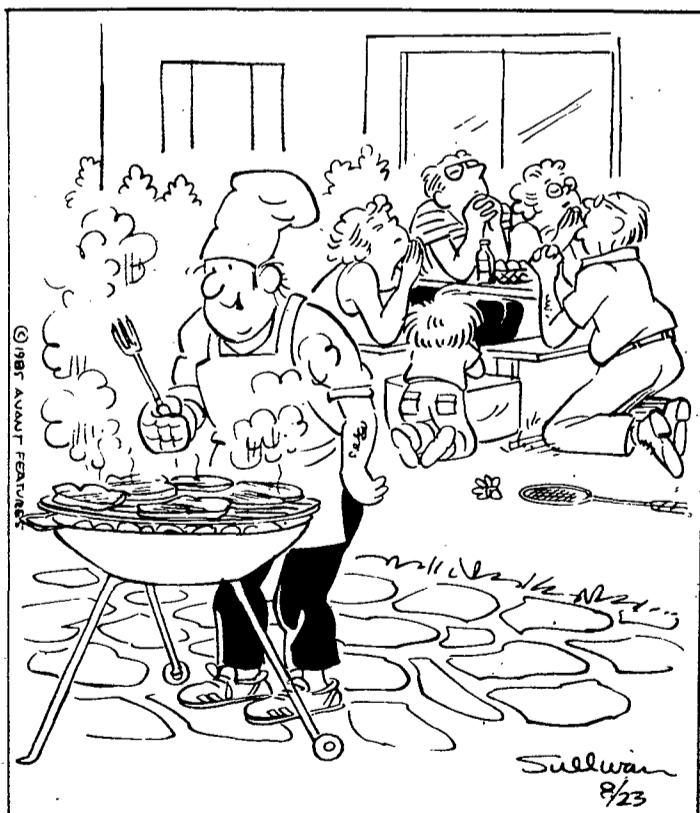
Have I ever had a painful, unwanted experience that turned out to be an unexpected and rich source of maturity and strength in my life?

Have I ever struggled long and hard to achieve something, only to find that the achievement did not bring the measure of satisfaction I had hoped for?

Have any or all of the above taught me new things about God's love? about myself? About others?

Peace to our Sisters or Mercy.

Peace to all.



"YOU'RE ALL REALLY SWELL NOT TO MENTION HOW I RUINED THE STEAKS AT THE LAST COOKOUT."

C-J Letters Policy

The *Courier-Journal* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting Church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader

interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Letters to the Editor, *Courier-Journal*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

C-J Letters

SBI alumnus finds column mis-taken

To the Editor:

A bit of personal background will help explain my negative reaction to Father Paul Cuddy's column of July 23 ("Where There's a Will..."). In 1960, I received an undergraduate degree from the college department of St. Bernard's Seminary. Four years later came priestly ordination, but no graduate degree. At that time St. Bernard's had neither the ecclesiastical nor the civil accreditation needed to offer such degrees. Those slated for positions requiring graduate degrees were sent for theology to such schools as the North American College or Catholic University.

After St. Bernard's became accredited to offer graduate degrees in the late 1960s, I took a couple of courses, but not until 1984, when I enrolled at St. Bernard's Institute, did I systematically return to formal studies.

My contact with both (academic) institutions convinces me that the institute is a worthy successor to the seminary. I find misleading, misconstrued and miscalculated Father Cuddy's characterization of the institute as "a kind of successor (to St. Bernard's Seminary), but not a seminary" and his suggestion that bequests might better be sent to Third World seminaries and sisterhoods, which "abound in vocations" and where "the money goes farther."

Misleading: While not labeled seminarians, candidates for holy orders have attended the institute since its

start. For all of these, ordination has been to the permanent diaconate, but now two SBI students are preparing for priestly ordination. Former seminarians, such as myself, are also part of the student body. Having a theological school nearby allows us to upgrade our seminary training without having to seek leaves from our pastoral assignments.

Misconstrued: Father Cuddy's article exhibits an unduly restricted notion of vocation. Vocation is wider than Church vocation. Church vocation is wider than priesthood and sisterhood. Excessive hand wringing over decreasing candidates for the priestly and religious lives forestalls the applause warranted by the burgeoning number of candidates for the permanent diaconate and for lay Church ministries. Since St. Bernard's Institute serves these candidates as well as priests and religious, it is involved in fostering the full range of Church vocations.

Miscalculated: The missions do offer a monetary bargain in the Third World costs for educating priests and sisters are lower than those of the first world. In keeping with the classical application to priests and sisters of Christ's injunction "The workman, after all, is worth his keep" (Matt. 10:10), Third World priests and sisters are by and large assured of a material security superior to that of the majority of their countrypeople. This means that while the poor economies of the Third World make for educational bargains,

more first-world money will probably be needed to subsidize these priests and sisters after their training is completed. On the other hand, little by way of material security is guaranteed to first-world lay ministers. Unless awarded special assistance, they pay full tuition for their education at St. Bernard's Institute. (Deacon candidates have their educational costs covered on a roughly 60-40 percent split between the diocese and the institute, but after ordination they normally receive no salary for the Church work done by themselves and their wives.) After graduation laity employed by Church institutions have minimal pension benefits and work for annual salaries \$5,000 to \$10,000 and more lower than those received by comparably educated workers in the private and governmental sectors. The low pay scales of first-world lay ministers create downstream bargains. Their higher educational costs are offset by what amounts to their subsidizing their ministries by accepting minimal salaries. If bargain is to be a criterion for financial support, St. Bernard's Institute should not automatically be eliminated from consideration.

Let I be inconsistent, my next task is to update my will so that the institute replaces the seminary as recipient of at least part of what I can't take with me.

Father Roy J. Kiggins
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of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Brookport

Columnist's path needs noontime illumination?

To the Editor:

The *On the Right Side* column in your July 23 issue got lost on its way to the forum. The column implied that:

1) St. Bernard's Institute is a "kind of successor" to St. Bernard's Seminary;

2) Not being a *bona fide* seminary, SBI is not deserving of financial support from the good-hearted faithful; and

3) Smart money goes to the mission seminaries which, bulging at the seams, yield a better return — spiritual, of course — on your American dollar.

Fact One: St. Bernard's Institute is by New York state law, by the standards of the Association of Theological Schools of the United States and Canada, and by the will of its trustees the same institution (as St. Bernard's Seminary) with one difference — it now has a broader mission. The highest authority at SBI remains the bishop. The basic charter, degree programs, board of trustees and alumni association remain the same.

Fact Two: St. Bernard's is still very much involved in "clergy education" plus lay-ministry education. The spring 1987 roster, for example, shows 13 priests and 33 permanent-deacon candi-

dates enrolled. Over its six years, the institute has awarded 35 priest graduates their retroactive degrees, two priest graduates their second degrees and seven graduating seminarians their first professional degrees. Had (the columnist) done his homework, he would have discovered there are three *bona fide* seminarians at the institute — young men ecclesiastically sponsored to prepare for ordination. Three robins, of course, do not make a springtime; but the institute is unworthy of financial support — on what premise?

Fact Three: Irony of ironies — SBI at this time proudly claims three students who were or are missionaries. One is a diocesan priest returned from valiant foreign mission work. One is a "missionary" to the U.S. from his native "mission" country. One is a mission-seasoned registered nurse awarded a full scholarship at SBI. Money to the missions? Indeed, we're all for it! But check the home turf first!

Fact Four: The institute indeed needs money. This year, 571 contributors thought SBI deserved their hard-earned contributions, and the same 571 might well bristle at the columnist's prejudgment. To make the maladroit assumption that SBI does not deserve financial support is to turn a column into a hobbyhorse. Even opinion

columns should let facts lead the way, however long the detour, on the way to the forum.

Fact Five: *On the Right Side* too often tilts at windmills. If the column is determined to be, by its author's own admission, "brash," it should examine its conscience to determine whether it keeps polarizing our faith community by misrepresenting facts. Freedom of the press, like motherhood and apple pie, we can live with. Misinformation in the press is worse than smoke shoveling; it's divisive. And Jesus once said something about creators of division.

Fact Six: Will someone show me a shred of logic in this scenario? 1) A resurrected, five-year-old letter, written to urge legacy writing to an elderly soul now dead two years; 2) which dear departed one gave her life's earnings fortunately, but ironically, to her home parish and neither to the missions or a seminary; and 3) a plea, based on the situation, to give more to *bona fide* seminaries.

Methinks *On the Right Side* loses its way on the way to the forum. A Diogenes with an oil lamp at noontime might help.

Father Sebastian A. Falcone
President-Dean
St. Bernard's Institute

Reader decries pusillanimity of moderation

To the Editor:

It distresses me to read that so-called "Marian exaggeration worries Pittsford pastor" (C-J Letters, July 30). I should think a more legitimate worry would be about the lack of devotion to Mary and the iconoclastic attacks on the daily rosary and the wearing of the scapular requested by her at Fatima. Just because the deposit of public revelation has been closed, some pastors think that all communication between heaven and earth has also been closed. The approved and authenticated apparitions of Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima say that the Church thinks otherwise.

Furthermore, any Catholic has sense enough not to defy Mary. But she is the mother of God and (is) our Mother.

er. As such, she is entitled to our love, honor and devotion; in fact, to love, honor and devotion over and above that given to all other saints, which veneration theologians call "hyperdulia."

In his encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" (#38ff) the Holy Father has laid to rest, once and for all, we hope, the silly charge that devotion to Mary attacks the sole-mediatorship role of her son, Jesus.

How strange it would be for the Pittsford pastor to homilize some Sunday about the dangers of loving one's own mother too much. What would his parishioners think were he to say to the youth of his parish, "Honor your father and mother, but be care-

ful. Don't exaggerate your love for them. After all, they are not God. So love God, but be mighty careful how much you love your parents — be very, very careful here. Exaggeration of parental love worries me. Don't love your father or mother too much; it might take away from your love of God."

Down with such pusillanimity. Jesus came to the world through Mary; and the world will go back to Jesus through Mary. That's her role — not to glorify herself, but to bring all to her Son. That is the hope of our Holy Father in declaring the Marian Year.

Evelyn Anne Hall
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