

## Editorial & Opinion

# A potpourri of ruminations, recollections and ramblings

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

This week's column is made up of some notes I have been collecting and some thoughts I have wanted to share with you. I offer them to you with affection and prayer.

I thought you might be interested in this postscript on the 40-day Spiritual Institute at Guelph, Ontario in which I participated early this year. You may recall that my spiritual director through those graced days was Paul Dungan, S.J. I am happy to tell you that Paul will be ordained a priest on December 30. I am also delighted to tell you that he very kindly invited me to ordain him. The ordination will be celebrated in the chapel of Loyola Retreat House, which was the site of our long retreat. I would be most grateful if you would pray for Paul as his ordination draws nearer.

One of these days I am going to make a rough check of the hours of work offered to our diocese by the women and men who serve on our boards, committees, commissions, etc. The number of hours they offer annually, I am sure, reaches the thousands. I could not even begin to calculate the worth in dollars of all that work, but I assure you it would be a huge amount. I thank them all for myself and for you, and I ask you to

## Along the Way



please remember them when you pray. I mention them not only to express thanks to them, but also to let you know that a vast amount of our work at the diocesan level is done by volunteers.

Most of you know that our Annual Thanks Giving Appeal (TGA) is in progress. This is the seventh time we have engaged in this effort to fund the ministries and services that are part and parcel of our obligations as a family of faith in the contemporary church. At its root, this effort is much more about ministry than it is about money. For that reason, I hope you have made

an effort to learn about our common work by reading the materials published in support of the TGA. They offer a sampling of the vast amount of work that is made possible by the generous offerings of people like yourself. I ask you, please, to support the TGA by praying for its success, by making a gift to it and by encouraging others to participate in the same ways. I thank you for your consideration.

Every now and then I like to include a sampling of a week's activities to keep before you in that concrete manner the variety of life, gifts, opportunities and challenges that exist in our diocese. Among this week's activities were a visit to the Becket Hall community; confirmations at Saint Pius X Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira, and Transfiguration, Pittsford; an evening of prayer and conversation with the Associates of the Sisters of Mercy; participation in the Civic Awards luncheon of the Salvation Army; meetings with the Diocesan Personnel Commission and the Diocesan Theological Commission; a visit to Saint Joseph's Convent and Infirmary; a celebration marking the 600th anniversary of the Church in Lithuania; the dedication of Mercy in Rochester. Peace to all.

## Letters

### Diocesan officials did meet with Slaughter

To the editor:

Mary Studier, in her letter to the editor of October 15, "Urges diocesan staff to educate parishes on Slaughter's views," states that Representative Louise Slaughter has refused to meet with Monroe County pro-life people.

Anita Maruggi, our coordinator of research and social action, arranged for a meeting with Ms. Slaughter on August 10, to which our legislative coordinator, Greg Haehl, and I accompanied (Maruggi). The purpose of our visit was twofold—first of all to tell Ms. Slaughter about our support for her voting record on most justice and peace issues.

Secondly, we informed Ms. Slaughter that we are firmly opposed to her position on abortion. We explained the Seamless Garment Ethic to her as the basis of the Church's activities in the political arena. We also informed her that, while the Church will neither endorse nor reject candidates for public office, we are obliged to direct our members to base their individual decisions on the magisterium. Since that body of official teaching is not only pro-life but also supports justice and peace, few candidates find a comfortable fit in the "seamless garment." Ms. Slaughter responded that she understood all this but that it would not influence her voting pattern on abortion issues.

So, you see, it has been possible for pro-life people to present their views to Ms. Slaughter. I did think it a little strange, however, that she found it necessary to call some of her Catholic supporters to find out who we were before agreeing to meet with us. And I hope she wasn't too upset that we brought up the subject of human rights for the unborn. Surely she understands that, as Christians, we are called to do what the Quakers refer to as speaking truth to power.

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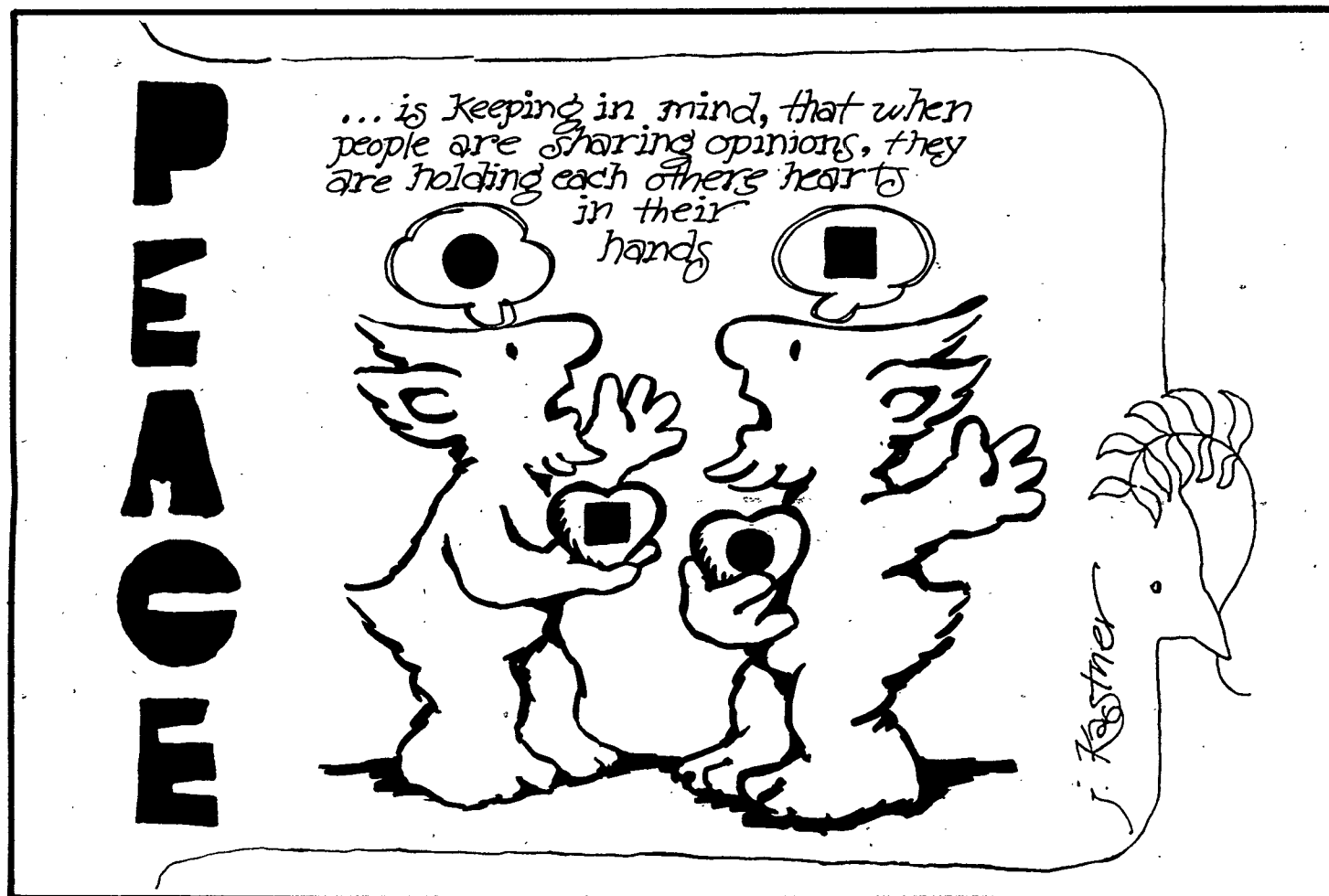
### Pope's speech offers lessons

To the editor:

While watching our Pope as he listened to our singing, our dialogues and responses, one could almost see his mind translating and defining each word. Then, while he was speaking we could again see and hear the labor and thought that goes into each word before it is uttered, in hope that it is pronounced and used correctly.

How good it would be after all of the wonderful and elaborate celebrations and heart-opening Masses if we — including myself — could learn two simple yet overlooked messages. Those would be: to listen, really *listen* to others by being patient and open to "understand their language." Secondly, that we may stop and *think before we speak*.

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## Orthodox faith does not require abdication of intellect

To the editor:

In his address to the bishops in Los Angeles, the pope stressed the need throughout the length and breadth of the Church for the formation of the mind as well as the heart.

In the 1950s, as I continued to express an attraction for the Church, members of my family, educators all, expressed the fear that in joining the Church I would have to check my intellect at the door. Now about 30 years later, I find numerous Catholics publicly evincing this same false fear which is now expressed with merely a different twist — to be a Catholic intellectual in the '80s means to be a dissenter; somehow, one cannot be educated and orthodox — and especially, American. How ridiculous!

In the old days, my family invited me to look at the poor ethnic groups in southern California who flocked to the Church but who on the surface did not appear to have a great deal of intellectual development. My family worried that as a Catholic I might become fodder for manipulation. I repeatedly silenced them by pointing to Bishop Sheen, equally as adept as my grandfather.

I can see now that, in the years since, I could have been manipulated, had I not had the graces of a sound formation, intellectual curiosity and excellent priestly advice to read sources before commentaries. There really are an awful lot of Catholic "followers" — just as in other religions — on every bandwagon one can name. However, I insist that there is no real excuse in our age for being manipulated. We live in an age of instant communication. We do not have to be isolated from the

mind of the Church! We don't have to climb on the bandwagon of disdain. We have the documents of the Council and the English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* through which we can be thoroughly informed and up-to-date. We can study and pray over the texts, as our bishop seems to desire.

When the pope spoke to the young people in Los Angeles, he repeatedly said that he had already addressed some particular questions, that he had spoken to many of the issues. Indeed he had; I have for years incorporated his answers into my family programs. One could see the frustration in his face that so little has reached the young people, whom he holds so dear. It's certainly not their fault!

It is never a mistake to trust Christ! It is never a mistake to be obedient to Him, as He was obedient to the Father. Christ is wisdom incarnate. As long as we plant ourselves firmly within the perennial doctrine of the Church and live her moral teaching, which is unquestionably related, we can go forward in God — even after death — to the very limits of our intellectual and affective capacity enlightened by grace. Was Solomon disappointed when he prayed for wisdom? His account ought to be examined in the light of Christ and the desire for what Christ brings in His train. Was St. Thomas Aquinas disappointed when he learned his head on the tabernacle and begged for intellectual insight and assistance? In each case, humility came first.

Is wisdom synonymous with a college education and degree in divinity? No. Is it opposed to education? No. Does it place itself at the service of a lifestyle? No. Is it discerning? Yes.

And, most of all, as a handmaid of faith, it is also a gift — a gift that simultaneously needs our exercise of it.

Only after I stepped over the threshold of the Church in full obedience and assent of mind and heart did I begin to find the intellectual freedom that I had desired. I chose Christ — responded to His call — trusting in what was intellectually sound, yet under the emotional burden placed on me by those who feared for my mind. I chose Him trusting Him — but still "no matter what." I know firsthand that He does not disappoint and is never outdone in generosity.

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### C-J Letters Policy

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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.

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