

Editorial & Opinion

Gatherings bring participants to consider call to holiness

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

God has been remarkably gracious to me during this Easter season by filling my life with people, experiences, questions and challenges that have led me to probe and contemplate the mystery of life in new ways. It has been a rich experience — one that leads me not only to attend to my own interior life but to try to be open to the hearts of the people I meet in the course of daily living.

I think of such gatherings as confirmation, Convocation '88, and the ordination of Tim Brown, which remind me of the vitality and diversity present in our community of faith and which at the same time are experiences of the bond of faith and charity that make us one. Such assemblies remind me how much we need one another if we are ever to become all that God wants us to be. They lend strength, lighten hearts and give courage for the journey to all of us who know how easy it can be to lose heart, weaken or go astray.

All these thoughts have come to me anew today, thanks to the group of 750 young men and women who have gathered here at Rochester Riverside Convention Center to celebrate our fifth annual Youth Day. Our theme today is "Here I am Lord; I will go, if you lead me."

The heart of the program this morning had to do with freedom, responsibility and commitment. A superb group of players from Cardinal Mooney High School presented "The Prophet," which raised the theme and fueled a lively interchange between the larger assembly of teens and a panel composed of the Mooney students

Along the Way



and several others who have made specific decisions about directions they want to take in their lives.

You might guess what questions were raised. How do you know for sure when you have made the right choice? Did you experience a lot of negative peer or family pressure about your choice? If you did, how did you handle it? What was your source of strong encouragement? How can you make long-range commitments when you know that we change as time goes by? And when we know that the world changes so rapidly? How do you choose between a high-paying job with little satisfaction and a low-paying one with a much higher level of fulfillment?

The session was lively. The questions and the answers were thoughtful. What pleased me most was the fact that the participants were free to be themselves with one another and to say what was really on their minds. There was some controversy, some disagreement, but I had the

sense that those who engaged in the exchange were more interested in searching for deeper insight than they were in winning an argument.

At this point in the day, our young friends have split up to participate in 20 workshops that have been designed to inform, assist and encourage them as they search for ways to respond to the call to holiness, which God speaks in each of their hearts.

Soon they will return to participate in the Eucharistic liturgy that will conclude the day's celebration. How fitting it is that today's second reading identifies us all as children of God, and applies to that identity such a dynamic and vital sense of growth and becoming. It's an encouraging lesson for us all. In it, there is a reminder that — however old or experienced we may be — the tender love of God is always abundantly available to us. Secondly, it offers the encouragement that God never loses interest in our continued growth. That growth takes different shapes and forms over the years.

The young people who gathered here today are growing in one way. I hope that you and I are growing in other ways. It is my firm conviction that continued growth is part of what it means to be a child of God.

Among the people who have shaped that conviction in me is Father Ben Ehmann. Ben is one of our senior priests who has never stopped growing. He is well into his 80s, yet constantly challenges his mind and strives to sharpen his pastoral skills. In his dynamic way of living, Ben has taught a great deal about what it means to be a child of God — at any age!

Peace to all.

Musical tradition is living, growing

To the editor:

While I am flattered at being labeled a "correct musician" by Father Cuddy ("On the Right Side," March 17), I must risk losing that felicitous sobriquet by offering these few reflections:

1. The hopefulness suggested by Father Cuddy depends upon the efforts of many. The sad sense of individualism our culture has fostered unfortunately infected Church life, as has the omniscience of the professional. If liturgy is to be the work of the people, then it must be just that. Our congregations are not simply an audience to be worked upon by performers. We must all take active part in lifting our minds and hearts.

2. In one sense, any liturgical action is a zero-sum situation: the more the congregation participates, the less the choir alone sings. But that in no way denigrates the importance of the choir, nor does it impugn the value of our musical heritage. There should always be enough time for Bach and Palestrina to engage our spiritual sensibilities.

3. If our tradition is a living one, as we so teach, we must recognize the process of accumulation. Only the foolhardy and myopic would consider our tradition in theology, liturgy and music as having been accomplished finally. As we live our tradition, new modes and

Letters

notes arise; only Spirit-filled time can judge their worth.

4. I cannot speak to events at St. Mary's downtown before my arrival. It would seem, however, that every story has at least two sides, and so far I've seen only one represented. Currently, our competent, school-trained and experienced music director is Darlene Flynn. She shoulders the unappreciated task of balancing old and new, ensemble and unison, trained and untrained. And since St. Mary's is a very open place, she contends with a parishful of critics. But that ferment is part of the Vatican II Church, and when suitably appropriated, can be quite intoxicating.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I must retire to the organ loft to continue my effort to be a correct musician.

Phillip J. Lioi
Arborwood Lane
Rochester

Down-to-earth columnist should check his facts

To the editor:

While we enjoy Father Paul Cuddy's column for its common sense and down-to-earth wisdom, he is occasionally a bit careless with his facts. Such was the case in his 3-17 column in reference to the music ministry at St. Mary's downtown. "Tradition in theology, liturgy and music" continue to be held in "high honor" at St. Mary's. I don't know if Father Paul has attended any liturgies at St. Mary's or in whose opinion it has become "less noble." I can state, from first-hand knowledge, that (the) parish council is dedicated to a quality music ministry at St. Mary's. We accepted Tom Donohue's resignation, and those of the choir who chose to resign with him, with considerable regret. No one was "gradually eliminated;" rather, all were urged, by council, to continue their good works. They were, and still are, welcome to be part of our worship community and share their

gifts. Keep up the good work Father Paul, but please check your sources.

Paul R. Stack, chairman
St. Mary's Parish Council

The truth sometimes hurts, but it remains the truth

To the editor:

I'm writing to commend Father Richard P. McBrien. I think he is very fair and very thorough.

He looks at the whole picture and not one small corner of it. The truth sometimes hurts but, it is still the truth. His column on March 24 ("A closer look at the pope's teachings") was particularly enlightening.

Eugene L. Powers
Hrezent View Lane
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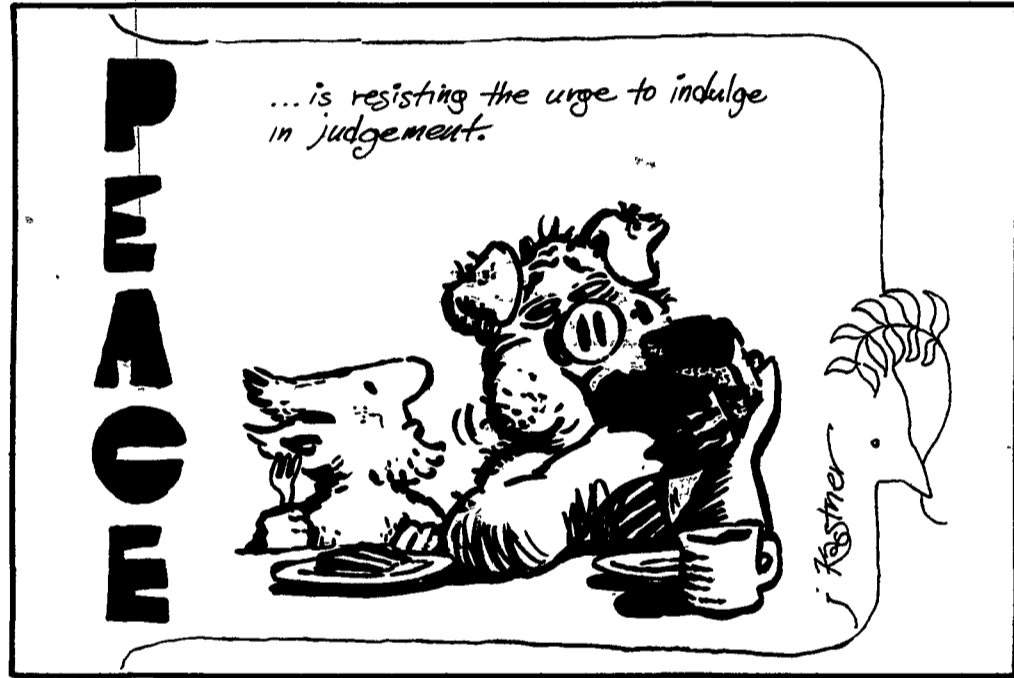
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Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will

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.

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



It's time to take the priest off the pedestal

To the editor:

Father Cuddy's column "An Awesome, Blessed Calling" in the March 24 *Courier-Journal* brought to mind one of the slogans of the Marriage Encounter movement in the '70s: "Take the priest off the pedestal!" The slogan referred to the over-emphasis of the power and privilege of priesthood, which had the unfortunate effect of substituting sanctimoniousness for sanctity, power for authority, and surliness for service. Another way of expressing the same idea is "Down with clericalism!"

Since the Second Vatican Council there seems to be a growing consciousness in the Church that the image of the priest which we have been living practically since the beginning of the Constantinian period — and which for

a long time was surely the proper one for the demands of the situation — gave really more emphasis to the dimension of the Old Testament type of priesthood and to the traditional role and status of the priest in the natural religions (the priest as the professional of religion), than to the *diakonia*, the apostolic ministry, which is so characteristic of the New Testament ideal, with its insistence on the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood and mediatorship and on the serving function of the "minister" in the midst of the priestly People of God.

Pedestals are cold and lonely places. Graham Greege and Andrew Greeley have shown us the effect of "awesome powers, graces and responsibilities" on some priests. I prefer to think of myself as "cheerleader of the goodness of God and God's people."

I write not in criticism of Father Cuddy but in the spirit of "On the one hand ... on the other hand" I am sure we both agree that it is never dull to be a priest in today's Church.

Father Robert L. Collins
St. Thomas More Church
Rochester

Applauds parish's efforts

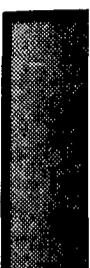
To the editor:

(This is) a letter of praise to St. Ambrose Parish. Have just read the article in the *Courier-Journal* about your decision to help make a permanent shelter for the homeless a reality (March 24: "Indebted parish takes risk to help the homeless"). You are a "light" to the diocese.

May your effort bear abundant fruit and be an inspiration to other parishes in our diocese. May we all step out in faith and be willing to take risks to keep our brothers and sisters in need.

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