

## Editorial &amp; Opinion

## Future of ministry depends on quality of community

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Tuesday, May 17

The Easter season is often a busy time, and this year is no exception. The days since I last wrote have been quite full, not only with confirmations, but also with a wide variety of activities in many different places. I won't go into all of them here, but I would like to mention a couple of this week's activities because they dealt with a familiar theme that is of interest to all of us. The activities were a day of reflection on ministry attended by 520 people from all parts of our diocese and a meeting of our Diocesan Pastoral Council. The theme of both was the changing Church in general, and our shifting vocational and ministerial pattern in particular.

At our ministry day, we reflected on our vocations picture in the diocese and on the fact that even now — but more so in the immediate future — we will have to adjust to a number of priests considerably smaller than what we have been accustomed to in recent years. At the meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, Father Tom Valenti and Sister Sheila Stevenson of our diocesan Vocation Team shared with the council members some information about our programs to encourage vocations among our young people.

Both days were stimulating because our presenters in both instances brought considerable experience and expertise to their tasks, and because the persons in attendance were deeply interested in the topics. People really do care and care deeply about the life of the Church and

Along  
the Way

her mission to build up the Kingdom of God. I won't go into all of the details of the two programs, but I want to share a few pieces of information and reflections that I think might be of interest to you.

1) In late summer and early autumn, all of our regions will gather in assemblies designed to foster the participation of local parish communities in the planning we must do in order to continue our tradition of excellent pastoral service in the Diocese of Rochester. We need to do planning at several levels, but especially we need awareness of and investment in the issue at the parish level.

2) I am concerned that the urgency of the questions before us will not hit home at the local level until we invite particular local communities to grapple with the very real challenge of reflecting on the kind of ministerial service they need. The meetings in September and Oc-

tober will assist us in that challenge, but I urge you to reflect on it even now.

3) If it is true that compared to many other dioceses we are abundantly blessed in our number of priests, the same is also true relative to other times in our own history. The faith was strong here when there were no priests resident in local communities. I think we have a tendency to unrealistically judge ourselves by the abundance of priests we had in the '40s and '50s. A change in numbers will call us to change — even to very difficult change — but that does not mean we are going through a dark and dreadful period. It may well mean that God, through it all, is calling us to deeper life and a more generous sense of service for the common good.

4) We will best respond to the opportunities before us as we appreciate more fully the depth and power of our baptism into the Lord. By it we are made a priestly people, called to worship our God and called to embody the love of God for us in our loving service to our brothers and sisters. I am convinced that as that sense of appreciation grows in us, there will emerge from the community high-quality young men sufficient in number to serve us in the ministerial priesthood. We must count on the community to form priests before we can look for priests to form community.

We will return to these themes from time to time. Please think about them and share your views and opinions in your community.

Peace to all.

## Writers question style on sisters

Dear Sir:

Since we are natives of Rochester, a friend shares the *Courier-Journal* with us each week.

There is a trend in the *Courier* that greatly annoys us. Without fail, the *Courier-Journal* refers to Religious Sisters by their last name. When did this become vogue? It seems like another unnecessary step in the secularization of Religious Life. We have a friend by the name of Sister Anne Marie Siscavitch. We prefer to call her Sister Ann Marie rather than Sister Siscavitch. Wouldn't you? Why don't you return to the respectful manner of referring to Nuns by their religious name. We do not think that you would offend either Sisters or the laity.

Thank you very kindly.

Mr. and Mrs. John Webb  
Crescent Drive  
Plattsburgh, N.Y.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** I've published the above letter without changing its format or altering the authors' capitalization, in an effort to illustrate a point about what we in the newspaper business call journalistic style, or "journalism." Whereas Mr. and Mrs. Webb capitalize "Nuns," "Sisters" and "Religious Life," the *Courier-Journal* would no sooner capitalize them than we would capitalize "mistress" or "married life."

In conversation or private correspondence, such matters of style may be settled on the basis of personal preference. (In conversation, I never call a sister by her last name.) But in newspapers these questions are settled by the final arbiter — the stylebook. At the *Courier-Journal* we rely upon the *Associated Press*

## Letters

*Stylebook, while other publications use the manual put out by United Press International.*

*On the topic of women religious, the AP Stylebook says that when a sister uses her last name, she should be identified by her full name on first reference — e.g., Sister Anne Marie Siscavitch — and by her last name on successive references — Sister Siscavitch. National Catholic News Service — which is operated by an agency of the U.S. bishops conference — also follows this format.*

*Moreover, I cannot understand how anyone could find this practice disrespectful. Part of respect lies in maintaining a certain distance between oneself and the object of respect. Conversely, the use of first names generally implies familiarity. No one seems to object that the *Courier-Journal* refers to priests and religious brothers by their last names. Why should it be different for women? In fact, the only people we do call by their first names are children. To my mind, it would be far more disrespectful for us to treat women religious like children.*

*And if we are to change our practice with respect to women religious, would we then not have to write about Father Tom and Brother Al? That's too familiar for me.*

## Alleged apparitions just 'tip of spiritual iceberg'

To the editor:

Several of the group of some 50 young people from the Geneva area on a spiritual retreat to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, have phoned their parents that they have seen the phenomena of the sun dancing as at Fatima. Subsequently, as they looked at the sun, a host and chalice appeared in its center. Later the sun darkened and they saw the Blessed Virgin Mary in the center of the darkened sun. One of the group, a young lady of our area, was cured of cancer at the time of these events. The Blessed Mother has been appearing regularly to five young Yugoslavians and conversing with them since 1981. Never has it been reported before that any other than these have seen the Madonna. Previously, others have seen the sun dance, but at the most only a luminous cloud when the Blessed Mother appeared. As I write this, the pilgrims are still in Yugoslavia and are not scheduled to return until May 2.

Those of us who take Fatima, Medjugorje and Father Gobbi's Marian messages seriously trust that the grace of beholding the Mother of God given to our local itinerant retreatants is merely the tip of a spiritual iceberg of graces Jesus is preparing to send us through the intercession of His most loving Mother. Mary has said through the visionary priest Father Gobbi, of the international Mar-

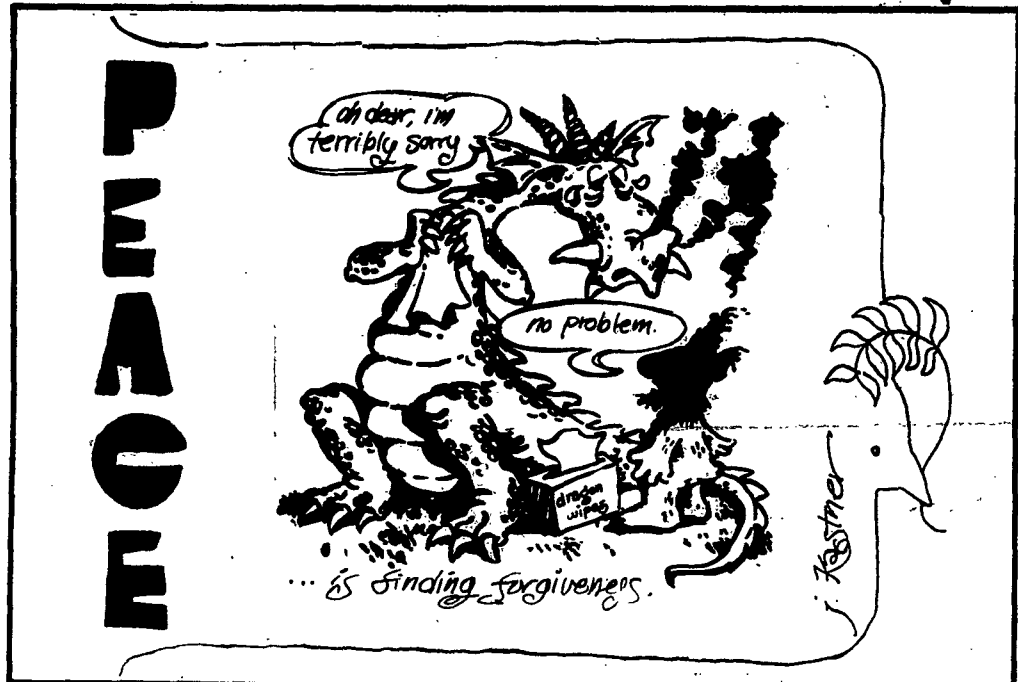
ian movement of priests, "It is particularly important for the great events which have been foretold to you by me, that during this year there be carried out my request, made by my daughter, Sister Lucy of Fatima — namely that Russia be consecrated to me by the pope together with all the bishops of the world (it seems to me that some letter of encouragement to pastors are indicated) — and so I beg you all not to let pass uselessly such an extraordinary occasion of grace, with this Marian Year, the mercy of the Lord has again granted to the Church and to all humanity."

Louis J. Pasqua  
Exchange Street, Geneva

## 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



## Student aims for peaceful coexistence

To the editor:

I would like to take the opportunity to comment on the article by John Stables, a student at Cardinal Mooney High School, regarding Central American Week held at Mooney during the week of March 21 (C-J, April 21: Speaking Out). I am the student from Mooney who organized Central American Awareness Week and scheduled five different guest speakers from such area groups as Metro-Act of Rochester, Rochester Peace and Justice Education Center and Rochester Sanctuary Committee, to relate to students the issues of poverty and oppression existing in Central America. The way in which the issues were presented may have been one-sided as John suggests — favoring a liberal point of view. Perhaps I made a mistake in doing that. However, the life of Jesus Christ, a friend and savior to many U.S. citizens and Central American citizens alike, tells me that what our government does in encouraging wars in Central America is immoral. According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus invites us all to love our neighbors, even our enemies.

Now, I certainly cannot be compared to John Stables in terms of his aptitude in the social sciences or his ability to use facts and statistics. However, after he calls the presentation one-sided and radical, John uses

the *National Review* to back his facts. The *National Review* is a one-sided, conservatively slanted magazine. There is no doubt, though, that I am faultless, because I can often be seen reading liberally slanted magazines. So now we know we're both at fault. We're human.

I like to look at the people of Central America instead of the politics, perhaps because I see the people as friends and brothers and sisters through Christ. By Christ, all citizens of the world are united, whether Christian or non-Christian. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once suggested that if we viewed ourselves as one family, there would be some very enjoyable changes in the world. During the Central American Awareness Week, when I presented some of these ideas to fellow students, I was often labeled as a "Commie Pinko" or "Bleeding-Heart Liberal" — sometimes jokingly, sometimes not so jokingly. After I heard these comments, I thought to myself: "What a lousy warmonger!" Again, I am at fault for not loving all of my neighbors as Jesus asks. Maybe if we just put that great human ability to judge and label one another (into) the closet, we could come one step closer to seeing the kingdom of God here in our midsts. As Michael Jackson so well puts it in his video, we could look at the "Man in the Mirror" and change his ways.

One final comment needs to be made. Although my views and the views of John Stables conflict with one another, we do coexist as fellow students at Mooney. In fact, I do not regret saying that John and I are good friends. If we can coexist as representatives of two different political factions, then I believe the different factions of Central America and those of the world can also coexist. May the Lord bless us all to live well with one another.

David Nesbitt  
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Rochester