

## Editorial & Opinion

# A busy week speaks of community's variety and vitality

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Tuesday, May 24.

Much has happened since the last time I wrote. The following will give you a sense of the week and an awareness, I hope, of the variety and vitality present in our community of faith.

1) Confirmations drew me this week to St. Joseph's in Rush, St. Thomas/St. Lucy in Leicester/Retsóf, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's in Corning, St. John's in Newark Valley, and Blessed Sacrament and St. Thomas the Apostle in Rochester. All were most enjoyable experiences for me because they offer an opportunity to be with the beautiful young people of our diocese. For me, there is no stronger sign of God's tender love for the human family than the young life that God raises up among us.

Visits next week to Holy Trinity in Webster, St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights and St. Margaret Mary in Apalachin will round out this year's schedule. While I will welcome a respite from the long night travels, I shall miss being with our youths.

2) On Friday, I spent a good part of the day with the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, celebrating the fifth anniversary of our pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace." The focus of the day was on housing problems that afflict the poor and on some of the ways in which individuals and groups are trying to

## Along the Way



deal with that issue.

This anniversary observance reminded me rather strongly that the publication of pastoral letters can help, but that social systems do not change unless people are committed to creating a more just world. I am afraid that there are more poor people in our country now than there were five years ago, and that the poor are getting poorer every day.

3) As I write now, I think of two other recent experiences with our Catholic schools. One was a eucharistic liturgy with the community at Holy Cross School in Rochester. The second was a prayer service for peace, in which four of our schools participated: St. John's, Humboldt Street; Annunciation; St. Andrew's; and St. Joseph's, Penfield. Both events were celebrations that made me very proud and happy.

They expressed the finest of our spiritual tradition. The children participated in appropriate and significant ways. As our friends so beautifully expressed their faith, they gave good gifts to those of us lucky enough to be with them. Many thanks to all.

4) On Sunday evening, we celebrated a moment of special significance with our friends the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester. At a celebration of evening prayer at St. Augustine's Church in Rochester, Bishop William Burrill and I signed a covenant by which we committed ourselves and our respective communities to work together to deepen our mutual understanding, respect and affection.

Hundreds of people from all parts of both dioceses gathered for the event. My hope is that their presence is a sign of a general willingness in all of our parish communities to make the covenant a source of new life and unity for all of us.

5) This week was not all formal and official events. On Thursday, I drove to Buffalo to visit two friends and with them to watch Rochester's Red Wings play the Buffalo Bisons at their new Pilot Field. It was a wonderful evening, even though the Red Wings lost by one run. I hope that there will be other ball games this summer. There are few things more relaxing at this time of the year.

Peace to all.

## Anecdote offers lesson on collars

To the editor:

Regarding the question of the Roman Collar (see "Essays in Theology," April 7, and Letters, May 12): While at a conference on Hispanic ministry in Houston, Texas, last summer, I heard Archbishop Patricio Flores speak of an experience he had earlier in his career as a parish priest. I would like to share with you, because it has been so helpful to me in clarifying my feelings about "the collar."

One Friday afternoon the then Father Flores was outside mowing the lawn when an old station wagon pulled up and a young man stepped out. The man was dark-skinned, probably Mexican. His young family were all in the car, and it appeared that they had made a long trip to the city of San Antonio that day. Father Flores asked the man where they were from, and the man explained that they were from "the valley," that is, around Brownsville, Texas, very near the Mexican border. He added that they had no money to stay in a room they had found. Could he help them out?

Father Flores was pastor of a very poor parish and had no money to offer the man, but he did have a friend at the social services office who had assured him that if there were ever an emergency, he had some discretionary funds that could be used. They all piled into the old car and headed down to that office.

When they arrived, Father Flores and the young man went into the office reception area. When Father Flores asked to see the official, the receptionist said, "I'm sorry, it's closing time. Come back on Monday." Father Flores tried to explain that the man and his family had no place to stay until Monday, and that the official would surely help them. Unimpressed, the young woman shooed them away.

Father Flores and the young man headed back, dejectedly, to the station wagon and when they got back in, the glove compartment in front of Father Flores accidentally opened up and a 3-by-5 index card, among other

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things, fell out. He had an idea. "Let's go in again," Father Flores said. So they did, and this time, Father Flores folded the index card and placed it in his now-buttoned collar.

Once inside, the men again approached the receptionist who, when she saw a priest, jumped up and said, "Why didn't you say you were a priest? Come right this way." In the elevator, Father Flores asked if the receptionist was Catholic. She responded affirmatively, and added that she had attended Catholic school all her life. Father Flores then said, "Then I would like to apologize." The woman said, "No, it is I who should be apologizing." But Father Flores insisted, "I would like to apologize, because all your life you have learned from the Church, and we have taught you to respect a 3-by-5 piece of paper more than a human being in need."

Archbishop Flores went on to say that day that he never uses the collar — and by extension, his clerical state — to gain better seats on airplanes or buses for himself or to be given any other privilege. Wearing the collar has that power, but he will not use that power for himself. He will, however, use it for those people who are outside of power, against whom "the cards are stacked." It is right and just, according to the archbishop, "to even the stacks" by this means.

A little lesson to me on how to be a Christian and a priest in the world but not of the world.

Father Paul F. English, CSB  
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Rochester

## Quotations shed light on non-sexist 'love' of early Church apologists

To the editor:

To Mr. William Hammill, who believes that the early Church fathers and apologists always exhibited love and were free from the sin of sexism (C-J Letters, April 21: "Disturbed by implications of pastoral draft"), I have a few examples for him to consider:

1) Tertullian: "Women, you are the Devil's

doorway. You have led astray one whom the Devil would not attack directly. It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and rage."

2) John Chrysostom: "Among all savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman."

3) John Damascene: "Woman is a sick she-ass ... a hideous tapeworm ... the advance post



## Rebuttal didn't fully reflect original argument

To the editor:

Father Gary Tyman's letter "Better dead than Red" discounts God's saving power" (C-J, May 12), didn't adequately reflect the content of my letter of May 5.

Actually I believe the risk of nuclear war would be greater if we were to follow the advice of peace groups like Pax Christi.

History itself teaches us that appeasement and military unpreparedness usually invited war.

Ironically, the president's defensive strategy, SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, has been attacked by peace groups even though this strategy is aimed at destroying nuclear missiles instead of people.

As a supplement to Our Lady's peace plan we must use our human intelligence to defend ourselves from an enemy that seeks global conquest.

In lieu of the fact that the Soviet Union is clearly superior in both conventional and nuclear weapons why would a further depletion of our weaponry increase our safety?

For over a decade the Soviets have been working on their own version of SDI as well as building underground shelters.

Are these activities meaningless or are they indications that the Soviets are preparing for a war?

When our Lord threatened to destroy an ancient city, its leader declared an emergency and all the inhabitants donned sack cloth and ashes. The city was spared.

As long as abortion, drug addiction and sexual immorality are rampant throughout the U.S., we have much to answer for.

Since we can only guess to what extent prayer and penance exist in the United States, we cannot be certain of God saving us from either a Soviet conquest or nuclear annihilation.

One thing is certain: our Lord never told us to disarm while an atheistic, aggressive adversary strived for world domination.

Robert W. Bart  
Ithaca

## Columnist contradicts self

To the editor:

In regards to Father McBrien's May 12 column, "Theologians and Theology," I perceive a contradiction in his logic. He states at one point, "Instead of constantly reviewing and debating the rules of the game, theologians should be encouraged to get on with 'the game' itself." Later, in regards to theologians and pastors he states, "Each side has to respect the competence and the distinctive ministry of the other." That seems to indicate to me he favors the need for rules or parameters. To have "sides" one must have "boundaries." I believe Robert Frost stated it quite well when he wrote "good fences good neighbors make."

Thank God theologians are not infallible! Nor always logical. Nor immune to the need for rules.

Kathy Crane  
Rochester

## 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

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