

Editorial & Opinion

Self-examination leads to realization of God's presence

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

My spiritual director is a perceptive and kind person. I see him about once a month. When we meet, I do the best I can to tell him what has been happening in my life, how I experience God's love and how I am trying to respond to that love. He, in turn, listens attentively, affirms what he judges to be valid and sound, and offers his guidance when he judges that I need it.

I always appreciate our meetings. Each one is a reminder that no one of us is alone in our journey of faith. Each one is a reminder that God is with us every step of the way. Each meeting reminds me that God continually calls each one of us to greater maturity and freedom, no matter how old we are or what our call in life may be.

Those values of spiritual direction came to me in a strong yet simple way at my last meeting with my spiritual director. In the past several months, I have been more introspective than usual. At both the personal and ministerial levels, I have been dealing with issues that have led me to do a lot of interior searching and self-examination. That process has been both a difficult and rewarding experience. It is difficult because, in the proc-

Along the Way



ess, I inevitably discover that I must make changes in my life because I have been missing something or have been fooling myself. It is rewarding because when I have the courage to change, I know that I come to better levels of maturity and freedom.

I told my spiritual director all about this recent experience and about how I tried to do it all with an awareness of God and, somehow, for God. My director was most encouraging as he always is, but he also offered the gentle reminder that, while what I was doing was very good, I still needed to take time each day to do nothing but listen to God. I know that he was right. I have al-

ways believed that, but in these recent months had slowly drifted away from the kind of prayer that finally centers a person.

Not too many years ago, I would have been quite discouraged by that realization. I would have felt that I had failed, and would have scrambled madly to restore what I had neglected and, therefore, lost. Now my reaction is different. I recognize that I had been praying — that I have, indeed, had a special sense of God's presence during these months, and that my call and desire now is simply to offer totally to God some good part of every day.

What had happened over the years to preserve me from the panic of youth every time I discover that I have been negligent or missed the boat on important things? I suppose the simple process of aging has something to do with it. Experience changes us, if we are lucky. Friends who love us certainly do. But I think what changes me most of all is the growing realization that God is present in all that is real, that God wants nothing but good for us, that God is utterly gracious and kind to us even when we struggle with illusion, mis-direction and sin — all of which are parts of every human story.

Peace to all.

Letters

Better communism than annihilation

To the editor:

In response to the letter by a Mr. Robert Bart, entitled "Better to risk nuclear war than to live under communists," (C-J May 5), I would like to say in reply that I think it is better to live than to die.

Certainly a life under communism — as lived in Russia and other countries — is not an ideal. However, it would seem to me that we are called to life. Perhaps life under communism would not be as some would like, but it would be a lot better than living under the fear of total annihilation by nuclear weapons.

Mr. Bart certainly has his facts mistaken. The United States has not continued to disarm itself, but rather the opposite since Ronald Reagan has taken office in 1980. Implying that the Russian government sends weapons to Afghanistan to kill and maim children is certainly a blinded view that sees America as white as snow. Remember it is America who also arms the other side in that tragic war. America has also aided the contras in Nicaragua with military aid and economic aid.

The situation that Mr. Bart speaks about in Cambodia is a valid point, but what is equally valid is what happened when America tried to spread Americanism in Vietnam, in which the United States saw more of their own men killed than (occurred in) any other war that we were in.

I do not see, as Mr. Bart does, that "disarming while our adversary continues to stockpile is neither a sensible nor a Christian way to work for peace." It seems to me it is the only way. Jesus came to teach peace, love of your neighbor. He did not put qualifiers on his statements. He said to turn the other cheek, love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. Peace will never occur unless we are willing to take the risk involved in opening ourselves to become vulnerable, even to the point of living under communism. We will never be able to adhere to Our Lady's word for peace as long as we are supplying armies with weapons or building up our own wall of nuclear weapons. On the other side of this wall is peace.

Brian Cool
Becket Hall
Rochester

PEACE



...is remembering that regardless of our opinions and judgments, all are loved unconditionally

Mercy sister explains funding situation of order's inner-city program

To the editor:

In response to Brother Augie Jackson's letter of June 2 ("Why no funds for House of Mercy?"), I would like first of all to thank him for his concern for and interest in the House of Mercy and its ministry to the poorest of the poor.

The Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, who sponsor the House of Mercy, are grateful for the support of many dedicated friends like Brother Augie who assist us in our mission of mercy.

I wish to point out, however, that we do not feel Bishop Clark has "taken back" his blessing because Urban Subsidy funding was not granted this year to the House of Mercy.

We understand that our ministry there was not able to fulfill the guidelines drawn up for Urban Subsidy funding, and that is why monies were not allocated to us this year. It was specifically mentioned that this was in no way intended as a criticism of our work at the House of Mercy.

I might also point out that the House of Mercy has received diocesan funding for the past two years; we are grateful for that support. In addition, there are countless numbers of individual friends, as well as several parishes, who continue to support our ministry there. For all of them we are most thankful.

Finally, the Sisters of Mercy have supported and are continuing to support the House of Mercy financially and otherwise. We affirm this ministry and the presence of our two sisters, who are serving people in such a vital way.

It is our intention to dialogue with appropriate diocesan officials to determine if there might be a way of funding ministries like the House of Mercy that do not fit the Urban Subsidy guidelines as they are presently drawn up.

We believe that our time and effort is better spent in trying to work together on behalf of the poor than to be at odds with each other, particularly with the diocese of which we are a part.

Let's call each other to greater love and compassion in the vision of the Gospel and of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, who said in her writings:

"The blessing of unity still dwells among us ... This is the spirit of the order, indeed the true spirit of mercy flowing on us ... He still leaves us his holy peace"

Sister Kathleen Milliken, RSM
Member of the Council
Sisters of Mercy of Rochester

Commends anti-abortion protesters' courage

To the editor:

The word of God in Proverbs 24:11-12 commends us to "rescue those being led away to death" and advises us that God knows our hearts when we see and pretend not to know that this is going on right under our Christian noses.

Thank God the Church is alive and responding to this word from God. During the first week of May, over 500 lay people, a Catholic bishop, and many nuns and priests and ministers took a week out of their lives and sat in and were arrested at abortion mills in New York City. Several Rochester people were in that number.

The following week saw 15 local pastors close down an abortion facility on Ridge Road. Nine were arrested for being doers of God's

word and not hearers only. Then Saturday, May 21, we witnessed 42 people of all sizes, ages, denominations put their lives and reputations on the line to close down another abortuary — Highland Hospital's Saturday morning clinic. This gave several women who were about to kill their babies a chance to think twice about what they were about to do.

My personal congratulations to all of these courageous people who cared enough to stand and speak for those who could not speak for themselves — the unborn babies. I pray that more Christians will be moved to put an end to these modern-day death camps disguised as doctors' offices and hospital clinics.

Judith Donoghue
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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

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