

Editorial & Opinion

TGA video, ad limina report tell diocesan tale of faith

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

The most consistent and attractive theme which runs through my mind these days is the richness and vitality of the faith of the people who make up the Diocese of Rochester — your faith and the faith of people just like yourself.

As you know, that theme is never too far from my spirit. But it is there with special vigor lately because of two events which have claimed my prayer and thought in a particular way recently.

The first is the impending "ad limina" visit by the bishops of New York State to Our Holy Father and some of his staff at the Vatican. In preparation for that journey, we have developed as full and accurate a report as possible about the life and growth of our diocese during the past five years.

The second recent occasion for this kind of reflection is the video we have produced to promote this year's Catholic Thanks Giving Appeal. That video brings together the face, voice and faith-gifts of many women and men from all corners of our diocese. Their presence on the video gives a beautiful sampling of the ways in which God blesses us continually.

Both — each in its own way — try to tell the story of your faith and how you live that faith in worship of God and service to your sisters and brothers.

Both efforts are very much worth while and nicely serve the purpose for which they were developed. But I had the sense in reviewing both that even taken together they do not begin to tell the full story of who you are

Along the Way



or of the varied and sacrificial ways in which you respond to the call of Christ as you hear that call through the ins and outs of daily living.

It's of such things that I want to speak next month when I have the pleasure of a private conversation with our dear brother John Paul II. I want him to know how you have stepped forward to build up the Kingdom of God in response to the challenge and invitation of Vatican Council II. I want to speak to him of the ways your imagination, creativity and generosity help us to respond to pastoral situations which are quite complex. I want to tell him how you so beautifully respond to the gospel call to be salt and light in your home and workplace and in all dimensions of daily living.

In addition to telling him all that I can about you, I want to bring him word of your affection and respect and our thanks for the incredibly generous way in which

he spends himself in service of the Church universal. Our visit will come near the 10th anniversary of his election, so I shall extend your congratulations to him on that occasion as well.

Recently I read a sampling of response people wrote to the question "what would you like to say to the Holy Father?" I have not formulated a specific response to that question for myself as yet. I learn towards encouraging John Paul II to emphasize the importance of the local church and to free local churches in all ways consistent with our tradition to make judgments about the shape and direction of their pastoral life. In my judgment that would strengthen the life of the local churches and would strengthen the bonds of faith and affection which unite us.

A second encouragement I would offer to him is that he not give more weight than they deserve to reports from prophets of doom in Rome and in the United States who say that the Church in the United States is in decline or disarray. I believe that the opposite is true and hope that our five-year report and those of our sister dioceses provide him with ample evidence of that.

As the days go by (things) other topics may come to mind. Of course, I am very much aware that this meeting will be a conversation and not a monologue, and that our Holy Father may have some themes on which he'd like to spend some time. Whatever the case, I look forward to the experience and to telling you about it when I come home.

Peace to all.

Letters

Prayer lightens task of service

To the editor:

This letter is written in response to a letter written by James G. Connor, published in the September 1 edition of this paper. Having just returned from Medjugorje, I might be able to address some of his concerns.

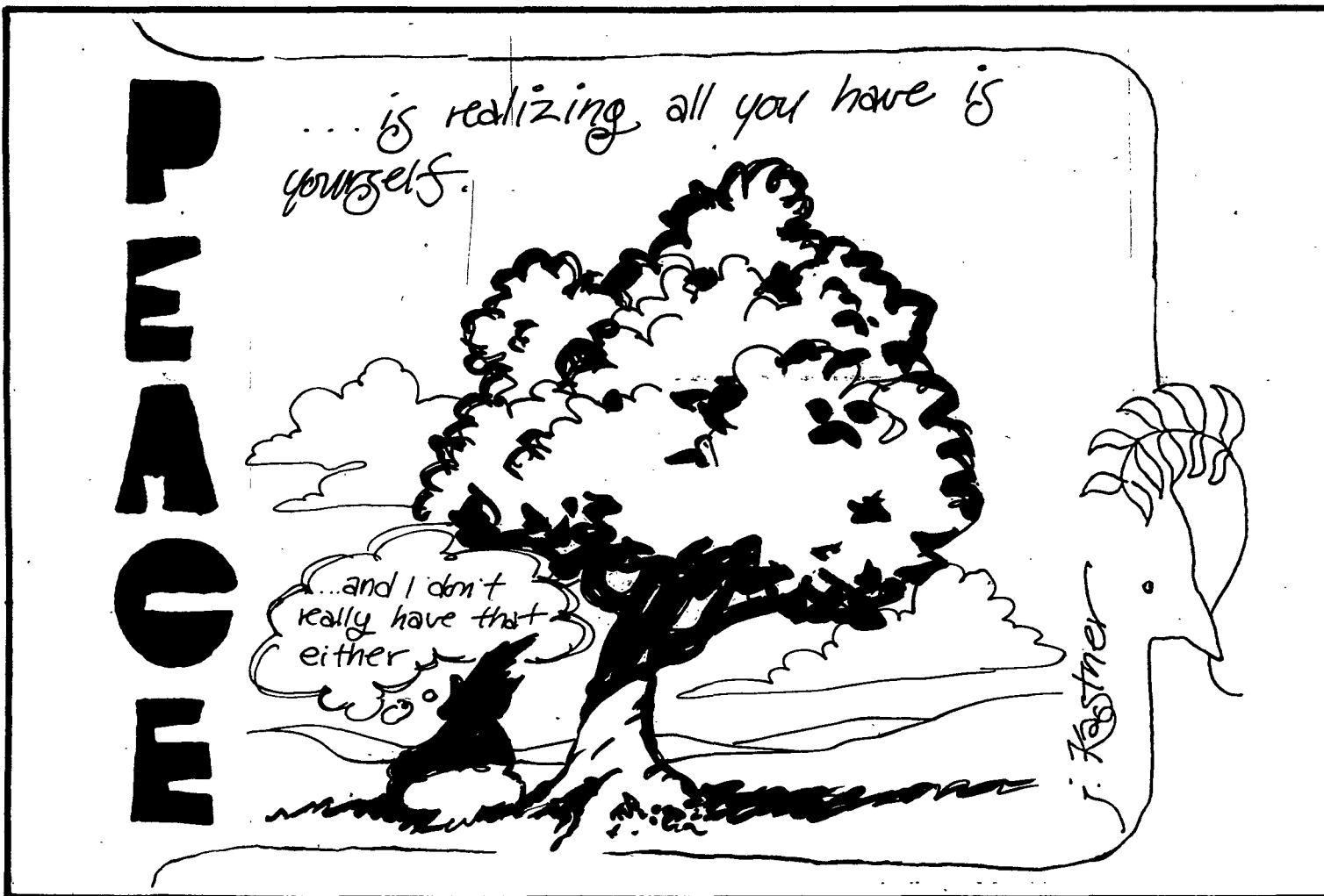
I must first question, who is the "devotee" quoted as saying, "Mary's asking us to go back to the church of 35 years ago"? Is this one of those devotees who sees Vatican II as having changed our devotion to Mary, putting her in a lesser light than before? This is not an accurate interpretation of Vatican II, but it is one that many Catholics hold to be true. This view should not be applied to the Franciscans at Medjugorje.

If Mr. Connor would like to learn how the Franciscans interpret the children's conversations with Our Lady, I recommend he read the meditations of Father Tomislav Vlasic and Father Slavko Barbaric. These are homilies they have given at services at St. James Church in Medjugorje. The gray book, *Open your Hearts to Mary Queen of Peace*, includes selected homilies from Easter-December, 1984. The blue book, *Abandon Yourselves Totally to Me*, covers January to June, 1985. A red book and a yellow book are being readied for print. These have been translated from Croat into Italian by Mirjana Vasilj Zuccarini, and then from Italian to English. The books are distributed free of charge by the Riehle Foundation. You can find them at the Christian Shop in Canandaigua.

Mr. Connor takes offence to one seer's response to a question regarding social ministries of the church. The answer was, "Don't talk about it, pray about it." Our Lady is calling everyone to fervent prayer. The seer's response is exactly the one they keep getting from Our Lady. Our Lady isn't giving them advice about specific rolls the Church plays in the world today. Our Lady is telling them that if the Church is to be effective in making changes in this world, we all must first pray, pray with our hearts, for the success of our endeavors. One hour in church on Sunday isn't enough to bring about the changes that are needed. The seer said, "Don't talk about it, pray about it." I don't think anyone can argue the importance of prayer versus talk. One can not imply that because action was not mentioned, that it is not of importance.

If Mr. Connor reads the blue book, he'll find the connection between praying and doing in Father Vlasic's homily of May 24, 1985.

"Yesterday I talked of being active ... peo-



ple have drained themselves and have been lacking in spiritual strength on account of the absence of prayer and the increase of their activities. I do not want to separate activity from prayer nor prayer for activity. However, the activity which we have to undertake extinguishes itself without the Spirit within us. We should work, I would say, more than others, but work with God so that each one of us is under the action of the Holy Spirit; do not act by the compelling power of human ideas, but by the strength of God.

"I experienced this in these last four years when I was full of my own ideas wanting to save this person or other and not succeeding in anything. When, however, I put myself into God's hands in prayer, only then did I see how everything changed."

Our Lady is asking us to pray. Pray especially as families, reading the Bible together as well as praying the rosary daily. She asks that we go to confession monthly and fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. In Medjugorje, fasting means bread and water on these days.

Does Mr. Connor perform all of these spiritual tasks for the success of our social ministries? Our hammers might not seem so heavy if we all take Our Lady's advice and pray as we serve others.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours."

Karen P. Donnelly
Marshall Road
Watertown

God's law supersedes that of man

To the editor:

At eight o'clock this morning I received a telephone call from my wife, Kathleen, informing me of her release from Tallahassee County Jail, where she had been incarcerated for the past five days for her involvement in a rescue mission to save unborn children from being killed. As with her spiritual counterparts in the sixties who recognized that discrimination against blacks — although legal — was immoral, my wife is aware that God's admonition "Thou shalt not kill" takes precedence over any law which permits the destruction of a developing child.

Every day 4,000 babies are aborted in this country — 4,000 babies whom God intended to live but now will not. And while it is true that salvation is free, discipleship costs. We all

must be willing to do more to stop this slaughter of innocents, even at great personal sacrifice. Certainly we must pray more and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct us in our actions.

Scripture reveals to us that the first person to recognize Jesus as Lord was John the Baptist while they both were in the womb. "Whatsoever you do to the least of these, you do to me" is not restricted to the poor and homeless, but most assuredly includes the unborn. God wants this holocaust to end, and He wants our help.

Bill Cusack
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Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above letter was dated August 11.

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

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