

Sabbatical's activity focuses on Tabasco team

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I wrote about studying Spanish in Cuernavaca last week. As promised, here is a brief account of the other components of my sabbatical.

On Dec. 16, I returned to Rochester to celebrate the Christmas feast and to pay my family a holiday visit. Following that I went to Orlando, Fla., for a weeklong meeting of the committee preparing the pastoral letter on the concerns of women for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Our work on that occasion was to revise the first draft of our letter in light of the responses to it, which we received from dioceses all over the country. When the meeting ended, Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany joined me in Orlando, and we spent the better part of a week together visiting the attractions of that area. On Jan. 14, I flew from Orlando back to Mexico City.

During my sabbatical experience, I visited Tabasco twice, for a week in December and for almost two weeks in late-February and March. I have always enjoyed my visits to Tabasco over the years, but I enjoyed this visit most of all. There are two reasons for that.

The first reason is that we have a full

team in place, working lovingly and fruitfully with the people of the 15 communities they serve within the large parish of which they are a part. Father Paul J. Ryan, Lisa Marie Kowalewski, Mark VanDerwater and Madalyn Kaniecki represent our life and care among the people of Tabasco in a way that makes me proud to be associated with this local church. In addition to the four from our diocese, two Tabasquenos, Luz Maria Gomez and Jesus Fernandez, have become part of our team. That the two of them approached our group and asked to live and work with them is to me a sign that our team is well-established in their new community.

I lived with the team, visited many of their communities with them, and prayed and played with them. They are faithful, generous people who make considerable sacrifices to engage in this apostolate, but who would be the first to tell you that the joy they experience with the people makes the sacrifices worthwhile.

The other reason I especially enjoyed this visit was that for the first time I could communicate with the Mexican people without depending on an interpreter. And that was a great joy. To be sure, I cannot communicate with them as I could in my

own language, but I could hear confessions, converse and preach in a simple manner and, thus, share my faith with them and be enriched by their own.

Since I have been home, I have tried to study Spanish for some time each day. I have not quite managed that, but I have been regular in it and believe that I will continue. And I will try to take advantage of opportunities to practice what I have learned when I meet the Spanish-speaking members of our diocese.

This week and last I have tried to update you on my sabbatical experience by sharing with you some of its basic components. Even as I write this, I am very much aware that I have not begun to share much of what has happened inside me during these months. I will not be devoting future columns to my sabbatical. But I hope that the issues and themes, the questioning and searching, the insights and inspirations that surfaced during these months will become a natural part of my future writing.

Once again, I thank you for your support and encouragement, which helped to make those months as peaceful and productive as they were.

Peace to all.



Along The Way

CUF representative clarifies organization's objectives

To the editor:

Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) is an international lay organization founded in 1968, and having as its goal the support, defense, and advancement of the teaching Church. It was therefore lamentable that Father Richard McBrien found it appropriate in his March 2 column ("Why conservative Catholics are not fundamentalists") to broadly denounce the members of CUF and similar orthodox lay groups — with utter disregard for the truth — as "papal fundamentalists" whose interests are antithetical to the good of the Church.

Father McBrien is, of course, also incorrect in his irresponsible assertion in the

column that CUF is "committed to a right-wing political agenda," as well as in his implication that CUF might be among orthodox groups which participate in Vatican intrigues through "close links with corporate wealth." Hopefully, these characterizations were seen by Father McBrien's readers as expressions of his displeasure at the resurgence of orthodoxy apparently at odds with his preferred ecclesial agenda, rather than as approximations of provable charges. But more serious than such contentions is Father McBrien's specious claim that faithful Catholics in organizations such as CUF "regard the pope, not the Bible, as the sole

norm of truth" — as if its members, subscribing to "sola Papa" instead of "sola scriptura," adhere to some form of mutant Lutheranism.

If Father McBrien were to attend a meeting of a CUF chapter, he would quickly discover that his conclusory doctrinal pigeonholing of CUF-members is made out of whole cloth. His attempt to find CUF guilty by association with Archbishop Lefebvre is a baseless charge. Unlike Archbishop Lefebvre, CUF members believe in the authenticity of the entire message of Vatican II; they have even been known to promulgate the truth of its text — which is not to be confused with the vaunted "spirit of Vatican II," a term in which the implicit requisite fidelity to the actual text varies with the fidelity of its user — as part of their efforts on behalf of the teaching Church. Thus, for example, while a CUF member recognizes that "(the faithful's) religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking ex cathedra" (*Lumen Gentium*, n.25), he or she also has no trouble in believing that "sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in ac-

cord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 10).

While CUF members do not believe, as Father McBrien also suggested in his March 2 column, that the principal enemies of the Church lie within the Church, we do concur in Pope Paul VI's observation that the "smoke of Satan" has entered the Church during the postconciliar period. It is the gates of that adversary's domain that shall not prevail against the Church founded by Jesus Christ Himself upon Peter the "rock" (cf. Matthew 16:18). As Catholic faithful, we are all called to reinforce the defense of those gates by sharing the cross of Christ our Truth, and glorifying His victorious and majestic omnipotence. "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). By God's grace, the members of CUF intend to continue gathering, Father McBrien notwithstanding.

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There are many wolves these days

Doctor praises hospital ministries

To the editor:

I would like to describe for you my observations of the events of Saturday, February 18th, at Monroe Community Hospital where I work in Medical Administration.

On the second floor, a Renewal and Reconciliation weekend was taking place for about 25 of our patients. The team included four of our diocesan priests, numerous Sisters of Mercy and St. Joseph and volunteers from several local parishes.

In the auditorium on the first floor we were celebrating our monthly birthday party. Pushing wheelchairs and stretchers

to bring patients to the auditorium, and helping serve punch and cake were students from Seton Junior High and a confirmation class from Mother of Sorrows parish. Joining in the festivities was a clown ministry group from St. John Fisher College.

Seeing all these diocesans generously sharing themselves with our patients was a wonderful sign to me of the life and spirit of the Church of Rochester. The Good News is at work here.

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Church needs a few bishops — or priestesses — men enough to fight attack of 'feminoids'

To the editor:

Feminists hate men, and want to wreck the Church. Our bishops are not men enough to stave them off.

I never thought I had much in common with the mace-wielding bishops of the Middle Ages. My weapon of choice is the fly swatter. Right now, though, we could use bishops and priests who are men enough to defend the Church against the

ferocious attacks of the feminoids.

These days religious manhood is hard to come by. Perhaps women could rise up and be Defenders of the Faith. It wouldn't be the first time. There could be a special Joan of Arc priestesshood.

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