

Potpourri of thoughts on column, retreat and anniversary

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

This will be the last column I shall write for the *Catholic Courier* until the edition to be published on August 3.

On Monday, July 3, I shall begin my annual retreat at the Loyola Retreat Center at Guelph, Ontario. Paul Dungan, SJ, will be my retreat director for that eight-day experience. You may remember that Paul was my director for the 30-day retreat I made in January-February of 1987, and that I had the privilege of ordaining him to the priesthood in late December of that same year. This will be my third retreat with Paul. I look forward to it as a time of renewal and deepening of my relationship with our God.

Following the retreat, I am going to spend a few days in Waterford with my mother, sister, brother-in-law and my five beautiful nieces. As you know, I enjoy seeing the family and take particular delight in spending time with the kids. That time becomes more precious as the years go by and the young people grow and scatter. It's not an easy matter anymore to gather everyone at table. Grace works in a hospital on a rotating schedule and on most weekends. Jane is employed in an office.



Pre-Cana program earns couple's praise

To the editor:

After reading the article in the May 25th edition of the *Catholic Courier* regarding the new Pre-Cana material ("Pre-Cana manual draws ire of parish team members"), we felt compelled to write. We have been involved in the Pre-Cana ministry for six years. We attended the information session on the new material in April. Being totally human, we were apprehensive. We had become very comfortable doing sessions the "old" way. However, after attending the session and reviewing the material in depth, we are really excited about the new program. It offers young couples an opportunity to explore the depth of their relationship, and that's what marriage is about — relationships.

As for being experts, or qualified to instruct — none of us are, but we are willing to learn, to be vulnerable for the sake of helping our brothers and sisters have a better relationship. I don't think the couples could ask for more. We have a wealth of experience to share, if we are willing to be open and that is not always easy, but then no ministry is always easy.

As for the material focusing too much on the negative, I say it's about time. For too long society has promoted negatives as being perfectly acceptable behavior and if we don't let young couples know they are negative and show them the positive alternatives, things won't change. Problems will just regenerate themselves.

Personally, we want to thank the Fishers for their efforts in the Pre-Cana ministry and let them know there is at least one team who is supportive of their efforts.

Anne and Tom Barton
Pre-Cana Team Leaders
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish
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Mary Ellen, who graduated from high school on Sunday, is just starting a new job as a cocktail waitress in a local restaurant. Margaret and Kathleen do a good deal of babysitting through the whole year.

Yesterday I was reminded of how quickly they have all grown up and how quickly the years pass. The occasion was the 10th anniversary of my installation as bishop of Rochester, and some friends at the Pastoral Center put together a videotape compiling photographs taken during those years. There were photos of my ordination as a bishop in St. Peter's Basilica, of my installation at the War Memorial, and of a wide variety of events and people that have filled by life since then. Photos of the kids were scattered through the years and brought a special joy to the occasion.

In keeping with the tradition of the ages, I'll be spending two weeks at the ocean with Tom Powers and Howard Hubbard. We are all hoping for better weather than we had last year. Whatever the weather, it will be good to be with those old friends again. We have much to share, and I look forward to it.

Several of you have written in response to the question I raised two weeks ago

about changing the format of this column when I resume it in August. I had asked whether I should continue the column in its present weekly format, change it to a monthly and more lengthy column on a particular pastoral theme or try some combination of the two approaches. Your responses have been most helpful and encouraging. As it stands now, your feedback indicates that you favor the present format but that you are open to some combination of this type column and the longer monthly piece. I want to do some further consulting about that question and will let you know in August what I would like to do at least through the next year. If you would like to express your view on that issue (or any other), please write to me at 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York, 14624.

One never knows what will happen during a retreat except that the Holy Spirit will be present in light and strength and encouragement. I ask your prayers that I will be open to those gifts and will be able to receive them with an open heart. I shall remember you with great gratitude for the kindness you have shown me through this year and through all the years.
Peace to all.



Along The Way

Writer suggests ways to increase priestly vocations

To the editor:

On Sunday, May 28, our pastor read a letter from Bishop Clark, stating that it was World Day of Prayer for Vocations, and to submit names of young men who might be interested in living a life dedicated to serving the Church and its people. They would live a celibate life, performing all the tasks and duties which priests have always done, carrying on after the other priests have retired.

Being realistic, looking at the trend of the last 30 years, no matter how many petitions are made to the young, will the response be enough to give our Church the clergy needed in the future to give Catholics the same leadership as in the past?

Of recent years the youth seem to have become very materialistic. Instead of the dedicated life, they seem to want college, career, marriage, children. Fewer have attended Catholic schools. Fewer are encouraged by family and friends in this direction. The celibacy requirement is one of the main reasons why youth today no longer consider the priesthood. Many very fine and capable priests have left the priesthood for this very reason.

One priest, speaking at our church on vocations, said that parents urge their children to marry and produce grandchildren. Since young parents are having fewer children, most do not urge their children to consider a religious vocation, because then they will have fewer children to produce the next generation.

With these thoughts in mind, here are some suggestions to alleviate the present shortage, and projected greater shortages,

and create a trend for the future. We remember that an earlier generation responded in much greater numbers to the call to the priesthood. Some years as many as 70 or more applicants took tests to enter the former St. Andrew's minor seminary from the eighth grade. Perhaps that generation, now reaching retirement age, 55 and up, could again supply much needed members to alleviate this shortage. Many are in good health, have five, 10, or 20 years ahead, with time on their hands, and would consider part- or full-time ministerial duties. Many have attended and dropped out of the seminary in their younger years. They may already be active in parish work as volunteers, or on the parish council.

Retired people have, on the whole, good buying power, have retirement and investment incomes, medical benefits, little need for high salaries. A year or two of training could supply the skills needed for this new vocation.

Another idea is to offer specialization for those with special training and skills. There are those trained in education, communication, working with youth, counseling, to name a few.

Wives of men may prove supportive in this ministry.

Every parish priest probably knows of many men in his church who are active in parish work, and might be willing. Deacons who have been trained would be another source of supply.

This example to the young could establish a precedent many would follow in their later years.

The pope, who seems to want a tra-

ditional unmarried clergy, does not seem to object to those who have late vocations and are also married. The Eastern Church does have married clergy. Our Diocese has one married priest, who converted from the Protestant ministry.

Today's priests have to do many varied jobs. Because of the shortage, they cannot do them all justice, and may get burned out. A recent *Courier* article (April 13: "Local priests weather storm of morale woes") spoke of the feelings of isolation many priests feel as, year after year, their numbers go down, their responsibilities increasing, along with declining health as they grow older.

Our country is rapidly changing, has been for decades. We cannot remain locked in the past. New methods must be tried. We don't want our religious leadership to disappear as our present priests retire. We are expecting more of them than is humanly possible. We are expecting an ever decreasing number of priests to do the same amount of work as previously when there was twice the number. This is impossible. We are told that if one of our two parish priests becomes ill or leaves, he will not be replaced. Soon one priest will be in charge of two or three parishes. Something must be done.

Let us make use of this great untapped resource, our capable, experienced, seasoned, knowledgeable mature generation.

Mrs. Ernest Willett
Thorncleft Road
Spencerport

Reader counters correspondent's criticisms of Episcopal bishop

To the editor:

Edward Gaffney's lengthy letter (*Courier*: May 18: "Questions Episcopal bishop's viewpoint") questions the wisdom of ecumenical dialogue. He asks, "Are we as Catholic laypeople really prepared to defend the teachings of our church" in the presence of learned leaders of other faiths?

If Mr. Gaffney were a steady reader of the Catholic press (the *Courier*, *Knights of Columbus Magazine*, *Twin Circle Register*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, *Wanderer*), he might find himself in company with many well-informed, well-spoken defenders of the faith and much less distrustful of self and others.

Even so, I object to his criticism of Episcopal Bishop Burrill who had admitted pain that the Catholic Church is unwilling to accept fully the ministry of women and its

tendency to inhibit theological discussion. The pain is all around us on these issues. Quite recently our Holy Father expressed his personal sorrow to the head of the Anglican Communion about its ordination of women to the priesthood. The bishop should be appreciated, not disparaged, for his comment on theological discussion. An entire page from the same issue of the *Courier* indicated the need for centuries-overdue reform by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, presently guided by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

The Episcopal bishop pledged to remain constant in prayer for Bishop Clark and the Catholic Community consistent with the Covenant between the two faiths. While I am saddened by Mr. Gaffney's caustic comments directed at the bishop for his sincerity of expression, I find it heartening that he holds the lives of the saints before

us when there is disagreement in conscience. We can find consolation and inspiration, for example, that Catherine of Siena, a laywoman and Vincent Ferrer were on opposing sides of the Great 14th Century Schism.

It might be a good idea for each of us to listen to the words of today's (May 23) liturgical reading: "Study the generations long past and understand" Sirach 2:10.

The Richard Kiley feature (*Courier*, March 16: "Small communities pioneer covenant course") was excellent. It's too bad Mr. Gaffney's response was so long in coming but he deserves an answer, as does your readers. Once in awhile please give a bit more space to letters.

Frank Carver
Trumansburg