

Ways vary to answer a common call

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Each year around this time, the letter from the pastor is in my mail box for me when I arrive home. Bob Miller wrote it faithfully when he was with us; now Tom Mull honors the tradition.

The letter announces the fact that the time for the Thanks Giving Appeal is here again and asks for continuing support of the effort. I have received such a letter for each of the last eight years and so have my secretaries — Chuck Latus, Lou Vasile and now Paul Tomasso — who have lived here with me at Sacred Heart.

We have some fun about it each year since I attend so many meetings and send so many letters about the Thanks Giving Appeal and am not likely to forget that this annual event has rolled around one more time. I do enjoy receiving the

letter, though, because I believe very deeply in the work of the appeal.

And, because I do believe in its work, I am happy to contribute whatever I can to its success. The Thanks Giving Appeal allows us each year to meet the responsibilities we have as a diocese. It also permits us to fund the services and ministries by which we extend the care of Christ to others who stand in particular need.

But my point today is not so much to promote the Thanks Giving Appeal — although I dearly hope that you will support the effort with great generosity — as to reflect on the fact that it is a joy to live my life among you, to walk with you in faith as together we seek to serve and build the kingdom of God on earth.

Saint Augustine said it well several centuries ago, when he remarked to his people that for them he was a bishop and with them he was a Christian. I have always appreciated those words, but they mean more and more to me as the years go by. I guess it is because they remind me who I am as a person and who I am called to be with you and for you.

They hold up a distinction which, I believe, is important for all of us to bear in mind about ourselves. The fact is that, while in our baptism we have a common call to holiness, we are called to live out that call in different ways according to the circumstances of our lives.

My call, as best I understand it, is to proclaim the Gospel in word and action, to strengthen as best I can the bonds of faith and love which identify us as friends of Jesus in this local church, and to share with the College of Bishops a living pastoral care for all of the local churches.



I have two fundamental convictions about that work: 1) It will be done only through the power of the Holy Spirit; and 2) I will do it well to the degree that I remember I must first hear the word before I presume to proclaim it to you.

Before I finish, let me invite you to think about the ways in which God asks you to live out, in the concrete circumstances of your life, the call to holiness which is yours. What does this call say to you about yourself as a person? What does it say to you about your relationship to others?

Enough for now — I have to go off and think about my pledge to the Thanks Giving Appeal. Peace to all.



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