

Autumn graces prompt gratitude for significant lives

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

This clear and warm stretch of autumn weather has been a welcome gift to us all. At least that is a comment I have heard frequently during my rounds of the past several days. People appreciate, and I know I do, this special time in which to savor the high color of the foliage, the brightness of the sky and the balminess of the air.

I have had a schedule during these days that has afforded me a special opportunity to enjoy all of this. Confirmations have brought me to Saint Catherine's in Addison, Sacred Heart in Auburn, Holy Ghost in Gates, Saint Catherine's in Mendon, Saint Michael's in Penn Yan, and Saint Michael's in Newark. Today I'll have the pleasure of a drive to Wayland and the privilege of confirming at Saint Joseph's.

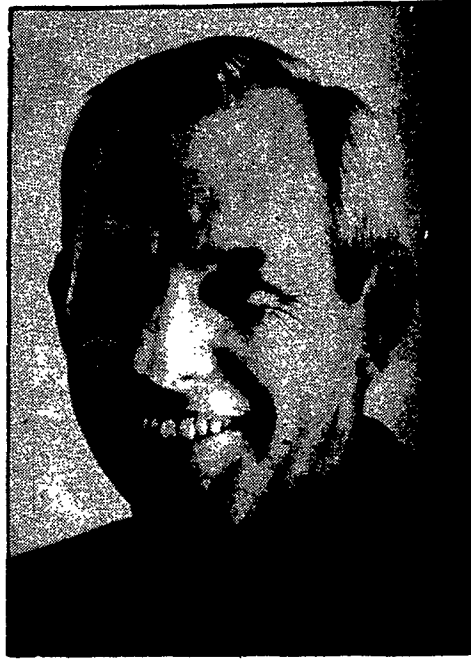
Those trips are a pleasure, whatever the weather, because each is an opportunity to be in the presence of people who are maturing and who are opening their hearts in a particular way to the strengthening, guid-

ing love of the Holy Spirit. I never share in that moment without some increased sense of the dignity of each person, the distinct personality and path of each individual.

There is in each one something which bespeaks the Lord's presence, beauty and compassion. That is what makes these celebrations such occasions for grace in parish communities. At this moment, I remember that over the years, not all of these young people have come to the sacraments from home environments or circumstances which fostered interest in the sacraments or participation in the life and vision of the Church.

Some have had a very difficult road. They have suffered abuse, neglect, and negative teaching about faith and religion. Others have suffered for other reasons — among them, serious personal illness or illness in the family, accident and physical or other handicaps.

Whenever I run into a young person who has experienced such obstacles and challenges, I ask who or what it was in human



ing that those elements are important to all of us wherever we have come from in life or whatever our goals and dreams may be. We do need loving relationships with individuals and communities. We do need to be accepted as persons with an inner dignity and worth which are rooted, not in achievement, but in the fact that we are made in God's image. We do yearn to change, to grow, to come to something better.

You have read this far. Let me tap your generosity a little more by inviting you to an exercise. As you go through the week ahead, try to take a brief moment at the end of each day to remember the people who have been a part of your life in any significant way during those hours.

And try to remember those encounters with questions like the following as your guide. Why do I remember this person now? Did she/he expand my capacity to understand my own humanity or my enjoyment of life? Was there challenge to growth in the meeting? Who offered it? How was it received? What, if anything would I change in what I said or how I acted? What did I learn today that will be helpful to me tomorrow? Your questions?

Peace to you.

terms that led them to the special moment of confirmation. The responses vary: the example of a friend; the interest of a teacher; the commitment of a grandparent; the spirit of the parish community; an undefinable hunger which sought satisfaction through search.

The common elements are an example of a life of significance led by some person or some community, initiatives or outreach to the person that indicate respect and acceptance and the provision of the kind of hospitable environment which encouraged growth.

My guess is that I am not alone in think-

Diocesan Appointments

Father David L. Bonin, from administrator to pastor of St. Mary's of the Lake Church in Watkins Glen and St. Benedict's Chapel in Odessa, effective Nov. 1, 1989.

Father George P. Heyman, from associate member of the Basilian Fathers to parochial vicar at Holy Cross Church in Rochester, effective Oct. 2, 1989.

Father Elmer J. McDonald from Veterans Administration chaplain at Bay Pines Medical Center in Bay Pines, Fla., to pastor of St. Christopher Church in North Chili, effective Nov. 23, 1989.

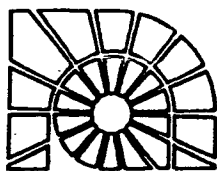
Father George R. Norton, diocesan director of telecommunications/public information officer and parochial vicar

at Holy Ghost Church in Gates, to concurrent responsibilities as on-call priest at Genesee Hospital, effective Oct. 1, 1989.

Father Robert P. Ring, pastor of St. Augustine Church in Rochester, to concurrent responsibilities as part-time Catholic campus minister at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, effective Sept. 1, 1989.

Father Robert G. Smith, pastor of St. Mary Magdalene Church in Wolcott, St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Red Creek, and St. Jude Chapel in Fair Haven, to concurrent responsibilities as senior chaplain at Butler Shock Incarceration Facility, effective Aug. 2, 1989.

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