

Meetings further communion

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

By the time you receive this column, I'll be in Baltimore beginning 10 days of meetings with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Our semiannual plenary session runs from Monday morning until Friday afternoon of the next week.

Prior to that plenary session, I'll be attending what looks to be an excellent symposium on the laity. I'll also be helping to lead a day-long session of orientation and support for recently ordained bishops.

Following the general meeting of the conference, I'll be meeting for three more days with our committee charged with the drafting of a pastoral letter on the concerns of women in church and society.

As you know well by now, I am not fond of such long stays away from home. At the same time, I am deeply interested in and committed to the work of our conference and its committees. I believe the activities of this body are a specific and significant expression of the communion that is at the

heart of the church's life.

Local churches or dioceses — much like individuals, families or parish communities — cannot live in isolation. They must share life and support one another in order to be fully alive.

Also like individuals, families and parish communities, our conference needs to work at theologically sound and pastorally fruitful ways to express this communion. We do things very well at times and, at other times, we falter. And, God knows, we have our critics. But the NCCB is a group I believe has struggled mightily to explore and mold the new ways of being the church to which Vatican Council II called all of us.

This meeting will be held in Baltimore rather than in its usual site of Washington, D.C., in order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the first diocese in the United States. I am looking forward to the special events commemorating that anniversary.

I also anticipate with joy seeing some

friends from Rochester who are now in the Baltimore-Washington area: Brian Cool, who is studying for the priesthood at St. Mary's, Baltimore; Sister Patricia Scholles, SSJ, who is teaching at that institution; Sister Muriel Curran, SSND, our former vicar for religious; Father Jim Schwartz; and Father Jay Madden, SJ, who was once a member of the McQuaid Jesuit community. They are all people who have many good friends in this area.

Baltimore is a city I have visited only once, so I am looking forward to becoming better acquainted with it. I have no notion of where the hotel is located, but I hope it is close enough to the famous Inner Harbor area of the city to allow me to explore that section while I am enjoying my daily runs.

The weeks since Labor Day have been most interesting. Certainly they have been filled with life and with all of the joys, challenges and questions that life carries with it. I'll enjoy not only the different kind of work of the conference sessions, but I'll enjoy as well the privileged opportunity to think



and pray from a different perspective about the life and beauty of this community.

I will not be submitting a column next week, but I will fill you in on my stay in Baltimore when I return. Please keep me and all of the bishops in your prayers while I am gone, and be sure that you are in my prayers each day.

Peace to all.

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