

Surrender your cares, let God be God

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

There is something exhilarating about a run followed by a hot shower on a cold winter night. I have just had that delightful twin experience. I'm now extending the pleasure of the evening by sitting in the quiet of my room to share a few thoughts with you.

I want first of all, dear friends, to wish you a Lenten season filled with grace and peace. I promise you my prayers for that intention and ask you please to keep me in your prayers as we share this blessed time together.

In my own heart tonight linger the words from Isaiah we heard at the eucharistic liturgy on Sunday: "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you."

I would be hard put just now to elaborate in any detail exactly what the passage means to me and why it lingers in my spirit as it does. I expect it has something to do with the tenderness that God offers to all of us — even when we are harsh — and with the utter fidelity with which God loves us — even when we are cold and unloving.

As I write those words, I know that the attraction I experience is more to rest in the tenderness and fidelity of God than to fidget about my own sin. I'm happy about that because those qualities of our own gracious God are immensely more powerful than my feeble sinfulness. There is something powerfully reassuring about Isaiah's reminder that God's love for you

and me is something like — although immeasurably more tender and faithful than — a mother's love for the child of her womb.

I invite you to think about that reminder during these special days. It is important for us to allow ourselves to settle internally so that in the peace such calmness brings we can hear the quiet word of God's love and experience the healing power of that gift. Lenten renewal is not about our working on God; it is about God working on us, changing and shaping us more into the image of Jesus.

Whatever the cares of your heart these days, I hope that you'll be willing to surrender them in prayer to the Lord. Such a surrender is very settling because it expresses our willingness to let God be God. And doing so is a wonderful first step toward the kind of healthy perspective that allows us to be at greater peace with our own humanity.

When we succeed to any degree in appreciating God's love for us — even in our frail, sinful humanity — we are much more able to accept others as they really are. Such acceptance generally means that we are ready to look for and respond to what is gracious and loving in those around us. We do not allow ourselves to be stuck at or dwell upon what might be the faults and limitations of others. Focusing on the faults of others can only separate and alienate, leaving all of us very lonesome.

If you'd like to test that theory a little bit, let me invite you to consider this idea for Lent. If there is someone in your life from whom you feel separated in a way that is not constructive for either one of you, why not hold that person in your daily prayer during this special season? You don't have to say a lot, except to ask for the healing grace of seeing that person more as God sees her or him. And ask that the person for whom you pray will be blessed with the



gift he or she most deeply deserves during Lent.

If you open your heart to another in this manner, I'll be very surprised if your own heart is not changed in a significant way by the time we gather to sing our Alleluia at Easter.

Peace to all.

A Season Apart leads from repentance to rebirth

By Sister Mary Louise Heffernan
Guest contributor

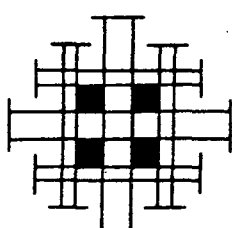
A couple of weeks ago, the world — at least the world I know — waited with eagerness for the release of Nelson Mandela. This was a moment that captured our hearts and thrilled us. It spoke of freedom, a freedom that seemed miraculous. How Mandela sees this freedom, and how we perceive his freedom could be very different.

In a sense, we need to stand in his place, to look from his standpoint at what it means. The freedom of Mandela is a freedom from ... so that he can be freed for ... He chooses how he will use his freedom. And yet, there continues to be unfreedom because not everyone sees the freeing of this man as I do, or as so many I know see it.

Lent is a time for each of us to look into our own spirit, to see what idols we need to release so that we move into Easter with a new freedom, a new life for the building of the Kingdom.

Historically, Lent was a time of retreat, of preparation for those who were preparing to receive baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at Easter. Time altered this

From Repentance to Rebirth



perspective of Lent and the focus was on penance and mortification.

With the revival of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults we again see Lent as a "Season Apart," a time of retreat, not only for the catechumens, but for all of us. A Season Apart — Lent, Easter, Pentecost — calls us to look, to see, to act, to listen, to find new life. This Season Apart is a time for us to look at and pray for the grace to grow in inner freedom, to let go of the encumbrances that keep me from God.

The words of our baptism, "Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children?" are a call to us again as we enter this Lenten season. Where is our unfreedom, our darkness? Many today find that their darkness belongs to the "ism" family: negativism, workaholism,

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Nazareth Academy

Registration for Fall 1990

Wednesday, March 14

3 - 8 p.m.

at Nazareth Academy

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Wednesday, March 14, is Registration Day for new students planning on attending Nazareth Academy in the fall.

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March 9-11 Creative Living Workshop: This seminar is designed to bring out the best in you... the YOU that is FREE. It will teach precise methods for positive change and personal growth given by Sr. Annette Mattie, r.c.

March 22 Lenten Evening of Prayer: with Fr. John Walchars, S.J. — 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

March 23-25 Lenten Retreat for Men and Women: given by Fr. John Walchars, S.J.

SPECIAL SERIES

STEPPING INTO FREEDOM: A Lenten Journey: Evenings of reflection for men and women interested in praying with the 12-Steps during the season of Lent. Helps for daily prayer will be offered each week. Offering \$5.00 per evening. Monday evenings, 7:00 to 9:00, March 5, 12, 19, 26 & April 2

MORNINGS OF PRAYER DURING LENT: Each week, the focus of these mornings will be on praying together as community, input on Scripture, time for private prayer, and time for reflection and sharing. Cenacle Sisters. Tuesdays 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. March 6, 13, 20, 27 & April 3.

All events are open to men and women of all faiths



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Father Andrew J. Kalafsky to temporary administrator of St. Catherine of Siena Church in Addison upon the completion of the pastorate of Father Francis J. Erb, effective March 1, 1990.



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