

Service to one another strengthens all

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark
Sunday, March 18.

In just a few hours I'll be driving to Ogdensburg, N.Y. I have been invited to spend St. Joseph's day with the priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg and with their college-level seminarians at Wadhams Hall, the minor seminary of the diocese. Our theme is collaborative ministry in today's church. That theme is one which attracts a good deal of attention these days. And I don't wonder at that, given the fact that all of us are striving to be faithful to the church's call in rapidly changing circumstances.

I am pleased about their invitation for several reasons. One is that I always find it a rich educational experience to visit another local church. Even short visits and the conversations they engender allow insights into the personality of the local community and the ways in which they try to be faithful to God's love. Another reason I am pleased to be going is that it will afford me the opportunity to tell our friends in Ogdensburg about you. Much of what I know about collaboration in ministry I have learned from you. It has been a happy experience to think about how you have labored through these years. You have come to insights and have developed relationships that have enabled you to put into pastoral practice so beautifully what the Second Vatican Council says about the people of God, how we are to relate to one another, and what we're called to be to the world.

It will also be my first trip to the Ogdensburg area. I am anxious to make the

drive and to enjoy the scenery of the Saint Lawrence region. And if all of that were not enough, I'll be seeing my friend, Bishop Stanislaus Brzana, and that is always a pleasure.

When I leave Ogdensburg tomorrow afternoon, I'll be heading to Washington for a Tuesday-Thursday meeting of the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. As I mentioned to you in a December column, this will be my first experience participating in that body and I am looking forward to being a part of it.

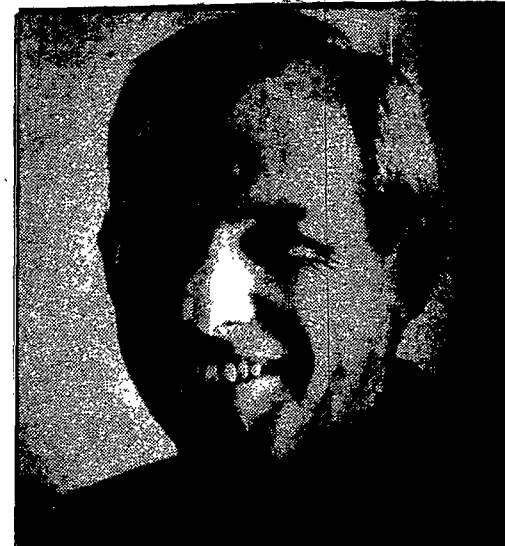
It has been quite a month for travel. Last week I was in Mundelein, Ill., for a meeting of our NCCB Committee on Women in the Church and Society. It, too, was a first for me. It was a happy experience because we got a lot of work done and had a good time doing it.

All of these activities have been challenging, and they do put an obvious and strong claim on my time and energy. But these activities are concrete expressions of a clear part of my responsibility as a bishop — to share with the whole college

of bishops a care for all of the local churches. I know that these associations strengthen my faith and my sense of the church. I hope that in the long run they strengthen our community as well.

Among the interesting side effects of this dimension of my ministry are the questions it raises about my priorities, my use of time and energy, and the relative importance of the commitments I make. No one gives you blueprints spelling out all of these things when you take the job of bishop. If you're lucky, you learn as you go. And if you learn as you go, it's usually because generous peers and co-workers and people like you share their experience with you and support your effort by their prayer and encouragement. Those are wonderful gifts.

I think as I write these words of another bishop, one I admire very much, with whom I was speaking not long ago. During a discussion of these themes he told me that he had been engaged in ministry outside of his diocese 103 days last year. I cannot imagine doing that. But I know the circumstances of this person's life and particular gifts well enough to surmise that



this kind of extraordinary service is precisely that to which the Lord is calling him during these years of his life. By any sign I can see, he is making a singular contribution to the life of the church in the United States.

Enough of this for now. Please pray for the endeavors I have mentioned. And while you're at it, you may wish to think about the ways in which the Lord might be calling you to serve others outside your normal, daily pattern.

Peace to all.

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving prepare us for Easter

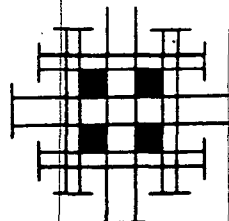
By Nancy Giordano
Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Lent is a special season in the life of the Christian community when catechumens and candidates prepare for baptism and full initiation into the church. The entire community reflects on the ways in which we have failed to live out our baptismal commitment to be other Christs in the world.

Lent is not simply a time for "giving up." It is not meant to be a challenge or an obstacle to be overcome. Lent is not a season for "gritting our teeth and bearing it," enduring the sacrifice that it brings. Rather, we enter this holy season freely, with good cheer, and we do more than abstain from our favorite food.

During Lent, we pray more frequently and more fervently, constantly calling to mind that we, God's children, heirs to the kingdom, have failed to live out so rich an

From
Repentance
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inheritance. We repent our failures, both in our private and in our communal prayer.

During Lent, we fast more conscientiously, not from a sense of obligation, but eagerly, reminding ourselves of our hunger for God, our God who alone can fill our needs and satisfy us. We fast also in solidarity with the poor for whom hunger is not a choice but a way of life. We fast so that they might have more.

Food is one source of our fast, but we might refrain from other things as well: television, movies, the constant need for entertainment and diversion which can fill

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LENTEN SPECIAL

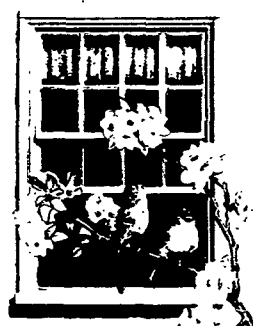
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