

Convocation considers deeper themes

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

In just a few hours, I shall be leaving for our annual convocation of priests, which begins today, Monday, April 23, at 2 p.m. and concludes just before lunch on Wednesday.

I am excited about the gathering because it is the one time during the year when we all come together. And we gather not so much to do business and work on specific problems as to consider some of the deeper themes of the ministry that calls us into friendship and collaboration.

This year's theme is "Ministering in Style." I am intrigued by that choice and look forward to participating in the program Father Dan Torney and his committee have put together. Dan tells me that the committee has made an effort to honor the theme by recognizing the need of all of us priests not only to study together but also to socialize, laugh, pray and play

together.

I have not been made privy to all details of the program, but the little I know about it indicates that it will be an enriching experience for all of us.

Our guest speakers this year will be Jay Nolan, a professor of history at Notre Dame University, and Syracuse's Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Costello. I know both of these men and am delighted that they are willing to share their exceptional gifts for our enrichment.

I believe this is Jay's first time among us. Tom is a frequent visitor who spent some of his seminary years at St. Bernard's and has a great number of friends in our diocese.

I will be sharing some reflections on our theme tonight and tomorrow afternoon during a panel with Fathers John Mulligan and Lou Hohman. The panel is meant to stimulate an open discussion on how we

can support and encourage one another in the ministry we share as diocesan priests.

In addition to those two aspects of the program, I also have the joy of presiding and preaching at the eucharistic liturgy on Tuesday, and at Wednesday's prayer service.

You can be sure that all of us are grateful for your prayerful support as we share these days. I can assure you that you and your loved ones are very much a part of our consciousness as we spend this time together.

In preparation for my remarks at the convocation, I asked Father Bob Schrader to prepare an up-to-date information sheet on the number and disposition of our clergy. I thought some of the information he provided might be of interest to you in light of such events as our convocation, the Call to Priesthood campaign, and the Commitment to Ministry process.



At present we have 214 active diocesan priests serving in our diocese. Among the 214 clergy are 137 pastors, co-pastors or administrators; 40 parochial vicars; and 37 priests involved in such special ministries as chaplaincies at hospitals, correctional facilities or campuses, and teaching or administrative positions.

Eleven priests of our diocese are ministering in the wider church, serving the needs of those in the missions, armed forces, higher education and other pastoral settings.

We also have 83 priests of the diocese who are retired, disabled or inactive for various personal reasons.

In all, we have 308 priests in the Diocese of Rochester.

With the addition of 86 priests who are members of religious congregations currently serving here, 394 priests are in some way associated with our local church.

That number climbs to 406 priests, when we add the 12 priests from other dioceses who are currently serving as part of our local church. Seven of these priests come from other dioceses in the United States, and five come from dioceses in other nations.

Finally, let me mention to you that since our last convocation, nine of our brothers died, we ordained two, and received one priest from a religious congregation as a priest of our diocese. We will ordain one priest this summer.

Dear friends, thanks once again for your loving, steady support for all of us and, in particular, for the gift of your prayers during these special Easter days.

Peace to all.

Relationship among sacraments needs attention

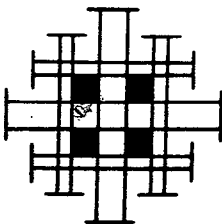
By Father Mitchell Dowalco
Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Although we have been concerned with the details of the renewal of our sacramental rites, we have often forgotten to look at the spirit in which our Christian ancestors celebrated the sacramental life of the church.

The reason why the early Christians gathered to worship is the same reason why we do today. Jesus Christ — who conquered sin and death — is living among us, and we share in the new life that He offers through the waters of baptism. All of our present-day celebrations are connected with those of the past, and will be connected with the celebrations of the church in the future. After all, isn't Jesus Christ the alpha and omega of all time?

Contemporary Christians, however, normally do not think in this manner. We tend to analyze only what is before us

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without understanding how things are interrelated. Frequently, we carry this attitude into the celebration of our rites. A good example is the Paschal Triduum — Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Most Catholics see these as individual celebrations, failing to recognize that they form one celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.

We do the same with the sacraments. Usually we think of them individually without considering their relationship to one another. Confirmation is one sacrament in particular that has suffered from this.

Originally, confirmation was celebrated together with baptism and Eucharist. For a variety of reasons, however, the confirmation celebration in the Latin Church was separated from the other two sacraments. Thus, we have found ourselves trying to develop an understanding of confirmation as it stands by itself.

Many catechetical and educational programs try to give confirmation a meaning for the young people who will receive it. Most often we refer to the sacrament as a rite of passage into Christian adulthood.

All of this is not necessarily wrong, but perhaps we can start developing some new insights into the sacrament when it is celebrated in its proper relationship to baptism and Eucharist.

The liturgical renewal has restored confirmation to its original position in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Through the waters of baptism, the newly formed Christians die to sin and are raised to a new life in Jesus Christ.

During confirmation, they are then sealed.

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