

# Youths reflect goodness of community

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark  
Sunday, April 29, 1990:

I am sitting on the terrace of the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, writing to you during a break in the proceedings of Bishop's Day with Youth. Seven-hundred-plus young people from more than half of our parish communities and from all of the 12 counties of our diocese are in attendance. Just now they are attending workshops on a wide variety of themes. While they are hard at work, I write and enjoy the breeze and the flow of the Genesee.

At an earlier plenary session I had the opportunity to ask some questions of our young people. I had five or six questions

prepared and hoped that those would be sufficient to make productive use of the hour we had at our disposal. As it turned out, we spent 80 percent of our time on the second question, which was: "When you think of your parish community, or any portion of it that you choose, what makes you most proud to be a part of it?"

It was a beautiful experience to hear these gifted people rise in such a large assembly and speak in some detail about how they draw strength and encouragement from their parish communities. As you might well expect, they were enthusiastic about their youth groups and grateful to the adults in the parish community who encourage them.

I took particular delight in the clear emphasis such groups place on growth in spiritual life, especially on their members' personal friendship with Jesus. In addition to that commitment and, I really believe, flowing from a genuine friendship with Jesus, the teens made frequent mention of their sisters and brothers who stand in need. They also spoke of programs through which they care for the homeless, the chemically dependent and those suffering from illness.

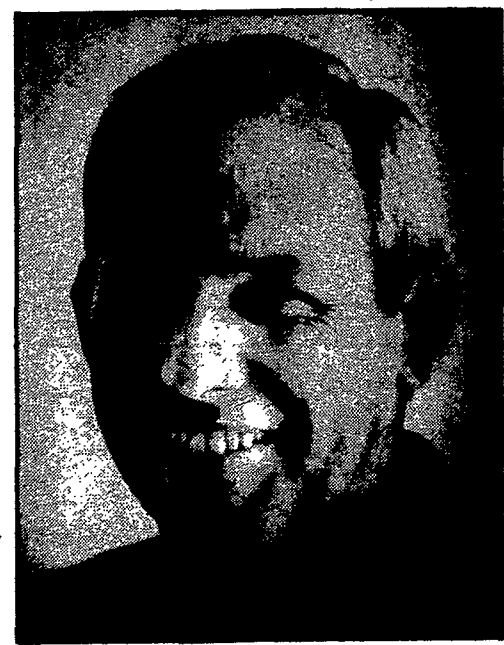
My reflection on that lovely experience leads me to believe that such concerns would not emerge quite so strongly as they do among young people without good example from the wider parish community or without the steady encouragement of the parish. I hope that the parish communities

that inspire such good things in our young people will in turn be confirmed in their faith by the vitality and commitment of the young. To me, it's all a beautiful example of what the church is meant to be — a community of faith that creates an environment in which people can discover more about Jesus and their relationship to him, to themselves and to their sisters and brothers.

We are meant to be a community of remembrance and hope, exploration and celebration, courage and vision. We never perfectly embody all of these elements and we never will, but they should always be our direction. People want affection, respect, a sense of belonging, someone or something to which they can commit themselves, reconciliation when they are apart from other persons, care when they are ailing, and visitation when they are lonely. Our potential to provide such support is enormous because we participate in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Surely we fall short of that beautiful call from time to time, but I have a sense that you do an enormous amount of such service day in and day out, and that no one ever hears very much about it. I am sure that a good measure of the pleasure I derive from being with and hearing from our young people comes from the fact that they are loving reminders of the good, holy things you do every day.

One final note: The world and the church in which we grew up are no longer the same. Our young people need to find their own ways to understand, celebrate and



proclaim the mysteries of our faith, and we need to help them to do that even if we must sacrifice some of our favorite attitudes and practices.

It can be a pleasant, constructive activity to remember the way we were. Doing so enables us to track constant, deep values through changing circumstances. It allows us to regain a sense of perspective and proportion when we have lost them.

But nostalgia can also serve us ill. Father Theodore Ross, a Jesuit at Loyola University in Chicago, cautions that we need to be careful about nostalgia trips because when we are on them we can tend easily to compare the worst of today with the best of yesterday. And that hardly seems fair to either generation.

Peace to all.

**DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS**

**Father Bernard F. Dollen**, from pastor of St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport, to pastor of St. Christopher Church in North Chili, effective June 26, 1990.

**Father William B. Leone**, from sabbatical assistance minister as temporary Catholic chaplain at Ithaca College, to pastor of the Northern Cayuga Cluster, effective June 26, 1990.

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