

Another niece takes a turn at the wheel

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

In my Thanksgiving column six years ago, I had some fun writing about a trip to an Albany shopping center with my mother and my oldest niece, Grace. Grace was 16 at the time, held a driver's permit and, like all people of her age, was anxious to drive as often as possible. I let her drive my car that day and it turned out to be the drive of a lifetime.

I won't tell the whole story again, but let me recap it by saying the ride could have given rise to the expression "white knuckle," as in white-knuckle drive or flight. Shortly after our arrival home, I discovered that the extent of Grace's driving experience before that day had been a few trips around the block in our small town. Even now my hands shake as I remember and write about the experience.

We have talked about "the drive" every Thanksgiving weekend since then. And we did again this year when the seven Earlys, my mother and I piled into two cars and headed to Glenmont, a town south of Albany, for a family photograph.

Margaret, who is fourth daughter of my sister Helen and her husband, Jim Early, wanted to drive this time.

Margaret is 17, has a license and some driving experience, but she had never driven my car and was anxious to try it. She did a marvelous job, especially on a busy arterial which was unfamiliar to her and notwithstanding the back-seat guidance she received from her grandmother and two sisters, Kathleen and Grace. (At one point Margaret looked in the rear view mirror and asked, "Gram, why do you keep grabbing the door handle?")

Thanks to Margaret, we arrived at the photographer's studio on time and in one piece. Everything went smoothly there, and now we look forward to the proofs so we can choose the family photo of the early '90s.

Helen and Jim wanted to have the picture taken this year because they are aware, as I think we all are, that the kids are growing up fast, and we're not sure how often we'll all be together in the future. Grace is in her senior year at SUNY New Paltz; Jane is a

junior at Canisius; Mary Ellen is a second year student at Hudson Valley Community College; Margaret is enjoying her last year of high school; and Kathleen is in the eighth grade.

Although it has been and is a joy to watch them all grow, I must confess that I don't look forward to the day when new responsibilities and other commitments take them in different directions. Even though I have complained to you for years that they beat up on their uncle, I do hold the unbiased view that they are beautiful kids, and I count them as very dear friends.

I hope that you were able to enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with loved ones and that the Advent Season which we'll begin this Sunday will be a time of renewed hope for you.

I'll be beginning my Advent in Arlington, Virginia, at a symposium sponsored by our Committee on Women in the Church and Society. The theme of the gathering is the Wisdom of Women. Attending will be representatives from women's commissions from the dioceses



of our country. As of this writing we are expecting people from 100 of our dioceses.

I am looking forward to the experience. Please remember all of us in your prayers during those days. I ask for special prayer because I have been invited to give the keynote address.

Thanks so much for encouragement and support.
Peace to all.

Advent-Christmas season should focus thoughts on second coming

By Father Robert J. Kennedy
Guest contributor

"Christians are Advent people," says theologian Edward Schillebeeckx in a concise, yet profound statement. We are a people of hope and vision, a people who look forward rather than back. As Advent-Christmas season begins again, the liturgy invites us to reflect upon the dimension of the future in our Christian life and worship.

Christians live more out of the future than out of the past. We have a vision of what is ahead of us, a goal toward which



we are running. We have heard and hold on to a promise that inspires us and motivates us. It is the vision, goal and promise of the reign of God, of the fullness of life and of reconciliation offered to us when Christ comes again in glory. And this reign of God transforms and colors all that we do in the present. Christians live now as they will in God's household.

This does not mean that Christians ignore the past; the past is a vital dimension of who we are as Advent people. With a lively faith, we remember the great deeds God has done on our behalf, especially in Christ, in order to understand the future into which we are headed. The coming of Christ long ago to live among us — to share our life, suffering and death — inaugurates the new age of God's full and final reign.

What Jesus did and taught while among us reveals the nature and relationships of God's heavenly household. Incorporation into the dead and risen Christ through our initiation enables us to begin living in God's commonwealth now, even as we anticipate its full realization when Christ comes again.

The Advent-Christmas season then is not a nostalgic reminiscence about the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem. It is a time to remember the first coming of Christ so that our minds and hearts will be directed to Christ's second coming at the end of time.

The liturgy, especially the Eucharist, embodies this future dimension of our faith life. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says: "In the earthly liturgy, by way of foretaste, we share that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, and in which Christ is sitting at the right hand of God..." (#8).

One might even say that the celebration of the Eucharist is a rehearsal for the reign of God, since it reveals the structure of relationships in the divine commonwealth

and sends the participants forth to live those relationships to the fullest. For example, as will be true of the heavenly banquet table, "people of every race, language and way of life" gather around the eucharistic table, and they do so as brothers and sisters with one another in Christ. This gathering gives visible shape to the words of the prophets of old, and is nothing short of a revolution in human relations.

Further, God is thoroughly present in the eucharistic action: in the assembly that prays and sings, in the word proclaimed, in the ministers and, of course, in this sacrament itself (CSL #7). This presence assures us that the reign of God is not some reality saved for the distant future, but is rather the *future present*, now, with us.

We listen and respond to the Scriptures read in the assembly, and our eyes and hearts are turned with hope to the future when "God will be all in all." We give thanks and praise for all God's wonderful works, in anticipation of God's bringing them to fulfillment. We pray that God's kingdom will come, God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. "When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory." We go forth in peace to proclaim the reign of God in our lives and lifestyle, and to work to establish the just relationships of God's reign.

In our worship and our lives, it is the future and its promise that shapes us. We are Advent people who "wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

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Dec. 7-9 Spirituality of 12 Steps A weekend retreat which explores the spiritual depths of the 12 Steps and aims at integrating them into one's life of prayer. Conducted by Greg Doyle, Sr. Ellen Frawley and Margie Mayk, r.c.

Dec. 10 Womens Voices From The Past Speak To Us Today. 7:00 - 9:00p.m.
Julian and Hildegard: A reflection on Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen and what they have to say to us today. Presented by Sr. Annette Mattle, r.c.

Dec. 16 Christmas at the Cencle A program for children and the young at heart, which reflects the true meaning of Christmas.

Dec. 31 Year End Renewal Evening of Reflection beginning at 8:00p.m. with Eucharist at 11:30p.m. followed by refreshments (optional overnight). Fr. David Mura.

All events are open to men and women of all faiths

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