

# New year begins with flurry of activity

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Monday, January 7

Happy New Year.

I hope that these beginning days of 1991 have been happy for you and your loved ones. And, if they have been difficult for you in any way, I hope that you have known the support of people who care about you.

These early days of the new year have been quite busy and interesting for me. The first project of the year was a trip to Our Lady of Florida, a retreat center in North Palm Beach, for a meeting of our committee drafting a pastoral letter on the concerns of women for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

It was a full and sometimes intense session that allowed no time to enjoy the beauty and warmth of the area. But we did accomplish a considerable amount and, I hope, brought this lengthy process a significant step closer to completion.

To participate in this endeavor has been a wonderful experience for me because I have learned a great deal from it. But we have been at it for several years now, and all of the members of our committee anticipate with some joy the day when our work will be finished.

Today, I went to the Islamic Center on Westfall Road to participate in a gathering of people from a wide variety of faith traditions. The purpose of our meeting was to explore the possibility of coming together in a consistent manner to become better acquainted with one another and to work

together more closely for our common good and for the good of the community at large.

I was quite pleased to participate in this gathering and left with the feeling that something important had happened among us. I shall be looking forward to building on what happened today.

Life has not been all meetings since I last prepared a column for the *Catholic Courier*. After I celebrated the Eucharist with the inmates at the Monroe County Jail on Christmas morning, my mother and I drove to the home of my sister and brother-in-law in Waterford, N.Y. All of the Earlys were there, and so was our dear friend, Father Tom Powers. We had a wonderful time.

As always, it was a special joy to be with all of my nieces in the same place at the same time. My head begins to spin after the first hour — they are beyond exciting! — but I would not trade a minute of it. The only difficulty I had was dealing with their unanimous accusation that when I write

about them I do not always do so with total accuracy. I told them that I may miss some of the facts, but I always tell the truth about them.

You can imagine that they were not persuaded by my line of argumentation. At one point they asked for space in my column to tell "Our Side of the Story." I agreed to that request, but thus far have not received their contribution.

Two other events made the holiday time especially festive. One was the celebration of my mother's birthday on Dec. 27, and the other was a Dec. 28 reunion with some members of my ordination class from the North American College. Both events provided privileged occasions to thank God for family and friends, and for all of the good things they do for us.

Now the Christmas season is nearly over, and our community of faith moves into the rhythm of ordinary time. Among other things I take that to mean that we witness to and live out as best we can our faith that our God is a God who is close to



us, cares about us and trusts us to hold others in the same regard in which Jesus holds us.

Peace to all.

## Through his baptism, Jesus embraced humanity

By Father Robert Scott Bourcy  
Diocesan Liturgical Commission

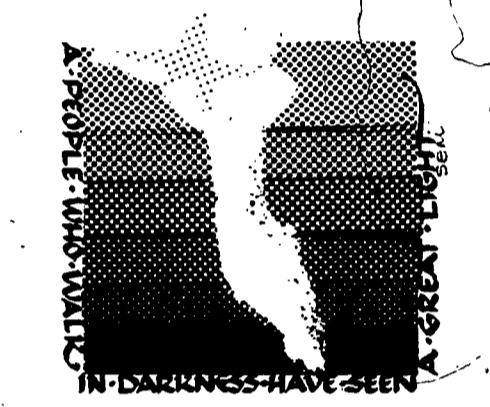
Do the following expressions sound familiar: "Let's get going!" "Come on, I haven't got all day!" or "I've only got two hands?"

Our lives can become so busy that that we don't even "stop to smell the roses."

During the busy days of Christmas, I paused with friends on the Feast of the Holy Family and baptized my new "niece." What a privilege, joy and delight to claim her for Christ our Lord! Throughout the festive day, I pondered the seriousness and responsibilities that her parents, godparents, myself and other family and friends were taking.

She is now a "Child of God." This special life now graced by baptism is to be guided spiritually, physically and emotionally by our example. And even though we know who we are and what to do, we often fail because we are sinners.

This week the church celebrates the re-



membrance of our brother Jesus' baptism. John the Baptist had made it clear that baptism was for sinners. They were the ones who had turned away from God. Yet, we believe Jesus was sinless so how come he submitted to baptism?

Jesus is identified in Mark's Gospel as the long-awaited servant. This baptism initiates Jesus' baptism as teacher: By embracing the human race and being born into the world, Jesus became a member of a sinful world of people.

Jesus did not need to be reconciled. He was not a sinner. Jesus was baptized to give example. As servant and as teacher, he was part of a world that needed to be reconciled because of its sin. By his own example he made a plea for others to acknowledge their sins and take responsibility

ty for their lives.

What does that say to us who are baptized and who have children baptized? Does the message of the long-awaited servant and teacher speak to us? Or are our lives so filled with activity and frenzy that we do not stop and smell the roses, pray and be with God?

Jesus took on social responsibility in the world. He raised consciousness to fragmented lives that needed mending, healing, love and forgiveness. Doesn't our own baptism invite us to do the same?

We may not be able to do everything, but we can do something. By my baptism I must follow Jesus' example and address the poor in my midst. I must seek out those forced to the fringes of society. Can I not even help in some way to work for peace — in hearts, homes and in the world? And my world, which I love so much, must also be addressed in how I care for it. Its precious resources need to be preserved for our children.

Sin may be everywhere, but so are good people. These good people and God can overcome sin. Some of us will do that in Rochester, the Southern Tier or in the Middle East.

We can touch the world with our baptismal lives if we follow the example of Jesus.

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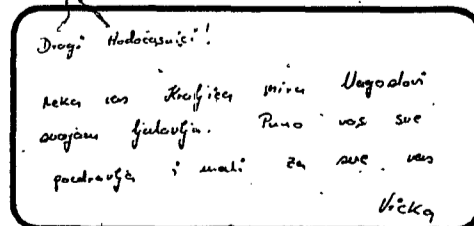
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Translation: Dear Pilgrims!

Let the Queen of Peace bless you with her love. Please accept my greetings and I am praying for all of you.