

Sharing serves to deepen joy, lessen pain

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

This week we are celebrating the Rite of Election. In that rite I receive and enroll catechumens — people who are preparing to receive baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil — and candidates, persons who are already baptized but who will enter fully into our community of faith on the same occasion.

In the ideal order, this is done in a diocese's cathedral church, but because of numbers and distance, we do it in other churches as well. On Sunday, we celebrated at St. Vincent's in Corning; on Monday and Wednesday at Sacred Heart Cathedral; and on Friday we will celebrate the rite at St. John the Evangelist, Clyde.

I find celebrations of the rite to be deeply joyful occasions. I suppose there should be no surprise about that, because the catechumens and candidates on these occasions come to a special moment in their journeys of faith.

After a long period of prayer, study and sharing with their respective faith communities — and strengthened by that experience — they are sent by those com-

munities officially to be elected to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

But beyond the joy that comes with their enrollment in the Book of the Elect, they experience for the first time the joy of gathering with catechumens and candidates from other parish communities. Monday night at Sacred Heart, for example, 32 parishes were represented.

It means a great deal to our new sisters and brothers — as it does to all of us when we begin some new venture or come to a new stage of one already begun — to know that we are not alone. The Rite of Election is a strong experience of learning not only that God calls us each by name, but also that God calls us from among a people.

Let me be quick to add that the catechumens and candidates have no monopoly on the joy experienced at the Rites of Election. Those who accompany them to the event and have shared their time of preparation. Their pastors, godparents, family and friends also find it a cause for joy.

They are happy for the elect; that is for

certain. But I suspect that they are also happy for themselves because they have a deep sense that somehow God has worked through them to help the catechumens and candidates arrive at this very special moment.

Now with them we prepare for the Easter feast. With them we ask for the gifts of ongoing conversion, and for a deeper more loving relationship with our God and with one another. This we do by the prayers and fasting and acts of charity to which the church calls us during this holy season.

In an earlier column, I suggested to you that you might be alert to circumstances in which you might ease the loneliness and isolation of someone else. I think of that suggestion again as I reflect on this week's Rites of Election. I have little doubt that the joy each of us experienced was deepened because it was shared by many other persons. In a similar way, the pain of isolation and loneliness is diminished when someone who cares about us shares the experience with us.

Peace to all.



DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following appointments:

Father William D. Lum from parochial vicar at Holy Cross Church, Rochester, to administrator of St. Joseph Church, Penfield, effective Feb. 27, 1991.

Father James M. Moynihan from pastor of St. Joseph Church, Penfield, to associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in New York City, effective March 4, 1991.

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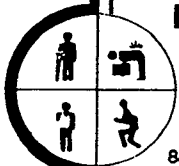
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