

Reunion reinforces St. Bernard's role

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Tuesday, October 15.

Yesterday and today, graduates of St. Bernard's Institute are gathering in reunion. The institute, which has been in existence since 1981, is the successor of St. Bernard's Seminary.

It extends in our day the tradition of excellence first begun at St. Bernard's in 1893. It is a tradition rich in theological education and the preparation of high quality pastoral ministers for our local church and beyond.

I think of St. Bernard's this morning not only because of the pleasant experience of reunion in which I participated last evening. I have been thinking about it a great deal lately in light of the high profile faith formation and formation for ministry have realized both in our recent Statement of Mission and Goals 1990-93 and in the themes for our synod.

There is no doubt that the people of this diocese want quality education and formation for their pastoral ministers. I can assure you that I join in that desire, and with you commit myself to work hard to keep that tradition alive in our local church.

While we do have a high regard for theological education, I am afraid it is

not matched by a high level of knowledge and understanding about the existence of St. Bernard's Institute, the powerful resource it is for us and the importance it holds for our future.

I cannot, in the space of this column, go into great detail about St. Bernard's, but let me share with you a few pieces of information about that wonderful institution:

1) St. Bernard's Institute retains the privilege under her state charter to grant graduate-level degrees in theology. Qualified candidates can earn masters' of divinity degrees (M.Div.) or masters' of arts in theology (M.A.)

2) Since the closing of St. Bernard's Seminary in 1981, St. Bernard's Institute has enjoyed a covenant relationship with Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Faculty and students at SBI contribute a great deal to and draw much from the ecumenical richness of CRDS.

Among the resources at their disposal is the Swayze Library, one of the largest theological libraries on the North American continent. The library of St. Bernard's is physically integrated into that collection.

3) In addition to its graduate-degree programs, SBI — in collaboration with the diocese of Rochester — also has de-

veloped programs of certification for youth ministers and catechetical leaders. These programs provide for high quality theological training for those who are not pursuing graduate degrees but who seek special formation for these ministries.

In addition to developing these exciting initiatives, St. Bernard's is helping our diocese develop quality certificate programs for such ministries as parish visitor, business manager and associate director of religious education.

4) St. Bernard's has struck an exciting agreement with the Diocese of Albany, which extends the work of SBI to our sister diocese. People in Albany now can pursue graduate-level theology degrees at a local institution. SBI participates in a bold venture pioneering a new model for ministerial training in our part of the country.

5) The small but high quality faculty of St. Bernard's offers an enormous service day in and day out, usually in quiet ways, to the life of our diocese. Their service to me, other pastoral ministers and parish communities is a great gift to our local church. It reminds me of how important solid theological education is and will always be for us if we want to continue to be a lively, progressive



community of faith.

As I indicated above, much more could be said about SBI. But on the occasion of this week's reunion, I did want to encourage your interest in her life and activities.

I also want to thank SBI's Board of Trustees; her president, Father Sebastian Falcone; and his faculty and staff for all that their labors do to strengthen our local church. They deserve our ongoing gratitude, encouragement and support.

Peace to all.



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