

Sharing meals with two good friends

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Monday, December 16
It's nearly 5 p.m. on this Monday afternoon. I am in my office at our Pastoral Center, hoping as I sit to write this column that I'll be able to finish it before I leave to have dinner with Monsignor Bill Shannon. If I do manage to finish by then, my mind will be freer to enjoy his good company, and I'll be freer tomorrow morning to do some reading I've been longing to get at.

I mentioned at the beginning of Advent that when this holy season began I was not as well prepared for it as I ought to have been. Too much activity. Too little quiet. Too much motion. Too little reflection.

Sharing that bit of information with you was helpful to me. I find that when I write things on paper it helps me to better own what I have written. And somehow what I write then becomes a standing, benign challenge. As a result I have managed to quiet down some and enjoy the season.

In addition, I enjoyed the added benefit of your kind encouragement. Many of you have mentioned how much you identify with the issue of finding the proper time for prayer and reflection amid the hectic pace of daily living. Such comments remind me that the things we judge to be urgent can draw us away from that which is truly important.

I look forward to sharing a meal with Bill Shannon tonight for many reasons. It



A LONG THE WAY

will be intellectually stimulating and pastorally challenging to be with him. It will be an opportunity to make connections and to explore the deeper meaning of recent shared experience. It will be a time for relating present events to past realities and future dreams. It will be a special moment in which — without agenda or the need to produce results — we can relax and enjoy the nourishment and good friends are meant to give to one another.

Tomorrow I'll be sharing a meal with another good friend — but there won't be just two of us at that meal. More than 250 people will gather then to honor Father Peter Bayer. After 18 years of service at our Pastoral Center, he is moving on to a

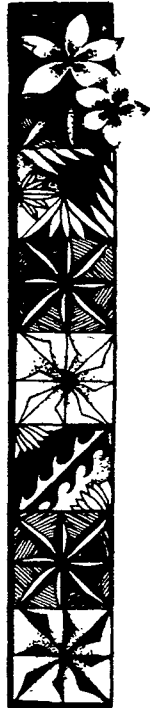
period of study and renewal, and then to a new ministry in the diocese.

I think few priests in the history of our diocese have served at our Pastoral Center (or Chancery as it once was called) as long as Peter has done. And if there have been some, it's hard to imagine anyone packing as much work into 18 years as Peter packed into his years of service here. He is a prodigious worker who did a great volume of work and did it with great care.

Important as all of Peter's work has been to us, I think his deepest gift to the church is the unfailing kindness with which he has done it all. Over the years, I have watched Peter work in a great variety of settings on a broad range of issues — some quite complex, some very tender. In all his duties, he has treated people with the greatest respect and kindness.

Great numbers of you have had personal experience both of Peter's prodigious capacity for work and of his pastoral kindness. I think of his wide-ranging work on parish census programs, his service to our Sisters at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, to St. Bernard's Institute, the *Catholic Courier*, Camp Stella Maris, Becket Hall and St. Mark's Parish. This is only a partial listing, I know, but it will give you some sense of the scope and depth of his ministry through the years.

Peter, with love, we thank you for it all. Peace to all.



God reigns, let the earth
rejoice, let the distant
islands be glad.

Ps. 96



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We pray that Christ will be the real light, joy and peace of your life now and throughout the New Year!

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BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK
FR. ROBERT C. BRADLER,
Diocesan Director
1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14624 436-9200

DIOCESAN STAFF:
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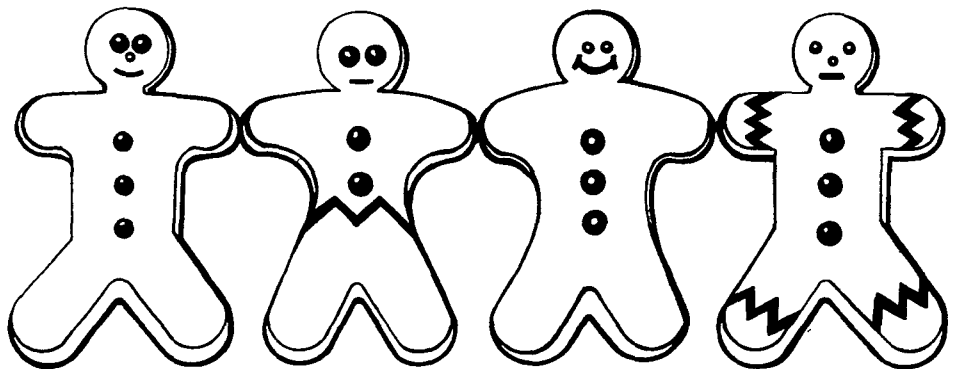
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