

# Columns draw engaging feedback

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I enjoy doing "Along the Way" for many reasons. Among them is the reader reaction I receive by mail or in conversation during my daily rounds. Whether the reaction is in support of something I have written or takes exception to a point of view I have expressed, it is gratifying and stimulating when people share their thoughts with me. To generate such exchange is central to my purpose in doing the column.

All of the reaction helps in one way or another. Obviously, letters and comments that praise or thank me are encouraging. They help motivate me when the last thing I feel like doing is to sit down to write. For example, someone wrote recently that a simple reflection offered on photo albums proved to be helpful in her retreat experience. Another correspondent noted that some of the things I write are helpful to him in finding the presence of God in the ordinary events and circumstances of daily living. Of all the kind remarks I hear, the most pleasing is when people say they enjoy the column because they feel they get to know me better through reading it.

It will be no surprise to you, I am sure, when I tell you that some readers express dissatisfaction with some of the things I



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write. For example, I wrote a column recently in which I commented on weekend experiences that led me to reflect on growth in the priestly vocation. One woman — a friendly, occasional correspondent — wrote that she agreed with her daughter who observed about that column that it went a little overboard on "male bonding." I must confess to you that I smiled at the comment because, even as I wrote the piece, I knew it could be read as too male-centered. I think the reader took no great offense, but may have been taking the occasion to express the view that all

kinds of people merit recognition for the ways in which they build the reign of God.

Another column that generated a similar kind of reaction was about discrimination against gay people. One writer, while generally in sympathy with what I wrote, felt that I had undercut the effort by what he judged to be my uncritical acceptance of the distinction between a homosexual orientation and homosexual acts.

It is not possible to go into detail about these or other letters. I mention them because I appreciate them very much. They challenge my thinking. They expand my horizons. They remind me that human experience is often deepened when people are willing to speak honestly both about their values and their efforts to express them consistently.

I will be keeping an active file of your comments in the weeks ahead. Every now and then I will share some of them with you and offer my own comments on them. I look forward to that kind of exchange with you.

If you are inclined to comment on some things I have written or wish to list topics about which you would like me to write, please drop me a note. I will appreciate the kindness very much.

Peace to all.

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