

Memories create sense of gratitude

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It was one of those weekends — on the road. It began on Saturday morning with a trip to St. Ann's, Hornell, to celebrate with the Catholic Daughters of America. It ended at Asbury First Methodist Church, Rochester, for the formal installation of Bishop Hae-Jong Kim, resident bishop of the New York west area of the United Methodist Church.

Between those two events, I visited three of our parish communities in Seneca County whose parishioners have been strongly impacted by cut-backs recently made at Willard State Hospital and the Seneca Army Depot. I celebrated the Eucharist at Holy Cross, Ovid, on Saturday evening; at St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls, at 9 a.m. Sunday morning; at St. Mary's, Waterloo, at noon on Sunday.

With me were Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Social Ministry, and Giovina Caroscio, director of our Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry. At each of the gatherings (except at St. Mary's which they were not able to attend), Jack and Giovina were able to share with the communities the initiatives we have been taking through advocacy and human services to stand in support of our sisters and brothers who are going through such a trying time.

Our offices of Support Ministry and Social Ministry have both been active in working with local civic and church leadership on behalf of those facing job loss. We are working to ensure that the process by which these steps are made is a fair one, that the persons affected and the community receive all of the benefits to which they are entitled, that there are efforts made to attract other employers to the region, and that individuals and



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LONG THE WAY

families receive the help they need to cope with the stress they are experiencing.

It was a special gift to be challenged Sunday by the Gospel story of Lazarus at the gate of the rich man's home. The story carries a strong call to concern for others and illustrates in a powerful way the link between love of God and concern for our neighbors — especially for our sisters and brothers who stand most in need.

If the Gospel is a reminder that we dare not be content with our lot when even one among us suffers, the concern of our communities and their pastoral leaders for those in need is beautiful evidence that the Spirit of the God of life is very much present in our people.

On the way back to Rochester, I stopped at Thompson Hospital in Canandaigua to visit

Father George Wiant, pastor of St. Patrick's, Victor. George is recovering from a ruptured appendix and will need some time to get his strength back. George is entrusting the parish to me this Sunday, and I look forward to visiting the community.

This morning as I look back on the weekend, I do so with a great sense of gratitude for the commitment and vitality of our local church. That gratitude arises not from some abstract sense of undefined goodness "out there." Rather it is rooted in such concrete memories as these:

- Marie's beautiful invitation to become part of the Life Chain in Geneva this Sunday afternoon, a peaceful way to remind us all that abortion is the destruction of innocent defenseless human life.

- The presentation Bob Kernan and Brad Jones made to the St. Patrick's community about the parish's financial achievements. Clearly the leadership of those men was a critical piece of it all, but they were far more interested in recognizing others.

- The beautiful children of St. Mary's who sang at Mass and reminded us all of the simplicity and innocence to which the Gospel calls us.

- The warm hospitality, touching sensitivity of Capuchin Father Nelson Ruppert as he ministers to a community deeply affected by loss of employment.

- The Catholic Daughters, who so graciously and generously support our candidates for the priesthood.

- The sign in front of Immaculate Mary, Painted Post, which proclaims: "The Synod's Here!"

The Synod surely is here. Let's continue our prayer that God will continue to bless us in this process.

Peace to all.

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