

Inspiring efforts in solidarity, hospitality

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I just came upstairs from a meeting with some of our delegates to the National Black Catholic Congress, which was held in New Orleans in July. The group carefully prepared for the congress with members of our local African-American Catholic community and, when they returned, drew up some recommendations for implementation in our local church.

Tonight's oral report dealt with the black family. Among the issues we discussed were societal factors that have a negative impact on family life; deepening concern for young black males; the importance of Catholic-school education for black children; and the need for marriage-preparation and enrichment programs that recognize and are geared to the experience of black Catholic couples.

I am looking forward to receiving, in written form, the oral reports we discussed this evening so that we can explore ways to stand in greater solidarity with our black sisters and brothers.

The meeting to which I just referred was the last of this day's activities — writing these words excepted! But it reminded me of the first event on the day's calendar. That was a visit to Corpus Christi School located at Blessed Sacrament Parish.

Sister Eileen Daly, SSJ, principal of the school, gathered some students from the upper grades who shared cider and doughnuts and banana bread with me. We talked



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LONG THE WAY

about school and politics, and we traded questions ("Who do you think has won the presidential debates so far?" "How did you become a bishop?" etc.).

It was a wonderful experience for me to enjoy the easy and natural hospitality of those children who, in their diversity, so richly remind me of the breadth of Christ's love for us.

Sister Eileen took me to all of the classes including the exciting new program (made possible by generous benefactors) for four-year-olds, and then she and I had a chance to sit and talk about the importance of the school to her children and their families.

I enjoyed the visit, immensely encouraged and more convinced than ever that Catholic-school education is a precious

opportunity for these little ones.

While on the subject of schools, let me thank all of the men and women, boys and girls who so generously supported Saturday's Walkathon for the benefit of our Northeast Quadrant Community Catholic Schools. It was a wonderful experience of community that would not have been possible without an enormous amount of work by many persons.

I had a wonderful time running the 10-kilometer route and wish to offer special thanks to Pam Giambone of St. Ambrose Parish and Aquinas Institute for her companionship and moral support along the way.

I want to close with these comments:

1). Congratulations and thanks to the board members and staff of the Catholic Family Center for the opportunity they provided to celebrate the 75th anniversary of their activity on behalf of those in need.

2). Thanks to the board members of St. Joseph's Cemetery, Auburn, and to Jack Geherin, cemetery director, for inviting me to bless their new statue of Jesus and the good thief. If your travels ever take you on Route 38-South out of Auburn, stop at St. Joseph's and enjoy this striking new work.

3). To Father John Gagnier and all at St. Francis, Auburn, my gratitude for their gracious hospitality on Sunday. It was a joy to celebrate with that community. I offer special thanks for their patience with my Italian.

Peace to all.

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