

Deep concerns emerge from Synod

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It's now mid-morning on Monday, Nov. 9, and I have just finished meeting with the committee that is preparing the agenda for our 11 regional synods, which will be held on Saturday, Dec. 12.

We were working with a notebook that contained the 48 recommendations — 16 for each of our first synod themes — that emerged most strongly from the parish synods held in late September and early October.

Our tasks were to review those recommendations and to identify any that can not be carried out locally, but which would require the attention of the wider church; and, to raise a note of caution about any that seemed practically impossible to carry out. We identified two recommendations that we do not have the authority to carry out locally. Both relate to qualifications to receive Holy Orders and will be among the issues discussed in our General Synod next October.

We did not find any of the recommendations to be impossible to do, but we did make some minor suggestions about clarity of language and the possibility of merging some related recommendations into a smaller number of proposals.

I was impressed not only by the importance of the concerns raised in our parish synods, but also by the creativity parish groups demonstrated in making recommendations of practical steps to meet our pastoral needs.

The revised form of the recommendations



A LONG THE WAY

we reviewed this morning will be the agenda for those who gather in our regional synods next month. Delegates to those synods will receive the agenda on December 1.

I won't go into the particular recommendations here because they are not yet in final form. But I do want to share with you what seems to me to be five deep, common concerns that emerge from the recommendations we reviewed this morning:

1) Continuing, systematic professional development for all persons engaged in full-time pastoral ministry is a clear priority. It may find its sharpest focus in the area of preaching — people value and want preaching that helps them live the Christian life — but it includes a range of significant ministries as well.

2) A strong desire for parish- and family-based opportunities to grow and develop in our understanding of the faith. People want to understand better our Roman Catholic tradition, and they want support and guidance in making the practical moral decisions by which they express their faith in the practical order.

3) The importance of good communication/networking as a common effort if together we hope to address our pastoral challenges in a fruitful and satisfying fashion.

4) A strong commitment to outreach and pastoral initiative on behalf of our sisters and brothers who stand in particular need, and a desire to reshape structures that confine people rather than free them.

5) A thirst for nourishing prayer experiences and programs of spirituality that recognize both the richness of our Catholic tradition and the diversity of persons in our community.

My friends at the meeting with me this morning may have come away from our session with a different listing of the fundamental themes that undergirded the recommendations we considered. We all read things out of our own experience and from our individual perspectives.

But I am sure they would agree that the recommendations are thoughtful and stimulating. I read them with a sense that the Holy Spirit continues to guide and inspire our community in this process. For that I am deeply grateful.

Peace to all.

A time to share



A time to heal

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