

Discernment processes rely on prayers

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I am writing this column much earlier than usual this week because I'll be leaving for Washington, D.C., tomorrow to participate in a meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Before I go I want to leave two intentions for your prayer.

The first is that you pray that the Lord will bless us in the process of identifying a replacement for Father Tom Valenti in diocesan vocation ministry. Tom will be taking a new assignment in June after 13 years of generous and loving service in his present position. In anticipation of that change and in order to provide for a smooth transition, I have invited our priests to write to me to share their ideas about vocations and to name brother priests who, in their judgment, would be gifted for the vocation ministry.

I am much encouraged by the responses I have received thus far. They indicate a rich interest among our priests in the promotion of vocations to the priesthood. They also manifest a prayerful reflection on the qualities we should look for in one who is to lead our vocation effort. One of our priests well reflected the spirit of all of the letters when he wrote, "I consider this job of the highest priority in the dio-



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cese requiring a person of maturity, spiritual depth, intellectual integrity and keen judgment and yet one able to relate to young people."

Finally, a public word of thanks to Tom. Among the many things for which I am grateful to him are: 1) his assistance in making the transition of our seminarians from St. Bernard's to other seminaries as smooth as possible, 2) his willingness to take on new responsibilities through the years, 3) his commitment to the spiritual life and to all of the young men who have been a part of his ministry, 4) his collaboration with the women and men who

accompany our candidates through this year of formation, 5) the excellent working relationships he has established with the seminary faculties who work with our students and 6) his work on the Bishop's Call to Priesthood program.

My second request of you is that you pray that — whatever our bishops' conference may decide about the proposed pastoral letter on the concerns of women for church and society — its decision will be for the good of the church.

It would be my guess at this moment that the conference will decide not to proceed with a pastoral letter on the subject. At the same time, I have a conviction that there will be commitment to continued work in this regard, with a special emphasis on making the best possible use of all that we have learned from the process begun nine years ago.

Thanks so much for your consideration of these matters and for your prayerful support. You can be sure that you will be very much a part of my prayer during the days in Washington.

Whenever I spend time away from the diocese, it affords a special opportunity to reflect on the life of our local church. That is always a life giving experience. You make it so.

Peace to all.

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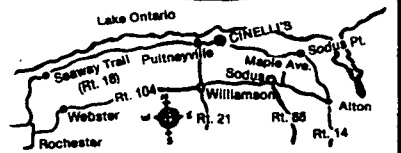
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