

Parish program highlights liturgy, life

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It was a stimulating discussion. The 38 adults in the room in Roger's Hall were sharing their experience and points of view about television and its effects on family life.

The conversation was wide-ranging. It contained a great deal of praise for the educational and entertainment capacity of the medium. It also contained concern about the content of some programs, the timing of others, the nature of advertising on programs for children, and the amount of time some of the little ones spend in front of the television set.

But the comments related not only to the content of programming and to children's viewing habits. The adults who were present wrestled with the impact television has on them as well. Was television becoming the center of family life? Was it too easy to sit the kids in front of the television just to keep them quiet? Were the couples unwittingly losing touch with one another because they, too, were spending time watching material they didn't like that much and wouldn't remember the next morning anyway?

Roger's Hall is the parish center at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Painted Post. And the discussion about television to which I just referred took place on Sunday morning before the 11 a.m. parish Mass. It is part of a family program conducted there on Sunday mornings.

I first heard about the program at Painted Post when I met Alice and Paul Marx last summer at the home of mutual friends. Alice and Paul spoke with great enthusiasm about the program they and other lay leaders were devel-



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oping. Our conversation that evening led to a letter of invitation from the Marxes to visit them one Sunday. The letter led to my doing just that this past weekend.

The community gathered at 9:30 a.m. for refreshments and a brief time for socializing. The children played. Some adults had mini-reunions. Others did last-minute consultation in preparation for the morning's activities. Shortly before 10 a.m., the children went to their respective classes, and the adults went to their discussion about television. I made brief visits to each of the children's classes, stopped by to see the baby-sitting crew and then spent most of the next hour with the adult group.

At 11 a.m., we all gathered in the church for our Sunday liturgy. The children were active in the celebration and showed a high level of

understanding of and comfort with what they were doing. They were obviously well prepared for their several contributions to the celebration. But I suspect, as well, that the children knew they offered their gifts in a particularly encouraging environment among people who honor them as fine members of the parish family.

I know that I enjoyed the liturgy very much. People were engaged, active and responsive. My intuition is that such quality participation is very much rooted in their sense of one another as belonging to a parish family. Secondly, I believe that they have an uncommon sense of the relationship between liturgy and life. My guess is that what so many of them experienced earlier on Sunday morning strengthened both.

Three postscripts:

1) My hat is off to Father Bill Spilly and all of the women and men who form the pastoral team in service to the parishes that form the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community. They have offered quality leadership for which I am deeply grateful.

2) One of the benefits of visiting Corning is that you get to see Father Tom Brennan, pastor emeritus of St. Mary's. Bill Spilly, Sister Mary Ann Sliwa and I had breakfast with Father Tom on Sunday. It was a delightful experience, as it always is to be with him.

3) My thanks to Alice and Paul Marx for encouraging me to share the Sunday experience with the Painted Post Community. And my thanks to them for inviting me to lunch with them and their eight wonderful children. Peace to all.

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