

# Week was marked by double loss

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I just returned from St. Ann's in Hornell where we celebrated the funeral liturgy for Father Richard Mattie, a priest of our diocese who recently retired after 20 years of service as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy.

Dick died quite suddenly at the North American College in Rome, where he had gone for a period of sabbatical renewal prior to taking up a new ministerial assignment in our diocese.

His sudden death at age 60 was quite a shock to his family and to all who knew him. But even in such sad circumstances there are memories that will support and console those who grieve his passing. For one, Dick had a longstanding ambition to spend some time in Rome and wrote to many friends from Rome saying how delighted he was with his experience there.

Another consoling memory is that Dick, who had a lifelong devotion to our Blessed Mother, visited the Church of St. Mary Major on the day before he died and celebrated the Eucharist there with his sabbatical study group. When Dick did not appear for a scheduled activity the next morning, a brother priest went to Dick's room and discovered that he had died while sitting in an easy chair, praying the rosary.

The most consoling memory of this good man will be the quiet, loving and



## A LONG THE WAY

consistent priestly ministry he offered for nearly 35 years — both here in our diocese and in the many places to which he was sent by the Navy.

This is a week that calls us to accept a double loss. Tomorrow (Tuesday, March 17) we'll be celebrating the funeral liturgy for Father Patrick Sullivan, parochial vicar at St. Mary's, Auburn, who died in his sleep this week. Pat spent eight of his 40 years as a priest of our diocese. He served at St. Andrew's and St. Margaret Mary's in Rochester before going to Auburn.

As is the case with Dick, the stories of generosity and quiet care Pat leaves behind will be a consolation to his dear parents, family members and friends. I

have heard many of them in these few days since his death, and I am sure that I'll hear many more Tuesday and in the days ahead.

I know that I remember Pat for his personal kindness to me. I don't think I ever ran into him that he didn't put himself out to say a word of encouragement. It was always quiet, usually brief. But I never met him without coming away with the feeling that I had experienced a gracious act of ministry. He offered me a wonderful example in all of that.

It's been about five years since we've experienced the death of two young priests in such rapid succession. We lost Bob Miller and Jim Mooney in the winter of 1988

Jim's funeral liturgy, you may recall, was also celebrated at St. Ann's in Hornell. I know that many who gather tomorrow at St. Patrick's, Victor, for Pat's funeral liturgy will be remembering, not only Pat but Dick, Jim and Bob as well.

All of us who knew them are saddened by the sudden, out-of-season loss we have experienced. Our gracious, loving God will treat us all with great mercy, so I pray for Pat and Dick, but I do not worry about them.

I pray also that their sudden deaths will help us to appreciate more deeply that life is, after all, a gift that none of us own tomorrow.

Peace to all.

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