

Eastertide is time for celebration

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It's certainly a time of celebration around our local church these days. And well it should be. The Easter season is a time for special remembering and rejoicing, a time to reflect on life and growth, achievement and aspiration.

In Naples on Saturday evening the St. Januarius Parish community gathered for the formal blessing and dedication of their new parish center. It was a joy to be a part of that gathering for many reasons. Not the least of them was the evident sense of parish participation in what we celebrated that night. One could tell immediately that people had invested a great deal in the project. They have made an investment of treasure; that is for certain. But they also have made significant investments of time and talent — investments that, in the long run, will yield the greatest rewards.

Two other notes about the evening:

1) At the wonderful reception and dinner that followed the Mass and blessing, a visitor could not miss the sense of care those present offered to one another. No rush. No hurry. Just a sense of joy about being together. That atmosphere has to do, I think, with a genuine and deep sense of hospitality that goes beyond an observance of formalities, and extends a kind word to the human spirit.

2) A touching reverence was shown to the children who were invited to partici-



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pate in ways that both expressed their great dignity and enhanced the worship of the community.

The Annunciation Parish community gathered for an entirely different purpose on Sunday morning. On that day the parish family gathered to celebrate 75 years of graced history. I want to tell you that they did so in a warm and elegant fashion. In conversation, music, silence, proclamation and in the breaking of bread, those who gathered remembered the blessings of the years. In those same activities, they expressed confidence that God would remain faithful in the future.

Annunciation Parish is a community rich in stories. That fact was evident in the way people reminisced about their common

experiences of parish life. It is clear also that the community has a lively, cherished connection with their mothers and fathers in faith. The community knew that what we celebrated Sunday had been begun by others. Those wonderful pioneers were very much with us that day.

I don't know if you have ever visited Annunciation Parish. If you haven't, you might enjoy doing so some time. Not only is the community most welcoming, but they also have a parish church you might enjoy seeing. It's on Norton Street in Rochester.

When I finish this column this morning I am going to Holy Family Parish to participate in the funeral liturgy for Helen Hickey, beloved sister of Bishop Dennis Hickey. There will be real sadness there — sadness that comes from separation and loss. But that gathering will be an Easter celebration, too. It will be a celebration of hope and confidence in the promise of Christ. It will be a celebration of the bonds respect, love and mutual service so apparent in the relationship Helen and Dennis Hickey enjoyed for so many years.

Please keep all of us priests of the diocese in your prayers this week. We will be gathered for our annual convocation. This year we continue on a theme of priestly spirituality begun at last year's gathering. You can be sure you will be in the prayers of all of us during those special days.

Peace to all.

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