

Mothers' Day on the road to 'adventure'

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I took the road to high adventure last weekend. I went home to see my nieces! "Oh, no big deal," you say. "Aunts and uncles do that all the time. What's so adventurous about that?"

I don't mean that visiting my nieces is adventurous in the manner climbing Mount Everest, traveling the Amazon in a dugout or going up in a space shuttle are adventurous. But to visit them is adventurous. The way I see it, an experience is an adventure if you know going in that you'll never be the same when you come out.

Well, I can't honestly say that I'll never be the same after the visit this weekend. But I'll tell you that I'll be processing the whole experience for quite a while. New vocabulary. Almost a new language. Not just multiple conversations at one time, but multiple conversations at several levels at the same time. It's just too much.

In fairness I can't blame Jane for any of this. She lives in Buffalo now and stayed there last weekend to be with her fiance and his family.

Jane and Scott Neff will marry on September 25. You can imagine the flurry of discussion and activity that announcement generated in the Early household. Before all of this I never realized that there exists an almost infinite variety of dresses designed for bridal attendants. Or that the first preferences of bridal attendants for them far exceeds the



A

LONG THE WAY

total number of gowns available.

Grace and Mary Ellen both celebrate their birthdays this week. Grace is working on a master's degree in business administration and, in her spare time, serves as adviser to Hillary Rodham Clinton, George Steinbrenner, John Cardinal O'Connor and her maternal grandmother, whose namesake she is. I don't call Grace my most exciting niece for nothing. It would be wonderful to have just 13 percent of her energy.

Mary Ellen also is a student these days. She finished Hudson Valley Community College last year. Since then she's been working in child care. In August she'll resume her college career in an art program at the College of Saint Rose in Albany. It was for the likes of

Mary Ellen that expressions like flair, pizzazz and "Oh, my God, what will she do next?" came into the English language. And, even as I write, I'm very much aware that even those don't do the job anymore.

Margaret, the fourth, also is moving on from Hudson Valley. She'll be going to Russell Sage this fall to prepare for a teaching career. When I think about Margaret's schedule and watch her in motion, I have to lie down in a dark place and put a cool cloth on my head. She's a banker, restaurateur, student, workout enthusiast and grounds keeper to the stars. Her sisters accuse me of favoring Margaret because she is my goddaughter. Not so. They just don't know how to deal with poets!

How do you thank a person for a million laughs? Especially when she's only 17? That comes to about 59,000 laughs a year, about 130 a day. Seems like a lot doesn't it? But you must remember that I am speaking about Kathleen and that, if anything, the numbers should be raised. It's hard to wrap words around Kathleen's humor. I can tell you only that she makes the Far Side seem like next door.

It really was a wonderful time at home last weekend. We celebrated Mothers' Day with my mother and sister, and birthdays with Grace, Mary Ellen and Father Tom Powers. I'm grateful to all for the special day. I'm grateful to my nieces who make me five ways proud and happy to be an uncle.

Peace to all.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)
Vol. 104 No. 32 May 13, 1993
Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$19.50; Canada and foreign \$19.50 plus postage.
Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340.
Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624

Advertising Deadline: May 28 Special Rate: \$18.25/col. in. Publication Date: June 10