

Events point to diocesan 'personality'

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

As I indicated to you in last week's column, this past weekend was an especially busy one in our local church. I enjoyed every single moment of it, and welcome this open Monday evening as a chance to remember it all, to think more about each beautiful event and to locate them all in the context of our unfolding life.

I won't revisit those events in a specific way here, but I do want to mention in brief fashion some of the qualities and characteristics I noted in all of the events and I believe can be used fairly to describe the personality of our local church. I would name the following:

1) **A spirit of optimism:** We all know that we are not carefree, that many among us face severe challenges in life. And we know that we, as a community of faith, often deal with issues on which we hold diverse and strong opinions. But I am always pleased — indeed, I judge it a sign of health — that we have such discussions.

And it is especially gratifying when, as happened all over our diocese this weekend, we can gather to rejoice in the loving gifts of God who calls us to a deep and honest unity. I find the people of this diocese always open to that call.



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LONG THE WAY

2) **A sense of the common good:** I suppose we all can get stuck in our own personal agendas. I know that I can. By that, I mean so locking in on what's important to me that I lose openness to the truth others may have to offer. I know I have no corner on that market.

But I do think that the great majority of the people of our diocese realize deep in their bones that to be Catholic means somehow to belong to and to care deeply about the rest of the community — their ideas, their joys, their pains and sorrows, their needs.

3) **A creative spirit:** It's not at all

unusual, as you know, that friends from other local churches come here to enrich our lives by offering conferences, retreats, workshops and the like. I notice that they often express some surprise at the vitality and dynamism of our community.

To them, the prospect of coming to this part of the country often means coming to a less-than-creative, play-it-by-the-book region. But when they have experienced you, they express great happiness at having had the opportunity. They find you forward-looking, unafraid of challenges and quite resourceful in facing the issues of the day. I think they are correct.

I certainly think that creativity, a spirit of optimism and concern have been hallmarks to date of our Synod process; I trust that they will remain so as we come ever closer to the first weekend in October when our Synod gathers in plenary session.

Our journey of faith together will continue to hold difficult moments for us, but the experience of this past weekend reinforces in me the sense that the Holy Spirit has endowed us richly — not simply to endure whatever trials we may experience, but also to discover new life in our honest attempt to meet whatever comes in faith and charity.

Peace to all.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)

Vol. 104 No. 36 June 10, 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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