

Meetings speak to universality of church

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I write this Monday morning at the kitchen table of my mother's home in Waterford. I drove over last evening for a meeting today of the bishops of the eight dioceses of New York state. We'll meet for most of the day, doing the business of the New York State Catholic Conference.

In the evening we'll gather with many others for a dinner in honor of J. Alan Davitt, who for many years was executive director of the conference. There will be people there tonight from all over the state. Alan's career is long and distinguished; he is also a much beloved gentleman.

This will be a week full of travel. I'll be driving back to Rochester after the dinner tonight. Tomorrow will be business as usual, but on Wednesday morning I'll be leaving for New Orleans for the spring meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. I'll be returning from that next Sunday. The agenda for New Orleans will be a full one. Among the items of practical pastoral interest will be some work on the sacrament of confirmation and a session on the new catechism. We'll also be participating in a celebration marking the 300th anniversary of the church in that region.

Meetings of the NCCB and the NYSCC are both practical, concrete expressions of a theological truth about the office of bishop — and more importantly about the nature of the



A LONG THE WAY

church. That truth is that the church is a communion of life whose individual communities must maintain lively relationships with the other communities in the larger communion. To be catholic is to be relational, inclusive, concerned for the other. We belong, we participate, we contribute because it's part of our responsibilities as Catholics.

In recognition of this truth about Catholic life, a bishop is ordained not only for the pastoral service of a particular community, but also to share with the college of bishops a pastoral concern for all the churches. In somewhat similar fashion, a pastor is appointed for the pastoral care of particular parish. But he

exercises that ministry well only when he shares with the bishop a concern for all of the parishes that are part of the local church.

For that reason — and others — a good pastor seeks to link communities for appropriate, common purposes. He works for the development of strong parish personality and identity, but resists anything that isolates or leaves the parish hostile to the wider community of faith.

One of the benefits I most enjoy from such meetings is the opportunity they provide to learn about and from the experiences of other local churches. Often enough I come home with ideas that are of practical help in dealing with our local concerns. But even when that's not the case, I always return with the conviction that we are dealing with the issues of substance and that we're doing so in a reasonable fashion.

By the time you need these words, our session in New Orleans will be in progress. Please pray that the Lord will bless our work and help us to be good pastors. You can be sure that I remember you frequently and fondly when I am away at such meetings. I will be praying for you especially at the liturgy marking the 300th anniversary of the church in New Orleans. I would do that under any circumstances, but I'll be especially mindful of you as we anticipate the celebration of our 125th anniversary at the conclusion of our Synod in October.

Peace to all.

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Barbara Flores grew up in Dangriga, a town in southern Belize, Central America. The missionary Sisters serving there very much impressed her — so much so that she decided to serve Christ as a "Sister."



Belizean Sister Barbara Flores

Today, Sister Barbara is in charge of catechetical programs in Belize

City. Impressing her now are the city's religion teachers. "They have so little to work with but they are so committed to their faith," she noted.



Belizean Sister Francine Vasquez at Mercy Kitchen

Another native Belizean Sister is Francine Vasquez, who runs Mercy Kitchen, also in Belize City. There, every day, 100 elderly men and women are fed a hot breakfast and a main meal. The Kitchen opened in 1986 to serve the city's elderly poor, Sister Francine explained.



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Fr. Robert C. Bradler, 1150 Buffalo Road., Dept. C,
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CELEBRATE WITH US!

Join us in celebrating two joyous events in the life of the local church — the culmination of the Seventh Diocesan Synod and the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Rochester.

In conjunction with the diocesan Office of the Synod, the *Catholic Courier* will present two commemorative publications: a special synod/anniversary issue of the *Courier* and a keepsake program for the 125th Anniversary Mass.

The *Catholic Courier's* special edition — to be published September 30, 1993 — will be distributed by mail to nearly 49,000 subscribers and to an additional 1,200 delegates to the General Synod. It will contain articles on various aspects of diocesan history, the agenda for the General Synod, and analyses of the recommendations on which delegates will be asked to vote.

The keepsake booklet will serve as a program for the Anniversary Liturgy, which will be celebrated at the Monroe County War Memorial at the close of the General Synod on Sunday, October 3, 1993, before a gathering of approximately 5,000 members of the diocese and church dignitaries.

Your organization can participate in the festivities — and help support the Diocesan Synod — by placing a congratulatory advertisement in these two special publications (a portion of the proceeds will help underwrite costs of the General Synod).

To place your ad in these special commemorative publications call Kathy Welsh or Bernie Puglisi at (716)328-4340.

Advertising deadline is Friday, July 23, 1993.

