

Reunion reflections of an 'old man'

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Our 28th annual family reunion was a great success. I'm not sure how many were present, but I think it was about 140. The weather was ideal and, although our pavilion was a bit small for our number, we all enjoyed the Saratoga State Park facilities.

For me such events are special invitations to appreciate the continuity of life and to think and pray about family relationships that help us to grow and develop — even when we are not immediately aware of that growth and all that supports it. I must say that one of the stronger realizations I take from this year's reunion is that there are now many more people at the reunion younger than I am than there are older than I am.

Two diverse and enjoyable experiences of the weekend brought that awareness home. The first occurred on Friday afternoon shortly after I arrived in Waterford at 1:30. At 3:30 I was to bring holy Communion to my aunt, Margaret Mitchell Bills, who will be 98 in February.

Although it was extremely hot that day I decided to use the interval to take a run through the streets of our town. As I ran along — even more slowly than usual because of the intense heat — I was thinking about the beautiful faith of my Aunt Margaret, about how she loves her family and how she has inspired us who come



A LONG THE WAY

after her. And, I was thinking about the blessing of good health that allowed me to run and go to my aunt that afternoon.

Caught up in such thoughts, I approached two little boys, about age 6, I would guess, who were squatting on the sidewalk playing a game like jacks. As I passed the boys they looked up with a smile and a wave, and one of them called out, "Hi, old man!" The greeting was cordial and most sincere.

The second experience occurred around the horse-shoe tournament, for years a very popular reunion event. Partners are picked by lottery. My partner this year was Danny Currier, 16, who next week will start his junior year in high school.

Danny and I didn't last too long in the tournament but I did enjoy the opportunity to get to know him better through the experience. What struck me was that during the 28 years of our reunions, I had played in the tournament with Danny's father, grandfather and great grandfather. His dad was with us Sunday, but his grandfather and great grandfather both died during the last two years. When Danny and I played together on Sunday, I remembered both of them. And I hoped that one day I might play in the tournament with one of Danny's children.

One final note on the weekend: Sunday, the day after the reunion, was the 16th anniversary of my father's death. It was a joy to celebrate the Eucharist with the family, to remember my dad on that special occasion and to thank the Lord together for the people and the events of the day before. When you think of the babes in arms who were there and include everybody up to Margaret Mitchell, you remember nearly a century of life.

So the reflections sparked by the little boys on the sidewalk and by Danny Currier are not at all sad. Growing older has its down side, I know. But if we don't move along, no one comes after us. And wouldn't we be the losers without the beautiful young ones God raises up in our families and communities?

Peace to all.

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