

# Rome visit evokes memories

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I'm glad this visit to Rome can end here — in the chapel of the North American College. It's where my experience in this city began 34 years ago this month when 96 of us seminarians from all over the United States began our study of theology in preparation for the priesthood.

Now, this evening, in some quiet moments before evening prayer, I watch today's students as one by one they enter the chapel for some moments of prayer at the end of the day. And, as I watch them, my spirit is flooded with memories not only of the events of this week in Rome but also of so many things that have happened in those 34 years.

When I met with John Paul II on Friday noon, he recalled ordaining me a bishop as he put it, "some years ago." I thanked him for that great gift and, anticipating the 15th anniversary of his election on the following day, told him that I hope he has been as happy in his years of service as pope as I have been as bishop of Rochester. He didn't answer the question directly. He just nodded his head and smiled. His grin widened as I extended your love to him and told him of the wonderful weekend of our General Synod.

I also thanked him for calling us together in Denver and told him how great our young people are, how beautifully all of our communities responded to World Youth Day. The visit I describe lasted about 10 minutes — short when I measure it against all of the topics I wish we could have talked about; long when I think of the endless stream of people John Paul receives day after day, year after year.

He truly is generous with us. In addition to receiving each of us privately, John Paul invited us to join him for Mass in his private chapel, entertained us for lunch in smaller groups and gave a talk to an assembly of the bishops of New York State and the bishops of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Each event had its own special joy. It is indeed an exciting privilege to have a personal conversation, however brief, with the Holy Father. And the celebration of Eucharist with John Paul II and the Minnesota/Dakota bishops was quite moving. But I think the luncheon opportunity, in its own way, leaves as strong a memory as any meeting with him.



# A

## LONG THE WAY

I suppose that's because it is so informal and relaxed. For an hour and a quarter, 14 of us sat at table and talked of a wide range of subjects — World Youth Day, life issues, religious life, women in the church, moral values, the catechism, John Paul's beloved Poland, the volatile condition of what was the Soviet Union and others.

It is clear that John Paul is an extremely intelligent person and that he holds strong views on a wide range of topics. That fact alone would make a meal experience with him a pleasure. But adding to the pleasure were his gift for humor and his interest in the opinions of others around the table. I thought even during the experience, and do again now, how good it would be if all members of our community could have the same special opportunity.

I think it would be good if all could experience John Paul as a brother, a fellow human being who continues to study, who asks questions, who struggles, as we all do, with important questions. And it would be a blessing if all could know that it's possible to hold an opinion that differs from John Paul's even in matters on which he has strong convictions.

The events we shared with John Paul were not the only activities of our stay in Rome. Our group of bishops joined our friends from Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to celebrate the Eucharist

at St. Peter's Basilica and at St. Paul's Outside the Walls. John Cardinal O'Connor presided at the former celebration; Archbishop John Roach at the latter.

We also visited the Vatican congregations responsible for Clergy, Education, Migration and Tourism, Family, Laity and Doctrine of the Faith. I missed a visit to Christian Unity because it was at the same hour as my private audience; our visit to Sacraments and Worship was canceled because our corporate meeting with John Paul took precedence.

Those visits varied in levels of participation and interest. For different reasons, I found most stimulating the visits to Doctrine of the Faith and to Clergy. The conversation at Doctrine of the Faith was substantial. We conversed with Cardinal Ratzinger about the delay in publication of the English version of the new catechism, the reception of the encyclical "The Splendor of Truth," the situation of resigned priests seeking dispensations and other matters of common interest. I found Cardinal Ratzinger to be quite open and helpful in the discussion.

At the Congregation for Clergy, Cardinal Sanchez opened the session by asking what our people thought about celibacy. There was silence until finally I spoke to ask if I had understood his question correctly. He said that I had, so I proceeded to give him a brief accounting of what our General Synod has expressed as their opinion on that matter. My surprise at the question was on two counts 1) that the Cardinal asked the question at all and 2) that he asked so soon after our Synod had considered the question so carefully.

On another evening we were guests at a reception at the Villa Stritch, a residence in Rome for U.S. priests in Vatican service. It was a happy time of reunion since many of those priests were students at the American College during my years there.

Now it's time to go home. The day will start with a ride to the airport at 5:30 a.m. I'm not thrilled about the early rising, but I am happy to be going home — not because I didn't enjoy my stay here but because these days in Rome and all of the memories they evoke make me realize how happy I am to serve in our local church, among such a vibrant community.

I look forward to seeing you in the weeks ahead. Peace to all.

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ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ROCHESTER  
CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 105 No. 4 October 28, 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.

A new monthly calendar will appear in the Catholic Courier on the last Thursday of each month.

## THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAYER FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

The following prayer was dictated by Our Lord to Sister Josefa Menendez at Poitiers, France, on the Feast of The Sacred Heart, June 3, 1921, with the instruction: "Josefa! Repeat these words daily!"

### JESUS PRAYER FOR HIS PRIESTS

O Jesus, by Thy most loving Heart, I implore Thee to inflame with zeal for Thy love and glory all the priests of the world, all missionaries and those whose office it is to preach Thy word, that on fire with holy zeal, they may snatch souls from the devil and lead them into the shelter of Thy Heart, where forever they may glorify Thee.

Imprimatur: E. Morrough Bernard, Vic. Gen. Westmonasterii, May 5, 1953

Mass  
Rosary  
Fasting  
Day Offering  
Offering of Sufferings  
Eucharistic Adoration  
Divine Mercy Chaplet

Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him on behalf of His Priests.

## NOVEMBER, 1993 DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

| SUNDAY                  | MONDAY                 | TUESDAY                | WEDNESDAY                                                                                                                 | THURSDAY                  | FRIDAY                 | SATURDAY                 |
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