

New president articulates vision for SBI

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

On the evening of Dec. 1 we had the joy of inaugurating Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, as the second president of St. Bernard's Institute. In that capacity, she succeeds Father Sebastian Falcone, who led the St. Bernard's community in its transition from the seminary on Lake Avenue to the institute on the campus of Colgate Rochester Divinity School on Goodman Street.

It was an exciting occasion for all present. Part of the excitement was rooted in the fact that we were able to attract a person of Pat's quality to follow Sebastian in the presidency. She is a teacher with experience at elementary, secondary and college levels and, by virtue of her experience at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, is much in touch with the need for high-quality training for pastoral ministry in today's and tomorrow's church.

In my view of things, another cause for enthusiasm that evening was Pat's vision of contemporary theological education and her ability to apply that vision to St. Bernard's Institute. She made that application with what I thought was clear insight into the pastoral needs of our own local church, and those of the Diocese of Albany, in cooperation with which St. Bernard's operates an Albany-based extension program.

Our new president articulated her vision for the institute, which she derived from her careful listening to the SBI communities in Albany and Rochester, and to those in both places who care about theological education and quality preparation for pastoral ministry.

It is impossible to do justice to that vision



A LONG THE WAY

in this limited space, but I do want to mention its six principal components to whet your appetite to know more about the reality and potential of St. Bernard's. I extracted the following items verbatim from the text of Sister Pat's inaugural address:

- 1.) "St. Bernard's exists to educate for ministry in a changing church. It needs to be responsive to the needs of the community, ready to explore new possibilities in ministry;
- 2.) St. Bernard's represents a unique attempt to assist Catholicism in its struggle to adapt appropriately to the culture that exists in the United States;
- 3.) A great part of the uniqueness of St. Bernard's comes from its physical locations in Albany and Rochester;
- 4.) A great part of the wealth of St. Bernard's and the opportunity it offers to the Roman Catholic diocese here, comes from its ecumenical posture;

5.) St. Bernard's exists to challenge and summon individuals beyond where they are now, and;

6.) What is most significant about St. Bernard's is ultimately not that it trains people for leadership in the church, is ultimately not that it upholds a tradition that values reason and the intellectual love of God, ultimately not that it engages in serious conversations with other faith traditions, not even that it upholds certain key convictions in the face of adversity. Rather, what is ultimately the most essential marker of SBI is what it claims as its overarching goal - which is to try to understand God more truly, simply for the sake of understanding God."

I would have enjoyed the evening under any circumstances because it was lively and joyful, because it was full of ideas, because it was a special event early in the second century of the proud St. Bernard's tradition, and because it fittingly celebrated the gift our new president is to us.

But I think my sense of satisfaction and my appreciation were deepened by the renewed realization of how important St. Bernard's has been to us in all stages of our Synod thus far, how important it will be - in the short run and in the long - as we work together to implement its recommendations.

If you have interest in the study of theology at the graduate level, in the pastoral ministry of the church, or questions about St. Bernard's Institute, I am sure Sister Pat Schoelles would welcome your correspondence at 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester, N.Y. 14620.

Peace to all.



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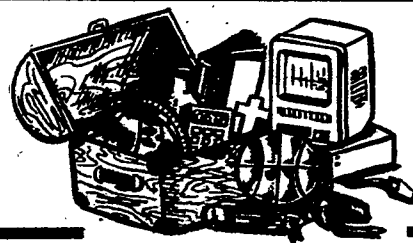
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