

# New year evokes hope for future

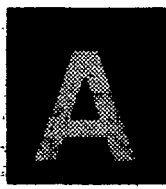
By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I hope that you carry happy memories of the events we have been celebrating these late-December and early-January days.

We all know that life's flow and its realities are not governed by the calendar, but I hope that you have been able to rest occasionally to reflect on the beautiful meaning of the Christmas season. Such reflection can bring great comfort and much encouragement because, at its root, it reminds us that nothing human is foreign to God, that God understands us deeply and is patient with our struggles.

As this new year begins, I find myself thinking about 1994 and my hopes for all of us for the coming months. At the forefront of my hopes for our local church is that we will maintain a high level of commitment to the implementation of our Synod. I believe deeply in the priorities you have identified as most important to us, and I have a firm conviction that we have the resources to respond to those priorities in a way that will be a blessing to our pastoral life and mission.

A second area for which I have fond hopes is the area of communication. One of the great benefits of our Synod process was that it made it clear that we face major challenges in this area. I am referring not only to the transmission of significant information in an effective and timely fashion, although that always helps, but I am thinking more of the ongoing desire made even more evident in our Synod



## LONG THE WAY

process, that members of our community have a great desire to be heard about matters that are of deep importance to them. It is my hope that we can make some significant progress this year. And it is my further hope that the *Catholic Courier* will make a notable contribution to that progress.

A third dream I have for this year is that all of us will renew our commitment to fight racism in any way in which it exists, within us or among us. Our faith tells us that all human beings are children of God, made in the divine image and possessed of a God-given dignity. It is totally foreign to that faith conviction to judge others by the color of their skin. We are blessed with some strong guiding documents about this issue, and I think that our Synod priorities will call us to revisit them and to take some good steps to address the issue.

Fourth, I hope that all of us in whatever way we can will bring the light of Christ to bear on the violence that plagues us. In an extreme expression of that violent spirit, people leap to weapons to resolve even the most minor of disputes, adults vent their anger by beating their children or by abusing their spouses. Even the frail elderly are not immune from such horrible treatment. But even apart from such horrors, there is a lot of violence around. I think of the boorish and intrusive conduct of some spectators at sporting events, of the utterly degrading treatment of women in some films and television productions, of the ways in which some people put others at risk by the way they drive their cars. I think that the person and teaching of Christ and the treasures of our tradition offer some deeply attractive alternatives to that kind of behavior.

Fifth and last — at least for now — it would be my hope that all of us could recover and express more strongly a commitment to the common good, even when that effort might require sacrifice on our part. We do ultimately have our dignity from God and we do possess certain basic rights based on the fact that God gave us life. But we realize that dignity and express those rights in community, as a part of the human family, and it seems to me that we do so most fully when we accept our basic responsibilities toward our brothers and sisters.

I wish you and your loved ones many good blessing for 1994.  
Peace to all.

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