

# God's love is with us in all things

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I am sure they didn't realize it at all, but as they filed into the hall for the late-afternoon Eucharist they were helping me prepare for Lent. It wasn't anything dramatic.

They greeted one another as they assembled. There were many smiles and some laughter. But what engaged my attention most was what I can best describe as the spirit of contemplation I noted among them as they gathered.

My reference is not to the community of Trappists at Piffard, nor the Benedictines in Elmira, nor is it to our Carmelite sisters on Jefferson Road or our Dominican sisters in Elmira. No, I am talking about the young men and women of our Catholic community at Cornell University.

When they assembled yesterday, I was very much drawn to quiet with them — so much so that I took a seat at the back of the room and rested with them in their peace. It was one of those moments that was brief in duration, but quite deep and wide in its significance for me.

The best I can do is to describe it as beautiful, restful, healing; and to say that it was a moment in which much that was disparate and spinning around in me came to rest as well.

The act of writing about it helps me to understand a little more what realities were undergirding that experience.

One, I think, was the richness and diversity of the assembly. Here were brilliant young men and women from



## A LONG THE WAY

most states in our country and many nations on earth, assembling to worship God and to strengthen one another in their faith.

In that moment, my mind wanted to know the life stories behind that assembly, and my imagination wanted to embrace the immense impact on the human community they will have in the years ahead. Somehow I felt a sense of elation that their faith will be a part of all of that.

The second underlying reality of the moment at Cornell was my experience that morning with our sisters and brothers at St. John's Church in Spencerport.

I had spent the morning in the parish and came away deeply edified by the faith and kindness of the people there. They have suffered much lately and now

had to hear news of money missing from parish accounts. But in the midst of it all, they are optimistic, active and anxious to live and celebrate their faith in this Lenten time.

I'll be going back to St. John's for another weekend during Lent. I look forward to celebrating with the community at a less pressured moment and to reflecting with them on what we have learned through these difficult times, and on how we can grow together into the future.

In a more personal vein, I'll be wanting to spend some time during Lent reflecting on the quality of my own ministry in response to the recent special pastoral concerns of our sisters and brothers at Spencerport.

All of that may seem far removed from the brief moment at Cornell. It probably is. But somehow the presence of the Lord in those gifted students, so powerfully evident to me at that moment, was a reminder that the love of God is with us in all things. If that is so, of what need we be afraid?

I wish you and your loved ones a peaceful and blessed Lent. Please be sure to pray for all who are preparing for baptism or for reception into our faith community at the Easter Vigil. They are preparing in a special way during the Lenten season and will be strengthened by the companionship of your prayer.

Next week: a report on your response to my invitation to comment on the *Catholic Courier*.

Peace to all.

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