

People feel need for silences in their lives

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Silence is on my mind this week. I find myself thinking about it for several reasons. Some of them are rooted in pastoral concerns and questions you have brought to my attention. Others are rooted in my personal effort to turn back to the Lord during this holy season of Lent. First, let me say a word about the pastoral concerns and questions that lead me to think about silence. Then I will share a few personal reflections on the theme and invite you to do the same.

People speak and write to me often about the pace of life in today's complex society. Common elements in their communication include high expectations placed upon them from a variety of sources, their limited store of talent and energy, the loss they experience when the jumble of activity they face each day keeps them from what they judge to be the most important things in life.

They complain of the tyranny of the urgent, which keeps them from things that are truly important. In that spirit, they lament the lack of such things as regular family meals, significant communication with their spouses, children, parents, sisters and brothers, etc. In the lives of what seems a growing number of individuals, people are feeling overwhelmed by activity. As a result, people feel spiritually and emotionally undernourished. They yearn for quiet, some peace and for rewarding relationships with others.

The theme is raised in another way by those who comment on their experience of worship in our parish communities. Once again, particular experiences and ways of expression vary, but many sisters and brothers long for the recovery in our liturgical celebrations of the kind of sacred silence that allows them truly to be close to God and neighbor.



A LONG THE WAY

I should say that this view is not being expressed by persons who are antagonistic to liturgical reform. Indeed, the opposite is true. They rejoice in lively participation and good music; they do appreciate the communal nature of their worship.

What they are saying, I believe, is that we should not lose the life-giving contemplative quality of our liturgical life. We should be careful not to equate participation with motion and voice. To put the matter in more positive terms, they are asking that we be unafraid of silence in our worship, that we do honor to those moments when the flow of liturgy calls for us to rest together in the Lord.

I can identify both with the personal and liturgical dimensions of this concern. Much as I try, I never seem able to put completely to rest the need to be self-critical of the way I use my time and energy. The task relates to making good judgments about what to do. It also entails decisions about how much to do. But, most importantly, it involves me in the

task of remembering that in the long run I do not put aside even some urgent things often enough to contemplate, to absorb those things that are most important.

Among these important things are such activities as praying, reading, reflecting on life and its events, integrating that experience and folding it into tomorrow. But I also include attending to relationships with family and friends, recreating and celebrating life's joyful moments. Such activities help me in a continued search to find some happy place between frenetic activity and self-absorption. I sense that the search will be a lifelong one. The circumstances of life change. So do we.

The liturgical concerns also correspond with my experience. I do honestly think that we need to become more attentive than we are now to the contemplative, quiet dimensions of our liturgical life. We can tend to be quite busy and very functional in our celebrations. We can be task-oriented and time-conscious.

And we are much prone to rush through any moments in our gathering that call for a contemplative silence. Think of our gathering habits, our penance rite, the interval between readings, the moments following the homily, the period after receiving the Eucharist. And I haven't even mentioned the time awareness that so deeply effects our attitude toward the length of our celebrations and the ways in which we exit our celebrations!

But, enough for now. I have a sense that all of us are struggling in some fashion with such issues as these. Writing to you about them helps me to process the question as it relates both to my personal life and ministry. If these thoughts get your wheels spinning in any constructive ways — or, better, if they slow them down at all — I'll be happy.

Peace to all.

Lenten Rosary Congress March 17-March 19, 1994

Holy Spirit Church
1355 Hatch Road, Penfield, NY

Celebrants, participants and conference speakers include: Bishop Jerome Hastrich D.D. National President World Apostolate of Fatima, Fr. Ronald Antinarelli, Fr. Dennis Bonsignore, Fr. Robert Bradler, Fr. Frederick Bush, Fr. Francis Feeney, Fr. Jack Healy, O. Carm, Fr. Donald McCarthy, C.S.B., Fr. Albert Shamon, Fr. Francis Marino, SSSM, and others.

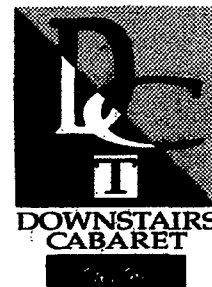
Join your sorrows and joys with our Blessed Mother and lay them before Jesus in the Eucharist

Program Schedule

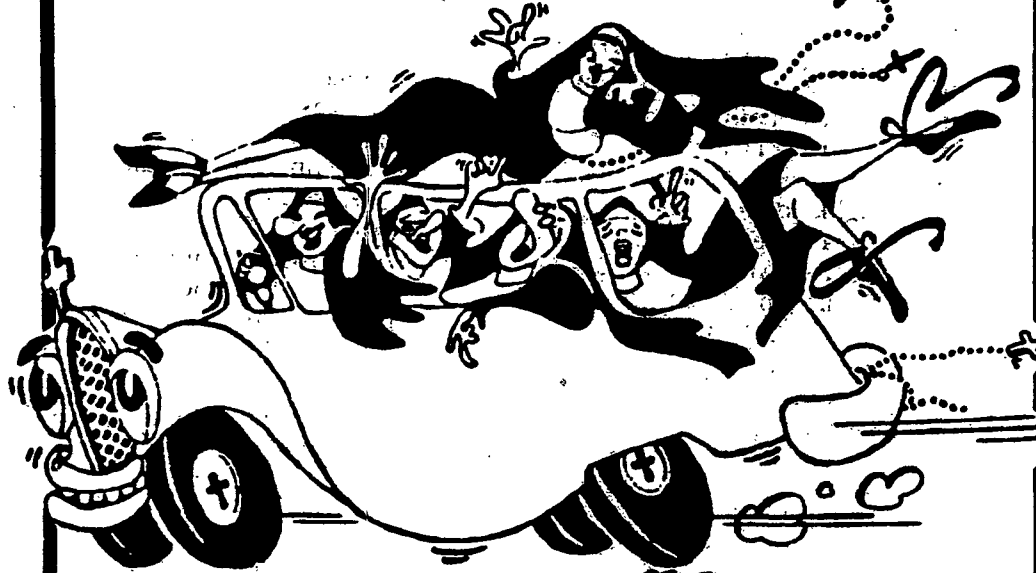
Thursday, March 17	March 18 (continued)
6:30 pm Sacred Music and Confessions	4:15 pm St. Louis Consecration - Confession
6:45 pm Rosary-Joyful Mysteries	5:00 pm Dinner Break
7:30 pm Mass-Bishop Hastrich	7:00 pm Stations of Cross
9:00 pm (after mass) Exposition and All night Adoration	7:30 pm Mass - Fr. Shamon
Friday, March 18	9:00 pm (after Mass) Exposition and All Night Adoration Rosary-Glorious Mysteries
8:30 am Rosary-Joyful Mysteries	Saturday, March 19
9:00 am Mass - Parish Priest	8:00 am Mass
9:45 am Conference - Fr. McCarthy	8:30 am Rosary - Glorious Mysteries
10:15 am Meditation	9:00 am Conference - Fr. Healey
10:30 am Conference - Fr. Marino	9:30 am Consecration of St. Joseph Litanies of St. Joseph
11:00 am Meditation	10:00 am Meditation-Confessions
11:15 am Rosary-Sorrowful Mysteries	11:00 am Closing Mass - Fr. McCarthy
11:30 am Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary	
Prayer to the Immaculate Conception	
Noon Angelus Break-Lunch Available	
1:30 pm Conference - Fr. Shamon	
2:00 pm Investiture of Brown Scapular	
2:15 pm Conference - Fr. Bradler	
3:00 pm Divine Mercy Chaplet-Stations of the Cross	
3:45 pm Conference - Fr. Shamon	

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