

Comment points to link between life, liturgy

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Tricia and Kelly both did an excellent job proclaiming the Word of God today at the 8 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral. They were thoughtful and clear in their reading, and they obviously engaged the attention of the congregation. I have a strong sense that both Tricia and Kelly prepared their offerings, not only as an act of reading but as an expression of their faith. It was a beautiful gift to all of us, especially since Tricia and Kelly are only in the fifth grade.

After Mass I told both of them that they had done very well and thanked them for all the work they had put into their kind service. They smiled at the words in a shy way and turned to get their coats and head off to school. But before she got too far Tricia turned to say, "You did a good job too." She said it easily and naturally, and I want to tell you, in saying it she made my Monday!

Such kindness is always a boost. Tricia's words are important to me for several reasons; their kind content, the goodness of the person who spoke them and spontaneity with which they were said. But that brief, pleasant encounter has also been important for the way it has helped my own continued reflection on our liturgical life.

She may not have thought it through in systematic fashion, but Tricia's



A LONG THE WAY

comment indicated her intuitive understanding of the ministry she had just offered at the liturgy. The gift of life she offered in her proclamation of the Word she now extended in the encouraging word she spoke to another when the celebration ended. For me, it was another wonderful reminder of the linkages we are meant to experience between liturgy and life. The brief exchange helped me to remember that, finally, liturgy is about reconciliation, relationships, gift giving, growth, healing and renewal.

That's not to say that what we do at liturgy is unimportant. Indeed, it is very important. Our symbols and how we treat them, our speech, our silence, our motion and our stillness, our music and

ritual gesture, our manner of relating to one another are all crucial vessels of the reality we remember and celebrate. They need to be solid and thoughtful and as deeply rooted in our tradition as we can make them.

But we need to remember always that all of the externals are meant to open our minds and hearts to the reality of God's saving activity within and among us. They call us to and strengthen us for the enjoyment of life-giving relationships with God and neighbor.

But we know that our symbols are not magic; they are not automatic. Rather, they are meant to touch mind, heart and emotion — the whole person — in ways that invite us to say, "Amen," and "I believe!" And they are meant to help us to do what Tricia did — that is to express in the street, office, classroom and kitchen what we have celebrated in our worshipping communities.

Next week we'll resume our ongoing conversations about the *Catholic Courier* with a report and some comment on what readers have said about the moral questions they are facing in daily life. I offer the reminder that we welcome your letters at any time, and do pay careful attention to them.

Until then I wish you many blessings during this Lenten season. Happy St. Patrick's Day and happy St. Joseph's Day!

Peace to all.

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