

Visit to alma mater proved stimulating

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

At the end of last week's column, I told you that this week I would offer an update on your responses to my request to write me about the concrete moral challenges you face in daily life. At the beginning of this week's column, I ask your understanding of my decision to delay that topic for one week.

I make the request for two reasons. One is that I lacked the time this week to do the job your letters deserve. The second is that a couple of especially interesting contributions came in late and I want to include them. Thanks.

Having said that, I want to note that your letters have been thoughtful and stimulating. They speak of your lived experience and, because of that, they have made me more alert to my own experience and to that of the people I have been meeting these days.

An example of that increased awareness was the visit I made this week to my alma mater, the College of the Holy Cross. I was invited to visit the campus to offer one in a series of lectures given by alumni/ae during the year, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of that wonderful institution.

The visit was a thoroughly enjoyable experience in every way, and I have



A LONG THE WAY

taken delight in remembering all of it in the days since my return. Among the happy memories were the visits I had with groups of students. I met for breakfast with students from this area and for lunch with students in the religious studies department. During the afternoon I met with a first-year seminar group and then with a group of students who are active in the campus ministry program.

In all of the groups, we talked about a wide range of topics, and I realized more and more as the day went on that there was a great similarity between the concerns of the students and the issues that many of you have been raising in your letters about the moral challenges of daily life.

The language used by the students was different, and some of the particulars varied. But the themes raised were markedly similar. They included a quest for meaning and lasting value, a desire to find a happy marriage between authority and freedom. And I realized that, as is clearly the case with many of you, the students' quest was rooted in their experience of life and in their efforts to make sense of it all.

I think it was not quite that way when my classmates and I went to Holy Cross almost 40 years ago. My memory of those days suggests that our life experience was much less complicated than is the life experience of the youths of today. Memory suggests as well that we were more inclined than are young people today to start with principles and apply them to individual cases.

None of this is to suggest in any way that the young are not concerned with principle. The opposite is true. I want to say only that there are some differences between my generation and this one in the ways in which we discover, make our own and live out the values and convictions all of us judge to be very important. There are many reasons for those differences, I think. But that's for another time.

Peace to all.

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