

People's sharing of gifts aids all

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

If you read this column with any regularity at all, you know that I find life within our faith community to be deeply life-giving.

That is true for many reasons. Among them are the faith, creativity, good humor, generosity and patience of the people who are the church in our richly blessed 12-county area.

Those good gifts so readily and abundantly shared by you with one another offer powerful testimony that the Lord is present and active within us and among us.

I look forward to yet another experience of those gifts later this morning when I join pastoral ministers from all over our diocese in a daylong session devoted to the study of small Christian communities.

You will recall that Small Christian Communities were identified as priority #4 in our Synod Process. Today's program will be one of several steps we are currently taking to respond to that priority.

In this instance our presenters are people with considerable experience in this kind of ministry. My expectation is that they will share that experience with us, help us to reflect on our local experience and needs, guide us in a consideration of where best we might go from here.

If this day is devoted to a consideration of small Christian communities, it will also be an experience that can fairly be included under Synod priority #1, Lifelong Religious Education. I say that because most of us who participate in the day will go with a lively curiosity about the theme and a desire to learn as much as we can.



A LONG THE WAY

Those who gather for the day will be people with very rich backgrounds in pastoral service. They will come with an openness to learning whatever they can about the experience of small Christian communities, and they will do that out of a desire to respond as fruitfully as they can to a value that is obviously close to the heart of our community.

My guess, based on what I know about those who will lead the day, is that our presenters will generously share their experience with our group. Further, I expect that they will devote a good part of the time to engaging our pastoral ministers in an analysis of our local needs and resources and in the identification of the next steps we might take together to make our Synod dream a reality.

I have little doubt that we will exit the day with much to think about and with a clearer vision of our opportunities to

strengthen communities, both in their life and in their capacity to serve. In addition to that benefit, we will have had the heartening experience of reflecting on our faith and our pastoral ministry with sisters and brothers who have so much to offer and are so generous in offering it.

A couples of closing notes:

1.) Thanks and congratulations to Father Ed Zenkel and all at St. Thomas Aquinas, Leicester, for the magnificent work they did in the renovation of their church. We gathered to rededicate the church on Sunday, and it was truly a beautiful experience. Such life!

2.) Therese Mack was an elementary school student when I came to Rochester. It has been a joy to watch from a distance as she grew through Our Lady of Mercy High School and the State University of New York College at Geneseo. The joy was extended last evening when Therese, now full-time youth minister at St. Joseph's, Livonia, presented the candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation. As she presented those wonderful young people, her presence and manner said a whole lot to me about Easter life.

3.) Thanks to the men and women who have served on our Diocesan Pastoral Council this year. We had our last meeting of the year on Saturday at St. Mary's, Auburn. We spent considerable time on the Synod. In their usual fashion, the members of the DPC offered thoughtful and constructive counsel for the improvement of our implementation plans. For this significant contribution, for their sacrifice of so many Saturdays, I thank them.
Peace to all.

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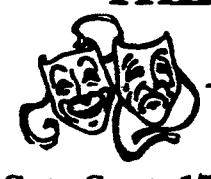
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