

Communities bring joy to weekend

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It was an exhilarating weekend. And it was a deeply contemplative one.

Saturday:

Eleven beautiful young Vietnamese-American women — clad in festive white and gold, and each carrying two bouquets of red carnations — drew us deeply into prayer by means of motion and gesture during the preparation of the gifts at our celebration of the feast of Pentecost at St. Anthony's, Rochester.

That simple but elegant dance was accompanied by a group of musicians and singers who were also young Vietnamese-Americans.

The dance, music and dress of Vietnam were the most evident signs of the diversity of our assembly, but they certainly were not the only ones.

Besides the Vietnamese Catholic community, represented that evening were St. Anthony's Parish, founded originally to serve new immigrants from Italy; and Holy Family Parish, founded to serve men and women who came from Germany.

As we reflected together on the reading from the Acts of the Apostles proclaimed at the liturgy, I became curious about the national origins of those who had come to worship that evening.

I asked how many had been born in a nation other than the United States of America. I knew that there would be some from Vietnam, Italy and Germany. What surprised me very much was the fact that



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there were also people at that celebration who were born in Chile, Poland, Canada, England, Portugal, Korea and Brazil. Ten other nations were represented at the celebration.

Awareness of this kind of diversity among us made more striking the clear and moving way in which the congregation members on Saturday evening joined together in a spirit of joyful worship. There was an easiness and openness about them that gave flesh to the promise of the Scripture reading — that even in our great diversity we can live together in peace if we are open to the spirit.

Sunday:

Thirty bright, confident candidates for confirmation and large numbers of their family and friends gathered at Mount Carmel Church at 11:15 a.m. They came from Mount

Carmel, St. Francis Xavier/Holy Redeemer and St. Michael's. The great majority of these young men and women are from Puerto Rican families, so much of our liturgy was in Spanish.

The morning was radiant. Mount Carmel church has been beautifully renewed; the men and women, boys and girls who gathered were bright and happy. It was truly life-giving and very much a Pentecost gift from the Lord to celebrate the feasts among them.

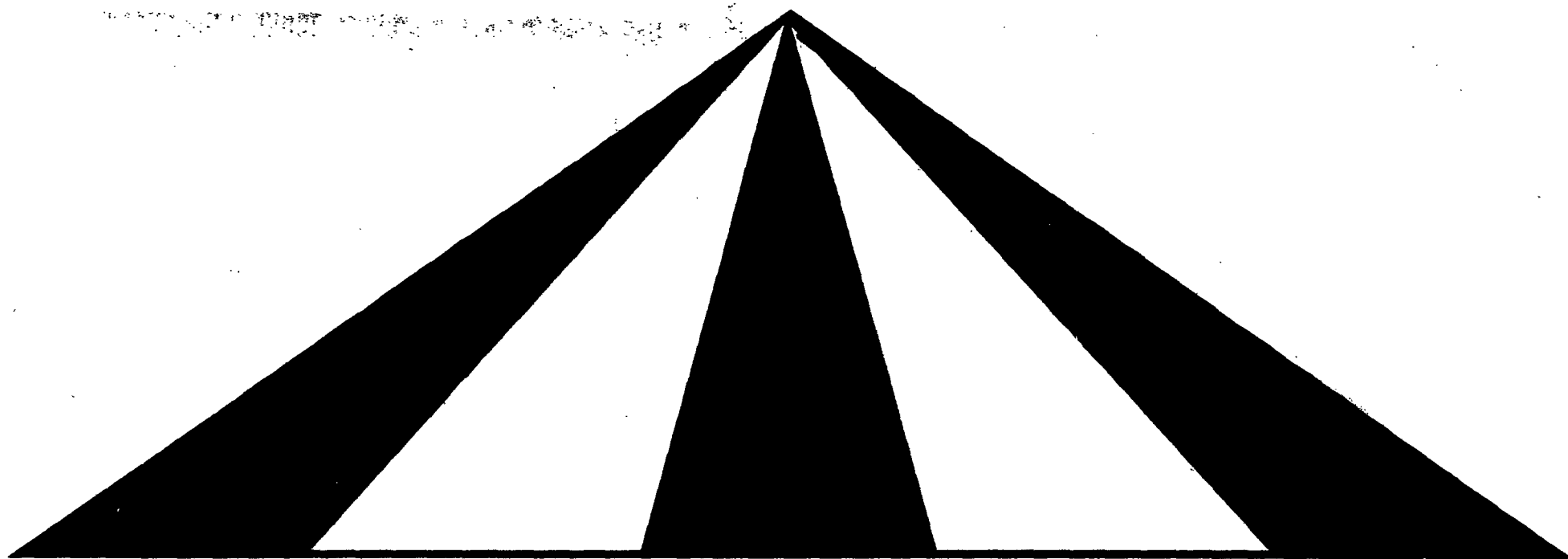
Were the morning celebration not gift enough, I had the privilege later in the afternoon of commissioning 13 catechists of baptism at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church. These men and women are from Puerto Rico and Mexico, and represent the Latino communities of the Brockport and Sodus regions as well as Rochester.

They have gone through a careful and thorough program of preparation and will now be working to prepare young couples for the baptism of their children. In their kind ministry, I know they will do much to encourage the parents with whom they will work and do much to strengthen family life.

I hope I have been able to convey some small sense of how the congregations with which I celebrated Pentecost helped make the feast especially rich for me. The great diversity within them and among them was beautifully evident. So was evidence that they had been drawn deeply together through the power of the Holy Spirit, active in their lives.

My thanks to those communities for the joy of the weekend.

Peace to all.



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