

Letter writers share signs of hope

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

In my last pre-vacation column I named and reflected briefly on what I see as signs of hope in and for our local church. They were in brief:

1. our Synod experience;
2. the generosity of our people;
3. the good things happening in youth ministry;
4. your willingness and ability to deal with the real issues facing us;
5. your concern for life and justice; and
6. your respectful openness to one another.

At the conclusion of that column, I raised some questions for your consideration, invited you to reflect on them and, if you so desired, to share your reflections with me in writing.

My questions were: Are you hopeful? About life? About our church and its mission? If so what leads you to be hopeful? As promised in that June column, I share with you the thoughtful and varied responses you sent in to me:

- "...you are right, and it is true, there are many indications of change, and where there is change there are always signs of hope."
- "...outpouring of help and prayers for the Rwandans and others suffering throughout the world ... for refugees in our midst."
- "...Social Action Network, the County Drug Task Force, Neighborhood Watch, the July Rochester Challenge Against Violence, Klan Watch, Amnesty International, Pax Christi, Common Cause ..."
- "And in the little things. Come to think of it, they're not so little. In Willie. I hadn't seen him in months, ever since he promised



A LONG THE WAY

to enter intensive drug rehab. He showed up ... 'to see the little lady who keeps my name on the kitchen table.' It's still there Willie and I continue to pray for you each day ... and so does Sister. ... Are you clean? 'Yes, thank God! And I got me a job.' ... Big smile and a hug and a kiss. Last Monday he showed up on his day off just to say hello."

- "... our parish ... the wonderful family atmosphere under the loving care of our pastor and his staff."
- "... in our RCIA ... never have we seen so many newcomers! Of course there is HOPE! I hope you can read my writing."
- "... flowers never cease to amaze me ... the ocean waves keep rolling in; only God could create such vast, refreshing, cleansing wonder."
- "the discoveries people make about themselves through their darkest times, the challenges people tackle, the immense success of their work."
- "... Bishops Matthieson and Gumbleton

and two others who 18 years ago went public over their pacifism ... gave birth to the pastoral letter on peace. ... Now Tom is on his way to Haiti as I write this and there is so little hope in that land. ... I hope that his goodness will be a credible witness to enough people in power that something will change..."

- "... the Spring '94 Convocation of Clergy to which other members of pastoral teams were invited gives me great hope."
 - "... the recent Small Christian Communities conference where parish leaders were encouraged to access everything we do in parish in the light of helping people connect faith with life gives me great hope..."
 - "... Sister Ann Michelle serving as Pastoral Administrator of a parish, truly a sign of our times when women's gift for spiritual leadership is celebrated."
 - "... an early morning run with the cool air and a sunrise! Even better - a run with a friend."
 - "... a friend celebrating another year of recovery."
 - "... our senior Sisters whose stories and lives of prayer are real signs of hope."
- I hope this gives you a good sense of those realities that bring hope to the hearts of our sisters and brothers who were kind enough to share their reflections. And I hope their kindness encourages you continually to find the Lord's gift of hope in your life.

This weekend we'll gather for our Diocesan Youth Convention at the State University of New York College at Geneseo. I look forward to it with great joy and ask you please to pray for its success and the peace and safety of all involved.
Peace to all.

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