

# Improving communication a challenge

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

When I mentioned to you in a recent column that I wanted to work on improving communications within our Roman Catholic community, I was picking up on a theme that emerged very strongly in our Synod process. In that experience, it became evident frequently and in many different ways that good communications are a continuing challenge to us.

One example of that fact was the great number of instances in which participants suggested the initiation of a particular service or ministry, only to discover that the service or ministry in question already exists.

Another example was the displeasure participants expressed about decisions that have been made and the processes that led to those decisions. We discovered frequently enough that, when we learned of these individuals' concerns and were able to provide information they had not had, they felt much better about the decisions and the processes that led to them. And I am certainly grateful for the opportunity our Synod has afforded us to share a great amount of information about the life of our church with great numbers of people in all parts of our 12-county diocese.

But beyond the special opportunity the Synod has afforded for the transmission of a substantial amount of information, it has challenged all of us in the Catholic



## A LONG THE WAY

community to think about the ways in which we relate to one another.

I mean that in a very positive way. To me, the Synod has been a blessed process in large measure because of the commitment made by the vast majority of participants, both to speak and to listen to one another with reverence and respect.

Those beautiful qualities in the people of this diocese certainly pre-existed the Synod. There is no question about that. But I have a sense that our strong experience of them within the Synod process helped bring us to deeper levels of common understanding and purpose. And based on that I have great confidence that our parish communities, and our diocesan ministries in support of them, will implement our Synod in a way that will help us come to deeper life

together.

In that spirit I hope we will all continue to make every effort to engage in the kind of honest and trusting conversations that respect the dignity of all participants and increase the likelihood that the decisions we make and the directions we take will truly be guided by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, be life-giving good for our community of faith.

Last week I asked you to pray for the participants in the 11 regional meetings to be held on October 1. They will be reviewing a draft of our diocesan plan for implementation of our Synod at the parish level. This week let me renew that request and add the request that you include among your prayers the prayer around which we have gathered all through the process:

### A Synod Prayer

Loving and gracious God  
open our minds, inspire our wills,  
guide our actions, draw us into one,  
and support our faith.

Grant your people the grace to discover  
your gentle love in one another, and  
in this discovery, help us discern your will.  
When we struggle, help us to be hopeful.  
When we speak, inspire us to be kind.  
When we decide, grant us patience and  
understanding.

When we pray, create peace within us.  
In all we do, help us labor to renew your  
church.

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Thanks. Peace to all.

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