

Diocese humming with activity

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

High in my mind on this Monday evening are the wonderful experiences I have had of the people of our local church over the past three days — on Saturday of the Yates-Ontario-Wayne regional Synod meeting held at St. Mary's, Canandaigua; on Sunday of young men and women who gathered at St. John of Rochester, Perinton, to receive the Hands of Christ award; this evening of men and women from parishes in Chemung and Schuyler counties who have assembled to assist with this year's Thanks Giving Appeal.

A word about each:

1.) The Synod: I have enjoyed every step of our Synod experience. At each step, notwithstanding the snags that are a part of every big project, the process has been blessed by the good-hearted participation of the people of this diocese.

And so, when I drove to Canandaigua on Saturday, I was looking forward to the Synod meeting with enthusiasm. I was confident that it would be fine. What I experienced exceeded even my high expectations. As I made my rounds of the table discussions I found myself genuinely touched by what I experienced. People were honest, attentive, thoughtful in their speech and respectful in their listening.

When representatives of each table came to the microphone to share their group's comments on the draft pastoral plan, they demonstrated a good grasp of the plan's design and intent, and made excellent suggestions for its improvement. All that I have heard of the other 10 meetings held on Saturday indicates that they too were of high quality.

I look forward to Wednesday evening when we meet to review the materials from Saturday's meetings and begin the process that will yield the final version of our pastoral plan in support of our parishes' implementation of the Synod.

2.) Hands of Christ: Each year we invite our parish communities to nominate young men and women who are going into their senior year in high school to receive the Hands of Christ award.



A LONG THE WAY

The award is intended to recognize and encourage those young people whose love for Christ and their faith shows itself in service to others.

Each year we invite those nominated to come together with family and loved ones to a special celebration at which they receive the award. The setting for the celebration has changed as the years have gone by. At first the awards were presented at Bishop's Day for Youth. In recent years we have celebrated the event at Sacred Heart Cathedral in the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

This year, in response to the growing popularity of the event, we are having two celebrations — the first last Sunday at St. John's, and the second this Sunday at St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads.

Sunday's celebration filled St. John's to overflowing with young people who would make your heart sing and with parents, family and friends who, like me, could not help but be elated by what we experienced. If ever you doubt that we have extraordinary young people active in our parishes, I invite you to come to Horseheads on Sunday. And, if your parish is interested in participating in the Hands of Christ program next

year, be assured that we would love to have you. I recommend it as a wonderful way to encourage high school students and to enliven any parish community.

3.) Thanks Giving Appeal: Is it possible that the TGA is here again? I'm here to tell you that it is. Just tonight Tom D'Agostino, director of the TGA, and I met at St. Mary's in Elmira with pastors and other parish leaders from communities in Chemung and Schuyler counties.

Once again, the event gathered generous, gifted people who gave up an evening to receive information, to ask questions and to make suggestions that will help us adequately to fund the operation of our local church and to give generous, fruitful response to our Synod priorities.

There was an excellent spirit at the meeting this evening as there has been at meetings already held at Auburn, Ithaca and Canandaigua. I believe that is because of Tom's leadership and that of people like those who have gathered at the meeting just mentioned. Working together they have reestablished the essential parish base for the TGA, sharpened its organization and streamlined its procedures.

To all of them goes the credit for the success we realized last year. Their continued commitment founds a real hope that we will do well again. (I should add for the curious reader that we will have TGA meetings for the Monroe area this evening and for the Geneseo region next week!)

By these comments on the TGA I invite you to consider a gift for this year. We would very much welcome and do need your support. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact your parish. Or, if I can be of assistance, please let me know. I'll do my best to get you the information you may need.

My thanks to our Synod participants, congratulations to our friends from the two Hands of Christ celebrations, and sincere gratitude to those who so generously participate in our Thanks Giving Appeal.

Peace to all.

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