

# Relinquishing 'control' offers freedom

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Father Kevin Murphy, pastor of St. John's Church on Humboldt Street, Rochester, dropped by the office this afternoon. It was wonderful to see him so obviously and happily on the way to recovery after a recent health crisis.

During the course of the conversation, Kevin spoke with affection and gratitude about a great many people who have supported him so lovingly during this difficult time. He mentioned among others his sister, Maureen, who helped him in his moment of crisis and who, in his healing time, is good friend and care giver; his niece, Megan, who shares her snacks with Kevin and takes him on secret shopping missions; the members of the pastoral team at St. John's, who have been so generous in their support and service; the people of St. John's, whose messages of affection and gratitude have been strength for the healing process; the doctors and other health-care professionals who have treated him with such skill and consideration; his brother priests, who have been so attentive; a neighboring minister who telephoned Kevin and offered to do his hospital calls for him.

As he spoke about so many who have been good to him during these trying days, he did so with great joy in his voice and in his eyes. I had the impression



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that, while Kevin certainly would never choose illness for himself or wish it on anyone else, this recent experience has yielded some insights and awareness that are very precious to him.

Besides being delighted to see Kevin on his feet again, I was also delighted with his visit because his words helped me with a couple of the themes I have been thinking about during this time of preparation for the Christmas feast.

I have been trying to understand better what a precious gift each day is to us. To hear someone who has literally been to the edge of life talk about theme is to be encouraged never to stop looking for the good and the hopeful even in the most painful and difficult of circumstances.

It has also been a part of my Advent quest to have a better sense of proportion in my life and a more acute awareness of the relative importance of matters that claim my attention.

My conversation with Kevin reminded me that we do not have total control over life — or even health. And it helped me to realize that once we acknowledge our lack of control and surrender it to God, then we're much less likely to feel the need to control anything else or any other person. There are seeds of freedom in that realization and the promise of great peace.

Kevin's words brought to mind other people I've known — and do know now — who remain loving, expansive and concerned for others even when they are asked to deal with life's harsher realities.

The witness of those courageous people, the goodness of all those who in recent weeks have lent Kevin their strength, and Kevin himself all push me toward a deeper understanding of the Christmas event. At the moment I would put it this way:

The Christmas feast tells us not: "Rejoice! All things are as they should be."

It says rather: "Rejoice! Great things are possible if we work together in mutual respect for the common good of the human family."

Peace to all.

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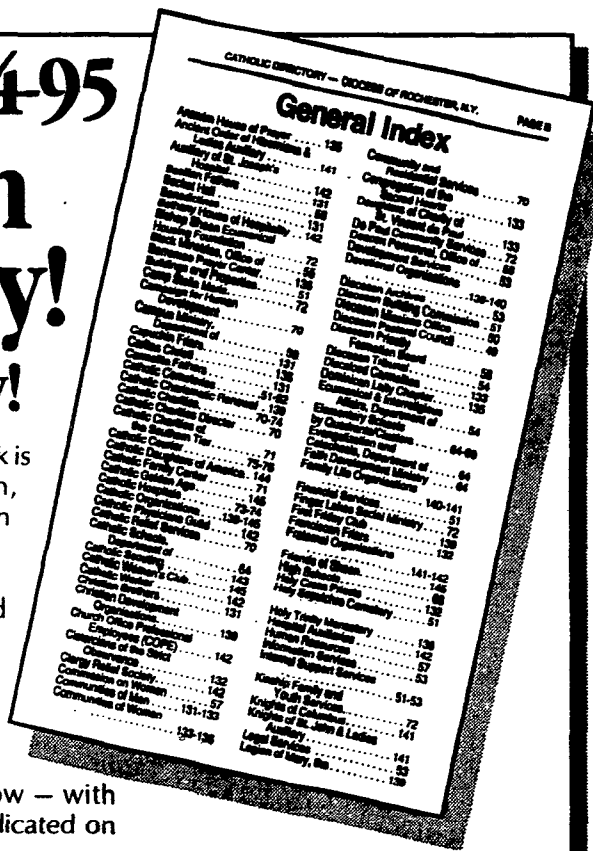
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