

Holy Week provides joy, challenge

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

The joy of these days of Holy Week is the opportunity they afford to appreciate Jesus' love for us, and the depth of that love as manifest in his death on the cross and in his resurrection from the dead. Our celebrations invite us to be in touch with his strong, compassionate humanity and, in that, to appreciate more deeply the intimate union he enjoys with the God he calls his Father.

And so in a spirit of prayer we will re-experience and celebrate his utter goodness in the face of all the chaos, confusion and ugliness he encountered in those days. We'll see him with Peter, Mary, Judas, John, Herod, Mary of Magdala, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, those who crucified him, those with whom he was crucified, and the many others whom he met along the way.

Our joy and our challenge will be truly to open our hearts to all of it, to let it speak to and give direction to the reality of our lives. It's a joy because any encounter with the love of God yields new life for us. It's a challenge to most of us, I think, because so many other interests and concerns clamor for our attention. What can make it doubly difficult is



A LONG THE WAY

that so much that claims our time and energy is pretty important stuff.

I'd like to encourage you to be aware in a particular way during these days of Holy Week that Christ's desire for all of us is that we share fully in his victory over death, that we be fully alive within ourselves and fully open to life all around us. We can easily equate holiness with a style of life that removes us from life's daily routine and cares so that we might find God. But for most of us, most of the time, we grow in holiness as we become more aware of God's loving presence in the daily events, relationships and circumstances of our lives. — much as Jesus became more deeply

united to the Father in and through the events that led to his death on the cross.

If it is at all possible for you to participate in the public worship of the community this week, I most certainly encourage you to do so. Your presence will be a gift to the community, and, I am confident that you will be the richer for having been with them.

But, if you for whatever reason are not able to do that, please know that you can still participate richly in Christ's love through your own prayer and through your alertness to God's presence in life's ordinary realities.

Before I conclude, I want to express my sincere thanks to you for your continued support of my mother in her illness. Your prayers and support mean a great deal to her as they do to me, my sister and the whole family. I am happy to tell you that Mom is back in her own home and quite happy to be there. She doesn't yet move at her customary fast pace but, I assure you, she is presiding over the family with her usual wit and good spirit. She is among those who will not be able to join the community for Holy Week's celebrations but who will be one with us in celebration of the mystery of Christ's love.

Happy Easter, and peace to all.

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