

# Readings remind us of Lord's mercy

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

As I sit down to write on this radiant Easter morning, I remember the joy of the Easter vigil last evening here at Sacred Heart. At that moving celebration, 16 men and women received the Sacraments of Initiation and were admitted into our community of faith. It was a joy to be with them as they came to a moment that meant so much to them and for which they had been preparing for so long.

During our vigil, I remembered the ways our parish communities had supported their candidates for the Easter sacraments with affectionate prayer all through their time of preparation, and especially during Lent.

In my travels around the diocese during these weeks, I had participated in the prayer and sensed the affection. That experience made it clear to me that the prayer and affection were offered not only by the community to the candidates, but were returned by the candidates in abundant measure to those who had so generously supported them along the way.

Those beautiful bonds came to be and were nurtured in the process that led our candidates to the Easter vigil. In that process they met with the men and women who received them in the name of the community. Together they studied and prayed, posed their questions and raised their doubts, told of their faith ex-



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perience as it had thus far unfolded, and shared their hopes and dreams for the future.

At the Vigil we all had a sense of the holiness of these candidates, of the sacredness of their stories and of our call to continually support them with affectionate prayer as they enter more deeply into the mystery of new life in Christ.

I am deeply grateful for the reminder Easter offers to all of us that we are precious in the sight of the Lord. For this reason I look forward to the readings of the Easter season. They are filled to overflowing with examples of the tender compassion the Risen One shows to us and of the gentle mercy He so freely and abundantly makes available to us in our moments of deepest need.

Think, for example, of the stories that take place in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus, by the lake side and in the public square.

They are stories of sins forgiven, hopes reborn, courage renewed and faith strengthened. And they are stories that, when retold in faith, bring us the same gifts today.

One of the challenges that comes with these good gifts is the call to bear witness to the One who gives them all. I find myself deeply encouraged in this vocation by the way in which so many in our community gave strong faith witness to the men and women received into the church at the Easter vigil.

If we asked them how they did it, I suspect that they would be quick to tell us that they did nothing spectacular or extraordinary.

Rather, they would speak about being willing to share their own search for and discovery of God, about honoring the stories of others, about quiet service, about openness to the living Spirit of God, and about the joy one knows in friendship with Christ.

As we move into this season of new life in Christ, I hope that we will know our call to give witness to Him not as a burden but as a great joy. I believe we will do that if we are aware of all that is good and beautiful within us and are willing to share those good gifts with our sisters and brothers.

Peace to all.

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**Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)**  
Vol. 106 No. 29 April 20, 1995

Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.  
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Second-Class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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