

# Priest's mourners share sadness and joy

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Many in our community are still reeling from our painful, stunning loss of Father David Mura last week. His death, much out of due season by human measure, leaves a void in our presbyterate and a sadness in the hearts of thousands of persons whose lives he touched during his years of ministry.

That sense of sadness was in evidence at the Liturgy of Christian burial celebrated for Dave at Holy Apostles Church on Saturday morning. There were tears in the eyes of many and, even where tears were absent, one just knew that people were engaged in the difficult work of absorbing the reality of David's death and dealing with the grief it carried.

But to speak of the grief is to tell only one part of the story. We also shared the joy of laughter, spirited song and happy reunion with old friends. All of that might have happened in any case because those who gathered share a deep and lively faith that through baptism we are joined to the dying and rising of Jesus the Christ.

But I am also quite sure that there was a joyful aspect to the gathering because Dave made it abundantly clear by the way he lived his life that he wanted it that way. Father Peter Bayer reminded us of that in his beautiful homily. The music group that so enhanced our prayer that day was another reminder of that joy, as were the many men and women, boys and girls who came bearing symbols that reminded us all of the



## A LONG THE WAY

clown ministry so dear to David's heart.

Now, two days after the liturgy, I think of David's mother, Helen Raymond, and her husband, Bill; of his brother and sisters and their spouses and children. One can never know completely what is present in the hearts of those who grieve. But I had a strong sense that Dave's family members were much comforted both by the tears and the laughter of those who gathered with them in such great number to commend David to the mercy of God.

My fond hope and prayer for them all is that they will continue to draw comfort from the memory of that assembly and, that when they remember, it will remind them that David's life and ministry made a big difference to many people and that he will be

sorely missed.

As I try to take this reality to heart in my own life during this Easter season, I am more aware than I normally would be that life does not come to a standstill while we pray to understand the mystery of God's love for us as manifest in the dying and rising of Jesus. Rather, we are invited to contemplate that great gift while life — messy and jarring as it can be — swirls around us.

The death of a loved one is an especially vivid example of that. Witness the death of David. But the aftermath of his funeral leaves me thinking about the quieter, daily, sometimes boring ways in which we are called to die to ourselves so that we find deeper life in the Risen One.

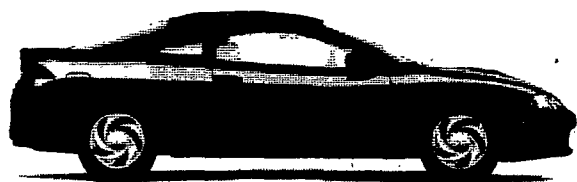
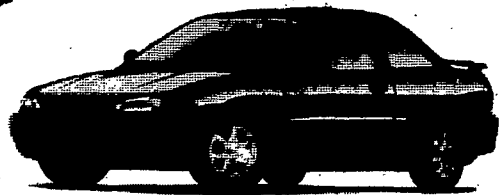
While I try to look at those invitations in my own life and consider the generosity or lack thereof in the way I respond to them, I leave you with the thought that such activity may be one of the ways we can best honor the memory of David or of others who are called to fullness of life.

You are probably as aware in the reading as I am in the writing that this is the third time in 1995 I have written about beloved brother priests who have been called home at an early age. Without wanting to back away from what I have written above about living in the Paschal Mystery, and certainly not wanting to be presumptuous, I encourage you to join me in an earnest prayer to God that it will be a good while before we have to go through the experience again.

Peace to all.

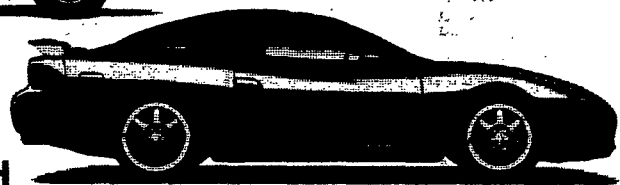
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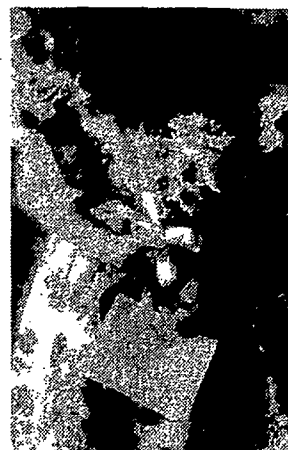
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