

Summer vacation offers chance to reflect

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Even though I enjoy writing "Along the Way" each week, I am happy to tell you that this will be my last column until the August 3 issue of the *Catholic Courier*. I am looking forward to summer vacation and to the opportunity it will afford to sit back a bit and to think about all that has happened in the life of our local church since last summer.

I don't know about you, but I have found that my life is richer and my ministry more effective when I make time to stop, think through and pray about the events that claim my attention day after day. When I don't do that, I miss the deeper meaning of things, and my response to them becomes correspondingly more shallow.

Before I go, a few end-of-the-year comments:

- Congratulations to all of our new high school and college graduates. I hope that the next stage of your life will make you more aware than ever of your dignity and goodness. I hope also that our community of faith will continue to enjoy the gift of your presence in our life and activity.

- I didn't know there were so many cranks among us! Thanks to all who wrote or spoke to me about last week's column, which dealt with feeling out of sorts and what we do when we feel that



A LONG THE WAY

way.

- To all sisters and brothers who will soon be taking up new pastoral assignments, I express my very best wishes. We all know that new beginnings are exciting. But we also know that transitions of this kind can be sensitive both for the pastoral ministers and for the communities receiving them. My encouragement would be to trust your ability and experience and to spend lots of time learning the story of your new community.

- To our communities that will be welcoming new pastoral ministers this week, I extend the invitation to read the paragraph above! To those words I add the encouragement to be open to the experience, talents and gifts your new pas-

toral minister brings to your community. They will not be just like the individuals they are replacing. That may be a challenge for some, which is understandable. But I hope it will be an opportunity for all to remember the diverse, sometimes surprising ways in which God gives us life.

- Your continuing interest in my five gorgeous nieces encourages me to tell you that the youngest of them, Kathleen, graduated from Waterford-Halfmoon High School last weekend. I have always thought of Kathleen as among the more delightful inhabitants of the planet. At this writing, I am not certain of her plans for the future. I am certain that whatever she puts her mind to, she will do very well and, in the doing, she will bring brightness and laughter to many.

- My earliest vacation move will be to the West to pay a visit to my grandniece, Julie Katherine Neff, who is now 132 days old. To watch someone that age grow and develop I find to be a privileged window to the mystery of life. I am grateful to Jane and Scott for so warmly making that privilege available to me.

- This is the 47th column in this year's series. Thanks for reading "Along the Way" and for your helpful comments. They mean a lot to me. If over the summer YOU think of ideas for future columns, I would be happy to hear about them.

Peace to all.

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