

Parish visit provides encouragement

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I had the great pleasure of spending last weekend at St. Anne's Parish on Mount Hope Avenue in Rochester. It was a joy to be with that community.

The weekend began with the Saturday evening rededication of their renewed church, and concluded Sunday afternoon with a solemn evening prayer during which we blessed the parish's magnificent new pipe organ.

The importance of music at liturgy has been a pastoral emphasis of the pastor, Father Frank Lioi, during his years of ministry at St. Anne's. Judging by my experience during this recent visit, I would say the parish community has responded to his leadership with generous enthusiasm.

I refer certainly to their investment of time, energy and funds that yielded the new pipe organ. But I refer also — perhaps, especially — to the active, spirited participation of those who gathered for worship during the course of the weekend.

I found their lively self-gift to the Lord and to one another during those beautiful acts of worship to be a source of great strength and encouragement.

As I look back over that experience on this Monday afternoon, I would name two of the ways in which I drew encouragement from my visit with the people of St. Anne's. The first is the way they confirmed in me the conviction that the



A LONG THE WAY

liturgical renewal to which the church continually calls us is not only desirable but possible.

Such renewal does not come without work, study, patience or, often enough, the investment of financial resources. Nor is it ever achieved once and for all.

But I am sure that the people of St. Anne's would be quick to tell you that in the process they have grown in faith and in their appreciation of what it means to be a parish family in service of the kingdom.

Our liturgy well celebrated inevitably makes us more lovingly aware of one another and of our shared vocation vessels of compassion, signs of hope in all aspects of our daily living.

The second encouragement I drew from the experience at St. Anne's was from the gift of music. As I sang, listened to others sing and enjoyed the glorious voice of the organ, I remembered experiences in my life that were broadened and deepened by music.

I thought, for example, of the songs our family sang to my mother as she lay dying. I thought of a summer afternoon in Paris 35 years ago when a group of Greek students invited all who came by to join their circle of dance and song. I thought of the music that welcomed me to this diocese when I was installed as bishop.

Music can reach places that words cannot touch. Music moves us beyond the things that can divide us from one another to the deeper realities of things that must unite us. Music conveys hospitality, welcome and a sense of belonging.

Be comforted if your singing voice is no better than mine. Fine tonal quality and strong register are not what I am talking about. I'm talking about the song we sing to the Lord in the way we treat one another, especially in the way we treat those who are different, or who disagree or whom we find disagreeable.

I'm grateful to the people of St. Anne's for their music. As we worshiped, together they reminded me that we all have a song to sing and they encouraged me to sing my own song as best I can.

Peace to all.

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