

Marge Nurnberg made room for all people

In last week's *Catholic Courier* you read about the death of Marge Nurnberg, who for many years served as Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for our diocese.

Marge had a remarkable impact on the lives of a variety of people. I was aware of that impact while she was active in her ministry. I came to appreciate that impact the more deeply at the time of her retirement, when her friends, co-workers and representatives of the ecumenical and interfaith communities spoke of their respect and affection for her.

Last Saturday, at a memorial Mass for Marge at her home parish, St. Patrick's, Elmira, people once again spoke in warm and grateful terms about the goodness of her life and the strength of her legacy. I appreciated their words because I, too, have tried to understand at a deeper level the special gift that made Marge so special to me and to so many others.

Marge certainly had a vision that allowed her to see every individual, no matter who he or she was, as a child of God and therefore as a member of the human family. And, although she was realistic about the issues that could di-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

vide person from person and community from community, she had a holy impatience that impelled her to remind us of the better things to which the God of us all so patiently calls us.

What helps me most to understand Marge and draw from her strength is the realization that in the embrace of her beautiful spirit there was room for everyone. She was very bright and deeply sensitive, so I doubt that she had any trouble identifying the ignoble or the less-than-perfect in her sisters and brothers.

But Marge didn't waste her precious gifts in that way. Rather, she focused her considerable energy on helping us to identify our deepest God-given possibilities and encouraging us to realize and to share them with others.

I am particularly grateful for the

memory of Marge at this time of the year. With her there was room in the inn for everyone. There were no aliens in her life, only guests; no strangers, only new friends; no haves and have-nots, only a diversity of gifts in a variety of people.

With our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, she believed passionately that none among us is so poor as to have nothing to give and none among us is so rich as to have no need for the gifts of others.

This memory of this wonderful woman is a great gift to me during the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season. She reminds me of the wonderful things that can happen when we, like Mary, Our Mother, and Marge, our friend, open our hearts in hospitality to the divine initiative. When that happens we experience the love of Christ in our hearts. We also have the privilege, as they did, of sharing that gift with others.

I hope that this beautiful season finds you lovingly aware of people like Marge whom you know. They do so much to make our celebration come to life.

Merry Christmas and peace to all.

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