

# An invitation to consider some key values

A few weeks ago I included our diocesan mission statement in *Along the Way* and asked you to put it on your refrigerator door or family bulletin board so that, over the course of time, you might become familiar with it.

I did so because the statement, if faithfully followed, will lead us on the way to a rich and deeply rewarding Catholic life. Since then I have seen the statement in many places and wish to thank you for your willingness to make it more a part of your awareness.

This week I would like to return your attention to another piece of work that emerged from our Synod process. I refer to the list of values judged by participants to be so important as to be worth saving as permanent, encouraging guides in all of our future work.

In the paragraphs that follow, I will name these values and offer a brief comment about each. I invite you to think about what each of them means to you in the particular circumstances of your life. Further, I ask you to consider specific ways in which you, your family and friends, your parish community and any other interested parties you may think of might bring these values to life in our local church.

**1. To be a collaborative church:** We are to be a community which encourages all of its members to participate as fully and actively as they possibly can. We know that we are the richer when people feel welcome among us and when they know that with us they can both offer their gifts and enjoy the kindness of others. We want the relationships of our communities one to the

## along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

other to be characterized by a similar spirit of openness and mutuality. This value reminds us that to be Catholic means to be open to the other in a communion of life.

**2. To call forth lay leadership:** Our local church in this value recognizes in a concrete way the profound dignity of the baptized. We acknowledge and accept our call to be a priestly people, growing together in the love of Christ and sharing the treasure we bear with others through the words and works of our daily lives. In our acceptance of this baptismal vocation to worship and to service we embrace our call to be salt and light for the transformation of the world.

**3. To utilize fully the richness of our diversity:** We are aware that we are all children of the God of life, and that all of humanity is embraced in the love of Christ. But we also know that such destructive forces as racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, ultra-nationalism and economic exploitation can rip us apart. We accept our diversity as an opportunity to recognize the wonderful ways in which God communicates life; and, we will actively oppose ideologies which demean or in any way deper-

sonalize our sisters and our brothers.

**4. To be open, trusting and respectful in our dialogue with one another:** The unity to which Christ calls us is both his gift and our work. To be one is not born of pious wish, nor is it fairly equated with everyone else coming around to my way of seeing things. Rather, this unity is the fruit of all of us honestly seeking the truth to which the Spirit of Christ would lead us in a given situation. By adopting this value we say that we are more interested in coming to life-giving truth than in winning arguments. We know that disagreements will occur but we will not allow them to drive us apart.

**5. To engage in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and cooperation:** Our conviction is that because we are all children of God we all participate in the truth of God and, therefore, we can and should always be willing to learn from one another. Neither smugness nor disdain has any place in our disposition toward other religious traditions. Instead, we wish to recognize and celebrate the many things we hold in common, to work together whenever possible for the common good.

I hope you will agree that these values are worthy of serious consideration and strong effort. We will make progress only with the grace of God. But we do need to bring to this work our honest commitment, a fair measure of patient perseverance and a healthy capacity to smile at our foibles and those of our neighbors.

Please accept my very best wishes for a happy New Year.  
Peace to all.

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