

Family, marriage celebrations bring joy

I am quite excited this afternoon about the prospect of a visit this evening with my niece Jane Neff, her husband Scott and their beautiful little daughter, Julie. (If you think my description of Julie smacks of undue avuncular pride, let me tell you that as unbiased a witness as her Aunt Grace describes Julie as "the perfect little female." So you will agree, I am sure, that my assessment is quite measured and reasonable!)

It's a joy under any circumstances to visit that new family. But two special factors make this evening's visit a cause for extra delight. The first is that it will be a celebration in anticipation of Julie's first birthday, which is Feb. 14. The family will gather this weekend for the official and plenary celebration of that wonderful event. I'll be unable to make that party, so I welcome the opportunity to extend my hugs and greetings to my beautiful goddaughter this evening.

The second reason for happy anticipation of tonight's celebration is that it will be my first visit to Jane and Scott's new home. They recently moved to Corfu and, although they are knee-deep in the challenges of organizing their new home, are very happy about everything. I can't wait to see their new place because I have heard it is quite lovely. But I

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



must confess that, however attractive their home might be, the greatest pleasure for me will be to be in the company of the three Neffs and to be warmed by the happiness they share.

Earlier today I was speaking with Jim (Bud) and Mary Heuther from St. Helen's Parish, Rochester. They had come to the Pastoral Center to talk with their nephew and my priest secretary, Father Paul Tomasso, about their 50th wedding anniversary, which they will celebrate in June.

In the course of our brief conversation I was deeply impressed by the joy and enthusiasm they bring to their jubilee. I am reasonably sure that the sources of their joy and enthusiasm are their love for one another and their family, their faith and the memories of all that they have experienced together for half a century. Being with Mary and Bud, even for

so short a time, made me doubly grateful for the happy start that Jane and Scott have experienced — and deeply hopeful that one day they too will be planning their own 50th anniversary celebration. (I'll need to honor that occasion in advance too. While I do hope for a long life, 106 years may be too many to ask for!)

These few comments about two married couples make me mindful that we will be honoring those celebrating marriage jubilees at two upcoming diocesan celebrations. The first is on Feb. 18 at Church of the Assumption, Fairport; the second will be April 14 at St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads.

I am happy that we are renewing this practice in our diocese and am quite delighted at the favorable response we have received to it. My hope is that these gatherings will help our jubilarians to remember and celebrate the years in joyful fashion.

I hope further that they will remind us to pray for married couples and for those now preparing for marriage. It is a beautiful and rich vocation, but it is demanding. Those who live it make proper claim on the prayer and support of the community.

Peace to all.



(Left to Right): Amy Sundstrom and Kim Parks

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 107 No. 20 February 15, 1996

Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Second-Class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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