

Bishop wanted 'adult' fast - with milkshakes

In these very early days of Lent, I want to express to you and to all the people you love my very best wishes for a holy and life-giving season.

As I drove around the city this morning, I was thinking about the Lents of my childhood and about what we did in those early years to prepare for the Easter feast. In the course of my remembering, two things we did to observe Lent came back to me rather strongly. One was going to the Stations of the Cross at our parish church every Friday afternoon after school. The other was giving up our cherished trips to the Lyric Theater for Saturday matinees from Ash Wednesday until after Easter.

We did other things, of course. In earlier years we gave up candy for Lent. In some of the later years we went to Mass every day, and I remember trying one year to do as close to an adult-type fast as I could all through the season. We had discussions, typical of the day, about whether Sunday "counted" when it came to Lenten sacrifice.

And, one year, when I was attempting a really grown-up kind of fast I remember seeking the good counsel of one of my religion teachers about whether or not drinking milkshakes broke the fast. Solid food was out. Liquids were acceptable. What about milkshakes? Solid or liquid? Acceptable when fasting or not? I wanted to know!

Wise woman that the sister was, she sensed that my question arose less from intellectual curiosity than from an ill-con-

along the way

By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



cealed desire to have my fast and milkshakes too. Her response? That era's equivalent of "get real!" No milkshakes that year.

These practices and the questions that came with them provide fond memories. I know they helped to me learn more about the church and the daily rhythms of its life. They stimulated the development of habits that reminded me to grow in faith and helped me to give my faith concrete expression in my life. They exposed me to the richness of faith in the lives of many people, like Sister, whom I have admired over the years. I am grateful for all of it.

Although I remember the Lenten practices of my youth with fondness and gratitude, I am also deeply grateful for the renewal to which we have been called since then. I say that because the church's renewed appreciation of Lent has made me much more aware than I ever was before of Lent's relationship to Easter. Now I think of Lent first as a time of conversion and preparation for the Easter feast. No longer

do I see it first as a time of personal sacrifice and discipline. Now I think of Lent first as a time when we pray for one another - and especially for our Catechumens - that we will commit or re-commit ourselves to Christ on Easter.

Lent is no longer a primarily personal project carried on without much prayerful consideration of those with whom I was sharing the journey. The longer I am around the more I am convinced that Lent is much more about the fidelity and mercy of God than about the ascetical practices in which we engage to mark the season.

To put that in a different, perhaps more accurate way: If we open our hearts to the mercy and fidelity of God, our openness to those realities will inevitably flow into the acts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving appropriate to our life's circumstances to which we are all still called in a special way during Lent.

Every now and then I hear my contemporaries lament what they describe as a loss of the good old days of "tough, disciplined" Catholicism. I'm not inclined to argue about such things, but I do try to reflect with them on my own experience of Lent years ago and Lent today as I have tried to do in this column. Such reflection leads me to think that, if we honestly open our hearts to conversion and renewal in preparation for Easter, we'll experience no lack of call or opportunity for self-discipline along the way. Peace to all.

MARCH BINGO CALENDAR

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT ■ CALL FOR HOLIDAY CANCELLATIONS

BINGO

SUNDAY

2:00 p.m. ... St. Margaret Mary Church 400 Rogers Parkway, Rochester 716-342-2100
6:15 p.m. ... St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951
7:30 p.m. ... Holy Family Church 899 Jay St., Rochester 716-328-3110
7:30 p.m. ... St. Boniface Church 15 Whalin St., Rochester 716-271-1458
7:30 p.m. ... St. Rita School 1008 Maple Dr., Webster 716-671-1100
7:30 p.m. ... St. Charles Borromeo Church Bingo World, 4419 Dewey Ave., Roch 716-621-9550

MONDAY

7:00 p.m. ... St. Mary Lyceum Hall 15 Clark St., Auburn 315-252-9545
7:30 p.m. ... St. Charles Borromeo Church Bingo World, 4419 Dewey Ave., Roch 716-621-9550

TUESDAY

7:30 p.m. ... St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951
7:30 p.m. ... St. Helens Church Gates Center Bingo, Westmar Plaza 716-235-1210

WEDNESDAY

7:30 p.m. ... Guardian Angels Church 2061 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester 716-334-1412
7:30 p.m. ... Holy Family Home School Assoc. 899 Jay St., Rochester 716-328-4800
7:30 p.m. ... Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church/St. Andrew School, 923 Portland, Rochester 716-226-9458

THURSDAY

7:30 p.m. ... St. Anne Church 1800 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester 716-271-3260
7:30 p.m. ... St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951
8:00 p.m. ... Holy Cross Church 4488 Lake St., Rochester 716-225-8363

FRIDAY

8:00 p.m. ... St. Mark Church 54 Kuhn Rd., Rochester 716-225-3710

SATURDAY

7:30 p.m. ... Good Shepherd Church 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester 716-334-3518
8:00 p.m. ... St. Thomas the Apostle Church 41 Colebrook Dr., Rochester 716-226-2943

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Catholic Press Month

(L-R): Jeanne Morin, Karen Franz, Mary DiPonzio and Lenna Hurley

The administrative staff runs most of what you don't see in the Catholic Courier: the many "behind the scenes" tasks of running a business.

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CATHOLIC COURIER

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By R Staff

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