

Tier catechumen sets example of openness

Each year in the first week of Lent we celebrate the Rite of Election during which, as the name of the rite suggests, we elect those who are to be baptized or received into the church at the Easter Vigil.

This year, we celebrated this beautiful event five times in order to accommodate the numbers to be elected. We gathered on Sunday at St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads; on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at Sacred Heart Cathedral; and on Friday at St. Mary's in Waterloo.

The Rites of Election are always happy celebrations. For those preparing for baptism and for those already baptized, who are to become members of our faith community, there is a freshness to the experience and a generous measure of joyful anticipation. They may come with some understandable nervousness, but when they are warmed by the affection of the assembly that soon passes. And when it does, they are very much alive to and excited about what's happening.

For those of us who have been members of the community for some time, the excitement of our candidates and catechumens is a reminder of the richness and beauty of our faith. They remind us of our call to turn our hearts back to God and to be one with them in their loving

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

preparation for the Easter feast.

As I write these words I think of the very first catechumen named at the celebration in Horseheads. Her name is Molly Graham. I don't think Molly would mind my telling you that she is in her 92nd year.

Ever since she was called and took her place in the sanctuary that day, her example has spoken to my heart. Most of all I think of her openness to life, her trust in God and her freshness of spirit. If God should give me Molly's number of years, I would want to honor the gift in the same way she has.

I don't know how you view such matters, but that theme of staying alive to life has always been of interest to me. I think of Molly today, but 30 years ago I thought about some of the senior priests in my home diocese of Albany. Why were some

of them so enthusiastic about and active in working for the renewal of the church called for by Vatican Council II? Why were others so upset about it and resistant to it?

I don't have any great answers to those questions, much less do I judge any of those men. But I can say that I was much more excited by those open to the renewal than I was by those who seemed threatened by it. To me their openness spoke of a living tradition and creativity and confidence in Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit would guide us.

I hope that you have people like Molly in your life, whatever their age or yours. I refer to people who get you thinking, who make you aware of new possibilities and help you explore them, who challenge you to bring lasting values to today so that we might work to create a tomorrow in which the human family can come to greater life.

If specific individuals come to mind as you consider the question, you might find it a healthy Lenten exercise to connect with them in some fashion — a conversation, a note, a prayer for them. Who knows what further contact like that might say to you about your life and its renewal.

Peace to all.

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