

Church blessed with lively, searching faithful

Last week I had the pleasure of visiting Toronto, having been invited to go there by Father Tom Rosica, CSB, who is a native son of St. Ambrose Parish, an alumnus of Aquinas Institute and a friend of many in this area.

Tom had invited me to speak to his Newman Community about lay spirituality in the North American Church in the years following Vatican Council II. I teased him a bit about inviting a bishop to address that theme, especially one who left the lay state before the council began!

But, tease him though I did, I was grateful for his invitation. His kindness drew me to review our Synod process once again and to remember the rich and abundant ways in which you spoke about spirituality through it all. And, perhaps even more importantly, it allowed a fresh opportunity for me to reflect on the ways I am privileged to observe you living out your faith every day of the year.

Being with Tom and the vibrant community that gathered in Toronto that evening was not the only joy of the trip. I also had the pleasure of visiting St. Augustine's Seminary, where three of our seminarians are preparing for the ministerial priesthood. They are Doug DellaPietra from St. John of Rochester, who with Frank Fusare of St. Anthony's, Elmira, and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore will be ordained on

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

June 1; Peter DeBellis from St. Francis of Assisi, Auburn, who is in his third year of theological studies; and Steve Lape, a second-year student from St. Theodore's, Gates.

It was a pleasure to be with them in the environment in which they have invested so much of themselves. We were able to go out for dinner together and I had the honor of presiding and preaching at their community liturgy on Wednesday evening.

And the timing of the visit had it that I was able to receive from their rector, Father John Boissoneau, the very positive faculty evaluations of all three students. I already knew that they have been very generous in their preparation. I was happy for them and for all of us that their commitment has borne such good fruit.

If the Newman and St. Augustine's communities were not gift enough for the week — and, truly, they were! — I still had the in-

augural East Friday luncheon meeting with the Catholic Leadership Forum. About 70 turned out for the affair. What a gifted, accomplished group of people they are. Being with them made me more grateful than ever to those who worked so hard to organize the event, and more hopeful than ever about our church of tomorrow. We are deeply blessed.

As I look back on those events, I realize how much just the memory of the individuals gathered at them revs me up for our celebration of the mysteries of Holy Week. That's because I could see in the people present in all three gatherings a lively, searching faith.

When they join their communities for Holy Week, they will bring their lives with them and have an awareness that, in the celebration, they will be encountering a God who is alive in the word, the Eucharist and the community. And, I expect, they will try to respond honestly and generously to what the Lord might ask of them.

I am aware that you will read these words no earlier than on Holy Thursday. But whenever you get to them, or they to you, I want them to carry my deep affection for you and my very best wishes for a Blessed Easter. As I ask for your prayers, I assure you that you are in mine every day. Peace to all.

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