

Friendships bring many gifts into our lives

Just a few moments ago I returned from the rectory at Holy Ghost Parish, Gates. Father Alexander Bradshaw, pastor of Holy Ghost, had kindly invited me to join some friends at a dinner party in honor of Father Patrick Barry, OSB; abbot of Ampleforth Abbey, England. When Alexander studied at the Ampleforth School from age 13 to 18, Father Barry — then the headmaster of the school — had a strong and positive influence in his life.

During the course of the evening, I became very much aware that their relationship is important to both of them. They are adults who relate to one another in a mature and engaging way. At the same time, it seemed to me that there is an awareness in both of them of the origins of their friendship.

I sensed in Alexander an abiding gratitude to Patrick for the wisdom and strength Patrick had brought to his life in earlier years. At the same time, I sensed in Patrick a sense of joy that the gifted young man he had worked with so many years ago had become such an esteemed and respected member of the community in which he now lives and works.

As I thought about the events of this evening on the way home, I remembered another experience I had three weeks ago. That was a dinner to benefit the scholar-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

ship fund of my high school, Catholic Central High School in Troy. I was happy to go to the dinner. Indeed, I was looking forward to seeing friends I had not seen for many years.

The fact that I had a wonderful time did not surprise me. What did surprise me was the lasting impact of the evening. Ever since then I have been more aware than ever of the lasting gifts my high school friends gave to me in those years. And the remembering has also prompted me to be deeply grateful for the gift of friends through whom God has given me such blessings in all the years of my life.

I have so much enjoyed remembering friends that I would like to invite you to do the same. I am not inviting you to think about friendship in an abstract sense, important as it may be to do that from time to time. Rather, I am inviting

you to name and spend some time thinking about the people in your life who have ever been friends to you.

If you wish, you can go all the way back to the beginnings of your memory to recall your first friend. And then you may want to track through the years, recalling the people who have been part of your life as friends — where you met them, the strength they brought to your life, the goodness you brought to theirs, why you remain friends to this day or what circumstances led you to drift apart.

How has your understanding of friendship changed over the years? How do you name and account for those changes? Have you been as good a friend to others as you want to be? What has prevented that?

As you think about people you have thought of as best friends over the years, do you think of any gifts of mind, heart and character that they hold in common? If these same people were to gather and were asked what they most treasured about your friendship, what do you think they would say?

It's a wonderful consolation in thinking about friends and a great call to reflection, to remember that Jesus calls us friends.

Peace to all.

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