

Week's events highlight life's spectrum

I had lunch today with our Priests' Personnel Board, whose members conducted their monthly meeting at Sacred Heart at the invitation of Father Tom Mull, board member and pastor of Sacred Heart Cathedral. They are a delightful group, and I enjoyed those moments of leisure with them before they started their meeting and I went back to a project on which I was working.

During the course of the lunch, we spent time talking about their experience of addressing the health-care proxy issue in their parishes this past weekend. All of the pastors at table found it to be a constructive and rewarding endeavor. Many parishioners took home health-care proxy forms and expressed gratitude to their pastors for raising the issue in sensitive and thoughtful ways.

My impression from the luncheon conversation was that a good number of people, who otherwise might never have done so, will soon be designating health-care proxies. Further, I got the sense that parish activity around the issue started lots of people thinking about proxies and related matters.

As you know if you read last week's *Along the Way*, I had not done much more than think about the possibility of designating a health-care proxy until we developed this parish initiative. Last week I told you that the initiative got me thinking about a proxy more seriously than I had ever done

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



and that I had definitely decided to do it. Let me update you by saying that I have the almost-completed designation form on my desk and expect to have the work done by the time I sit to write this column next week.

I had another experience this week that drew my attention to the opposite end of life's spectrum and in doing so made me glad once again that our community of faith is committed to a concern for life at all its stages. The experience was a conversation with my niece, Jane, during which she asked me if I would like to see a sonogram image of the new baby she and Scott are expecting in early May.

As you might guess, I said I would be thrilled to see it. And, indeed I was. It wasn't the first time I had seen a sonogram image, but it was the first time that I remember being so touched by what I saw. I am sure that there was a note of awe in it for me because, although I never saw an image

of Jane in her mother's womb, I remember Jane from the day of her birth in the midst of the blizzard that ended 1969 and have been delighted to observe her growth in the years since then.

Another part of what so engaged me in the moment was a sense of wonder at the incredible advances made in medical technology and research, advances that hold such incredible possibilities for the health and well-being of people like Jane and Scott and their baby, you and me and the whole human family.

Most of all, I think, the experience offered a special reminder of the mystery that is human life. It spoke to me of its wonder, its strength, its frailty, its potential, its relational quality and its utter beauty. I am grateful to Jane for such a thoughtful gift.

I should add for the more curious among readers that I did not learn from the sonogram the gender of this developing child. Although I do not recall Jane and Scott saying so explicitly, I left their home with the very strong impression that they know but are not volunteering the information to others. That is perfectly fine with me. I would much rather wait for the moment. Besides, I have already told you that my non-scientific but certain conviction is that the new baby will be the seventh- consecutive, beautiful female child born in our family.

Peace to all.



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