

A time of joy, a time of sadness

This week I offer a few comments on the passing scene:

1. Thanks to all who so warmly supported Saturday's Eucharistic Liturgy for Gay and Lesbian Catholics, their families and friends. Our Cathedral was filled to overflowing. The liturgy was spirit-filled and touched by joy. My fond hope is that the gathering brought some healing to people, and that it will continue to stimulate thoughtful conversations about the questions, issues and concerns it raised.

We received many letters prior to the event. It is reasonable to assume that we will receive more now that we have had the experience. When the flow of correspondence ebbs and we have had a chance to review it and respond to it, I will be happy to share with you at least a summary of the input we have received.

2. I am writing on Sunday morning this week. Usually, I write sometime after noon on Monday or, in a real pinch, very early on Tuesday. But I moved the work ahead this week because I am off to Waterford today to preside tomorrow morning at the Liturgy of Christian Burial for my cousin Mary Ann Higgins.

We are all saddened by Mary Ann's death. It came with shocking suddenness and leaves her immediate and extended families saddened by the loss of a person we all loved very much. Mary Ann was warm and kind and full of life. She was a person whose own trials and tribulations — and she had them — never diminished her concern for others.

Mary Ann's husband, Gene, died more than 20 years ago when the younger of their

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

seven children were still in elementary school. Arthritis caused her great pain for years. But when the family gathered, and especially at our huge annual reunion, Mary Ann was always at the center of the laughter and good cheer. When I think about her today I have a strong and clear sense that she was truly a holy woman, a saint, who lived lovingly the nearly 70 years God gave her on this earth.

3. When I leave Waterford after the funeral tomorrow I will drive to Ogdensburg for the Tuesday morning Liturgy of Christian Burial for Bishop Stanislaus Brzana, retired bishop of the Ogdensburg Diocese. The bishop's death, like Mary Ann's, came as quite a shock. I knew that he had been hospitalized for treatment of a balance problem but was completely surprised and saddened by the news of his death.

I know that many people in this area vacation in the beautiful north country of our state and may have met Bishop Brzana on one of their visits. And all who have spent time there prayed for him during the Eucharistic prayer at liturgy.

4. There has been so much going on these days that I cannot write as much as I would like about a number of lively, encouraging events that have been part of my schedule these days: a wonderful celebration of evening prayer at our cathedral in support of persons committed to opposing the destruction of innocent, defenseless life through abortion; the opportunity to speak during the Lenten Mission at St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen/St. Benedict's, Odessa; the luncheon at St. John Fisher College at which we honored the nominees for their new and exciting Service Scholarship program.

This afternoon the events continue. First, at our cathedral, we will honor the Scouting achievements of boys and girls from all parts of our diocese. It is always a joy to be in the presence of such gifted, generous young people, to have the opportunity to honor them, thank them and encourage them in their continued growth. They are a blessing to us now and a beautiful sign of hope for the future.

Between the Scouting celebration and the trip to Waterford I will be stopping at St. John Fisher College again for Mass with the campus community and supper with some of the students. There is nothing quite like sitting down with young people when the agenda is nothing other than what they might want to speak about at the time. There is no limit to what one can learn!

I hope that your Lenten experience has been positive and good. Please continue your prayer for those who prepare for baptism and reception into our faith community at the Easter vigil.

Peace to all.

Just in time for St. Patrick's Day and Easter

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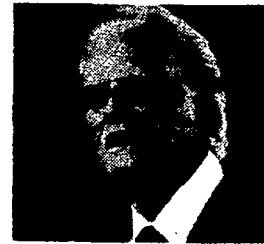
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