

We should listen, leave judgment to God

You know quite well that the Eucharistic Liturgy I celebrated on March 1 at Sacred Heart Cathedral with gay and lesbian Catholics, their families, friends and other interested persons drew quite a bit of attention. Several local media outlets reported it. So did at least two national wire services. That high level of public interest has carried over to many conversations in which I have been engaged since we announced the event and to the notable volume of correspondence I have received since then. In view of that high level of interest, I thought you might like to know more about that reaction.

As of April 15 — and they are still coming in — I had received 426 letters that were written before or after the March 1 liturgy. Of those, 393 or 93 percent were positive about the initiative. The remaining 33 responses, 7 percent of the total, were negative about the event or, at least, expressed reservations about it. I confess to you that I was quite surprised by the overwhelmingly favorable nature of that correspondence. My experience has been that people who are discontent are much quicker to let me know of their reactions than satisfied individuals are. I am told that that trend is by no means the pattern only in the church. I am very much aware that numbers, in matters like this, are of limited importance. But the fact that there was such a dramatic reversal of usual patterns in this instance suggests to me that the event touched sensitive chords in many Catholic people and in other people in the community who took an interest in what we were doing. Further, it indicates to me that we should consider very carefully and learn from what people found positive, encouraging or healing in the event.

Beyond and deeper than the numbers are those positive, encouraging and healing stories and comments persons offered in their letters.

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

Let me give you a sampling of excerpts from those letters. I hope that you will allow them to become food for your own thinking, especially if they raise questions you had not thought of before or if they allow you to consider the issue in question from a different perspective.

"I have never seen the Cathedral so full of people, or so bursting with love and warmth. And I have never heard so many people say how proud they were to be Catholic."

"More and more I realize how inclusive God is — truly a God who wants us to love one another and never do violence to anyone for any reason, whether through neglect, animosity or a rationalized ethic of justifiable violence."

"We have struggled a long time loving our gay sons, maintaining our relationship with them and being faithful to the teaching of the Vatican. Just seeing you come up the aisle in procession said more than words can express. Now we know what Jesus would do."

"... thank you for what you are doing for our gay and lesbian children and friends. Our daughter lives in California because she felt the hatred so strongly here ... and so do we. I've prayed for this day for 15 years."

"Over the years I have come to know the very

real suffering and sense of abandonment among homosexual people and their families, and I am so deeply joyful to see you bringing them close to the community and making such a clear and strong statement of love."

"My younger brother is gay. I would give my life for him; he is, and always will be, closer to me than any member of my family. What I have seen him go through is unspeakable ... the Mass at Sacred Heart will show the Rochester community that all can come together as the people of God and that we can rid our corner of the world of prejudice, injustice and misunderstanding."

I hope that you find these words as moving and thought-provoking as I did. None convey any sense, as did the letters of some critics, that our celebration on March 1 suggested a backing away from the moral norms that call all of us to lead honest, just and loving lives. Rather they looked at themes of inclusion, compassion, respect for the richness of our moral tradition and the privileged place of conscience within that tradition.

They and I recognize the norm that genital sexual activity is to be enjoyed only by men and women who are united in matrimony. But we recognize also that the practice of many individuals, homosexual and heterosexual, falls short of this norm, that circumstances strongly alter the nature of cases and that we are wise to leave the judgment of hearts to the God who knows all about us, our sin included, and yet continually calls us to deeper life.

Such dispositions contribute much to the development of a church environment that allows all of us to accept, support and love one another as we try, even through our sins, faults and failings, to be generous and faithful in our response to God's love for us. Don't we all need that? I think so.

Peace to all.

MAY BINGO CALENDAR

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT ■ CALL FOR HOLIDAY CANCELLATIONS

BINGO

SUNDAY

6:15 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951

7:30 pm Holy Family Church Water Tower Park, Rochester 716-235-0860

7:30 pm St. Boniface Church 15 Whalin St., Rochester 716-271-1468

7:30 pm St. Rita Church *New Location* Knights of Columbus, Barrett Dr., Webster 716-671-1100

MONDAY

7:30 pm St. Jude the Apostle Church 4100 Lyell Rd., Rochester 716-247-4322

7:30pm St. Michael's Church Corner S. Main & Franklin, Newark 315-331-6753

TUESDAY

10:00 am Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Bingo Palace, Rochester 716-467-2725

7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951

7:30 pm St. Helens Church Gates Center Bingo, Westmar Plaza 716-235-1210

7:30 pm St. Francis Xavier 316 Bay St. (School Hall) (716) 288-9700 or 482-3211

WEDNESDAY

7:30 pm Holy Family Home School Assoc. Water Tower Park, Rochester 716-235-0860

THURSDAY

7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951

FRIDAY

7:30 pm St. Margaret Mary Church 390 Empire Blvd., Rochester (716) 482-9770

SATURDAY

12:30 pm Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Bingo Palace, Rochester 716-467-2725

7:30 pm Good Shepherd Church 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester 716-334-3518

8:00 pm St. Thomas the Apostle Church 41 Colebrook Dr., Rochester 716-226-2943

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Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
2461 Lake Avenue, Rochester, NY 14612
716-458-4110

The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

Will you pray for a priest each day?

Jesus' Prayer for His Priests

O Jesus, by Thy most loving Heart, I implore Thee to inflame with zeal for Thy love and glory all the priests of the world, all missionaries and those whose office it is to preach Thy word, that on fire with holy zeal, they may snatch souls from the devil and lead them into the shelter of Thy Heart, where for ever they may glorify Thee.

Imprimatur: E. Morrogh Bernard, Vic. Gen. Westmonasterii, May 5, 1953

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

May, 1997

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
We are obliged to cancel the MPRP Calendar due to a lack of funds. Gratitude to our faithful donors who brought us this far!						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Francis Fusare	Priests on Sabbatical	Leo Dunn, CSsR	William Donnelly	Richard J. Shatzel	Paul J. McCabe	Francis J. McNamara, SJ
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
John T. Walsh	William F. Laird	Albert J. Shamon	Edward Ondrako, OFM Conv.	Sebastian A. Falcone	Austin B. Hanna	Louis A. Vasile
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Pope John Paul II Birthday	Robert L. Collins	Richard J. Orlando	Terence K. Fleming	John L. O'Connor	Peter T. Bayer	Bruce F. Ammering
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Msgr. Joseph A. Cirincione, Ph.B.	Msgr. William M. Roche	C. Richard Nangle	Edwin B. Metzger	Thomas M. Erdle	William Onuh	Peter M. DeBellis

We are truly sorry to tell you, our "prayer-partners for priests", that May is our last calendar. On-going contributions have not been enough to pay its cost. Regretfully for MPRP, Lee Beaudruak & Mary Reilich, 70-A Green Knolls Drive, Rochester, NY 14620-4746