

## Article says much about priest's ministry

Peggy Szczesniak from St. Mary's, Geneseo, kindly sent me a copy of an article on the priesthood Father Bill Gordinier recently wrote for their parish bulletin.

Recent publicity about the damaging activity of a few priests here and elsewhere had prompted several people to ask Bill, "Why would one want to be a priest?" and "Why do you stay in the priesthood?" Bill also submitted the article as a letter to the editors of the *Catholic Courier*, so you can read the full text on page 15 of this edition. But right now I want to share with you the heart of his answer:

"My job as a priest is to build bridges between God and those of his people whom I serve. I do this through the Mass, through the Sacraments, through preaching and teaching, through consoling, through kindness and concern for those people whose care has been entrusted to me. My task is to build bridges between them and God.

"My job is also to build bridges between people whose spiritual care has been entrusted to me ... to link them to each other ... to remind them that they are truly sisters and brothers and should have the care and concern for each other that siblings traditionally have. I must introduce those who don't know each other, I must point out similarities which might link them to each other, I must promote an active spirit of connectedness arising from the common fatherhood of God and from our gathering around the one table of the

### along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

Lord, the Eucharist.

"These are just some reasons why I remain a priest even in the face of my inadequacies, the low esteem in which priests are held these days by many, the suspicions many have about all priests based on the actions of a few. I want to BUILD BRIDGES, bridges between God and people and between people and other people!"

I read the piece with interest and delight because I could tell that Bill's words came from his heart and because his words squared beautifully with the content and spirit of his priestly ministry as I have come to know it in the years I have been privileged to be his bishop.

I am quite sure that all who have known Bill over the years — brother priests, co-workers in ministry, members of communities in which Bill has served — would readily agree that there is a strong congruence between what Bill wrote and the quality of his priestly ministry over his nearly 40 years of his priesthood.

Bill's article interested me for two addi-

tional reasons. First, it led me to think about all of the priests of our diocese and how they might express in writing, as Bill Gordinier did, what they prize about priesthood, how they try to live it out and what keeps them at it when the going gets rough.

It would be fascinating to collect a significant number of those stories and explore both what themes might be common to them all and what distinctive qualities might individualize them. I know that I would find the collection personally enriching, and I suspect that you would too.

Secondly, my reading of Bill's article left me wondering how his approach to and priorities about priestly ministry would correspond or not correspond with your own.

Would you say a loud Amen! to his thoughts as expressed? Or would you want to suggest to him something to be added to his design or an element to be subtracted from it?

And do you think that a cross section of people in your parish would respond as you do?

I raise such questions because I think they are deeply relevant in the context of the pastoral issues that claim our attention these days. I hope that they might get you thinking, praying and sharing the results of those activities with your pastor and the members of your parish community. Such interchange is healthy and will help us make good decisions for the future.

Peace to all.

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