

Try to answer the 'Monday question'

Over the years I have told you some of the questions our children most frequently ask me when I meet with them:

- What should I call you?
- How do you keep that little red hat on your head?
- Why do you carry that big stick?
- What kind of a car do you drive?
- How did you become a bishop?
- Do you like being a bishop?
- Did you ever meet the pope?
- What do you do all day?

Many years ago, my eldest niece, Grace, who was then a very young girl, asked me that last question. After I had given her a fairly detailed and, I thought, age-appropriate response she said, "Oh, thanks. I thought you just sat in a chair and rocked all day."

I thought of Grace's question again at our Junior High Youth Rally at Nazareth College last Saturday. As I was walking along with a young girl she said, "I know you do all kinds of things like this on weekends. But what will you be doing on Monday?"

I thought it was an interesting question because it indicated that this young person intuited that there is more to the ministry of a bishop than participation in public functions.

We both knew that there was not much time available for us to talk about her question at any length. Given that fact, I responded that on most Mondays I spend a good deal of time at my office at our Pastoral Center on Buffalo Road, and that on many Monday evenings I am out for a meeting, a Confirmation or some other public event.

My young friend seemed content with

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

the response. If she had thought previously that I sat in a chair and rocked all day, she didn't say so.

Her question touched an issue to which I give attention, as I am sure you do, in an ongoing way. That is the issue of how to use our time and energy in the best possible way. That question can take many shapes and forms depending on the circumstances of our lives. And it can change for each of us over the course of years.

How can we make a generous, honest effort to meet our responsibilities — to job, family, community, parish — and still recognize and honor reasonably our own legitimate physical and spiritual needs?

What changes should people consider making because they have a new baby or because their wives now work to help make ends meet or because their dads need some added care or because their jobs are no longer secure or because we are not as young as we used to be?

How do we make such shifts and still preserve or even deepen the values, relationships and customs that bring good nourishment to us? What are the implications of the choices we may need to make in order to respond to the changing circumstances of our lives?

"What will you be doing on Monday?" is not a bad question, if it puts us in touch with the freedom and responsibility we have to live constructive, realistic, loving lives for all the years God gives us on this earth.

Because we change continually through the years — because everything around us does, too — we know we need continually to say "yes" to life. Otherwise we stop growing and miss life's joy and vitality.

Had I had more time with my young friend, I could have told her more about my Mondays. For example I might have told her that almost every Monday at noon I meet with Father John Mulligan. He directs the day-to-day operations of our Pastoral Center, and so I meet with him to review the flow of our work.

While no two meetings are exactly alike, it is fair to say that at each of our sessions we review current initiatives, deal with questions that may have come up since our last meeting and do some planning for the future.

I might have told her that I spend time on most Mondays going through the weekly mailing from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and writing "Along the Way."

And I might have added that when I have no outside evening obligations on Monday or have responsibilities close to home, I enjoy our Monday evening pasta suppers with the priests of Sacred Heart Cathedral where I live.

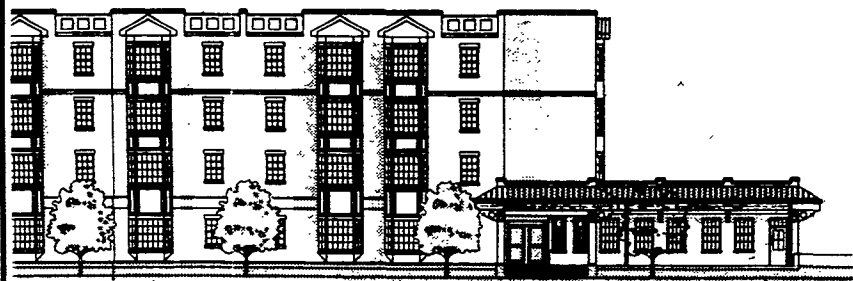
The Monday question is not always an easy one. But it is important. It is good when we can help one another as we deal with it.

Peace to all.

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