

# Youth, vacation put life in perspective

It is good to greet you once again in the pages of the *Catholic Courier*. I enjoyed vacation time and am grateful to all of my co-workers whose generosity made it possible.

As is always the case after such breaks, I am happy to return. Vacations heal and comfort the spirit. They also offer an opportunity to put things in perspective. Doing so always reminds me of how blessed I am to be called to the service of this local church.

In recent years, including this one, the first public event on my post-vacation calendar has been our Diocesan Youth Convention, which is held on the first weekend of August. I had a great time with the more than 500 young people who gathered at the campus of the State University of New York at Geneseo for that wonderful experience.

My programmatic involvement had me offering words of greeting when the convention assembled on Friday evening; conducting two workshops for participants on Saturday afternoon, and presiding and preaching at the Eucharistic liturgy later that day. When not formally engaged I tried to spend as much time as possible with the kids.

And I enjoyed every single minute of it. My only regret this year was that I was not able to stay for the Sunday part of the program. That was because I needed to be with the bishops of our province in Ogdensburg to join the people of that local church as they celebrated the 125th anniversary of their foundation.

## along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

I wanted to be part of the Ogdensburg celebration and thought that it was very beautiful. But I still minded leaving the kids before the convention ended. Even as I write this on Monday morning, I am anxious to get to the office to hear how things went on Sunday.

Several times during the experience at Geneseo I wished that everyone in the diocese could have the opportunity to spend time with our wonderful young people in such circumstances. The convention provides a privileged opportunity to experience their wit, imagination, exuberance, generosity, kindness and faith.

They have a wonderful, natural way of inviting us to laugh, to think, to pray, to reflect on our faith and our continually unfolding human experience. I know I found myself doing all of the above on my drives to and from Ogdensburg yesterday.

It may not be possible for all of us to attend youth conventions of this kind. But it is possible for all of us to be connected to and supportive of the young people in our

respective communities.

I encourage you to do that in any ways that are attractive to you and possible for you. I assure you that the kids will appreciate your interest. And I am willing to bet that you will be quite delighted with their response to you.

Please try to be aware of the relationship between your parish community and the young people of your parish. Do you have a sense that the young people in your parish feel welcome in and appreciated by the larger parish community? Are they included in the pastoral reflection of the parish? In parish social life? In parish liturgical life?

Are they encouraged to minister to others? Do they have regular opportunities to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ? Can the young people of the parish deal with issues that are important to them in an environment of trust and safety?

If you do not know the answer to these questions, you may want to inquire about them in the normal course of your parish associations. And you may discover that you can help your parish make progress in these areas.

Any such initiative is testimony to our respect and affection for our wonderful young people. I can assure you that our teens will appreciate your interest and that you will have planted seeds, the fruits of which will be rich blessings for tomorrow's church.

It is good to be back with you. Peace to all.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 108 No. 43 August 7, 1997  
 Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.  
 Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.  
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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