

# Parish, ill pastor provide inspiration

As you know well, I enjoy opportunities to celebrate the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy in our parish communities. Such occasions allow reunion with old friends and the chance to meet new ones.

They also provide the chance to know better the personality of the parish, to be in touch with the richness of its pastoral life, and to have deeper insight into the dreams and struggles of the community.

I had the chance for such a visit this morning when I celebrated with St. Joseph's Parish, Livonia, at 9:30 a.m. and with St. William's, Conesus at 11:30. My visit was occasioned by the recent illness of their pastor, Father Bob Collins, who needs some support while he regains his strength.

It was good, as always, to be with Bob, who keeps his good spirit even when physically weakened by illness. And it was a pleasure to be with the people of the parish who are so attentive to Bob and pray so lovingly and faithfully for his full and speedy recovery.

It would be difficult even for the casual observer to miss the mutual respect and affection that exists between Father Bob and the community.

It is quite clear that Bob and the community share a special challenge and concern because of his illness. No doubt about that. What impresses me especially about the people of St. Joseph's and St. William's is that they show Bob such genuine affection

## along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

and concern even as they continue to mourn the sudden death of Bob's predecessor, Father Bill Trott. Much has been asked of them in this regard. I admire them deeply for the way in which they have responded to these realities.

The parish's strength of spirit may account in part for Bob's comment to me every time we meet that he loves the parish and thanks God daily that he is there.

Whatever the reason for such a beautiful relationship between pastor and parish community, it is a wonderful thing to behold. Observing it today made me very happy and put me in mind of many other parish communities in which there exist similar life-giving relationships.

I wished through the morning, as I often do on visits to parishes, that I could have had along with me young men who have some interest in priesthood, but who wonder if the vocation is sufficiently joyful and rewarding to help to grow in freedom and

maturity through the course of their years. I think they would be much encouraged if they could see what I see in my travels.

Two additional notes about the morning:

1.) When I asked the people at the 9:30 Mass at St. Joseph's how many of them came from other dioceses I was amazed at the number who raised their hands. I recall that there were people there from Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, Ogdensburg, Miami, West Palm Beach, Venice, St. Petersburg, Scranton, Tucson, Richmond and New York. I may even be forgetting one or two. Whatever the number, their presence in Livonia and the hospitality of the community provided a stimulating meditation on the reality of the church.

2.) At Conesus we celebrated an outdoor liturgy, which was followed by a picnic lunch. That experience also invited me to reflection and prayer. This time it was about the themes we have been following in John's Gospel during these summer weeks. The experience spoke to me of Christ, the living bread. It spoke to me of how the people gathered were so obviously willing to be good bread for one another.

I thank all at St. Joseph's and St. William's for being good bread for me today. I ask all of you to pray for the continued good health of these communities, and for a full and speedy recovery for Bob Collins.

Peace to all.

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