

Time, experience shed new light on role

Leadership and authority are themes to which I give quite a bit of thought and prayer. I have found over the years that the daily realities of my ministry as bishop in the church demand that of me.

I use the words "daily" and "demand" not to suggest that the task is burdensome or onerous. I use them to convey a sense that a person in a position of pastoral authority must stay alive both to her or his own growth and maturation, and to those same phenomena as they unfold in the life of the church and the world around us.

Such attentiveness is an important source of new insight. It helps us to connect significant truths one to the other. It helps us to deal with complex issues without fear — to live with uncertainty. It increases our capacity to distinguish between what is timeless and what is time-conditioned; between what lies at the core of the church's life and belief and the ways in which our beliefs have been understood and expressed throughout our history.

To be more personal and concrete: When I look back on my 18 years as bishop, I do so with the fond hope that I have changed during those years, and that I understand myself and the people I serve — the church — differently now than I did in 1979.

I retain my core identity, as does the church, but the way in which I understand and express those identities today is different after 18 more years of life experience. If that sounds a bit strange to you, pause for a moment and reflect on similar themes over the last 18 years of your life. If you are among our younger readers, go back as far as you can!

As usually happens, unfolding experience stimulates these reflections. In this instance three realities — one past, two coming up this

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

week — cause my wheels to spin:

1.) Several months ago the editors of *New Theology Review* invited me to prepare an article on "The Pastoral Exercise of Authority" for inclusion in their August edition, which is devoted to authority in the church. I enjoyed preparing the article through study and prayer, conversations with pastors and theologians in our diocese, and reflection on my years of pastoral experience as a bishop.

My effort was to locate the theme in the contemporary and evolving understanding of the church, to name some of the challenges that come to a person in pastoral authority, and to make some suggestions about pastoral authority for the consideration of the wider church. You may see some references to that article in next week's edition of the *Catholic Courier*.

2.) I will be at Keuka College in Penn Yan, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week to participate in Keuka Days, a gathering of pastoral ministers from a great number of parishes in our diocese.

Our theme this year is "A Eucharistic People Leading a Eucharistic Life." Participants will hear speakers on such themes as "The People Who Gather," "Leadership Qualities Needed

For the Next Millennium," "The Way Ritual Shapes Us" and "The Mission of the Baptized."

I look forward with delight to hearing the speakers who will address these themes. I look forward as well to sharing in the rich pastoral experience of all the participants. I know that I will learn a lot from all of them.

3.) Thursday through Sunday the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) will be holding their annual convention at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Attending this event will be members of the leadership teams of a great majority of congregations of women religious throughout our country.

I am delighted that they have chosen Rochester for their meeting and look forward not only to celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy with them, but also to spending as much time with them as I can. As at Keuka, I know I will learn about pastoral leadership both from the speakers and the participants at the convention.

A further comment on why I am happy that the LCWR will be with us: It is my opinion that conference members have been prophetic leaders in our church for many years. In their effort to offer leadership in word and in work, they have endured misunderstanding and even some vilification. To both, their responses have been characterized by respect for others, an honest search for truth, a determination to offer that truth as best they understood it and an enduring faith that has sustained them on their journey.

I admire them for all of that and am grateful for what they have taught me about pastoral leadership, the equality of disciples, speaking the truth in charity and faith in God. Peace to all.



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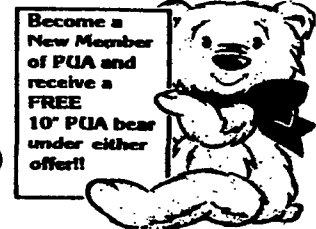
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