

Celebrate life's richness

Before the 6:30 p.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Lynn Kershner, our lector for the celebration, was speaking excitedly about the imminent arrival of a new grandchild.

It has been fun to hear Lynn talk about that exciting prospect. His voice is animated, and a happy grin touches his face when he does.

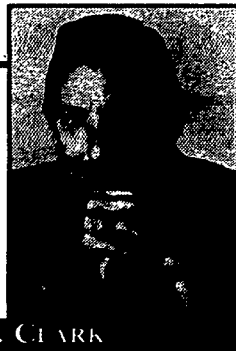
Adding to the fun is my memory of the new father-to-be, Lynn and Peggy's son, Eric, who was a little guy when I first came to Sacred Heart. It was fun to watch Eric grow up; it is a source of delight to remember all of that as I think about him becoming a father.

Last night I visited my niece, Jane, her husband, Scott, and their daughters, Julie and Megan. I had not seen them since Christmas and was quite anxious to reconnect with them. Besides, I was already late with a birthday gift for Jane and wanted to get it to her.

It was a wonderful visit. I remember in particular the awesome experience it always is to note the growth of the little ones in the interval between visits with them: new words, increased physical capacities, continually developing personality traits. It seems a holy experience to me because it always draws me to think about life and its meaning.

This morning the Gospel passage was taken from Mark 4:26-34: "A man scatters

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

seeds on the ground. He goes to bed and gets up day after day. Through it all the seed sprouts and grows without his knowing how it happens ... the blade ... the ear ... the ripe wheat in the ear."

Reflection on that beautiful passage about the growth of life served to deepen my appreciation of the mystery of what's happening in the lives of Lynn and Peggy; Eric and his wife; Scott, Jane, Julie and Megan.

In similar fashion, my awareness of their unfolding lives helped me to a renewed appreciation Jesus' instruction about the mystery of life.

I am grateful for such moments because through concrete, human experiences they put us in touch with the mystery of life.

They invite us to remember that life bespeaks growth and change.

They encourage us to an awareness and appreciation of what is of true and lasting importance.

They strengthen our hope that, in spite of our sins and failings, God is always ready to love us into new life.

They call us away from smugness and complacency and into healthy relationships with others.

I believe that it is in such movements that we find sources of true happiness.

Last week I noted that Lent was not far off and invited you to think about how we might prepare in a fruitful way for that holy time of the year.

Let me renew that invitation and specify it just a bit by asking you to be aware of life as you are aware of it unfolding within and all around you.

What are you experiencing or observing that gives you hope and courage for the long haul? What is having an opposite effect?

What resources and opportunities do you have that you can employ to strengthen your sisters and brothers? What would you ask of them to help you in your own growth?

You may have 100 questions that appeal to you more than the ones I suggest. By all means pursue them. I raise mine to convey my conviction that our spiritual lives, our observance of Lent are the richer when we celebrate them not only with a genuine openness to God but in loving solidarity with our sisters and brothers.

Peace to all.

Upcoming Supplements

ARMCHAIR COLLEGE FAIR

Publication Date: Feb. 19

(Bonus distribution to high school juniors & seniors) It's never too early to begin planning ahead for college. This supplement will look at ways families can find and set aside the necessary money, help students discover the colleges and programs that are right for them, and also explore the growing opportunities for people who delayed college, or want to stimulate and challenge their minds later in life.

RETIREMENT

Publication Date: March 26; Deadline: March 10

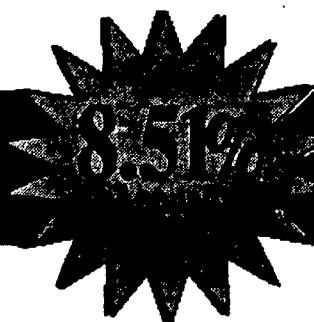
The "golden years" are a time of unique opportunities and challenges for seniors. This supplement will explore such issues as financial planning and money management, volunteering in church and community as a way of keeping active, traveling for pleasure and enrichment, and maintaining good health.

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