

Stay tuned for reports of 'ad limina'

It is very quiet in the office today. We are officially closed in observance of Presidents' Day, but I came in to catch up on some work, and to prepare for my Thursday departure for Rome and our "ad limina" visit to the Holy See. I should note that my need to catch up today is rooted in a wonderful mid-winter break I just enjoyed with Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany. It was a restful, renewing experience, and I came home deeply grateful to co-workers whose generosity made it possible.

I am beginning to become excited about the possibilities of our journey to Rome and the events that will fill those days. Bishop John McGann of Rockville Centre, who coordinates the visit for us, has kept us well-informed on all developments. There are some details to be worked out, but the basic framework of our days has been established.

The major unresolved question is when and in what formats we will be seeing our Holy Father. Quite understandably and according to customary practice, we never know those details until we arrive in Rome. Even then, we receive this information on a day-to-day basis.

My hope is that Pope John Paul II will be able to spend as much time with us as he has in the past. In his almost 20 years as pope he has established new standards

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

of generosity in that regard, but his current health concerns and other obligations may force him to change his practice. Whatever the reality turns out to be, it will be a joy to see him again — not just because he is successor to Peter but because of who he is.

Our schedule calls for return to Rochester on Sunday, March 1. My hope is to write my next two columns when I am in Rome so that I can give you a first-hand account of the activities of those days. In the best of all worlds, the weather will permit me to write from such places as St. Peter's Square, the Piazza Navona or the Trevi Fountain. We'll see what happens!

To the best of my knowledge, Channel 10, the NBC affiliate in Rochester, is planning to send a reporter and camera person to cover the visit. If you have access to that station, you may wish to enjoy their coverage.

Last evening I visited St. John Fisher College to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy with the community and to enjoy supper with many of them. In the course of an informal, after-dinner conversation we talked about this upcoming visit. I told them of its general purpose and pattern, and shared with them my experience of earlier visits.

They seemed especially interested in the opportunities we might have to converse with our Holy Father. Intrigued by that interest, I asked them, "If you were to take my place and could present any idea you wanted to present to the Holy Father, what would you say?"

Two thematic responses emerged in the exchange. The more general one encouraged a careful consideration of cultural differences within the church before the issuance of norms that affect the whole church. The more specific one called for a full and considered reflection by the whole church on the experience, gifts and dreams of the women of our church.

I told the St. John Fisher group that I would convey their hopes to the very best of my ability and that, in any case, I would convey their good wishes and affection to our Holy Father. I know that you would want me to do the same.

Peace to all.

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