

Rites of Election engender sense of joy

I have been home from Rome five days at this writing. Although I am well back into daily living, I still think about those days *ad limina apostolorum* and all that we experienced there. It was a memorable time.

Thanks to all of you for your verbal and written welcome messages, and for your lively curiosity about the Holy Father and the work of the Vatican Congregations and Secretariats.

I suspect that NBC Channel 10's coverage of those days greatly heightened people's awareness of the *ad limina* visit. I have thanked them for that coverage by letter and renew my expression of gratitude here.

While I still think of those days, I do so in the context of the stimulating life of our local church, especially during this time of Lenten renewal.

Central to my awareness during this first full week of Lent have been the six Rites of Election we have celebrated or will celebrate by Monday, March 9. At this writing, we have celebrated twice at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Today we celebrate two more — one at Groveland Correctional Facility; the other at St. Mary's, Dansville. The others will be on Sunday at St. Mary's, Auburn, and on Monday at the cathe-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

dral.

I love these rites for many reasons, but most of all for the lively, joyful, enthusiastic faith manifested by those preparing to receive the Easter sacraments. Their trust and confidence in God remind me how easy it is for me to rely too much on my own very limited abilities.

Their sense of excitement reminds me of how matter-of-fact and routine my disposition can become toward even the most sacred activity.

Their genuine humility and sense of being gifted calls me to renew a sense of awe at the compassion of God so beautifully manifest to us in the human face of Christ.

In short, these men and women, boys and girls, really are for me both living invitations to turn back to God and warm reminders that conversion of the

heart — although sometimes difficult — is, finally, always a joy.

In so doing, they give me strength to look at my own lack of freedom and the ways in which I am deaf or resistant to God's invitation to die to my egotism so that I might come to new life.

Our sisters and brothers who have been elected as candidates for new life at Easter continue their probing to discover how God wants them to be sons or daughters. Inspired by them I am going to try to do the same as we move through this holy season.

To do this, I fall back on the tried and true ways of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. When we engage in these activities in a spirit of faith we are inevitably led to a deeper honesty with self, a healthier dependence on God and more genuine openness to other persons.

To me these are lasting sources of happiness and are well worth any pinch or pain they may cost.

How are you doing so far with your response to the opportunities offered by Lent? Whatever your answer, I hope you are aware of God's personal love for you, and that such realization will lead to an expression of gratitude and yet another step toward deeper life.

Peace to all.

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Registration deadline: March 21