

## Travels throughout diocese refresh spirit

The moment of insight about prayer and the pressured pace of life, which I mentioned in last week's *Along the Way*, continues to be a grace in my life. It did not change the week's schedule, but it did leave me much more peaceful and collected in the midst of it. I am grateful for that and have incorporated into my Lenten prayer the hope that I will remember the moment when pressures or circumstances can lead me to forget its lesson.

I have had many life-giving experiences since I returned from Washington. Let me tell you about the ones I had on Saturday and about the individuals who helped make them so special.

In Waterloo we had a convening of members of our diocesan and regional boards of Catholic Charities. I thoroughly enjoyed the event. It is always a blessing to have time with such committed and gifted people. And, I found it enriching to hear our diocesan Catholic Charities director, Jack Balinsky, give a short overview of the history of the Catholic Charities movement in our country. It is a proud and interesting story that holds much relevance for our ongoing work in this critical aspect of our Catholic life.

Our main speaker was Joseph Sullivan, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, who has been involved in Catholic Charities for 40 years and has been a nationally recognized leader in the field for most of those years. He spoke of the challenges we must face if we are to remain faithful to our mission to serve others in the spirit of Christ. I thought his message was exactly on target. It was true and real. It was challenging, hopeful and encouraging. I add my appreciation for Joe's delightful gift of bringing humor and laughter to any situation.

### along the way

By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



On the way home from Waterloo I stopped, as planned, at St. Thomas More Parish, Rochester, to be with participants at the close of a Lenten day of prayer. By God's good favor, I arrived early enough to hear the concluding portion of a talk by Andy Hoelperl who serves as campus minister at McQuaid Jesuit High School. Andy spoke to me when he addressed all the ways in which we can allow lesser realities to interfere with an honest hearing of God's word; and to the ways we can devise to put off or avoid a generous response to that word even when we have heard it. It was a gift to hear such a clear, thoughtful message from such a young man. It was just great.

Next came Emily Kirchoff. It was for the likes of Emily that the expression "burst on the scene" was invented. Emily put in beautiful terms her respect and gratitude for the support she has experienced from the parish community at St. Thomas. She spoke of her faith in them and through them. To experience such a witness of faith by one of our wonderful young people — Emily is a freshman at Penfield High School — was a blessing for all of us who heard her.

When she rose to follow Emily, Diane Waterstreet paid Emily the compliment of saying that it would be difficult to follow her. Diane need not have been concerned because she was as gratefully received as was Emily, and for the very same reason. Diane was clearly very much herself in presenting her witness. Her reflection on holding a position of leadership included reference to others seeing in her and calling forth from her gifts she did not see in herself. She also mentioned the support she had received from others in her leadership of the parish's Renew Program.

The closing event of the day was a dinner and discussion with Mary Ellen and Casey Lopata and others who have been leaders in the development of Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry. We reflected on our experience of the ministry as we have experienced it thus far, spoke about some possible next steps in pastoral care and in education, and reviewed our preparations for the annual convention of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian & Gay Ministries, which we will be hosting in September. As always, I left the meeting with much admiration for the faith of the group, for their genuine concern for the God-given dignity of all persons, and for their ability to persevere in a work that is very sensitive and easily misunderstood.

I have named Jack Balinsky, Joe Sullivan, Andy Hoelperl, Emily Kirchoff, Diane Waterstreet, and Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata, who on a gorgeous Saturday in March strengthened my faith and enriched my Lenten prayer. I offer thanks to them and to the many others not named here who made the day special.

Peace to all.

# The Only Thing Missing from Vol nteer is u.

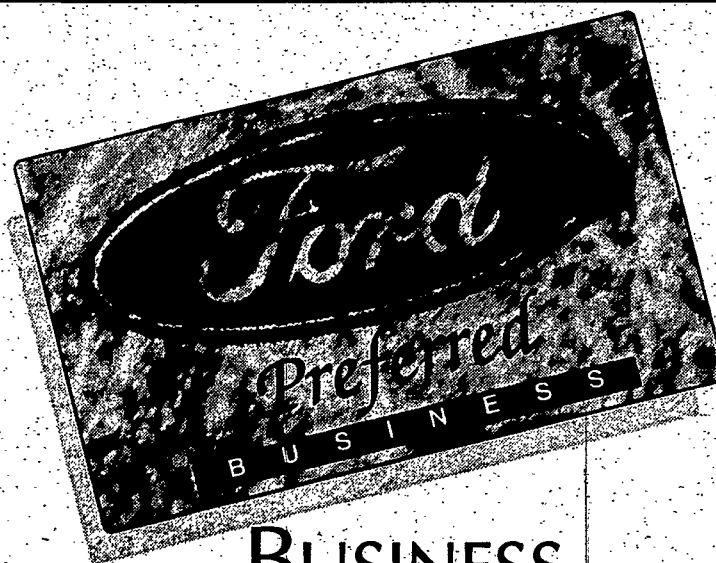
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