

Easter engenders celebration of family

I once thought that aching joints and disappearing hair were the surest signs that the aging process had sunk deep roots in me.

On Sunday another sign emerged to rival those two: My youngest niece, Kathleen Loretto Early, celebrated her 22nd birthday. Emphasis on 22. Emphasis on youngest.

Can she have been around that long? No, that is not possible. Such were the thoughts that tickled my mind as we honored Kathleen at the Earlys' Easter table.

But a quick review of family photos around the house reminded me of all of those years and the growth of this young woman who has brought great delight to her family and so many others.

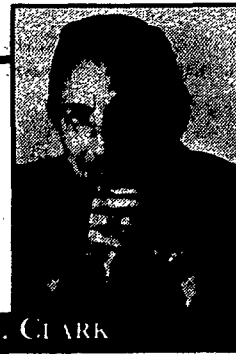
Readers of the *Catholic Courier* first met Kathleen through a photograph taken at my Installation on June 26, 1979. In the photo, Kathleen was shown trying to remove her father's necktie without loosening the knot. It was such a delightful shot that it was picked up by a wire service and printed in several newspapers.

Kathleen was just over 3 years of age then, but the necktie episode gave all of us at least a broad hint of what life with her would be like in the future. At table on Sunday, we told a lot of the stories about Kathleen and enjoyed the laughter and good spirit such reminiscences carry with them.

It was wonderful to be with the family

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



in those relaxed circumstances. As we told the Kathleen stories, I was also thinking about her sisters; what they are up to now, their growth over the years and the happiness they have always brought to the rest of us.

I remembered Grace's wonderful laughter, her concern for others and how the challenges of work have always stimulated her to study and to explore new challenges.

I thought of how Jane handles the challenges of raising her two daughters, managing a household and working — and still makes it all look so easy.

I cannot think of Mary Ellen without smiling. Never could. I was aware on Sunday of how she has been carrying a tough work and academic load for some time without losing an ounce of the spirit of fun.

Margaret and Doug McMahan will marry on June 13. You can just imagine the excitement that has generated. Lease

signing, furniture refinishing, invitation writing and selection of readings for the wedding liturgy are among the swirl of topics I recall just now. There were many more. But I remember most Margaret's quiet joy.

I was not thinking about it at the time, but now, as I write, I wonder what goes through the minds of my sister and brother-in-law at such family gatherings. They're remembering about 130 "daughter years." I know some of the stories, but I cannot even begin to imagine all of the memories that must emerge in them at such times.

My guess is that such memories touch the joys, the worries, the sacrifices, the laughter, the peace, the challenges, the disappointments, the exhilaration, the heartbreaks and the promise of parenthood.

Maybe I'll ask Helen and Jim about such things when I see them again.

In the meantime, I'll continue to think about those special moments with the family and with other people. Why? Because I believe that in significant relationships Christ reveals himself and calls us to new life. "Where two or three gather in my name ..."

The Easter season offers a special, multi-level invitation to come together, to tell the stories, to break bread. I hope that you will have ample opportunity to enjoy such experiences.

Peace to all.

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