

Dansville 10-year-old inspires second wind

I never would have finished Saturday's Run for the Young at St. Lawrence, Greece, without Steven Washer. That bright, vigorous 10-year-old from St. Mary's, Dansville, came along at just the right moment.

I was about halfway through the five-kilometer course. I knew I was getting older; my legs felt like lead. I knew I was still congested from a cold; my chest was heaving. I was wondering why I had not stayed behind to slice bagels and pour cold drinks for the runners when they finished.

Just then Steven came along with a bounce in his gait, a smile on his face and a willingness to gab for a while with the old-timer who was chugging along beside. I had just enough air to gasp out a few questions.

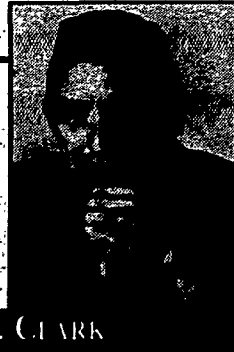
In response to those queries, Steven told me that he had come to the run with a group of six people from his hometown, that fourth grade wasn't half bad after all, that he was really glad he came because so many nice individuals turned out for the race.

He was absolutely charming and succeeded somehow in helping me acquire the well-known second wind we all need from time to time.

I got a special kick out of one bit of information Steven gave me: This was the first time he had entered a race of this

along the way

By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



kind. In fact, he was wondering if the training he had done would prove sufficient to see him through to the end of his first effort. I tried to encourage him as best I could, but knew without a doubt that, if he chose to, he could still be running now. And it is Monday afternoon!

Encounters such as the unplanned one I had with Steven at the Run for the Young are among the reasons why events with and for our young people are such rewarding experiences.

On this occasion, young people and adults worked together to organize an event that was fun for more than 200 people, aged 8 to 65. Siblings ran together. So did parents and children.

In addition to providing the fun of camaraderie and competition, the event also generated some money that will be used to fund scholarships for kids to participate in our Diocesan Youth Convention, Junior High School Rally and

Diocesan Retreat Program.

We all know that such gatherings can be deeply significant in the spiritual growth of our young people. For example, recently I was reading some research findings about key factors in the development of vocations to priesthood and religious life. A memorable retreat experience was identified as one of those factors.

Last week's Run for the Young was the second such event. We had the one on Saturday and an earlier one in October. Hereafter we hope to hold one each May. I am sure that parish communities will be receiving very early notice about the particulars. Saturday's level of participation doubled last October's.

We hope that the one next May will be another good step forward in support of the spiritual growth of the great young people of our diocese.

A final word of gratitude to Steven: On Saturday you encouraged me into a much needed and renewing second wind. You also sparked in me the life-giving memory that I was 10 years old once. That awareness has put me in touch with all kinds of people who since then have given support and encouragement when I have tired or felt like quitting or have become discouraged along the way.

That is a wonderful gift. Thank you, Steven.

Peace to all.

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My discovery of my vocation was gradual. It began with a growing desire to spend my whole life loving and serving God and assisting in the salvation of men. While my work was honest and good, I felt I was called to more direct service to others, and a much deeper prayer life. After praying to the Holy Spirit for guidance and the grace of trust, and investigating several communities, I knew God was leading me to the Hawthorne Dominicans.

In God's will is our peace; I wish no other life than the one God has offered me in the precious gift of my vocation.

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