

Advent a season for spiritual healing

I was recipient of great blessings this past weekend. The gifts were opportunities to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy on consecutive days with residents at Rochester Psychiatric Center, St. Ann's Home and Monroe Community Hospital. To celebrate with those communities is not a new experience for me. Visits to each of them are a part of my annual calendar. What was different this year was that they came so close together.

It is not at all unusual to hear people engaged in ministry say that they receive more than they give in its exercise. That statement can carry a range of meaning. It depends on the type of ministry, the personalities of the individuals involved and the circumstances that bring them together. I have been with dying persons who have taught me a great deal about life by the strength of their faith and their concern for others. People who suffer from intractable illness can exhibit a sense of peace that is notably deeper than that manifested by others who seem carefree. Individuals with severe physical problems often manifest a ready joy at the simplest of favors. The disposition of such persons as these invites a

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

look at life from a fresh perspective. Blessings tend to take much higher profile; cares and sufferings seem less acute than they once did.

Two factors probably made me more aware than I normally would be of the impact these visits had on me. The first is that I am a heart patient. As a patient, I am aware that I must depend on other women and men to help me achieve good things that I am not able to provide for myself. That is why I appreciate so much the direction of the medical people who continue to guide me on the road to healing. Of course, I know I have depended on others all of my life. All of us do. It is just that my recent experience makes me aware of my need in

a much more pronounced way.

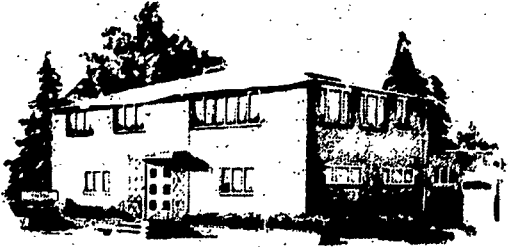
The second factor that may have spurred my reflections these days were the readings from last Sunday, the second of Advent. Running through them was the theme that healing is a sure sign of God's presence among us — "the blind see, the lame walk and the poor have the good news preached to them." The words helped me notice the courage and patience of the people I met over the weekend. The biblical theme alerted me to their gratitude for small favors, to their concern for others, their words of encouragement. Such caring human activity manifests the presence of the living God among us. It also points to the deeper promise that a more profound spiritual healing will be the endless joy of those who in faith receive Christ into their hearts.

I hope that you are finding food for your good spirit as we move more deeply into the Advent season and closer to Christmas. We all need the nourishment of quiet moments and the opportunity they provide to be in touch with God present to us in the course of our daily living.

Peace to all.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 110 No. 12, December 17, 1998
Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

The Courier will not publish a Dec. 31 edition. The next edition will be Jan. 7, 1999.

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