

## Trip will offer glimpse of church's breadth

I write this week with a growing enthusiasm for my departure on Saturday to visit our Sisters of Mercy in Chile and our Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil. Since the first of these journeys in January of 1981 I have enjoyed every opportunity I have had to be with our sisters and the beautiful people with and among whom they minister.

What has made these once-every-three-year trips so memorable and rich for me? There are many reasons I could name, among them: the warmth of the people, the commitment of our sisters, the support of the people of our diocese for these efforts for more than 30 years.

The heart of this journey for me is the direct and personal contact it allows with vital extensions of the life of our local church. You are there in your financial support. You are there in the loving presence and ministry of our sisters. You are there in your daily prayer. In the experience I am reminded in a privileged way that the borders of our 12 counties do not circumscribe the life of our local church. Rather, the life of our local church is as large and expansive as our baptismal call to

### along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



mission. Faithful to that call, you generously share with others what you have received in baptism.

In similar fashion, these travels allow me to thank the people among whom our sisters serve for the ways they enrich the life of our local church. Hospitality that shares everything they have with the visitor is one way in which they do that.

Commitment to justice for the oppressed is another. A third is the reminder they are every day that one need not possess much to be rich in faith and its blessings.

For the next few weeks I'll try to give you a sense and flavor of the lives of our sisters and of the people they love. I'll try to let you know how they come together in faith, what they

learn from one another and how their relationships have evolved in their more-than-30 years of history together. I would also like to ask our Chilean Sisters of Mercy and our Brazilian Sisters of St. Joseph how your care has strengthened their faith or influenced their vocational choice over the years.

An added bonus for me on this trip will be the company of my niece, Grace. For several years now she has expressed interest in visiting Latin America with me. I am absolutely delighted that she made the commitment to share these coming days with me for several reasons. For one thing, it's just plain fun to be with her. Secondly, this will be a new experience for Grace and I am delighted that she will have it with the guidance of such incredible women as our sisters. Thirdly, it will be fascinating for me to see this trip through the eyes of a bright, curious woman who was born shortly after our sisters first pioneered this effort — with your generous support — more than 30 years ago.

I look forward to being with you, first, from Chile and, then, from Brazil.

Peace to all.



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