

Workshop highlights need for Christian unity

I just came home from the opening liturgy of the National Workshop on Christian Unity being held in Rochester this week.

Nature smiled on what creative planners organized for this evening. We convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on a terrace overlooking the Genesee River. We began our prayer at this attractive site. Then, led by a bagpiper and a group of young dancers, we processed to the Downtown United Presbyterian Church on North Fitzhugh Street to complete the prayer already begun.

And a beautiful celebration of prayer it was. There was graceful dance and stirring music. The proclamations of God's word were done with grace and power. One sensed from the way they related to one another and joined in spoken and sung prayer that those who gathered did so out of a deep yearning for Christians to find a way of moving beyond those things that yet divide them.

For me an important part of the evening was the sermon preached by the Very Rev. Frank Griswold, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. He urged us to press on to unity as to something essential to the fullness of life; to let our attitudes be challenged by the expansiveness of the Gospel and by the mystery of renewed life; to leave what is narrow and confining and, like Jesus, to be radically available to God's desire, however obscure,

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



demanding or contrary to one's own desire it might be.

Many groups participated in the general workshop. One of them is the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (NADEO) who represent Roman and Eastern Catholic dioceses in the United States. We hosted them for lunch at Sacred Heart today. I'll be joining them for two events tomorrow. The first is a lunch at the Crowne Plaza with representatives of Orthodox churches.

The second is a Eucharistic Liturgy at St. Josaphat's, a Ukrainian Catholic church on East Ridge Road, Irondequoit. Bishop Basil Losten — bishop of the Ukrainian Diocese of Stanford of which St. Josaphat's is a part — will preside at that liturgy, and I will preach the homily.

I look forward very much to the celebration tomorrow afternoon. Bishop Basil will be leading us in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. It has been a long time since I've had the opportunity to pray the great

mysteries of our faith in this particular fashion.

Always an important part of gatherings such as this is the boost that comes from being with individuals who are deeply committed to ecumenism. To hear one another's experiences, to trade ideas and to worship together do much to revive any spirits that may be sagging; to put spring in the legs of those for whom the road seems endless. I know that just spending the evening with this assembly was life-giving and encouraging.

If that were not enough, I enjoyed renewing acquaintances with people whom I have known for many years but whom I do not often see. Fathers Dennis Mikulanic from San Diego and Joe Lehman of Richmond were seminarians at the North American College when I served on that staff. Father John Long, SJ, one of the founders of NADEO and for many years a great figure in Rome, is here. Father Tom Green, a distinguished canonist at Catholic University, was a year behind me in the seminary. Father Phil Morris of Newark is a classmate and dear friend.

I'll go to bed tonight with a renewed awareness of what yet divides the Christian family one from the other. But, I'll also nod off mindful of and grateful for the Christ's promise to abide with us and, eventually, to lead us to better places together.

Peace to all.

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