

Jubilarian couples inspire faith

When I reached the local section of today's Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* (Oct. 18), I was thrilled to see two photographs of yesterday's Marriage Jubilee Celebration at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The larger of the two pictures caught Nazzarine and James Noto of Rochester in radiant smiles as they received flowers from me in recognition of the fact that, now together for 63 years, they were the longest-married couple in the assembly.

The second, no less touching photo, focused on the joined hands of Elmira's James and Sophie Kieffer, married 53 years, as they renewed their wedding vows.

I was delighted at both the pictures and the accompanying article because I thought they conveyed in an effective way the significance and spirit of an event made very rich by the presence of more than 150 couples married for 25 years or more.

Such gatherings — so important, in my opinion, to the life and health of our local church — never fail to impress me. People deeply committed to one another for years — who have seen a lot of life, who have faced its demands, tested its joys — now come together to thank God

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

for all of it.

And, in the renewal of those vows that first joined their hearts to one another in Christ, they renew their trust in the Lord's total fidelity to them.

A deep curiosity of mine is to know all of the stories — and memories — that play in the minds and hearts of our celebrants at such moments:

Who are the people most present to them as they remember the years?

What are the moments they now judge to have been pivotal in their marital experiences?

What are the greatest lessons they have learned through the years?

What would they do differently if there were an opportunity to correct the record?

Another way of expressing that curiosity would be to invite each of the couples present to distill from their years of faithful experience the three most important pieces of advice they could possibly pass on to a young couple preparing to marry next year.

Had we done that yesterday, I wonder if there would have been clear and consistent patterns in the responses offered. I suspect that there would have been. And, my guess is that they might have related to such values as mutual respect, honesty, sacrifice, prayer, patience, faith and trust in God.

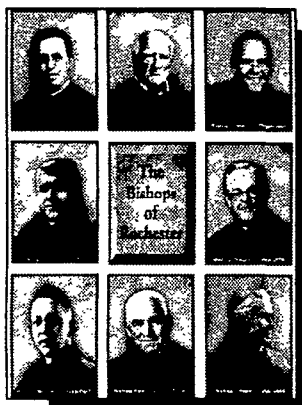
I thank our jubilarians for the encouragement their faith brings to me. Unmarried myself, I can never understand fully and completely what your experience has been.

But, privileged as I am to minister among you and honored as I have been that many have shared their stories with me, I have some sense of your faith and generosity. I hope that yesterday's celebration helped you appreciate a little bit more not just God's deep love for you but also the consistent generosity of your response.

Peace to all.

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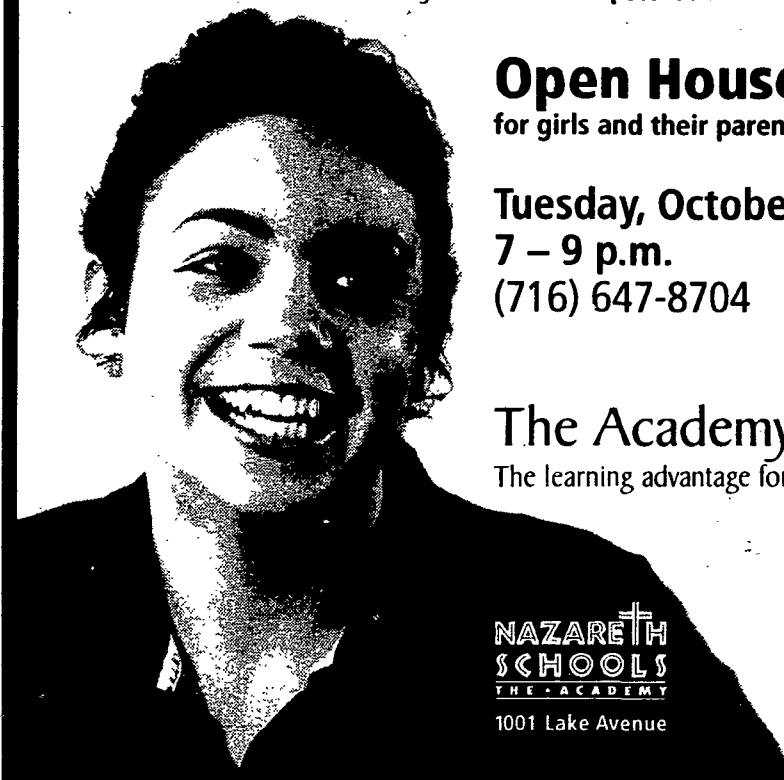
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