

# Joy of priesthood knows no age limit

Father Dick Brickler and I were kidding about age in a conversation this morning. The gist of the exchange was our awareness that at an earlier time in our lives both of us thought our current ages were old beyond belief and would leave us with precious little energy for anything very constructive.

Although the veteran pastor of St. Boniface and I both acknowledge that, while we don't beat out as many infield hits as we once did, we do not feel much different than we did in those earlier years. We're also happy to say that we put in pretty full days, love our work and draw considerable energy from it.

At a recent luncheon, the presence of two of our senior priests, Father Robert McNamara and Father Elmer Heindl, reminded me that there is no automatic chronological limit to the associations, activities and interests that continue to teach our senior brothers and sisters about life and continue to benefit the communities that are beneficiaries of their dynamic presence. For example, Father Elmer, who lives and ministers generously at St. Charles Borromeo, Greece, is particularly known for his ministry to veterans' groups. Father McNamara continues to distinguish himself through his historical research and writing. Most recently he published his updated history of the Diocese of Rochester.

I find the achievement of these individuals — and I could name many others just like them — to be quite inspiring. They do

## along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

much good for a large number of groups and individuals. But even more, I am impressed by the spirit in which they do the work and by the dispositions they have toward those who benefit from their acts of ministry. There is a note of joy about them. They convey a sense that it is an honor for them to serve their sisters and brothers, that they are happy to place their God-given gifts and life experiences at the disposal of others.

I think my father got me off on this line of thought today. At morning prayer I was very much aware that, had he lived, Dad would have celebrated his 91st birthday today, November 8. He would have been just a shade older than Fathers Elmer and Robert. I was wondering what life might have been like — his and mine — if he had lived this long rather than having been called to God in 1977 just short of his 69th birthday.

Had he been left with us and remained consistent with the patterns of his life, he would likely have continued to place himself at the sense of others through volun-

teer work. He would also, I am sure, have continued to help people enjoy their common activities through his easy manner and gift of humor.

At 62 years of age, I do hope that God will allow me many more years of life and ministry. I full well realize that the passing of years will mean changes in how I live out my ministry. That's for sure:

But I hope that, whatever specific shapes that ministry may take, it will always be in the kind of spirit I have noted in the friends I mentioned here. That will be a cause for joy, teach about life and be of genuine benefit to others.

I hope there are some people in your life who can get you excited about your own future — people who somehow help you identify the values that will bring you the kind of peace you seek and who will suggest to you safe paths by which you can confidently seek those values.

One final note: Just as we may be mindful of the encouragement and support offered to us by those who have gone before us, I hope that we do all we can in support of those who come after us. Few gifts are as important, are of such lasting impact to those who are growing and maturing, than the encouragement and support of those who are willing to share their life experiences with them.

Those who have reviewed such gifts understand that well and should have little difficulty passing on freely what they have freely received.

Peace to all.

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