

Joy of the elect inspires all who participate

Joshua seemed a bit nervous as we gathered yesterday for the Rite of Election at St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads.

This was quite natural. After all, the 8-year-old boy was about to take a significant step in his life of faith, and he was doing it in the presence of several hundred people - individuals preparing for baptism or to become members of our church at the Easter vigil and those who are accompanying them.

Joshua was absolutely correct. He did very well all through the ceremony. In fact, as the rite unfolded this delightful boy became more and more relaxed.

At the end of the celebration he was as peaceful as a dove and grinning from ear to ear.

I had the sense, as I kept an eye on Joshua through the ceremony, that the joy and kindness of the assembly eased whatever might have been tense in the little guy's spirit.

What Joshua did not realize, I think, was that his presence and that of several other faithful, searching boys and girls contributed much to the happiness of all of us gathered with them.

As I drove home on Route 14 along Seneca Lake I rested with the memories of the joyful celebration I had just experienced with people who came to St. Mary

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

Our Mother from many Southern Tier parishes for the Rite of Election.

I know that their faith and joy brought great encouragement to my own spirit. I am equally certain - because so many told me so after the ceremony - that the Rite was a special experience of prayer for all of those who participated.

I suspect that our preparation for the Easter feast will be the more loving and prayerful because of what we shared yesterday.

If that delightful experience were not enough, I will have the privilege (a word I choose with care!) of celebrating four more Rites of Election this week.

They will be at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Tuesday evening; at St. Stephen's, Geneva on Wednesday evening; and again at Sacred Heart at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Sunday.

No one of them will be exactly like any other. The form and flow of the ritual will be the same at all, of course. But each will gather different people from different parish communities, and that fact will make each rite special.

Why does the Rite of Election seem almost always to be a significant spiritual experience for those who participate? I think that the following elements are among those that help explain it:

1. It is a form of liturgical prayer that many have not experienced before.

2. There is an aura of joy, enthusiasm and hope among the catechumens and candidates. Their feelings are contagious.

3. The catechumens and candidates experience, often for the first time, the affection and prayer of the wider church.

4. Those of us who accompany and elect them know the consolation of new life with which God constantly enriches the church.

5. The wide range of age and experience among the newly elected remind us that God's good favor knows no season, has no limits but is always there for all of us.

I hope that your Lent goes well. Be assured of my daily prayer for you and your loved ones.

Peace to all.

**YOUR SPOUSE NEEDS YOU.
THE KIDS NEED YOU.
A PARENT NEEDS YOU.**



Looks like you need us.

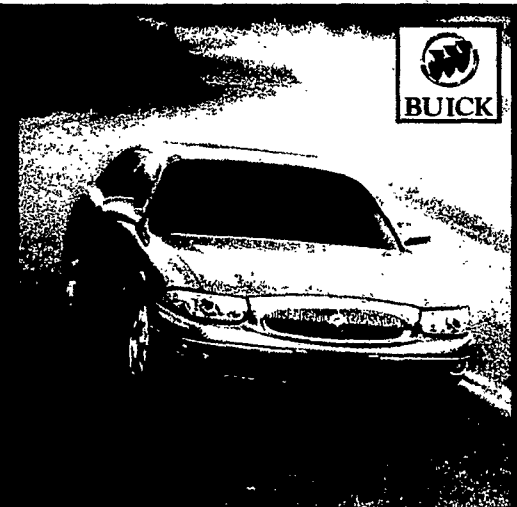
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