

## A season to focus on right relationships

The touch of spring we have enjoyed lately has boosted the spirit of most people I know. Bright skies, warm air and tender buds bespeak new life for all of us, and so are most welcome. They give promise that the stark beauty of winter will soon give way to the more lush beauty of spring and summer.

These promises of nature find encouraging parallels in the flow of our liturgical year. We are already in the third week of Lent. Our entry into this season of conversion and repentance deepens. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving help us to remember the importance of right relationships in our life. Our hope is that we will find the vision and the courage to put them in order so that we can live in greater freedom and peace.

I was thinking and praying about such themes over the weekend, and some of that activity was inspired by the Sunday Gospel. Another stimulus was the activity on my weekend calendar.

Regarding the reading: Jesus' anger at the perversion of the Temple by the money-changers and tradespeople was not a condemnation of their respective occupations. They indeed rendered a service to people who had come to worship. Jesus was angry because their location and manner of doing business put things out of perspective and distorted the purposes for which people gathered. What was meant to free people for peaceful worship and help them deepen their relationship with God had become a burdensome distraction. In

### along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

short, the tradespeople and money-changers, instead of helping the people, were now hurting them. And Jesus wanted to do something to correct that.

Regarding my activities: Two weekend experiences fueled my reflections on right relationships and our call to develop them.

The first was a meeting with our Diocesan Women's Commission. It was a pleasure to meet with this gifted group to share our common hopes for the commission's work and to share ideas about how best to get it done. Of particular interest to me was the substantial portion of the meeting that members devoted to the reality of domestic violence.

I was much impressed by their concern about the problem and by the care and thoughtfulness they exercised in searching for ways to support all who are affected by the harsh reality of violence in the home. In this instance, the concern is about relationships — but about relationships that have become distorted and therefore cause severe damage to people who once had lively hopes for something totally different.

Added to my Lenten prayer now — and, I hope, to yours — will be to ask God's blessing on the commission's work so that we can strengthen our pastoral care for those who suffer this tragic experience and who often do so in secrecy and silence.

The second weekend experience was a Sunday evening spent with the faith community on the campus of St. John Fisher College. We had dinner together at 6 p.m. and then, after a short break, reassembled for the Eucharistic liturgy at 9 p.m.

As always, it was a delight to be with such bright and gifted young people. More than they'll ever know, their witness of faith — including their probing and searching and questioning — offers me great encouragement in my own life and much hope for our church.

It seems to me that the central theme of our wide-ranging discussion was how individuals negotiate the often complex challenge of participating happily and constructively in the life of institutions (e.g., family, church, school, etc.) and still remain free to develop fully all of the good gifts and talents they enjoy.

I could not possibly capture the several sub-themes of the discussion, nor do justice to the thoughtful participation of the students. I would just like to let you — and them — know that, as always, they taught me a great deal and enlivened my hope.

I hope we can continue to pray for our catechumens and candidates and for one another during this holy season.

Peace to all.



### Give to the Jubilee Debt Forgiveness Fund

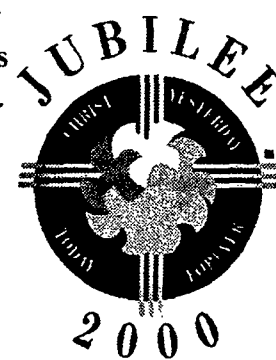
## New beginnings...

## New hope

Forgiveness of debt is basic to the biblical concept of Jubilee, which calls us to give those overwhelmed by unpayable debt a chance to start over.

Such debt ravages many of the world's developing nations, but also saps the vitality of parishes in our own diocese. These struggling faith communities must divert resources from important ministries to meet financial obligations.

To relieve their burdens, Bishop Matthew H. Clark has established a Jubilee Debt-Forgiveness Fund that will be used for the forgiveness of debt. In this Lenten season of renewal and new beginnings, please consider joining the Diocese, parishes and schools in contributing to this fund as a sign of unconditional hope for the new millennium.



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