

Pray for God's blessing on convocation

For several years we have held our Convocation of Priests — and, in recent years, of our pastoral administrators as well — from Monday afternoon until Wednesday noon of the week after Easter week.

We repeat that pattern next week as we gather for an assembly at the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Rochester. Our central theme this year will be the ministry of preaching.

As always, I look forward to this event and the many sources of enrichment it will offer. Certainly, I am eager to learn more about preaching from those who study that ministry, which is essential to the life and good health of the church.

Secondly, I anticipate with eagerness the opportunity the convocation affords me to speak to and to hear from our priests about issues that are significant to the life of our local church.

This year I want to share with our priests and pastoral administrators some ideas and reflections generated by the initial stages of our program of Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium. I find it enormously helpful when they are willing to hear my ideas, critique them and enrich them by sharing their own pastoral wisdom.

While such sharing of ideas and experience is essential to the convocation, I find myself most excited by the prospect of just being in the company of such a wonderful

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

group of people. For me they are a symbol of the life and vitality of our local church, and of the great promise that is ours even in a time in which we find it necessary to change some cherished habits and revered patterns of living.

I have convened our priests annually since I first arrived as bishop of Rochester. In the beginning, we met at the Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua and, because of space limitations, we met in two sections. Half of our priests came from Monday afternoon until Tuesday noon. The others came on Tuesday afternoon and adjourned on Wednesday at midday.

Over time, we realized that the experience would be richer if it were longer and if all of us could share it together. That is when we moved to commercial facilities large enough to accommodate us. It also is when we lengthened the program.

As I write these words and think of those earlier days, I remember that much

has changed since then. Many of the priests who gathered in the early 1980s have gone home to God.

A good number of others have been ordained since then and now contribute to our assembly. And, surely, those of us who have shared the experience through all of the years are different now from what we were like way back then.

Annual events like the convocation provide a special opportunity to remember and put into perspective what changes over years of life experiences and what remains the same. And I mean not only changes that occur within each individual. I also include changes in the ways in which we understand and relate to one another, and how we deal with issues of common interest.

When I remember my first gathering with our priests in 1980, I am acutely aware that I would have approached that event much differently if I knew then what I know now.

But I also know that life does not work that way for any of us. All we can do is offer ourselves as best we can at any given moment, trust that our friends and colleagues will do the same, and know that the Spirit of the Risen Christ will lead us through it all.

I ask you to pray that God will bless and guide all who participate in our convocation.

Peace to all.



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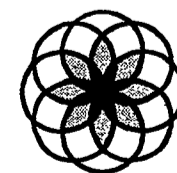
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