

Diaconate has come a long way

If you are a regular reader of Along The Way, you know that we had our annual Convocation of Priests during the second week of Easter. I enjoy this annual event for many reasons. Yet, its deepest significance for me is that the gathering reminds me that we, the presbyterate, are one body working together in service of the people of God in the Diocese of Rochester.

Today I want to offer a few comments on a similar gathering of our permanent deacons that we enjoyed on Saturday in the meeting facilities at Monroe Community Hospital. Deacons and their spouses had an opportunity to consider important matters of common interest, to pray together, to deepen old friendships and begin some new ones.

John Pistone, a permanent deacon who works for our national office, spoke to the assembly first. He offered an overview of the permanent diaconate not only in our nation but also in other parts of the world. I found John's comments to be very helpful because he spent some time talking about questions and issues, successes and failures and false starts that have occurred around the globe as the church has endeavored to renew this ancient ministry. I also found his remarks to be encouraging. Our program of preparation is strong. Our deacons have done very well and the community has positively received them.

But this positive story has not unfolded without growing pains. This has been a huge undertaking in the diocese and it has called for many adjustments by large numbers of people. And, since the story is not yet fully written, I am sure the maturing of this ministry and its integra-

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

tion into the life of our local church will require our continuing commitment. It's just good to know that we have come a long way and our experience has much in common with other dioceses.

Sister Patricia Schoelles, president of St. Bernard's Institute, spoke to issues and questions relative to the theological preparation and formation for ministry of our candidates for the permanent diaconate.

Examples of those concerns and questions: Are we doing enough to attract and meet the needs of possible candidates who do not have an ideal academic background but who are otherwise very attractive candidates? Can we do a better job of attracting candidates from our Latin, African-American, Asian, Native American and other minority communities? How can we deal constructively and honestly with all of the gender-related questions which people raise about ordination?

As did Deacon John, so did Sister Pat deal honestly and directly with the community about these issues. All of us appreciated that very much and drew much to think about from

her comments.

Deacon Tom Cass, who directs our Office of Deacon Personnel, spent some time reviewing with the assembly the highlights of a revision of the policies governing the training and ministry of our permanent deacons. Tom had solicited input from the community all through the process of revision but thought it would be good to enjoy this opportunity for corporate comment before they are finalized. I think that his decision was a very good one.

In my own comments on Saturday, I highlighted some of the questions and concerns I had raised with our priests during their convocation. These had to do with the distinctions we make between ministerial priesthood and the priesthood shared by all of the baptized. How deacons, vowed religious and lay persons qualify to become pastoral administrators; how in the practical order we will make decisions about which parishes will be led by ordained pastors and which by other pastoral administrators.

As you might imagine, those fine presentations took some time. But there seemed to be ample time for feedback through the day and we did rejoice in the opportunity to enjoy both a Eucharistic Liturgy and a most pleasant supper together before we headed our separate ways.

Our 90 active permanent deacons work in a wide range of parish-based ministries and are to be found ministering to sisters and brothers in a wide variety of settings including jails and prisons, colleges and universities, hospitals and nursing homes. Please pray for them.

Peace to all.

MISSION NEWS

Every day, against a backdrop of war and great suffering, Simon Garang offers the people of his homeland the greatest gift of all: the hope and peace that come only from Christ.



Simon is a catechist in Sudan, proclaiming the Gospel among people who so need to experience the love of Jesus. "Catechists in Sudan are the pillars of the Church," says Archbishop Cesare Mazzolari of Rumbek in Sudan. "Without them, vast areas would be without the Church, the true source of hope."

There are 400,000 catechists in the

Missions like Simon who depend on help from the Propagation of the Faith to continue the work of spreading the Gospel of hope into the next millennium.

Through a Gift Annuity with the Propagation of the Faith you can help Mission catechists and provide yourself with income for the rest of your life at a favorable rate of return.



Bishop William J. McCormack

THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

Please mail coupon to: Bishop William McCormack, National Director, Propagation of the Faith, 366 Fifth Avenue, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10001

Please send information on your Gift Annuity for the Church in the Missions today, I enclose...

\$100 \$50 \$25 \$10 \$_____ (other)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please remember **The Society for the Propagation of the Faith** when writing or changing your Will.

DORSCHTEL



2000 LeSabre

\$349

per month lease

Sticker Price \$24,523 Fully equipped custom edition. Lease with only \$499 down plus your first payment, tax & license fee down totaling \$2,073. Lease payments total \$12,564 Residual \$12,752. 36 month lease/ 12,000 miles per year (.20 per mile thereafter) \$1,000 rebate applied to sale price. Offers with approved credit. Prior sales excluded.

Sale Price \$21,499



dorschel.com

3399 West Henrietta Road 475-1700