

Thanks to Mary, the tiger and rainbow child

Mary's beautiful smile is one of the last and happiest of the memories I have of Sunday's Diocesan Jubilee Family Pilgrimage held at Seneca Falls. She had just told me she was 89 years of age.

I knew exactly why she did that. Mary was smiling as she responded to a comment I had made during my homily at the beautiful prayer service that concluded the day. The service invited us to remember the gift of our baptismal life, its dignity, and its call to worship and serve the Lord. I invited the assembly to be aware that all of us share that gift and that we were all called to respond to it, each according to her or his vocation, age, talents, opportunities, etc.

To illustrate that great range I asked the assembly to note that our number included babes in arms, people even older than I am, and all ages in between! In her few words, but mostly in the beauty of her smile, Mary said to me, "You're still a kid. Enjoy all of the days ahead of you." It was a wonderful gift, one that expressed what I judged to be the deep spirit of the event: We are a family, made so by the love of Christ.

I did not know quite what to expect when I went to Seneca Falls on Sunday. Yes, I did have a program for the event and knew that games, displays, play and prayer would all be part of the day.

But I also knew from experience that when people like you and those who gath-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

ered at Seneca Falls come together there is life that can never be captured on a program.

That was certainly the case on Sunday. I have rarely been at an event at which people of all ages, from all parts of our 12-county diocese had such a wonderful time. I know that the program, so thoughtfully developed, provided the framework that made it all possible.

But I am convinced that it was the open, generous, faithful spirit of the people who gathered that pumped such exciting vitality into the day.

Folks strolled the grounds in clothing that suggested biblical themes and characters. The kids took delight in questioning them. I did too. Artists painted the faces of the little ones. One had the beautiful rainbow sign of life and hope on his cheek; another was painted so that she looked like a tiger.

The little ones wanted to tell us what the art meant. We wanted to hear.

Delightful conversations were born of it all. People who had never met before felt at home with each other. Young connected with old, and old with young. Steuben County connected with Cayuga County; Livingston, with Tompkins.

Nowhere was this sense of belonging to one another more evident than in the prayer service at which we celebrated our baptism. We recalled that miracle of grace in our lives with a sprinkling rite in which we used water brought by families and pooled in a common font. People brought it from the spectacular lakes and waterways of our region. One person added water from the River Jordan.

I wish I could express well all that it meant to me to sprinkle such a great assembly with water from that font on Sunday. I can only tell you that it made me deeply grateful for my baptismal call, one that I share with all who gathered that day.

The moment also filled me with a sense of joy about my ministry as bishop. I suppose that is because the ritual spoke to me about my responsibility, in season and out — the healing, forgiveness, new life and sense of belonging that it symbolized.

For a day of delight and joy I thank all who planned the day and all who attended. I give special thanks for special memories to Mary, the rainbow child and the wonderful tiger.

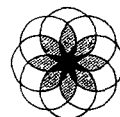
Peace to all.

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