

## Energizing trips to Penn Yan, Alabama

Notes on some recent activities:

1) I need to back up a week to thank the people of St. Michael's Parish, Penn Yan, for a wonderful celebration of their 150th anniversary. Their founding goes back to the days when our 12 counties were a part of the Diocese of Buffalo with John Timon as bishop.

It was a pleasure to join the parish on that occasion. To me, the event was yet another experience of the hospitality of that warm community. I told the congregation that when I think of the parish, two aspects of their life always come to my mind. One is the hospitality I just mentioned. When I visit the people at St. Michael's I find that they are unfailingly hospitable. And I don't mean just to me. I have observed them offering the same gift to the many visitors that come to them for a big piece of the year.

A second observation: For as long as I can remember, the parish has been well represented at all manner of diocesan programs — Rites of Election, Ministry Days, ThanksGiving Appeal meetings and the like. They are always there in good number and in good cheer.

It is a pleasure to celebrate in their church. The renovation they did in the '80s has served them very well and has stood the test of time. A photo in the sacristy brought back happy memories of the day of its rededication. Father Bill Michatek, the pastor at the time, and I were in it. So was Bill's predecessor, Father Mickey McVeigh, who since has died. I was reminded just before we began the liturgy that it was the anniversary of Mickey's death.

I confess that I spent some time on the

### along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

way home thinking that this parish did a beautiful job of renovating their church, that they did it in peace and that they continue to delight in it.

2) I was in Birmingham, Ala., from Thursday through Sunday last week for the annual convention of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers. I am serving as episcopal liaison to that group and have enjoyed the experience immensely. Being with them always gives me a charge of energy. That comes from the enthusiasm, faith and deep affection these women and men bring to their ministry with and on behalf of our great young people. I think that being with them also reminds me of the delight it is to be with the young people of our diocese.

The planning committee invited me to lead a mini-retreat on Friday. This was the first time they had included such an opportunity in the convention program. I think they did so because participants at earlier conventions had suggested the idea. The planners were curious about how many would make the retreat option. I was too. But what really intrigued me were other questions: Why

those who did so made the choice for a retreat? What format for a retreat did they expect? What did they hope to gain from the day?

As it turned out, it was an enlivening experience. We spent some time at the beginning of our five hours together looking at those questions. Most wanted to step aside from the rush of daily activities, pray and share faith experience with peers in ministry and be open to whatever I might wish to share with them. Our day was peaceful, easy-going and quite informal, but I do think that we were able in a modest way to draw all of those values into the experience. I can tell you that the honest faith and sharing of those generous men and women inspired me.

Another special moment for me came when I celebrated the Eucharistic Liturgy with Bishop David Foley of Birmingham and the over 1,800 youth ministers who came from all over our country to be at the convention. I was thrilled to preach the homily on that occasion. It was a privilege to do it. But the holiness of the assembly reminded me of how humbling the ministry of preaching can be.

Yes, there was a lively delegation from our diocese in Birmingham — a group of 27. The whole group got together for dinner on Thursday evening. That was the only time we assembled, but we saw one another frequently through the course of the days. You can be very proud of them and of all who so generously work with our kids. When and if you run into them, please offer them the encouragement of your gratitude.

Peace to all.



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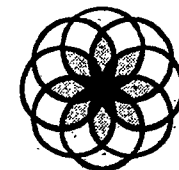
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