

Cathedral staffing mirrors pastoral changes

I met Father Larry Murphy in September of 1957 when I entered St. Bernard's Seminary. We were together there for only one year. In June of 1958, Larry was ordained for the Diocese of Rochester. I went off to Rome for theological studies the next year and was ordained in 1962 for the Diocese of Albany. We did not meet again until I came back to Rochester in 1979.

I remembered Larry through the years. One reason for that was our common interest in sports — participating in them and rooting for the New York Yankees. But I also admired the way he carried himself. He was quiet and kind and very much interested in other people, traits that are evident in him even to this day.

At supper recently, Larry and Father John Mulligan were reminiscing about their years at Sacred Heart Cathedral with Bishop Lawrence B. Casey, auxiliary bishop to Bishop James E. Kearney and long time pastor of Sacred Heart. John grew up in the parish under Bishop Casey. Larry served as parish priest with the bishop.

The two of them had many affectionate stories to tell about Bishop Casey. Clearly, their memories of him put them in touch with a person who was very important in their lives. The stories also bring back to awareness friendships that began in those days and continue even

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

now. I know that I love to hear the stories because they help me to connect with a history and a set of relationships of which I was not a part at their beginnings.

If there is a wonderful sense of continuity conveyed in those stories, there is also a reminder of some dramatic changes. For example, as Larry told stories about table conversations at Sacred Heart, it dawned on me that he was referring to Bishop Casey, the pastor, and four parochial vicars (called curates or assistant pastors in those days). Although he had substantial responsibilities at the diocesan level, Bishop Casey was a hands-on pastor. But he also had four full-time priests to assist him in service to the parish. In addition another priest would come to assist each weekend.

I would add that Bishop Casey was then and John Mulligan is now 62 years of age. The four assistants in Bishop Casey's day were in their 30s and early

40s. Now, John, who also has substantial diocesan responsibilities, has no full-time priests serving Sacred Heart parish with him. He does have the generous sacramental assistance of Father Jerry Connor, one of our senior priests.

That moment at table was another reminder that a diminishing number of priests and an aging clergy are realities already with us. And we can be sure that in the short run we'll be fewer in number and older. In light of all that, we need to prepare ourselves on several fronts to do the best we can to provide the best possible pastoral service to all of our communities. As I did last week, I ask you to be as well-informed as you can be about these issues, to support your parish priests with prayer and understanding and to contribute what you can to the pastoral outreach of your parish community.

Our goal is not to re-create the circumstances and models of pastoral service from the days when Father Larry worked with Bishop Casey. Much has happened in the church since then that changes the way in which we think about priestly ministry and the priesthood of the faithful. What we need to do is to work together to give the best expression we can in today's circumstances to the compassion of Christ for all. I am sure that we can do that if we remain one in faith and affection.

Peace to all.

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