

New day has dawned for lay ministry

I enjoyed my Sunday visit to St. Margaret Mary Parish, Irondequoit. The community was hospitable. They celebrated with spirit, and participation was outstanding. I noted especially their inclusion of their young people in liturgical ministries.

One young girl, Kelly Bates, debuted as cantor and leader of the community's song. I never had a chance to ask her if she was nervous about being cantor. If she was, it did not show. To me she seemed peaceful and poised. Her voice was clear; her gestures, confident and true.

It may have helped that her dad was lector at the same liturgy. And that her mother and siblings were in the first row quietly, but obviously, cheering her on. I tried to put myself in her dad's shoes during the liturgy. I can only imagine the joy the moment held for him, or the memories it evoked of Kelly's life and growth.

When I entered the church before Mass, one of the kids greeted me and offered me worship materials for the day. Later on, a small team from the same generation passed down the aisles to take up the Sunday offering.

They impressed me in their manner and their method, and made me very happy that in our diocese we are committed to encouraging this kind of participation by our young people. I thank the kids

along the way

By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



for their excellent service and the parish for encouraging it.

To those who trained these boys and girls, I extend a special gratitude. The confidence and poise of the young ones — and the quality of their ministry — testify to the respect and care that so many invested in their training.

Nancy DeRycke has had much to do with that. Nancy is serving as the temporary pastoral administrator of St. Margaret Mary until we make a new round of pastoral assignments during the month of June. Nancy is a lay person who is well trained in theology and ministry.

Her commitment on behalf of our people is a gift to the church. Nancy and a growing number of her sisters and brothers in the same ministry are providing pastoral leadership in parishes to which, for a time at least, we cannot assign a full-time priest. In the short run their number

will increase. In the longer run, I hope that we will have a full number of priests and still enjoy a wealth of people like Nancy to serve the pastoral needs of the people of our diocese in such critical areas as catechetics, youth and young adult ministry, care of the sick, social ministry, etc.

When I was a boy, I never imagined that there would come a day when Kelly would lead the congregational song at Mass or that her dad would proclaim the Scripture in the English language at the same celebration. It thrills me that that day has come.

When I was a boy, I never thought that we would not have at least one residential priest for very parish. Nor did I ever imagine that we would know the blessings of such a group of ecclesial lay ministers as we experience in our diocese. I wish the former was not true; but I rejoice that the second is the case.

My friends, we live in exciting times. There is much to think about, much to learn and many adaptations we must make. Some of these things I would choose. Some I would not. About all of them I am confident. Why? Because of people like Nancy and Patrick and Kelly and the wonderful little ones who collected the offering on Sunday.

Peace to all.



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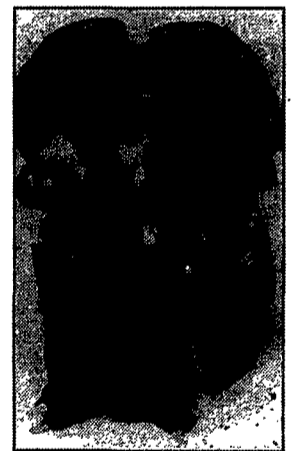


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