

Awareness grows at Lenten retreat

Sister Mary Louise Mitchell's talk tonight did me good. I thought it would when I learned of her theme: "Discovering the presence of God in each moment. Come learn simple ways of recognizing the Sacred in every day of your life."

That is something I believe in deeply, i.e. that God is part of all that is real. And, believing that, I do try to be aware of each moment for itself and what it may mean for my life. To put it in other words, I try not to let worries about yesterday or concerns about tomorrow take away my awareness of today. The rub is that I often fail to live out what I believe. The result is worry, tension and, perhaps worst of all, the feeling that so much depends on me that I really can't ever take my mind off the affairs of the day. Mind you, I know with certainty that that is not true. I'm just not that important. Nobody is.

So, when I went to hear Mary Lou speaking at the Lenten retreat for the people of Sacred Heart, Holy Rosary and Most Precious Blood parishes I did not go to have her convince me of the value of attentiveness to the present moment. My hope was that she would offer ideas that would help me do that more consistently, more peacefully, more fruitfully. I was not disappointed at all. She gave a number of practical suggestions I appreciated very much. But what I liked most and will remember longest is her simple statement that she does not always keep this awareness as well as she would like and has to keep working

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

on that value in her own life.

When she said that, I could feel the tension in my body ease. I think that is because of my above-mentioned tendency to take it all on myself and to require of myself a perfection that God would never require of any of us. Once again, I know it does not make sense to be a perfectionist in that sense. It is a destructive force, because it leads us to forget our dependence on our gracious God and separates us from a healthy interdependence on our sisters and brothers.

Yes, my body relaxed when Mary Lou acknowledged her own patient efforts to be faithful to something she knows to be important for her well-being. I also laughed to myself. Why? Because her reference to that struggle in her life cut through a huge distraction I was having at the moment.

Do you remember last week's Along the Way? I wrote about planning for the renovation of our Sacred Heart Cathedral and I asked you to think about what we should surely change and what we should be careful to preserve. Well, you guessed it. When

Mary Lou was speaking so beautifully about being present to the moment, I was answering my own questions about the renovation of our cathedral! I was glad for her encouragement not to worry about such lapses, but rather to return in confidence and peace to an awareness of God's abiding presence in all that is real.

As I write these words about God's presence in the moment, I think of the Rites of Election we celebrated last week at Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. Michael's, Penn Yan, and Immaculate Conception, Ithaca. There are few events I can think of that catch me up more in the richness of the moment than do these wonderful gatherings.

Among those gathered for the Rites there are lively memories of God's favor leading them to the moment. And certainly there is anticipation of the joys of Easter. But neither takes them from the moment. Rather they come together in such a way as to leave all in the assembly acutely aware of God's love within them and among them.

Dear friends, I hope you are enjoying this Lenten season, that you have been able to turn back to the Lord in any ways that seem right to you. As we continue our prayer for one another, please remember to pray also for our catechumens and candidates. I can tell you that they are an exciting group who will add much to our life.

I thank them and Mary Louise Mitchell for the enrichment they have brought to my Lenten journey.

Peace to all.



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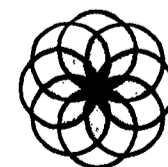
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