

Planning process needs input of all

In this week's *Catholic Courier*, you will find coverage of a Planning Group Leadership Day we held last Saturday at St. Mary's School, Waterloo. I hope you will take time to read the story of that meeting and that you will also take a few moments to go over the talk I gave during the program.

I do not wish to repeat what you will read there. But I do want to share some comments about the day, as I experienced it. Let me do so by touching briefly on a number of things that were of interest to me as the day unfolded:

1. We are blessed to have so many gifted, faithful women and men to do this difficult work. I am always impressed by their desire to do what is right and good for the people of their parishes and planning groups. The Synod resulted in a deeper knowledge of today's church in a great number of people. I think that Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium [PPNM] benefits from that experience. I also think it deepens it. It would be hard to imagine a time in our history when so many people participated so deeply in shaping our future.

2. One of their concerns is involving other men and women in leadership positions. I share that hope. The participation of a greater number would enrich PPNM with new ideas and energies; it would also give encouragement to and allow some rest

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

for those who have been at it for a long time.

3. A second concern of those who gathered in Waterloo is the challenge of finding ways to get their parishioners thinking about the issues and opportunities at hand, and to participate in finding ways to make the best of both. That is not an easy task. People are busy today. We all know that. They experience heavy demands on their time and energy. And think of some other challenges to good communication among us: (a) on a typical Sunday only 30 percent of our people participate in the Eucharistic liturgy, (b) fewer than one-half of our households receives the *Catholic Courier*, (c) there are no electronic or print media that cover all of our 12 counties. In their kind way, our friends at Waterloo were saying to you and to me, "We need your support."

4. Many voiced the hope, music to these

old ears, that we need to involve our young people appropriately in everything that matters to us and to them. We need their ideas, talents, energy and freshness. And they want us to honor their insights, share their dreams and open for them the treasures of our spiritual heritage. I think we share the conviction that our planning is to be not for the church of today or yesterday but for the church of tomorrow.

5. It was so good to hear the warm comments made about the ministry of Bill Pickett, Karen Rinefierd and Casey Lopata in PPNM. Bill directs the program; Casey and Karen work with the planning groups. There was never a time when people did not respect the three individuals. But the kind comments made about them on Saturday by those attending the session indicated to me that some of their early concerns had been put to rest. Will our larger neighbor swallow us up? Is this already decided and are we just going through the motions? Will anyone really listen to us?

6. I loved the sense of belonging to one another that was alive in the room. People were aware that we have much work to do. They know that it will not be easy. But they also know that with trust in the Lord and the pooling of our best ideas and efforts we can do some wonderful things and even have a very good time along the way.

Peace to all.


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