

Devotion of 91-year-old a blessed inspiration

Once again, I offer some notes and comments drawn from my experience of this Easter season:

1) At a confirmation at St. Patrick's and St. Anthony's, Elmira, last week, I met Rose Kingston, a former teacher at Elmira Free Academy and a longtime, devoted parishioner at St. Patrick's.

Father Walter Wainwright pointed Rose out to me before we started the liturgy and told me she was celebrating her 91st birthday that evening. He suggested that Rose would appreciate my greetings on that occasion.

Blessed Walter! Blessed Rose! It was a privilege to spend a moment with this faithful, loving woman. I think she would not mind if I shared with you what was on her mind as she prayed in those quiet moments before the liturgy began. Rose was remembering her parents and thanking God for the life God gave her through her parents' love for one another. She thought of her siblings, all now fully with God. And she said she could not think of a better way to conclude her birthday than to come to church to pray for and with the young candidates whom we were confirming in the Holy Spirit.

2) You may have a pastoral associate in your parish. If you do not, I trust you have met one or another in the course of your travels. If you have, you know what an important contribution they make to our parishes and to the life of our entire local church. They are persons whose study, pastoral experience and faith commitment qualify them and enrich them publicly to offer the pastoral service of our church to our faith communities.

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

As do so many of our pastoral ministers, our pastoral associates have formed an association for education, mutual support and enrichment. I meet with them occasionally, and was happy to do so last Friday. Their invitation included the request that I prepare a few thoughts about and lead a discussion on how to be a peacemaker in the midst of conflict situations. I was happy to accept that task and did so knowing full well that, while I might be able to help them, they would help me a great deal.

That intuition was correct. I did learn a great deal from them. Their willingness to share their rich and diverse experiences and the spirit in which they did so were strengthening gifts for me. I think you'll agree that people who go through experiences like our own can be a tremendous support. Rarely can they solve our problems. But just knowing that they understand and support us means a great deal. (You might think just for a moment of people in your lives who understand and support you because they have been where you are now.)

3) A Day with the Bishop is the name given (not by me!) to the annual convocation

of our diaconal community. From my point of view, it was a splendid experience. The overarching theme was a consideration of the new and/or deepened relationships to which deacons are called by virtue of their ordination - to God, to spouse, to faith community, to bishop, to their pastoral ministers, to one another.

Father Joseph Burke, SJ, gave the keynote address; Father John Colacino, CPpS, director of deacon formation, reported on progress made or concerns expressed at last year's convocation. Deacon David Palma, deacon personnel director, updated the community about recent developments in support of the diaconal community. My assignment was to offer some thoughts on the relationship between the bishop and deacons. I would have enjoyed that assignment under any circumstances. Because I had offered similar papers in recent months on priests and lay ministers, I found it doubly rewarding to add this piece to those two.

In my opinion, the day's content was rewarding. Of no less importance was the gathering, the body together, the community. There's strength in that. There always is. Such gatherings remind us of our interdependence - of the nature of our communion, which always pushes our boundaries and challenges our set ways of thinking.

4) I close with an unpaid, unsolicited plug for and expression of gratitude to St. Bernard's Institute. All of our deacons and the vast majority of our pastoral associates trained at SBI. Where would we be without them?

Peace to all.

MISSION NEWS



Many of the students enrolled at St. Francis Xavier Seminary in Sri Lanka have come from very poor families - barely able to afford the basic necessities of food, clothing and medicine, let alone pay the tuition for their sons to become priests. Father Nicholas, Rector,

says: "As the enrollment has increased every year, our seminarians depend even more on your generosity to provide financial assistance. If it were not for your kindness, these dedicated young men would be unable to complete their seminary training."

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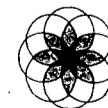
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