

Children offer hope for the future

It was one of the longest, most attractive cakes I have ever seen. When I first saw it, I wondered if it ever would be eaten. But that was before I saw all of the children who were there. When I saw them, I knew that the long cake had no chance for survival. I was right.

Those beautiful children did more than consume cake. They were very much a part of the worshipping community at St. Januarius in Naples as the parish celebrated its 125th anniversary on Sunday. (Photos of the event are on page 8.)

At the end of the beautiful liturgy, a chorus of children formed on the sanctuary steps and led us by voice and gesture in "This Little Light of Mine." As they sang, I noticed that the rest of the assembly was totally caught up in the experience.

The presence and activity of those beautiful children would have been engaging under any circumstances. But I also had a sense on Sunday that all of us were deeply drawn to them because they are such wonderful signs of hope and the possibility of renewal in a world that seems, once again, to be a dangerous place. And, if the kids are a sign of hope, they also are symbols of innocence and vulnerability we wish to pro-

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

tect and keep safe from all harm.

As I write these words, I do so with great gratitude and affection for the people of St. Januarius. Like so many of our parish communities, they have experienced a great deal of loss and the need to change in recent years. They have borne it all with good grace and — it seems to me, at least — have even deepened their wonderful community spirit. I am not only grateful for that; I am inspired by it. I wish them well as they begin their 126th year as a parish community.

My other story on Sunday was at St. Vincent's parish house in Churchville. A few months ago, Charlotte Bruney, pastoral administrator at St. Vincent's, proposed the idea of a program to engage the interest of young boys in the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood.

It seemed a good idea to me, so Charlotte and Patty Finnerty, our diocesan director of vocation awareness, developed a program and, with the consent of parents, invited the boys to attend.

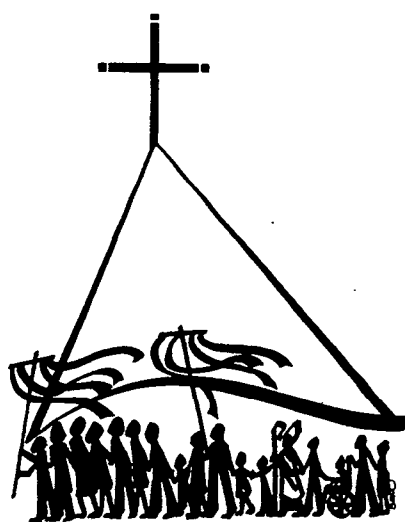
It was delightful to be with the 11 boys who attended. Their range of age was 13-16 years. And, although some manifested a shyness appropriate to their age, none seemed the least bit intimidated by the adults present.

We had good conversation about vocations in general — to marriage, to the single life, vowed religious life, to priesthood. I had an opportunity to tell them a little about the development of my own vocation, and they had the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the themes and discussion of the day.

I am very grateful for Charlotte's initiative. Not only did I enjoy the experience with the kids, but it got me thinking about the importance of talking about vocations — the whole range of vocations — with even the very young. If, as we believe, God calls us each by name, isn't it important that we encourage our kids to think about that remarkable gift, and to pray that they will always be open to God's call in our lives? Peace to all.



“Love one another as I have loved you”
(John 15:12)



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