

Celebrating an old parish and a new abbot

I write to you this Monday afternoon from a quiet place in the motherhouse of our Sisters of St. Joseph. I find myself between commitments on the east side of Rochester, and the sisters graciously allowed me to spend some time here in the interval.

This has always been a peaceful place for me, but I appreciate being here today in a special way. I think that's because my life has been quite full lately and these quiet moments help me to appreciate what's been happening, to learn and grow through it all.

For example, I think about being with the people of Blessed Sacrament, Rochester, yesterday as they celebrated their 100th anniversary. Because I write about such celebrations so often, you know that I find them deeply life-giving and encouraging. I find that the pride and joy people take in their faith is deeply encouraging. I love the way communities celebrate and give thanks for their mothers and fathers in faith. Their generous embrace of sisters and brothers in need, their sense of communion with the larger church, and their hopes for the future constantly nourish my spirit.

The way in which Blessed Sacrament Parish embodied all of these realities and values in their celebration yesterday is a story far richer than I can tell here. But exemplary of the ways they did so are the following:

1) Their affectionate tribute to their founding pastor, Msgr. Thomas Connors, and the place of honor given to his family reconnected us all to those to whom we owe our faith — family, teachers, pastors, faithful friends. Some of you may be unaware that Msgr. Connors was pastor of Blessed Sacrament for 62 years!

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

2) The parish's strong commitment to sharing food and clothing with others for the love of Christ was part of my awareness as I celebrated with them. The folks don't talk about it very much, but day in and day out they stand with sisters and brothers in need in generous and loving ways.

3) The celebration was a reunion for many who belong to others parishes now but returned to Blessed Sacrament to celebrate their roots, to express their gratitude for the contribution the community made to them at another time in their lives. They reminded me strongly of our interrelationships, the larger communion of faith to which we all belong.

The liturgy was a wonderful one. I had a sense of people standing on spiritual tiptoe as we prayed together. They were alive, confident together in their love for our faith. I sensed in them a desire to bring to tomorrow their very best in our common effort to love God and neighbor in the Spirit of Christ and to do that in word and in work.

Let me mention another memorable event — a first in my life. It was a Eucharist Liturgy at the Abbey of the Genesee at which we blessed their recently elected abbot, Dom

John Denburger, OCSO. You read about Dom John in the October 4 issue of the *Catholic Courier*, and I know that you embrace him and the Trappist community in your prayers. Daily they offer us that gift.

The church was fully present at that ceremony this morning, even though our numbers were relatively small. I mean this: Celebrating there were the people of God — faithful laity both married and single, women and men religious — some from contemplative communities, come from active apostolic ones, deacons, diocesan and religious priests and a bishop of the church.

There were people from Asia and Africa, Europe and North America. There were some very young people, quite a few of us seasoned people and people representing all age groups in between.

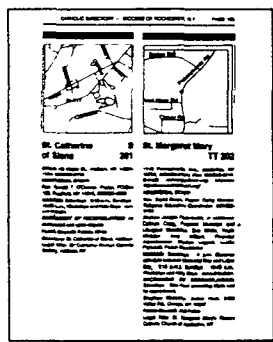
That quiet place of prayer held us all today. The event reminded me that we are all called to a life of prayer. This celebration also renewed in me the awareness that the dynamism, joys and sorrows, aspirations, struggles and celebrations of our local church are all present and alive in the prayer of our brother and the monastery every day of the year. For all of us, I thank them for that daily gift.

A closing note: I shall be out of town from Nov. 8-15. I'll be in Baltimore first to present a workshop at a convention sponsored by the National Pastoral Life Institute. Next I shall be in Washington for the regular November meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I'll keep you updated on both events. In the meantime, please continue your prayers for healing and reconciliation in our community.

Peace to all.

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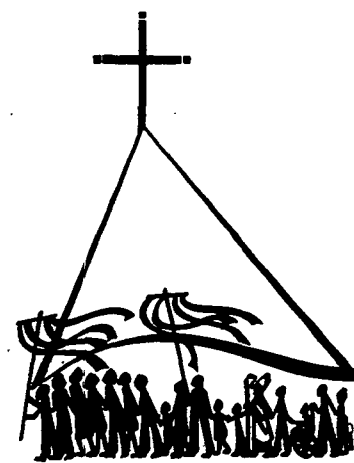
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