

Blessings of Thanksgiving week

God is good.

That's a safe lead sentence for Thanksgiving week, don't you think? I begin in that fashion because of the holiday and because the theme of gratitude has been with me all day. Thought and prayer on that theme began as I drove to Savannah on this Sunday morning for the 125th anniversary of St. Patrick's Parish. As I traveled east on Route 31, nature spoke to me in the brightness of the sky and in the quiet mid-November beauty of the countryside. It was peaceful and quiet. I enjoyed the tranquility of the morning, the more so after a week of meetings in Baltimore and Washington since I was last in touch with you.

Though the pace changed, the peace of the morning suffered no interruption when I arrived at St. Patrick's. The parishioners were most gracious in their welcome and hospitality at the Eucharistic Liturgy and at the sumptuous meal which followed in the parish hall.

My experience with them left me with the strong impression that they are very proud of their parish. They have an obvious and healthy sense of responsibility to one another. They also convey awareness that they are a part of our diocesan church. They were very much engaged in our Synod. They participate generously in

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



our Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium, especially with St. John's in Clyde. A pleasurable moment for me came when Father Jim Hewes, pastor of St. John's and St. Patrick's, thanked and congratulated both communities for exceeding their goals for this year's Thanks Giving Appeal.

As I drove home, I thanked God for the gifts of life and faith — not in the abstract but as embodied in the daily activities of those with whom I had just shared such good bread. And, remembering them, I thanked God that every day of my life I meet individuals like them. I mean people who love their faith, who know the Lord in prayer, in acts of service and in love shared with others. They are people who are aware of their imperfections and those of others. And yet, touched by grace, they are aware of and grateful for God's faith-

ful love in Christ. They are willing to reconcile, bind up wounds and move ahead in charity.

I thank Father Jim and all at St. Patrick's for connecting me with our mothers-and fathers in faith today. I thank them for the witness of their own faith and for their abundant and warm hospitality. I thank them for making me so much aware of the wonderful goodness of the people of our diocese. You renew my hope and deepen my confidence in Christ's promise to be with us always, even until the end of the world.

God willing, I'll be heading for my sister's home following a 9:30 a.m. Thanksgiving Day liturgy at Sacred Heart Cathedral. I look forward to that because it gathers so many of the family with all the joy that such gatherings can bring.

I hope that you, too, will have the opportunity to spend time with loved ones during this holiday weekend. But, whatever the case, I hope that you have a moment to think about life, to thank God for that precious gift and for all that you would name as blessings of your life.

Please accept my affectionate good wishes and the promise of my prayers that God will bless you and your loved ones on Thanksgiving Day.

Peace to all.



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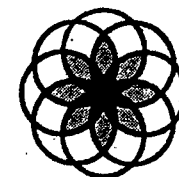
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