

## Rite of Election is always new, exciting

When I wrote last week about our Rites of Election, I did so with an enthusiasm born of years of experience with those celebrations.

At this writing, we have completed three of the five. I can tell you honestly that these gatherings continue to renew my hope and recharge my spiritual batteries.

I have tried to think about why that is so. Why does this rite – which I have celebrated for so many years – seem so exciting and new each time I preside at it?

Here are a few reflections on that question:

1. Those who participate bring to the celebration a palpable sense of joy and hope. Catechumens eagerly look forward to new life in Christ that will be theirs in baptism. Candidates – already baptized persons who wish to complete the Sacraments of Initiation as a member of our faith community – seek a life, an experience of God that is deeper than anything they have known before. And the rest of us – those already fully initiated – draw encouragement for repentance and re-conversion from our sisters and brothers seeking election as candidates for full initiation at the Easter Vigil.

2. I am deeply conscious at these events that God works in unexpected and wonderful ways in the minds and hearts of

### along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



those elected for the Easter sacraments. Some hear the call at an early age; to others it comes when they are well along in years. For some individuals the call seems clear from the beginning and remains so as it unfolds. For others, every moment and each new step tests the spirit.

Their stories are rich and varied. No two are alike, but all of them, when shared, are inspirations to those privileged to hear them. What makes them so wonderful, so appealing is that they are deeply rooted in human experiences with which we can all identify. The loving example of faithful people is somehow a part of every story. Spouses and fiancés figure deeply in them; so do children. The generous faith of co-workers, fellow students, pastors and mentors have tremendous influence on seekers. Sometimes their impact is clear and immediate – a flash, a surprise. At

other times, such influence is there for a long time – quiet and consistent – before it registers.

3. Always, the event is a reminder that the Spirit of Christ pursues us, calls us to a deeper, more loving relationship with God and neighbors every day that we live. That goes for the widow and widower, married folks, women and men religious, single people, teens, little boys and girls, priests and bishops.

During this Lenten season, the Lord calls all of us to new life and deeper love, asking only that we turn away from sin and believe the Gospel. I always believe that deep down in my heart, but my belief inevitably starts running again when I am in the company of those celebrating the Rite of Election. Their sense of call reminds me of my own. The depth of their confidence in Christ deepens mine.

I hope that you have had opportunity to respond to the Lord's call during this holy season. If you haven't, remember that now is as good a time as any to begin. You might start by asking: Lord, what do you ask of me in preparation for the Easter feast? Then do two things: Listen patiently for the Lord's voice and remember that the affectionate prayer of the church supports you.

Peace to all.

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