

Children serve as a reminder of Jesus' call

A few brief notes about Lent.

We are now three weeks into this holy season. I hope that you have been able to spend some time in prayer for our sisters and brothers who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. I also hope that you have prayed for our entire community — that we will all prepare well for the renewal of our baptismal promises on Easter Sunday.

At every stage of life, in all circumstances, God calls us to new life in Christ. It is so easy to lose sight of that when the going gets tough or when we are called to travel paths we never would have chosen for ourselves. This is a time to remember to turn away from dead-end ways of living and thinking, and to turn back to Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.

During these weeks, I have tried to be especially attentive to the voice and leading of God who speaks to me in prayer, in my work, in the voices of friends and in the witness of our faith community. I have made an honest attempt to fold into daily living some expression of the prayer, fasting and almsgiving to which we are all called in this special season of repentance and preparation for Easter.

Why, then, have I been feeling restless and edgy and fearful that discouragement was beginning to take root in my spirit? I have tried to face that question to find

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

out where it comes from, what to do about it.

I have been dealing with some painful issues and complex questions lately. This is never easy, but it is not a new experience either. The same has been true many times over the years.

Could it be because there are no immediately evident, absolutely sure answers to some of those questions? Answer: same as above. I have experienced that frequently in the past. I often say, only half kidding, that there are more questions in life than there are answers — at least with respect to clear-cut, at-the-fingertip answers.

After some prayer and thinking, it finally dawned on me what the source was of the unrest I was experiencing. You've heard it before from me: I was, for all practical purposes, caught in the illusion that I was responsible for dealing

with all of the hard issues alone. I don't mean without the help of generous co-workers; I almost always invite their help and support, and they always respond generously. I mean that I was not surrendering these challenges to the power of God. It is always important to think, to work, to strive. But it is never helpful to forget that only God's goodness gives fruit to our labors.

How did I get out of the rut? I wish I could tell you that the fresh freedom I experience in this regard was the result of some brilliant insight, or that it flowed from an all-night prayer vigil.

The truth is that I am out of that rut through pure gift. The gift was an experience with a gym full of St. Louis School kids who gathered for an assembly. I went there to read *Green Eggs and Ham* for them and came away with wonderful gifts: the warmth of their hospitality, the joy of their song, and the gift of their attentiveness to peers and to me.

It's difficult to explain it all. I can only tell you that those kids reminded me of the call of Jesus — not to fret or to stew, but to consider the lilies of the field ...

I thank them for the gift — every one of them. And I thank God for the gift of all our children who change our hearts and bring new hope to our spirits.

Peace to all.

Notre Dame Retreat House



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