

Holy Week events bring joy, hope

Easter night.

I am at my sister and brother-in-law's home in Waterford, N.Y. The house is quiet now. Helen and Jim are putting some final touches on the day and will soon sit down to watch the opening game of the Major League Baseball season, the Cleveland Indians vs. the California Angels.

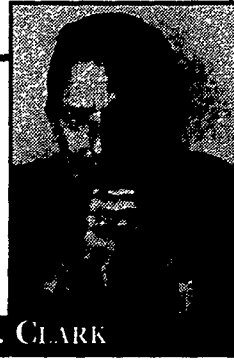
The others who gathered here for Easter dinner have gone home — Margaret, Doug and Liam McMahan to Baldwinsville; John Esposito, Mary Ellen and Patrick Early, Mark and Kathleen Grignon, and Grace Early have returned to their homes in Waterford. Father Tom Powers, our dear family friend, is back at St. Theresa's in Albany, where he is pastor. The Neff family — Jane, Scott, Julie and Megan — weren't with us this time, and we missed them.

It was an absolutely wonderful gathering. Our hosts served an elegant meal. It was a leisurely time with much story telling, catching up with one another and a good deal of laughter. An added feature at the meal was a celebration of Mark's birthday. He turned 27 today and seemed pleased that it fell on a feast day that gathered the family.

The reunion with family was a perfect way to end what seemed to me an especially beautiful Holy Week. I always enjoy these most solemn days in the Christian calendar. This year the days seemed richer than ever for reasons that I can not fully identify.

Certainly, a significant factor was the faith and good spirit of those who participated in the Holy Week liturgies at the cathedral. They entered into the celebration with joyful hearts all through the week and seemed attentive to those who gathered with them. And surely we were all touched by the generosity of musicians and singers, those who proclaimed the word, served at the altar, prepared the sanctuary or in any way made the cele-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

brations so beautiful.

And, there is little doubt in my mind that the celebration of Our Lord's passion, death and resurrection meant something special to us all in the midst of the deep pain of the sexual-abuse issues with which we have been dealing in recent weeks.

It was not my sense that anyone was running from the issue as though our reverent celebrations would somehow make it all go away. Rather, I had a sense that people sought the grace of the Lord so that we, like him, could move through suffering and come to new life in imitation of him.

Though it's not new to me at Sacred Heart Cathedral, I was particularly aware these days that we are over the years becoming a more diverse community. I rejoice in that fact because praying with people of different colors, people of all ages, people with illness and physical and emotional challenges is a source of life for all of us. It is a beautiful reminder that we are all children of God, that we need the love and support of others if we are to become fully what God wants us to be.

The source of the joy and strengthened hope I experienced during Holy Week was not rooted exclusively in the liturgical celebration at Sacred

Heart Cathedral. I think of two events in particular that I remember with delight and considerable gratitude, both on Wednesday.

The first was at All Saints Catholic Academy where we broke ground for the new wing that will allow us to enhance programs and accommodate more students at the junior high school. The students impressed me deeply, as did the prayer service prepared for the occasion. It was a special moment to be with those young people, praying with them in word and song that God would bless this work of our hands, and bless all who are or who will be a part of the All Saints family.


The second Wednesday event was a soup lunch with the students of St. Ambrose School. Can you imagine some 250 kindergarten through sixth-grade students eating a lunch of soup, crackers and water — and doing it in complete and prayerful silence?

Yet, that's just what they did. I was quite amazed by it all and honored to share the lunch with them. I stand in admiration of the way the students conducted themselves, and of the principal, teachers, volunteers and parents who helped the students have such a rewarding experience.

It was about prayer. It was about what we need, not about what we desire. It put us in touch with others who live in want, and with God who is the source of all goodness. It helped us all to listen to the often quiet voice of God in a world in which silence is a rare commodity, in which there are so few easy opportunities to be still. It was an experience I shall not soon forget.

That's enough from me for one day. I just wanted to share with you the joy of these days, and to express the hope that during the Easter season we'll all have many opportunities to know Christ better because we have seen him in our sisters and brothers.

Peace to all.



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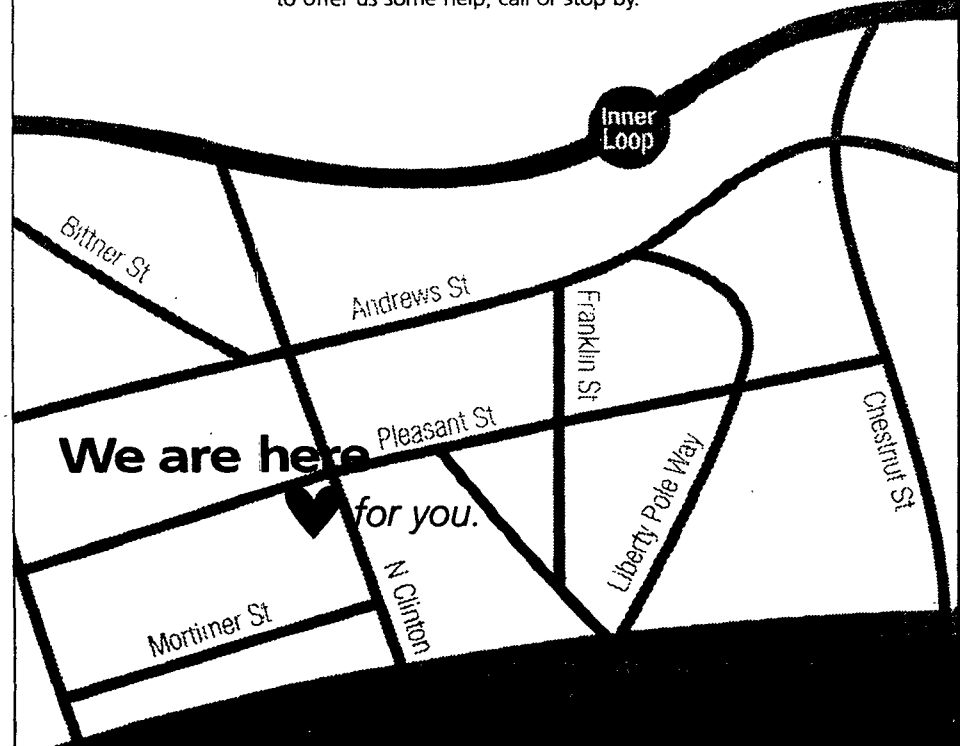
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