

Events reveal faith and trust in the future

Some notes on recent events:

1) I just returned from an evening meeting at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse with a group of women and men religious. They represented most of the religious congregations that live and minister in our diocese.

We hold these meetings once a year. The theme for this year's gathering was changes congregations are experiencing or planning, and the impact of those changes on our local church.

It will not surprise you to know that most groups reported that their membership is decreasing and the average age of membership is rising because of the small number of applicants they have been receiving.

What may surprise you is the commitment to, and optimism about, the future that these good women and men manifested. This is based on their experience of young inquirers — and even a fair number of older ones — who are attracted to religious life because they have a desire for solid spirituality, community life and worthwhile activity to which they can devote their lives. Those who spoke tonight bore strong hopes that — although the days of large numbers of applicants each year are probably over — we can anticipate an upswing in the number of young women and men interested in religious life.

If those values appeal to you and give rise to a curiosity about religious life, I am sure that your interest would be most welcome and receive prompt response. If I can help you connect with someone with whom to explore this possibility, I would be happy

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

to assist.

2) Yesterday was Mother's Day. When my mother was living I tried, usually with success, to get home to join the family in honoring the motherhood of my mother and my sister, Helen.

The day was special for that reason. But the delight was heightened because over the years we combined birthdays that fall close to Mother's Day with that celebration. Those are the birthdays of Grace, Mary Ellen Early and Megan Neff (Jane's daughter) on May 13 and of our dear friend, Father Tom Powers, on May 14. It was typical of my mother and Helen that they took delight in the expanded celebration and the people who shared honors with them on Mother's Day.

I didn't make it home yesterday, but I called last evening and got a complete report from my brother-in-law, Jim. There were three mothers there yesterday — Helen, Jane and Mary Ellen. Margaret, the other mother in the family, is expecting again and decided to stay at home for the feast. All four of the birthday people I mentioned above were there. I can tell you that

Megan celebrated her fifth birthday yesterday. I will not indicate the ages of the other three except to say that they have all achieved their majority.

Kathleen is the only one of my nieces I haven't mentioned. She was at the party with her husband, Mark. I have no doubt that Kathleen was in the center of things. That's where she can be found in most circumstances. If you are a Yankees fan you will understand when I tell you that Kathleen is the Reggie Jackson of our family — the straw that stirs the drink!

3) I celebrated and preached the liturgies at St. Pius Tenth this weekend. I wanted to be with the parishioners to support them in the suffering they have experienced in recent days and to begin to look at future possibilities with them.

While it is a tender situation, I can't say that I went with any fear or with high levels of apprehension. I have been around long enough to know the strong faith and genuine kindness of the people of this diocese.

But, I have to tell you that I was quite moved by my experience of the parish community during that visit. They were saddened by recent events, of course. Yet, even in the grieving, they were future-oriented, confident and ready to do all they can to help one another move on with the parish.

I do thank all at St. Pius Tenth for the gift they were to me last weekend. I remain deeply impressed by and grateful for the strong witness to the faith they showed me. I know that they have the support of our prayers during this difficult time.

Peace to all.

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