

Special events spark memories, renewed hope

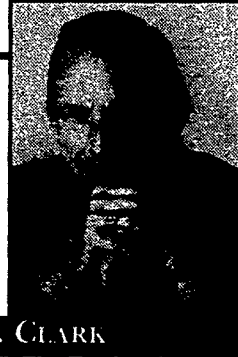
Memorial Day weekend is over and we soon move into June. For most of us this time of year is filled with special events. Weddings, graduations, first Communions, confirmations, ordinations and anniversaries dot our calendars. Such events bring great joy to their celebrants and to all those who share the moment with them. And — as usually happens — these celebrations are deepened by the memories and hopes that attach to them.

An example of that for me was a visit to St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads this past weekend. I preached at all of the weekend liturgies, to express my affection and support for the parish as they go through the pain of losing their pastor. I also wanted to update them on the process by which we fill pastoral vacancies, and how the process is going in this case. The people were just wonderful, as they always are, and I enjoyed my time with them a great deal.

In the midst of it all — and for reasons I can't fully understand — I kept remembering my first visit to St. Mary Our Mother in November 1979. It may be because the occasion of that visit was the dedication of their newly constructed church. It was the first time I presided at the rite of dedica-

along the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



tion, a rite that I have grown to love more and more over the years. A big part of the memory is, of course, the priests, pastoral ministers and people who have formed the community over the years. The parish has always been hospitable, generous in their service of others and in their cooperation with me.

On Friday evening and Saturday morning I had confirmation and first Holy Communion at St. Patrick, Owego, for parishioners of that parish, St. Francis of Assisi, Catonk, and St. John the Evangelist, Newark Valley.

At St. Patrick's the presider's chair is quite close to the first pew. At one of the celebrations, I noticed that the mother, dad and daughter just in front of me were very

attentive to one another and much engaged in the celebration. In fact, I made some reference to that in my homily.

After the celebration I was chatting with them and the mother said, "Do you know that you confirmed me 20 years ago in this very church?" She even mentioned that I had fussed over the tight curls in her hair at the time.

I loved the exchange. I suppose that's because the young mother shared an experience of liturgy that certainly was important in the present moment, but which also drew from it a sense of her own journey of faith and God's fidelity to her through the years. It goes without saying I am sure that the celebration drew the woman not only to a happy memory in her own life, but also to joyful hope for all of her daughter's years.

Do you have any special events on your calendar during June? If so, I encourage you to be mindful of how events of significance celebrated in the present moment so often bring with them a deepened appreciation of past experiences and renewed hope for the future. I hope you have a wonderful June.

Peace to all.



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