

Pains of past year accompanied by blessings

On the June 27 publication date of this issue of the *Catholic Courier*, I will be beginning my annual retreat. This year I will be making an eight-day directed retreat at a Jesuit retreat center in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It will be a return visit to that lovely place. My memories of a retreat there three or four summers ago are very positive, and my anticipation of another time of prayer there is joyful.

The retreat comes at a very good time. This year has been an especially challenging one, even a painful one, for many of us. The horror of September 11 stunned us collectively and individually in ways we are even yet trying to understand and deal with effectively. The pain of it all is deep and slow to heal. Our sense of security has been sadly shaken, giving birth to a sense of vulnerability that is new to us. We struggle with the realization that — while many in other nations admire the United States and much that we stand for — among others, aspects of our foreign and economic policy are the cause of deep and wide-spread bitterness toward us. It is all unsettling, but it unites us to become acquainted as best we can about how our national policies affect other people for good and for ill.

And, of course, we have all borne the pain of the sexual-abuse issue that has been in front of us every day for months. I have written about it here on several occasions during the past several weeks. Today I do not wish or need to go into it any further.

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

It's just that it is impossible to omit it in any review of the year.

I still pray for the day when the people of Spiritus Christi will return to our family of faith. I pray daily for such reconciliation, and do so with hope even though some of their recent decisions take them farther away from us.

Having mentioned causes of concern that can so easily absorb great amounts of time and energy, I want to express my thanks to all of you who day after day quietly do the work of the Gospel. I think of hundreds of pastoral ministers — religious, lay and ordained, paid and volunteer — who generously give of themselves in service of their sisters and brothers. They teach the young, comfort the afflicted, preach the Gospel, care for the sick, prepare people for the sacraments and celebrate those sacred rites with and for the people.

I think of those men and women — married, single, widowed — who live the Gospel each day. They are salt and light in their

homes, in their work places, in their social circles and among those with whom they share their good gifts. I see enough of them to know that they don't do it for praise, thanks or glory. They do it because they want to imitate Christ in his disposition toward and behavior with others. As I see it, these incredible people become more like him every day.

Very much on my mind these days are our young people. I have said to you often that they have much to offer us. For that reason, and for their happy growth, I continually encourage their inclusion in the life of our parish communities in all ways for which they are gifted and prepared and in which they have interest. Without them our future will be very thin. I believe that many of our parishes have done wonderful work with and for our young people. I am deeply grateful for this and ask God's blessings on our continuing effort.

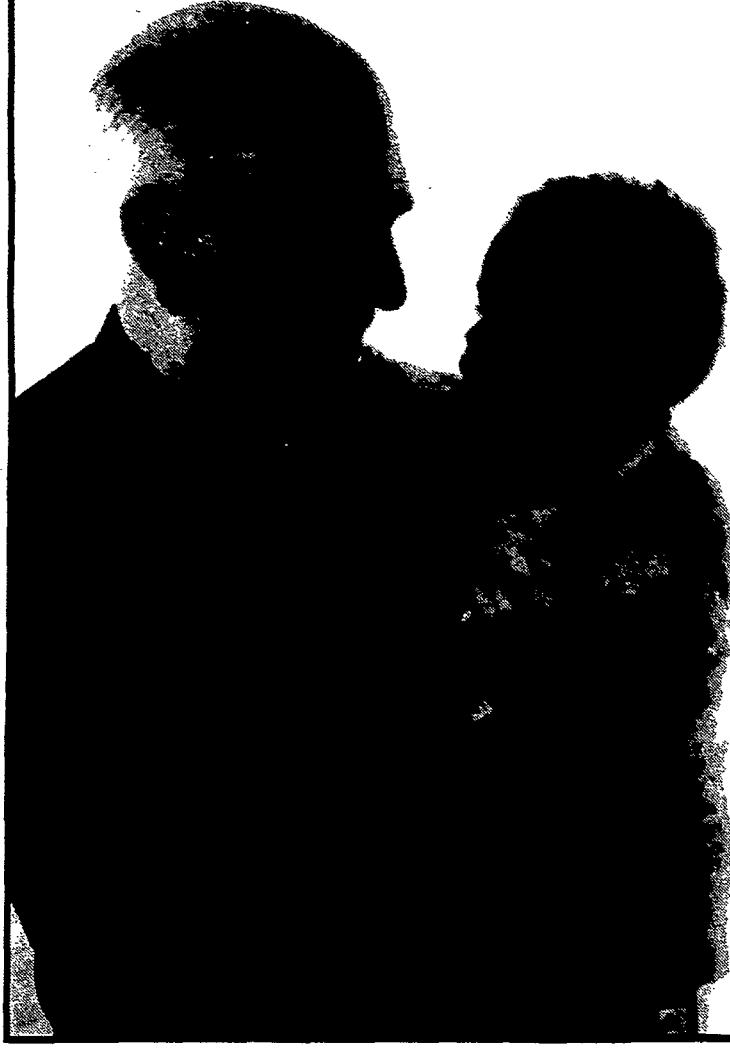
There are other persons and ways of service that come to mind just now. I cannot mention them all, but why don't you, if you have a moment, think about girls and boys, women and men who bring the Gospel alive for you, who inspire you to prayer and service that give life.

You can be sure of my prayers during retreat and vacation time to follow. I ask your continued support and prayers and look forward to greeting you here in our August 8 issue.

Peace to all.

A faith ever ancient ever new . . .

TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD THE FUTURE FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS



While the Gospel of the Lord is once again heard throughout Central and Eastern Europe, one cannot underestimate today's problems ...

- A large percentage of parishes still have no church or chapel. It is difficult to recover ecclesiastical property or receive permission to build a new church.
- The middle-aged, educated in the spirit of atheism, have little familiarity with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and must be catechized anew.
- Young people need good role models and teachers trained in the Catholic faith for their companions and instructors. They are searching for God while simultaneously being influenced by secularization.
- An acute shortage of priests and religious prevails, a shortage only partially filled by foreigners. New vocations require nurturing in newly re-established seminary and convent facilities.



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