

Feasts remind us of 'parents' in faith

November brings special awareness of our union with one another and with those who have gone before us — our mothers and fathers in faith. We begin the month with the feast of All Saints and follow immediately with the feast of All Souls. And so we are mindful of our relationships both with those already completely home with God, and with those who, like us, still walk by faith.

Were he still with us, Dad would celebrate his 94th birthday on November 8. I think of him often and speak to him from time to time, but never so often as I do at this time of the year.

There's no single theme to my words. Sometimes I ask for his prayers — for wisdom, courage, patience, trust or some other quality or virtue that I need. On other occasions, I talk with him about what's going on in my life. Every now and then, I say things to him that I wish I had said when he was still with us. And I even mention what I wish he had said or done — or vice versa — when I was growing up.

I suspect that I am not alone in that kind of conversation with



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

parents. As years go by, our experience helps us to be more and more aware of our limitations. When that happens we can be more at peace with ourselves.

We may continue to work hard, but we can learn to find joy and a sense of satisfaction somewhere short of perfection. We may ask much of ourselves, but we do so mindful of the fact that both the talents we have and the energy to use them are God's gifts to us.

There can be considerable peace and freedom in remembering that we are not masters but stewards of creation. When we appreciate such things about ourselves, it is much easier to offer the same kind of understanding to

those who came before us, to those who gave us life. As God leads me to a better self-understanding through the experience of years, so God leads me to a deeper understanding and love of my father through yet another November experience. I am very grateful for both gifts.

As I write, a worker is outside my office hanging re-framed pictures of all of the bishops of Rochester, yours truly included. I mention them not only because the sound of the hanging floats into my office, but also because they, too, are people with whom I have occasional conversations.

For me they represent our mothers and fathers in faith, people whose courage and vision laid foundations for this local church upon which we still build.

More than once I have called upon Bishops McQuaid, Hickey, O'Hern, Mooney, Kearney, Sheen and Hogan for their understanding, guidance and prayer. I have no doubt that all seven keep a lively interest in what we are about and pray that we will continue to grow in faith and freedom all the days of our lives.

As we move further in November, I invite you to be mindful of the people, now gone to God or still among us, who were or are salt and light for you. It is a grace of our faith that we can enjoy the strength of one another's prayer as we journey in faith. It is a grace of our faith, and a source of unshakable confidence, to know that we shall one day all meet again when Christ returns in glory. Then we shall see God as God truly is and, in that vision, come to know one another in full and wonderful ways.

A related note: A few weeks ago I mentioned to you that I had lost my appointment book. I told you I was praying to Saints Anthony and Therese, the Little Flower, for its recovery and asked for your prayers as well.

I am happy to tell you that I found the book and wish to thank you for your prayers. I'll tell you now — because I know that you will ask — that I found it in a pocket of my suitcase, one that I swear I searched carefully when I discovered the loss. But then ... well, you understand.

Peace to all.

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