

# Faith unites varied communities

Two events I am thinking about on this blustery Monday morning:

1) I installed Father Bill Laird as pastor of St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls, on Saturday. It was a delightful experience to preside and preach at that eucharistic liturgy, to encourage Bill to loving pastoral care of the community, to encourage the community to support Bill in his life and ministry among them. I have no doubt that both will happen in wonderful ways.

An added benefit for me was the chance to spend an hour or so before the liturgy with a group of teens and young adults of the parish. They, of course, are deeply curious about Father Bill. Will he drop by when we meet and talk with us and have pizza? Will he come to our plays and games and other events? Will he allow us, encourage us to participate in the life of the parish?

Based on my knowledge of Bill, I could say a "yes" to all of the above. But, I also encouraged them to let their new pastor know of their desire to have his company and to allow him to manifest



**Bishop Matthew H. Clark**

## Along the Way

his love and care for them in ways that are easy and natural for him.

I thank the parish, our beautiful young people and Bill for a memorable experience of church.

2) Speaking of wonderful experiences of church, I had another one the following morning. This was at the dedication of the renovated St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport.

Talk about excitement and joy! The church was filled with both as a rich cross-section of the parish gathered to bless and dedicate to God what they had worked so hard to achieve. Their work is beautifully done. It is elegant and simple. It is faithful to church norms for liturgical renewal. It

honors the past, meets the needs of the present and will help form the community for the future.

I do not remember just how many church dedications I have celebrated in my years as bishop. But, when I shared the experience with the people of St. John's yesterday, I had a renewed awareness of just how moving and powerful a rite it is. Part of that, I think, relates to the nature of the rite itself. It is filled with our most important symbols. Among them are: the assembly itself, water, oil, word, incense, bread, wine, altar, ambo, ambry, tabernacle, music, motion and silence.

Another major and underlying source of the joy of such days is the sense of belonging, common vision and common purpose that people share in a renovation or construction process. Such endeavors involve brick and mortar, dollars and cents. More deeply, the work is about the nature of our church, relationships that give us life, and our common desire to strengthen one another so that we can share the Good News

in all that we do.

I thank the people of St. John's for witnessing all of that to me yesterday, and offer them this public reminder that in a special way I commend to their prayers the success of our cathedral renovation work.

Thinking about the people of St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls, and the people of St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport, is a great encouragement to me. The two parishes are about 80 miles from one another. They live in different circumstances in terms of history, present challenges and opportunities. Their economic, social and cultural orientations are different. And yet — for all of these differences — they are one in faith. They are united by bonds of charity and a genuine concern to be active participants in the life of the diocesan and universal church. Part of my responsibility as bishop is to tell them about one another and their faith, to tell all of you about both. It's good for us to know how generous God is to us.

Peace to all.

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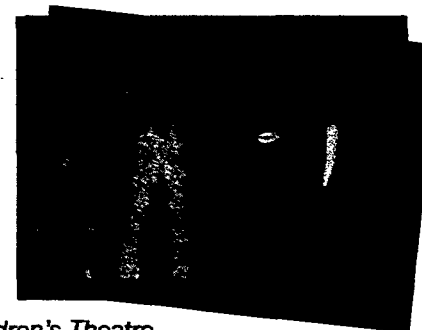
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