

Events generate gratitude

I had the pleasure of baptizing Sean Matthew McMahan at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church at Baldwinsville in the Syracuse Diocese on Saturday afternoon.

You'll believe me when I tell you that there is great joy in baptizing a relative. And I'm sure that you'll understand the happiness of pouring the water of life on the brow of one who bears your name.

His mother and dad, Doug and Margaret Early McMahan, were glowing on the occasion, as were little Sean's godparents, Grace Early and Jane Early Neff.

Sean himself, all of my bias aside, deserves an A+ for his participation in the event. He observed everything with quiet interest and apparent tranquility. Even his reaction to the water flowing on his head was quite reserved — a widening of the eyes, a knitting of the brow. He remained peaceful all day.

Margaret and Doug's family both gathered in force. Friends and colleagues of the new parents added to the number of celebrants. A special feature of the day for all of us was the presence of six other children seven years of age and younger. They had a grand time playing together. If there were any spats, I remained unaware of them.

A bonus of the day for me was the kind hospitality of the pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Father Jack Wagner. Jack and I have been friends for 45 years. That friendship began when we began our theological studies at North American College in Rome in September of 1957. Jack has many friends in Rochester since he taught at St.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Bernard's Seminary and helped in our parishes in the mid-'60s.

Sean's baptism was not the only life-giving event of the weekend. A second was the 40th anniversary of ordination party in honor of my dear friend, Father Tom Powers. The members of his parish staff at Albany's St. Teresa of Avila Parish and their spouses joined Tom's sister and brother-in-law, Mary Ellen and Tom Leonard, his niece, Margaret, and her husband, John Ebenhoch, Bishop Howard Hubbard and me in a delightful dinner party at an Albany restaurant.

If you follow Along the Way at all, you know that Tom is an important part of my life and the life of my family. For the 47 years we have known him, we have enjoyed his friendship, understanding, hospitality, wisdom and incredible humor. It was a special delight to share memories of those years with the St. Teresa's group and to hear something of their experience of this wonderful friend during their years with him.

Last in time, but certainly not in life-giving joy, was the blessing at Epiphany Parish in Sodus of their expanded parish center. The expansion includes new office space and a parish library. In addition to those valuable resources, the parish

also finished the lower floor of the center, thus providing additional space for offices and a library.

They've done a wonderful job, and celebrated it in typical Epiphany fashion — with a well-prepared liturgy and a warm social following the celebration. Exemplary of the liturgy, I share with you what I shared with the assembly on Sunday: the five servers at the liturgy were quite young, yet I noticed that all five, who had no books in their hands or other guides, sang the responses after the first reading without missing a beat. To me that says a great deal about how the parish celebrates liturgy and, in particular, about how they treat their young people. A second indication of that care was the prominent role the youth of the parish had in preparing the reception event for the community.

These events make me aware this Thanksgiving week that gratitude should be my first and deepest response to much of my experience. In the weeks prior to Advent, these celebrations help me to reflect the many ways in which God breaks in to our lives and awareness — in community, in celebration, in more difficult times.

I wish you and your loved ones much happiness and a renewed sense of gratitude as we celebrate our Thanksgiving feast. I wish you all a renewed hope as we anticipate the season of Advent.

A reminder and request: If you have not yet made a commitment to our Catholic Thanks Giving Appeal, I would ask you to do so. Your contribution will help us to carry on the good work of our local church. Thank you.

Peace to all.

Responding to terrorism

The Diocese of Rochester has sent parish pastors and leaders a second educational packet concerning the U.S. response to terrorism in the context of Catholic social teaching.

The first such packet was sent to parishes for use around the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The second packet is designed to coincide with Advent, according to a Nov. 6 letter from Bishop Matthew H. Clark. A third packet will be sent out during Lent, he wrote in the letter to pastoral leaders.

The bishop noted that the packet was a collaborative effort of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry in Rochester, the Diocesan Office of Liturgy, Diocesan Catholic Charities and the Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.

The packet's sections offer a reading from Isaiah, a series of questions designed to provoke thinking about how people responded to Sept. 11 and such issues as the causes of terrorism, a brief section on Catholic social justice teachings regarding life issues, especially war, and an excerpt from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter "Living with Faith and Hope after Sept. 11."

"We continue to urge resolve, restraint and greater attention to the roots of terrorism to protect against further attacks and to advance the global common good," the bishops wrote.

The packet calls on Catholics to discuss the response to terrorism with family members and friends, and to make their concerns known to their elected officials.

"We need the wisdom of the whole community, especially those who see things differently than we do," the packet says.

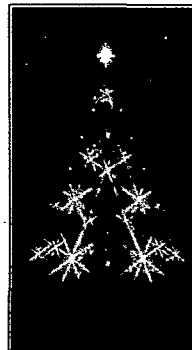
The packet also asks Catholics to consider making a "Pledge of Non-Violence," and lists a series of Internet sites with information on the roots of terrorism and on nonviolence.

"I encourage you to duplicate these materials and ask your parishioners to take them home for study and reflection," Bishop Clark wrote.

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