

# Be aware of, support lay ministers

I begin this column in an airplane. We are on the tarmac at the Denver airport, awaiting the start of our flight to Chicago.

These few days in Denver have been most enjoyable. I came out to participate in a convention sponsored by the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry. It drew some 2,100 youth ministers from all parts of the United States. About 25 of them came from the Diocese of Rochester.

As usual, these women and men brought great spirit to the gathering. Those who are rich in experience are ready to share what they have learned. They are also thirsty to learn more — from their peers and from those who present major addresses or workshops.



**Bishop Matthew H. Clark**

## Along the Way

Those who are new to the ministry find warm hospitality and can attend several presentations designed especially for them. And, because they are new in the field, their peers welcome their enthusiasm, their fresh vision and new ideas.

I know that I receive a huge charge of energy whenever I am

part of assemblies such as this. The participants' faith, enthusiasm and love for our young people are evident. Their programs are rock solid, their liturgies are deeply spirited and they know how to have fun.

One of the highlights for me was the opportunity to share two evening meals with large groups of our delegation. It's fun to relax with them, to hear their stories of life and ministry and to enjoy their good-natured banter.

A second privilege for me was to preside and preach at the Eucharistic Liturgy on Saturday morning. The assembly was sparked by an extraordinary group of pastoral musicians who expressed their faith in wonderful ways. I got to recruit my own servers for the Mass. Ann Kidera and Brian Gallagher, who minister at Good Shepherd, Henrietta, kindly assisted me. Brian is a new friend, but I have known Ann since she was in high school. One of the joys of these years has been following her growth through the youth-ministry movement in our diocese.

These good days with the youth ministers gathered in Denver remind me of other predominantly lay ministry groups I have associated with in recent months — liturgists, hospital chaplains, permanent deacons, pastoral musicians, Catholic school teachers and catechists.

Their ministries differ, and each requires particular gifts and training. But they all bring to their respective ministries a lively faith in the Lord and a great love for the people whom they serve.

They have a great awareness of the power and dignity of their baptisms. What they do, they do not for

treasure or fame, but the good of their sisters and brothers and to build up the reign of God. It is a way to live out their baptismal vocations, their contributions to the transformation of the world.

Last week, I invited you to be attentive to the presence of God in our lives. Let me make that invitation a bit more particular this week. I invite you to be aware, if you are not already, of the lay people who serve your parish communities in whatever capacity they may offer their gifts.

Have you ever asked them why they chose to take up this kind of ministry? Are you familiar with the standards they are required to meet? Do you know where and how they qualified for the ministry they now exercise? In a nutshell, do you know the stories of those who give themselves to Church ministry?

Their stories are an increasingly significant part of the life of the contemporary church. It is important that we know them. Such knowledge will remind us of our responsibility to support and encourage them in all the ways we can.

I hope that your Advent is going well. This *Catholic Courier* will arrive in most homes on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I hope that we can all imitate Our Lady by taking time to remember the wonders that God has worked for us.

A quick final note: I ask you once again to offer a gift to our Thanks Giving Appeal if you have not already done so. I don't want to be a nag, but I know from experience how easy it is to put aside for later something that I want to do — and then to forget that I put it aside.

Peace to all.

## MISSION NEWS

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*This Christmas, won't you give a gift to the Missions, through the Propagation of the Faith, to support those who, through their words and actions, reveal Christ's love and peace to the suffering and the poor?*



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