

Holiday gifts provide peace, renewal

Let me begin this first "Along the Way" of 2003 by wishing you and your loved ones a most blessed New Year. I hope that it will be a year of grace and peace for you and that you will experience the Lord's presence in deep, healing ways.

I want to thank all who sent me Christmas greetings and good wishes on the 40th anniversary of my ordination to the ministerial priesthood. Your kind friendship and prayers are always sources of encouragement and renewed hope for me.

Heavy snow in Albany kept me from driving to the home of my sister and brother-in-law, Helen and Jim Early, on Christmas as I always do after celebrating the Eucharist at the Monroe County Jail. I missed my family very much, but enjoyed the hospitality of dear friends here who invited me to share the feast with their family.

Another consolation was the fact that on the Friday before Christmas, Helen, Jim and all five of their wonderful daughters came to Rochester to join some other friends who were kind enough to help me celebrate my anniversary.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

It was an evening of happy reunion and fond remembrance of the years.

I could say the same of the reunion of our ordination class, which I mentioned to you in my last column before Christmas. As best I could tell, all who could attend the reunion enjoyed it immensely. I know that I did. My hopes for it were high, and the reality surpassed them.

There were three basic components to the event. The first was an evening in the home of Bernadette and Don Casey. Don resigned from active ministry in the early '70s, married Bernadette and went on to a fine career in industry. They and

their family offered a warm and gracious environment in which we could renew friendships begun years ago. It was a great pleasure to do that. I had a renewed sense of how blessed I was to have the company of those gifted men, in years formative of and important to all of us.

The second component was a presentation given by Father Frank Sullivan, SJ, a noted theologian, who spoke on the theme "Developments in Ecclesiology in the Past 40 Years." You can imagine how interesting the topic was to us whose ministry began while Vatican Council II was in session. What made the session a particular joy for us all was the fact that Father Sullivan taught us ecclesiology at the Gregorian University in 1959. Memories of the years flooded us as he spoke. And the questions and comments voiced by our class were a privileged way to get a sense of classmates' spiritual journeys over the years.

The third component took place at St. John the Baptist Parish in Hillsdale, New Jersey. Monsignor Phil Morris, who co-hosted the re-

union with Don Casey, invited us to his parish for a liturgy together and for a reception and dinner following. It was an enriching and varied evening touched at one time or another by laughter, quiet reflection, joyful song, storytelling, renewal and healing. It was a very special time.

There are just a few days left in the Christmas season. Remembering it as I write, I become aware of how renewing the season has been. Thanks to such events as the Christmas Feast, our class reunion and your prayerful support in both, I have found peace and renewed perspective that I greatly needed after what was a very difficult 2002. I know that much tough work remains, but I can approach it strengthened by the gifts this holy season has provided.

If all goes well, I will write next week's column while visiting our Sisters of Mercy in Chile. I shall bring your love to all of them and do my best to give you some sense of how they extend and enrich the life of our local church to the church in Chile.

Peace to all.

Help a child escape the shadow of violence.

Witnessing violence hurts kids more than you think. It can leave them with emotional or social problems that last for years. If you know a child exposed to violence, please call today to learn ways you can help.

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