

Winter chill both physical, spiritual

On the first day of the business week after a pleasant mid-winter break, my first public responsibility was the funeral liturgy for Monsignor John Duffy, a distinguished priest of our diocese.

In the chapel of the Mercy Motherhouse, where John lived his last days and where we celebrated the liturgy, the bitter cold of the winter day and the sadness of loss gave way to the warmth of the occasion. Father Bruce Ammering and John's niece, Virginia Brady, offered words of consolation in which they both, in their own ways, put us in touch with the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. This they did by reflecting on the readings of the liturgy and on how John expressed his faith in the way he lived his life. I remember that humor, humility and gentle, encouraging ministry were thematic in the remarks made by Bruce and Virginia. It was good to hear about the lived expression of this man's faith both from a ministerial and a



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

familial perspective. I felt much enriched by the experience.

As I drove home from the liturgy, snow was falling again in Rochester, and weather reports on the radio spoke of a storm that was paralyzing major cities along the Atlantic seaboard.

In that context I was drawn to thoughts of spring, when the snow that blankets the earth will cede to a cover of fresh green, and the piercing cold of winter will give way to warm April breezes.

This is not a knock on winter. Although I reserve the right to crab about certain aspects of it, I do find beauty in it and would mind it very much if winter were no longer a component of the majestic, rhythmic change of seasons that makes our area so beautiful all year around.

In addition to its barren beauty, its symbolism makes winter a rich time. Nature rests for a while, restores itself and then springs to new life. What lay fallow, blossoms; what was frozen, thaws.

We have been experiencing a deep winter for some time. The chilling effect of 9/11 and the scandal of sexual abuse still bring pain that needs to be healed. The same is true of the activities of some major corporations and financial institutions. People are understandably shaken by all of this and by the weakened economy we now experience.

If all of these were not enough, we now face an impetus toward war

with Iraq that seems to grow stronger within our government as the days go by. Recent demonstrations in major cities here and in other nations indicate that large numbers of people judge that we should not invade Iraq, that we have not used all of the means available to us to effect a peaceful solution to this problem.

I am in agreement with them and pray every day that our president and government leaders will work with the international community to deal with the threat posed by Saddam Hussein in ways that leave the Iraqi nation intact while protecting the legitimate interests of other nations.

I am confident that spring will come to end this chilling winter. It won't be easy or automatic but it will happen if we speak the truth that we have, keep our eye on the common good, respect the dignity of all and, above all, if we keep faith in the promises of Christ.

Peace to all.

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