

# Rites of passage are times of hope

I am about to leave for Washington, D.C., for a meeting of the Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. We'll be in session from Tuesday morning through Thursday. Our basic work is the preparation of the agenda for our June General Assembly in St. Louis. Occasionally, we address issues that need attention.

As I prepare to leave, I do so mindful that we may invade Iraq while I am in Washington. I have been praying with all my spirit that we will not. I simply cannot embrace the reasoning our president offers to justify such an invasion. The community of nations can contain Saddam Hussein without a military invasion that could create a deep and lasting enmity among nations and create a terrible chasm between Islam and Christianity that would be tragic.

In the midst of it all, I join you in prayer for our military personnel and for their families who daily bear the burden of separation and worry. Their safety and their peace of heart are important to all of us.



**Bishop Matthew H. Clark**

## Along the Way

While worries of war and the dangerous moment at which the world finds itself occupy our thoughts, we all know that life goes on, that there are still events to celebrate that bring confidence and give birth to hope.

Yesterday we completed our five Rites of Election — this one held at St. Mary Our Mother for parish communities from across our beautiful Southern Tier. Those rites, which began in the bitter winter cold of Rochester last Sunday, ended yesterday on a glorious, spring-like day

in Horseheads. People raced from car to church for the first one. For the last, they lingered on benches or walked the grounds together before entering the church to begin the rite.

This morning was doubly blessed — first by an exciting liturgical experience with the Aquinas Institute community; then, at a memorial Mass for the recently deceased former mayor of Rochester, Thomas P. Ryan.

The kids were stupendous! They were excited about the spring and the fact that they had only 100 more days until graduation. And the junior class received their class rings, which I had the privilege of blessing at the end of liturgy.

One of the highlights of that celebration on Dewey Avenue was the post-Communion reflection given by Maria Oberst, daughter of Margaret and Gene Oberst. I have known Margaret and Gene for many years and was so glad that they could both be at Aquinas to hear their daughter speak today. As I listened to her, I thought of how proud her parents

must be to enjoy her presentation.

In a conversation with Margaret and Gene after Mass they confirmed that they were, indeed, very proud of Maria. What I did not realize was that their daughter had not given them any preview of her words. It was as new to them as it was to us and, obviously, they were deeply pleased.

Mayor Ryan's Memorial Mass was a happy experience in a different way. All present, especially Charlotte, his wife, and their daughter, Mary, will miss this distinguished and generous humble servant. The pain of separation can be very great.

But there was much consolation and joy among the assembly as well — and more than a few smiles. Part of that comes from the encouraging memories and solid example with which Tom Ryan leaves us. But I am quite sure our faith in Christ's victory over death and our participation in his life give heart to all.

I hope that you are having a blessed Lent.

Peace to all.

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