

Bishops meet with a varied agenda

I greet you from Washington, D.C., this week. The bishops of our country are gathered here for the semi-annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Between Monday morning and Thursday noon, we will be covering a wide range of issues. We hope, for example, to give final approval to pastoral statements on the following themes: popular devotional practices; food, farmers and farm workers; concelebration of the Eucharist, Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest; stewardship and young adults; and marriage and same-sex unions.

In addition to those pastoral items, we will be spending time on such organizational matters as budgets, priorities and plans, and the election of conference officers and committee chairmen.

Several informational or report items will claim some of our agenda time. Most of these involve updates about ongoing conference or committee work. For example, we'll have a report from the Committee on Catechesis, and one from a com-



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

mittee reflecting on how to make as beneficial as possible for all the experience of priests from other nations ministering in the dioceses of our nation. Of course, we give more attention to our continuing work to implement our "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

At this meeting, we will hear from bishops from other nations. Diarmuid Martin, coadjutor archbishop of Dublin, will address the theme "War and Peace 40 Years After Pacem in Terris." Archbishop Martin participated for many years

in the Holy See's Mission to the United Nations.

We will also hear from Cardinal Frederic Etsou-Nzabi-Bamungwabi, archbishop of Kinshasa and president of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo. His address will introduce a general discussion about the church in Africa. Our conference committee on international social policy has been the catalyst of this opportunity. I am quite sure that this will be a significant step toward a deeper, ongoing discussion of this critical theme.

One of the enjoyable features of our national assemblies is the opportunity they provide to begin or deepen fraternal relationships with other bishops. This evening, for example, I will be joining a group of bishops who gather for dinner some time during every general assembly. These sessions are informal. We enjoy a meal. We talk about matters of common interest. Laughter is always a part of the mix, as is a sharing of pastoral experience. I find our time together most rewarding and encouraging.

When we adjourn on Thursday, 50 of us will be going to Houston to participate in the National Catholic Youth Conference. I look forward to this very much. It is always a joyful and hopeful experience of the young church. In a special way, I am eager to spend as much time as I can with the members of our diocesan delegation to the event. I am delighted that our diocesan group will number close to 900. And, I understand that ours will be the largest group in Houston, save for the delegation of the host diocese, Galveston-Houston.

Please pray that God will keep them all safe, and that their experience in Houston will be a time of special grace and growth for our beautiful young people. They give much to the life of today's church; they will be key leaders in tomorrow's church.

Thanks to you and all whose encouragement inspires our young people to participate in such ventures. Thanks also for your financial support, which is such a great help to them as well.

Peace to all.

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In its special Books, Music and Video Issue Nov. 20, the *Catholic Courier* will publish a list of diocesan individuals or groups who have produced books, music tapes and CDs, and videos in 2003.

If you or someone you know released such a work this year, send us in writing by Nov. 17 the name(s) of the author(s)/performer(s), the name and brief description of the work and a contact number in case we have any questions.

Please keep in mind we need your submissions — in writing — by Nov. 17.

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THIS WE
 Sun., Nov.
 Psalms 16:
 10:11-14, 18:
 Mon., Nov
 1:10-15, 41:
 Psalms 1:19:
 155:158; Luk
 Tue., Nov.
 6:18-31; Psal
 10
 Wed., Nov
 7:1-20:31; Ps
 Luke 19:11-2
 Thu., Nov.
 2:15-29; Psal
 Luke 19:41-4
 Fri., Nov.
 4:36-37, 52-59
 29:10-12; Luk
 Sat., Nov. 2
 13; Psalms 9:
 20:27-40