

Experience serves to bolster faith

We were concerned about poor driving conditions on Sunday, and came close to canceling a scheduled reunion liturgy for our teens who had journeyed to Houston in November for the National Catholic Youth Convention. As it turned out, we went ahead with the event at Guardian Angels Parish because there seemed no effective way to call it off at the 11th hour.

I am glad that we didn't cancel. About 175 people attended the celebration, which allowed us all a chance to revisit and draw new energy from a common and very happy experience.

In addition to the pleasure of their company, which is always a cause for joy, I had yet another experience of the wonderful faith of our young people. I really do believe that they came to the liturgy



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

in Advent spirit. They believe that God is with them. They truly do. But they also realize full well that God's work is not complete in any of us. And they know that there is much all around them that is inimical to their faith convictions. So we prayed in faith and confidence Sunday that what God has so gracious-

ly begun in us, God will one day bring to completion. I am firmly convinced that when our young people gather together they strengthen one another in faith. I know that they do that for me whenever I am privileged to share their company.

But it's not only the younger set that offers this life-giving witness. Although in a different way, I suppose, my generation and those senior to it do the same thing.

I know that that was my experience when I visited the St. Ann's Community for an Advent liturgy on Saturday evening. Here are men and women who have seen a lot of life. I suspect that their Advent prayer is rooted in the same themes that ground the Advent longings of our young people. But the length and variety of their experience, the culture of their youth and the great events of their lifetimes surely lend a different tone to their longings for the fullness of life, which is Christ's promise to us.

I often wish in the midst of such assemblies that I could know the personal human and faith stories of those present. My intuition is that they would contain an extraordi-

nary measure of generosity and stories of sacrificial service to others above and beyond normal expectation.

What I do know is that I never leave their company without a sense of gratitude for their cordial hospitality, the spirit with which they participate in the Eucharistic liturgy and the witness of their faith. Somehow they seem at home even away from their lifetime homes. I know that the care offered by all at St. Ann's Community has much to do with that. But I am convinced also that the foundation of such a disposition is their belief that Christ is always with them, and that where he is, there is our home.


I hope that Advent has been good for your spiritual life, that you have had time for prayer and thought about the place of Christ in your life.

The *Catholic Courier* will not publish again until its issue of Jan. 8. In view of that fact, let me offer to you and your loved ones a most blessed Christmas. My prayer is for you to experience the feast as one in which God truly is with us.

Peace to all.

ON THE COVER:

The illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers depicts the theme of this issue, the Holy Family. In this week's articles, people from across the diocese share their faith, their love for friends and family, and ways in which faith and love strengthen them during the Christmas season and all year long.



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