

# Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

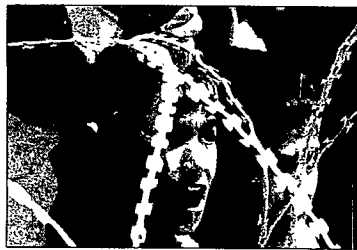
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## Honoring 25 years of service

April 23, 1979, started off as a normal day for Father Matthew H. Clark, spiritual director at the North American College in Rome. By the end of that day, however, he'd learned that he would be installed as bishop of the Diocese of Rochester in a little more than two months.

"Oh, it was a bolt out of the blue," Bishop Clark recalled of the news.

He arrived in Rochester on June 25, 1979, and was formally installed as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Rochester before a crowd of 10,000 the next day.

A native of Waterford, N.Y., in the Diocese of Albany, Bishop Clark attended St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester from 1957-59, and was ordained to the priesthood in Rome in 1962. His return to Rochester was unexpected but pleasant, he said.

"I wouldn't trade a second of my 25 years here for anything in the world," Bishop Clark said in a recent interview.

Bishop Clark said that when he arrived in the diocese, his goal was to be a good servant and pastoral leader, so he put a high priority on listening and being attentive to the people of the diocese. Doing so has become his guiding philosophy throughout his ministry here.

"I think it's very important for a bishop to remember that first of all he's a disciple of the Lord, and that discipleship is what most deeply unites him with the local church, who are also disciples," Bishop Clark said. "To the degree that I have made decisions in consultation with those affected by those decisions, I think ... the decisions have been sound and well-received. To the degree that I've not consulted in that way, inevitably I wish I had."



File photo

Bishop Matthew H. Clark enters Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral for an October 1999 Mass.

Father Joseph Hart, diocesan vicar general and moderator of the diocesan Pastoral Center, agreed, saying that Bishop Clark's spirit of collaboration has been a strength of his bishopric.

"One always feels that he's absolutely, totally respectful

of even divergent opinions and wants to listen and to decide what to do; what is in the best interest of everyone," Father Hart said.

An example of this came in 1986, Father Hart added, when Bishop Clark approached the diocesan Priests' Council

about convening a diocesan synod. The bishop had thought it was an appropriate time for such a gathering of priests, religious and laity to advise him on diocesan legislation and policy. But the Priests' Council felt otherwise, so Bishop Clark

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Story by Jennifer Burke