

Reflections

by the

Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



You're Invited - RSVP

The average Catholic relates to the Church through his or her experience with a parish community. The parish community is the setting in which celebrations of birth, unity, Eucharist and reconciliation take place. Most of all, the parish is the focal point for the Christian community to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist. Recent years have witnessed a greater emphasis on the life of the parish community in our own growth development as Roman Catholics.

However, the parish community receives its identity from its relationship to the Bishop and a Diocese. In reality, the Bishop is the "pastor" of every parish community. The religious, laity and priests who staff and serve a parish community represent the Bishop and teach in his name. No parish has the luxury of isolating itself from the mainstream of the life of the Church in a Diocese. At the same time, the needs of the local parish must be recognized and met.

A Bishop has the obligation to lead the local Diocesan Church in accord with the policies of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the directives of the Holy See through Pope John Paul II. The Bishop does not do this alone, but with the help, assistance and commitment of dedicated laity, religious and priests who provide service and help to parish communities. These people comprise the Diocesan Staff.

If a Diocesan Staff is to be of service to the parish communities, there must be dialogue and discussion. A Diocesan staff cannot isolate itself from the people and communicate only through the written word or newsletters. Consequently, I have asked the members of the Diocesan Staff to travel with me to five central meeting points in our Diocese to meet with key parish personnel, to celebrate Mass with people of the area, and to come together for an Open Forum with all who are present. This Caravan begins its journey this Tuesday in Wolf Point and continues on this week to Billings and Miles City. In September, the Caravan will visit Havre and Great Falls.

The people responsible for the Church's ministry in Eastern Montana for the Marriage Tribunal, Religious Education and Formation, Ministry, Liturgy, Catholic Schools, the Business Office, and Ecumenism will be journeying throughout Eastern Montana to meet you. Won't you come to meet them?

Three years ago I arrived as a stranger in Montana. The first commitment I made was to go out and meet the People of God in our Diocese. I have tried to continue that commitment. However, I fulfill my ministry to you through those who share a responsibility with me on the Diocesan staff. They want to know your questions and concerns, your dreams and hopes. They want to listen to you in order to serve you better.

I'm looking forward to the Caravan. It will be a chance to travel through Montana with others instead of alone. Please join us for this gathering when we come to your area of the Diocese.