



UP FRONT AND PERSONAL Sister Ave Clark's Theology of Detours

BY DAVID H. POWELL

A detour is a turnabout, a deviation from a course, a roundabout way of temporarily replacing part of a route. According to Sister Ave Clark, OP, who on March 10 experienced a detour when her car was slammed into by a runaway train, a detour can give all of us a chance to reflect on our life's journey and lead us to a deeper life of faithfulness.

This was the message she shared with 35 adults at St. Anthony-St. Alphonsus Church, Greenpoint, on a very rainy Wednesday evening when everybody, especially the speaker herself, could easily have stayed at home. But they all came to be in the presence of this frail-looking, awe-inspiring sign of the depth of God's power in our own life's detours.

Sister Ave's Heart-to-Heart Ministry, which celebrated its tenth anniversary on Oct. 18, is back on track (sorry about the bad pun) and we were all mesmerized as we listened to her speak quite pointedly about that train accident and its effects on her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But in the midst of it all, I, who with our pastor Father Robert Czok arranged for this presentation, found myself being moved not just personally but professionally as to how skillfully Sister Ave shifted attention from God's work in her experience to God's work in our experience.

At first, I felt almost embarrassed to think of any painful detours in my life. What could compare to the pain that Sister Ave had experienced in these past six months. But then I thought of the words of my friend and colleague, Maureen Gotimer, whose own sister, Cathy-Jean, had died an early tragic death as a Dominican nun: "Never minimize your own pain."

So then, like everyone else in the audience, I let myself respond to God's invitation through Sister Ave to plunge into my own detours. Suddenly it was the summer of 1964 and this 21-year-old seminarian was being told by the Chancellor of the diocese that I was being sent to Innsbruck, Austria, for the next four years and that I would be leaving in time to take a seven-week course in German in Burg Feuerstein. Where?

As Sister Ave said, when the detour comes, "we don't recognize the road anymore. At times, we seem alone and feel lost. What shall we do? Turn around? We can't. The detour is part of life."

Oh, but I had had my chance and it was Mom who ruined it. At the time, my Mom had been quite ill for a number of years. Earlier in the year I had learned that a situation like that could be used by a seminarian to obtain permission not to be sent to Europe. I could have stayed on what Sister Ave called "the known road, the well-travelled highway" which would have meant staying in the diocesan seminary to which I had now grown accustomed over two years. But when I told my Mom and Dad of this possibility, my mother gave me that look that only a mother could give and said plainly, "Do not let my condition keep you from doing God's will for you."

That settled it, and sure enough that summer I had four weeks to get ready for the next four years. The ten-day ocean voyage began a two-year journey which turned my life completely around: the travel, the people, the culture, the theology, the scenery, the immersion in a whole new way of life while continuing for the time on the path to ordination. And then came another detour.

By the end of the second year, I was working myself too hard and wondered why I felt so mentally and physically tired. Suddenly, I got the phone call from my Dad that Mom was in a coma. By the time I got home, she was dead. I made it through the ordeal of the wake and funeral and then fell totally apart. Result: a seminary leave of absence detour, followed by a private school teaching detour, followed by the discovery of a doctoral program in theology at Fordham, followed by another detour from that program after the masters degree into religion teaching. During that time another detour into the Manhattan College Counseling Psychology masters program which led to the luckiest "opportunity" of all - the chance meeting of my future wife, Carol, on her way to a subway after class. I offered her a detour from the subway - a ride home in my car - which she chose and the rest is history.

During two years of theology in Innsbruck, we learned that the purpose of theological study was to move towards further clarification, that theological development was never complete, never reached its goal, because theological reflection was always moving toward the Divine without ever really possessing it, even while the Divine is in our midst.

As I listened to Sister Ave that night and have had the privilege of reviewing the written draft her reflections, it occurred to me that she was helping me move toward a theology of detours, both in her lived experience and in her reflections upon her own detour. Like the true faithful steward, she drew from both old and new and helped us do the same as we prayed with her: May all of our detours be ones that lead us to a deeper life of truthfulness.



Fighting from the Pews

Last Sunday, churches around the diocese participated in a postcard campaign to support Tuition Tax Credit legislation in New York State. This legislation would give thousands of parents the financial help they need to send their children to Catholic schools. Parishioners were asked to fill out postcards during the Masses. The postcards will be forwarded to Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, who will tell state legislators that the diocese favors this financial boost for children and their families. Lydia and Michael DeJesus sign their cards at the 10 a.m. Mass at Mary Queen of Heaven Church, Mill Basin. Their oldest daughter, Michelle, attends St. Edmund Prep and her little sister, Gabrielle (above) attends public elementary school.

Accusations Against Priest Found to Be Not Credible

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio has announced that an allegation of improper sexual behavior with a minor against Father Richard M. Lewkiewicz, when he was a parochial vicar in Blessed Sacrament parish in Cypress Hills more than 30 years ago, has "no merit and no credibility."

The bishop made the statement in a letter he wrote to parishioners of Our Lady of Angels parish in Bay Ridge, where Father Lewkiewicz has been a parochial vicar since 1998.

Msgr. Kevin B. Noone, the Episcopal Vicar for the Brooklyn West Vicariate, read the letter at the seven Masses at Our Lady of Angels last weekend, Oct. 30-31.

Stating that the parochial vicar will continue his priestly ministry at the Bay Ridge parish, Bishop DiMarzio said: "I know that this has lifted a heavy burden from Father Lewkiewicz's shoulders."

The bishop also said he was aware that Father Lewkiewicz "has been encouraged and touched" by the support of parishioners "during this difficult period in his life." They responded with

hearty applause when the news was announced at the Masses.

Bishop DiMarzio said he directed the Diocesan Review Board to investigate the allegation of sexual misconduct. The panel is composed primarily of lay persons from the fields of the law, law enforcement, medicine, social services and education.

"At the beginning of the investigation, the review board sought assistance by retaining the services of a respected private investigator with many years of experience examining child sexual abuse cases as a member of the New York City Police Department," the bishop wrote.

After the investigator conducted "an extensive series of interviews over a considerable period of time" with persons associated with Blessed Sacrament parish when the alleged misconduct was said to have taken place and with Father Lewkiewicz's accuser, the bishop said the review board concluded that the allegation had "no merit and no credibility."

The board "found no evidence" that

Continued on page 6

The Tablet

Published by and in the interest of the Diocese of Brooklyn
310 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, NY 11215 • 7200 Douglaston Pkwy., Douglaston, NY, 11362
718-965-7333 • Fax 718-965-7338 • e-mail: TheTablet@AOL.com

Publisher Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio
Associate Publisher Frank DeRosa
Business Manager Don Christiansen
Editor Ed Wilkinson

The Tablet (ISSN 0039-8845) is published every Saturday by The Tablet Publishing Co., Inc. 310 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Periodicals postage is paid at Flushing, NY and at additional mailing offices. Subscription prices in U.S.A. \$26.00 per year in advance. Canada and foreign countries \$35 per year. Advertising rates on request. Member Audit Bureau of Circulation.

Editorial Staff: Linda Busetti, Marie Elena Giossi, Roger Payne, John McAlinden,
Entire contents © Copyright 2004
The Tablet Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Tablet
310 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, NY 11215

The Tablet Telephone Guide (718) 965-7333

Business Dept.		Circulation -	
Don Christiansen, Business Manager.....	Ext. 2001	Through Parish - Maurven Hackett.....	Ext. 2003
Kim Tubin, Admin. Asst.....	Ext. 2002	Gift & Regular - Kathy-Anne John.....	Ext. 2004
Advertising		Production and Creative:	
Don Maguire, Display.....	Ext. 2004	Michelle Arroyo.....	Ext. 2005
Dan Monahan, Display.....	Ext. 2005	Paul Curtis.....	Ext. 2006
Jerome Phillip, Display.....	Ext. 2006	Kaisha Amory.....	Ext. 2007
Aniko Nemeth, Display.....	Ext. 2003	Editorial Department:	
Carrie White, Classified Co-ordinator.....	Ext. 2007	Ed Wilkinson, Editor.....	Ext. 2008
Darrell Evans, Classified.....	Ext. 2008	Linda Busetti.....	Ext. 2009
Barbara Meagher, Blue Book.....	Ext. 2009	Roger Payne.....	Ext. 2010
Accounting		Marie Elena Giossi.....	Ext. 2011
Julia Caragiula.....	Ext. 2013	John McAlinden, Illustrator.....	Ext. 2012

Brooklyn Churches Will Be Lit for Christmas

BY MARIE ELENA GIOSSI

This Christmas will be merry and bright — quite literally — at 10 Brooklyn parishes that are benefitting from some small town generosity right here in the big city.

"Celebration of Light" is an annual endeavor, voluntarily undertaken by members of the Bay Ridge community, to illuminate the neighborhood and spread cheer to people of all faiths during the holiday season. Maimonides Medical Center, Borough Park, has once again signed on as chief sponsor of the program, which got an early start this year with a kickoff breakfast at St. Patrick School, Bay Ridge, in late October.

Pamela Brier, president of Maimonides, and Douglas Jablon, vice president of patient relations, presented checks to pastors and representatives of the participating parishes: Visitation Monastery, St. Patrick, Our Lady of Angels and St. Anselm in Bay Ridge; St. Athanasius, St. Rosalia-Regina Pacis and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Bensonhurst; St. Finbar in Bath Beach; Mary Queen of Heaven, Old Mill Basin; and St. Cecilia, Greenpoint. Funds will be used to cover the costs of their individual displays, which include life-size Nativity scenes, dozens of trees and tens of thousands of lights.

"It takes more than medical care to make people healthy," Brier said, before handing out the checks. "We look for opportunities to do good deeds" in the communities the hospital serves, primarily Bay Ridge, Bensonhurst and Dyker Heights. "I truly am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this."

Larry Morrish, community activist, heads the committee that coordinates the program and assisted in the gift distribution.

He acknowledged the valuable contribution made by Brian Long and John DeLosa, proprietors of Long and DeLosa Construction Group. They'll spend the better part of November and December setting up each parish's display and attending each lighting ceremony. As Morrish noted, they provide their services "absolutely free." Long, who is the chairman of the bishop's Boy Scout program, also has about 100 Scouts from the parishes assist in the preparations.

Morrish then recognized his fellow organizers who bring this annual activity to fruition, committee members: Anne Strafaci, development director at St. Patrick; J. Peter Clavin of Clavin Funeral Home; retired Detective Joe Nolasco; Maryann Teta, a representative of Xaverian H.S., and Larry's wife, Phillipa



BIG-HEARTED BROOKLYNITES will make this a Christmas to remember for 10 parishes participating in the "Celebration of Light," an annual endeavor to decorate Catholic churches and spread holiday cheer. Program organizers, pastors and representatives from Maimonides Medical Center, Borough Park, chief sponsor, kicked off the program in late October.

Morrish.

Also in attendance were State Senator Marty Golden, who helped start this program, and City Councilman Vincent Gentile. They along with other local politicians and businesses donate trees at some of the participating parishes.

"All of us, together as friends, whether Christians or not, in the spirit of those we serve are trying to instill good will in everyone," said Morrish. "We just want to give something that is so needed by all those we serve — that spiritual nudge."

"It's capturing the whole flavor of the holidays for everyone — Christian, Jew, Muslim. It's a feel good thing."

Eleven years ago, Msgr. Joseph Parks, then-pastor and now pastor emeritus of St. Patrick's, approached Morrish and Golden on behalf of the Sisters of the Visitation Monastery, who wanted to have a more noticeable spiritual presence in Bay Ridge, especially during the holidays.

"We wanted to do something to really bring out the spiritualism of the holiday season," said Morrish, who worked with Golden to solicit contributions from local businesses. Executives at Chase Manhattan Bank donated a life-size Nativity to the monastery and contractors Long and DeLosa volunteered to set

it up for the Sisters.

What started as a small way to spread Christ's light in the Bay Ridge area has grown to include numerous parishes in Bensonhurst, Old Mill Basin and most recently, Greenpoint. Maimonides offered to sponsor the displays and Long and DeLosa continue to provide their services.

This is the second year Our Lady of Guadalupe is participating. Long had this advice for the new pastor, Father Matteo Rizzo, "Get your sunglasses ready." The parish will unveil its display, "Light Up the Avenue with Christmas" on Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Our Lady of Angels and Mary Queen of Heaven parishes will also light their trees that evening at 6 p.m.

"For years, our parish has done a family tree. We invite all the families of the parish to bring an ornament from home and put it on the tree. This gift will help us with the outdoor decoration of the family tree for the whole community," said Father Kull, parochial vicar at St. Anselm, also new to the program this year. St. Anselm's Tree Lighting will be after the 10 a.m. Family Mass on Dec. 12. Later that day, St. Finbar will have a Tree Lighting at 4 p.m. and St. Patrick's will have its festivities at 6 p.m.

"This will help us out," said Msgr. Fursey O'Toole, pastor of St. Cecilia, one of two new churches participating this year. Although he's still figuring out how to make the most of Maimonides' gift, he's confident it will boost holiday spirits in his small but faith-filled parish and the neighborhood as well. An outdoor tree will be lit on Dec. 18 at 6 p.m., followed by the lighting of an indoor tree, near the parish Nativity scene.

Over 10,000 lights will illuminate an extensive display at St. Athanasius, which will also come to life on Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m.

A spectacular evening is planned for Dec. 5 at the place where the program finds its roots, Visitation Monastery, the seed of this blossom," according to Mother Susan Marie Kasprzak, VM. A Mass will precede the Nativity lighting and reception, where the Sisters, students and faculty will sing a selection from Handel's Messiah.

"We're accomplishing our mission of making Christ known," noted Mother Susan, who looks forward to seeing families come to the monastery and share in the joy of celebrating Jesus' birth.

Further information will follow about the tree lighting at St. Rosalia-Regina Pacis parish.

New Student Council

St. Catharine of Alexandria School, Borough Park, installed its newly elected Student Council. Members are: back row, from left, Arbey Ramirez, treasurer; Roxana Bermeo, secretary; Katherine Rodriguez, president; Lauren Glennon, historian; Lorianna Colon, vice president; Mardochee Augustin, historian; front row, class representatives, Rianna Bachan, Melanie Thakore, Damaris Soto and Starr Hernandez.



Accusations Not Credible

Continued from page 2

the priest had sexually abused a minor, the bishop said, adding that the board determined that his reputation "as a person of character faithful to his priestly vocation was well-deserved."

Bishop DiMarzio said he reviewed the board's report and the investigator's findings and accepted their conclusions and recommendation that Father Lewkiewicz remain in ministry.

The bishop also observed that from the time the allegation was made public a year ago, Father Lewkiewicz "firmly and consistently" denied that he ever engaged in improper sexual behavior.

The procedures followed in the investigation were in accordance with the "Charter for the Protection of Young People" and the accompanying Norms, issued by the U.S. Conference of

Catholic Bishops in 2002, the bishop said.

In his letter, Bishop DiMarzio also addressed press reports that implied that the diocese should have removed Father Lewkiewicz immediately once the accusation was received. "This is not the case," he said. "An allegation is to be investigated before such an action is taken."

Only after an allegation is determined to be credible must a bishop remove a clergyman from ministry, he noted.

Father Lewkiewicz served in Blessed Sacrament from the time of his ordination in 1968 until 1979. He was a parochial vicar at St. Camillus parish in Rockaway Park from 1979 to 1988 and at Good Shepherd parish, Marine Park, from 1988 until he was assigned to Our Lady of Angels a decade later.