

THE CRITERION

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The greatest gift is God himself

by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord:

A baby boy lying in a manger is called the Light of the world and the Word made flesh. How strange and how abstract . . . to call a person a light and a word. Yet if we stop to think of circumstances some 2,000 years ago, maybe it doesn't seem so strange.

Then as now a light in the darkness meant an awful lot. We panic when electricity "goes out." That was the normal condition then. Fire went out much quicker and more often. In the days before newspapers and books, many centuries before audio and video cassettes, the truth about things, the news, and just general information was learned through the face-to-face spoken word. Messengers and story tellers and rabbis (teachers) were a lifeline. The boy named Jesus would come from God as a light in the darkness and a teacher and story teller and messenger. He became light. He became God's Word of love.

Ever since Adam and Eve said, "No, we will not obey (because we want to be like God)," our human family has been plagued by another kind of darkness and ignorance. Sin and tragic human error mark all our lives. I speak of the darkness and ignorance which spawn jealousy and murder, stealing and war. Cain hated Abel, a brother in the blinding darkness of jealousy hates his own brother, and commits the first murder. In our city, almost daily brother kills brother for drugs and the money to purchase painkilling drugs.

From the beginning it would only be a short time before unfaithful husband in ignorance hates his wife because he blindly loves only himself and he discards her to use another. Even more so today, victims of broken love discover the worst kind of darkness. Man and woman, intended to be complementary partners for life, become strangers to each other and separate into loneliness. Distrust adds the bitter spice to the fright of darkness.

Only God could bring light and knowledge to our human family hopelessly lost in dark-

ness and ignorance. His own Son became one of us to be the saving light and the trustworthy word of truth. He came to reveal God who is faithful love itself. Christmas is a feast of love. In the manger in a dark stable with dumb animals Christ began to shine as the Light of the world and the Word of truth. It began with a little boy born of a loving mother and watched over by a courageous father in a dark stable.

Those of us who know the story of the stable and the simple birth of the Savior and know what it really means have a special obligation to our troubled world. The torch has been handed on to us. How are we to be the light and spread the word? Christ once said that the world would know we were his if we have love, one for another. "Love your neighbor as yourself," he urged. . . . "Turn the other cheek. . . . Forgive your enemy 70 times seven. . . . Feed the hungry . . . clothe the naked. . . ."

Our colored lights and nativity sets remind us of the promise of the Christmas story and our part in it. They also remind us to thank God for his Christmas gift! The greatest Christmas gift is God himself! The gift is free, and it is for all of us, holy and unholy alike.

A prayerful celebration of Christmas is our thank you. I add a warm and heartfelt "thank you" to all of you who do so much to help carry the Christmas light of hope in our archdiocese. God bless each and every one! My Midnight Mass is for all of you and for all your loved ones.

THE CRITERION

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CHRISTMAS—This figure of the Madonna and Child is located at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis. (Photo by Margaret Nelson)

SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD

Christmas offers a timely boost to our faith

by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB

No matter how old or how young we are, Christmas Day is not just another day and this is not just an ordinary season of the year. One would have to be pretty hard of heart not to be touched with a little of "the Christmas spirit," no matter what the circumstances of our life may be. The long and beautiful tradition of the season, enhanced by warm music and beautiful decorations, the custom of sharing gifts and bountiful meals all lend a romantic and joyful air to Christmas.

Yet, being hard of heart is not out of the question for any of us, is it? Being without faith and hope is not beyond any one of us. Indeed Christmas is meaningless if we are without faith and hope. If viewed as a mere secular celebration it can even be a burden. In fact, many view it as such.

It is important to remember that Christmas time gives us pause to measure the quality of our faith. Are we willing to see that the tinsel decorates a spiritual meaning of Christmas? Can we trace all that we know as Christmas celebration to the birth of Jesus? Can we genuflect to the Jesus who is born into human poverty like one of us? Do we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of



God and our Savior and dwells within us? Can people tell we believe Jesus is the Son of God in us by the way we live?

The Christmas season offers a timely boost to our faith. Is our faith a live flame or perhaps merely a spark? Through every liturgical season of the church God offers us special grace, special help to deepen our faith. Our challenge is to look for and to accept the gift God offers us through the ministry of the church. Christmastide is especially rich in its potential to lift up our faith.

Surely the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas time is rooted in the fantastic gift God gave the human family when he gave his only Son for our salvation from sin and death. In the spirit of God's gift-giving we are led to generous gift-giving as a sign of our love for each other. The whole evolution of the tradition of Santa Claus is rooted in a spiritual tradition of giving because of our love for each other. And God's gift of his only Son is our model.

The spiritual call of Christmas is to live for God and for each other. The spiritual gift of Christmas is special. The special Christmas gift awaits each of us. We find it in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. We find it in the celebration of Holy Mass. The gift we find is the gift promised by the angels in their Bethlehem hymn of praise during the shepherds' watch. The gift is peace.

There is no greater gift for any human person than the gift of interior peace. All the world can be in shambles, all the world can be ecstatic, yet peace of

mind and heart and spirit make all the difference. Peace is God's gift to us and a gift we are invited to share at every celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

I want to offer a special invitation to those who feel they have no one with whom to share the true spirit and peace of Christmas. Some among us find the holiday season a particularly lonesome time. Spiritual and psychological counselors tell us that they listen to more stories of depression and heaviness this time of year than any other. If you are among those who suffer such feelings, I hope you feel welcome to come to our churches to find some peace in the warmth and comfort of a believing community.

Through the birth of Jesus God came to make his home among us. And in so doing, Jesus calls us to make a home for each other, while we remember always that Jesus is the foundation stone.

Wherever we are on Christmas day and throughout this season of special love and peace, however distant we may be from loved ones—I think of our loved ones who have gone home to God or perhaps loved ones who live far away—we can truly meet them in church, in our prayers, especially at Mass and Holy Communion. Spiritual reunion is real reunion too.

Know that I shall meet all of you and your loved ones in my Christmas Masses and prayers. If you like, please come and join me in the celebration of Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul. May the peace and joy of Christ be with you all! And God bless our New Year!

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

Peace continues to be elusive for us humans

by John F. Fink
Editor, The Criterion

Christmas is a special time when we wish each other peace. It's a wish as old as Christmas itself for it was included in the message of the angels who announced Christ's birth to the shepherds.

But peace continues to be elusive for us humans. We have yet to understand that peace cannot come without justice. Our world has yet to learn that God made all people equal and that we all have the same inalienable rights. If we are to be peacemakers we must promote and defend those rights for all people.

We are now in the second winter of the severe ethnic fighting that is going on in the former Yugoslavia. Religious liberty is still being denied in China, some of the former Soviet republics, Vietnam, Sudan and Cuba. Violence both by and against Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland took many lives this year, although now there are peace possibilities there. Democracy is being denied is several of the countries in Africa.

Closer to home, there is still turmoil in Latin America even if much progress has been made there. The civil wars are not as

bad in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, but death squads are still murdering street children in Brazil. There is still discrimination against the indigenous people throughout Latin America.

In the land of Jesus' birth, much progress toward peace has been made since last Christmas, but we are still a long way away from a situation where the rights of all people there are respected.

No institution has worked harder for peace than the Catholic Church. Last year the bishops of the United States issued their latest message on peace, on the 10th anniversary of their magnificent pastoral "The Challenge of Peace."

This year the bishops emphasized what they called "the church's positive vision of a peaceful world" which, they said, includes: "a) the primacy of the global common good for political life; b) the role of social and economic development in securing the

conditions for a just and lasting peace; and c) the moral imperative of solidarity between affluent industrial nations and poor developing ones."

The bishops warned against an isolationism that seems to have infected the United States since the end of the Cold War. "This is not an option for believers in a universal church," they said, "or for citizens in a powerful nation."

They went on to say, "In a world where 40,000 children die every day from hunger and its consequences, where ethnic cleansing and systematic rape are used as weapons of war; and where people are still denied life, dignity and fundamental rights, we cannot remain silent or indifferent. Nor can we simply turn to military force to solve the world's problems or to right every wrong."

Unlike the pastoral 10 years ago, the bishops' message this year has largely

ignored by the secular media. So was Pope John Paul II's message this summer in Denver, when he said, "The international community ought to establish more effective structures for maintaining and promoting justice and peace. This implies that a concept of strategic interest should evolve which is based on the full development of peoples—out of poverty and toward a more dignified existence, out of injustice and exploitation toward fuller respect for the human person and the defense of universal human rights."

God calls all of us to be peacemakers. The bishops tell us how this can be done. "A world marked by true respect for the life, dignity and rights of the human person will be a world at peace."

They also say, "To be a Christian is to be a peacemaker and to pursue peace is to work for justice." Let that be our goal as we move toward 1994.

OFFICIAL
APPOINTMENT

Effective December 10, 1993

REV. KEVIN RYAN, O.S.B., appointed administrator of St. Augustine, Leopold and St. Mark, Perry County.

The above appointment is from the office of the Most Reverend Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., Archbishop of Indianapolis.

Two-Mass duty this weekend

The Office of Worship asked parishioners and parish staffs to take note of the effect of the Solemnity of Christmas falling on Saturday, Dec. 25.

Attendance at the celebration of the Eucharist is required for both Christmas, Dec. 25, and Sunday, Dec. 26, the Feast of the Holy Family.

Since parishes will celebrate the Christmas Vigil on Friday night and a full schedule of Christmas Day Masses on Saturday, they

should carefully consider scheduling an anticipated Mass on Saturday evening. Parishioners might think they can attend Mass once on Saturday night to fulfill both obligations, but they cannot.

If it is pastorally necessary to have a Saturday evening Mass of anticipation, the liturgy which is celebrated is that of the Feast of the Holy Family. Parishioners should know this, so that they don't expect a Christmas Mass at that time.

No issue next week

In accordance with our usual practice, *The Criterion* will not be published next week, Dec. 31. The next issue will be dated Jan. 7, 1994.

All offices in the Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Friday, Dec. 24, 1993, to Monday, Jan. 3, 1994.

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SERVICE—Hayward George, like his classmates, serves Holy Cross School friends and parishioners during the school's annual Dinner Theater on Dec. 16. The eighth grade students plan, prepare and serve the meal to 60 people. Then the class gave a Christmas play: "Wee Three Kings." (Photo by Margaret Nelson)

Christmas supplement

The *Criterion's* annual Christmas supplement begins on page 11 of this issue. The 16-page section includes 11 pages of Christmas memories submitted by our readers.

The CRITERION

Official Weekly Newspaper of the
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

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Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein

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Communications strategy plotted at symposium

by John F. Fink

Linking parishes together through a computer network in order to promote unity in the archdiocese emerged as the top communications priority during a communications symposium at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis Dec. 16.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein called the symposium to brainstorm possible strategies that will lead to the development of a communications plan for the archdiocese. Thirty-nine persons, including communications and public relations experts from both within and outside the archdiocese, participated.

In his charge to the participants, Archbishop Buechlein said that the archdiocese's strategic plan called for strengthening communications ministries. He said, "We have to be attentive to how we communicate and the effectiveness of our communications." He said that the church has a great story to tell but "we need to improve the way we tell it."

The participants were asked to propose action plans to achieve three objectives: 1. to promote the unity and vitality of the church in and among the 39 counties of central and southern Indiana with make up the archdiocese; 2. to effectively utilize contemporary communications media "to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ" to all people and to raise awareness about the programs and services of our church; and 3. to effectively utilize modern communications technologies to inform, educate and train adults, youth and children throughout central and southern Indiana.

Dan Conway, director of planning, communications and development for the archdiocese, gave an overview of communi-



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY—Joan Berner, standing, director of the Communications Office for the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, gives the recommendations of one of the groups working on communications strategy for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Archbishop Buechlein listens in the foreground. In the background are Mary Pat Farnand, director of lay ministry personnel, and Father Daniel Mahan, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church, Franklin. Thirty-nine people participated in the communications symposium at Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis Dec. 16. (Photo by Charles Schisla)

cations in the archdiocese. He stressed the eight values identified in the archdiocese's strategic plan and the necessity of communicating those values.

He identified eight audiences as potential recipients of the church's communications efforts:

- the approximately 200,000 persons who are registered members of 154 Catholic parishes and missions in central and southern Indiana;

- women and men (clergy and lay people) who have leadership responsibilities in the Catholic Church;

- Catholics who are no longer active in the church;

- men and women who are leaders of other religious traditions;

- people who have no religious affiliation;

- all of the people who live in the 39 counties of central and southern Indiana.

Conway said, "We don't have separate goals for communications." He said that the communications goals are the same as those in the strategic plan.

Conway distributed the first draft of a statement regarding communications in the archdiocese titled "Living and Proclaiming the Gospel."

The participants discussed the three objectives in three groups of 13 members each. They then gathered to discuss the results of their deliberations and to identify and prioritize the communications needs of the archdiocese.

Discussions in all three groups concerned better use of electronic media, both now and in the future. There was little mention of print media.

The communications and public relations experts encouraged the archdiocese to utilize professional outside resources, including the formation of an advisory committee composed of public relations and media professionals.

They also encouraged the archdiocese to take advantage of present electronic media, including television, to spread the church's message.

Community to keep birth control services if hospitals 'network'

In October, Community Hospitals of Indiana, Inc. agreed to stop performing elective abortions if plans are completed to form a collaborative health network with St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services in Indianapolis. But other issues with moral implications were left to be resolved at later meetings.

A statement from the Community board of directors, issued on Dec. 6, read, in part: "The board of directors of Community Hospitals has now determined that it is necessary for the fulfillment of its mission that Community Hospitals continue voluntary sterilizations, and other reproductive

services such as distribution of birth control materials and *in vitro* fertilization."

The Community group said that, with the formation of the new network, it will consider for adoption the ethical and religious directives of the Catholic Church.

St. Vincent later issued a statement that included this: "The collaborative agreement by the hospitals is not a merger. As a result, many issues will continue to be decided at the individual hospital level. The reproductive issue is one of those. We will continue to have dialogue with Community Hospitals Indianapolis as it relates to the ethical and religious directives of the Catholic Church."

Charities required to substantiate taxpayers' gifts of \$250 or more

by Margaret Nelson

Last week, Joseph B. Hornett, chief financial officer for the archdiocese, advised archdiocesan leaders of the implications of the Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993.

He noted that "burdens of the act are substantiation requirements for gifts of \$250 or more, and the disclosure of the deductibility of gifts of \$75 or more when benefits are provided to the donor in return."

After Jan. 1, 1994, a taxpayer may not take a charitable deduction under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code for any contribution of \$250 or more without substantiating it with a "contemporaneous written acknowledgment" from the charitable organization to which the donation was made.

The acknowledgment that the organization receiving the payment gives the taxpayer must contain this information:

- 1) the amount of cash contributed, or description (not a valuation) of other-than-cash property contributed;
- 2) an indication of whether the donee provided any goods or services in whole or partial consideration for any contribution; and
- 3) a description and good faith estimate of

the value of goods or services provided by the donee organization.

One thing that might be of particular interest to the recipients of Hornett's letter is: "The special problems of tuition options/minimum contributions and the funding of Catholic schools."

He stated that most archdiocesan schools, including high schools, are supported in whole or in part with tuition options or required minimum contribution arrangements by parents of the students. Hornett calls these arrangements that disguise tuition as charitable contributions "problematic (especially now) on two fronts."

Internal Revenue Service ruling 83-104 described factors that distinguish tuition from contributions, regardless of what payments are called.

Money transferred by a parent to a school may be treated as a charitable contribution only if 1) the child's enrollment in the school was not contingent on the payment; 2) the payment isn't part of a plan to convert non-deductible tuition payments into charitable contributions; and 3) receipt of the benefit was not otherwise dependent on the making of the payment.

Archbishop Buechlein to preside at King ecumenical celebration

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein will preside at an ecumenical celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. in St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

"Black History in Perspective" will be the theme of the celebration. Father Clarence Waldon, director of the Office of Evangelization and pastor of Holy Angels Church; and Rev. Oliver Walker, pastor of Phillips CME Temple, will be the speakers for the event.

The choirs from Holy Angels and the Phillips Temple will provide the music. The celebration is sponsored by the Office of Ecumenism, Father Thomas Murphy, director; the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver; and the Urban Parish Cooperative of the archdiocese.

After the service, a reception will be held at the Assembly Hall of the Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center.

Those wishing further information may contact Blanche Stewart at 317-236-1509.

Assumption Parish, Indianapolis to begin 100th year celebration

Assumption Parish in Indianapolis will begin to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its founding with the 9:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Jan. 2, 1994.

Father John Ryan, administrator of the parish, will celebrate the Mass in the church that is clearly visible from Interstate 70.

Father Joseph F. Weber was the first pastor of Assumption. There are about 100 registered families, with some former parishioners coming from outside the parish boundaries to the weekly liturgies.

The construction of the Interstate took many families away from the area. Children in the parish attend All Saints School, part of the St. Anthony campus.

Several celebrations are being planned for Assumption's centennial year, including a mission on February 23-25 led by Benedictine Father Bede "Steve" Peay, a native of the parish. Father Bede is now serving at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

An alumni Mass will honor all graduates of the parish school on June 12. The youth group, ALIVE, will sell parish anniversary memorabilia.

On October 2, a major celebration will be held to close the anniversary year with Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein presiding.

Providence Sister Monica Withem serves as pastoral associate and administrator of religious education in the parish.



FUN WITH SANTA—A St. Mary's Child Center student from Indianapolis talks with Santa Claus during a Christmas party sponsored by the F. C. Tucker Company on Dec. 15 at the archdiocesan Catholic Charities agency. Tucker associate Rick McCommon helps Santa hand out toys to the children. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

FROM THE EDITOR

The Gospel descriptions of Jesus' birth

by John F. Fink

Last week I wrote about some of the Catholic doctrines contained in the account of the Annunciation that was last Sunday's Gospel. This week it seems only natural that I should focus on the accounts of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

Two of the Gospels' authors—Matthew and Luke—wrote what are called the infancy narratives. Mark began his Gospel with the preaching of John the Baptist. John began with a profound prologue which doesn't tell the story of the birth but which tells us the nature of the divine person who assumed our human nature. I've written about John's prologue in the Christmas supplement that included with this issue.

Here I will try to explain what Matthew and Luke had in mind when they wrote down the stories and traditions of the early Christians about the birth of Jesus. They wanted to do more than just tell a nice story.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL HAS been read at Masses during this last week of Advent leading to Christmas. The point Matthew wanted to make was that the coming of Jesus was the climax of Israel's history and that Jesus' conception, birth and childhood were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

He began, therefore, with "the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," putting David first to emphasize Jesus' descent from that king's putative ancestor. At the end of the genealogy, he explicitly says that Jesus "is called the Messiah."

Matthew devotes only eight verses to the birth of Jesus, but those verses reminded Jewish readers of stories in the Torah, Joseph's dreams, for example, evoke the dreams of another Joseph—the son of Jacob the patriarch. But



Matthew's main purpose was to teach the doctrine of the virgin birth, which Joseph learns from the angel in his dream.

In the stories he tells about Jesus' birth, Matthew kept showing how the Jewish Scriptures were being fulfilled. His stories about the visit of the magi, the flight into Egypt and the massacre of the Holy Innocents paralleled the history of the Jews and the reliving of the Exodus.

As he was to do throughout his Gospel, Matthew stressed the rejection of Jesus by the Jews and his acceptance by the Gentile nations. The magi represent the Gentile nations, the massacre of the Holy Innocents by a wicked king parallels the killing of the Israelite babies by the Pharaoh, and Jesus' being taken to Egypt and then returning relives the Exodus. All this, Matthew said, was done "that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" (2:15). (The prophet was Hosea; see Hos. 11:1.)

LUKE'S GOSPEL, THOUGH, is the one that is read on Christmas day (except for the third Mass when John's prologue is read). Luke was a master storyteller and he combined historical and legendary details to answer the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" In Luke's Gospel, Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem because of a census and Jesus was born there. He was circumcised after eight days, was presented in the Temple after 40 days, and then the family returned to Nazareth. There is no mention of the adoration of the magi, the flight into Egypt, or the massacre of the Holy Innocents.

Luke does, though, have a great many other details as he parallels the births of John the Baptist and Jesus as his way of showing that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Luke's focus is always on explaining who Jesus was. He was writing to a different audience than Matthew was, to Gentile Christians. His message was that God's promises to Israel were fulfilled in Jesus and that the salvation promised to Israel and accomplished by Jesus were extended to the Gentiles.

Among the details are the shepherds, who first learn about Jesus' birth. This is in keeping with Luke's theme that the lowly are singled out as the recipients of God's favors. Throughout his Gospel, Luke shows Jesus as caring toward the lowly, the outcast, and the afflicted.

Sometimes people point to inaccuracies in Luke's Gospel. For example, historians have never been able to find evidence of a universal census during the time of Caesar Augustus, who reigned from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D., although there were registrations of Roman citizens (Joseph was not a Roman citizen). Luke puts the census "when Quirinius was governor of Syria," but Quirinius became governor in 6 A.D., after Christ was born.

Luke's account, though, is not meant to be historical. He probably knew approximately when these things happened. After all, he was writing about them 80 or more years after they happened.

The details, though, were not as important as the message, which is spoken by the angel's announcement to the shepherds: "Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (2:11). As savior, Jesus is looked upon by Luke as the one who rescues humanity from sin and delivers humanity from the condition of alienation from God. The "messiah" was the expected leader from the line of David who would restore the kingdom to Israel. And "Lord" is the name used for Yahweh and, when applied to Jesus, points to his divinity.

ALTHOUGH THEY DID IT in different ways, both Matthew and Luke wanted to convince their readers that Jesus was indeed God's Son, the Messiah, the Christ. They also both taught that Jesus had no human father, that he was of the House of David through the Davidic heritage of Joseph, that he was born in Bethlehem as prophesied, and that the Holy Family ultimately went to settle in Nazareth.

THE GOOD STEWARD

Dickens' 'Christmas Carol' is a story of good stewardship

by Dan Conway

One of the many blessings I have received during the past year has been the opportunity to write this column. In gratitude for this, I dedicate the following to all who seek to be good stewards of the gifts they have received.

We all remember the scene from old movies and TV specials. Two "portly gentlemen," as Charles Dickens called them, enter the offices of Scrooge and Marley hoping to raise money "for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time of year." They make their case, pointing out that "hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts."

"What shall we put you down for?"

"Nothing," says Scrooge.

"You wish to be anonymous?" the gentlemen ask.

"I wish to be left alone!" says Scrooge.



The gentlemen grieve for the poor and the homeless but they also grieve for old Ebenezer Scrooge whose self-centered misery has blinded him to the simple joys of Christmas.

How many times have we heard similar versions of this same old story? How many times have we found ourselves playing the part of Scrooge—saying to those who ask for our time or money, "Please don't bother me. I wish to be left alone?"

Although he never uses the word, Charles Dickens' wonderful story "A Christmas Carol" is about stewardship. It is about the joy of giving and about learning to care for (and be responsible for) all of God's creation.

Scrooge is not a good steward. He hoards what he has been given (time, talent and treasure) and he buries his gifts deep within himself. He cannot give or share, and the result is a twisted, self-absorbed misery. Along with his gifts and talents, Scrooge accumulates and hoards all the hurts, resentments and disappointments of a lonely lifetime.

There is only one thing that can save this

miserable old man from the hell he has made for himself. Giving. Open, generous, unrestricted giving is the only cure for the likes of Ebenezer Scrooge. As long as he holds back—asking, "What's in it for me?"—Scrooge is condemned to live the life that he has fashioned for himself through years of lonely self-centeredness.

Fortunately, because Dickens believed in a generous and forgiving God, old Scrooge is given one last chance to experience life as it was truly meant to be lived. The spirits who visit Scrooge help him to face painful truths about himself. And by caring enough to confront him with his selfishness, the spirits give Scrooge something far more valuable than all his gold; they give him a glimpse of who he was, who he is now, and who he could become—if only he would let go of his bitter resentment and embrace the joy of giving.

Recall that following this change of heart, as he hurries to join his nephew's family for Christmas dinner, Scrooge encounters one of the two "portly gentlemen" who had asked him for a contribution the day before. After greeting the gentlemen so warmly that the man barely recognized the old miser,

Scrooge whispers in his ear the amount of his pledge to help the poor and destitute.

"My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?" cries the gentleman.

"Not a farthing less," says Scrooge. "A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you."

And then the most amazing thing happens. As the astounded solicitor tries to express his gratitude, stammering from both appreciation and disbelief, old Scrooge says it for him: "Thank you," says Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. I thank you 50 times. Bless you!"

In "A Christmas Carol," Dickens wants each of us to discover what old Scrooge had to learn the hard way. The only way to hold onto something is to give it away. This is the paradox of giving: The one who gives a gift (from substance and without counting the cost) is the one who is most grateful. Besides being a donor, the generous person is also a beneficiary.

Afterwards, Mr. Dickens says, Scrooge kept Christmas well by giving it away. And so, as Mr. Dickens observes at the conclusion of his story, "May that be truly said of us . . . everyone!"

EVERYDAY FAITH

The very best Christmas morning a kid could ever ask for

by Lou Jacquet

Looking back, I should have quit while I was still in a state of pure bliss on Dec. 15, 1957. It's been mostly downhill from there.

Well, I exaggerate. After all, I have enjoyed my life. But it is true that, at age 7, I had no way of realizing I would never again approach the magic and the wonder of the best Christmas morning that a kid could ever wish for.

Mom and Dad had worked all night to transform the living room. They had made the white fireplace look exactly as if Santa had wedged his oversize presence down the chimney for a visit. The towering blue spruce in the corner (with that wonderful fresh smell that no artificial tree could ever approach) hovered over a child's fantasyland.



Even now I can recite parts of the scene from memory: the white enamel garbage truck with the sliding rear door; the Remco Fordlin 99 dasher; and steering wheel; an Erector set; the shiny black Johnny Lattner football helmet; a Cadaco Ellis hockey game with players that moved via handles you turned at furious speeds; a fantastic orange open-wheeled racing car; and Pop's old cast iron train running through it all, an ever-present fixture dating to 1910 or so that linked us to the ghosts of Christmases past. More, too, all artfully arranged by my parents during their sleepless night Christmas morning at our house was a major production in those days.

Mostly I recall the vividness of the colors: the lights on the tree, the glossy red, yellows and blues of the plastic toys, the bright enamels on the trucks, the golden stripe on that polished black helmet. With the whole scene bathed in the glow of Pop's floodlights, it was a moment never to be forgotten.

The truth is that "Christmas 1957" in my memory probably telescopes the best mo-

ments of two or three childhood Christmases into one. Photographs would document the details if I chose to go back and investigate them. But accurate details are not what I come seeking these December days when I lie down on the floor in the early morning hours and look up at our lighted Christmas tree. For a few moments, memory takes me back a few decades to a glowing, golden, magic childhood world full of possibilities and promise.

This is not the world most of us adults inhabit. In the real world, we are beset by a thousand problems with no easy solutions. We are separated by crime, drugs, prejudices and the various camps that we have divided ourselves into on a variety of issues. Even our faith, for all its joys, calls us to responsible adult conversion to its painful struggles and genuine difficulties.

So let my thoughts drift, on these cold December mornings, back to perhaps the last time I felt pure, unadulterated joy and wonder for one mesmerizing moment, I'm a kid again on the best Christmas morning a

kid could ever have. What better Christmas present could an adult ask for than a memory like that?

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To the Editor

Celebrating triumph of creative spirit

Recently, I had dinner at the Cardinal Ritter High School cafeteria, where as a faculty member, I eat amid the shouts of students daily. I was not looking forward to this debut of the school play, although Ritter has a food service staff that has helped me gain 30 pounds in three years. ... Yum!

The priest director, Father Troy Overton, has carried his body so bent the last few days, he could have been Christ himself bent under the cross. The message that the play was in trouble was clear. So I arrived at the theater with every intention of ducking out if it became too much to bear. I had a hard day.

One week before, I saw "Harvey" performed at Howe High School, an Indianapolis public school built in the '70s with megabucks to support a beautiful theater. The first few rows were filled with enthusiastic families of the student performers. Our young friend Aaron was cast as the psychologist. The production was well done. It seemed impossible for Ritter to begin to match it with our make-shift stage and modest budget.

What a surprise I had! Mothers and fathers of the thespians transformed the cafeteria. Lights went out; clothed and candle tables set a cafe mood; donated Fazoli spaghetti and Subway salad fed the body.

Then "The Matchmaker," by Thornton Wilder, featuring the bombastic red-velvet-clad "Dolly" of "Hello Dolly" fame took over. A few lines came back, but once more priest-sociologist Andrew Greeley's revelation was obvious: that commitment of faculty and parents to church schools overrides budget problems.

The show was terrific! The students created a glow in that everyday room. Father Troy opened with benediction and ended with "Thanks be to God." Everyone celebrated a triumph of the creative spirit.

Rosalie Kelly

Indianapolis

Bishops targets because of actions

The media attack on Cardinal Joseph Bernardin is typical of the Catholic bashing long endured by the American church. Such anti-Catholic bigotry is one of the few forms of bigotry still fashionable to the opinion-making elite. You don't hear Jewish bashing, black bashing, or heaven forbid, gay bashing by the media. Now, Catholic bashing, especially if it involves bishops, is another story.

With that said, however, it should be noted that our bishops have set themselves up for attack by neglecting the religious formation of the laity and by unnecessarily assuming a high political profile. Let me explain.

After the Vatican Council, in the first flush of enthusiasm, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference were formed. Over the years, that two-man bureaucracy has in many ways functionally become a Washington lobby, with a mind-boggling social agenda. Reform of the social order seems to be a predominant focus. Instead of it being used as a vehicle to form our people religiously and spiritually, and then letting our people reform the social order, the opposite was done.

The bishops set about to reform the social order on their own—bypassing and ignoring many of the laity. Of course, why should laymen bother to take up their own responsibility in the world when the bishops were more than happy to do it for them? Since men of good faith often differ on concrete prescriptions to solve society's problems, it soon became apparent to many laymen that the bishops, as a body, had a partisan perspective. This was the beginning of the eclipse of the bishops as shepherds.

After the council the time was ripe for

religious formation. But our bishops chose a social agenda and building bureaucracy instead. Furthermore, by assuming a high political profile they squandered away their moral and spiritual capital with the laity and set themselves up for attacks to come. Their moral and spiritual credibility with the laity is now simply gone. That is now coming home to roost.

The high-profile operation of our bishops in Washington has little lay backing and the politicians know it. For example, how many Catholics have any idea what our bishops say or do, or even care to know? On the other hand, if our bishops had only bothered to be the shepherds first and form our people, some of the very issues the bishops are concerned about would have been resolved. But they choose to go it alone.

For example, if Catholic laymen had received any serious religious formation they would vote by the tens of millions against abortion. Pro-abortion politicians would be an endangered species, especially pro-abortion "Catholic" judges and politicians. But, our people have received no formation! All they received was one NCCB/USCC statement after another on all manner of topics, many having little to do with faith. In light of this absence of formation, it should surprise no one that some of the most pro-abortion states are predominantly Catholic! Catholic formation has been non-existent.

Our bishops are indeed in an unenviable position that they have brought upon themselves. They just had to be "players in D.C." The high profile was just to tempt. And at this point they still seem disinclined to work through the very people who could help them the most. The trouble is, they cannot work through the laity until the laity are spiritually and religiously formed, and that just does not seem to be in the offing and furthermore, time is now too short.

An objective appraisal of the current situation would probably be as follows: 1) Catholic formation has not occurred since the council and shows no signs of occurring in the immediate future.

2) Religious continuity with the past has already been severed by a generation-and-a-half, and even if Catholic formation were to begin in earnest, it would be highly problematic. The doctrinal misunderstandings and deliberate "disinformation" are now so vast that we would have to back up just to get to zero.

3) For most Catholics, while the bishops say or do is not known and of no concern to what has become a nominal and privatized Catholicism.

4) The bishops are perceived by the laity as spiritually irrelevant.

5) Nonetheless, there is some advantage to having bishops, since they fight some of the moral perversions of our age and that helps me from having to get involved.

6) More attacks will occur against our bishops and there will be little effective large-scale lay support for them, since Catholics, by lay support, have no idea what they believe.

A once-avoidable situation.

Jay Carlos

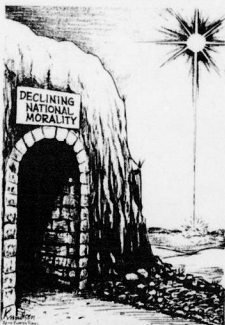
Bloomington

'Menial' not term for mother's work

In your Dec. 10 editorial, "Women's Role in the Church Has Changed," you wrote: "In the developing countries, women are still expected to perform all the menial jobs of caring for the home and the children as well as working in the rice fields, etc."

So—the role of women bearing children, caring for them, contributing to the family's welfare is still considered to be of "menial" classification (as contrasted with the range of opportunities now offered them in the United States)?

"Menial" implies that neither education nor intelligence are the qualifications neces-



THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

sary for the job—and it is just this placement on the scale measuring values for the country's growth or well-being that has fueled much of the flame of feminism.

I am not a "feminist," no matter what degree of organization it takes—but a woman who treasures marriage and raising eight fine children as a true and dignified contribution to the growth of civilization—even while changing diapers, scrubbing floors, or driving the children to music lessons.

It was this very concept within the church—that women were "allowed" at the altar only to clean it—that fueled much of the anger many women felt. A saving grace, however, was the church's emphasis on regard for the Blessed Mother that lessened the sting of the stigma.

In any case, please review your classification of feminine social and ask, "Is a CEO better than a mom?"

Mary F. Flaten

Indianapolis

Tax money should assist special ed

This is in response to Monica Santangelo's letter (Dec. 3) expressing a good deal of dissatisfaction with the Catholic school system primarily because they are not allocating resources towards special needs children. The one statement which

The Criterion welcomes letters from its readers. Its policy is that readers will be free to express their opinions on a wide range of issues as long as those opinions are relevant, well-expressed, temperate in tone, and within space limitations.

Letters must be signed and contain the writer's full address, although his/her name may be withheld for a good reason. The editor reserves the right to select the letters to be published and will resist demands that letters be published. The editor may also edit letters for length, grammar and style.

Letters for publication should be sent to The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, Ind. 46206.

stood out was the anxiety felt by the Santangelos whenever asked to increase support to the church with the majority of that support going to the school.

I know exactly how they feel. I have the same anxiety attack every time I see my property taxes increase to support a public school system bloated by bureaucracy, inefficiency, and anti-Catholic attitudes.

I am grateful for any of my tax dollars which help provide resources to special needs children. . . that is right and just. However, if I had my choice, any tax money going for special needs children in public schools would go for special needs children in Catholic schools. Please also keep in mind that even though you may be asked to increase your support to the church, it is a fact that your property taxes are lower than they otherwise would be because of the Catholic school system.

Santangelo views that her son was denied a Catholic education yet goes on to state that his CCD program is "wonderful." That is inconsistent logic at best. That there are no resources for special needs children in the Catholic school system is the fault of governmental policies that deny funding to Catholic schools even though they teach the same math, science, etc. classes that are taught in public schools, and the statistics give evidence that they do it better.

The December 12 collection gave opportunity to contribute to the needs of priests who by their next-to-free labor subsidized not only the Catholic educational system, but the system of taxes which supports the public educational system as well.

Stephen Brandmaier

Indianapolis

LIGHT ONE CANDLE

How to enjoy Christmas

by Fr. John Catoir
Director, The Christophers

My Christmas gift to you this year is a spiritual one. It is contained in this quote: "The secret of sanctity and happiness consists in but one thing, fidelity to God's will as it is manifested in the duties of the present moment."

"Abandonment to Divine Providence," Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J.). Living joyfully in the present moment is, of course, a work of grace, but since grace builds on nature, there are things we can do to make this dream come true. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Don't let the past drag you down. Pray for the grace to forgive everyone who has ever hurt you and forgive yourself in the process. Feelings of resentment and guilt can destroy the present moment, but you can't linger in this mood. Once you repent, God forgives and forgets. Discipline yourself to trust in God's mercy. When plagued with dark thoughts about the past, stop everything and say, "I'm not going to think about that anymore. God loves me, all will be well."

2. Don't be afraid of the future. Jesus said, "Be not afraid." Living in the present moment means saying, "NO" to all those dark and fearful thoughts about the future. Why spoil the present? It's all you've got. In the words of St. Paul, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable. . . think about these things. . . the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:8,9).



3. Be a doer, not a worrier.

Worry never baked a cake, built a bridge, or solved a problem. Fretting does little more than make a bad situation worse. If you do your best to help make this a better world, there is little danger that you will be overcome by fear of failure.

The Lord made a point of instructing us on the need to overcome fear. "Do not worry about your life. . . Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If God so clothes the grass of the field, will he not much more clothe you. . . Therefore do not worry. . . strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:25,27,30,31,33).

4. Try to be cheerful in all circumstances.

If you act cheerfully, eventually you'll feel cheerful. Everyone must endure the unavoidable miseries of life, but cheerful acquiescence is much better than doleful resignation. Tears are necessary at times, but for those who strive to live gladly, the tears are wiped away. It's always better to deflect self-pity as soon as possible. Betty Malone of Ottawa, Canada, suffers from a number of physical ailments which leave her in constant pain, but when asked, "How are you feeling Betty?" she offers a big smile and says, "Oh, I have my good days and bad, but when I have my good days I feel terrific."

Catholics are called to live joyfully in the present moment because of the knowledge of God's love, the wonderful love that was revealed to us at Bethlehem. Merry Christmas!

(For a free copy of the Christophers News Note "Life Up Your Heart," send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, NY 10017.)

CORNUCOPIA

Tonight is 'the night'

by Cynthia Deves

Brian is worried about the animals. He knows from visiting Grandpa's farm that they smell bad and sometimes they lick you with big tongues or swat you by mistake with their tails. He hopes Baby Jesus is not having to put up with that kind of thing in his manger tonight.

Rosie dreams about Mary, the one who's "full of grapes" and who looks so beautiful in the creche beneath the Christmas tree. Rosie understands that the plaster Mary is not the real one, but she knows in her heart that Mary was pretty because she was a mommy and mommies are pretty.

Baby can't focus very well on the creche, but he's hypnotized by the lights of the Christmas tree. The blinking ones make him start every time they wink, making him so exhausted that he falls asleep in the swing seat, propped up by his stuffed Rudolph on one side and his Christmas teddy on the other.



Great-Aunt Sarah is sitting in the living room, telling Pat and Mike jokes to the relatives. Great-Uncle Pete tops those with Lena and Ole jokes, and pretty soon the usual friendly familial arguments will be underway over the mulled cider.

Mom takes advantage of the lull to throw another batch of cookies into the oven so that no guest will go away without a sugar high from her house over the holidays. She hopes Santa got her message about the new hand mixer which would certainly have come in handy, a fact she has mentioned publicly many times.

Dad's getting into the Santa suit as fast as could be expected while feeling sick from smoking his annual Christmas cigar with Uncle Ed. The thought of the toys which need to be assembled between midnight and (probably) 4 a.m. makes his stomach go another turn.

The choir practices a final time for its big appearance at Midnight Mass. Mr. Davis is suspiciously jovial and the Harding twins can't stop giggling behind their music at the sight of the new tenor, but all will be well when the first notes of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" boom forth from the organ. Father Matthew is so impressed, he thinks he'll tip the altar

boys and girls more than they could ever hope for or deserve.

The ladies at the retirement home are cooking their tastiest specialties as a Christmas treat for the men, whom they outnumber by four to one. In return, the men plan to make an effort to dance with every single lady when someone suggests playing records, as they inevitably will. That is if they can make it up out of their chairs.

People of all ages, genders, economic strata, intellectual levels, religious persuasions and personal ambitions take time off on this Christmas Eve, as they do every year, to be hopeful and joyful and good.

It is a wonderful life, and there are miracles on 34th Street. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. All of this happened because tonight we celebrate the birthday of a vulnerable, unthreatening, needful little baby. And on this particular night, we realize that we all need him. God bless us, every one.

vips...



Dan and Daisy Smith of Sunman will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Nicholas church on Jan. 1 at 10:30 a.m. An open house celebration hosted by their children and grandchildren will be held at the Sunman Community Building, from 2-5 p.m. The Smiths were married in the chancery of the Basilica of the Assumption Church in Covington, Kent on New Year's Day, 1934. They are the parents of seven children: William, Gerty Ammerman, Daniel, Jr., Joseph, Kathy Sroufe, Judy Crandall and Kenneth Smith. They have 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Assistant editor Margaret Nelson's *Criterion* article, about Terre Haute Comboni Father Todd Riebs' missionary work in Sudan, appears in the new winter edition of *Comboni Missions*.

St. Thomas Aquinas School music instructor Tina Valdois of Indianapolis is currently performing in the role of Mother Superior in the play "Nunsense II" at the Theatre on the Square at 627 Massachusetts Ave. in Indianapolis. Performances continue through Dec. 31. For ticket information, call 317-637-8085.

St. Andrew parishioner Charles J. Schisla of Indianapolis, director of the archdiocesan Catholic Communications Office, had five

color photographs printed in the new book "John Paul II Speaks to Youth at World Youth Day," published by Catholic News Service and Ignatius Press. Schisla's photographs were taken at Marian College in Indianapolis during the Holy Cross Gathering in June and at various locations in Denver during World Youth Day events last August. Some of his photos feature archdiocesan youth. "John Paul II Speaks to Youth" is available from Ignatius Press, 33 Oakland Ave., Harrison, NY 10528 for \$11.95 softcover and \$19.95 hardcover plus \$2 per book shipping and handling.

Daniel Conway, secretary for planning, communications and development for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, has been reelected to the Board of Directors of the National Catholic Stewardship Council (NCSC). There are a total of 18 members on the board, representing 14 national and international regions.

Benedictine Brother Godfrey Mullen, a fifth-year theologian at St. Meinrad Seminary, has been awarded the 1993 Marz-Sullivan Archdiocesan Scholarship. The fund was established by an anonymous donor in memory of three Terre Haute men killed in a 1988 automobile accident. The income earned by this fund is to be applied toward the education of a St. Meinrad Benedictine monk. Brother Godfrey professed final vows as a Benedictine monk of St. Meinrad in August, 1992. He was ordained to the diaconate on Nov. 6.

check-it-out...

St. Paul Episcopal Church, 10 West 61st Street, will hold a Festival of Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. on Dec. 24. Christmas music for organ will begin at 4:30 p.m. This service originated at Truro Cathedral in England and was based on a medieval vigil service. Modified at a later date, the service has become known to the world each Christmas Eve through its television broadcasts from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, England. In marking the Christmas Season, lessons are read by laity and clergy with carols and hymns sung by the choir and congregation. St. Paul's will also present a Christmas concert, preceding the Festival Christmas Eucharist at 11 p.m. The concert will begin at 10:20 p.m.

The Love Lights a Tree Project, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, is a very special opportunity for friends and family to honor those who have been afflicted with cancer. The Marion County Unit of the American Cancer Society erected Christmas trees in the Glendale Shopping Center and outside the Greenwood Place Mall for the month of December. Those interested in honoring an individual may do so by purchasing an ornament for a minimum of \$10. The ornament will be placed on the tree in honor of the loved one. To place an order, call 317-879-4100.

The first exhibit of art at St. Meinrad Archabbey Library for 1994 will be the work of Valerie Dillon. The arrangement of more than a dozen paintings will offer a range of subjects, including still-life, landscape, portraiture, and semibstract. Dillon uses a variety of painting techniques, such as oils, acrylics and watercolors. The display will be held until Jan. 28.

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MARKET DAY—At the St. Jude Parish Ministry Fair, parishioners learn about the Market Day food co-op, proceeds of which benefit the school. (Photo by Donna Ahlbrand)

Needy helped at Terre Haute Christmas Store

by David Delaney

Making sure families that are pinched for money have at least a couple of Christmas gifts is the goal of the Christmas Store of Terre Haute.

Cosponsored by Catholic Charities of Terre Haute and the Terre Haute Diocese Council of Catholic Women, the store was started in December of 1976. It has been set up at different sites over the years. This year it began operating out of Ryves Hall Youth Center in Terre Haute's inner city.

Some who use the store have recently lost their jobs, while others simply don't have the money to buy gifts after their basic bills have been paid.

This year, the store was open from Dec. 6 to 10, with people coming in to select their gifts for their families by appointment.

"This comes in real handy for people like us who can't afford to buy gifts," said a woman named Angie. She was in the store one evening with her husband to pick out gifts for their five boys, aged 8 to 12 years.

"It's real nice they do this for needy people," she said.

The Council of Catholic Women in each parish in the diocese makes arrangements to have various items available at the Christmas Store.

Each of the parishes raises money for its contributions. Some do it with money-making activities, like baked sales, rummage sales or other projects.

People who "shop" at the store are contacted by their pastors or are given Christmas Store shopping certificates. Several community agencies and schools also hand out certificates.

"People from all over town benefit from this," said Ryves Hall Youth Center director Jim Edwards. He said some parents choose not to tell their youngsters where the presents have come from, and that's OK.

"Some who need help find it a little embarrassing," he said. "Then others have kids who still believe in Santa."

Besides toys, shoppers can pick out household supplies, including sheets, blankets and toiletries.

Those benefiting from the project show up with their gift certificates. They are not asked to give their names.

Providence Sister Brenda Harvey of St. Mary of the Woods helps coordinate the project. Sisters Raymond Hunter, Marie Germaine, Loretha Theresa, Cyril and Mary Evangelista help her.

"The sisters are like Christmas elves," said Sister Brenda with a smile. The sisters work two days a month on the project throughout the year, she said.

"It takes a long time to get ready for 400 families," she said. Each member of a family that shops at the store gets a cloth Christmas bag filled with assorted treats.

The nuns also repair the toys that are gathered every month of the year. "We don't put them in the store unless we can get them to look like new," she said.

Part of the work performed by the sisters is making clothes for the dolls. "We freshen up used teddy bears," said Sister Brenda.

The sisters do much of the work on the toys at Simeon House I and II, which are residences run by Catholic Charities of Terre Haute for people over 60 years of age.

Sister Brenda said that this enables the sisters to perform dual tasks—making toys for needy children and socializing with the elderly residents of the Simeon houses.

She appreciates the efforts of Catholic Charities in this Christmas project and also its many other activities the year round.

"Pat and John Etling are really dedi-

cated," Sister Brenda said. "Catholic Charities exists in Terre Haute because of their efforts."

The Ettings are pleased that so many people are pulling together to assist the needy during the holidays. "Christmas is love," proclaims the sign placed in the middle of a wreath at the entrance of the store.

The Ettings said the entire holiday project is the result of a tremendous amount of cooperation by businesses, agencies and individuals.

The archdiocese helps by giving \$5,000 from its discretionary funds. Agencies making referrals include Lifeline, mental health programs, United Way, Bethany House, the Simeon Houses, local parishes, the welfare health department, the CODA shelter, school nurses and the Washington alternative living and training agency.

St. Rita pantry thankful

Lillian Stevenson, of the St. Rita food pantry, announced that IPS School #93 brought 6,000 items of food to help the pantry. Three busloads of children, grades one through six, made a human chain to put the food right on the shelves of the food bank, she said.

Tell City families gather at St. Paul to make Advent wreaths

by Peg Hall

Boys and girls love parties and Christmas. And they love stories that begin: "When you were a baby..."

One of Craig Sinclair's favorite Christmas stories—if he remembers—might be about the party he attended at St. Paul Catholic Church in Tell City and how he smiled and waved his arms as he lit the candle on the pretty Advent wreath in front of him.

Mommy helped, of course, since he was only 3-and-a-half months old when he went to the family wreath-making party at St. Paul Church on Nov. 28, 1993.

Baby Craig and his parents, Lee and Kim Sinclair, were among dozens of families that gathered as a community to share a potluck supper and make Advent wreaths to take home.

The custom of lighting candles in

circles of evergreens, to chase away the gloom of winter, is an ancient one, they learned. With the coming of Christianity, it gained greater meaning as the symbol of waiting through the darkest month of the year for the birth of Jesus, the light of the world to his followers.

The traditional family Advent wreath has a place of honor in the center of the table. Four colored candles, or three purple or blue, and one pink, stand in an evergreen wreath.

Beginning the fourth Sunday before Christmas, the first candle is lit with prayers and songs when the family sits down to eat.

Another candle is lit each week—if there is a pink one, it is lit the third week—sort of symbolizing, "We just can't wait for Christmas."

Finally, the week before Christmas, all of the candles are ablaze and the waiting time is almost over.



ADVENT WREATH—Craig Sinclair lights a candle in darkness with help from his mother, Kim. With his father, Lee Sinclair, the family is participating in the St. Paul, Tell City wreath-making party. (Photo by Peg Hall)



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Plans for pope's midnight Mass made early

by Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY—Before most people even thought about buying Christmas cards, Msgr. Piero Marini had already chosen the art that is decorating the programs being handed out at Pope John Paul II's Christmas season liturgies.

And before most cards were in the mail, Msgr. Marini had sent the artists with the texts of prayers, readings and music for the Masses to the Vatican print shop.

But putting the booklets together in November is only a small part of the 51-year-old's preparations for a papal Christmas.

Since 1987, he has been the "master of pontifical liturgical celebrations," the chief organizer and coordinator of Masses and prayer services celebrated by the pope at home and abroad.

The altar servers, readers, deacons and concelebrants answer to him. He works

with the musicians and with the Italian television crews who beam up to satellites the images of the papal Christmas celebrations seen around the world.

And, he is at the pope's side during each of the liturgies. It's a rare photograph of Pope John Paul celebrating Mass that does not include Msgr. Marini.

The Masses he plans have a worldwide congregation and set a standard for celebrations across the globe.

Before the two great liturgical celebrations of the year—Easter and Christmas—Msgr. Marini meets with his papally appointed consultants, who are liturgical experts.

"We evaluate the celebrations of the year before to see if there are elements which need to be improved, both in texts and in other areas," he said.

They have videotapes of the liturgies, the monsignor said, but usually don't have to use them because "these liturgies are recorded within us."

The Christmas season liturgies begin with Midnight Mass and conclude with the Jan. 9 commemoration of the Baptism of the Lord.

After six years of working with Pope John Paul, Msgr. Marini said the Christmas liturgies "have reached a certain equilibrium."

Although he likes trying new things, he said, "with an international assembly, such as that gathered for midnight Mass, there are some elements, some songs, which cannot be changed."

For example, he said, "you can't replace 'Adeste Fideles' with another song; it wouldn't be Christmas."

Whether at the Vatican or on a papal trip far from home, language and culture are important considerations in the liturgy planning process.

"The most important thing is the participation of the people," he said.

The language and the songs are the most obvious means through which people participate, Msgr. Marini said, but cultural expressions such as dance and other gestures also can be important, "although they must always respect the sacred character of the Mass."

Tradition and the worldwide audience for the midnight Mass have led to some established uses of language and others that change each year, he said.

The Gospel is always proclaimed in Latin, Msgr. Marini said. The first Scripture reading is usually in Spanish—the language spoken by the greatest number of Catholics in the world—and the second reading is usually in English "because it is the international language."

The real mix comes in the prayers of the faithful. With the petitions, "we try, above

all, to take into account the universality of the church, so there are a few European languages, an Asian and an African language to make all continents present in some way," he said.

The Mass he likes best during the year is the Easter Vigil, "even if at Christmas the liturgies are more intimate, more familial," he said.

Msgr. Marini, who started working at the Vatican three months after his ordination to the priesthood in 1965, does not have much opportunity to preside at parish liturgies.

"It's not like I have much choice, because the pope is always busy on Sundays," he said. If Pope John Paul is not off on a foreign trip, he's likely to be found in a Roman parish.

Being chief in charge of everything that goes right and everything that goes wrong during a papal liturgy makes actually praying during the Mass a challenge, Msgr. Marini said.

"There are pluses and minuses," he said. "The rewards are preparing the liturgy and all its texts, meeting different people, and being in contact with the Holy Father, being near him, helping him. It's a unique experience."

On the other hand, it is difficult to pray when "you see everything that happens that shouldn't," he said.

"Being in a position where I have to watch everything that is happening and think about what should happen next, there is distraction," he said.

"But despite that, there is always some level of prayer because that is why we are there," Msgr. Marini said.

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|---------|---------------------------|--|
| Jan. 2 | Rev. Robert Sieg, OFM | Members of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish Indianapolis |
| Jan. 9 | To be announced | |
| Jan. 16 | Rev. Nicholas Dant | Members of St. Simon parish, Indianapolis |
| Jan. 23 | Rev. Peter Gallagher | Members of Holy Spirit parish, Indianapolis |
| Jan. 30 | Rev. Robert Borchertmeyer | Members of Little Flower parish, Indianapolis |
| Feb. 6 | To be announced | |
| Feb. 13 | Rev. Anthony Volz | Members of The Criterion Staff and Board Members |
| Feb. 20 | Rev. Roger Rudolf | Members of St. Mary parish, Greensburg |
| Feb. 27 | To be announced | |



VATICAN CHRISTMAS 1992—Pope John Paul II blesses a creche in St. Peter's Basilica during the 1992 Christmas Eve Mass at the Vatican. Preparations for the papal Christmas celebrations begin months in advance. (CNS photo from L'Osservatore Romano by Arturo Mari)



CHRISTMAS KARAOKE—Holly Trinity Adult Day Care clients Bob Young (left) and Mike Cisarik of Indianapolis sing Christmas carols with a karaoke machine supplied by entertainer Bob Montague, who performed for clients of the Holly Trinity and Caring Community adult day care facilities on Dec. 14. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

Faith Alive!

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Search for God's light

by Dolores E. Lecky

Night comes quickly in the season of Christmas. As we leave offices, schools and shops at day's end and glance into the sky, the evening star hangs on the tip of Venus. I am always glad for these rays of night light.

The Advent prayer of the church has similar glimpses of light. One Vespers hymn chants these words:

Creator of the stars of night
Thy people's everlasting light
Jesus Redeemer, save us all
And hear Thy servants when they call.
The stars of night carry a certain celestial light. But Christmas is surrounded by other lights as well: the lights of commerce and festivity. Unfortunately, for many these lights bring anxiety and distress.

Some years ago I heard a homily that illuminated the reason for holiday depression. The priest spoke about how the outward manifestations of celebration (lights, music, parties) might not correspond with one's inner reality.

If indeed we have something within us that is unreconciled, then the outward merriment rings a false note. We will feel—and be—disconnected from the celebratory mood surrounding us. Inner darkness will overwhelm the brightness of Christmas lights.

The answer, suggested the priest, is to try to reconcile our own brokenness and darkness. Reflection, confession, forgiveness: These help light the way through early winter.

Then, released from the burdens of sin and judgment, we can lift our voices and our hearts in true rejoicing.

Unfortunately, this movement of reconciliation may be more difficult than we think. The first challenge is to "see" ourselves more clearly.

One spiritual exercise of St. Ignatius of Loyola centers on a meditation that envisions the Trinity—Father, Son and Spirit—gazing on the earth and all who dwell therein. The gaze extends back to the beginning of time and sweeps right up to the present moment. What we are asked to do is to see with God's eyes, as it were, scanning the earth's array of races, occupations, moral behavior, charity and cruelty.

God gazes on it all and grieves.

The meditation continues with the Triune God deciding that one shall appear among the turmoil and the tenderness and bring redemption into its midst.

Then the meditation continues with the Annunciation scene. Nestled in the hill country of Galilee one sees the home of a young Jewish woman. Both she and the dwelling are filled with light. The archangel Gabriel brings with him all the light from

worlds unseen, unimagined. Winter nights are not so dark after all.

The question before us is how to move from a field of vision that encompasses all the pain, cruelty, distress and sin rampant in our world to a center of peace and creativity; how to move to the dwelling at Nazareth.

It is not so easy. We too often take our ease in the company of cynicism and narrowness, noise and clutter. Thus we miss the beauty of insight and starlight, and fail to speak words of gratitude and hope.

The Carmelite poet Jessica Powers understood this temptation to focus on distress only too well. She wrote:

"I tore the new pale window shade with slightly more than a half-inch tear. I knew the Lady would be shocked to see what I had done with such finality. I went outside to lose my worry there. Later when I came back into the room it seemed that nothing but the tear was there. There had been furniture, a rug, and pictures, and on the table flowers in purple bloom. It was amazing how they dwindled, dwindled, and how the tear grew till it filled the room." (From "Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers")

We are too ready to lose sight of the flowers and furniture and character of the room and see only the tiny tear in the shade. When that happens the bright lights of Christmas glare rather than illumine. They appear as harsh intrusions in our lives.

But if we can turn our gaze from the tear—from all that is wrong in our own worlds and in the larger world—and instead carefully notice the moments of generosity and charity that constantly appear (but are ignored, unlike the tear), we have a chance of joining our own inner lights with those that decorate our town squares, our offices and homes.

Some practical ways to see with the eyes of Christmas include:

- Unclutter the space of Christmas. By that I mean a loving time to concentrate on the people we no are gifts in our lives. This will likely mean "doing" less, but "being present" more.

- Experience periods of silence during the Advent and Christmas season. Rising a half hour earlier to be alone, remembering that out of the silence came the Word, can change the texture of an entire day.

- Remember Nazareth and the light that still emanates from that historic meeting of Gabriel and Mary whenever darkness threatens to overwhelm your spirit.

- Give thanks for starlight, inner light and the multi-colored lights of Christmas.

(Dolores Lecky is director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth.)



INNER LIGHT—The question is how to move from a field of vision that encompasses all the pain and sin rampant in our world to a center of peace and creativity where our own inner lights illuminate others. (CNS illustration by Joan Hyme)

Christmas is good time to refocus

by David Gibson

Christmas is about Jesus' birth. But there is more to the message of Christmas than that. Christmas has something to do with seeing better.

Christmas announces the coming of the Lord and the beginning of his work. Part of his work was to give sight to blind people.

To me that suggests that the Lord—that Christmas announces—wants people not only to listen and hear better, and to fine-tune their sensitivities in other im-

portant ways, but also to see better and in new ways.

I propose that I'm seeing poorly when I'm not seeing, all there is to see. Maybe I see only what goes wrong and take no notice of what goes right; I see others' faults or my own, but not their strengths or mine.

Or maybe I see too little of what there is to "see"—ignoring most of the signs that God is present in the people and events of my life and thus diminishing the significance of my own and others' existence.

To see better, I need to refocus this Christmas.

(David Gibson edits Faith Alive!)

DISCUSSION POINT

Look for signs of God's love

This Week's Question

What would you not see if you were spiritually blind?

"Signs of God's love, for example, Reginald Denny's forgiveness of his attackers during the Los Angeles riots would seem to be sheer stupidity to someone who is spiritually blind." (Teri Hecht, Carmel, Ind.)

"I would not see that there is hope in tragedy and suffering and death, that there is a redemption, that suffering has purpose. I would not see that no one can get the best of a sovereign God—but sometimes you do wonder!" (Peggy Halpin, Tehachapi, Calif.)

"I wouldn't see any reason for joy in everyday life. We're struggling to acquire a house. You get caught up in the big things you're missing and miss all the little gifts God gives you every day." (Lisa Schoch, Cadott, Wis.)

"Things would be flat, single-dimensional, frozen, colorless. There would be no 'something more' to life. And

we would be satisfied to live in our lack." (Vic Boerio, Pittsburgh, Pa.)

"I would not see the greatness of God as seen in his creation. The world wouldn't reveal the love of its Maker to me." (Anna Chan, Arlington, Texas.)

"They don't see the hope because they do not know who Jesus is. They do not see that through Jesus, God is always with you, always loving you and taking care of you when others hurt you or you hurt yourself through sin." (Michelle Bove, Steubenville, Ohio)

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: What two essential qualities are needed in families that stay together?

If you would like to respond for possible publication, write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.



Share joy at Christmas

by Fr. Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS

"Listen!" We could hear the sound of pipes, shepherds' pipes. We were approaching the square in front of *Stazione Termini*, Rome's main railroad station.

It was Christmas. Every year they come, the shepherds of the *Abruzzi*, to play in the streets and squares of Rome. We walked a little faster.

"Look!" We could see them in simple mountain dress, pipes held high, rhythmically moving to the sounds of Christmas. They seemed happy.

I looked around for sheep. We were the sheep—my companion, a monk from Colorado, and I, along with all those people around us on their way to spending Christmas with family near and far. Now they would also take with them the sound and the vision of shepherds playing at Rome's *Stazione Termini*.

Christmas is a feast of sound and sight. It has always been so. Remember the story of the first Christmas shepherds:

First, the shepherds listened. Silent sentinels, they were watching over their sheep as they did every night, when the angel of the Lord broke into their night.

I can hear them even now. Listen as they listen. An angel speaks the Gospel to them, "A savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord."

But listening and hearing was not enough. So they went to Bethlehem to see what the Lord had made known to them.

I can see them as they look. The shepherds saw the Gospel, and they believed.

Christmas is not just a matter of words and hearing. It is a matter of images and seeing, the kind of seeing you sometimes have to learn from blind people.

They can "see" the Gospel of Christmas all around. "The Word was made flesh." Let

yourself remember! The Gospel of Christmas is something you can see, feel and touch.

You see the Gospel of the Word made flesh in people wanting to be with people at Christmas. Christmas is no time to leave someone all alone. "Emmanuel" means "God is with us." "If God is with us, surely we must be with one another."

You see the Gospel of Christmas in the way people visit not only their family, but also those without family, especially the aged and those living far away.

The Gospel of Christmas is strangers speaking to strangers and finding themselves strangers no more.

You see the Gospel of the Word-made-flesh in gestures of hospitality, big and small.

When Jesus was born, there was no place for Mary and Joseph in the hospitality of the City of David. At Christmas people try to make up for that great refusal of hospitality.

Mary and Joseph were homeless at Christmas. Little did Bethlehem suspect that the homeless at their door were bringing peace and life to them, everlasting life.

The Gospel of Christmas is a gesture of kindness and compassion.

You see the Gospel of the Word-made-flesh in the person next door who remembers the neighbors who lost their little boy or girl this year. After Jesus was born, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, mortal like every child.

The Gospel of Christmas is the way people reach out to a couple whose child died, bringing new life into their lives, even in the midst of tears, and finding it for themselves.

Christmas is a time to look and to see, and then to share joy.

(Blessed Sacrament Father Eugene LaVerdiere is the senior editor of *Emmanuel* magazine.)



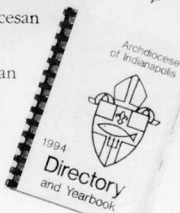
FEAST OF SIGHT AND SOUND—Christmas is a feast of sight and sound, and is a time to share joy with others. It also is a reminder of the angel's words, reported in the Gospel: "A savior has been born to you who is Messiah and Lord." (CNS illustration by Joan Hymé)

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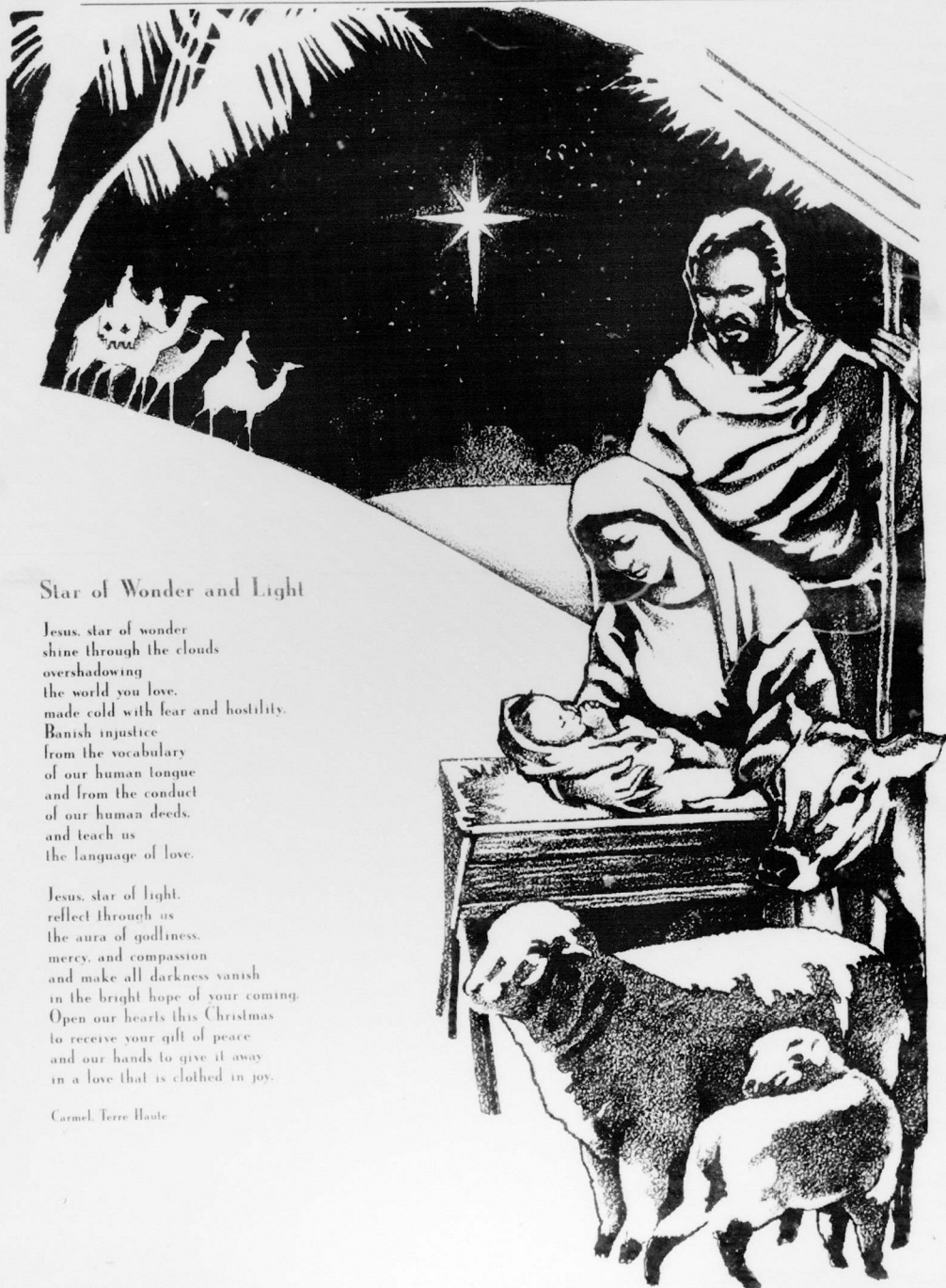
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Blessed Christmas

A Christmas Supplement to The Criterion



Star of Wonder and Light

Jesus, star of wonder
shine through the clouds
overshadowing
the world you love,
made cold with fear and hostility.
Banish injustice
from the vocabulary
of our human tongue
and from the conduct
of our human deeds,
and teach us
the language of love.

Jesus, star of light,
reflect through us
the aura of godliness,
mercy, and compassion
and make all darkness vanish
in the bright hope of your coming.
Open our hearts this Christmas
to receive your gift of peace
and our hands to give it away
in a love that is clothed in joy.

Carmel, Terre Haute

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

At Christmas, let us marvel at the mystery that God became human

by John F. Fink

We all know that at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. From the time we were old enough to understand, we have heard the story of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem and of Mary's giving birth to a baby. We have heard and read about an angel appearing to shepherds in the locality and directing them to Bethlehem where they found Mary and Joseph, and Jesus lying in a manger.

One of the places we have heard that story repeated annually is at Christmas Mass. It's found in St. Luke's Gospel and parts of the story are read at the first two Christmas Masses, those said at midnight and the first Mass in the morning.

Down through the centuries the image of the Holy Family in a stable was been the inspiration for millions of paintings. St. Francis of Assisi popularized the creche and children are fascinated by the story of the birth of a baby.

But it seems to me that this pleasant story falls far short of explaining what we really celebrate on Christmas. For that we must go to the Gospel that is read for the third Mass of Christmas—the prologue to the Gospel of John. The author of this

Gospel doesn't tell us anything about the birth of a baby, but he gives us the theology behind the most amazing event in all history—that God assumed human nature. This is the Incarnation, the central mystery of Christianity.

Those who were born prior to the Second Vatican Council will remember that this Gospel was part of every Mass. It was called "the last Gospel" because it was read at the end of Mass. The church did that to emphasize the importance of the Incarnation to Christianity.

The 18 verses that comprise the prologue to John's Gospel probably contain more theology than can be found in any other part of the Bible. It's believed that these verses were an early Christian hymn.

"The Word became flesh," this Gospel says, thus summarizing the doctrine that the supreme manifestation of God's self-communication, identical to God himself (the Word) assumed human nature, including a human body, a human soul and all human characteristics.

But John's Gospel doesn't tell us that the Word became flesh until the 14th verse. First it tells us more about this "Word." Of top importance is the fact that the Word existed from the beginning, he was in God's presence and he was God. The Gospel begins

with the same words as the beginning of the Old Testament ("In the beginning"), but, whereas Genesis starts with creation, the author of this prologue starts even before that—back to eternity.

This is important theologically because some of the early heresies taught that the Second Person of the Trinity was created by God the Father. Not so, says John's Gospel, the Word "was in the beginning with God." He was not created.

Not only that, but the Word was intimately involved in the act of creation, an act sometimes erroneously associated only with God the Father. "All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be," the Gospel says.

In this the Gospel writer was teaching what had first come from St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians decades earlier: "In him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17).

In recent years I have heard some priests, apparently in an attempt to use terms other than "Father" and "Son" for God, make the sign of the cross with the words, "In the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier." Although these priests might have good intentions, this formula is heretical because all persons of the Trinity are involved in the three acts designated.

John's Gospel's prologue emphasizes again that the Word was also the creator when it says, "He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him."

There are some who teach that Jesus was born, grew to manhood, began preaching, and only gradually realized that he was the Son of God. After his death God's Father raised him from the dead and after his ascension into heaven, he sat at God's right hand. This is false teaching. Both the author of John's Gospel and St. Paul, the church's first theologian, emphasize that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity existed from all eternity, he assumed a complete human nature, he knew that he was God throughout his time on earth, and finally returned to heaven.

John's Gospel then says: "He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him," referring to the Jewish people. "But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God." In other words, no human agency, male or female, begets God's children. That is done through baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Then the author tells us, "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This was the uniting in one person two natures, the divine and the human. In theological terms, this is known as the hypostatic union, a term that was introduced at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The result of this union is a person who is both perfect God and perfect man.

St. Paul put it this way in his letter to the Philippians: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of humans" (Phil. 2:6-7).

We should marvel at this. That God would actually humble himself to become a human is marvelous indeed. And why did he do that? To redeem humankind, something that could be done only by someone who was both human and divine. That's what St. Paul meant when he said, "He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). He neatly tied in the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption.

In modern times the Second Vatican Council explained it this way: "In the human nature which he united to himself, the Son of God redeemed humanity and transformed us into a new creation by overcoming death



13TH-CENTURY IMAGERY—Our images of Christmas owe a large debt to St. Francis of Assisi, who popularized use of the manger scene in the 13th century. The creche helps people recognize how fully the Son of God took on our human condition. (CNS illustration by Joan Hymn)

through this own death and resurrection" ("Lumen Gentium").

But how can a person be both divine and human? That's the question that the early Christians tried to answer and that was the cause of so many heresies. Many of the people who taught what were ultimately determined to be heresies were very sincere people who were just trying to figure out the answer to that question.

For example, when Jesus was born he assumed a human nature. Did that mean that Mary was the mother of only that human nature? A man by the name of Nestorius thought so. How could a human be the mother of God? he asked. Furthermore, he taught that only Christ the man suffered and died on Calvary since God cannot die.

However, the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 disagreed with Nestorius and decided that Mary was the mother of God because Jesus' divine and human natures were combined in only one person. But many Christians continued to agree with Nestorius and it wasn't until 1445 that the Nestorians of Cyprus were reunited with Rome. The Nestorian patriarch finally accepted Catholic doctrine in 1545 and the Nestorian Church of Malabar was reunited with Rome in 1559.

Another man who could not understand how any one person could have more than one nature was Eutyches. He agreed that Jesus was God but denied that he was fully human. This teaching came to be known as Monophysitism. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 decided that this too was a heresy, that Jesus was fully human. Today there are still Monophysite Armenians, Copts, Syrians, Ethiopians and Jacobites.

A similar heresy was Monothelitism, proposed in the seventh century as a formula to try to reconcile Monophysites who still did not accept the decision of the Council of Chalcedon. Monothelitism taught that, even if Christ had two natures, he had only one will. The Council of Constantinople in 680 decided that he had both a divine and a human will since the number of wills is a function of the number of Christ rather than of his unity of person.

The heresy that caused the church the most trouble was Arianism, named after a priest from Alexandria, Egypt named Arius. This heresy taught that Jesus was only human, not divine. Although condemned by the first Council of Nicea in 325, this heresy was supported by Roman Empire emperors and continued to be the subject of fierce conflicts for about 50 years.

The reality is that the Incarnation is a mystery that Catholics believe on faith alone because we cannot fully comprehend it. We believe, for example, that Jesus had both human knowledge and divine knowledge, but we can't understand how that worked in practice. Human knowledge must be acquired, but divine knowledge is not. It's no wonder that early Christians had difficulty understanding these things.

Yes, at Christmas we celebrate far more than just the birth of a baby in Bethlehem so many centuries ago. We celebrate the fact that God showed his perfect love for us by actually lowering himself to take on our imperfect human nature. It truly is something to marvel at.



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Feast of Holy Family is a perfect reflection time

by Alice Dailey

When the last gift has been opened, the last guest has gone, and the celebrating is coming to an end, then what?

Do we breathe sighs of relief and never give a second thought to the stranded little family in Bethlehem who helped set the wheels of our redemption in motion?

Possibly anticipating just such heedlessness, the church has wisely set Dec. 26 as the Feast of the Holy Family. What better time to reflect on how it might have been for them on those days following Christmas.

Luke's infancy narrative gives us just the bare bones. Artists' sketches of a calm, collected and halo'd trio don't give a clue as to their inner emotions.

Childbirth even in this age of advanced technology, always brings some degree of confusion and adjustment. How then must it have been for Mary and Joseph, far from home and family and without a single convenience to their names?

We wonder if, in their hurried departure, they remembered to bring along most essentials. We know that the young mother-to-be did pack swaddling clothes, but we also know that a newborn goes through a layette fast. Without soap, water and heat for laundry, how did Mary cope?

What about food? Do we envision Joseph, footsore and weary, trudging the streets of Bethlehem looking for a "sheep"? Or, happily thought, might there have been an innkeeper's wife, compassionate as her husband was not, who may have brought them hot soup and blankets?

Luke tells us that the shepherds, elated by their experience, went in haste "to see

this event which the Lord has made known to us."

News must have traveled fast and, much as modern pilgrims flock to sites of reported apparitions, how surely must the townspeople have turned out en masse to view this flesh and blood "apparition."

Mothers everywhere, and particularly brand new ones, can empathize with the exhausted Mary, privacy at a minimum, coping with streams of devout or merely curious strangers.

Could she be blamed for a possible yearning for the peacefully warm home in Nazareth? Or for a fleeting thought that may have crossed her mind, "Is this what I get for saying 'Yes to God?'"

We can put these questions to rest. Certainly this young woman, so holy and courageous as to have accepted God's bewildering challenge, was not about to let disquieting thoughts dampen her pride in having helped bring salvation to the many. And the all-encompassing care and treasuring of this heavenly baby would have negated any inclination to self-pity.

Scripture doesn't give a time frame for their stay in that stable, but—in another wishful bit of imagery—could it have been that an aroused citizenry pulled strings and found more appropriate quarters for the special guest in their midst?

And what of the special guest, the star of such unprecedented drama? How did it go for him? Hopefully, he slept in heavenly peace, blissfully unaware of the flurry surrounding him and of the rocky road ahead.

(Alice Dailey is a member of Little Flower Parish in Indianapolis.)



'NATIVITY OF CHRIST'—Angels surround the Holy Family in this representation of the birth of Jesus titled "Nativity of Christ" done by 16th-century Italian painter Anastagio Fontebuoni. The painting is in the collection of the Spada Gallery in Rome. (CNS photo of Fontebuoni's painting from ICCD Rome)

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Pope John XXIII students hope Santa will help them

by Mary Ann Wyand

Santa Claus has lots of challenges for Christmas again this year, if letters to jolly old St. Nick written by fifth-grade students at Pope John XXIII School in Madison are any indication of a national trend.

Many Pope John XXIII students want Santa to reunite them with family members who live far away.

And one child is hoping his uncle can come home—from prison—to spend the holidays with family members.

"If you could make my Christmas the best Christmas ever," the student wrote, "you would have to get my uncle out of jail."

Several other students are missing grandparents who died during the past year, and would like to see them again.

"Do you know what would make my Christmas even better?" Ashley Andrew asked. "I wish that my grandfather, who died, could be with us at Christmas."

Many of the fifth-graders thought about the needs of those people who are less fortunate when they wrote their Christmas letters to Santa.

"I'm asking for something for everyone," Paul de Lamerens wrote. "If you could give the homeless homes and the hungry food, that would make me happy."

World issues were very much on the minds of the students at both fifth-grade classes, as reflected in G. C. Gray's letter.

"The thing that would make my Christmas good would be if people who run our country would make peace with other countries, because people are killing other people for no reason at all," he said. "The other thing that would make my Christmas good would be if people who were hungry would get food and clothing because they deserve a good Christmas too."

Kelly Morgan was concerned about the impoverished children in Haiti.

"My family supports a child in Haiti," Kelly wrote. "Her name is Mirlene. This Christmas she will not be celebrating Christmas because her country is having political problems and gifts will not get to her and many other children. Could you

let her know that people really do care about her and maybe sneak a present or two in to her?"

Danielle Miller wants "world peace" for Christmas and "lots and lots of toys."

Fifth-grader Daniel Goley would like his uncle, who is in the Army and travels to other countries, to come home so he can meet Daniel's new baby sister.

"My sister is now a year old," he wrote, "and my uncle hasn't even seen her. I would have the very best Christmas this year if I could see all my family."

Some of the kids tried a humorous approach in their letters to Santa.

"I'm not like most kids," Mary Kate Kugler wrote. "I don't want every toy in the world. I only want a couple of things. I would really like a new bike, or at least tires for my old one. I would also really, really like a new sports car, but you don't have to get me that until I'm 16. Until then, I'll stick to a bike."

Requests for animals were one of the students' Christmas wish lists. Hunter Nott and Tarah Limerick would like a horse, while Beth Bennett and Patrick Dorten want a monkey for a pet.

Most of the students in the fifth-grade classes taught by Terri Guarino and Colleen Johnson drew beautiful holiday pictures on their letters to Santa.

Scott Duncan, who colored his letter red and green and drew snowflakes around the edges, likes video games and wants Santa to "ask your elves if they have time to make one more 'Sega'."

Eric Muhoray wrote a truthful letter to Santa Claus. "I have been kind of bad," he admitted, "but I deserve something, don't I?"

Katrina Madden is hoping for a white Christmas. "I wish for lots of snow so my dad, my mom and I can go sledding this year," she wrote. "I hope my friend can find happiness, because her dad is dead. I wish the whole world could find happiness and start compromising instead of fighting all the time. And if you have enough room on your sled, I would like a new 10-speed bike for when the snow melts."



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Woman accepts God's will at Christmas time

by Eileen Endres

It was Christmas 1978. My father and I sat quietly next to my mother's hospital bed, as we had done every day for the last couple of months, praying and watching her.

Only the night before had I finally come to the point of saying, "God's will be done, not mine." It was a painful and almost unbearable process.

My mother had lung cancer and an inoperable brain tumor which had destroyed her ability to connect all thought with speech. Toward the end of November she had slipped into a coma.

As my father and I engaged in soft conversation, my mother suddenly opened her eyes and started to talk to us. I stood there shaking from the shock.

Thirty minutes later, the entire family was

assembled around her bed. She was able to hug and kiss everyone.

It was as if she had never been sick, but had merely gone on a trip and needed to catch up on family trivia. After three hours, she said she was tired, went to sleep, and slipped back into a coma.

The following Sunday, the Solemnity of Mary, as I was sitting alone by her bedside I heard something and looked over in my mother's direction.

Her eyes were wide open and she was looking up. I glanced in that direction but couldn't see anything. She definitely appeared to see someone or something.

After listening for a couple of minutes, I realized that she was saying the rosary. Suddenly her eyes closed and she stopped breathing. Had Our Lady personally come to take her to heaven? I still wonder.

(Eileen Endres is a member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington.)

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INSPIRATION FOR WAITE—A postcard of this stained glass window showing the imprisoned 17th-century English Baptist preacher John Bunyan in his cell was sent by a complete stranger to Anglican evangelist Terry Waite while he was being held hostage in Lebanon. After four years of confinement, the unexpected postcard that got through to him revived his hope. (CNS photo from Reuters)

Hostages cherish the gift of freedom they once lost

by Shirley Vogler Meister

One year ago Terry Anderson, the last American hostage in the Middle East, was released from captivity.

On his night automobile ride toward freedom, he timidly peeked out the side window of the car to see the stars—a view he had been denied for so many years. Anderson's long imprisonment made him appreciate what so many of us take for granted, not only the beauty of nature but sight itself.

In fact, in a poignant early interview, someone asked him about his lowest moment during captivity.

Explaining how bad his eyesight is, Anderson said one bleak Christmas Day in isolation he dropped and broke his glasses. (During his first television appearance, I noticed that the right temple on his glasses was missing.)

Another hostage, Anglican evangelist Terry Waite, treasures a different kind of "seeing" experienced during his imprisonment as a hostage in Lebanon.

For some reason, after four years of confinement, an unexpected postcard—from a stranger—got through to him. The card showed a picture of a stained glass window featuring the English Baptist preacher John Bunyan in a cell during one of his 17th-century persecutions.

Waite claims that viewing that postcard revived his hope.

During Bunyan's first jailing, he began writing his famous "Pilgrim's Progress." Both Terry Anderson and Terry Waite also wrote about their experiences as hostages. Anderson's book "Den of Lions," published by Crown Publishers, and Waite's book "Taken on Trust," available from Harcourt Brace, are powerful stories.

Once again Anderson, Waite and other freed captives can relish their lives. As captives, they often were blindfolded. They relied on other senses to keep abreast as best

they could of what was happening around them. Now they can use those same senses to fully appreciate the beauty of life, especially during this holy Christmas time.

Anderson and Waite said they renewed and re-experienced an intense faith in God while they were held as hostages.

Their spirituality inspires those of us who realize how we too often take for granted our blessings. Christmas is a reminder to appreciate Christ's birth and our freedom to celebrate it.

Sometimes the essence of Christmas gets blinded by the glitter and the gloss of commercialism.

However, if prisoners can keep their faith-filled perspective in nightmare situations, we should be able to keep ours even in a glut of splendor.

Is it so difficult to imagine the Bethlehem stable in which a young girl, Mary, and her spouse, Joseph, protect the new life of Jesus?

Is it so hard to sense the kittens frolicking around the manger—or the dogs wagging tails and barking their welcome at the stable entrance—or the birds twittering in the loft—or the sheep and cows, donkeys and horses braying and neighing nearby—or the earthy and musty odors mingling with the fragrances of frankincense and myrrh?

Is it so hard to remember first and foremost God's gift to humanity for salvation—his very son?

Through our senses we can see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the Christmas season in all its glory without losing the reason for the season.

Even without glasses or windows, through faith we can sense the stars of the holidays—and the star of Christmas—in as vital a way as did Terry Anderson and Terry Waite and John Bunyan during captivity. The very ability to see and believe is a God-given gift needing nurturing.

(Shirley Vogler Meister is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.)

Chris Kringle represents spirit of holiday season

by Shirley Vogler Meister

One holiday season, my grandson mentioned he would like to get an autograph from Kris Kringle.

"Leave it to me," I told his mother.

So, friend Linda and I traipsed to a mall where I had discovered a handsome descendant of St. Nicholas, complete with a natural beard and a laugh straight from the North Pole.

As the old but ageless man wrote a note to David, I was startled by his signature.

"You spelled your name wrong," I said. "I thought it's 'Kris Kringle' with two Ks, not 'Chris' with a C."

With that famous twinkle in his eyes but a touch of exasperation in his voice, he emphatically replied, "Everyone spells my name wrong. My first name has always been Chris with a C. Chris Kringle!"

Chris probably doesn't get asked for his autograph very often. If he were, then it would be the general knowledge how he prefers his name.

Later, giving more thought to this, I realized the sense in the C spelling of the name.

Chris is short for Christopher, which means "light-bearer." A legend says a giant sea-man by that name devoted his life to carrying travelers across a river.

One day, the legend goes, a small child asked to be taken across the river. Midway, however, the child became unbearably heavy; and, when Christopher commented

on this, the child reportedly said something like this:

"Don't be surprised. You have borne upon your back the world—and the one who created it."

Ever since, St. Christopher is represented in art carrying the Christ child on his shoulder.

The story is appropriate for the season, since we believe that Christ is the ultimate light that bears—and lightens—the burdens of the world.

Chris Kringle symbolizes goodness and giving. Getting his first name spelled incorrectly reaffirms the secularism of the holy feast of Christmas.

The word Christmas means "Mass of Christ," a celebration of "the light." Chris Kringle by any name, even Santa Claus, has a traditional role in the weeks-long holiday party.

The New Testament's Gospel of St. John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without Him was made nothing that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness grasped it not."

If we let them, the lingering lights and the Chris Kringles of the holidays can help us grasp and hold tightly to the essential light of the season—Jesus Christ.

(Shirley Vogler Meister is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.)



FACES OF CHRIS KRINGLE—Whatever the name given to this jolly man—Chris Kringle, St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus—he represents the spirit of Christmas and reminds the faithful to give of themselves to others. These handmade renditions of Chris Kringle illustrate the spirit of giving. (Photos by Mary Ann Wyand)



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TIME FOR REFLECTION—Advent as well as Christmas are wonderful times for reflection on how the light of Christ can be kept brightly lit throughout the rest of the year. (Photo by Margaret Nelson)

Advent lights the way to Christmas and Christ's birthday teaches love

by Patti Carson

Christmas.

It's a time when neighbors exchange fruit cake and cookies.

It's a time of good feelings. Movies with titles like "It's a Wonderful Life" bombard the television airwaves.

It's electric. Multicolored lights illuminate the neighborhoods.

It's a time of kind gestures.

It's letting the man behind you with three items go in front of you in the store check-out line because you have virtually bought out the toy store.

It's when you splurge and make a long-distance telephone call to your old friend.

It's a time of togetherness. The kids come home from college or wherever they may be now.

It's tradition. Eggnog toasts are made once again.

It's a quiet, peaceful time. Perhaps a single snowflake could be heard hitting the velvet ground—if a band of jovial carolers isn't singing seasonal music.

It's a time of giving, when you don't mind

sparing some change for the bell ringers outside the store.

It's good friends gathered around a tree that radiates the smell of a pine forest.

It's a pious time with "standing room only" at church.

It's a birthday celebration.

It's explaining the nativity set to a young child.

I saw a greeting card in a store the other day that said, "May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you all throughout the year."

But Christmas passes too soon and tension surfaces among nations and within nations. Good feelings fade and the Christmas spirit is forgotten on a bleak January morning.

My Christmas wish is that we can savor the peace, the time to relax, the time with old friends, the fruit cake.

And to the best of our ability, we shouldn't let Christmas end at midnight. We should keep the spirit alive!

(Patti Carson is a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield and is a freshman at St. Mary College at Notre Dame, Ind.)

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Readers share Christmas memories

Tattered ornament helps needy family

by Peggy Loudon Speer

The woman approached me when I thought I least needed another distraction.

After all, didn't I already have enough to do with entertaining parties to go to, family get-togethers to attend, shopping for the perfect gifts, countless hours of wrapping to finish, and an endless amount of items to design and make for booths I had reserved at two parish Christmas Bazaar functions?

With all I had to do, there didn't seem to be time for spreading the spirit of Christmas let alone experiencing the Christ child renewing peace in my life that year.

"Here's a little something for your Christmas, dear," the woman said as she gave me a half-hug. "Please pass it on."

With that she was gone, down the crowded aisle of the grocery store, repeating her gesture of goodwill to a few select others before she left the store.

As I continued my shopping, I found myself tightly gripping the soiled and frayed bell-shaped ornament she had

pressed into my hand before taking her leave.

"What value could it possibly have?" I asked myself. "It's certainly not fit to use on our tree at home."

As I progressed in my task I tried to ignore the ornament that now dangled from my little finger, but with every selection I made for my shopping cart the closer I came to the decision to duplicate the ornament to sell at my Christmas Bazaar booths.

By the end of my shopping excursion that afternoon, I had enough supplies to make about 50 of the bell ornaments. And by the time of my first bazaar, the ornaments were ready to be sold along with numerous other items I'd prepared for the holiday sale.

Every one of the 50 bell ornaments sold at the bazaar. I was delighted with my success and with my profit of close to \$100.

As I contemplated all the wonderful things I could buy for myself with this unforeseen windfall, the words spoken by the woman who had given me the bell ornament became like a melodious chant. Her words "Please pass it on" echoing in my head literally seemed to put a halt to every planned purchase. Why couldn't I find happiness in spending this \$100?

On Christmas Eve morning, I treated

myself to early weekday Mass at my parish. Afterward, while sharing a cup of coffee with my pastoral associate, I learned of a family who had suddenly fallen on hard times due to illness.

"They need a great deal of money to pay bills and buy a small gift for each of the children," she said. "We've been able to raise most of the money, but although it's Christmas Eve and we still have a large amount yet to go I just know that Baby Jesus will see that it arrives on time."

"How much do you still need?" I asked.

"One hundred dollars," she responded, carefully enunciating each syllable. "Any ideas?"

A smile knowingly made its way to my face before the familiar words "Please pass it on" exploded within me, causing a rush of happiness which spread through my entire being.

As the \$100 exchanged hands, I was filled with a peace that I knew could only have been renewed in me by the Christ child.

That soiled and frayed bell-shaped ornament will hang on our family's tree this year just as it has every year since I received it. The memory, the spirit of Christmas, the peace it evokes makes its value absolutely priceless.

(Peggy Loudon Speer is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis.)

Christmas greeting brings heroes alive

by George A. Zimmer

It is just an old Christmas card, waterstained and yellowed, lying at the bottom of the box, almost hidden by the dog tags and photos of faraway places and faces.

I don't know why I save it. It wasn't addressed to me, although it was meant for me. It was delivered late by an unusual air-mail service.

Perhaps I should read it one more time before I throw it away. As I do, the memories begin . . .

Drifting snow had partially covered the

card by the time I stepped from my tent that cold January morning of 1953.

A colorful pattern of green holly with red berries outlined the card and its message of "Peace." Except for the bright colors, I might never have noticed its presence in the snow at my feet.

The absence of footprints told me that the messenger had dropped his greetings from the sky during the night, hedging-hopping a light plane around the North Korean mountains that rose high around our camp.

Curiously I picked up and read the "Peace" message, but was disappointed to find it contained only the standard Communist propaganda line . . . its three pages of rambling discourse could best be summed up as "Yankes go home . . . leave Korea to us." It was appropriately signed by "The Chinese People's Volunteers."

Message drops of this type did nothing to disturb the resolve of those men with whom I served. If anything, their devotion to duty became more pronounced with each attempt by the enemy to disturb their morale.

Even today I can see the faces of those who gave so much. There's Bill Quinn, that well-mannered Negro boy . . . came out to help me that night and died in the hellfire of a battlefield . . . his last breath as soft and quiet as the life he led . . .

And there goes that young medic from B Battery . . . left the safety of his bunker to care for a wounded buddy . . . the next incoming shell made him one of the last deaths of the war, just five hours before armistice . . .

And young Joe Kleinfelter, artillery observer . . . so worried about not being a man when his time came . . . defended his hill against overwhelming enemy forces, his voice calm and controlled as if watching a movie . . . stayed after the infantry left, knowing he would not make it back . . . his last words before death, unwritten but etched forever in my mind . . . only God knows the extent of his sacrifice . . .

Most of us have heroes; these men are mine. Some heroes give until it hurts. Mine gave that; then they gave until the hurting stopped.

Perhaps that old Christmas card is my signpost to the past, to that level of excellence gained by my heroes.

And with that thought, I place the card back in the bottom of the box.


(George A. Zimmer is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.)

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Flocked tree brings the gift of laughter

by Rita Phillips

I'm sitting here looking out the bay window. It's a cold day, and already we've had two snows. As the snowflakes blow and cover the fallen leaves, some are still green on the trees. I can't believe that Christmas is just about here.

This is my favorite time of the year. I love all the family gatherings, the Christmas music, good food, and just sitting around talking about old times.

One of our favorite holiday stories involves a flocked Christmas tree. Most of our trees have a story about them; this one is the most comical.

This particular year I decided to have our tree flocked. It was about seven feet tall and very beautiful. It stayed so nice that I hated to throw it away. I decided to keep it, really just to see how long it would keep.

We wrapped it in plastic and stored it in the basement. When Christmas arrived the next year, we carried the tree upstairs. It was still beautiful, although very dry so we couldn't use lights. We did manage to get the ornaments on it.

Most of the family thought I was crazy for using the same tree another year. They wanted a green tree.

Two nights before Christmas, their father came home with an armload of presents. As he was putting them under the tree, he accidentally fell into its flocked limbs. Pine needles, white flocking, and ornaments flew everywhere.

I've never heard a louder crash, or seen a funnier sight. There was nothing left of the tree but the trunk.

Although it wasn't so funny at the time, my kids did get a green tree that year after all.

The story about that flocked tree is our favorite, and is told to the grandchildren every year. Although their granddaddy is no longer here, they remember him with love and laughter, all because of the story of the flocked tree.

(Rita Phillips is a member of St. Meinrad Parish at St. Meinrad.)

Christmas is time to live for the moment

by Sheila Nauman-Todd

My Christmas memory reminds me that the most treasured gifts are for the moment and in the giving.

Twelve years ago my first husband, Scott, was dying of cancer at age 25. I didn't know at the time it would be his last Christmas. I only knew there probably wouldn't be many more and that he was very, very sick.

Radiation and chemotherapy treatments has caused hair and weight loss. On days that he could work, he often came home afterward and slept for three or four hours.

One particular day when he returned

home from work and went straight to bed, I left to shop for his Christmas gift. I had racked my brain for weeks about what to buy him. Most often we gave each other things we could enjoy the whole year long.

The year before, I had given him a camera and he had enjoyed it so much. But now he was often too tired to enjoy anything but a nap.

I stared in shop windows for a gift idea to jump back at me. I felt tears fall as I watched healthy shoppers come and go with packages. How I wanted to give him good health!

Walking into one of the shops, I glanced down at a basket of furry creatures. Picking one up, I realized it was not a stuffed animal but an animal hat!

Once on, the snout formed a short bill above my forehead and two ears poked out atop my head. I looked in a mirror and laughed—as did others in the store. This was it—the gift that would keep a hairless head and ears warm and also create a smile.

Christmas morning came, and as I watched Scott smile as he put the hat on I knew it was the right gift. Later, he would wear it to friends' homes and to work and all of us would try it on and laugh.

The bear hat taught me that Christmas is for the moment. Holiday moments abound: a wave to let someone into a desired holiday parking space, a smile in a crowded line, a gift that makes you say, "Yeah, that's me."

As givers and receivers, may you find those moments this Christmas!

(Sheila Nauman-Todd resides in Indianapolis.)

Joy and laughter fill the air at Christmas

by Alma Hofmann

It was nice to believe in Santa 80 years ago. The best room in our home was locked all day on Dec. 24 because Santa was working in there.

All day our hearts would race as we passed the room. What could Santa be doing in there?

Will I see my old tin-head dolly in a new calico dress, new hair bows or even a surprise?

We were sure we smelled the oranges and maybe even a whiff of cedar.

When evening came, we would hear a loud knock on the door and—behold—Santa would arrive, sometimes dressed as a bishop with a high miter on his head. He would ask us to pray and he would place his hand on our heads. Then he would lead the way to the opened best room in our home.

Behold the candle-lighted tree all aglow! Joy and laughter filled the air.

We never quite understood why Papa was carrying a bucket of water, but who wondered or who cared because Christmas was here at last.

Now that I am older, this is what Advent is all about—the anticipation for the joy that a Christ child is born to save us.

(Alma Hofmann is a member of Little Flower Parish in Indianapolis.)

'Silent Night' recalls memories of youth

by Margaret Lawley

Christmas is my favorite holiday—the birth of the Christ child, Christmas trees and decorations, and the family all home together.

The sun was bright but it was still cold enough that the snow hadn't melted underfoot. I was 8 years old that wonderful Christmas in 1919.

On my birthday the March before, I walked into the music room at school and told Sister Baptista that, "Today is my birthday. I am 8 years old."

Sister said, "Happy birthday, Margaret Mary."

After a brief silence, I told her, "My mother said I could take piano lessons and learn to play paper music when I am 8."

Sister called my mother, who laughed and said I could start lessons.

Now it was Christmas 1919 and I was going to play "Silent Night, Holy Night" in St. Patrick's Church on Woodlawn Avenue.

one block west of Virginia Avenue in Indianapolis, at the 9 p.m. Mass.

My entire family—Mother, Father, Harold, Martha, Alvin and Francis—as well as my grandmothers and aunts all attended this Mass.

Father John O'Connell was pastor, Sister Baptista was the music teacher, and Helen Colbert was the choir director and organist at St. Patrick Church in 1919.

The organ in old St. Patrick (our old church was burned a few years later) had three keyboards and many stops to create lovely sounds. I had to take off my high-button shoes to play the pedals on my tip-toes. (Remember the button hooks we had to use?)

I played the organ at St. Patrick Church through high school and later at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Bloomington for 10 years.

Each year as I play "Silent Night, Holy Night" I remember St. Patrick Church in 1919 when I was 8 years old and got to play that Christmas carol for the first time during Mass.

(Margaret Royce Lawley is a member of Little Flower Parish in Indianapolis.)

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SNOWFALL!—Sparkling snow covers the head and shoulders of a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the lawn in front of the rectory at St. Mary Church in Indianapolis. The snowfall last year inspires thoughts of a white Christmas, which doesn't happen every year in the archdiocese. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

Christmas memories

Christmas birthday is a special miracle

by Patty Brooks

As a child, you grow up to learn that Christmas morning means sharing with everyone. After all, 'tis the season of giving.

You share giggles amidst the wrapping paper when Mom gets another robe from Dad. You pass the mixing spoon dripping with red-velvet cake batter to the nearest drooling child.

A birthday is a different matter because this special day usually means presents only for the honored birthday child.

But when you have a birthday on Christmas, therein lies confusion.

In 1987, my husband and I were living in Jacksonville, Fla., with our 2-year-old son Jamie. We were expecting our second child any time around Christmas. In fact, the doctor had given me Christmas Day as my due date.

But then doctors can be wrong. I thought to myself as the doctor announced that I would have a special present on that day.

"How unfair to this child!" I thought. "My baby won't have a special day just for himself or herself, but will have to face sharing a birthday amidst the clamor and confusion of the holiday."

This sentiment was echoed by my family, who shared with me the story of my Aunt Ginny, whose birthday was a few days after Christmas. She always heard that her presents were for both Christmas and her birthday!

And then something (or someone) gave me a nudge. What is the true celebration of

Christmas? Whose birthday is better to share than Jesus—the one who would share the ultimate gift with us?

As an expectant mother, I began to think about what Mary had gone through on that special night. She was traveling in a distant land, away from her family, with a baby thriving within her womb. She would not be delivering her child in the comforts of a hospital, but within the confines of a straw-laden stable. She would not be surrounded by family and friends when her child was born, but with the beasts of the field and some shepherds.

As we sat in Mass on Christmas Eve and listened to the story of the birth of Christ, my labor pains began.

My eyes glistened with tears as I heard those joyous words that we all hear from Luke 2:13 during this joyous season:

"Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests.'"

After my daughter Dana was born at 6:30 a.m. on Christmas morning, I peeked joyously through the swaddling clothes at my beautiful gift from God and knew that she would not be disappointed to share her birthday with Jesus. She would learn to rejoice.

But, more importantly, I had experienced the greatest gifts that God could share with me.

►the birth of a healthy, beautiful child who would celebrate with his son the day of her birth,

►and the pains, joy and love Mary experienced (and still experiences) in her role as Mother of God and mother of us all!

(Patty Brooks is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.)



NATIVITY—This nativity scene from St. Andrew Parish in Indianapolis offers a visual retelling of the Christmas story. Christians traditionally display nativity scenes in their homes during the Christmas season. (Photo by Margaret Nelson)

Twins' births add to holiday excitement

by Tiffany Walter

My most memorable Christmas was about three years ago.

My aunt gave birth to twins on Dec. 12. She had a boy and a girl she named Alex and Ashley.

Alex was born with a heart condition, and as soon as he was born he was put in an incubator. My poor aunt was constantly sad, and spent most of her time in the hospital visiting the weak baby.

About a week before Christmas my aunt asked her doctor if Alex would be able to come home. She found out that Alex would miss his first Christmas.

Soon it was Christmas. Nobody seemed to be bothered because Alex wasn't there. Everyone seemed to have all their attention focused on Ashley. Then my aunt said she wanted to visit Alex at the hospital.

When we got there it was too late and we couldn't see him because it was after visiting hours.

My uncle saw the doctor approaching with a smile on his face. The doctor asked my aunt to step into his office for a minute. When she returned, she was smiling too. She told us that Alex could come home but he had to wear a heart monitor the whole time.

I was so happy! Alex came home on Christmas after all, and we had a great time with both babies. That was my best Christmas ever!

(Tiffany Walter is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis and is a seventh-grade student at St. Gabriel School.)

Merry Christmas!

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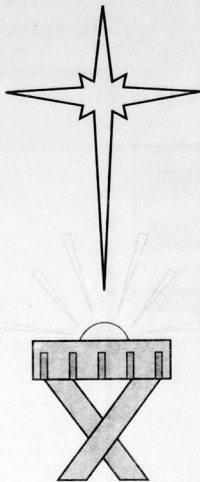
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Soldiers celebrate Christmas overseas

by Cpl. Dick Grayson

It was hot, very hot, on the tropical island of Mindoro in the Philippine Islands in 1945. The war was over. We were thinking of home, and all the wonderful things we missed so much. There were the ones we loved, the sweethearts we left behind. (I later married mine.)

We were biding our time, waiting our turn to be shipped back to the states.

I began to think... It was only a few days until Christmas. There were six of us in the tent, but I had a tough time convincing the others that we could have a real old-fashioned Christmas in the tropics.

I started to plan. We'd have a tree and a gift exchange. Each man would give a gift to the man on his right.

"But where could we get gifts?" they asked.

Maybe we would get lucky and one of us would get a package from home in the next few days. There was the F.X. They had pens and writing paper. We could do it because it was the spirit of giving, not the gift. The others caught the feeling.

One buck sergeant said he cut paper spirals in kindergarten and would volunteer to make some for the tree. He would color them yellow with anti-malaria atabrine, and make some purple with potassium permanganate from the medical supplies.

Christmas spirit was spreading. Another man said he could probably remember how he folded paper into cubes in grade school. They would look good on the tree.

Two men were sent out to find a tree, but they came back about an hour later with no tree.

"Hey, this is the tropics and there isn't a hardwood tree on the whole island."

What to do? They were sent out again

with instructions to find something strong enough to hold Sarge's paper cutouts.

Another hour went by, but this time they found something that looked like a dried ragweed, and it was stiff enough to hold paper ornaments.

Word spread around camp that there would be a Christmas celebration.

Finally it was Christmas Eve. We went to Midnight Mass, all of us—Jews, Catholics, Protestants. Everybody went. We were as one.

After Mass we went back to the tent. There was the "tree" all decorated in yellow and purple, with six gifts under it.

Others joined us. Lots of men crowded in. We had our gift exchange. Someone "requisitioned" a little medical alcohol and added some lemon flavoring out of a K-ration pack and water from the mess hall, and we had our holiday punch.

We sang Christmas carols far into the night, and as we did thoughts of the three invasions we had made began to fade. The hate that we had in our hearts all through the long, difficult war was being replaced by love.

It was a Christmas that I'll always remember.

(Cpl. Dick Grayson is a member of the Catholic Community of Columbus and attends St. Columba Parish.)

Polish celebrations include royal dinner

by Bartosz Labeda

As the white snow slowly floats down onto the white ground, people in Poland prepare for the coming season.

Poland's Christmas traditions differ from other countries. One Polish tradition is that children receive presents twice.

The first occurrence is on Dec. 6 when Santa comes with presents for young

children. The second occurrence is after the royal dinner on Christmas Eve.

Another Polish tradition is the royal dinner on Christmas Eve. This 12-course meal begins with red beet soup with tortellini. It is followed by many more rich foods.

After we are done eating, we exit the room. After a couple of minutes, we come back and find presents for everyone.

This is how Christmas is celebrated in Poland.

(Bartosz Labeda is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis and is an eighth-grade student at St. Gabriel School. The Labeda family moved from Poland to Italy when he was 7 years old, and he received First Communion at the Vatican from Pope John Paul II.)

Childhood holidays were holy, joyful

by Eileen Hoeing Settles

As a child back in the 1940s, I lived in a farmhouse that was always busy. Our family life was full of joy and laughter with our share of hardships and sadness.

My siblings—Mary, Dorothy, Edna, Ann, Loretta, Wilbur, and Martha—were all a part of this beehive of activity and serenity. Although we did not have much in the way of material things, our mom and daddy—Leo and Rose—always saw that we had food to eat and were warm.

This particular year—1944—I will always cherish as one of my most beautiful memories of Christmas.

Daddy brought home a cedar tree that he had chopped down from along the creek. He made a wooden stand for it and we all tried to put something on the tree to decorate it. We had a paper chain, ornaments, a bird nest, a few icicles, and a star for the top. The crib was the main point of attention, as we would gather

around and straw to put all around the Holy Family to make it look like a stable.

On Christmas Day we all went to Mass at St. Mary Church in Rushville. After Mass, we walked up to the sanctuary to see the crib.

Santa Claus usually didn't come until sometime after dinner. This gave everyone time to do their chores. Some of the older children went outside to care for the animals, while others made beds and prepared dinner. My job was to bring in coal and wood for the stoves.

After we finished dinner and washed dishes, it was time for Santa Claus. The younger kids had to go into the bedroom, but we did try to look under the door until Mom called us to come out.

There under the tree was a big crate of oranges. I don't really remember what anybody else received but my godmother, Aunt Alma, gave me a beautiful little glass hurricane lamp. It was green in color and about six inches tall. (Later Mom put it on the window sill and the sun would sparkle when it hit the glass.)

I also received a coloring book which was about a half-inch thick that I shared with my sisters.

Daddy gave Mom a pair of silk stockings and a bottle of wine. I heard her tell Daddy, "You know we can't afford that!"

The older kids were playing checkers and eating popcorn and oranges. The younger kids were coloring in our book.

Then Daddy got out his violin and started to play Christmas carols. I remember Mom leaning in the doorway with her eyes closed as she listened to Daddy play "Silent Night."

I stopped coloring and listened too. The sun was still shining on my lamp and everyone was having a good time.

I have had many joyous Christmases since then. My parents have gone to their eternal reward. Now I like to remember when life was so simple and serene and Christmas was truly a holy day.

(Eileen Hoeing Settles is a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County.)

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New home is a Christmas dream come true for family

by J. J. Hoagland

It was November 1949 and our Blessed Lady did it! She answered our prayers and found us a home.

I was 13 years old! Our house had been sold and we (my folks, my sister and I) had been staying with our Aunt Ada when we found it!

It was a charming four-room house on Kelly Street in Indianapolis with gingerbread woodwork around the top of the front porch. Every room was small, but that was OK. Small is good.

Dad got his usual big tree and it almost took over the living room. The scent of the pine filled the house. We decorated it with our treasures from Christmases past.

Mama's kitchen was cozy and smelled delicious from the pies and cookies she baked for the holidays. Little elves hung from the knobs of the red and white cabinet in the corner, and the table was covered with a bright red tablecloth. Grandma's antique glass-angel-holding-a-green-candle centerpiece was in its place of honor.

My sister Rosalie and I shared a wonderful bedroom. Our bed was directly under a window almost as wide as the room, and at night we would look at the sky. I tried to point out the Big Dipper and Little Dipper, but Rosie at age 7 wasn't interested. She would say, "I'm looking for Santa ... in case he comes early."

Outside Dad hung green garlands around the doorways and used the gingerbread trim to hold big red, green, yellow and blue Christmas lights. It looked just like a storybook Christmas cottage.

During Christmas Eve Mass, Mama whispered, "Don't forget to thank Jesus and his mother for our little home."

I did, Mama, and I also said thank you for giving us a big Christmas memory.

(Jo Ann Jennett-Hoagland is a member of St. Michael Parish in Greenwood. During her childhood, she attended St. John Academy. Her family attended St. Joseph Parish until 1949, then moved to St. Catherine Parish.)

Volunteer finds joy at the new CSS Christmas Store

by Rosemary Robertson

"We own nothing but today."

You might ask, "What brought that on?" Let me tell you my Christmas story.

We have so many beautiful memories of our past Christmas experiences: childhood, teen-age years, and young family joys. And weren't they wonderful? And now it is today.

This year I happened on to a most unique project which has been in operation for four years. It is a Christmas Store, organized by Catholic Social Services and staffed by volunteers, set up to meet the needs of some of the less fortunate in the Indianapolis community.

Each family shopper has been identified and referred to the store by a social service agency. After having given a suggested nominal donation, he or she leaves with the Christmas shopping completed for each family member plus a stocking filled with goodies for each child.

The store has been stocked with solicitations—donations which are all brand new merchandise from many generous merchants, corporations and individuals. The atmosphere is great, all decorations are in place, and each item is displayed with perfection.

All of this has been accomplished on a completely volunteer basis by some very special people.

Volunteers experience such a rewarding feeling from the giving of one's time, effort, energy and love. I was only there to donate my little "drop in the bucket," and I noticed their smiles.

It is happening today, right here in Indianapolis, to help the poor.

As we reminisce, it brings to mind how we loved the Christmas spirit of our yesterdays. Now we are living with its fullness of today and praying for many blessed Christmases to come.

We must have heard the cliché, "There's no time like the present." Aren't we God's lucky creatures?

God bless each and everyone.

(Rosemary Robertson is a member of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis.)

Friends help couple with gifts of food at Christmas

by Charlene Burke

Christmas 1989.

In November of that year my soon-to-be husband injured his back in a car accident, and according to the doctor, he was to become a semi-invalid for at least three months.

The job I had paid just enough to keep a roof over our heads, pay for his medicine, and most of the time put a meal on the table. We had no savings, simply because hard times had hit the previous months.

A week before Christmas I spent an evening with some friends, and during a conversation it slipped out that we

were nearing dire straits. Coming home that evening, I was embarrassed—simply because my husband and I prefer to believe that if we keep going forward, doing the right thing, and praying for strength, then all would be well in the end. And we truly believed that we were going to be all right.

Within a few days a friend conveniently "just dropped by to say hi" with an armload of groceries.

Then another friend, just dropping by, provided some Christmas candy.

Belong long, enough friends had stopped by to say "hi" that we had enough groceries to get us through to the end of the month.

In the meantime, my husband found a tree for us. We used the foil wrappers from miniature Reese cups to wrap around shell peanuts (part of the goodies from our friends), attached red ribbon found in a box, then used fishing hooks to hang them on the tree.

After a bit of scrounging about I found plaid ribbon and we made bows, then again used fishing hooks to hang them.

I took a white sheet and wrinkled it around the base of the tree for a skirt, then we used gold paint to highlight the tips of pine cones and acorns and spread them around the skirting.

Today we both reflect on that Christmas, especially when the time comes to put up the tree each year.

We kept some of the plaid bows and still have a few colorful peanuts left to remind us that we had experienced the true meaning of Christmas—the sharing of what you have with others.

We try to do this ourselves as often as we can as a way to repay those friends who were "just dropping by" before Christmas in 1989.

(Charlene Burke is a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg.)



RAGGEDY TREE—America's beloved Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls form the theme for a Christmas tree on display at the Christmas Gift and Hobby Show at the Indiana State Fairgrounds last year. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

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Christmas memories

Father gives lasting gifts at Christmas

by Cathie Patton

It was Christmas Eve 1973, 20 years ago, that has long touched the hearts of my sisters and me.

Little did we know that it would be our daddy's last Christmas with us. But now we believe that he knew.

For Christmas that year, he gave our mother—his wife of 43 years—a black cross necklace with a diamond in the center. He also gave each of his three daughters a beautiful diamond cross.

Included with our necklaces was a note from him that read, "Wear this with love and faith in him who gave his life on the cross that we may have everlasting life, if only we believe."

Needless to say, we will cherish our gifts forever.

Ten years before my father's death, my mother was stricken with congestive heart failure. I was only in the eighth grade, but my two sisters were grown and married.

They recall many instances of my father—who was a police sergeant for 21 years—going to St. Catherine Church late at night after leaving work at the police headquarters to pray that if God would spare Mother's life for us girls he would carry the burden of suffering for both of

them. God spared my mother, but 10 years later my father was stricken with cancer and suffered so greatly that he was unable to eat or talk for six months.

During that time, my mother had a nervous breakdown and never fully recovered from losing Daddy.

It has been 19 years since losing Daddy, and now we just lost our mother. Our only consolation is knowing that Mother and Daddy are finally together in heaven with our Almighty Father.

This Christmas will certainly be a sad one for us girls, but it will truly be happy for Mom and Dad.

(Cathie Patton is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.)

Santa mixes up gift list, surprises girl

by Leah Lindsey

My most memorable Christmas came when I was only 4 or 5. I went to visit my grandma in Chicago with my mom and dad.

My mom and I returned to our apartment to find that Santa had come while we were gone.

I tore open my gifts and—to my amazement—there was nothing I had asked for on my Christmas list to Santa. I loved the things that were there, but I wanted the things on my list more.



ANGELIC GIFT—Handmade Christmas gifts like this embroidered tree ornament of an angel on a heart-shaped design are special presents which are treasured by recipients for many years. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

I mentioned this to my mom, who responded—without a flinch, smile, snicker or even raising her eyebrows—that I should just be happy with the things I had been given.

Over the next few days, I enjoyed the toys and forgot about the misplaced gifts until I received a letter from Santa. In the letter, he said he had gotten me mixed up with another girl in the United States. Santa also mentioned that he would bring me one gift from my list.

I waited and waited. Finally, under the tree one morning, I found a set of little fat women inside of each other. It was the set of nesting dolls I had asked for on my list.

Later in my life I realized that Santa had gotten only the things that he thought I would like.

This was probably my most memorable Christmas—so far.

(Leah Lindsey is a member of St. Gabriel Parish and is a seventh-grade student at St. Gabriel School.)

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Very special Santa Claus will be missed this year

by Marjorie Stoll

My most memorable Christmas was last year. I only wish I had known it at the time.

After the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass, my family all gathered at my home for a gift exchange and dinner. With six children, their husbands, wives and 17 grandchildren, our house was bulging at the seams.

The children were very anxious to open their gifts, but were told they must wait because we were expecting a very special person to come to our house.

First we heard the bells, then a loud "Ho, ho ho!" The adults were as excited as the children. We knew our special Santa Claus had arrived—and as he had told me many times, he was the real Santa!

Two of my grandsons, Jon and Zac, would follow him through the house trying to see if all his hair was white. John was quite sure he knew who Santa was and he was determined to tell Zac. Santa knew this and was just as determined Jon would not know.

After sitting with each child—big and small—on his lap and asking them if they had been good, Santa gave each person a gift. All I got was a big hug.

Our Santa had three more Masses to say for Christmas, but he always found time to give me and my family so much joy and love.

When it was time for Santa to leave, we had to make sure the children didn't see how Santa arrived at our house. Santa would go out the front door while the children watched from the back door. As Jon was watching with the others, he yelled, "Zac, come here quick! I can see him go up in the sky!"

This year our special Santa will only be here in spirit. Our special Santa was Father Carmen Petrone, the pastor of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg. He died on March 11, but he will live forever in our hearts and memories.

Every time I see a Santa Claus, I will always feel blessed to have known the "real Santa" and sad that I will never again get that special hug from him.

Our Christmas this year will not be quite the same without him, but I am sure we will feel his presence.

On his tombstone are printed the words, "Remember that I loved you." How could we ever forget?

(Marjorie Stoll is a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg and had served the parish as the church secretary. The late Father Carmen Petrone's love of Christmas was well known in the archdiocese.)

Imaginative child discovers sleigh and reindeer tracks

by Kari Patlak

When I was a child, I was too short and too fat and I had an overactive imagination.

It was a bitterly cold morning. All throughout the morning, every child in every land was rejoicing because it was Christmas!

I, on the other hand, was not as happy. The previous day my brother had revealed to me the "real truth" about Christmas. Naturally, I was distraught. All my fantasies of the wondrous lands, of Santa, and of the elves were all destroyed!

I put on my clothes and walked outside. As I looked at the driveway a race came over me. There were sleigh and reindeer tracks!

As I was running inside to tell the "real truth" about Christmas to my brother, I stumbled and fell on the stairs. Overjoyed, I did not care.

After carefully pondering the news just obtained by my young mind, I decided that I would not tell my brother. It was my secret, one of a child with an overactive imagination!

(Kari Patlak is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis and is a seventh-grade student at St. Gabriel School.)

Christmas includes helping sisters at the parish school

by Mark Allen

I grew up in the Brightwood area behind St. Francis de Sales Church and School. I remember Sister Mary Dorine would decorate the church and plan Christmas functions for the school.

It was 1970 and I was in the eighth grade. I was the part-time janitor and lived across the alley from the school. The nuns called on me frequently to help out in the convent and do other tasks and deeds for them. I enjoyed helping them.

It was Christmas time. Sister Dorine, who taught seventh- and eighth-grade math, asked me to help clean and set up her classroom for a Christmas party for her class.

I worked most of the morning getting everything ready, then I went to the convent—which was in the school—and told her everything was done.

I went on home and thought no more about the party. About an hour later, Sister Dorine sent one of her

students over to my house to tell me that she wanted to see me. I thought I had done something wrong. On the way there I was thinking to myself, "What did I do?" She wanted me to be there to celebrate Christmas with her and her class.

Sister Dorine was a unique and wonderful person. She died in February of 1971. She and that memory of Christmas will always be with me.

I was in the last graduating class of St. Francis de Sales School in 1971. I also was an altar boy. In 1975, I graduated from Secoma Memorial High School. Through all this, I had not been baptized in the Catholic Church. In March of 1980, I was baptized by Father Charles Lahey and was married at St. Francis de Sales Church in June of 1980.

(Mark Allen is a member of Holy Name Parish in Beech Grove.)

After baby arrives, family celebrates at the hospital

by Gary Taylor

"Honey, I think it's time. The pains are getting closer."

"OK. Let me find someone to watch the kids."

It was a little after noon on Christmas Eve, and finally the baby in the womb had decided to come forth almost two weeks late. What a time to come!

Grace always abounds. My cousin and her husband were happy to watch our three children. They were going to a family Christmas gathering. Having five children of their own, they didn't mind taking along three more.

As Kris and I drove to the hospital, we made small talk. This is our fourth child, so we were pretty calm. I even remembered to go to the emergency room for a

wheelchair. This fourth birthing process was going well, but the hours were passing and the baby wasn't ready to be born yet. Then, at 8 p.m., four hours before Christmas, Micah was born.

"But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me, one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times" (Micah, 5:2).

He came from Evansville, which isn't so small, and he may not be ruler in Israel, but he was born with a self-will and does he try to rule the Taylor household!

My cousin Sharon and her husband Chris brought our children and their children to the hospital to see baby Micah. We talked, smiled, gossiped, and did all of the normal things people do when a baby is born. Then it was time to say goodbye and get the kids home. It was almost Christmas.

After the kids went to bed, I walked into the living room and thought about Kris and Micah sleeping on the other side of town in the hospital. I looked at the Christmas tree and decided to talk this situation over with Jesus. Wisdom, a light bulb of insight, came to me.

I ran to the telephone and called a cab to come over and pick up all the Christmas gifts. I told the cab driver to take me to Kristina Taylor's room at the hospital. Then I went upstairs and fell asleep.

The kids woke me up. "Daddy, Daddy, where are the presents?" What are they talking about? I'm waking up. "Oh, yeah. I remember and tell them to get dressed so we can go to the hospital to see Mom and baby Micah. I tell them the presents are at the hospital."

We arrived at the hospital at breakfast time. Kris was tired, but happy to see us. Excitement abounded. Presents are opened, and both grandmas called us. Christmas had come at last!

(Gary Taylor is a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.)

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Readers recall Christmas tales

Life in a large family was joyous and fun on holidays

by Elizabeth Bridges

When I think of Christmas, the scene that pops into my mind is that of an 8-year-old living in a spacious farmhouse in rural Jennings County in 1950.

On or about Dec. 22, Dad and my older brother would drag in a freshly-cut cedar tree that had just been cut from a fence row around one of our 40-acre fields beyond our barnyard. The tree was fitted between some furniture in the double living room, then decorated with rather worn ornaments and lights.

My birthday is Dec. 23. That particular Christmas, my birthday cake was a homemade fruit cake and my birthday present was wrapped in Christmas paper. Both of these things disappointed me.

It wasn't until several years later when I tried making a fruit cake from scratch that I appreciated how hard Mom must have worked to prepare that fruit cake and keep it moistened with the wine from Dad's vintage stored in our basement. Making wine also took many hours.

As was typical of the innocence or maybe ignorance of that day, I never knew that Mom was going to have another baby. However, my sister was born on Jan. 4, which means that my

mother was eight and a half months pregnant with her eighth child on Christmas Eve!

Later after supper, my two older brothers actually stayed in the kitchen to help with the dishes. As soon as the dishes were cleared away, we were scurried into the living room. After a few minutes, we heard a knock on the front door. The door was opened and there were piles of boxes and brown sacks of gifts and food. I remember slipping through the door to see the mysterious visitor. Of course, Dad and my older brother had already slipped around the back of the house.

What excitement followed! There were ham sandwiches and sacks of grapefruits and oranges. The homemade cookies and candies were brought out of coffee cans. And there were lots of gifts for us kids.

I inevitably got gloves, crayons and coloring books, paper dolls, and a doll—the most precious rubber baby I could ever want for my own. And there were some extra homemade outfits for the doll too.

As 10 p.m. neared, we slowly left our new toys and changed clothes for church. Then Mom, Dad and all seven kids crammed (it didn't seem crowded to me) into our family car and headed for Midnight Mass.

Since then, 40-some Christmases have come and gone. A few of them were marked with sadness which stemmed from loss, but the vast majority have been exciting and quite fulfilling. But none stick in my memory more clearly than that special Christmas when I was 8 years old.

(Elizabeth Bridges is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County.)



CAROLERS—Parents who want to share a meaningful Christmas with their children should focus on the intangible gifts of the season and include God in each family holiday celebration. (CNS photo from Squires)

Worn nativity set is a part of family's holiday tradition

by Mary Rubeck Benson

When our son Jonathan was a toddler, my husband and I bought a nativity made of greenware. We spent over a month painting the fragile figures before we were ready to have them fired in a kiln.

Knowing it would be hard for our young son to resist the animals and brightly colored people, we decided to set up the nativity on Christmas Eve and put it away shortly after Christmas. We continued this practice when Jonathan's younger brother Stephen was a toddler.

Several years ago I finally realized we no longer had to wait until Christmas Eve to set up our nativity. Our sons were well past the age of wanting to play with it.

When I voiced my thoughts, Jonathan quickly said no because it was our family tradition to set up the nativity on Christmas Eve after Mass.

One of the cows has a broken horn, a lamb has only three legs, and a wise man has a foot that was broken off, but for over 20 years we have set up our nativity on Christmas Eve. It is a tradition that we will keep again this year.

(Mary Rubeck Benson is a member of St. Simon Parish in Indianapolis.)

Toddler's Advent remarks remind mom to slow down

by Mary Ann Wyand

On the first Sunday of Advent in 1986, I was a little bit late getting out the door to go to Mass. Upon arriving at Holy Cross Church in Indianapolis, I encouraged my then 3-year-old daughter to hurry as we climbed out of the car and headed for the church.

At the time, Holy Cross Parish was in the midst of a major construction project. The former rectory adjacent to the church was being remodeled for use as low-income housing for handicapped persons, and debris from the renovation of Providence Place covered the lawn.

"Are they tearing down the church?" my daughter asked as we hurried past the construction site. "Sure looks like it," I replied, easing open the church door with minutes to spare before the opening song.

As luck would have it, Father Pat Doyle chose that liturgy to invite the children to sit near the altar for an informal discussion on Advent during the homily time.

"What's going to happen in a few weeks?" he asked the children now seated on the sanctuary steps. "Does anyone know?"

Some of the children looked thoughtful, but my daughter had an answer right away. She waved her hand excitedly, and when he called her name she replied, "They're going to tear down the church."

The priest smiled and looked out at the people seated in the pews. "Is this something I should know about?" he asked, as everyone laughed.

I should have taken the time to answer her question properly, I thought. But the tendency to rush—especially during Advent—is so ingrained in Americans.

However, this year I won't be rushing around at all. I had foot surgery recently and am hobbling slowly through Advent, reminding myself that peace and joy and prayer are the essence of Christian preparations for Christmas.

(Mary Ann Wyand is a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis.)

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Friends and faith combine for holy Christmas season

by Melissa Morrow

Hearing the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" this Advent season brings to mind my "first" Christmas.

It was the first Christmas my best friend and I were to spend together, both of us away from home and family for the first time in our lives, away from that sometimes smothering, often stressful atmosphere that we always thought was Christmas.

It was the first time in my 20-some years of celebrating Christmas that I really celebrated Christmas.

In the midst of delayed flights and rainstorms as I flew into Terre Haute, in the midst of last-minute shopping at the mall and crowded grocery stores and the even more crowded Apple House, in the midst of cooking and cleaning, in the middle of visiting friends and attending daily Mass and decorating St. Patrick Church, in the midst of going out to eat at the Beaver House and waiting for my best friend to get home from work and talking to my family on the phone and cruising around looking at Christmas lights and comparing Indiana Christmases to New Mexico Christmases, somehow I found it.

No, not somehow, but through the grace of God I finally found Christmas.

I remember praying the rosary with my best friend with only the lights of our carefully decorated Christmas tree glowing in the dark.

I remember walking hand in hand with my best friend down the street to Midnight Mass, wearing my new boots.

I remember how St. Patrick Church in Terre Haute was decorated with bright red poinsettias and tiny white lights and how the French horn ensemble practiced "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" while I sat, early, in the front pew of the church.

I remember thanking God for calling me to my spiritual home and praying that Easter would come quickly because then I would be confirmed and, as a full-fledged Catholic, allowed to receive the Eucharist.

I remember crying as I thanked God for the Catholic Church and thanked God for my best, best friend in the whole world.

Emmanuel came that Christmas, not only to a quiet stable in Bethlehem, but into my world-weary heart that "first" and very best Christmas of my life.

(Melissa Morrow now resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico.)



FAMILY TRADITION—Decorating the Christmas tree together is a special holiday tradition for many families. Tree ornaments collected over the years add to the fun. (CNS photo by KNA)

Girl discovers Christmas means love—and presents

by Melinda Berkopos

I was 3 years old and I did the usual, "Oh, please let me open my presents!"

I was always trying to make deals with my mother like, "If you let me open my presents, then you can open your presents!" But that never seemed to work.

I always used to wish that it would snow and snow and never stop. I was never sure why I wanted it to snow so much. I guess it was a fascination I had with snow.

One year I made a deal with my mother that if it snowed enough to build a snowman, then I would get to open one of my presents. I made this deal with her because it never snowed enough in Indianapolis to build a snowman.

But that year it did! The next day I reminded my mom that since it had snowed enough to build a snowman, she had to let me open my biggest present.

When I was little it was really cool to be able to open one of my presents before Christmas. I tell my mom now that she shouldn't have let me open that present early because now I want to open one present early every year.

Now that I'm older and the Christmas presents are getting better, it seems more important to open my presents early.

Christmas has always been a really important time at my house because of how much my family loves each other.

(Melinda Berkopos is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis and is a seventh-grade student at St. Gabriel School.)

Family traditions include a trip to grandmother's house

by Abby Rardin

Most of my Christmases are very memorable. We do the same memorable things every year.

My brother, sister and I always get up at 6 a.m. on Christmas morning.

We wake up our parents, then sit on the stairs to wait for my dad. We do this because we all want to go downstairs together.

Our stockings are opened first, then the presents are passed out and ripped open.

At about 9 a.m. we haul our presents to our rooms, try on our new clothes, and get ready for a two-hour drive to my grandmother's house in Oakland, Ill., for another family Christmas celebration with our relatives from out of town.

My grandmother is an excellent baker. She makes cookies and pies for us.

There are quite a few family members at her house and we have fun together.

Most of my Christmases are very memorable.

In fact, the only thing that changes each year are the Christmas presents!

(Abby Rardin is a member of St. Gabriel Parish and is a seventh-grade student at St. Gabriel School.)

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Readers tell Christmas stories

Santa manages to find girl in her new home after all

by RoseMarie Jackson

I was five when I knelt on a chair that Christmas and helped Mommy cut cookies and sprinkle raisins in the apple strudel.

I was a quiet, lonely child, the youngest of 10 and the only one to survive babyhood. As I was used to playing by myself and was a very good child, Mommy never worried that I would get into trouble.

The week before Christmas Mommy took me uptown every day.

There was wishful thinking, but little money in 1929. One day I looked in a store window and saw a beautiful doll wearing a pink dress, a lacy cap, and black slippers with straps. She had blue eyes and black eyelashes and long pale blonde curls.

Mommy always stopped to let me see my dollie friend in the store window. But when we went uptown on the day before Christmas she was gone! I cried, and went home a sad little girl.

Poppy put up the tree, with the shiny star on top, on Christmas Eve. Mommy and Poppy hung the fragile ornaments they had brought from Hungary on the Christmas tree, and I scattered tinsel on the tree branches as high as I could reach from my tiptoes.

After Mass, Poppy lit the candles for awhile. I put on my pajamas, determined to wait for Santa.

We had moved last summer, but if Santa looked through the window he would know that I lived here now.

I soon nodded off to sleep, though, and Poppy put me to bed.

On Christmas morning, I got up and ran to see if Santa Claus had found me. I didn't see the packages under the tree, though, for there—in a little rocker—was my dollie!

She was truly mine, for when I picked her up she called me "Mama."

I named her Maggie. I rocked her and she closed her lashes over her blue eyes.

I had so much to tell Maggie that I talked to her all day. I kept thanking Santa for finding me in my new house and bringing Maggie to stay with me.

Mommy and Poppy just smiled at each other.

(RoseMarie Jackson is a member of St. Rose Parish in Knightsdown.)



NUTCRACKER—Toy soldiers are a popular design for nutcrackers, which have become a holiday tradition because of a Christmas play by that name. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyand)

Nativity inspires child to sing 'Happy Birthday' song

by Bernadine Purcell

So many memories of my Christmases of the past race through my mind as I try to write my Christmas story. I think I would like to write about the time in my life when I truly believed in Santa Claus.

There was a special kind of excitement that prevailed the week before Christmas. My mother was spending extra hours in the kitchen baking cookies for the holidays. When we came home from school the smell of cookies baking sent us to the pantry to see if another filled cookie jar had been placed on the shelf.

At the supper table, my dad talked about all the orders for turkeys he was getting from his customers at our family grocery store.

No doubt we younger children would venture into the basement of our home to watch our older brother help our dad dress the turkeys. I sure didn't look like they were dressing them. We watched in anguish as the poor turkeys' heads were chopped off. Those big feathered bodies jumped around on their two skinny legs and bony feet. It wasn't a pretty sight. Oh horror of horrors! Now their bodies were dipped into a kettle of boiling water before all their feathers were plucked off. Then their naked bodies were placed next to each other in rows on a large wooden table.

When we climbed back up the stairs, we decided it was time to check the living room door. It was still locked and would remain that way until Christmas Eve. We didn't have much luck peeping through the keyhole, so we decided to peek under the door. We were sure we heard Santa's footsteps.

At school, we were practicing Christmas songs. On the last day of school that week, Santa would be coming to our Christmas party.

It wasn't until we sang "Jingle Bells" that Santa Claus appeared on the school stage. As he stepped onto the stage, I could see his red hat and his snow-white beard. His face broke into a smile as he greeted us with a jovial "Merry Christmas!" I was anxiously excited as I waited in line for my turn to receive my gift of a bag of fruit and candy from Santa Claus.

As the days grew closer to "The Day," no child would dare complain about doing household chores. The living room door was still locked. We were sure Santa was in there. Didn't we hear him call out "Ho ho ho!" from the locked room? Some days we heard the sound of jingle bells. Someone even saw Santa's black boots while peeping under the door.

At last it was Christmas Eve. Now the door would be unlocked. Yes, Santa had been here. There by the window was a big Christmas tree strung with bright lights of red, green, blue and yellow. On the top of the tree, almost touching the ceiling, a bright star was shining from its lofty perch. Under the tree and scattered over half of the room were toys and fancy wrapped gifts, something for each member of our large family. The hours before bedtime passed too quickly as we played with our brand new toys.

When we arose the next morning, we greeted each other with "Merry Christmas!" The living room door remained closed but not locked, as we prepared ourselves for Mass at our parish church. There we would celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

Before leaving the church, we would go to the side altar to see the nativity scene. The figures were lifelike in size, so much bigger than the small nativity set that appeared each year under our Christmas tree.

When I gazed into the holy face of the little babe lying in the manger, my heart sang, "Happy birthday, Jesus!"

(Bernadine Purcell is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville.)

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The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 26, 1993

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 — Colossians 3:12-21 — Luke 2:22-40

by Fr. Owen F. Campion

This weekend the church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family. The first reading is from the Book of Sirach, long a favorite source for Christians who are looking for inspiration and divine guidance and long a favored reading in the liturgy.

As a literary work, Sirach has had an interesting history. It draws its name from its author, Jesus (or Joshua in Hebrew), the son of Sirach Eleazar. The author was certainly a learned man. He knew language, and most importantly for a religious work, he knew well the religious traditions and writings of his people. He probably lived in Jerusalem, and very likely he maintained a school for young men interested in studying the Scriptures.

Such schools were important in the ancient Jewish tradition. As a matter of fact, they endure today in the rabbinical schools provided for Orthodox Jews. The primary, indeed usually their solitary, emphasis was upon religion. Nothing else mattered in their eyes. The schools were open only to males. Any Jew financially secure had as an ambition the education of his or her child in such a school. Paul himself attended a school of this type in Jerusalem.

Sirach was written around 180-200 years before Jesus. It originally was in Hebrew, but for many years its Hebrew text was lost. Only the Greek survived, condemning it in pious Jewish eyes to disrepute. However, much of the original Hebrew text has been recovered as ancient copies have been found.

It is part of the Wisdom Literature. The Wisdom Literature insisted that belief in the one God was not illogical. Rather, it was the greatest statement of wisdom.

The reading from Sirach for this Feast of the Holy Family looks at that most basic unit of society, the family. It is a call to honor parents. Reverence for parents was required by the Ten Commandments themselves.

As Jewish tradition progressed, this reverence for parents became not only fixed in the tradition but very comprehensive. Since the Holy Family obviously was very devout, and since Jesus himself was a follower of the Jewish customs and practices, the Lord would have conducted himself according to the advice by Sirach.

In this reading, the word "father" should not be read with the male parent only in mind. It is a literal translation from the ancient text, and it was a male-dominated society, but the tradition insisted upon regard for mother as well as father.

St. Paul's epistle to the Christians of Colossae is the source of this weekend's second reading. The first section of the reading calls upon Christians to lead lives of virtue and propriety. In no place is such advice more important than in the home. Families must love one another and care for one another, or their lives will be filled with unhappiness and insecurity.

This selection from the Scripture also

contains Paul's famous demand upon which they they subject themselves to their husbands, and that husbands must love their wives. In the atmosphere today, a period so charged with concern for human rights for all—especially for women who for so long have been very secondary members of the human race—Paul's advice may in itself seem quite exploitative and tolerant of attitudes placing women at a level lower than that of men.

To understand this text, it is important to see early Christianity as it was. Among the Christians, women were assured of a dignity absolutely unmatched in the culture around them. By baptism, they were redeemed, linked with God in the Savior, destined for heaven as heireses of all that God promised.

By all means they were equal to men, and women were strong examples of the most devoted and assertive Christian behavior. Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe are but a few women saluted by Paul for their extraordinary role in the Christian community.

If husbands love their wives, they will honor their wives. Husbands and wives together should subject themselves to the needs of the other.

The Gospel reading, from St. Luke's Gospel, is the familiar story of the Presentation. Obedient of Jewish religious law, Mary and Joseph brought the child to the Jerusalem temple to pledge his life to God. An old man, very devout himself, Simeon, sees the child whom he recognizes as the Redeemer. He prays in thanksgiving for he had hoped that God would allow him the sight of the Messiah before he died. At the same time, an old woman, long herself a devoted servant of God, a woman named Anna, met the Holy Family and as did Simeon, she thanked God.

Reflection

The readings for this feast day tell a love story. It is the story of the love of Jesus for all people, of the love of Mary and Joseph for each other, and of their love for God.

In the Gospel, Mary and Joseph lovingly bring the child to the temple. No law mandated this trip. It was an outgrowth of their belief and their love for God. The story concludes with the reminder that Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was subject to them. He loved them too.

The Liturgy of the Word this feast day insists for us that the first unit of society, the scene of our lives and of our most intense feelings, is in the home.

Each person wishes to belong, and every person ultimately wishes to belong to a family where love and security dwell.

Sirach and Paul both tell us in the readings that we are blessed by God. We have been given the persons of Jesus to guide us. We respond properly when we relate to others in love.

This is essentially and critically needed when we relate to those with whom we share our lives in love. It is a love far above self-interest. It is a love alive with God, for we include God.

With this love, particularly present in families, lives are joyful and with meaning. The Holy Family, devoted, obedient, loving, sacrificial, is the ideal.

(cf. "Lumen Gentium," 34). At baptism, the faithful receive from the Holy Spirit a special character enabling them, in union with Christ, to worship the Father through the church and to offer their lives and also their activities as acceptable spiritual sacrifices (cf. 1 Peter 2:5).

This universal priesthood is exercised most fully in the Eucharist, the supreme act of Christian worship, in which the faithful offer themselves with Christ to the Father and are thus sanctified for the building up of the church and the redemption of the world.

Daily Readings

Monday, Dec. 27
John, apostle and evangelist
1 John 1:1-4
Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:2-8

Tuesday, Dec. 28
Holy Innocents
1 John 1:5-22
Psalms 124:2-5, 7-8
Matthew 21:3-18

Wednesday, Dec. 29
Fifth day in the Octave of Christmas
Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 John 2:3-11
Psalms 96:1-3, 5-6
Luke 22:23-35

Thursday, Dec. 30
Sixth day in the Octave of Christmas
1 John 2:12-17
Psalms 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Friday, Dec. 31
Seventh day in the Octave of Christmas
Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:18-21
Psalms 96:12-13, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Saturday, Jan. 1
Octave of Christmas
Mary, Mother of God
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalms 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Sunday, Jan. 2
Epiphany
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, Jan. 3
Christmas weekday
1 John 3:2-4, 6
Psalms 27:8, 10-11
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, Jan. 4
Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 4:7-10
Psalms 72:14-15, 17-18
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, Jan. 5
John Neumann, bishop
1 John 4:11-18
Psalms 72:1-2, 10-12, 13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, Jan. 6
Blessed Andre Bessette, religious
1 John 4:19-54
Psalms 72:1-2, 14-15, 17
Luke 4:14-22

Friday, Jan. 7
Raymond of Penafort, priest
1 John 5:5-13
Psalms 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, Jan. 8
Christmas weekday
1 John 5:14-21
Psalms 149:1-6, 9
John 3:22-30

SAINT OF THE WEEK

St. Thomas Becket did the right deed for the right reason

by John F. Fink

The life of St. Thomas Becket, whose feast is next Wednesday, Dec. 29, has been dramatized more than once. T.S. Eliot wrote "Murder in the Cathedral," and Richard Broun portrayed Thomas in a movie about him.

There are parallels between the lives of Thomas Becket and another great English saint, Thomas More, although they lived four centuries apart. Both were friends of a King Henry of England, both were named by the king as chancellor of England, both eventually refused to allow the king to interfere in the affairs of the church, and both were finally martyred.

Thomas Becket was born in 1118 in London. At about the age of 24 he obtained a post in the household of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, and was ordained a deacon. Several times the archbishop sent him to Rome on important missions. Eventually he was named archdeacon of Canterbury, a high ecclesiastical honor at the time.

As a young man Thomas became quite friendly with King Henry II, also a young man. They parted together, hunted together, and became inseparable. In 1155, when Thomas was 36, Henry appointed him chancellor of England.

Archbishop Theobald died in 1161 and Henry decided to appoint his friend the new archbishop of Canterbury. Thomas accepted the post, but warned his friend that he might not accept all of Henry's intrusions into church affairs. He was ordained a priest and consecrated an archbishop in 1162. Later he received the pallium from Pope Alexander III.

Thomas immediately changed his lifestyle. He began to wear a hair shirt next to his skin (as did Thomas More), he read Scripture in the mornings, and lived temperately and modestly, keeping a monastic regularity to his life.

Then he began to experience troubles

with Henry. At one point, Thomas tried to compromise and was about to approve the Constitutions of Clarendon which, among other things, would have denied the clergy the right of trial by a church court. He eventually rejected the Constitutions and then fled to France for fear of Henry. For seven years he lived in a Cistercian monastery at St. Omer while he, Pope Alexander and King Henry tried to negotiate.

On Dec. 1, 1170, Thomas returned to England, having been named by the pope as legate for all England except York. He excommunicated several of his adversaries, including three bishops, who took their grievances to Henry. At one point, Henry cried out, "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?" and four knights took him at his word.

As acted in T.S. Eliot's play and in Richard Broun's movie, Thomas's murder in his cathedral at Canterbury was very dramatic. At one point, T.S. Eliot has Thomas facing a temptation to seek martyrdom in order to have earthly glory and revenge and he puts these words in Thomas's mouth: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason."

Thomas was murdered by the four knights on Dec. 29, 1170. Within three years he was canonized as a martyr by Pope Alexander and his tomb became a shrine of pilgrimage. Eighteen months later, King Henry II did public penance at the tomb. In 1220 Thomas's body was solemnly moved to a shrine behind the high altar in Canterbury Cathedral.

Thomas's tomb continued to be a popular place for pilgrimages. Geoffrey Chaucer's famous "Canterbury Tales," written in the 14th century, are a collection of stories told by a group of people on their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. However, in the 16th century, King Henry VIII destroyed Thomas's shrine and scattered the saint's relics.

THE POPE TEACHES

Lay faithful are called to service

by Pope John Paul II
Remarks at audience Dec. 15

Continuing our catechesis on the church, we now turn to the participation of the lay faithful in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

As the Second Vatican Council teaches, Christ, the eternal high priest, wishes to continue his witness and redemptive work also through the laity, and thus he has given all a share in his priestly office of offering spiritual worship, for the glory of God and the salvation of all mankind

Entertainment

VIEWING WITH ARNOLD

'The Piano' combines romance and feminism

by James W. Arnold

"The Piano" is a strange, Bronte-like tale about passions that simmer and finally rage in a primitive European settlement in the 1850s in New Zealand.

A big winner (best film, best actress) last spring at Cannes, and a likely contender for major Oscars, it's also the first real success by young (38) New Zealand-born writer-director Jane Campion. Very stylish, restrained and indirect, "The Piano" also appears to be as much feminist allegory as intense love story.

It would be pleasant to agree with the accumulated praise. No question, it's fresh and haunting, in its way. But it's also overblown and pretentious, the curse in America is different. New directors here cut their teeth on bad horror films or youth comedies.

The offbeat heroine, Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter), is a diminutive Scots woman sent by her father as a mail-order bride to a modestly fixed, lonely colonial farmer (Stewart, played by Sam Neill). Ada can hear but can't speak. This doesn't faze Stewart, who "believes that God loves dumb creatures and so should he."

She has been mute, Ada tells us in a voice-over narration ("my mind's voice"), since the age of six. We never learn why, but given the way Ada is treated by men, it's likely from some abusive trauma.

She's accompanied by Fiona (Ana Paquin), a bright seven-year-old daughter from a mysterious, seldom discussed failed relationship. While the spirited Ada some-



times writes notes to convey her meanings, mostly she uses Fiona as translator. They're close, like sisters.

But the really odd thing about Ada is her piano. That's how she truly expresses herself. She's brought it with her, halfway around the world, and wow, does it serve as a symbol. Her alter ego, her soul? The one treasure that she keeps as her own, as refuge and comfort? Perhaps all or none. Take your pick.

At first the piano just sits in a crate on the beach (a wonderful image). Like Ada, the piano is Stewart's now, and he doesn't want his Maori helpers to lug it inland over the muddy forest trails. Big mistake. Ada doesn't want to hear her husband. Instead she charms a rough settler neighbor, Baines (Harvey Keitel), to retrieve the piano. But he frustrates her by buying it from Stewart.

In an original variation on a very old plot, Baines falls for Ada, using the piano to seduce her. He agrees to give it back to her if she'll come and play for him—at a rate of "one key" for each visit. Campion wants us to wonder who is seducing whom: this is the only way Ada is going to get her piano.

The film's long central sequence is basically Baines bargaining his way over many visits and piano sessions until Ada consents to make love (for 10 keys). It's gently and subtly done (these are Victorians after all, and seeing a bare arm is a thrill), in his dimly-lit cabin, though they're naked enough when it's finally completed. The joke on them is that they fall in love. (Or is this Ada's plan all along?) Baines eventually gives her the piano, but now she pines for him. What's Stewart been doing all this time?

No kidding, he thinks she's been giving Baines piano lessons. When he sees for himself what's going on, he locks her up.



BEETHOVEN AND BRIDE—Beethoven and his bride, Missy, search for their four puppies and turn a household upside down in "Beethoven's 2nd," a sequel to last year's story of family life with a St. Bernard. The U.S. Catholic Conference classifies the film A-II for adults and adolescents. (CNS photo from Universal Pictures)

You can imagine how the headstrong and resourceful woman reacts to that.

The conclusion is suitably melodramatic and violent, with several apparent endings, suggesting that writer-director Campion had trouble deciding between quietly happy and flamboyantly arty unhappy.

At heart, "The Piano" is a romance in which the woman rejects the choices made for her and arranges (with a few ups and downs) her own fate. Ada's unique character and look (tense and plain, bundled in black cap and black hoopskirted dress and white crinoline amid the wild desolation), superbly achieved by both actress and director, are precisely what give the movie its distinction.

"The Piano" doesn't have much other-wise, except for the moody piano music (Hunter plays her own), the morals and emotions are well within normal adult range. The characters are basically decent, and surely suffer for their sins. The infidelity is softened by Ada's mail-order situation, the marriage is never consummated.

The Maoris provide some cultural background and interest, but the lush forest, wave-lashed beaches and frequent rain are the main visual attractions. Watching tiny actress Hunter negotiating the muddy

pathways in her ground-length skirts is equally fascinating.

(Emotions repressed then expressed, with a touch too much art and indirection, in primitive 19th century New Zealand, acting and style make it likely Oscar nominee; nudity, sex situation; satisfactory for adults.)

USCC classification: A-IV, adults, with reservations.

Recent USCC Film Classifications

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Beethoven's 2nd | A-II |
| Paraway, So Close | A-III |
| Gerontino: An American Legend | A-III |
| In the Name of the Father | A-III |
| The Pelican Brief | A-III |
| Schindler's List | A-III |
| Shadowlands | A-III |
| The Trial | A-III |
| What's Eating Gilbert Grape | A-III |

Legend: A-I—general patronage, A-II—adults and adolescents, A-III—adults, A-IV—adults, with reservations; O—morally offensive. A high recommendation from the USCC is indicated by the # before the title.

'The Journey' tells modern-day Christmas story



'THE JOURNEY'—A young social activist helps a homeless pregnant woman who was robbed in the half-hour Christmas special produced by Family Theater Productions. The show airs on WTHR Channel 13 in Indianapolis at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 24. (Photo courtesy of Family Theater Productions)

When a homeless pregnant woman is robbed on Christmas Eve, a young social activist intervenes while his affluent parents refuse to get involved in "The Journey," a half-hour Christmas special that will air on WTHR Channel 13, the NBC affiliate in Indianapolis, at 5:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

A production of Family Theater, based in Hollywood, "The Journey" also intertwines the story of the first Christmas, when another homeless couple, Mary and Joseph, sought sanctuary in crowded Bethlehem before the birth of the Christ child.

Billed as a story for all seasons, this contemporary Christmas film for the entire family stars acclaimed theater, film and Emmy award-winning actress Lois Nettleton and a diverse cast.

Producer Peter Thompson, an Emmy nominee for "Quincy" and "The Ann Jillian Story," created the story, co-wrote the script and produced the film. It was directed by Corey Allen, an Emmy winner for "Hill Street Blues," and was filmed at a number of locations in and around Los Angeles.

"The Journey" is one of five award-winning films in a Family Theater series which intertwines biblical and contemporary stories. The program has been honored with the Golden Halo Award by the Southern California Motion Picture Council, the Award of Excellence by the Film Advisory Board, and the Silver Angel Award from Excellence in Media.

The Family Theater films were funded by a grant from Witnessing to God's Love Foundation, which is based in Holland.

A pioneer producer of family and religious dramas for four decades, Family Theater Productions was founded in 1947 by the late Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton to foster prayer and family values through the mass media.

Father Peyton died in June of 1992 at the age of 83. He was well known as "the rosary priest."

Family Theater Productions is known for its slogan "The family that prays together stays together."

TV Programs of Note

Monday, Dec. 27, 8-10:30 p.m. (PBS) "Stifelio." A "Metropolitan Opera Presents" presentation of Verdi's

three-act opera, sung in Italian with English subtitles, features Plácido Domingo in the title role.

Tuesday, Dec. 28, 8-10 p.m. (NBC) "Legend to Legend Night." Katie Couric hosts a special honoring the achievements of 14 contemporary celebrities including Gene Kelly, Sugar Ray Leonard, Barbara Mandrell, Gregory Peck, Eva Marie Saint, Tony Bennett and Wynonna Judd. The program includes musical performances, interviews and vintage clips.

Tuesday, Dec. 28, 9-10 p.m. (PBS) "Broken Minds." This peat of a "Frontline" program explores the baffling mental illness called schizophrenia.

Wednesday, Dec. 29, 9-11 p.m. (CBS) "The Kennedy Center Honors: A Celebration of the Performing Arts." The 16th annual presentation honors Johnny Carson, Dance Theater of Harlem founder Arthur Mitchell, conductor George Solti, composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim and singer Marion Williams for lifetime achievement in their art form.

Wednesday, Dec. 29, 8-9 p.m. (PBS) "Sesame Street Says Up Late! A Monster New Year's Eve Party." In this special New Year's Eve family program, Big Bird and his friends learn about the holiday festivities in Mexico, Portugal, Japan, Israel, Germany and Norway, then include these customs in their own partying.

Wednesday, Dec. 29, 9-10:30 p.m. (PBS) "Leonard Bernstein: The Gift of Music." The great 20th-century American musical figure is celebrated in a compendium of his most memorable film and TV appearances that chronicle his many talents.

Friday, Dec. 31, 11 p.m.-12:05 a.m. (PBS) "Clive James' New Year's Eve Special." British author and TV personality Clive James bids an irreverent farewell to 1993 and greets 1994 with the aid of Big Ben in this holiday special that includes clips and stills from the past year and his wry commentary on the year's fads, trends and events.

Saturday, Jan. 1, 9-10:11 p.m. (PBS) "The Richard Tucker Opera Gala." Some of the world's best known operatic arias are performed by Grace Bumbry, Ruth Ann Swenson, Rockwell Blake and Juan Ponce in this annual celebration of opera. The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra is conducted by Christian Badae.

(Check local listings to verify program dates and times.)

QUESTION CORNER

Private revelations confuse Catholics

by Fr. John Dietzen

Q The flood of news some of us Catholics receive in our area about apparances of the Blessed Virgin and Jesus and saints is unbelievable and confusing.

You have said in your column that none of these visions put obligations on us about what to believe or what to do. And we accept that.

But some of them are so insistent. Either do this, or don't do that, or you will make Mary unhappy, or you will even go to hell.

Is there any way to tell if any of these are really, as they say, "messages from heaven"? (Pennsylvania)



A Before anything else, it is good to hang on to what you said. None of these private revelations, or locutions as they're called, even the genuine ones, impose any new beliefs or obligations on us as Catholic Christians.

They may remind us of the importance of prayer and penance and good works, which we know already from the Gospels and from traditional practices of the church. That is good, of course.

Two major observations or cautions may help you and your friends.

First, those who desire special revelations or messages from God beyond what we really have, or rely on them, don't have very nice things said about them by the great Christian spiritual writers of our Catholic tradition.

Such searches and expectations of personal announcements from God are usually considered signs of a weakness of faith.

St. John of the Cross, for example, was second to none in the history of Christianity for his mystical experiences of God and for his reputation as a spiritual director.

He knew God can speak to us any way he wishes. Yet, he claimed, God has spoken in total completeness in his Word; in his Son, he has given and said to us everything he would wish.

"Anyone who would seek some new vision or revelation

from him would commit an offense," according to this great authority on spiritual life. "No soul who does not deal with them (inner messages) as the work of an enemy can possibly escape delusion in a greater or lesser degree." (Ascent of Mount Carmel, chapters 22 and 29)

Maybe that's putting it a little strongly, but such phenomena obviously didn't impress him much at all.

Second, one of the surest signs that some personal revelation is suspect, if not outright fraud, is that the recipient attempts to bind other people to obligations because of it.

In my opinion, the finest readable, authentic and common-sense book available on this subject is "A Still Small Voice: A Practical Guide on Reported Revelations," by Father Benedict Groeschel.

A clear sign suggesting that a revelation is false or actually fraudulent, according to him, "the recipient's insistence that

the decisions of others must be made on the basis of what is allegedly revealed to the visionary" (pg. 114).

Those who, by every evidence, actually did receive genuine personal revelations from God, St. Teresa of Avila, for example, rarely made such demands.

These impositions on others are, however, a common tactic of those, past and present, who claim visions and revelations which eventually prove to have no supernatural foundation.

I sympathize with your frustration and wonder at the, at best, naivete of so many people. It's important these days to keep your balance.

If you're interested, Father Groeschel's book is available from Ignatius Press.

(Send questions to Father John Dietzen, Holy Trinity Church, 704 N. Main St., Bloomington, Ill. 61701.)

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FAMILY TALK

Couples must work on communication skills

by Dr. James and Mary Kenny

Dear Mary: My wife and I have been married for 23 years and have three children. We are a very close family, and except for business never separated for more than a couple of days.

Recently my wife, 45, took a group of children to Spain for three weeks. It devastated our 6-year-old, who mourned her mother, and me for the effect on the child. It made me quite angry, to the point that for most of the trip I did not miss my wife until the last few days. This of course changed upon her return. It was wonderful to have her home, and for all the right reasons.

On Mother's Day I wrote her a letter to reaffirm my love and state that I had and would continue to honor our vows to each other and would try to be worthy of her love. To my surprise she did not mention the letter until I brought it up, then she said it was wonderful.

I had hoped she would write the same to me. Later I brought it up once more and stated that I thought it was a good idea to reaffirm the vows.

She became provoked and stated that she could not state that she had never been with another man and had never even harbored a thought of being with someone else. Frankly this outburst was a surprise. The matter was dropped. I am left to wonder about it all. (Kentucky)

Answer: Twenty-three years together sounds as though you and your wife know something about living with each other.

You seem to have some personality differences, and that's wonderful. Many persons choose their marriage partner precisely because their personality strengths and weaknesses complement one another. In your case, you seem to favor stability, permanence and order while your wife may be more spontaneous and impetuous.

Recognize and enjoy the differences between you. Do not insist she write a letter in return. You have different styles. She may not feel comfortable doing what you do.

Be more open about admitting your own feelings, even negative ones. You were angry about your wife leaving. Apparently you never told her this.

At the same time, recognize that your wife can have interests and activities apart from you. Allow your wife and yourself space to follow some dreams apart from each other. Enjoy the differences in your personalities which can enrich you both.

(Address questions to the Kennys, 219 W. Harrison St., Suite 4, Bensenville, IN 47078.)

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Whatever happened to James & Loretta Key?

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The Active List

The Criterion welcomes announcements for The Active List of parish and church-related activities open to the public. Please keep brief, listing event, sponsor, date, time and location. No announcements will be taken by telephone. No pictures, please. Notices must be in our offices by 10 a.m. Monday the week of publication. Hand deliver or mail to: The Criterion, The Active List, 1400 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, Ind., 46206.

December 24

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

December 25

A pro-life rosary will be prayed at 9:30 a.m. at the Clinic for Women, Ritter Plaza, 21st and Ritter Ave.

December 26

The choir of Sacred Heart, 1530 Union St., will perform its annual Christmas Cantata at 11:30 a.m. Free and open to the public. For more information, call Rose Springman at 317-792-8285.

☆☆

The Secular Franciscans will meet in Sacred Heart Parish Chapel, 1530 Union St., at 3 p.m. Refreshments will follow in the parish meeting room. For more information, call 317-637-7309.

☆☆

St. Paul, Sellersburg, will meet for prayer, praise and sharing from 7:15 p.m. in the church. Every-

one is welcome. For more information, call the parish office.

☆☆

St. Bridget, 801 Northwestern Ave., will pray a rosary at 10 a.m. For more information, call 317-547-3755.

☆☆

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 1-5 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

December 28

The prayer group of St. Lawrence, 6944 E. 46th St. at Shadeland Ave., will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the chapel. Prayers are offered for the parish, personal concerns, the entire Christian community and the world. All are welcome. For more information, call 317-546-4065 or 317-842-8805.

☆☆

St. Mary Chapel, 317 N. New Jersey St., will pray a devotion to Jesus and the Blessed Mother from 7-8 p.m. For more information, call 317-786-7517.

December 30

A pro-life rosary will be prayed at 10 a.m. in front of Affiliated Women's Services, Inc., 2215 Distributors Drive. Everyone is welcome.

☆☆

St. Roch, 3600 S. Pennsylvania St., will hold a Family Eucharist Holy Hour with rosary and Benediction from 7-8 p.m. in the church. Everyone is welcome. Call 317-784-1763.

December 31

The Knights of Columbus of Greenwood will hold a New Year's Eve Celebration at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call Al or Ida Meyer at 317-881-8351; Frank or Betty Hommel at 317-881-2094; Bob or Jan Kratoska at 317-887-0174 or Bill or Sharon Johnson at 317-882-0885. \$20 per person. Catered by Jugs.

☆☆

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

☆☆

St. Andrew Parish, Consersville, will hold a Family New Year's Eve celebration from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.

January 1

A pro-life rosary will be prayed at 9:30 a.m. at the Clinic for Women, Ritter Plaza, 21st and Ritter Ave.

January 2

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 1-5 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

☆☆

St. Bridget, 801 Northwestern Ave., will pray a rosary at 10 a.m. For more information, call 317-547-3755.

☆☆

St. Paul, Sellersburg, will meet for prayer, praise and sharing from 7:15 p.m. in the church. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call the parish office.

January 4

The prayer group of St. Lawrence, 6944 E. 46th St. at Shadeland Ave., will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the chapel. Prayers are offered for the parish, personal concerns, the entire Christian community and

the world. All are welcome. For more information, call 317-546-4065 or 317-842-8805.

☆☆

St. Mary Chapel, 317 N. New Jersey St., will pray a devotion to Jesus and the Blessed Mother from 7-8 p.m. For more information, call 317-786-7517.

January 6

A pro-life rosary will be prayed at 10 a.m. in front of Affiliated Women's Services, Inc., 2215 Distributors Drive. Everyone is welcome.

☆☆

St. Roch, 3600 S. Pennsylvania St., will hold a Family Eucharist Holy Hour with rosary and Benediction from 7-8 p.m. in the church. Everyone is welcome. Call 317-784-1763.

January 7

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

January 7-9

Mt. St. Francis Retreat Center will hold a retreat on forgiveness and healing. Call 812-923-8817 for reservations and information.

☆☆

The Sisters of St. Benedict will hold a Christmas Gathering at the Monastery Immaculate conception in Ferdinand. This gathering is for women wanting to find out more about religious life. For additional information, call 1-800-738-9999.

January 8

A pro-life rosary will be prayed at 9:30 a.m. at the Clinic for Women, Ritter Plaza, 21st and Ritter Ave.

☆☆

The Indianapolis Symphony Choir will hold auditions for new members. For additional information, please contact the ISC chairperson at 317-881-3420.

☆☆

Positively Singles will gather for "Mystery Meal" pitch-in and game night at Salem Courthouse Apartments Clubhouse. For more information, call Mark at 317-545-9157. \$5 per person.

January 9

St. John Church, 126 W. Georgia St., will celebrate a Tridentine Mass at 9:30 a.m.

☆☆

St. Lawrence, 46th and Shadeland Ave., will hold Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 1-5 p.m. everyone is welcome.

☆☆

St. Bridget, 801 Northwestern Ave., will pray a rosary at 10 a.m.

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CNN - THE EARLY YEARS



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For more information, call 317-547-3735.

☆☆

St. Paul, Sellersburg, will meet for prayer, praise and sharing from 7:15 p.m. in the church. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call the parish office.

☆☆

Mary Queen of Peace Parish, Danville will sponsor an All-You-Can-Eat-Breakfast Buffet in the lower level of the church. Adults, \$5.00; kids 12 & under, \$2.50; kids under 5, free. For more information, call 317-539-6367.

☆☆

The Oblates of St. Benedict of Our Lady of Grace Monastery will meet from 2-5 p.m. For more information, call 317-787-3287.

☆☆

Assumption Parish, Indianapolis, will celebrate an opening Mass for its 100th anniversary at 9:30 a.m.

Bingos

MONDAY: Our Lady of Lourdes, 6:30 p.m.; St. James, 5:30 p.m.; St. Michael, 6 p.m. TUESDAY: St. Malachy, Brownsburg, 6:30 p.m.; Msgr. Sheridan K. of C Council 6188, Johnson Co., 7 p.m.; St. Pius X Knights of Columbus Council 3433, 6 p.m. WEDNESDAY: St. Anthony, 6:30 p.m.; K. of C Council 437, 1305 N. Delaware, 5 p.m. THURSDAY: St. Catherine, 5:30 p.m.; Holy Family K. of C, American Legion Post 500, 1926 Georgetown Rd., 6:30 p.m.; FRIDAY: St. Christopher, Speedway, 6:30 p.m.; Holy Name, Beech Grove, 5:30 p.m. SATURDAY: K. of C Council 437, 1305 N. Delaware, 4:30 p.m. SUNDAY: St. Ambrose, Seymour, 4 p.m.; Ritter High School, 6 p.m.

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December 31, 1993

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Washington joins bishops in their call to put children first

by Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON—Official Washington seems to be coming around to the viewpoint long expounded by the U.S. Catholic bishops—America needs to put its children first.

"It is certainly true that this country would be better off if our babies were born into two-parent families," said President Clinton at a December fund-raiser in Hollywood.

If parents "slow down the pace of their lives" and spend more time with their children away from the television set, said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley in late November, "we will transform this nation."

All things considered, two-parent families are better on average for a child than a one-parent family," said Vice President Al Gore in a Dec. 5 appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Those comments echo some of the points raised by the

bishops in their new pastoral message to families, "Follow the Way of Love." The message was presented to the United Nations Dec. 7 as part of the U.S. Catholic contribution to the 1994 International Year of the Family.

"A committed, permanent, faithful relationship of husband and wife is the root of a family," the bishops said. "When children are born, both mother and father are important in nurturing and forming them."

The bishops also commented on "the incredible busyness of family life" today and said that it is "hard to imagine how a family can live faithfully, be life-giving and grow in mutuality without deliberately choosing to spend time together."

Whenever possible, "hours on the job need to be weighed against their impact on family life," the bishops said. They urged all family members to "see what individual pursuits could be given up or replaced with family activities."

A recent survey by the Family Research Council in Washington showed that many believe the contentious

"family issues" of our time—such as divorce, illegitimacy, pornography and abortion—could be resolved if adults were to look at them from a child's perspective.

Asked to view the issues through children's eyes, 83 percent said they believe that "it is better for a child to be born into a two-parent family than to a single mother" and 93 percent believe that "children suffer when their parents divorce."

Eighty-four percent of the respondents said "children are harmed by the presence of sexually explicit materials and adult entertainment," and 64 percent they thought "unborn children should have the right to life."

The survey was conducted by the Voter/Consumer Research firm during September 1993 among 1,100 randomly selected adults. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

According to Gary L. Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, nearly everyone agrees that most societal changes in the last 30 years or so have been for the worse. But there is little agreement about what brought about the changes.

"Some see a wholesale abandonment of moral and cultural norms that ought never to have been abandoned," he said. "Others see a failure by society to provide government services that could remedy these ills. Still others see mere cultural shifts that are morally neutral in themselves."

But the latest study shows that "many family issues that divide Americans could be resolved if people were to consistently agree that the needs of children supersede the preferences of adults," Bauer said.

"The key, then, to resolving these issues is building a public consensus that Americans should give paramount consideration to the needs of children—that Americans, in short, should 'put children first,'" he added.

The U.S. bishops, whose Campaign for Children and Families has entered its third year, put it another way in their 1991 document, "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation and World."

"As a nation, we need to make children and families our first priority; to invest in their future, to combat the forces—cultural, economic and moral—which hurt children and destroy families; to manage our economy, shape our government and direct our institutions to support and not undermine our families," they said.

"As believers and citizens, we need—each of us—to use our values, voices and votes to hold our public officials accountable and to shape a society that puts our children first," the bishops added.

More than two years later, there are signs that some public officials are listening.

Irish primate says declaration gives IRA way to end violence in Northern Ireland

by Catholic News Service

DUBLIN, Ireland—Ireland's leading Catholic churchman said a declaration signed by the British and Irish prime ministers Dec. 15 offered the Irish Republican Army and its political wing a basis for honorably ending violence in Northern Ireland.

He said it also offered an opportunity for the IRA to enter mainstream politics.

Cardinal Cahal Daly of Dublin praised the declaration as "a model of balance and fairness," but emphasized that the document must be read in its entirety.

"Nothing is fudged, but the balance lies in the totality of the document," Cardinal Daly said Dec. 17.

"There is no ground for triumphalism on anyone's part," he said. "In this declaration there is no sellout, and there is no victory. There are no winners and no losers. But the alternative, which is violence, has no outcome except losers all around."

The outlawed Irish Republican Army has been fighting for decades to end British rule in Northern Ireland.

In 1948, the Irish Free State parliament declared the 26 southern counties of the island an independent republic, which Britain recognized the following year. But London would not allow the heavily Protestant six counties of Northern Ireland—a separate, self-governing area since 1920—to be absorbed by the republic without approval of the staunchly pro-British Northern Ireland Parliament.

Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster said he hoped for an end to violence in Northern Ireland following the prime ministers' pledge to work for a political agreement that could result in uniting Ireland if the people of the divided island want it.

"I warmly welcome the declaration for peace," Cardinal Hume said Dec. 15. "I trust it will lead to a cessation of all violence."

"The balanced agreement recognizes the constitutional rights of the unionist community in Northern Ireland, while also acknowledging the aspirations of the nationalist community for a united Ireland," he said.

Most unionists are pro-British Protestants. Most nationalists are members of Northern Ireland's Catholic minority.

"I fervently hope and pray that the subsequent talks envisaged in the declaration will lead to a satisfactory settlement for all communities," the cardinal said.

The pledge, released Dec. 15, said that "The British government agrees that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement with the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish."

The commitment was released by Prime Ministers John Major of Britain and Albert Reynolds of Ireland at the conclusion of talks on the issue.

Reynolds said that the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, where mainly pro-British Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by almost a 2-1 ratio, would be needed before the status of the British-ruled province could change.

"The Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) hopes that over time a meeting of hearts and minds will develop, which will bring all the people of Ireland together, and will work toward that objective, but he pledges in the meantime that as a result of the efforts that will be made to build mutual confidence, no Northern Unionist should ever have to fear in future that this ideal will be pursued either by threat or coercion," the seven-page communiqué said.

Reynolds confirmed that, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, he would support changes in the Irish Constitution that would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland.

The two governments said they would seek, along with the political parties in Northern Ireland, to create institutions and structures that would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest.

Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, England, and his

Anglican counterpart, Bishop David Sheppard, issued a joint statement of support.

The bishops said they welcomed the "courage, perseverance and vision" of the prime ministers and added that the agreement "opens up an immense challenge, calling for an end to violence and above all for the will for peace."

"We hear often enough the words 'give peace a chance,'" the church leaders said. "Now this must be put to the test. It will require not only a wholehearted commitment to the pursuit of a just peace but also a patient but firm resistance to any provocation from it."

There is now no excuse for the Irish Republican Army to continue its campaign of violence, said Member of Parliament Joe Hendron. Hendron is a member of the mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labor Party.

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Youth News/Views

Providence theater and musical groups bring Christmas fun to area

by Peter Agostinelli

While many Our Lady of Providence High School students dreamed of Christmas and a long vacation from classes, members of six performing arts groups from the New Albany Deanery interparochial high school spent many hours polishing their songs and skits for special holiday performances.

Students at the school, located in the Clark County town of Clarksville, audition to be members of the holiday performing arts groups. They entertain at various civic organizations, businesses and private parties in Clarksville and throughout the greater Louisville area.

The performing arts groups don't charge for their performances, but donations are accepted to help defray transportation costs.

The Providence Christmas traveling groups include the Providence Singers, the Popcorn Players, the Cricket Company, the Wise Guys, the Kristmas Kapers, and the Snowflake Singers.

Providence students have been performing as members of these holiday traveling troupes for a number of years and are well-known in the area.

Dale Durham, chairman of the performing arts groups at Providence, said group members choose a show they feel will appeal to a certain audience.

Audiences for their programs range from nursery school students to residents of nursing homes.

Claire Heazlett, a member of the Cricket Company, said students will perform the same routine many times

over a couple of weeks but stay fresh in their shows by improvising and ad-libbing their parts.

Even though practices and performances demand a lot of time and energy, Claire said playing a part in a group is a good way to sharpen performing techniques and just have fun.

"I enjoy being with the students," Durham said. "That's why I'm here, of course. But I enjoy working with them. It's all part of Christ's message of working with others."

Meredith Muller, a member of the Providence Singers, said the opportunity to perform in front of an audience is one of the reasons she got involved in the first place.

And she said she especially enjoys performing at other schools in the area so she can get the word out about Our Lady of Providence High School.

"It keeps you very busy," Meredith said, "but it keeps you going. And it helps you to mature."

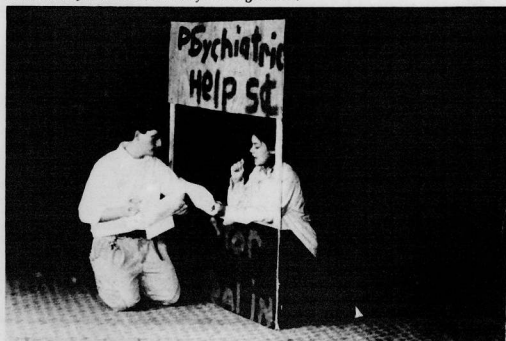
One group, the Popcorn Players, have prepared their own real-life version of the Charles M. Schultz animated classic "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

The performers replicate the original parts, from the aloof but lovable Snoopy right down to Charlie Brown's visit to Lucy's psychiatric booth.

"You get to meet a lot of people, and they really appreciate the shows," Claire said. "It makes you feel more in the Christmas spirit."



CHRISTMAS PERFORMERS—Two holiday traveling groups organized by Our Lady of Providence High School's Performing Arts Department are the Wise Guys and the Cricket Company. Members of those performing arts groups include (front row, from left) Amy Wheatley and Ann Wheatley and (back row, from left) Angela Day, Beth Edwards, Claire Heazlett and Jeff Muller. (Photos by Peter Agostinelli)



ON STAGE—Our Lady of Providence High School students Wes Hillegas and Ronnie Reeves, who are members of the school's Popcorn Players, rehearse a scene in a production of the Charles Schultz classic "A Charlie Brown Christmas." The skit features members of the Peanuts comic strip gang.

Catholic high school students help needy families

Brebeuf Preparatory School and Roncalli High School students from Indianapolis collected gifts, food and money for needy families earlier this month.

Their school service projects were among many similar food and fund-raising drives for the needy conducted by Catholic high school students throughout the archdiocese.

At Brebeuf, students responded to the school's ninth annual "Help for the Holidays" project by filling the school chapel with gifts. Student Council members organized

the service project which helped more than 135 people in 30 households.

Roncalli High School students continued their annual tradition of collecting food and donations for the needy with neighborhood drives on the Indianapolis southside, and their efforts generated \$1,000 and lots of groceries for the Catholic Social Services Crisis Center.

After Roncalli students finished their holiday service project, 37,969 cans or items of food were delivered to 15 area food pantries, including the CSS Crisis Center and St. Vincent de Paul Society pantries.

Roncalli students also collected \$500 to support the Little Sisters of the Poor ministry to the elderly poor at St. Augustine Home in Indianapolis and \$500 to benefit the Light-house Mission's ministry to the homeless.

☆☆☆

The Terre Haute Deanery Youth Ministry Office will sponsor an "I Want to Live/Peace and Justice Weekend Jan. 14-16 at the Merion Conference Center near Terre Haute.

For registration information, telephone Janet Roth, youth ministry coordinator for St. Ann, St. Benedict and Sacred Heart parishes

at Terre Haute, at 812-535-3391. Registration costs \$75 a person and includes workshops, housing, meals and supplies.

☆☆☆

Our Lady of Providence High School will sponsor an entrance examination for prospective students on Jan. 15 from 8:15 a.m. until noon at the school, located at 707 W. Highway 131 in Clarksville.

There is no fee for the test. For additional information or to make a reservation to take the test, telephone the Providence office at 812-945-3350.



SANTA'S HELPERS—Brebeuf Preparatory School students (from left) Colleen Witchger, Lauren Wilson, Melissa Martin and Heather Martin and Joshua Holmes of Indianapolis get ready to deliver Christmas gifts to needy families. Brebeuf students filled the school chapel with gifts for the needy earlier this month as part of a holiday service project coordinated by the Student Council. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyandt)



CHRISTMAS CHEER—Roncalli High School seniors Russ Bartholomew from St. Jude Parish and Sarah Johnson from St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis present a check for \$1,000 and lots of groceries to Dick Kramer, associate director of Catholic Social Services, earlier this month following a school drive to raise funds and food for the needy. (Photo by Mary Ann Wyandt)

Campus Corner

Christmas comes early at University of Dayton

By Catholic News Service

DAYTON, Ohio—At the University of Dayton, Christmas always comes early—17 days early, to be exact.

For the past 30 years on Dec. 8, the campus shuts down. Classes are canceled and, for the day, students adopt local children and senior citizens for a joyous Christmas celebration and a Mass that draws up to 4,000 people to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the Marianist-run university.

Known as "Christmas on Campus," it's a tradition that has 85 percent of the university's nearly 70,000 alumni have experienced—and remembered.

The Dec. 8 tradition is now making its way throughout the country. University of Dayton alumni in 14 cities, from Cleveland to Chicago to Pittsburgh, visit homeless shelters and urban elementary schools to bring the same spirit of giving to young people and the needy in their communities. In many cities, it's become the most popular alumni event of the year, according to Regis Lekan, the university's director of alumni and parent relations.

"We're not aware of any other alumni tradition like this in the country," Lekan said. "Christmas Off Campus," as we're calling it, allows alumni and their families to rekindle old memories while offering service to their communities and experiencing spiritual renewal."

In Washington, D.C., 1983 graduate Maureen McTigue and other alumni were

to attend a religious service, sing carols and help children at the Community of Hope shelter wrap donated gifts "for other children in the neighborhood who are even poorer than they are."

In Pittsburgh, Amy Armstrong, a 1986 graduate, was organizing an "adoption" of two dozen mentally and physically abused teenage girls at the Wesley Ridge View Center. The Christmas celebration at the center "brings out the values we learned at the University of Dayton, that you love your brother and sister no matter who they are," Amy Armstrong said.

In Trenton, N.J., alumni were taking "gifts of warmth"—hats, scarves and gloves—to the Martin House, an inner-city organization that rehabilitates housing for the poor.

In St. Louis, where the "Christmas Off Campus" tradition started four years ago, a group planned to prepare and serve dinner to homeless women and children at the Cathedral Mission Society.

Detroit alumni said they would play bingo with senior citizens at the Botsford Continuing Health Center, while in Chicago classmates were to hold a clothing drive for the St. Vincent DePaul Society homeless shelter and "adopt" 30 students from St. Agatha's Church for a Mass and Christmas party.

For 1970 alumnus Bob Cullio, the recreation of his alma mater's Christmas tradition has turned into more than just an annual service project. He and other alumni in northern New Jersey regularly volunteer at the Martin House, which is also run by the Marianists.



WRAPPING GIFTS—A University of Dayton graduate helps a child at a Washington shelter wrap a Christmas gift that will be donated to a poor and homeless family. Across the country, the Dayton, Ohio, Catholic university's "Christmas Off Campus" event has become one of its most popular alumni activities of the year. (CNS photo from University of Dayton)

"Christmas Off Campus" was the seed," he said. "This past weekend, about a dozen of us volunteered to help renovate a home. This has become a year-round endeavor for me, a permanent connection."

Cullio's son, Robert, is a first-year student at the University of Dayton who will participate in his first "Christmas on Campus."

"We're going to be able to share the excitement," Bob Cullio remarked.

Roncalli graduate excels in volleyball at Xavier University, Ohio



Katie Andrews

Katie Andrews, Roncally co-Most Outstanding Senior Female Athlete of 1993 and member of St. Jude Parish, recently completed a successful freshman year in volleyball at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. The 5'10" Andrews started as right outside hitter and helped lead the Lady Musketeers to their second best record in school history (26-14). Xavier placed third in the recent MCC (Mid-Western Collegiate Conference) Tournament at Evansville, losing only to conference champion, nationally-ranked Notre Dame.

Representatives of St. Meinrad's Cooperative Action for Community Development (CACD) attended the Governor's Voluntary Action Program Conference in Indianapolis. CACD President Greg Bach of Augusta, Kent., and Vice President Tom Jelinek of Winter Springs, Fla., joined 16 colleges for the day-long event. The conference provided

information to Indiana collegiate volunteer service organizations on state and national programs available to the service groups.

First Lady Susan Bayh addressed the colleagues about her Step-Ahead Program for childhood development. The group was also informed about the 21st Century Program, a state program which provides college funding to eighth graders who promise to strive for good grades, to say "no" to drugs and alcohol, and to apply to a college when they are seniors.

As a result of the conference, CACD will be joining the Indiana College Compact. Through this network of eight colleges, schools share information concerning grants and service opportunities and hold conferences which discuss techniques for improved service in their areas.

"We are anxious about becoming involved with the state of Indiana," commented Jelinek, "to improve our service, and to better assist the tri-county community of Spencer, Dubois, and Perry."

The seven Indianapolis colleges and universities (Butler University, Christian Theological Seminary, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, Indiana Vocational Technical College, Marian College, Martin University and University of Indianapolis) have formed a partnership to promote the concept of Indianapolis as "Middle America's College Town."

Because of Indianapolis' diverse network of educational offerings, strong economic climate, affordable housing and relatively low crime rate, together with its central location and proximity to dozens of other prestigious universities, the city is an excellent higher education choice for students from throughout the nation and abroad.

Numerous civic and corporate leaders, in addition to the college and university presidents, have added their endorsements to this concept in the publication "Middle America's College Town." A limited number

of copies produced for the College Town Presidents Council are available by writing to the Director of Communications at Marian College, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis, IN 46222-1997 or to any of the member schools.

Many parents and students think that scholarships are only for students with good grades, low-income families, or the athletically inclined. A small example of the numerous scholarships available to students include, Left-Handed Students Scholarship, Handicapped Student Scholarship, scholarships for members of various religions, David E. Letterman's Scholarship for "C" Students, minority scholarships and many more.

Over \$10 billion is available to students from private sector scholarships. Over \$20.4 billion is available from

the federal government. In a U.S. Congressional study, it was reported that "over \$6.6 billion of private sector financial aid went unused because the parents and students did not know where to apply."

There are organizations that have spent hundreds of hours in research locating scholarship sources. These organizations are American Educational Excellence (AEE) members with a list of over 400 different scholarship names, addresses, telephone numbers, application deadlines, summaries about the scholarships and the amount the scholarship will pay the student.

For more information send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: The U.S. Channel of Commerce for Higher Education, College Bound, P.O. Box 773, O'Fallon, IL 62269.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Christmas books for kids

Reviewed by Barb Frazee and Margaret Krause
Catholic News Service

The following children's books are suitable for Christmas gift-giving.

THE BOGGART, by Susan Cooper. Margaret K. McElderry Books (New York, 1993). 196 pp., \$14.95.

The Boggart is an invisible, fascinating yet devilish spirit that lives in a castle in the Scottish highlands. When a Canadian family inherits the castle form a long-lost uncle, the Boggart travels back to Toronto with them. Young readers will delight in the mischief the Boggart brings about. This fantasy, written by Newbery award winner Susan Cooper, is an entertaining adventure novel for the preteen. Ages 9-12. (MK)

ANIMAL PARADE, by Jakki Wood. Bradbury Press (New York, 1993). 27 pp., \$14.95.

Preschoolers will spend hours with this simple ABC book. Animals beginning with each letter of the alphabet parade across the pages in bright color. The author introduces youngsters to animals seen only in large zoos. For example, the aardvark, flamingo and the wart hog are

intermingled with the more traditional members of the animal kingdom. Ages 3-6. (MK)

(Ms. Frazee, CNS assistant foreign editor, is the mother of three children. Ms. Krause, director of search services for the Georgetown University Law Library, has a degree in library science with a special interest in children's literature.)

Unsworth flippant at times but generally delightful

HERE COMES EVERYBODY, by Tim Unsworth. Crossroad (New York, 1993). 226 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Father James Gilhooly
Catholic News Service

Tim Unsworth, in his new book, "Here Comes Everybody," says of one of the characters, "He could make (words) dance on a page." The same must be said of Unsworth himself.

What Jimmy Breslin is to the secular press, Unsworth is to the Catholic. He is one of the reasons I read the National

Catholic Reporter. Some may judge his style flippant. I find it generally delightful.

The book contains 22 chapters. Each is a largely successful sketch of some aspect of church. If you are an Unsworthophile, you may have read several of these pieces in the NCR, U.S. Catholic, The Critic, and Salt magazines. A re-read is wowed the time.

The conclusion of at least one chapter caused me to laugh out loud. Several other chapters touched me. Some I wish I had written. One or two miss the mark.

Apparently Unsworth has never met a priest or layperson he does not like. That is all to the good. Both groups need many warm hugs these days in the American church.

Aside from "bedroom and celibacy issues," Pope John Paul II comes off with high marks. Unsworth says, "a social and peace questions the pope 'continues to move toward the cutting edge. Examined closely, his encyclicals outdistance the pastoral letters on peace and the economy issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.'"

Bishops get the needle almost every time out of the gate. For example, "the bishops were much more comfortable at their own meetings under the cut glass of one of Washington's better hotels." Sometimes one gets the feeling the author's superior attitude on a line from one of his characters speaking to those criticizing his bishop. "You don't know him. You just don't know him."

Out of four stars, I would assign this volume three. (Father Gilhooly is at Mount St. Mary College, Newburgh, N.Y. His articles have appeared in America, The Tablet of London, The Critic, and elsewhere.)

(At your bookstore or order prepaid from Crossroad - H&R, Keystone Industrial Park, Scranton, PA 18512. Add \$2 for shipping and handling.)

Janice Uselman and Billie Jo Anderson, brother of Kathleen Whitwell, grandfather of five.

† **SECONDO, Mary**, 93. St. Joseph, Universal, Dec. 2. Wife of John.

† **STUEWING, Mildred L.**, 76. St. Elizabeth, Cambridge City, Nov. 26. Wife of Arthur; mother of Milli Hiday; Ruth Sweetwood and Stan; sister of Gertrude Mull and Virginia Morningstar; grandmother of seven; great-grandmother of 12.

† **SULLIVAN, Thelma Lois**, 87. Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Dec. 5. Friend of Marie Morganthorpe.

† **TATE, Jessie "Jenny"**, E. 88. Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 12. Mother of Helen K. McAttee; sister of Raymond Moore and Delbert I. Moore; grandmother of five; great-grandmother of 11.

† **TOMMILLER, Anthony**, 30. St. Malachi, Brownsburg, Dec. 10. Son of Gerald and Vikki Tommiller; brother of Julie; grandson of Eugene White and Genevieve Fidler.

Franciscan Sister Marita R. Hogan dies at age 90

A Memorial Mass was celebrated on Dec. 11 at the Motherhouse in Orlensburg, Ind., for Franciscan Sister Marita Rose Hogan. Sister Marita Rose died on Dec. 9. She was 90 years old.

Born in Middletown, Ohio, Sister Marita Rose entered the Orlensburg Franciscan Community in 1928 and professed her final vows in 1933.

Sister Marita Rose taught at Little Flower, Indianapolis, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, and St. Joseph St. Leon. Sister also taught in Ohio. She retired to the Motherhouse in 1983.

Sister Marita Rose is survived by one sister, Hilda. Hogan. Memorials may be made to Sisters of St. Francis, Orlensburg, Indiana, 47036.

Benedictine Sister Amanda Wallbaum dies on Dec. 14

Benedictine Sister Amanda Wallbaum died at the Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand on Dec. 14. She was 81.

The former Edna Wallbaum was born in Louisville, Kent. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict in 1930 from St. Michael Parish in Bradford, Ind. She professed her first vows in 1932 and her final vows in 1936.

Sister Amanda received her master's degree in education from Ball State University. She served as a teacher at various schools, including St. Joseph, St. Benedict and at Christ King in Indianapolis.

† Rest in Peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Mon. the week of publication, be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests, their parents and religious sisters serving our arch-

diocese are listed elsewhere in The Criterion. Order priests and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it.

† **BELL, Little Mae**, 101, Our

Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Dec. 5. Mother of Charles, Viola McCarty, Violet Sweeney and Bonnie Nolan; grandmother of 16; great-grandmother of 32; great-grandmother of two.

† **BLANCHARD, Betty**, 57, St. Vincent, Indianapolis, Dec. 9.

Wife of Thomas A.; mother of Brett D., William A., Peter F. and Timothy A.; daughter of Francis E. and Mary Louise Bolger; sister of Francis E., Jr., Joanne Bannan, Kathleen Green, Michelle Rennek and Deborah Luke.

† **DOYLE, Joseph Carl**, 65, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Oct. 4.

Father of Robert V.; brother of Bernard and Mildred Nolan.

† **ELLIG, Albert**, 74, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Husband of Maxine; brother of Ernest.

† **FENOLIO, Andrew**, 83, Sacred Heart, Clinton, Dec. 2. Husband of Madge.

† **GIBBLE, Stauffer**, 78, Holy Family, Richmond, Oct. 30. Husband of Gail; father of Wendy Wright; brother of Russell, Beulah Dohner, Grace Hartman and Frances Wright.

† **GREENWELL, Joseph L.**, 56, St. Mary, New Albany, Dec. 5. Brother of Charles A., Rita Oppel, Bonnie Francis, Barbara and Anna L.

† **KILLGREW, John W.**, 79, St. Michael, Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Husband of Irene; father of Kathleen Iloya, Kevin, Robert and Marla; brother of William; grandfather of son.

† **KOERNER, Kathryn**, 80, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Dec. 12. Mother of Christine; sister of Aileen Thompson and Carolyn Bernard.

† **LEE, Mary Ann**, 85, Prince of Peace, Madison, Dec. 6. Mother of Mary Joan Leodone, Phyllis McCauley and H. David; grandmother of six; great-grandmother of two.

† **LOGSDON, Kenny**, 69, St. Paul, Tell City, Dec. 7. Husband of Verne Baumann; Logsdon.

† **MCELROY, Kathryn**, 68, St. Rita, Indianapolis, Dec. 9. Mother of Patricia Payne; grandmother of two.

† **MILLER, Louise E.**, 99, St. Mary, Lawrenceville, Nov. 25. Mother of Lela Mae Naville, Germaine Day, Lawrence Jerome, Kenneth and Edward; sister of Philip Wisman; grandmother of 21; great-grandmother of ten.

† **MOLCHAN, Andrew R.** (formerly Brother Casper), 76, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Dec. 12. Husband of Joan V.; brother of Steve and Helen Deen.

† **MULLIKIN, Alice**, 54, St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, Dec. 5. Wife of James; mother of Lisa A. VanVleet and Jeffrey A.; daughter of Vertrice Barger; sister of Lonnie Barger and Dora Neitzel; grandmother of four.

† **MULLINS, Virginia**, 62, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Dec. 3. Daughter of Elizabeth Schater; sister of Robert T., George W., Pauline Hoehner, Martha V. and Delphine Rothbauer; grandmother of one.

† **MURPHY, Mary Jean**, 62, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Dec. 10. Wife of Joseph Sr.; mother of Joseph Jr., Edward, James and Janet Judd; sister of Gordon Blackman, Irma Lawson and Violet Richner; grandmother of nine; great-grandmother of two.

† **OBERTGELL, Mary Anna**, 88, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Sister of Margaret Stuck.

† **SEARING, Charles**, 78, St. Joseph, Universal, Nov. 14. Husband of Rose Mary; father of Gary, James, Margaret Wagner.

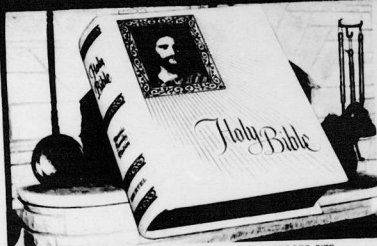
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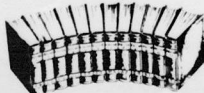
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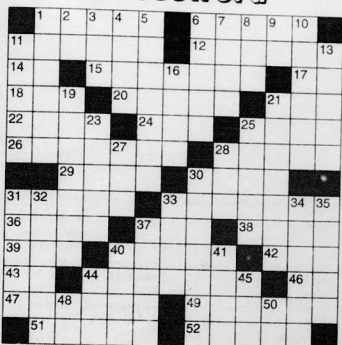
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Israel and Vatican to sign agreement Dec. 30

by John Thuvis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY—In a long-awaited step toward diplomatic relations, Israeli and Vatican officials plan to sign a

Catholic Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Heavenly messenger
- 6 Shown
- 11 Holy
- 12 Worship tables
- 14 "Unto—a child is born"
- 15 Nine day devotions
- 17 European community (Abbr.)
- 18 Priestly garment
- 20 A disciple
- 21 Armed conflict
- 22 "And they said, the Lord hath—of him" (Lu 19:34)
- 24 Contain
- 25 Clock reading
- 26 Landed possessions
- 28 Feet
- 29 Attila followers
- 30 "As"—waters to a thirsty soul, so [is] good news from a fair country" (Pr 25:25)
- 31 Gregorian—
- 32 Considers holy
- 36 Pre-Easter season

- 37 Prohibit
- 38 Totter
- 39 "Thou shalt not make unto thee—graven image..." (Ex 20:4)
- 40 Pseudonym
- 42 Theft or covetousness
- 43 "God—love!"
- 44 Saint Patrick's mission field
- 46 "Nearer My God—Thee"
- 47 Sinai and Ararat
- 48—about, rumored
- 51 Church parts
- 52 Take an oath

DOWN

- 1 Passages between pews
- 2 Reno's state (Abbr.)
- 3 Card game
- 4 Son of Seth
- 5 Biblical priests
- 6 Church law
- 7 Actor Ladd
- 8 Right tackles (Abbr.)
- 9 Poe initials
- 10 What Joseph interpreted
- 11 Guitared Eddy
- 13 Loose rocky rubble
- 16 Flightless birds
- 19 Where Jesus raised Lazarus
- 21—, and the—of heaven were opened" (Ge 7:11)
- 23 Intimidate
- 25 Relatives
- 27 Explosive (Abbr.)
- 28 Musical note
- 30 Promised land
- 31 Muppet creator
- 32—Many full of grace
- 34 Restaurant worker
- 35 Church council
- 37 Pray over, in a way
- 40 Comic Johnson
- 41 White fabric
- 44 Inventory (Abbr.)
- 45 "It is appointed—this men—once, and after death be judged" (Heb 9:27)
- 48 United States (Abbr.)
- 50 Continent (Abbr.)

historic "fundamental agreement" in Jerusalem Dec. 30, opening a new era of cooperation and problem-solving.

The agreement, hammered out by a joint commission during 17 months of negotiations, marks a turning point after 45 years of cool and often-troubled relations between the Vatican and the Israeli state.

With the expected exchange of diplomatic envoys and the prospect of full diplomatic ties within several months, the accord creates an unprecedented channel of communication that both sides plan to utilize.

But the agreement does not resolve thorny church-state problems so much as open the real debate. It states the basic principles of religious freedom in civil society, leaving for later groups the task of negotiating their application in Israel and its territories.

"It's a platform on which to build," said one informed Vatican official, and he underlined the work that remains.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said, "It's an extraordinary agreement from a historic, spiritual and diplomatic point of view. It's the first time an open, diplomatic rapprochement is under way between the Catholic world and the Jewish world."

Sources from both sides predicted that the impact of the agreement would indeed extend beyond bilateral issues and help strengthen Catholic-Jewish relations worldwide. Israelis in particular view the accord as a demonstration that the church's statements of reconciliation with Jews can be translated into the real world.

If conditions are right, Vatican sources said, Pope John Paul II could crown the diplomatic development with a visit to the Holy Land sometime over the next year or two.

Diplomatic sources said the ceremonial signing in Jerusalem would be preceded by a meeting in Rome Dec. 29 at which the Vatican would formalize its acceptance of the text. Signing the accord will be Msgr. Claudio Celli, a Vatican assistant secretary of state, and Yossi Bellin, Israeli deputy foreign minister.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls confirmed Dec. 20 that the "first phase" of the Vatican-Israel commission's work had been completed and said the expected signing Dec. 30 would follow a full session of the commission. He described the accord as an expression of "principles and rules" that will help normalize relations.

The agreement will have immediate and long-range effects. According to sources in Rome and Jerusalem, personal diplomatic envoys are to be exchanged soon after the signing and, more importantly, both sides have made a commitment to establish full diplomatic relations within four months of the agreement's ratification.

The Israelis pressed hard on this point, not wanting to delay diplomatic relations while negotiations continued on more specific church-state problems. The Vatican agreed, believing the time had come for such a move, said a church official.

At the same time, the official noted, ratification by the Israeli parliament is not a sure thing, and it could take months. Both sides said privately that ambassadors would probably not be exchanged until mid-1994.

For years the Vatican has emphasized that it recognized the right of the Jewish state to exist within secure borders. But it withheld diplomatic relations in the absence of progress toward settling territorial questions and the status of Jerusalem.

These wider issues were taken up in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, allowing the Vatican-Israeli commission to focus on bilateral problems, the church official said.

The religious aspects of the Jerusalem question remain of primary importance for the church, however. Although the issue is not specifically mentioned in the "fundamental agreement," the Vatican is still pressing for international guarantees—above and beyond Israeli law—to protect the cultural and religious values of the city, which is holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Moreover, diplomatic sources said the Vatican has chosen to establish its eventual nunciature in Tel Aviv instead of Jerusalem, a decision that left the Israeli side less than happy. Most countries do not recognize Israel's claim to the entire city of Jerusalem as its capital.

The agreement leaves in doubt the status of the current apostolic delegation to Jerusalem and Palestine, headed by Archbishop Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo. It is believed, however, that the Vatican will maintain the delegation as a separate entity from its eventual diplomatic mission to Israel.

The geopolitical fanfare over the agreement has overshadowed its effect on the local church. After all, that was a main reason why the Vatican and Israel set up their joint commission in 1992—to solve practical problems faced by the minority Catholic communities by better defining the church's legal rights in the Jewish state.

The "fundamental agreement" does that, but in broad terms, avoiding any specific policy decisions that would require legislative approval in Israel, sources said. In language acceptable to both sides, it defends freedom of conscience and worship, the free access of pilgrims to holy places, and the church's right to run its own schools, welfare institutions and communications media.

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Inclusive-language Grail Psalter not approved for use in liturgy

by Jerry Filleau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Catholic bishops have voted down use of the inclusive-language Grail Psalter in the liturgy.

Three-fifths of the bishops who voted approved the new translation of the Psalms, but it did not receive the two-thirds approval of all active bishops that church rules require for all liturgical texts.

The final vote, announced by the bishops Dec. 15, was 150 in favor, 98 opposed. At least 173 "yes" votes were needed for passage.

The bishops debated liturgical use of "The Grail Psalter (Inclusive Language Version)" at their fall general meeting in Washington Nov. 15-18. Their vote at that time was inconclusive, so absent bishops who were eligible to vote were polled afterward by mail.

In an unusual move during the meeting, Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced that he and Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington would personally register and count the mail ballots.

The bishops' negative vote does not affect liturgical use of the original Grail Psalter, an English version of the Psalms which has been approved for U.S. liturgical use since 1963 and is the only version used in the Liturgy of the Hours approved by the U.S. bishops.

Nor does the vote affect use of the new inclusive-language version for nonliturgical uses, such as reading, study, or devotional prayer. In September 1993 the inclusive-language version received an imprimatur, approval for publication in

the United States as a Catholic translation of Scripture, from the NCCB president at the recommendation of the bishops' Committee for the Review of Scripture Translations.

The 1963 Grail translation of the Psalms, done under the sponsorship of a British Catholic organization, the Ladies of the Grail, remains popular because of its "sprung rhythm" style of accented syllables, which lends itself to singing with any standard Psalm tone. Its use in the Liturgy of the Hours makes it the English-language version most familiar to U.S. priests, bishops and others who regularly pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

A first effort at a new version, using the same sprung

rhythm but incorporating principles of gender-inclusive language, was published abroad in 1983. But the U.S. bishops voted against its U.S. use in the liturgy in November 1984 after several bishops questioned the translation of some texts traditionally understood as having reference to the Messiah.

As a result of that debate, the U.S. bishops formed a special committee of bishops to draw up guidelines for inclusive language in Scripture texts to be used in the liturgy. The translation criteria it proposed were adopted by the bishops in 1990.

Using those criteria, the bishops' liturgy committee revisited the proposed inclusive-language Psalter and found it insufficiently inclusive. In a series of consultations over nearly three years, the publisher, a group of Bible scholars and the bishops' committees on liturgy and Scripture translations worked out the revised text which was submitted to the bishops in November.

As in 1984, questions about the translation of potentially messianic references in certain Psalms were among the key issues raised by some of the critics of the inclusive-language version.

Pope sets prayer day for people of Bosnia

By John Thavis

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope John Paul II, distressed at the continuing suffering of families in Bosnia-Herzegovina, invited all believers to join in a day of prayer and fasting for the war-torn population there.

The event will take place Jan. 23, during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and should highlight universal spiritual concern for civilians caught in the Bosnian fighting, the pope said Dec. 12.

In announcing the initiative, the pope reminded his listeners that "so many families have been torn apart" by battles in the former country of Yugoslavia. The conflict "is still raging and, unfortunately, a just and equitable solution does not seem near," he said.

The pope implored Bosnian leaders to "silence the sound of weapons at last" and asked international authorities to keep trying to mediate a settlement. Meanwhile, he said, believers around the world should pray for peace.

The pope said he would celebrate Mass in Rome Jan. 23, a Sunday, and asked the whole church to follow his example. He asked that this moment of community prayer be preceded by a day of fasting.

"I extend this invitation to all other believers and to all people of good will," he said.

The initiative recalled a special interreligious prayer service that the pope called last January in Assisi, Italy, dedicated to European peace, especially in the Balkans. That service was attended by Catholic and some Orthodox Christians, as well as Muslims and Jews.

The fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina has involved three main population groups: the mostly Orthodox Serbs, Muslim Slavs and the mostly Catholic Croats.

In a Dec. 12 interview with Vatican Radio, Archbishop Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, said some

30,000 Catholics who remain in the Bosnian capital were preparing for Christmas despite continuing cold and hunger.

Throughout central Bosnia, however, traditional outdoor Christmas celebrations have been canceled this year, because Serbian forces have stepped up attacks wherever people gather, he said.

At great personal risk, priests continue to celebrate Mass in unheated churches and provide religious assistance, the archbishop said. Meanwhile, it remains difficult to obtain basic necessities, and government agencies are dispensing only a trickle of humanitarian aid to Catholics, he said.

Despite their hardships, most Catholics are looking toward Christmas with great hope and are convinced that peace will come soon, he said.

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