

# the CRITERION

## Bishops' pastoral heads list of 1983 news stories

by JERRY FILTEAU  
NC News Service  
An NC News year-end  
round-up and analysis

"We wait for peace, to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead."

Jeremiah's cry could serve as a backdrop for many major concerns in the world of religion in 1983.

It was a year during which the Catholic Church introduced a new law code and sought reconciliation in its holy year and synod of bishops, but tensions in the church, wars and the dangers of nuclear war dominated the 1983 news.

Topping the list was the U.S. bishops' war and peace pastoral in May, a widely hailed milestone in U.S. Catholic history.

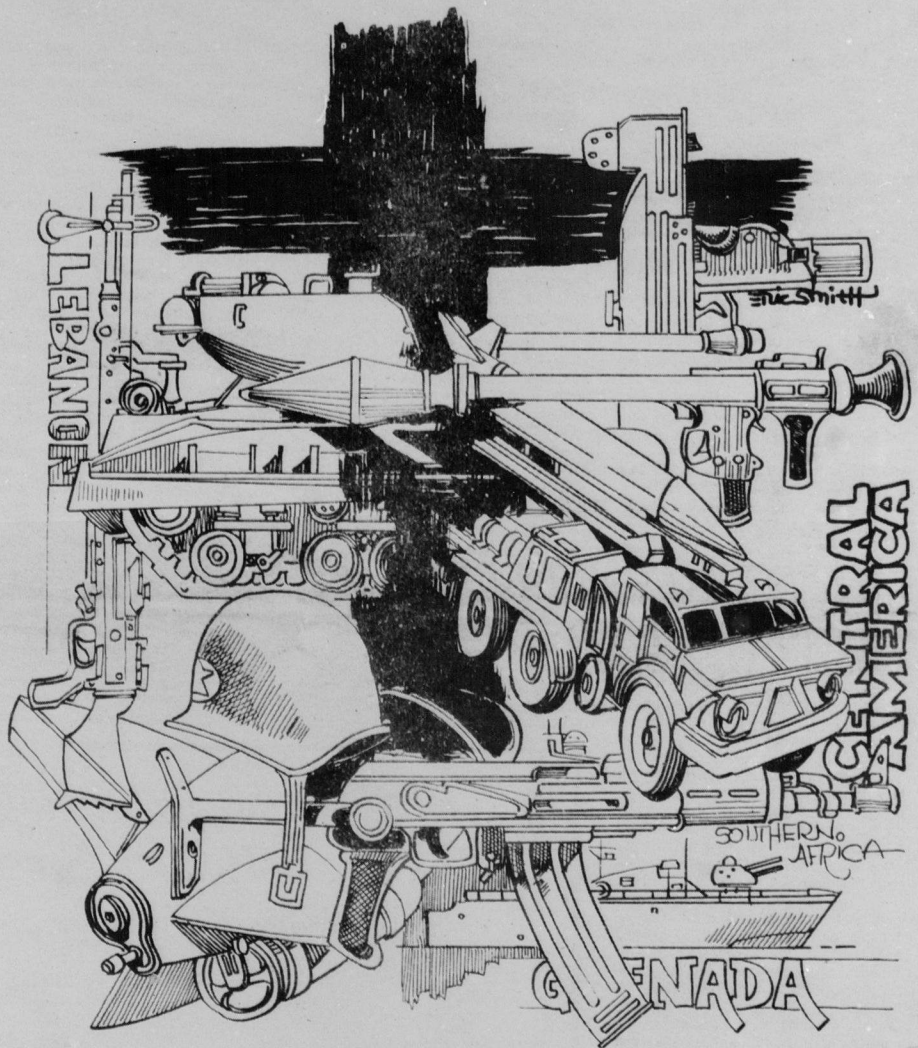
Not only did the pastoral itself make national headlines over several months with its controversial moral judgments on nuclear deterrence, but it served as a major impetus to, and yardstick for, statements by other U.S. religious groups on the subject. Several Catholic bishops' conferences in Western Europe, spurred in part by the U.S. statement and in part by the imminent deployment of U.S. cruise and Pershing II nuclear missiles in Europe, also issued long statements or pastoral letters on nuclear deterrence.

APPLYING Catholic moral principles on warfare to a thoroughgoing critique of U.S. nuclear policy, the U.S. bishops rejected virtually any possible use of nuclear weapons. They specifically condemned any massive nuclear retaliation and any first use of nuclear weapons, sharply questioned the meaning or real possibility of a so-called "limited" nuclear exchange, and urged more intensive efforts to halt the nuclear arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate the whole stockpile of existing nuclear weapons in the world. They did not treat arms control in isolation but posed positive solutions for constructing world peace as well, including the development of international structures of authority to assure human rights and economic and political justice without resort to violence.

While fresh moral concerns over the threat of nuclear annihilation occupied a central place in 1983 religious news, smaller but actual wars were not far behind.

Central America and Lebanon brought headlines throughout the year. Sectarian strife continued in Northern Ireland. Poland, despite the lifting of martial law, remained a focus of East-West tensions.

POPE JOHN Paul II visited strife-torn Central America in March, warning the people that "the blood will continue to run" (See BISHOPS' PASTORAL on page 2)



**YEAR OF PEACE, LOOK OF WAR**—The U.S. bishops' war and peace pastoral letter dominated the news in 1983 but the document was issued in a year which saw the weapons of war used in trouble

spots around the world and U.S. missiles deployed in Europe. (N sketch by Eric Smith)

### Looking Inside

The fourth article in a series on the life of Bishop Joseph Chartrand continues on page 4.

Father John Buckel has some thoughts for Christmas on page 5.

A special supplement of articles, stories and activities for Christmas begins on page 11.

Edith Stein, Simone Weil and the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust are reflections offered in this week's Know Your Faith series beginning on page 31.

St. Bernard Parish at Frenchtown is the subject of this week's Parish Profile on page 34.

## Souvenir items are available for sesquicentennial

A commemorative calendar and several souvenir gift items marking the sesquicentennial of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are being offered for sale.

Designed by Franciscan Sister Sandra Schweitzer, the calendar features various people, places and events of the archdiocese as depicted by archdiocesan artists. Other commemorative items include a coffee mug, beer stein, key ring, paper weight, visor, cap, pen, wine set and buttons. In addition, a print incorporating SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, the Old Cathedral in Vincennes (St. Francis Xavier), St. Mary of the Knobs and the

Catholic Center, by K. P. Singh, is also being offered.

For price and order information contact Benedictine Sister Mary Luke Jones, chairperson of the Sesquicentennial Art & Environment Committee, 5858 Crittenden Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46220, 317-257-9366 or 317-251-1469.

General information concerning the sesquicentennial can be obtained by calling Providence Sister Loretta Schafer, general chairperson of the sesquicentennial, at the Chancery in the Catholic Center, 317-236-1403.

the CRITERION

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Indianapolis, Indiana

# Parish has been closed, but some items have been preserved

by SUSAN M. MICINSKI

Six months have passed since St. Francis de Sales Church closed in Indianapolis, and since then some major items from the church have found new homes. Mary McGuire, a former parishioner, recently shared what has become of them.

The pipe organ, which McGuire stated had "excellent tonal quality," was purchased by Monsignor Lindenmyer from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. It will be the first pipe organ in that archdiocese.

"The way I understand," said McGuire, "there are several Indian missions Monsignor has been supplying with needed equipment. He happened to be visiting in the area when the closing was announced and contacted the Chancery to see if it was for sale." Making the financial transaction was relatively simple, but "it took him and a few of his friends two weeks to dismantle the organ which was then trucked back to New Mexico."

Divine Word Father Arthur Kelly, director of St. Nicholas Youth Center, who had been in residence at St. Francis de Sales since 1979 until its closing, was presented with the chalice in appreciation for his service to the parish. "Father Kelly helped Father Charles Lahey, the former

pastor, with the Masses," explained McGuire. "When Father Lahey passed away, Father Kelly stepped in and had just about all the Masses."

**THE BAPTISTRY**, paschal candle and large wooden cross used during Lent can now be found at St. Simon parish. "Father Lahey was a former pastor at St. Simon," declared McGuire. In addition, "some former St. Francis parishioners, who were forced to relocate when the east leg of Interstate 70 was built, joined St. Simon, although they would often return to their former parish. So there has been a link and closeness formed between the churches."

The relatively new tabernacle which was located on the Blessed Mother side of the altar at St. Francis, and installed during Father Strange's pastorate, is now in Holy Rosary parish in Indianapolis for retention of the Blessed Sacrament.

The vestments, presidential and side chairs, lectern, sacrificial altar, crib and statues of Mary and Joseph and Saints Anthony and Theresa were purchased by Father Charles Robards of Pennville, Ill. "Father Charles had stayed at St. Francis prior to his ordination," explained McGuire. "He always felt close to the parish, and upon hearing of its closing contacted the Chancery to see if these

items could be obtained for his parish in Illinois."

**THE LARRY** Esslinger family of Indianapolis is the new owner of the Sacred Heart statue which previously stood above the high altar. They also purchased the pump organ. "Larry and his wife, Rita, were both very active former parishioners," said McGuire. "He headed up the St. Patrick's Day activities, which included memorial events for Father Lahey, the last few years prior to the closing. He also did quite a lot of electrical work in the church."

The statue of St. Ann with Mary as a Child, from the high altar, is now in the possession of former parishioners, Chester and Alberta Callahan of Indianapolis.

St. Francis de Sales, another statue from the high altar, now belongs to John and Theresa Esslinger, parents of Larry Esslinger. "They are in the process of making a shrine in their front yard," stated McGuire. "They're planning on building a rock garden around the statue."

The papal and American flags of St. Francis have joined the collection of Jim Hunter, another former parishioner. "Jim has quite an extensive flag collection, and I am sure these were two welcome additions," said McGuire.

The altar linen cabinet, once storing linens now houses art supplies at Chatard High School. "Since this cabinet has skinny, flat drawers, it lends itself for just such a purpose," noted McGuire.

St. Philip Neri parish in Indianapolis is the new home of St. Francis' former candle sticks.

"And I have the St. Francis de Sales portrait which hung in the school hall and was displayed in the church for the saint's feast day," said McGuire, who was also active on the board of education, parish council and ladies' club. "When Holy Cross Brother Douglas Roach, our former administrator asked me if I wanted the portrait, I was just thrilled," she exclaimed, "especially since Father Lahey had such a fondness for it."

McGuire explained that Father Lahey received the portrait from a young man who was staying at the same place Father Lahey was while in Milwaukee appealing to a foundation. But it is a mystery to her how the young man who painted it knew Father Lahey was coming at that particular time, or that his parish was St. Francis de

Sales—since the two had not previously met.

Presently, the wooden high altar, two side altars, Stations of the Cross, communion rail and pews have not been disposed or reassigned.

And although St. Francis de Sales parish exists no more, it is still fondly remembered by former parishioners. One project helping to keep these memories alive is the parish yearbook, which recently became available from the printer. "We originally wanted to do a book for our centennial celebration," said McGuire, who was also the parish directory coordinator. "But didn't end up carrying out those plans when Father Lahey took ill." Some time later "we decided to go ahead and expand the project, before learning of the closing."

But according to McGuire, "I feel the yearbook doesn't do the parish justice. We just didn't have the time to do all we planned." Even so, she has heard from former parishioners now living in New Jersey, New York, Arizona and many other places, all asking to be sent a copy. There still are a few copies left, and those interested in one should call McGuire at 631-2435.

All things considered, McGuire believes most parishioners have made a smooth transition into other parishes. "It's not the things you do or the place you do them at," she stated. "It's the spirit you approach the Lord in that counts."

## New report submitted on El Salvador

WASHINGTON (NC)—A secret report on a new investigation of the 1980 murders of four American churchwomen in El Salvador reportedly has found "no compelling evidence" that the murders were ordered by high Salvadoran officials. The secret document, submitted to the State Department by retired U.S. Judge Harold Tyler, also reportedly found "ample evidence" that the five ex-Salvadoran National Guardsmen being held in the case were guilty of the crime and that National Guard commanders tried to cover up the killings. The director of social concerns for the Maryknoll Sisters, which lost two members in the killings, said she disagreed with the implication that higher-ups were not involved.

## Bishops' pastoral (from 1)

until they establish societies based on justice and human dignity, freed of hatred and violence.

In the United States, bishops continued to be the most significant religious voice urging internal solutions to the conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Tensions between the Marxist-oriented Sandinista government and the Catholic bishops in Nicaragua, highlighted in March by a shouting match between the pope and pro-government demonstrators, grew during the year. In September the bishops criticized military draft proposals by the government and urged people to be conscientious objectors.

U.S. military aid to El Salvador was a particular source of tension between the Reagan administration and a growing coalition of U.S. religious groups throughout 1983. In December, American religious groups observed the third anniversary of the murder of four U.S. Catholic missionaries in El Salvador with pleas to end U.S. military aid to that country.

The U.S. invasion of Grenada in October to reverse a Marxist coup there, though widely applauded according to U.S. public opinion polls, provoked serious questioning by many religious leaders. At their November meeting the U.S. bishops were told that the invasion raised a number of moral questions in light of Catholic just war teaching. The National Council of Churches also questioned the action.

**ELSEWHERE** IN Latin America, the military government of Gen. Augusto Pinochet in Chile was threatened by social unrest and the first outbreak of nationwide protests in his 10-year rule. Priests and nuns were among those arrested in various demonstrations. Pope John Paul and the Chilean bishops urged Pinochet to approach the dissent through dialogue and reform instead of repression.

The other major hot spot in the world besides Central America was Lebanon. Pope John Paul II made almost weekly appeals for peace in the war-torn country, divided chiefly among Islamic and Christian factions. Christian church leaders began to speak more openly of their fears of rising Islamic fundamentalism,

the Middle East that was ruled by principles of religious tolerance instead of by Islamic laws discriminating against non-Muslims.

Suicide bomb attacks in October against French and U.S. peacekeeping forces in (See BISHOPS' PASTORAL on page 9)

## Best Wishes for a Happy & Holy Holiday Season from the Criterion Staff

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# Roman Catholics meet with Disciples of Christ

Representatives at international talks between the Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ have agreed more exploration is needed on what it means to be in communion with each other.

Representatives from each denomination met in Venice, Italy, in December to discuss "The Church as Koinonia (communion) in Christ," according to a release from Disciples News Service in Indianapolis. It was the first meeting of a seven-year cycle of discussions.

In the meeting's "agreed account"—expected to be published in 1984 but parts of which were released by DNS—the dialogue team agreed on the need to find common bonds.

"While Disciples insist on the importance of the visible unity of the church, they believe that they are only part of the whole church of God," the account said. "For their part, Roman Catholics also recognize that koinonia may be expressed outside the visible boundaries of their church."

"Because there never was a formal break between the Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, there may be particular possibilities open to us for discerning genuine marks of koinonia in each other's communities," the account said.

DNS said other issues in the talks were the role of creeds in church unity, the relationship of the church to the massive suffering in the world today and the church as the sign of the world God wills.

Catholic chairman of the discussions is Archbishop Samuel Carter of Kingston, Jamaica, who grew up in an Indian Hindu family, attended a Disciples of Christ church as a child, then became a Catholic when his mother converted to Catholicism.

The Rev. Paul A. Crow Jr. of Indianapolis is the Disciples' chairman. He is chairman of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and the Council of Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

The two Disciples councils and the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity are sponsoring the talks.

Cardinal Marco Ce of Venice praised the discussion group for "reflecting on the mystery of communion with which the Father has drawn his church together in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Among persons presenting papers at the first meeting were Dominican Father Jean Tillard of Ottawa, a theologian who spoke on "What is the Church of God"; and Margaret O'Gara, professor of theology at the University of St. Michael's in Toronto, who spoke on "The Church as Sign of the World God Will's."

The Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ completed a five-year cycle of talks in 1982. This team's next meeting will be in Nashville, Tenn., in December 1984.



AND THE WINNER IS . . . —Gerry Faust, head football coach at the University of Notre Dame, draws the name of the grand prize winner in St. Simon Parish's Dare to Share program from a bin containing more than 91,000 tickets. Above, Faust hands a sealed envelope containing the winner's name to Steve Hise of St. Simon. After Joe Pickett of WIBC had drawn the other 24 winners, Father Harold Kneuen, pastor, opened the envelope and announced that the winner of the \$200,000 grand prize was Bobby Johnson of Indianapolis. A total of \$500,000 was awarded, with winners from as far away as San Antonio, Texas. (Photos by Jim Jachimlak)

## Parish helps needy with heating bills

by MARGARET NELSON

Last year St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis collected \$1,080 to help people in the northeast community to pay their heating bills. The word "loan" was never mentioned. But \$600 of that money was returned before the heating season ended! Because of the double use of these funds, a total of \$1,760 was available to unemployed parishioners.

It all started in October, 1982, when the pastor, Father James Farrell, spent the weekend at Fatima Retreat House as retreat master. A priest who had been a boyhood friend took his place for the weekend Masses and managed to get the attention of those in attendance with a little anecdote about their pastor at age 10.

The story centered around a lost quarter the guys were looking for one evening. Everyone was searching close to where it had dropped, but young Jim Farrell was looking under the street light. When asked why he was looking for it so far away, Farrell was quoted as saying, "Because the light is better over here."

Though Father Farrell laughs about the story and calls it "apocryphal," it brought an idea to mind for Mary Baker, who has been a member of the parish for 32 years.

Mary's ideas have often helped the parish and other worthwhile organizations. Through her salvage of rummage sale items, she has compounded the value of items by offering them to antique dealers. And during the 60's, her neighbors must have wondered what was going on when parishioners brought carloads of household items to help furnish the new St. Maur's Seminary faculty quarters.

This time Mary saw possibilities in the lost quarter story. She realized that small change adds up and that many in the area were out of work while fuel bills were going sky high. She called the parish staff and received the go ahead, then contacted friends to do work and public relations

releases. An appeal was published in the parish newsletter and announcements were placed in the bulletin. Bottles and jars were placed at all church exits. Even the children were adding their candy money to help those who were having it rough. And Mary was right! Those quarters added up to more than \$1,000!

This winter at St. Andrew's, Father Jim's Quarter Fund has already collected \$200 to help pay heating bills for those who can't afford them. But it had a head start from last year. Several of those who received assistance last year are doing better now. And they were appreciative enough to repay the fund so that others could be helped!

## Ukrainian diocese created; new archbishop named

WASHINGTON (NC)—Pope John Paul II created a new Ukrainian diocese in the United States on Dec. 20 and named a new archbishop for Dubuque, Iowa.

He named Auxiliary Bishop Robert M. Moskal of the Ukrainian Archdiocese of Philadelphia to head the new Ukrainian Diocese of St. Josaphat, which will have its headquarters in Parma, Ohio.

He named Bishop Daniel W. Kucera of Salina, Kan., to head the Archdiocese of Dubuque, succeeding Archbishop James J. Byrne, who retired last August.

The appointments were announced in Washington by Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic delegate in the United States.

Archbishop-designate Kucera, 60, is a Benedictine monk and former abbot of St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, Ill. Along with Benedictine Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee and Dominican Archbishop Thomas Kelly of Louisville, Ky., he becomes the third member of a monastic order to head a U.S. archdiocese.

The new Diocese of St. Josaphat is the fourth Ukrainian diocese in the United States, along with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the dioceses of Stamford, Conn., and St. Nicholas (Chicago). Drawing territory from Philadelphia and St. Nicholas, the new diocese will cover 10 full states—Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and North and South Carolina—plus the western part of Pennsylvania.

There are about 250,000 Ukrainian Catholics in the United States. They are served by 256 priests in some 200 parishes.

## Working group recommends intercommunion

LONDON (NC)—An international Anglican-Lutheran working group has recommended intercommunion between the two churches as a step toward full communion.

The group, chaired by Anglican Primate Edward Scott of Canada and Lutheran Archbishop Olof Sundby of Sweden, met in December at a Catholic conference center near Newbury, England.

The group identified five issues the Anglican and Lutheran churches must agree upon before they reach full communion: authority in the church; the Gospel and its implications; justification and salvation; the sacraments; and the ministry and its ordering.

"Anglican and Lutheran churches should officially encourage the practice of

mutual eucharistic hospitality—if this is not already authorized—where pastoral need exists and when ecumenical occasions make this appropriate," the group recommended.

The group's meeting marked a resumption of dialogue at the international level. Following substantial agreement from 1970-72, subsequent dialogue was conducted on a regional basis.

## Committee notes violations in El Salvador

UNITED NATIONS (NC)—A U.N. committee expressed concern over "grave human rights violations" in El Salvador. A committee resolution criticized the bombardment of urban areas by government forces, the abuse of persons in internment camps, guerrilla attacks on the country's

economic infrastructure, disappearances, and murders by anti-guerrilla death squads acting with impunity. The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee resolution called on the Salvadoran government and its opponents to intensify efforts to reach a political settlement.

## Holiday schedule

Offices at the Catholic Center will be closed during the holidays according to the following schedule. There will be no essential services provided on Friday, Dec. 23, Monday, Dec. 26, Friday, Dec. 30, and Monday, January 2, 1984. Print services will be closed on Tuesday, Dec. 27 as well.

The Criterion does not publish an issue the last Friday of the year. Criterion offices are closed until Wednesday, Dec. 28.

For more information on any services offered by any offices during the holidays, contact the individual office.

# Chartrand's preaching focused on sin and evil in the world

by JAMES J. DIVITA  
(Fourth in a series)

In later years, when Bishop Chartrand mounted the great marble pulpit of his Cathedral, they came and they listened. Although he preached on grace and the supernatural, he is best remembered for his denunciation of sin and the evils of the world. "Ruthless" was the adjective most repeated in descriptions of these attacks. He loved Forty Hours services at the Cathedral; his 20-minute Wednesday evening sermons during Lent drew people from all over Indianapolis. His concluding point was always a zinger. "What would this earth be without the Catholic Church? You will have the answer if you tell me—what would heaven be without God?" Significantly, he viewed evil as a threat to the individual and not society itself. Although the world offered temptation, the response of the individual was the bishop's chief concern. Consequently, the bishop seldom employed his oratorical abilities outside the church or at non-religious events. Nor do we find any evidence of the bishop's reacting to specific public issues like the anti-Catholic prejudices and the institutional violence which accompanied the phenomenon of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana during the 1920s.

The bishop of Indianapolis, a churchman in the true sense of the word, had particularly high regard for the priesthood. "The

Priesthood of the Catholic Church is of divine origin" are the unequivocal opening words of his Easter pastoral letter in 1926. He sought to befriend each of his priests, a goal relatively easy to accomplish because, as a priest of the diocese, he had studied and worked with many of them. He seldom missed preaching at the funerals of priests. His theme was consoling and hopeful, for a priest, he liked to say, was "another Christ" and could not escape Heaven. He encouraged pastors to take full parish responsibility. Therefore, he ordinarily followed a policy of non-interference at the parish level and was not receptive to lay criticism of the clergy. In the age of Catholic Action he disliked the formation of diocesan-wide lay organizations, for he was unsure of their relation to the institutional Church. Yet he once concluded a confirmation talk: "The most powerful preacher is not the Bishop nor the priest but the Catholic layman who preaches a continued sermon by the exemplary life he leads."

IN THE SAME pastoral letter cited above, Bishop Chartrand pointed out that "God, in wisdom and mercy, chose not angels, but men, to serve as His ministers of grace and reconciliation, and to dispense the heavenly mysteries..." Among his clergy he was truly beloved, even if he had favorites. Some pastors closely imitated his style, including his lack of concern about

finances, while others profited from his generosity. He liked to tease his friends and priestly companions. Some believed that he would choose certain clerics to accompany him on long auto trips—like down to St. Meinrad—because they were especially jovial or good straight men. He punctuated his intimate conversations with the exaggerated use of the adjective "holy." Those receiving major orders were his "holy deacons" and he referred to his car as his "holy chariot." His episcopate was a clerical golden age: the number of religious and diocesan priests increased from 246 in 1918 to 345 in 1933. The ordinary even released a few for the missions every year.

Unquestionably the bishop enjoyed life. "Besides being talented and a good student," a St. Meinrad memoir of him pointed out, "he was at the same time good-natured, fun-loving, and could play an innocent prank when the opportunity presented itself." He remained that way even when bishop. Once he caught a cat which had strayed into the Cathedral and carried it into his confessional. Now the bishop never had a curtain separating him from the penitent, only wooden latticework. So imagine the shock when the window slid open and the next sign was greeted by a cat eyeballing him! Eyewitnesses report that the bishop was not above using a leaky trick water glass on unsuspecting dinner guests—even if they were members of the hierarchy.

BISHOP CHARTRAND knew who he was: his confident bearing betrayed his position. The rector of the St. Louis Cathedral, responding to an invitation to his 1910 consecration, wrote: "Say to him I always knew from my first acquaintance that he would be a bishop." Yet if younger clergy thoughtlessly pressured him to change his mind he would loudly announce: "I am the bishop of this diocese." He disliked his public reputation for sanctity. Once he asked a young

Cathedral assistant, "What is a martyr?" "Someone who gives his life for the faith" was the reply. "Wrong!" said the bishop. "A martyr is someone who lives with a saint." Other times he would recite this little rhyme:

To live with the saints in heaven  
is to live in eternal glory;  
To live with the saints on earth  
is quite another story.

Bishop Chartrand combined charisma with humor. Every time he rode past the new Scottish Rite Cathedral on Meridian Street and admired its "Catholic" architecture he would quip: "They stole that from us. We'll get it back some day."

Pastors knew that he could take a joke—as long as they respected his episcopal dignity. Once in a country parish a pastor instructed his choir to sing the traditional greeting, "Ecce sacerdos magnus" (Behold the great priest), and to respond at the time of the episcopal blessing with "qui fecit caelum et terram" (who made heaven and earth). However, when the bishop entered the church, the choristers remained silent and the bishop, thinking they needed prompting, solemnly intoned "Behold the great priest" to which the choir inexplicably responded "who made heaven and earth." "Even a bishop can't do that," he commented to the pastor after the service. "You could if you put your mind to it" was the pastor's retort.

Another time, sisters kneeling near him in the sanctuary of the Franciscan Motherhouse chapel at Oldenburg on investiture day overheard this interchange between the bishop and his priest assistant. When a very unusual name was to be conferred on a sister, the priest whispered, "Where do you think they got that name?" "Sears and Roebuck," responded the bishop under his breath.

(Divita is professor of history at Marian College.)

(Continued next week)

## WASHINGTON NEWSLETTER

# Bernardin links diverse political issues

by JIM LACKEY

WASHINGTON (NC)—A significant new chapter in the history of the church's participation in issues of public policy may have been opened by Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago when he called recently for a "consistent ethic of life" cutting across numerous political issues in U.S. society.

Cardinal Bernardin used a Dec. 6 lecture he had been invited to give at Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York to argue that the church has both the responsibility and the opportunity to link such diverse issues as abortion, nuclear war, capital punishment and foreign policy in a comprehensive pro-life program.

Cardinal Bernardin's speech obviously wasn't the first time that church officials have seen respect for human life as a consistent thread tying together the

church's position on issues like abortion or government programs for the needy. It has been expressed many times in the catch phrase that the church supports life "from womb to tomb."

But Cardinal Bernardin, whose leadership in the development of the U.S. bishops' war and peace pastoral helped make him perhaps the best known and most respected member of the American hierarchy today, expanded to an unusual degree on the link he sees between the issues and on how the church can work to present that link to the American public.

HE ALSO used the speech to assert flatly that as the new chairman of the bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities—which traditionally but unfairly has been characterized as concerned almost exclusively with the single issue of abortion—he was "committed to shaping a position of linkage among the life issues."

The approval by the bishops last May of their new war and peace pastoral helped create the opportunity the church now has to build a consistent ethic of life, Cardinal Bernardin said. One result of the pastoral, he said, was to bring a Catholic moral vision to a specific public policy issue, something the bishops now have the potential for doing in other areas.

While U.S. citizens are "radically pluralistic" in moral and religious views, he added, an articulation of a Catholic religious conviction can lead, as it did in the war and peace pastoral, to "support from individuals and groups who do not share our Catholic faith but who have found our moral analysis compelling."

Another reason the bishops have the opportunity and responsibility for developing a consistent ethic of life is what Cardinal Bernardin called a "perceptible shift of emphasis" in the past 30 years in church teaching and pastoral practice toward life itself.

cepted the view of some that life may never be taken, Cardinal Bernardin said, in the past three decades the church has strengthened the presumption against taking human life and made even more restrictive the exceptions when life may be taken, such as in self-defense.

This helps explain, he added, recent pleas by bishops and popes who, while not denying the classical right of the state to employ capital punishment, have urged that methods more humane than the death penalty be used to defend society against criminal acts.

Cardinal Bernardin said consistency in promoting an ethic of life also demands a linkage between abortion and aid to the poor, between arms control and foreign policy.

"It is this linkage which has led the U.S. bishops not only to oppose the drive of the nuclear arms race but to stand against the dynamic of a Central American policy which relies predominantly on the threat and the use of force," he said. The linkage

also has led the bishops to argue that the right to life of the fetus does not end at birth but translates into specific political and economic positions on issues affecting poverty, unemployment and hunger.

Through it all Cardinal Bernardin said several times that building a constituency to promote a broad-based ethic of life would be difficult. He cited the "significant opposition" that already exists to relating abortion and nuclear war, and he said there must be "honest recognition" that even in the Catholic community the church is far from finished in its efforts to shape a consensus on spectrum-of-life issues.

But "there is no better place to begin" than in the wake of the war and peace pastoral. The pastoral, he said, has helped the church to be seen as an institution committed to avoiding nuclear war, which he said is a profoundly pro-life concern.

He added, "We should not lose this momentum; it provides a solid foundation to relate our concerns about war and peace to other 'pro-life' questions."

# Pope stresses commitment to Central America

by JOHN THAVIS

VATICAN CITY (NC)—In talks to two new ambassadors to the Holy See, Pope John Paul II underlined the church's commitment to peace and justice in Central America.

Accepting the credentials of Honduran Ambassador Oscar Acosta on Dec. 16, the pope said it was impossible to think of Christ's peace without thinking of social peace.

He said Honduran Christians should work to promote a more just society, work against hunger and suffering, and help prisoners and people on the margins of society.

He said the church had a special duty to defend ethnic and social minorities "who run the risk of being annihilated by interests that do not always respect the rights of the individual and his culture."

In a speech Dec. 17 to Guatemalan Ambassador Jose Alejandro Deutschmann Miron, the pope urged the restoration of

dignity "to all those who suffer from injustice, neglect and poverty."

The pope also said he hoped "that we can quickly arrive at a normalization of ecclesiastical districts which are now deprived of their pastors, whose purpose is only to work for the kingdom of God and thus favor the well-being of Guatemalans."

In one Guatemalan church jurisdiction, the Diocese of Santa Cruz del Quiche, the bishop and most of the priests, Religious and lay leaders have been forced to leave because of violence and threats against their lives. Church leaders have complained that the government has been unwilling to provide adequate protection to church personnel.

Relations between the church and Guatemalan officials have been strained also over restrictions on church activities and the killings of several Religious and lay leaders. Hundreds of Religious and lay workers have had to flee Guatemala because of political violence.



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WHILE THE church has not yet ac-



## LIVING THE QUESTIONS

# Peace comes to us through love and trust

by Fr. THOMAS C. WIDNER

Among the Christmas cards I've received this year is one from a cousin of mine whose wedding I performed this past summer. On the card is a quotation from Muriel Lester, an English social worker and writer who traveled with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. The quote says, "The job of the peacemaker is to find God in everything and in everyone."

That speaks volumes to me about the lack of peace in our world and why, despite all the jingle in our own confused society, peace is more elusive than ever. It also says a lot to me in preparing to homilize New Year's Day on the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace as our Indiana bishops have asked priests to do.

This is the time of the Prince of Peace but he appears to be missing. One of the season's more popular contemporary songs is Elvis Presley's "Blue Christmas" and for many that's what Christmas is. The helping professions tell us that this is one of the busiest times of the year for them for it is one of the loneliest. While many people are celebrating, many more are not. How much lonelier will the future be in a society which



is increasingly made up of single parent families, divorced families and people who are isolated from one another? The future suggests a boom for the helping professions.

Recently a family I know was shattered by an emotional tragedy which left its members scarred and one member remaining helpless. Another family I met after not seeing for a long time seemed disturbed and upset. They are no longer practicing Catholics, you see, and though I didn't know that at the time, it seemed to me to explain some of their uncomfortableness.

Of course, there are the headlines. They are interminable. And those headlines reveal what I believe to be a tendency in our government today to capitalize on fear. There appears to be an increasing attempt to make citizens believe that we alone in the world know what is best for that world.

This fear fits in well with the personal fears and anxieties I am seeing in so many people around me—and even in myself. This fear says that we as a people should not trust anyone, perhaps not even ourselves. We should only trust the government because it best knows our interests.

I reject such a notion because that is contrary to all the free will God has honored me with by the birth of his son. Sometimes interpreters of the Gospel in the church have even tried to tell me the same thing. But no one can be responsible for my free will except myself. Even the Christ whose birth we remember this week and

whose death saved me expected me to freely accept the responsibility for deciding my own future.

But the fear seems to grow. There seems to be a deliberate movement to destroy attempts to make peace despite protestations that no one really wants any war. Some people do profit from war. Jobs are created through war. The economy gets better because of war. The only thing that gets worse is living. People die in war.

This lack of trust, if some are successful in promoting it, will get us where the profitmakers want us to go. To war. And so it is useful to some to refuse to find God in everything and in everyone. It is useful to some to promote a god who is narrow and wrathful. But that is not the God who made Himself known to a Virgin and a carpenter in a stable in the Middle East a couple thousand years ago.

As long as we refuse to believe that everyone else has the same rights as I demand for myself, we will be constantly muddling our desire for peace. Until we recognize that God is the God of all human beings, we will have no peace.

So I hope we do not surround ourselves with an illusion of peace in an unpeaceful world. I hope that we are not led into believing that some of us know better than others what God wants of us and for us. I hope we remember that peace is found through trust and love and not fear and building up our arms sales. I hope we do not forget.

## Real meaning of Christmas comes from gift of love

by Fr. JOHN BUCKEL

The story of Christmas really begins with Adam and Eve. God breathed His very life into a handful of clay and created the first human beings. He gave them all that they needed for happiness. Then sin entered the picture. People often ask how long Adam and Eve were in paradise before they sinned. Considering the frailty of the human species, I would say about 10 minutes.

Once sin entered the world, there seemed to be no stopping it. Cain's murder of Abel, the Tower of Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah, were just the beginning of a long history of sin. Even the very messengers of God (the prophets) were put to death. The human race seemed intent on finding a sin that was too big for even God to forgive. It was into such a world that the Christ-child was born.

In many ways the world of 2,000 years ago was a lot like the world of today. Sin is an old-fashioned idea. So often the people of today, like the days of old, seem to try the patience of God.

Yet God with all the affection of a loving father, has looked upon His creation gone astray, and has embraced it. God has not given up on the human race. God has not left us to wallow in our sins. As surely as God transformed a handful of clay into a human being, he desired to transform a sinful world through His Son Jesus. God's response to sin was and is love, total and unconditional love. He seems to find delight in showering us with gifts of love, grace, and forgiveness. The greatest gift any

person can give to another, is his/her presence; especially when he/she needs it the most. This is so important. God has given us His Son when we needed Him the most. He is called Emmanuel, God with us.

In prophesying the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah imagined what the world would be like. "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the lion shall lie down with the lamb." I would like to imagine what the world would be like when Christ dwells in the hearts of all people.

The Arab and the Jew will dine together in peace.

The English and the Irish will play together without fear.

The United States and Russia will try to outdo one another in their generosity to the poor.

The Catholic and the Baptist will break bread together.

The Moslem and the Christian will live in harmony.

The Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, and all Christians will worship together.

All nations shall be as one family.

Injustice and persecution will be but a memory.

Hunger and poverty will be no more.

Peace on earth will be a reality.

Love will be our standard.

Joy will be shared by all.

This dream of peace and harmony is not unique, and is certainly not original. Another man spoke of it long ago. He referred to it as the Kingdom of God.

Christmas reminds us that God is with us still. The Christ-child continues to be God's pledge of fidelity to us. He who

created us never has and never will desert us in time of need. He continues to provide us with all that we need for happiness. God's love seems to be too good to be true,

but it is. It is God's love that gives meaning to Christmas.

(Father Buckel is associate pastor of Christ the King Parish, Indianapolis.)

## Nestle boycott to continue, organizer says

WASHINGTON (NC)—The six-year-old international boycott against Nestle products will continue until the company's infant formula marketing practices fully comply with a World Health Organization code, a boycott organizer said.

Douglas A. Johnson, national chairman of the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFAC), said at a Dec. 15 press conference that while Nestle has improved some of its marketing procedures, INFAC will concentrate its efforts on four areas of violations.

Johnson said that organizations monitoring Nestle's sales methods in Third World countries report the company's major violations include continued supplies of free formula to hospitals; personal gifts to health professionals; inaccurate information in literature about breast feeding; and inadequate warnings on formula labels.

One article of the WHO code was designed to disrupt the routine practice of bottle feeding in hospitals, and, in turn, to encourage mothers to breast feed, said Jonathan Churchill, legal counsel to the International Nestle Boycott Committee.

Nestle should "limit free supplies to infants who have a medical need for them, such as orphans and mothers who are physically incapable of breast feeding," Churchill said.

The free supplies to hospitals should stop altogether, said Anna Padia, human rights coordinator for the Newspaper Guild. "If hospitals have to pay for the formula, the 'routine' of bottle feeding would disappear."

The WHO code, adopted in 1981, prohibits companies from making gifts to health care professionals, but Nestle claims that certain gifts are allowed because they are not "inducements to promote products," Churchill said.

Churchill also said that Nestle's educational literature for mothers and health professionals does not concede "that the products can do harm, and should be used as a last resort."

The 1983 United Nations Children's Fund report "reminded us that millions of infants suffer needless trauma and disease because they have not been breast fed," he said.

The WHO code also requires companies to remove pictures of babies from formula cans, which Nestle is doing, and to warn mothers of the dangers of not mixing the formula with the proper amount of water and of using contaminated water.

In October a company-initiated Nestle Infant Formula Audit Commission Report said that Nestle had eliminated distribution of free samples, restricted free or reduced-cost supplies to institutions, developed the new warning, and eliminated or is eliminating labels that idealize infant formula.

The commission has been chaired by former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie.

After the press conference, supporters of the boycott delivered more than 143,000 petition signatures in a baby buggy to the Nestle Coordination Center for Nutrition in Washington.

## Pope discusses the importance of confession, reconciliation

VATICAN CITY (NC)—Priests "must give priority" to the ministry of the confessional, Pope John Paul II told a group of U.S. priests Dec. 16.

The pope stressed the priests' unique role as "Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation" during a meeting with 35 participants in the Institute for Continuing Theological Education, a study program for U.S. priests sponsored by the North American College, the U.S. seminary in Rome.

"In allowing penitents the opportunity personally to confess their sins to the Lord, you mediate one of the most profoundly religious moments of forgiveness and joy," the pope said.

In this "deeply intimate" encounter, Christ "has chosen us, his priests, to be the

only ones to forgive sins in his name," he said.

"This ministry, therefore, is uniquely ours and it is one to which we must give priority," he added.

Pope John Paul asked the priests to offer Christ's understanding to "the needy, the suffering and those in trouble" when they return to their dioceses.

"As priests, we are charged with being Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation," the pope said. "But in order to fulfill this role effectively, we must first embrace that message ourselves and permit it to take root in our very being."

"We cannot preach the message of reconciliation to others unless we are convinced of its saving truth for our own lives," he said.

# TO THE EDITOR

## Perverse policy toward Nicaragua

Sunday past at our town meeting we heard the people from San Francisco Township petition for help to build a school house. Presently they have to use a shack, if it can be dignified with that name. Others who live in town asked when the electric poles and lines would be extended to their neighborhood; that their neighborhood-watch duty is made more difficult by lack of street lights. Others reminded the leadership that this town of 6,000 enjoys the service of only one small and ancient bus that makes but one trip a day to Managua if it's not out of service for lack of spare parts. Others worried if there would be road equipment available to fix up the secondary roads to bring this year's coffee harvest to market.

So how does Congressman Dan Burton respond? But of course, with the solution for every human problem, Ronald Reagan-style: with guns. By approving the \$19 million in covert military aid, rather than meeting those voiced needs of the independent sector of the Nicaragua

economy, Mr. Burton aggravates their problems and inevitably produces yet more anti-American sentiment.

Being an American myself, with fond memories of four wonderful years in Indianapolis, how can I explain those \$19 million for programmed murder? Tomorrow, for example, when we have the funeral with the remains of a man who was killed by CIA-backed counter-revolutionaries, what am I supposed to preach? Surely, what Jesus himself taught: to love our enemies. It won't be necessary to remind the people that the USA of Reagan-Burton is the enemy. I will ask the survivors to love Mr. Reagan and Mr. Burton. Nicaraguans are nearly all Christians. They'll know intuitively that's what they're called to do.

But it will not keep me from saying that U.S. policy toward Nicaragua is perverse. Nor will it keep me from asking if there aren't a few believers in humanity left in Central Indiana willing to tell Mr. Burton that President Reagan is cruelly mistaken as to what will bring true peace to Central America.

Readers who want accurate legislative information should write: Coalition, 120 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002, 202-463-3391.

Readers who feel they need accurate information about Central America should write: USOCA, 303 Cortland Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110, 415-550-8006.

And should readers want to help the families of the victims of U.S. weaponry and intelligence expertise, there is Church Women United, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

Fr. Bernard A. Survil  
Managua, Nicaragua



K. OF C. GI'T—Marian College President Louis C. Gatto (right) accepts a \$2,700 check from Ted Bunce, Faithful Navigator of the Bishop Chatard Assembly of the Knights of Columbus, as Father Frank Bryan, director of campus ministries at Marian, looks on. The money comes from the Ritchey Trust Fund, administered by the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, which supports speakers and activities in the college's campus ministry program. The fund, which awards grants for religious, educational and charitable programs, was endowed by former K. of C. member Russell Ritchey.

## Bishop Chartrand's legacy lives on

Many thanks for your coverage of the Bishop Chartrand Anniversary and your decision to publish the excellent account of the saintly prelate by Dr. James J. Divita of Marian College.

Although 50 years have passed since the bishop's death, his legacy of spirituality and personal example to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis continues to this day. Countless stories of Bishop Chartrand still circulate to the second and third generation in families touched by his life and times.

It seems only appropriate that his 50th anniversary year coincides with the universal Church's Holy Year, as the dedication of the Bishop Chartrand Chapel at Marian College took place during the Marian Year of 1954.

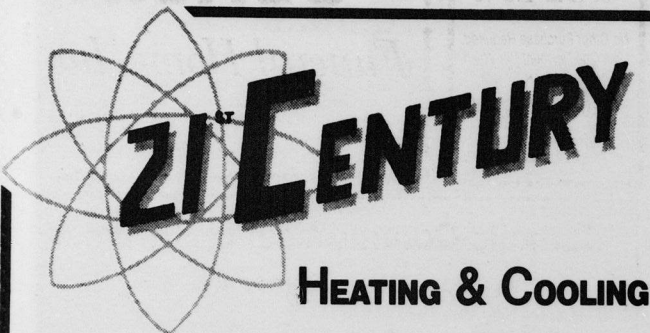
May the intercession of the beloved bishop continue to inspire present and future generations.

Paul G. Fox

Indianapolis

## Women's shelter opens

SALT LAKE CITY (NC)—The Diocese of Salt Lake City and Catholic Community Services have opened Marillac House, a shelter for single women, including those with children. Operational funds for the house are available only through March, but Catholic Community Services decided to open the house because it is the only shelter of its kind in the city.



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## CORNUCOPIA

# Remember good times, forget bad

by CYNTHIA DEWES

As we mellow out over our egg nog this year, dreaming of Christmas Past and enjoying Christmas Present, let us remember the good times and forget the bad.

Let's forget our zippers popping after we've eaten "just three more" cookies at the office open house. Forget the blood, toil, tears and sweat invested in assembling Johnny's toy, only to have it promptly demolished by baby Sammy. Forget the shoppers who crushed us in the department store and partially denuded our fleece jackets while searching for Cabbage Patch dolls. These things don't matter.

No, the essentials here are the joyful things, the traditional things. (We won't consider the fact that popping zippers may have become one of our Christmas traditions.) We can get positively maudlin dredging up sugary Christmas memories from childhood (anyone's childhood).

Like the times when Grandparents came to visit so that they might share in the children's delight on Christmas morning.

Not wanting to miss a moment of that happy event, Granny once slept on the couch in the living room where the Christmas tree presided over the gifts. Across the room stood Elizabeth, a child-sized fresh from the workshop at the North Pole.

Her penetrating blue eyes gazed straight ahead with a sinister intensity. Next morning when the children scampered in, Elizabeth was turned sullenly to the wall and Granny looked sleepless. "Those eyes," she said.

Another time Jim bumped nearsightedly into the corner of Pete's new cardboard playhouse during the excitement of Christmas morning and scratched his eye. He is recorded on Grandpa's photographs, red-eyed, looking like an abused child.

The glittering memories of Christmas morn may only be slightly tarnished for parents of small children who can't read the clock. After being instructed on Christmas Eve not to get up until the proper time next morning, the rascals are wide awake at 4 a.m.

They thump up and down the hallway asking older brothers in hissing whispers if it's "time yet." Meanwhile Mr. and Mrs. Santa are trying to catch another half hour of sleep, recovering from their late night run with the reindeer. So much for the apocryphal happiness of children and their families on Christmas morning.

Putting up a live Christmas tree is



another joyful event. When artificial trees first became popular, bringing a tree back alive was a real challenge.

If we could find one, usually for an obscene price, it tended to be a ten-footer with an average of seven and five-eighths scrawny branches to which uninterested needles were barely attached. Smokey the Bear would've phoned out for a fire extinguisher at the sight of it.

Carpentry skills were necessary to rearrange the branches of those trees, and we lavished ornaments on them to cover embarrassing spaces. Their plastic icicles looked like thinning hair combed carefully over a bald head.

Never mind. The cliches we encounter every Christmas may turn out to be less than ideal, but they continue to give comfort. Christmas IS for children, it IS a time of hope and joy, and Christmas Spirit IS abroad in the land. It's still the best Birthday Party going.

## check it out...

✓ **An MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Support Group Meeting** will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 5 in the Special Functions Room (behind the cafeteria) at Community Hospital. I.U. Physical Therapy professor Jan Brockner and horsemanship expert Barb Bonacheck will speak on a horseback riding therapy program. For information call Ruth Beaber 894-8834 or Joann Rogers 359-7215.

✓ **Women considering discipleship** today are invited to attend a **Franciscan Live-In** on the weekend of January 13-15. Suggested donation: \$12. Call 812-934-2475 by Jan 8.

✓ **James Associates Architects and Engineers, Inc.** announce the **1984 James Associates Minority Scholarship Program** for black high school seniors interested in pursuing careers in architecture and related areas. The program includes \$1,000 a year for five consecutive years, professional counseling and summer in-service training employment. Applications must be submitted by Feb. 28, 1984. For applications and information, contact William Casteel, James Associates, P.O. Box 55809, 2828 E. 45th St., Indianapolis, IN 46205, 317-547-9441.

✓ **The twelfth annual Indianapolis-Scarborough Peace Games International Competition** will be hosted by Indianapolis August 10-13, 1984. Marion County volunteers are needed to serve as sport chairmen or coaches for sports including baseball, gymnastics, cross country, soccer, softball, table tennis, track and field, or volleyball. For information call Beverly Adams, Executive Director, at 924-4570.

poverished Americans jumped to 34 million in 1982, Simon said only 21 million are on the food stamp program.

BFW is in partial agreement with Meese about a lack of authoritative figures on American hunger, but the group faults the U.S. for having no comprehensive system for gathering such data and monitoring its extent and severity.

For this reason, BFW hopes the administration will back proposals for a nutrition monitoring system of low-income Americans, and stop cutbacks in federal food programs.

"A comprehensive system of nutrition monitoring could answer Meese's questions and tell the nation, once and for all, what many church groups already know and what many local surveys have already revealed—hunger is very real in the U.S.," declared Simon.

✓ **Central Indiana Marriage Encounter** will hold a weekend on January 13-15 at St. Joseph Motherhouse, Tipton. Call Charlie or Carol Post 462-1289 for information or registration.

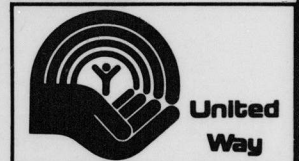
✓ **The Adult Catechetical Teams of the Southside Deaneery** will sponsor a free public forum on "Peace and Justice" presented by Father Cos Raimondi on Wednesday, Jan. 18 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the church hall at St. Mark Church, 6047 S. East St. (U.S. 31 and Edgewood Ave.).

## vip's...

✓ **Newly elected officers of the Irish American Heritage Society** include: **Mike Williams**, president; **Juanita Taylor**, vice-president; and **Charles Kidwell**, secretary-treasurer.

✓ **Dan and Daisy (Cornett) Smith** will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving in St. Nicholas Church, Sunman, on Sunday, Jan. 1 at 10 a.m. From 2 to 6 p.m. the couple's children and grandchildren will host an Open House Reception for them in St. Nicholas Hall. The Smiths were married in the rectory of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Ky. on New Year's Day 1934.

They are the parents of seven children, including William, Dan, Jr., Joseph, Judy, Kenneth, Gerty and Kathryn. They also have 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



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The staff of the Catholic Communications Center wishes each of you a most happy and holy Christmas and abundant blessings in the New Year.

Charles J. Schisla  
Ethel M. Brown  
Mary Ellen Russell

Date	Celebrant	Congregation
Jan. 1	Fr. John Beitans	St. Ann Parish, Indianapolis
Jan. 8	Fr. Rick Ginther	St. Therese (Little Flower) Parish, Indianapolis
Jan. 15	Fr. James Byrne	Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Indianapolis
Jan. 22	Fr. James Higgins	St. Martin Parish, Martinsville
Jan. 29	Fr. James Farrell	St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, Indianapolis

## BFW disagrees with Meese on hunger in U.S.

Much controversy has been raised over White House counselor Edwin Meese's statement regarding hunger in America, and Bread for the World (BFW), a Christian citizens' movement concerned with hunger, is one group taking issue with his remarks, although it does welcome the attention Meese has drawn to this national problem.

Rev. Arthur Simon, executive director of BFW, stated that despite Meese's professed ignorance regarding hunger in the country, evidence abounds in rapid multiplication of people throughout the country requesting emergency food assistance and in various studies. He explained it is also manifest in the number of hungry Americans who fall below the poverty line but are not receiving food assistance. Citing the number of im-



## FAMILY TALK

# 'Trust your own judgments'

by Dr. JAMES and MARY KENNY

Dear Dr. Kenny: Recently widowed, I have been dating a wonderful person who lost her spouse a few months ago. We have much in common and spend a lot of time recalling memories of our partners. (We were not friends before.)

Our friends are reluctant to accept the situation because it has been "less than a year" since our partners died. Where are the relatives and people who were quick to say, "If there's anything I can do, let me know?" They are never around when needed.

We have our families raised and are considering marriage someday. Having

enjoyed a successful marriage we both feel this would be a credit to our first spouse.

You've written on young marriages. What about us in our 50s?

Answer: My first reaction is to be very supportive. Your lives are your own, and the opinions of other people should be secondary.

Your friends are probably motivated by lingering loyalty to your departed spouses. They are having trouble juxtaposing the new person in the old position.

Give your friends time. Mourning usually goes through four stages, which are not easily hurried. First, you must accept the loss. Second, you must express all the

emotions you feel. Third, you must get used to life without the deceased. The fourth stage is to replace the deceased.

Your friends are in stage three. You have moved on to stage four.

How did you get to stage four more quickly? Perhaps your spouse had been ill for some time and you had the chance to say goodbye before death. This hastens the grief work. Or perhaps you have grieved more intensely than your friends, which will hasten the process.

Whatever, you are dating each other and finding joy in a deepening affection. I applaud your courage to trust your own judgments and not let custom dictate your behavior.

Yes, I agree with you that remarriage after the death of a spouse can be a compliment to your first spouse and the satisfying life you had together. Good experiences beg for repetition.

Further, the evidence is that older persons are more mature in their selection of a partner and show a better record of marital success. You have much to recommend your union.

One caution, however, following my first positive counsel. Society and its customs are not pointless. The year-long period of mourning after a death has a purpose. The purpose is to protect you.

From what? From many extraneous factors which could add to your motivation to marry. People remarry on the rebound, to avoid going through the sense of loss. Should a sense of loss come after the remarriage, it is devastating to the newly formed relationship.

People remarry to cover up loneliness. Better to let the tears come for a while (stage two) and to shuffle your way through a few months without your beloved (stage three). Unless you take time to say goodbye to your deceased spouse, your new partner will suffer the unfairness of comparisons, and may gain only half a partner.

So be sure you have said goodbye to your lost partner and that you have had time to mourn. Have patience with the counsel of your friends. Then reach confidently for the affection and support that men and women find in each other. You have every chance for a fine and lasting love.

(Reader questions on family living and child care to be answered in print are invited. Address questions: The Kennys; 807, St. Joseph's College; Rensselaer, IN 47978.)

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## USCC told to abandon sex education

A coalition opposed to sex education programs called on the U.S. Catholic Conference to abandon its guidelines, "Education in Human Sexuality for Christians," and asked two priests who work with family life issues to renounce the guidelines. Officers of the National Coalition of Interstate Committees of Clergy and Laity praised guidelines released Dec. 1 by the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education and said "the document repudiates what has been happening for the last 15 to 20 years in Catholic education in the United States."

## church in the world

### Canadian religious leaders issue statement critical of nuclear weapons

OTTAWA (NC)—Backing Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's peace initiatives, an interfaith group of religious leaders criticized nuclear weapons and the Reagan administration's policies on arms control. Trudeau has been visiting foreign capitals to promote more in-depth international dialogue for arms control and a summit meeting of the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, France and China. Church leaders who issued the brief included officials of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Canadian Council of Churches, the Anglican Church of Canada, the United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Lutheran Council of America—Canadian

Section, and the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

### Vatican bank report is given to officials

ROME (NC)—The Vatican-Italian commission investigating links between the Vatican bank and Italy's bankrupt Banco Ambrosiano has given its report to Italian and Vatican officials, a commission member said Dec. 15. "We've finished our work and presented the report. It's now up to other officials to take the next step," said Pasquale Chiamenti, an Italian lawyer on the commission. The report is in the hands of the Vatican Secretariat of State, Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi's office and the Italian Treasury Ministry, all of which are negotiating a final settlement of the question, according to the Treasury Ministry's chief press spokesman, Tiziano Garbo.

### Nuns abducted in prison escape

WASHINGTON (NC)—One American nun was killed and another was injured Dec. 14 during an attempted prison escape in Lima, Peru, said Cindy Fox, a State Department spokeswoman. Columban Sister Joan Mary Sawyer, a U.S. citizen born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, was killed after she and three other American nuns involved in prison ministry were taken hostage by inmates and police began shooting at the vehicle in which they were leaving the prison. The wounded nun, Marist Sister Theresa J. Pasterczyk from Dracut, Mass., was released from a hospital after a bullet was removed from her arm. The other two Americans taken hostage were Marist Sister Mary Ellen Conway from Needham, Mass., and Marist Sister Anna Maizolo from Michigan.

### Weakland sees pastoral as bishops' duty

NOTRE DAME, Ind. (NC)—American bishops are "just doing their duty" in grappling with an issue "which concerns everyone," the American economy, Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee said during a Dec. 12-14 meeting at the University of Notre Dame. Archbishop Weakland, who chairs a National Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee drafting a pastoral letter on the economy, also said the meeting with theologians, economists and business experts was "very important at this moment in history."

### Fr. Justin Belitz, OFM

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Fr. James D. Barton, Archdiocesan Director



# Bishops' pastoral heads list of stories (from 2)

Lebanon, followed in December by similar suicide attacks on French and U.S. posts in Kuwait, highlighted the "holy war" mentality of some Moslem fundamentalist factions in the Lebanese strife.

**SECTARIAN** strife continued to claim lives in Northern Ireland, and the underlying ideological conflict crossed the Atlantic in March as Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York boycotted the city's annual St. Patrick's Day parade because Michael Flannery, a supporter of the Irish Republican Army, was its grand marshal.

Pope John Paul's second visit to Poland as pope came in June, on the heels of the lifting of martial law in that country. The pope's pleas for freedom and human dignity were almost overshadowed by the behind-the-scenes wrangling for a papal meeting with Lech Walesa, leader of the outlawed Solidarity trade union.

When Walesa won the Nobel Peace Prize later in the year for his efforts to liberalize Polish society through peaceful means, the government continued to try to discredit him. He pledged his prize money to the church-run fund to aid Polish farmers.

Church-state tensions increased in Poland as the church continued to criticize government policies and the government accused priests of using the pulpit to meddle in politics.

**ANOTHER SCENE** of renewed church-state tensions was the Philippines, where many church figures have long been at odds with President Ferdinand Marcos on human rights issues. The assassination in August of opposition leader Benigno Aquino while he was under military custody provoked huge popular protests and led Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila to accuse Marcos of at least indirect complicity in the killing.

South Africa also continued to be a focus of religious concern because of its continued policy of white minority rule and apartheid, or strict racial segregation. The general secretary of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Father Smaungalo Mkhathshwa, was freed from a

six-year-old banning order in July, but four months later was arrested in the tribal homeland of Ciskei and given no reason.

The growing prominence of the Catholic Church as a voice in international affairs led to a significant U.S. legislative development in November, as Congress approved and President Reagan signed a bill which lifted a century-old ban on U.S. diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Americans United for Separation of Church and State and a number of Protestant and Jewish organizations opposed the lifting of the ban, arguing that it raised serious constitutional questions on the separation of church and state.

**ANOTHER U.S. church-state issue** that was a regular news topic in 1983 was that of tuition tax credits for parents of non-public school students. Despite Reagan administration backing, various efforts to get such legislation through Congress failed.

Pro-life issues came into the news on three fronts in the United States: abortion, protection of handicapped infants and capital punishment.

In January pro-lifers marked the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court abortion decisions with their annual march on Washington. In June, the anti-abortion movement was dealt a double setback.

The Supreme Court on June 15 struck down as unconstitutional key provisions in an Akron, Ohio, abortion control ordinance which was being promoted as model legislation by pro-life forces around the country. Provisions struck down included a requirement of parental consent for abortions performed on minors, and a 24-hour waiting period for obtaining an abortion.

Two weeks later the U.S. Senate defeated a modified version of the Hatch Amendment, a proposed constitutional amendment—the first explicitly backed by the U.S. bishops—that would have restored to states the legislative power to prohibit or restrict abortions.

**ABORTION** opponents claimed victories on other fronts, however. In one, Congress approved continuation of a ban on most federal funding of abortions.

In November and December the Reagan administration sought unsuccessfully to intervene in the case of Baby Jane Doe, a Long Island child born with multiple deformities, whose parents had refused corrective surgery. The case drew new attention to the complexity of intertwining medical, moral and legal issues involved in such decisions.

Also in November, Pope John Paul II pleaded with Gov. Robert Graham of Florida to halt the execution of Robert Sullivan. Sullivan was executed despite the papal plea and long-time efforts on his behalf by Bishop Rene Gracida of Corpus Christi, Texas, who believed that he had been wrongfully convicted.

The pope had signaled a growing involvement by the Holy See against capital punishment in January, when he said in his annual address to diplomats that "humanitarian concern" prompts the Holy See "to recommend clemency and mercy for those condemned to death, especially those who have been condemned for political motives."

**MEHMET ALI** Agca, who tried to assassinate the pope in 1981, remained in the news in 1983 as Italian officials continued to investigate the alleged "Bulgarian connection," the theory that Bulgarian secret police, acting for the Soviet secret police, engineered the plot to kill the pope and hired Agca to do the job.

In another area of church involvement in justice and peace issues, the Holy See in November issued a Charter of the Rights of the Family which called on governments to guarantee, protect and promote the "inalienable rights" of families in their laws and social policies.

One of the family rights enunciated in the charter, the right of parents to assure the moral and religious education of their children in accord with their beliefs, was emphasized in Vatican guidelines on sex education released a few days later. The guidelines emphasized the prime parental role in sex education and insisted that moral formation is an essential part of all education in sexuality.

Internal affairs in the Catholic Church were also a frequent source of news in 1983.

One of the most important Catholic developments of the year was the enactment of the new Code of Canon Law by Pope John Paul II, climaxing two decades of efforts to reform the 1917 code in light of the changes in the church since the Second Vatican Council. The new general law governing the church was published by the pope in January and went into effect on Nov. 27.

**ONE OF THE** results of the new code was that it brought to a head an ongoing discussion among the U.S. bishops over the number of holy days of obligation observed in the United States. During their November meeting, after debating a proposal to reduce the number to three, the bishops reaffirmed the century-old U.S. practice of observing six holy days of obligation.

The code for the most part simply systematized piecemeal changes that had already taken place in the church, so its immediate effects on everyday church life were almost unnoticeable.

Among major changes in the new code, compared with the 1917 code it replaced, were a major shift from a legalistic to a sacramental mentality throughout; the elimination of virtually all laws that treated lay women differently from lay men; substantial decentralization of church authority; and significantly broadened definitions of lay rights and responsibilities within the church.

On Nov. 26, the day before the new code took effect, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith provoked a new controversy in the United States by issuing a declaration which said that Catholics are still prohibited from joining Masonic associations, even though the new code no longer contains that specific prohibition. Most U.S. Masonic lodges, unlike their counterparts in many other parts of the world, are not generally considered anti-Catholic. U.S. church officials interpreted the new declaration, however, as saying that local bishops could no longer make their own judgments but would have to refer membership requests to Rome.

On the ecumenical front, Catholics and (See **BISHOPS' PASTORAL** on page 10)



**WHITE ON WHITE**—The White House is framed by an iron fence along Pennsylvania Avenue as a severe winter storm hits the nation's capital. (NC photo from UPI)

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# Bishops' pastoral (from 9)

## Pope makes visit to Lutheran church in Rome

Lutherans in many parts of the world marked the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther with joint observances in which they stressed what they believed in common, and Pope John Paul II made an unprecedented papal visit to the Lutheran church in Rome to participate in an ecumenical prayer service.

In the United States, the national Catholic-Lutheran dialogue issued a landmark statement of agreement on justification by faith, one of the fundamental issues behind the Reformation. The issue need no longer divide the churches, the theologians on the dialogue commission said.

Elsewhere in ecumenism, the World Council of Churches held its sixth world assembly July 24-Aug. 10 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Major concerns at the meeting were common Christian proclamation and witness and the use of the 1982 Lima statement on baptism, Eucharist and ministry as a common basis for church unity.

An ecumenical effort that did not fare so well was the U.S. National Council of Churches' release of a new "inclusive language" lectionary that retranslates Scripture to reduce or eliminate exclusively masculine references to God and Christ. While some church officials and theologians enthusiastically welcomed the new lectionary, others sharply criticized it as both bad theology and bad Scripture scholarship.

**RELIGION MADE** news in the world of art with the year-long exhibit in the United States of "The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art," a collection of 237 works of art from the Vatican. It was shown in New York, Chicago and San Francisco.

Another year-long Vatican event in the

news in 1983 was the special Holy Year of the Redemption, inaugurated by Pope John Paul on March 25, 1983, and scheduled to close on Easter Sunday, April 22, 1984.

In special ceremonies and weekly general audiences throughout the year, the pope stressed the significance of Christ's redemption of humanity and humanity's need for penance, conversion and reconciliation.

The 1983 world Synod of Bishops in October also focused on those issues.

A major concern of the synod was the decline in use of the sacrament of penance and in a sense of personal sin among Catholics in recent years. But the bishops also tackled the social dimensions of sin, reiterating the church's commitment to denounce injustices and seek reconciliation in communities, nations and international relations.

**ADDRESSING THE** need for reconciliation within the church, one of the synod's concerns was the role of women in the church.

That issue was frequently a topic of church news in 1983, and it had particular relevance in the United States, where it was also closely linked with tensions between the U.S. church and the Vatican.

In September Pope John Paul brought the issue to the fore when he told a group of U.S. bishops visiting him that they should work to end all forms of discrimination against women in the church and in society but should withdraw all support for anyone seeking the ordination of women to the priesthood. The church's bar against women priests is not a matter of discrimination, the pope said.

The role of women in the church was also an important element in one of the most widely publicized controversies in the

U.S. Catholic Church in 1983. That was the Vatican's order in May to Mercy Sister Agnes Mary Mansour to leave religious life if she would not give up her post as head of the Michigan state social services agency or publicly dissociate herself from its funding of welfare abortions. Ms. Mansour chose to be dispensed from her vows.

In November the U.S. bishops preceded their annual fall meeting with a two-day workshop on women in the church, which about 100 of the nation's prelates attended. During their meeting they agreed unanimously to undertake a pastoral letter confronting the controversial questions of women in the church and in society.

The willingness of the bishops to confront tough public controversies head-on, as they had done in their war and peace pastoral, was also indicated in a progress report on their planned pastoral letter on the American economy and Catholic social teaching.

Recognizing the impact that the proposed pastoral could have on the discussion of American political issues, Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, head of the letter's drafting committee, announced that publication of the first draft of the pastoral would be delayed until after the 1984 presidential elections in order to prevent partisan use of it to influence the elections.

The papally mandated study of U.S. Religious by the nation's bishops put the U.S. hierarchy on the front lines of another controversy. During the bishops' meeting Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco, named by the pope last June to head the commission guiding the study, cast the project in terms of a call to the bishops to engage in dialogue with Religious and be of pastoral service to them.

**HE REPUDIATED** any "fundamentalistic" interpretation of the Vatican documents on the study that would view it as a Vatican crackdown on Religious—an interpretation that had evoked strong concern among many Religious but was being promoted by American Catholic conservatives. The study was also linked with the issue of women in the church, as it was widely perceived to be directed chiefly at concerns about women Religious.

The study of Religious was but one of many events during the year that were played up in the media as indicative of conflicts between the U.S. church and the Vatican.

But Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, ending a three-year term as president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, cast the tensions in a

different light during the bishops' fall meeting. He suggested that the Vatican was paying greater attention to the U.S. church because of its "exceptional influence . . . on the church in other countries."

The tensions, he said, are "the growing pains in a maturing relationship" in which the U.S. bishops are taking an increasingly active collegial role in the guidance and governance of the church.

**THE PAST YEAR** marked significant transitions for a number of prominent religious figures.

On Feb. 2 Archbishop Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, already emerging as one of the leading U.S. church figures of the 80s because of his appointment the previous year as archbishop of Chicago and his central role in drafting the bishops' war and peace pastoral, became the first U.S. bishop since 1976 to be elevated to the College of Cardinals.

The deaths of Cardinals Humberto Medeiros of Boston Sept. 17 and Terence Cooke of New York Oct. 6—leaving only three active cardinals in the United States, with two of them approaching retirement age within the next two years—heightened the sense that 1983 marked the beginning of a major transition in American church leadership.

Cardinal Medeiros, 67, archbishop of Boston since 1970, died after undergoing a six-hour triple bypass operation.

Cardinal Cooke, 62, head of the New York Archdiocese and the U.S. Military Vicariate since 1968, died of acute leukemia. His serene approach to death in his final months provoked wide admiration.

Another leading cardinal who died during the year was Australian Cardinal James Robert Knox, 69, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family and former prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship.

In May Cardinal Raul Silva Henríquez, head of the Archdiocese of Santiago, Chile, for 22 years, retired at the age of 75. Cardinal Silva was internationally known for years as the leading defender of human rights under Chile's military government.

In the United States, religious leaders were caught by surprise Nov. 15 when United Methodist Bishop James Armstrong abruptly announced his resignation as president of the National Council of Churches, citing personal and family reasons.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops saw a less dramatic transition in leadership as Archbishop Roach completed his term as NCCB president and the bishops elected Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, NCCB vice president for the past three years, as their new leader.

For Pope John Paul, Oct. 16 marked the end of his first five years as pope.

(Research contributors to this story were Barbara Frazee and other members of the NC News staff.)

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# CHRISTMAS SPECIAL



## Blessed are They Among Women

*Christmas is the time  
for remembering  
an ancient story of  
a young girl  
who learned from an angel  
that she was to become  
a Mother.*

*The girl, Mary of Galilee,  
despite difficulties,  
accepted pregnancy  
with grace.*

*"Be it done unto me  
according to Thy Word!"*

*From this acceptance  
was born the Holy Babe,  
Jesus Christ,  
Son of God,  
foundation of  
Christian faith.*

*Now other unwed women  
in diverse, dissimilar  
circumstances also learn  
they are expectant.  
But modern options  
often kill  
creative will.*

*Many do not accept maternity,  
do not nurture a life,  
do not allow a new soul  
a place in God's new world.*

*Blessed are they among women  
who, like Mary of Galilee,  
choose to bear  
the fruit of their wombs!*

*Their decisions  
dignify life and  
complement  
Selfless Love:  
the very essence of  
Christmas!*

*—Shirley Vogler Meister  
(Member of Christ the King Parish)*

# Christmas thoughts turn to the past as much as to the present today

by Fr. DAVID K. O'ROURKE, G.P.

I think of Christmas and my thoughts turn as much to the past as to the present. For me, as for many others, the holidays are a time of memories.

Today, a beautiful day, with the first frosts of winter silencing the golden California hills in which I live, my mind keeps drifting back to my first Christmas as a priest.

Twenty-one years ago I spent Christmas Eve on the sidelines in an intensive-care unit, watching helplessly as a medical team fought to save the life of a child. The young daughter of friends, she had scampered out into the street, into the path of a car.

The doctors did what they could. Now she lay there completely wrapped in bandages.

I stayed there as long as I could. But before midnight I had to leave because I had a church full of people waiting for Midnight Mass. She died not long after. As so many others were celebrating the birth of Christ, my friends lost their baby.

An inappropriate and disconcerting image at this time of year? For me it certainly is, for I love Christmas and its celebrations. My friends only half-jokingly accuse me of having an absolutely Dickensian attitude during the holidays as they watch me garland the church, arrange parties and cook up one dinner after another.

No subsurface drear in these quarters, Christmas always has been my favorite time of year. Yet this image from the past remains with me, even to the details of

faces and dress. The first impressions of an impressionable and newly ordained priest? Perhaps. But this image also remains because of its challenge.

At Christmas we recall the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago. The nativity story appeals to us, I suspect, because it celebrates something so simple, and so common to all human history. In this celebration of birth, and the realization of our hope that life will continue, we also can reaffirm our belief that all life, even when begun under painful circumstances, is special. This nativity scene is something we can all understand.

But it marks only the beginning. And this is where the challenge comes in. What is ultimately so special about this birth is its purpose. The purpose comes to the fore not so much at the birth of Jesus as at his death and resurrection. We Christians celebrate Christmas so joyfully because we know who is being born, and why, and where that birth leads us all.

Because of that knowledge we do not have to narrow our view of Christmas to the celebrations, the happy memories, the good feelings. When we think of Christmas we can extend our view to all of our lives, to include the situations that just don't fit, and to the experiences that left us reeling. I can think of little Sarah's death on that Christmas many years ago, before her life had even really begun, and we can, each of us, make our own personal additions to the list of events that don't make sense.

We can fill out this picture without being overwhelmed by it. We are sustained by a gift of purpose which comes to us in the birth of Christ.



**AFFIRMATION**—At Christmas we recall the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago. "The nativity appeals to us," Father David K. O'Rourke writes, "because it celebrates something so simple, and so common to all human history. In this celebration of birth, and the realization of our hope that life will continue, we also can reaffirm our belief that all life, even when begun under painful circumstances, is special." (NC photo by Bob Taylor)

That knowledge of life's purpose which we celebrate at Christmas goes by another name. It is called faith.

As St. Paul tells us it is not a knowledge based on our vision of what we can touch and test, but a knowledge of things unseen. We believe not because we can see and prove it, but because God has spoken to us.

What has God spoken? A word. A word of comfort, and hope and salvation. And God spoke not just a word, but "the" word. As St. John writes in the prologue to his

Gospel, in his own way of describing that first Christmas: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw his glory." This word became flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is faith, a faith which tells us that the child born 2,000 years ago truly was the eternal word of God become human like us, that gives our celebration of Christmas the quality it has.

For it is that birth that gives our lives their hope and their purpose.



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## Christmas: the festive time

Christmas: the festive time when people take time out from ordinary concerns.

Yet Christmas can be a time of bittersweet memories too, as Dominican Father David K. O'Rourke indicates. He points to the meaning in Christmas—the purpose the birth of Jesus points to. With that purpose in mind, Christians can associate all of life with this festival, even the painful parts. Father O'Rourke is on the staff of the Family Life Office in the Diocese of Oakland, Calif.

Suzanne Elsesser tells the story of a visit in the Holy Land. There, in the heat of summer, she began to see the meaning of the peace of Christmas and

its gifts. Ms. Elsesser is on the staff of a South Bronx pastoral center.

Katharine Bird turns to historical fiction this week and offers a story about how Dec. 25 came to be the date for Christmas. It happened centuries ago when Christianity was on the ascendancy in the Roman Empire. Dec. 25, we find, was a pagan feast of the sun. Now Jesus becomes the "sun of justice," as his birth is celebrated.

And Father John Castelot discusses Scripture's Christmas people of prayer this week. Luke's Gospel is sometimes called the Gospel of Prayer, he writes. Even the angels pray in Luke's opening chapters.

## Discussion questions

1. Do you have any Christmas traditions from your own family that are kept from year to year? What are they?

2. What Christmas do you remember as the best for you? Why?

3. Most people want Christmas to be a happy time. But on Christmas, as on other days, there is poverty, there

are wars, there are human needs. How should these realities influence the Christian community at Christmas?

4. What is the real meaning behind Christmas gift giving, in your opinion?

5. On Christmas, religious leaders often preach on peace. Is there anything people in communities like your own can do to promote peace, to be peacemakers?

## Resources for readers

"A Parade of Saints," by Mark Twomey. This children's book includes short readable biographies of about 50 saints, a glossary of terms and a listing of saints month by month through the liturgical year. The illustrations by Brother Placid Stuckenschneider make it a most attractive gift. (1983. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 56321. \$10.95.)

"The Life and Words of Jesus," compiled by Pat Alexander. The book is lavishly illustrated with color photographs of the Holy Land which help bring the meaning of the biblical texts home to readers. (1983. Harper and Row, 1700 Montgomery St., San Francisco, Calif., 94111. \$10.95.)



# We need to focus on gifts of true importance

by SUZANNE ELSESSER

"Are Sarah's legs long enough for a two-wheeler this year?"

"Jerry always thanks us a lot for the flannel shirts we give him, but I don't think I've ever seen one on him."

"Pop-pop's tough. Are there any tools he doesn't have for his garden?"

"How late are the stores open this year? Do you think we could eat early so I can run out after supper?"

"I'm not sure just how far this Christmas Club money is going to go. I hate spending so much, but Christmas is Christmas and you've got to do it. Particularly for the kids."

I worked once with a Benedictine sister who was surprised when I told her how much work Christmas was for me: the presents, the endless shopping, the decorations, the multitude of errands, the children's stockings, the cards and the tree. Her preparation was one of prayer and peace. I envied her ability to avoid the frantic rush and focus on the importance of the season.

Last summer I was fortunate to experience some of that peace and reflect on the true gifts that my sister friend knows so well during a trip to the Holy Land. In celebrating future Christmases, I hope to retain some of the lessons I learned then.

I journeyed to the Holy Land with staff members from the South Bronx Pastoral Center where I work. There, in the middle of July, we gathered for Mass in the area of Bethlehem.

The early morning temperature already had reached the mid-90s as we looked over the stone-covered, barren fields outside Bethlehem where the gospel writers say the angel announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds. The scene was very beautiful with its fields and gentle, beige-colored hills. In a valley a few shepherd boys with large sticks as crooks could be seen escorting their flocks into the fields for the day.

Leaving that scene behind, we went into a large cave that had been made into a chapel for visiting pilgrims. Immediately, the temperature was at least 20 degrees cooler. The cave was, as it had been in the time of Jesus, a refuge from the intense daytime heat or the deep night cold that comes in desert lands.

Our small group from New York gathered on each side of a simple stone altar and there, in the middle of summer, began our celebration by singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." We smiled across the chapel at each other. How funny to be singing Christmas carols in July. How lovely to be singing them in Bethlehem.

Father Octavio, a member of our group, recalled God's gift of the son and invited each of us to recall other gifts we have received.

"How fortunate I am to have received the gift of religious life," said Sister Joanne, a director of religious education in a South Bronx parish.

"I will always be grateful for the gift of health and education," reflected Nora.

"And I for the joy of living," said someone else.

We all prayed. We all were thankful. We remembered the gifts of caring parents, children who brought immense pleasure, friends we could talk with, a faith and

church that united us with each other and with so many others, and prayer that brings God closer.

No one said a thing about the other kinds of gifts that can preoccupy us at Christmas. God gave us that day a lovely occasion on which we could speak of and celebrate the gifts of true importance.

## How do we know date of Christ's birth?

by KATHARINE BIRD

(Little is known in detail about the establishment of Dec. 25 as the date to celebrate the birth of Christ. The following story is a fictional account based on history.)

Once again the winter solstice draws near. In the manner of old men who like to reminisce, my mind turns back to some stupendous events that occurred more than 40 years ago.

Let me identify myself so that you may know my credentials. I am Hilary, a Christian priest, who for a brief glorious time served as the confidential secretary to Bishop Hosius of Cordova. He was the ecclesiastical adviser to Constantine, mighty emperor of the Roman Empire.

To me fell the awesome task of recording Constantine's efforts to bring the

worship of the one true God into the empire on an equal footing with the pagan gods.

With Hosius and other advisers, I heard what Constantine said as he explored ways of christianizing some of the pagan festivals.

A perfect case in point was his effort to establish Dec. 25 as the date to remember the birth of the Lord Jesus. If I remember correctly this happened early in the 330s, for Constantine died in the year 337.

Our task was difficult. For the Romans traditionally celebrated two separate pagan festivals during December.

The first was the Saturnalia, beginning Dec. 17 and often celebrated for seven consecutive days. It was without doubt the gayest and wildest feast of the empire. Primarily an agricultural festival, it was dedicated to Saturn, the god of seeds.

Roman people always celebrated the Saturnalia with exuberant spirits. Law courts closed and all business, even war, was suspended for the days of merry-making. Temples were decked out with greenery and flowers. People danced and gambled and sang in the streets of Rome. Often they chose a mock king to reign. Revelers gaily exchanged seasons' greetings and often small gifts as well—gifts of wax candles and little clay dolls.

The second pagan festival was the ancient feast of the Unconquered Sun. This Dec. 25 celebration honored the birth of Mithra, the Iranian sun god, the giver of light and warmth. This mighty feast signaled the new birth of the sun at the winter solstice, the time when sunlight begins again to drive away the powers of darkness.

Both festivals featured fires and light—the eternal symbols of warmth and lasting life.

In all truth, we Christians had to struggle to find an alternative to those popular feasts. But finally it occurred to us that much symbolism surrounding the feasts also fit with the birth of Christ. Take the symbolism of light attached to the Unconquered Sun, for instance. For Christians this applies very naturally to Christ.

Therefore, with Constantine's approval, plans were advanced for a festival to celebrate Jesus' birth Dec. 25. And in planning the first Christ-Masses, we combed the sacred readings for the kinds of passages which might appeal to Romans accustomed to the pagan winter festivals.

And we found them! Passages that spoke of Christ as the rising sun, the light of lights, the one and only true sun of righteousness. With the prophet, Malachi, we praised Christ as the sun of justice and the only true light of the world. We spoke of Jesus' birth as the inauguration of a new age bringing eternal light to human beings.

How well did we succeed? I don't know. Especially now in this dark time of transition in the empire, it is by no means clear what the final outcome will be.

But clearly a start has been made. As proof, let me mention my most precious possession—an exact copy of the first Christian calendar. The sumptuously decorated Philocalian calendar was given to Valentinus, a Christian, on New Year's day in the year 354. It contains the oldest list of feasts in the Christian world. Compiled in 336, it lists Dec. 25 as the date to honor the birth of Jesus for the church in Rome.

In the decades to come, is it too much to hope that all Christian churches will follow our example?



**PILGRIMAGE**—A procession, which had left Jerusalem on foot at noon on Christmas Eve, moves through the courtyard of the 4th century Basilica of the Nativity into Manger Square. Suzanne

Elssesser recalls her pilgrimage to Bethlehem and the Christmas gifts she and her companions had received. (NC photo)

# Luke's gospel filled with all kinds of prayer

by Fr. JOHN J. CASTELOT

Luke's Gospel sometimes is called the Gospel of Prayer. It is not surprising, then, that his Christmas story is filled with all kinds of prayer.

It opens with Zechariah, future father of John the baptizer. Zechariah is exercising

his priestly functions in the temple. But into this liturgical setting Luke places a personal kind of prayer: a joyful yet troubled dialogue with a messenger of God.

The old man receives the incredibly joyful news that he and Elizabeth, likewise aged and also sterile, will have a son. This is almost too good to be true. Like so many

people who don't dare take God at his word, Zechariah asks for some guarantee. "How can I know this? I am an old man; my wife too is advanced in age." (Luke 1:18)

He gets a sign, a guarantee. But it is not a pleasant one. He will lose his power of speech until the child is born.

When God speaks to us in prayer, it is wise to listen.

Paralleling that scene, Luke composed the theologically rich dialogue between Mary and the same divine messenger. Mary is "deeply troubled" by the messenger Gabriel's words. (1:29) This time, however, Gabriel proceeds to reassure her that she has nothing to fear. Then, with words borrowed largely from Nathan's great oracle to David in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 7:12), Luke describes the surpassing greatness of her son-to-be.

Mary's final words are a perfect prayer: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." (1:38) They sum up her attitude as the first model disciple, who hears the word of God and keeps it. Even though she doesn't comprehend what God wants of her, Mary anticipates the prayer which her son will say years later in a dark garden: "Not my will but yours be done." (22:42)

The canticle Mary recites, the

Magnificat, is a further expression of a disciple who humbly acknowledges her lowliness and pours out heartfelt gratitude for God's gracious favors: "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my savior."

As the Magnificat continues, it expresses what Luke demonstrates throughout the Gospel: God's tender concern for the lowly and poor of the earth. This concern is manifested in the humanity of God's son.

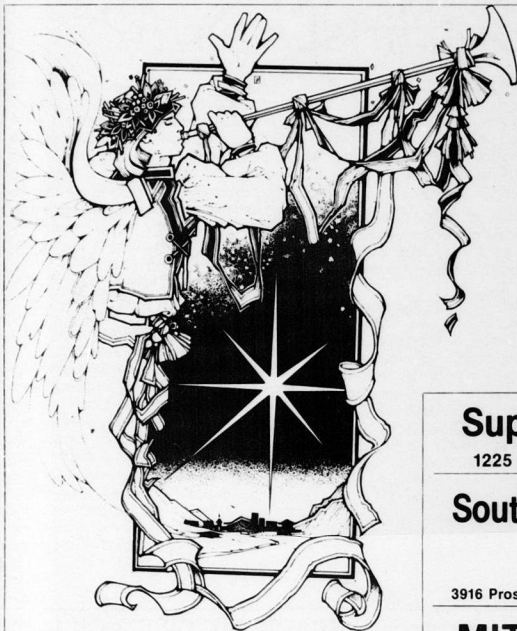
Zechariah's canticle also, the Benedictus, is an enthusiastic cry of gratitude for God's faithfulness to his promises in raising up a mighty savior, whose way will be prepared by his own son, John. "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel because he has visited and ransomed his people."

But not only people pray as Luke's Gospel begins. The angels too praise God for initiating his reign of peace.

And when the infant Jesus is presented in the temple, the aged Simeon gives voice to yet another canticle. He thanks God for allowing him to see his "saving deed displayed for all the peoples to see." (2:31).

Then Simeon proclaims: Jesus will be "a revealing light to the gentiles, the glory of your people Israel."

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# Savior makes humble entrance into the world

by JANAAN MANTERNACH

Joseph ran home. "Mary, did you hear the news? Caesar is taking a census of the whole world. We have to go to Bethlehem to register!"

Mary was excited by Joseph's news. But she also was concerned. "Joseph," she said, "Bethlehem is a long way from Nazareth. We'll have to walk the whole way. I wonder if I can do it."

Mary was pregnant. She was going to have a baby very soon. Bethlehem was about 90 miles from Nazareth. That's a long walk.

"We have to go, Mary," Joseph said. "Maybe someone will let you ride part of the way on their donkey."

A few days later Mary and Joseph left Nazareth. Many friends and neighbors went at the same time. They walked for several days. Friends let Mary ride much of the way.

By the time they got to Bethlehem, Mary was very tired. It was evening. Joseph began to look for a place to stay. But all the places for travelers were filled. There was no room in the whole city.

"What are we going to do, Joseph?" Mary asked. "We need a place. The baby will be born very soon."

Joseph knocked at another door. A man opened it and looked at Mary. He could see she needed a place to lie down. "Our house is full," he said kindly. "But you need some place to rest. Use my stable. It is warm. There is plenty of straw to lie on."

Joseph thanked the man. He led Mary to the stable, and helped her find a comfortable place to lie down.

That night Mary became a mother. She gave birth to a baby boy. She and Joseph wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes. They held the baby close and kissed him. Joseph spread a blanket over the straw in a manger where cattle ate. They hugged each other and were very happy.

Not far away in the fields shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. All at once an angel of God stood before them. They were terrified.

"Don't be afraid," the angel said. "I have good news for you. What I have to tell you will bring joy to the whole people. Tonight in Bethlehem a savior has been born, the Messiah and Lord. Here is how you'll recognize him. You will find a baby lying in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes."

Just then other angels of the Lord appeared. They praised God and sang: "Glory to God in highest heaven. Praise on earth to all God's friends."

Then they were gone. "Let's go over to Bethlehem," the shepherds said to one another. "Let's find that baby."

They went quickly to the city. They found Mary and Joseph in the stable. They saw the baby lying in the manger. They praised God for what they heard and saw, and told everyone the good news that the savior had been born in Bethlehem.

## Questions:

1. What would you have done if Joseph had come to your door and asked for a room?
2. What can children do in their homes to make Christmas a better celebration?

## Children's Reading Corner

In "A Certain Small Shepherd," by Rebecca Caudill, Jamie is a mute child who has the coveted role of a shepherd

in the Christmas pageant. In this memorable Christmas story, a big snow storm comes up and it doesn't seem as though anyone will be able to get to the pageant. Travelers, caught in the storm, wind up at Jamie's home and are taken in and helped. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 383 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. 1965. Hardback, \$3.50).

Another story that reveals the mystery and power of Christmas is "A Good and Perfect Gift," by Drew Bagicalupa. (Our Sunday Visitor, Noll Plaza, Huntington, Ind. 46750. 1978. Hardback, \$4.95).

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A CHILD IS BORN—That night Mary gave birth to a baby boy. She and Joseph wrapped the baby in swaddling

clothes. They hugged each other and were very happy. (NC sketch by Beryl E. Newman)

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**FROZEN WHITE**—Like a formation of stalagmites, Rainbow Falls in New York's Adirondack Mountains leaves a frozen formation as it awaits the spring thaw. (NC photo by Gene Ahrens)

# Miracles made possible this time of year through imaginations

by Fr. ROBERT SHERRY

Christmas so sparks a child's imagination that almost any miracle seems possible. If a jolly, white-bearded old man can squeeze through a chimney in the middle of a starry, snowy night, then even God could come to earth in the likeness of a newborn infant.

Christmas lights up one's dreams. Stars merge and wink in highest heaven, regal magi camel across countries, angels rejoice. The long-awaited one has come.

This night brings presents and presence. We want it all to last, as we want our dreams to last.

Our friends helped us to recover when the dreams we centered around Santa Claus dissolved. But we need leaders to bolster more adult dreams.

We need the friend who says, "Don't quit now. When you lose your dream, you're dead."

At the Christmas liturgy, the priest is amazed at the increased number of people he sees. Children, young and less young, come to dream of what new heavenly gift will brighten their eyes this year. A priest longs to renew the ageless hope in all people, both by his presence and by God's word.

The priest dreams too. Christmas reveals a perennial hope. He feels the tension between what we have and what we want, between what is real and what can come true tomorrow. He always hungers for more—more peace, more joy, more lasting love.

Each time a new priest is assigned to a

parish, people hope with a Christmas hope that he will resemble the Messiah in thought, word and lifestyle. But few priests image the loftiness of the Christ; some never come close. Few can capture or translate the awe and simplicity of the Christmas story. Christmas imagery can leave any dreamer winded.

The miracle of Christmas is that God sent his son. The miracle of a priest's new assignment is that someone has come again to witness openly to the light of the world. The priest is not the light but, like others, tries to witness to the light.

This new age cries out for new Christmas people—ministers who can take the best of the past and reflect it; sift the best of the present and promote it; gaze into the future and create it.

The priest strives to resurrect the ghost of Christmas past:

- when the whole world was at peace;
- when the family unit traveled together;
- when a mother carried her child over rocky roads to full term;
- when people were content with lodging rather than a lodging full of contents;
- when people were humble as shepherds before God;
- when wise men knew that God was God and they were not;
- when people lay down their lives for their friends.

The priest at Christmas knows the present is not the past. He knows some of the present is clouded in confusion and darkness. But he also knows if we lose our



**ELECTRO-ART**—Eleven new electro-art sculptures depicting the theme "Journey to Bethlehem" have been added to the 14th annual Way of Lights display at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows near Belleville, Ill. More than 125,000 lights are spread over a mile and a half route to illuminate the display which will continue until Jan. 8. (NC photo)

dreams, we grope in dead darkness too.

Christ as high priest inspired dreams. He inspired hearts and imagination by preaching that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, a banquet, a widow, a king—images that excited folks because they lived the images he preached.

Christmas for a priest is a display of

hope fulfilled and love made flesh. For the priest, too, Christmas is a mustard seed of hope blossoming into a great tree of lights; a banquet of gifts anxious to be consumed; a widow singularly finding room for all strangers coming to the inn; a caring king now serving people by bringing light to the hopes and the dreams in the hearts of all.

## 'Good old Mom' made the holidays better

by CELESTE KEARNEY

It was going to be a wonderful Christmas. Everyone was coming home. We would all be together for the holidays.

One by one, the children had left home to go to college and then to work. It had been nice this past year, my husband and I alone in the house. But I couldn't imagine Christmas with just the two of us. So Christmas presents were flights home, from as far away as Hawaii.

I made lists of things to do, activities to schedule, meals to plan, items to buy. It was exciting and sort of like the old days. The shelves in the kitchen filled up, packages went under the bed and into the closet, bedrooms were opened and beds long empty received fresh sheets and blankets. Everything was going to be perfect.

One by one, I collected them from the airport. But very soon I was aware of feeling unsettled and tense in my own house. Unexplainable anger simmered beneath my smiles and chatter.

The holidays unfolded in a beehive of activity. Finally they started to leave, and as I made the trips back to the airport, I felt myself sighing with relief.

A cloud of guilt hung over me. What kind of a mother was I, anyway? Didn't I love my children?

Then I realized what I had done. When they were away, I trusted my children to lead their own lives, feed themselves, clean up after themselves. When they came home, I took over all that, telling myself that they were on vacation. I set things up so they were just like the old days.

Then I realized I really was angry with myself. I had not recognized that I had changed, and so had the children. Next Christmas would be different, I decided.

The following year, as I drove each one home from the airport, I said, "I'm so glad you're home. This is a vacation for you. I'd like it to be a vacation for me, a happy time for us all."

"I really like to prepare meals for us all, but when I do, I'd like you to clean up. Once in a while I'd like you to cook. When you do, I'll clean up." And we discussed ways to share some of the other chores as well. "This way we can spend more time together," I said.

The answers were immediate, clear and simple. "Right on, Mom. Of course we'll do that."

It worked. It wasn't easy for me at first. Often I'd go to bed before them, closing my eyes to a kitchen still a mess from dinner. But never once did I come down in the morning to dirty dishes.

I scheduled a date with each of the four of them, a time and place and activity when just the two of us would be together, away from the hustle, bustle and competitive conversations of a family of six. Those were precious times for me and for each of them as we shared ourselves adult to adult.

I made sure I had some quiet time alone each day, something I was very much used to in their absence and found important. Just as I asked them to respect my need for privacy, I respected theirs.

Christmas holidays have never been better since then. I'm so glad good old Mom doesn't live here any more, and I think my family is, too.

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# Christians have waited to tell stories, sing songs

by GABE HUCK

Like most other tribes, the Christian people have waited. We have waited, and called those waiting days "Advent."

We have waited to tell the stories and sing the songs and pray the prayers. We have waited to put into word and melody and procession all that we want to stake our lives on: this place, this earth, this flesh—God's dwelling place.

Before there were theologies for Christmas, there were stories. Around the stories there came to be festivity.

The stories were not histories or documentaries. They were tales told about a birth by people who had to see everything through the other end of life, the death in which Jesus triumphed.

And so the people told of a woman from Galilee called Mary who, as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote:

"Gave God's infinity/Dwindled to infancy/Welcome in womb and breast,/Birth, milk and the rest..."

There was a birth. There was the bursting of waters, pushing, cutting cord, fondly wrapping. There was parting at the beginning, as at every beginning.

And not only, the stories tell, the blood of birth spilled, but other blood, the world's most innocent blood in the death of the innocents. It is a true story being told, for that, we know, is the way it goes, the way it went, the way it will go: We've all known kings like Herod. It's practically a prerequisite for the job: "Sure, somebody's going to get hurt—a few lives lost, but isn't it worth it?" It comes with the territory.

But then consider how the medieval drama called "The Play of Herod" ends. We see the escape to Egypt, the hasty retreat of the magi, then the intrusion of the military into the village and, as the children are put to death, the biblical wailing of Rachel who would not be comforted because her children are no more.

But this is not the end of the play. Did the medieval authors somehow invent a happy ending? Nothing of the kind. The ending is not happy. It is a great mystery. For there is a "Te Deum" sung: "We praise you, God, we confess you as Lord."

The greatest chant of praise and thanksgiving. This is sung by Mary and Joseph, processing through the audience. But they are joined in their song and procession by the animals and the angels, by the shepherds, by the lamenting Rachel and the parents of Bethlehem, and they are joined by the soldiers and their victims and by Herod.

They all process and all sing praise. And we sing too, finding ourselves in the procession.

Today we can't imagine it. We take our Christmas with lots of sugar. And we take it in a day. Though we've been baptized into his death, we have little time for or patience with how that death is told at Christmas, a death that forever confuses lament and praise. And no wonder we are careful to keep Christmas at arm's length. What is Herod in these times?

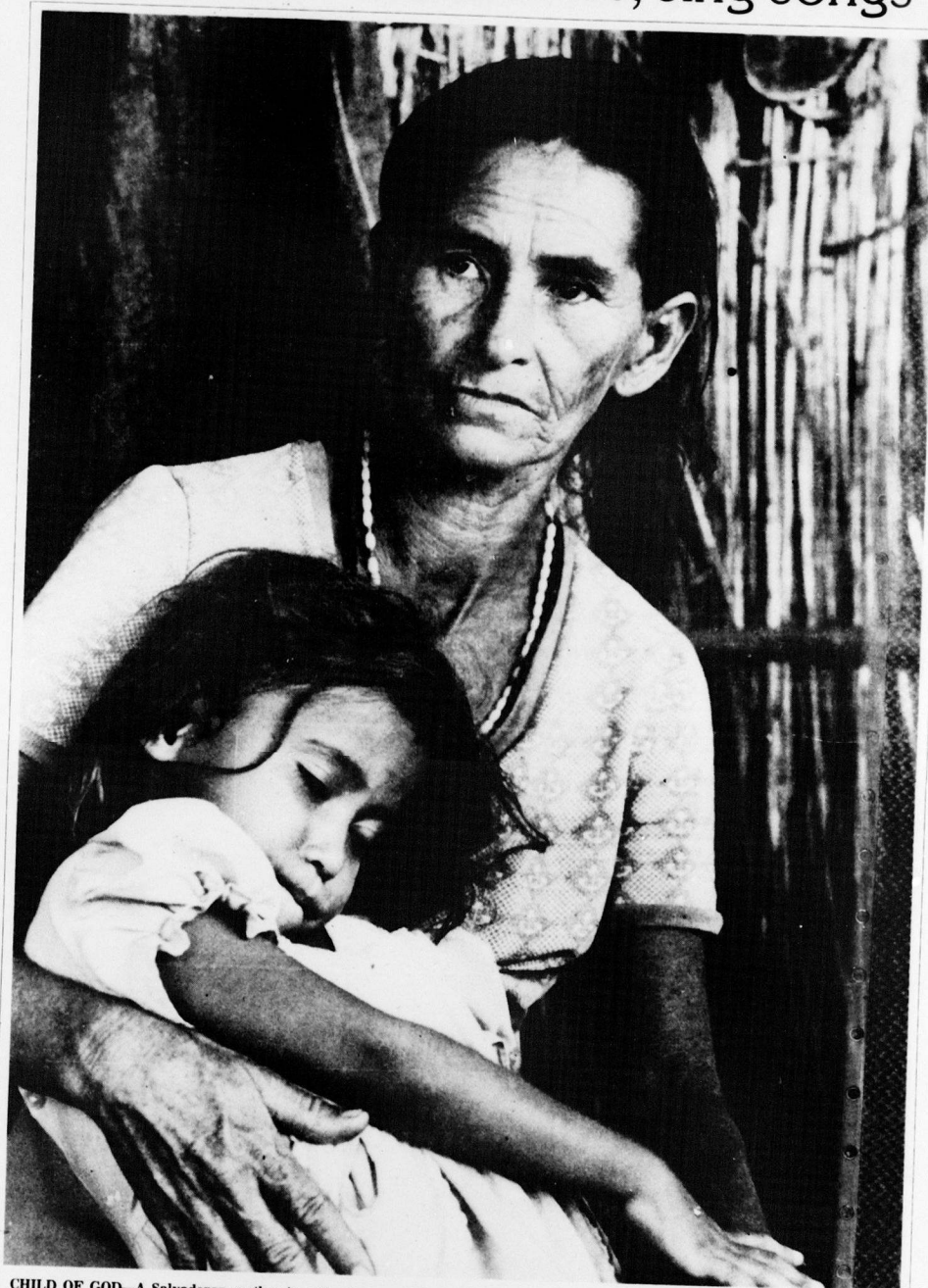
"O the night of the weeping children!/O the night of the children branded for death/Sleep may not enter here.../Yesterday mother still drew/Sleep toward them like a white moon.../Now blows the wind of dying/Blows the shifts over the hair/That no one will comb again."

(From "O the Chimneys," by Nelly Sachs (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.)

Not about Bethlehem but about Auschwitz. Or maybe about any place the world's Herods (include us in) have wandered. From the year's news of 1983: How many places, how many innocents?

Where is that mystery in our Christmas, the mystery that is only the victorious cross? It is right there in the stories we tell, the carols we sing, the gifts we give and cards we write, the time we take to process through the dozen days from Christmas to Epiphany, the many ways we have to whisper to one another that the days are numbered now for the world's business as usual.

Somehow, some way, we are going to join hands and take the procession all over this earth.



**CHILD OF GOD**—A Salvadoran mother in a Honduran refugee camp holds her child close as she ponders their uncertain future. Her humble surroundings might be akin to those of Mary and her

child when she gave birth in the manger. (NC photo by Rick Reinhard)

## Some TV programs you can watch this week

Television programs are abounding during the Christmas holidays. Here are a few to watch:

Saturday, Dec. 24, 11:30 p.m. (NBC)—Bishop Agnellus Andrew hosts a special report on the preparations for the Christmas midnight Mass from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Saturday, Dec. 24, 12 midnight (NBC)—"Christmas Rome 1983" Pope John Paul II celebrates the Christmas midnight Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Sunday, Dec. 25, (ABC) "Directions"—"Kalikimaka: Christmas in Hawaii," a Christmas service from the Kawaiahaeo Church in Honolulu. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)

Sunday, Dec. 25, (CBS) "For Our Times"—A musical tribute to Christmas

with the CBS Orchestra conducted by the late Alfredo Antonini and soprano Veronica Tyler. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)

Sunday, Dec. 25, 10-11 p.m. (PBS) "Christmas at Pops." The Boston Pops Orchestra, conducted by John Williams, is joined by the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for a concert of Christmas music that includes an audience sing-along of traditional carols in a rebroadcast of last year's program.

Monday, Dec. 26, 9-10 p.m. (PBS) "The Four Seasons." Violin virtuoso Gidon Kremer and the English Chamber Orchestra perform Antonio Vivaldi's classic concerti cycle, "The Four Seasons," filmed in the 18th-century Bavarian monastery library of Polling, West Germany.

Tuesday, Dec. 27, 9-10:30 p.m. (PBS) "Joint Custody: A New Kind of Family."

By examining four different arrangements in which divorced or separated couples share equal responsibility for raising their children, this documentary shows the rewards and hardships of co-parenting.

Friday, Dec. 30, 9-9:30 p.m. (PBS) "Mark Russell Comedy Special." A roundup of Russell's best jokes and jabs at Washington's politicians and the newspapers' daily headlines are presented in this year-end review of topical humor.

Sunday, Jan. 1, (ABC) "Directions"—ABC News reports on the major religious stories of 1983. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)

Sunday, Jan. 1, (CBS) "For Our Times"—Jewish, Protestant and Catholic seminarians look at the issues and events challenging religion in America. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)

# Love is the best gift but many of us don't know how to wrap it up

by BOB DYLAN

It's OK to give Christmas presents.

About this time of year we may need that affirmation because some otherwise good and kindly people try to convince us that gift giving demeans the spirit of Christmas. That can happen, but it doesn't have to.

Love is the reason people do most of the things they do at Christmas time. And lots of us count on a gift to somehow express our affections, because when it comes to expressing love, our society is pretty primitive.

A friend helped me put this into some perspective a few years ago as we shopped in a hardware store (they sell everything in some of those places). Last-minute shoppers were busily gathering games off the shelves.

"What people are really buying is love," he said.

Aware that he had a rather dry sense of humor, I waited for a punch line. "How's that?" I finally asked.

"Most of those folks will never get around to playing those games with their kids. They know a lot of the games will be lost or broken a few weeks after the holidays. But they see these things advertised on television and the commercials show families playing games together.

"Everybody's happy. Nobody's fighting or shouting. The little kids aren't accusing each other of cheating. Everybody wants that kind of family. They buy the games and hope their family will find that kind of instant happiness.

"But it's a substitute for love. It's not the real thing."

I thought awhile before answering.

"Maybe it's not so different. Sure, people want families to be fun. They want to be together and they want to be happy—especially at Christmas. That's good."

In response to his shrug, I pointed out that just buying those kinds of things was an effort at communicating care. "They're saying, 'This is what I hope for us. This is what I'd like.'"

It seemed to me that underneath all the wrapping and tinsel was a message that people were struggling to give.

"There are people who think the whole idea is commercial. They don't see any good in it. There are also people who measure the holiday in terms of the gifts they accumulate. They're wrong—and they're a minority."

You don't have to give or get a gift at Christmas to know that you are loved. But it helps if you are able somehow to give one.

Most of us know that Christmas is the best time to tell the people around us we love them. We don't give that message often enough.

You can't possibly dump a sufficient amount of love on people—especially children—in a set time and expect it to last for days, weeks or months. That's like setting aside five minutes for petting a puppy and wondering why it comes back 10 minutes later.

Loving is easier than explanations.

That's why a lot of us give gifts. We want family, friends and neighbors to know that we care. The words we want to say



LOVE IS—Rodney Fulton saunters down Pine Chapel Road in Hampton, Va., whistling a merry tune while carrying a gift for his grandmother. His pooch, Duchess, comes along to keep him company. Love is the reason people do most of the things they do at Christmas time and a gift is one way we try to express our love. (NC photo from UPI)

somehow don't fit together in our minds and sound strange in our mouths.

The miracle of Christmas is that it makes us want very much to say them.

So if you get my present, even if it's

tacky or the wrong size, it doesn't matter. What I'm trying to give is some of myself.

Love is truly the best thing each of us has to offer. A lot of us just don't know exactly how to wrap it.



All Christmas secrets shared, we rest content, beside the hearth, a light brimming in our hearts to warm the winter through.

L.S. Ayres & Co.



# Each family should foster traditions for holiday

by MARK D. LOMBARD

Snow is gently falling on the quiet evening scene. Inside the large Victorian house a yule log burns in the fireplace, giving off a glow that is the only light in the room.

Three generations are gathered around the fire to share fruits and snacks and to reminisce of Christmas past.

The house, simply decorated, is filled not with the sounds of television, radio or video games, but with traditional Christmas music, singing and laughter.

Does that sound like the perfect Christmas scene? Though the elements of one's own "perfect" Christmas may differ, many yearn, hope and pray for a holiday season that fosters closer family ties and deepened rituals—a Christmas like they've never had before.

The need becomes ever more heartfelt as parents listen to children who seemingly parrot television advertisements promoting designer jeans, GI Joe command posts, Masters of the Universe figures, video games, Dukes of Hazzard matchbox cars and Strawberry Shortcake.

Faced with the desire to make this Christmas the hap-

piest yet, but feeling that Christmas celebrations have become festivals of overabundance, what can a parent do?

A paperback book may provide clues for the parent trying to instill meaning and joy in the holy season. Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli in "Unplug the Christmas Machine: How to Have the Christmas You've Always Wanted," (William Morrow and Company Inc., New York, 1982, \$6.95) offer helpful hints, a valuable resource guide and the cumulative wisdom of the thousands of parents they've spoken to at holiday workshops they have given.

"Christmas has become a national neurosis," the authors stress. Subtitled "How to Have the Christmas You've Always Wanted," the book suggests that the lack of fulfillment parents may experience has less to do with Christmas and social values and more to do with not appreciating what children really want and really need: relaxed and loving time with the family; realistic expectations about gifts; an evenly paced holiday season; and strong family traditions.

The book suggests ways to help satisfy these needs, while freeing the anxiety-ridden parent from the roles of host (hostess), housecleaner, master chef, craftsman, decorator, correspondent and packer.

Rather than crowding the season with special events that exclude children, plan activities that allow each family member to become a responsible, active participant in holiday celebrations, the authors suggest. As a family, choose and decorate the tree and the house, visit friends and relatives, bake, send cards and gather the neighborhood for caroling. Do not be concerned about how the tree, decorations, cookies and cards look.

The key ingredient in a less stressful, more rewarding Christmas is the active involvement of all family members, the authors note.

Move the focus of Christmas toward celebration. Parents spend enormous amounts of energy and money trying to give gifts that the children have had their hearts set on. Yet, on Christmas Day, parents may find looks of disappointment when all the presents are opened.

"When all of their excitement about Christmas is focused on gifts alone, children feel terribly let down, because as marvelous as the new games and toys may be, they can't possibly live up to all those weekends of breathless anticipation," the authors write.

They recommend spreading the excitement over the four weeks of Advent and through Christmas Day to Epiphany. The authors suggest a potluck supper with family and friends after Christmas.

And remember, the authors stress, that in the family setting a "tradition" takes hold after only the second year of carrying out the activities.

So, create your own "traditional Christmas" that allows room for the full participation of the entire family. And spread the responsibility for a fulfilling holiday season to everyone.

You just may find that the spirit of Christmas has truly come alive in your home on Christmas Day.

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## Differences in gospel accounts

by Fr. JAMES A. BLACK

During the Christmas season, the church selects scripture readings from the sections of the Gospels known as "the infancy narratives."

There are only two infancy narratives to be found in the gospel accounts: One is in Matthew, the other in Luke. The two accounts contain significant differences.

Matthew's account mentions Joseph and his espousal to Mary. Matthew describes the violence of Herod against the children of Nazareth. He tells of the magi who followed a star.

Luke describes the kinship between Mary and Elizabeth, the appearance of angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus in a manger.

In all their details, the two authors were trying to present information that was more significant than biographical detail. Instead, they were trying to say something important about who Jesus was.

Matthew: Matthew opened his narrative with a genealogy of Jesus. His audience was largely composed of Christian converts from Judaism. Such a genealogy would have been important to them because one of Jesus' ancestors was King David.

You might remember that God made a promise to David: From David's line would come the Messiah.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus are found in Matthew 1:18-25. This brief passage contains most of the New Testament statements about Joseph.

Chapter 2 of Matthew relates the coming of the magi—symbols of the gentile world—to see Jesus.

Herod's reaction to Jesus' birth is also described. His intent, obviously, was to eliminate Jesus as soon as possible. Herod viewed Jesus as a threat to the throne.

Luke: The first two chapters of Luke also contain an infancy narrative. Luke described the Annunciation, perhaps an event unknown to Matthew. Luke also described the circumstances surrounding the birth of John the baptizer.

Some remarkable similarities can be found when comparing the infancy narratives in Luke with several Old Testament stories in which a child was born through God's intervention.

Three come immediately to mind: the angel's announcement to Sarah about Isaac's birth in Genesis 17; the similar announcement to Samson's mother in Judges 13:2; the announcement of Samuel's impending birth in 1 Samuel 1.

The Old Testament accounts all involve elderly women who could hardly bear children under normal circumstances. But Mary was young, engaged to be married. She asked how she could be the mother of God's son. Upon hearing the angel's response, she professed her willingness to be a part of God's plan.

The traditional story of the birth of Jesus—the Gospel

used at Midnight Mass—is found in Luke 2:1-14. Because of the crowded and public nature of inns at the time, it was probably just as well that Mary and Joseph were directed to a nearby stable. At least the stable provided some privacy for childbearing.

There are so many differences between the accounts in Matthew and Luke that we'll never know in specific detail what happened at Jesus' birth. But each evangelist wanted to make clear one indisputable fact, no matter how he chose to express it: God became man. God himself came down from heaven to become one with us.

That is indeed a fact worth celebrating.

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# Santa remembers Little Jerry and the time a little bird came to stay

by RITA LESTER

In those rare, fleeting moments of tender camaraderie, Jerry's brothers call him Little Jerry.

Little Jerry is 18. Years, not months. One-hundred-fifty pounds stretch tautly over his still growing six-foot frame. His hands are huge. His feet are more so. His hair is red, which he hates, and his eyes are sparkling blue, like—Remember in the Disney film, Snow White, when Dopey put the diamonds in his eyes? Like that.

The name started when he was 2. Santa had left a birdie at our house that year. A yellow, singing canary.

"Mine," Jerry claimed.

"No, no," I gently admonished. "Santa left the birdie for all the boys. He brought you your very own Fisher Price mailbox. See? Santa left the birdie for everyone."

"Mine," he said.

Joey, who was 5, named the bird Oliver, and was assigned the task of filling his water dish. Billy, tidy even at 4, sprinkled seed in his cup while Danny, 3, gleefully ripped up paper for the cage floor. Naturally, I got to clean it. The baby, Bobby, accompanied my mutterings with gurgles and coos. And Jerry? Jerry followed each of our appointed tasks with critical eye and loud voice.

"Me do."

"You're too little, Jerry."

By mid-February I was the sole keeper of the bird. His funny trills and songs lured no one to his cage. Except Jerry.

Every morning Jerry padded to the kitchen in his fuzzy blue sleepers, pushed his high chair to the counter and settled himself in front of the bird. He whispered to him, smiled at him, scolded him, hummed at him and then brought me the birdseed.

"Mine Buldie. Eat."

"His name is Oliver, honey. Can you say Oliver?"

"Before spring the family had accepted the fact that Oliver, now called Buldie, belonged to Little Jerry. But he never did get big enough to feed the bird by himself. Buldie died when Jerry was 3.

He refused all help with the burial. We watched as he dug the hole, placed the box inside, then decorated the grave with rocks. For weeks he spent the first half hour of each day sitting beside those rocks, whispering, humming and crying.

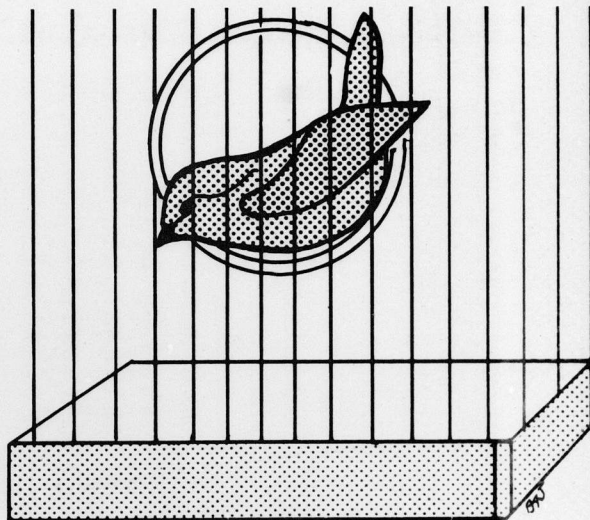
We moved shortly after that so I don't know if Jerry actually remembers Buldie. He says he does. But I suspect it's because "Little Jerry and the Birdie" was one of those "remember when" stories so often requested by the boys. One year we looked into the possibility of Santa bringing another canary. Prices had skyrocketed—Santa couldn't afford it.

The boys are all young men now. Joe is home on leave from the Army. Bill has just returned from California. Dan from Oklahoma. Jerry from his first semester at college. Bob is a senior in high school.

The house is filled with rumbling voices, loud laughter and much back slapping. Last night we reminisced. It seemed to break the tension of trying to relate to one another on this new, independent, young-adult level. It ends with each of them telling of their adventures, misfortunes, disillusionments, hopes.

Jerry, being the newest at facing the outside world, is the most confused, the most insecure, the most vulnerable. This morning he's sitting at his desk upstairs working on a theme paper. I'm at the kitchen table writing this. And the boys?

The boys are out shopping. They left right after lunch, right after they'd given



**BULDIE THE BIRD**—It all started when Santa left a yellow, singing canary at our house, Rita Lester writes. The three older boys all were assigned tasks to help take care of the bird but Jerry, who was 2, was too little. The oldest boy, Joey, who was 5, named the bird Oliver but Jerry insisted the name was Buldie. (NC sketch by Betsy Jones)

me a Christmas tag to hide. Right after they'd asked me how to spell Buldie.

Jerry had wanted to go with them.

"No way," they'd said. "We're out to pick up somethin' neat for your dorm room."

"Like what?"

"Who knows? somethin' yellow maybe."

I can feel the tag in my sweater pocket now. I can feel its warmth. Its Christmas message. Its words, scrawled by brothers.

"Merry Christmas Little Jerry. From Santa."

## Austrians donate tree for Vatican square

**VATICAN CITY (NC)**—A 50-foot Christmas tree, a gift from Austria's Tyrolean region, arrived in St. Peter's Square Dec. 13.

A giant crane helped position the tree beside the ancient Egyptian obelisk in the center of the square. At the same time workmen were constructing a large nativity scene with life-size wooden figures. This is the second year in a row that a

nativity scene and a decorated Christmas tree have been placed in the square.

Pope John Paul II began the practice in 1982.

U.S. Archbishop Paul C. Marcinkus, proponent of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City, welcomed the arrival of the tree, which was hauled from Innsbruck, Austria, on a large truck.

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# 'Membering' a time when Christmas was like ...

A short story recalls  
a holiday past

by KEVIN C. McDOWELL

"Wait here, please." The nurse disappeared around a corner. A door opened and closed somewhere. I dutifully sat down and crossed my legs, decided that was too feminine, tried another way, found that too uncomfortable. Finally, I just planted my feet on the floor, placed my valise snugly by my chair and aimlessly drummed my knees.

I don't like nursing homes. They make me uncomfortable: neon lights, medicinal odors, curious sounds—all too antiseptic, a way-station for the hereafter. But my job requires me to come here when an estate's affairs must be concluded. This was one such instance.

There I sat, surrounded by neon, suffocated by the slow smouldering of decay. Not far away was a small waiting room with round tables, magazine racks full of out-of-date and strange periodicals and those multi-colored fiberglass chairs that stack so nicely but are aesthetically offensive. There was also an elderly gentleman there, comfortably situated. Next to him, on one of those round tables, was a crib scene.

Favoring discourse over my current situation, I made my way to the gentleman's side. He maintained his position between me and the crib scene, an almost protective stance, I thought.

There was nothing special about the nativity scene: the usual assortment of plaster characters, white showing through the chipped areas. An angel held a banner inscribed with "Gloria in Excelsis Deo." The animals were all of the same mold, save one, which was an amorphous blob of dried play-dough that might have been a horse. Then again, it might have been a sheep . . . or a deer. It had four legs in any case. Evidently, it was a child's creation, but no doubt treasured above the others.

I TOOK MY seat. The old man held a cigarette in his hand, but judging from the gray smears in the all-weather carpet beneath his feet, he didn't smoke much. From my vantage point, the smears looked like a bombing pattern. He nodded civilly, acknowledging my presence. He raised the cigarette to take a puff, then thought better of it, and then lowered it. Then he said, simply, "Member."

"Member? Member of what?" I thought. "Pardon me?"

"Member a time when there wasn't shoppin' centers, leastwise none like the Land of Oz like we have nowadays. 'Member a time when Christmas was not so much hustle-bustle. Most of all, I 'member my friend Pat, and I miss 'im."

He flicked off the ashes, decided there wasn't enough left of the cigarette to worry about, so the butt followed the ashes on its bombing raid of the carpet. He folded his hands and glanced toward the nativity scene.

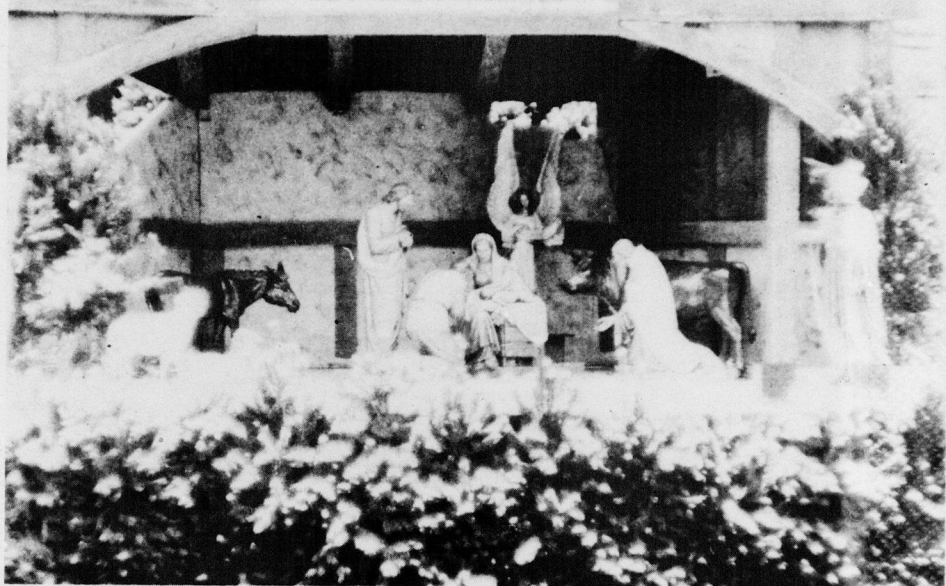
"Pat was the best guy I ever met. Mostly, I thought he was a sucker. Used to call him 'Pat-sy' just for fun. Never ruffled his feathers, though. No siree Bob. They call his kind 'sensitive' now. He was just plain good-hearted to us.

"EVERY YEAR we had to have a school play. Tradition, they said. Torture, I said. Pat was shy, so we were all surprised when we found out he had volunteered for the play—for a speaking part, no less. All he had to say was 'There is no room for you at this inn.'"

"Well, I mean to tell you, he practiced that line over and over, moved his mouth this way, flared his nostrils that way: 'There is NO room for you at this inn.' And on, and on. But, we had to admit, he was pretty good, as surly innkeepers go.

"One day while a bunch of us was down by the railroad tracks—Pat, too—lining up discarded liquor bottles and bustin' 'em with our slingshots, Pat said suddenly, 'I can't do it anymore.'"

"Do what?" we said. "What's wrong with breakin' o' bottles?"



"Not that," he said. "I can't go through with this play. I can't keep on turning those people away."

"Those people," I said, "are acting, same as you."

"Yeah," he allowed, "but it DID happen once. And it was wrong. I want to stop it. Now." And he would discuss it no further.

"NOTHING MORE was said about it, so we figured he had gotten over his problem. But we weren't sure, so we snuck into dress rehearsal. Got caught, but we convinced the teacher—Miss or Mrs. Something-or-Other, don't remember—convinced her that an audience would make the rehearsal seem more real. So we stayed.

"It came to Pat's part. Mary and Joseph came riding up on a donkey—why is it the biggest kids in class always play beasts of burden?"

I didn't know. I didn't think he wanted an answer. He went on.

"Anyhow, they came to the inn and Joseph knocked. Pat menacingly poked his head out the door and critically studied the two.

"Joseph humbly said, 'Have you any room in your inn, sir; for my wife and I have traveled far and are in need of some rest.'"

"I saw Pat's surly face take on all sorts of contortions. We sat on the edges of our chairs and studied the scene intently. Pat finally smiled and—obviously overcome with his good-hearted ways—draped an arm over a somewhat bewildered and reluctant Joseph and half-dragged him into the inn, shouting, 'Welcome! Welcome!'"

"WELL, LET me tell you, Miss or Mrs. Something-or-Other jumped onto that stage with fire in her eyes. She ran up to Pat, shook him fiercely, and said something to the effect that she would break every bone in his body if he ever pulled a stunt like that again. This was serious stuff, biblical and all that, et cetera.

"Poor Pat. That teacher made him repeat that line over and over again, adding more meanness to his voice as he went. Mary and Joseph got impatient and went home to do their homework. The donkey came and sat with us and watched Pat go through the wringer.

"Pat was quiet all through school the next day, more so than usual. He mumbled a great deal. He didn't normally do that.

"Well, the night of the big Christmas play came at last. They always print about a million copies of the program 'cause the mothers always take a handful for posterity and relatives, so the relatives can see what so-and-so's little Johnnie or Suzie's doing. That gives the relatives a year to plot their revenge.

"The principal made a few opening

remarks. This gave everybody a chance to get seated and was safer than switching the lights on and off. They didn't work right as it was.

"The gang was all there. There wasn't a one of us with dry palms as Joseph and Mary—and the donkey—approached the inn. Our hearts were in our throats as Joseph knocked on the door. Our eyes were half shut when Pat opened the door.

"Pat popped his head out so fast he dang near scared Joseph half to death. Joseph regained his composure and went through his spiel about traveling, about his wife, how tired they were and could they stay.

"I saw that characteristic droop come over Pat's face, and for an agonizing moment or two, he said nothing. Then, puffing up his chest, he loudly proclaimed, 'There is NO room for YOU at THIS inn!'"

"Joseph sadly shrugged his shoulders and began to turn away. But then Pat suddenly moved toward the couple, snagged both of them by their arms and added, 'Sure, there's no room, but that's no reason why you can't come in for a bit and have a drink.'"

"Pandemonium comes closest to describing what happened then. There was so much laughing going on in the audience, and any number of fathers were asking the mothers, 'What happened? What'd he say?' And poor Miss-or-Mrs. Something-or-Other. She didn't laugh. She didn't even get

mad. She just flat bawled her eyes out. So much for the nativity play that year.

"Well, I 'member that night well. Afterward, Pat was as excited as a new father. He jabbered all night long about how, after all those years, after all those plays, he had had a chance to change the record, at least for that brief moment.

"I 'member his walking backwards in the snow, explaining to the gang how he felt. It was contagious. Can't buy that. Pretty soon we were all feeling pretty good about it all. What a perfect gift—to give of oneself. And Pat did just that—gave of himself. Of course, he was going to have to give of his neck when school resumed and it was time to pay the piper.

"But I'll never forget that night for as long as I live, and beyond. Makes me feel good all over again, even though the gang's long since gone. When I see one of these crib sets, I 'member it all over again."

At that moment, the nurse reappeared from around the corner. "She'll see you now." And just as suddenly, she was gone.

"Thank you," I said to the air where she had been. I stooped to gather my stuff.

The old man looked wistfully at the nativity, and then smiled at me, eyes wide: "Member?"

"Member," I answered.

And do.  
(McDowell, a Criterion correspondent and Indianapolis lawyer, is a member of Christ the King Parish.)

## Letters and packages greet lonely Marines in Lebanon

by J. J. ZIPPERER

MANITOWOC, Wis. (NC)—A mother whose son spent last Christmas in Lebanon assured some U.S. Marines stationed there of a little brighter holiday.

Diane Schmitt, a member of Manitowoc's St. Andrew Parish, organized a drive to send letters and packages to the Marines. More than 300 boxes were shipped to New York, then to Lebanon, where they are expected to arrive in time for Christmas.

Mrs. Schmitt said while her 20-year-old son, Randy, did not mind his tour of duty in Lebanon, he told her, "Mom, it's so lonely there, and half the guys in my unit never get letters or packages."

Mrs. Schmitt, secretary of the local branch of the Catholic Knights Insurance Society, contacted other Manitowoc County branches for donations so packages could be sent to as many Marines as possible.

When a television station reported the

story, she said, donations began arriving from all over the state.

Everyone who donated something was asked to enclose a letter for a Marine, said Mrs. Schmitt, who wrote letters for packages which did not have a note.

Children at St. Gregory School in St. Nazianz, Wis., wrote letters and drew pictures for the Marines.

"One student wrote, 'Don't come back dead,'" Mrs. Schmitt said, "and there were tears in my eyes when I read that."

Some persons donated money, which Mrs. Schmitt used to buy items for the shoe-box packages packed with non-perishable food, gum, Christmas ornaments, stamps, cards and small games.

Although Randy, now stationed in the United States, will spend this Christmas at home with his family, he expects to return to Lebanon after the holidays.

Mrs. Schmitt said when she told her son of the project, he was pleased, and said, "Mom, you did it for Christmas; now you have to do it for Easter when I'll be there."

# Many customs enhance Filipino family's celebration of the season

by SUSAN M. MICINSKI

The customs of Christmas are many and diverse, and will often differ from country to country. We might sing about the twelve days of Christmas here, but "Christmas in the Philippines is celebrated for 22 days," exclaimed Elvie Carandang, a native of the nation of islands who now lives in Greenwood but who still follows the Filipino traditions for Christmas and New Year's.

Elvie, who was a pharmacist in the Philippines, and her husband Rudy, along with their five children who were born in the Philippines—Delle, Roel, Jojo, Roscel and Odie—have been celebrating the holiday season in the States since coming here in 1966, except in 1975 and 1980 when they visited their homeland. At that time they were at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where Rudy, who worked as an agriculturist in the Philippines, thought he'd complete his master's degree.

"But he was late for enrollment," explained Mrs. Carandang. So instead, "he took the board exam for state plant pathologist in Indiana and Illinois, and passed both. He decided to take the job here since at the time I had a brother who was moving here."

Returning to Filipino Christmas traditions, the festivities begin with "people attending a novena of Masses,

Simbang Gabi (Mass of the Rooster) at four o'clock in the morning on Dec. 16," stated Elvie. Small neighborhood children will carol from house to house "just for fun," while "adults and teenagers will do it for charities and clubs."

**WHEN THE** people get up for the early Mass, "it is dark and cold," declared Mrs. Carandang. However, the "cold" does not fit our conjured-up images of ice and snow. "It's cold enough just for a sweater," she said. "It's more like spring here in the States; you don't have to wear a heavy coat."

On the way to church the Carandang family would see brightly colored lanterns hanging from windows in the homes of both rich and poor. According to Elvie, the lantern is made of a five-pointed star within a circle. "The framework is made of bamboo and covered by tissue paper—white, orange, blue—whatever color the family wants. They are lit from the inside by a candle or bulb."

Mrs. Carandang, who works at Riley Hospital in the chief vital function laboratory, likened these holiday lanterns to the eastern star that helped point the way to Jesus' birthplace. Of course, "we don't hang the lanterns outside over here because of the snow," she chuckled.

Closer to the church stand vendors who sell some native delicacies—such as



**MANTLE OF WHITE**—The first snow of winter wraps its mantle around a statue of St. Theresa of Lisieux at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Rock Springs, Wyo. (NC photo by John S. Gregg)

coconut meat or milk and rice or sweet rice—cooked in many different ways. "We call these puto bumbong, suman, bibingka and sinukmani," declared the laboratory worker. "They also have the native ginger tea, called salabat."

**ALTHOUGH** knowing what Advent is, Mrs. Carandang explained it is not observed to the same extent in the Philippines as it is here.

There is, however, one special celebration held locally for all Filipino people in Indiana, as well as Americans of Filipino descent. "But most of the people come from around the Indianapolis area," stated Elvie. Each year the Barangay Club, a group made up of such people, sponsors a Christmas party. This year it was a dinner/dance held at the Convention Center on Dec. 10.

Christmas Eve is celebrated like it is here in the United States. "The Philippines is westernized, and we follow most of the things the U.S. does," Elvie stated. A midnight Mass, known as Misa de Aguinaldo (Mass of the Gift) is celebrated. "This is the climax of the festival of Simbang Gabi. After Mass, people, whether they know each other or not, greet each other with a warm 'Merry Christmas.' Relatives will kiss each other, too."

After Mass, each family will go home and feast on a special dinner together, called Media Noche. This is followed by the opening of Christmas presents which Mrs. Carandang explained "are scattered around the Christmas tree. And yes, we do have Christmas trees in the Philippines—in fact they are actually grown there, too," she chuckled.

Young Filipino children always receive special gifts from Santa Claus. "Rovin, our youngest child who was born here in the States, always looked forward to opening the first gift from Santa Claus," declared the hospital worker. "This was until he entered first grade and learned in school that the father is Santa Claus. In the Philippines, this was not taught in school. Children were allowed to believe in Santa Claus and their fathers were just happy to play the part for them."

From Christmas Day until Jan. 6, the Feast of the Three Kings, "there is much visiting," said Elvie. "Younger relatives go to the homes of older relatives, and make a special point to see their godparents. We pay them respect by kissing their right hands. We receive blessings and gifts specifically prepared for each of us."

On New Year's Eve, "the whole family gathers in the house of the parents," explained Mrs. Carandang. "We play games waiting for twelve o'clock to come. When it's only a few minutes before twelve, everybody gathers in front of the television counting down the minutes and seconds." When the magic moment finally arrives, "everybody shouts joyful greetings and kisses each other. Then the adults make toasts with champagne and throw coins to the children. After this, everyone has dinner together, called Noche Buena."

Although 17 years have passed since the Carandang family first came here, and their children are now all quite grown, "we still enjoy keeping our traditions alive celebrating the holidays with my mother and brothers who live in Terre Haute," stated Mrs. Carandang.

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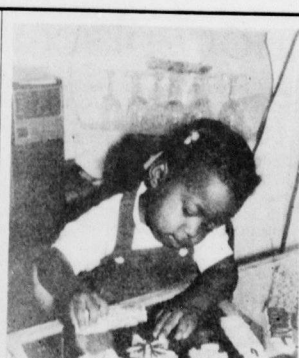
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**IN A CANDY SHOP**—Like a child discovering something sweet and good for the first time, this youngster got involved in baking Christmas cookies. Amber Harris is not quite 23 months old. But she learned the story of the Christmas star while she learned to decorate Christmas cookies as well. Looking over the scene, Amber decided a dash here

and a dash there was enough. A proud chef, she admires her own work. Amber is a member of St. Andrew's Parish Family. The cookies were baked according to the recipe of Margaret Nelson in last week's Criterion. (Photos by Margaret Nelson)

## Love is the perfect gift—the one God gave to us

by Fr. JAMES A. BLACK

No doubt, you've noticed all the advertisements in the newspapers and on television. Every store in town seems to be offering the "perfect gift" for Christmas giving. Most of these gifts seem to be directed toward children.

Each year a good friend reminds me that, in her opinion, "Christmas is for the children." Her point is that Christmas is a special time best appreciated through the eyes and heart of a child.

In one sense, I disagree. Yes, Christmas

offers us the joy of the season. But it also offers genuine opportunities for spiritual growth to anyone who believes in the coming of Christ.

Such opportunities hardly belong to children alone. Indeed, turning Christmas over to the children can be a way of ignoring such opportunities.

One of the Lord's commands to his followers was that they love one another. Loving is an adult responsibility.

Loving seems to come naturally to children; most of them haven't become jaded or cynical about the world around

them yet. For adults, loving is more difficult, but even more necessary.

Paradoxically, it is adults who most resist the very love they need. We set aside a few days or weeks around Christmas each year in which we do nice things for each other, but then we return to our routine.

The proverbial "man of good will" is difficult to find around Jan. 1!

So, in another sense, maybe my friend is right. Unlike adults, children are open; they trust the world around them. They don't look for the base motives or

questionable values of adults. Maybe we adults can learn something from children at this time of the year.

In the final analysis, perhaps the greatest possibility of Christmas is that we learn to love and to be loved. It's a lesson that children seem to learn easily.

This Christmas, tell someone close to you that you love them. It will make the message of the Lord much more real. All advertising claims to the contrary, your very own love is the "perfect" gift—the best one you have to offer. After all, it's the same gift that God gave you.

*Greetings!*

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# Comfort is no replacement for human warmth

## A Christmas short story of today

by TERESE DAILEY

Through the garage window, you could see the car inside was accumulating quite a bit of dust. Two months had passed since anyone had driven it. A slight touch by hand over the car confirmed this. The car was very cold.

On the other side of the town known as Whistlestop, population 5,000, the atmosphere was different. A shopping center sat on a hill overlooking the super highway. Directly behind the shopping center was a small red brick building covered with a gray roof. From the chimney blew nonchalant puffs of smoke. The white door to the entrance was lit on either side with mirrored sconce. Centered on the door was a large Christmas wreath. Hanging on each window was a small red wreath with a red bulb lighted inside. Snowy white curtains excluded the invasion of privacy.

In the reception room to the left side of the building, it was very warm. A fire began to go out but still gave a feeling of toastiness. Along the mantle above the fireplace were large scallops of gold garland. Across the room and majestically standing straight and tall was a Christmas tree. It had tiny blue lights on each fresh green branch, and on first glance the tree seemed to be real but closer inspection told you it was artificial.

Since it was the holiday season, all guests were invited to enjoy the tree and some refreshments. While eggnog was

being served, season's greetings were also being exchanged. "Hello, my name is Nellie St. John." When she extended her hand, the woman beside her did not immediately respond.

Suddenly the other woman turned and with a warm smile said, "I'm sorry. Were you speaking to me?" Once again Nell introduced herself and offered her outstretched hand.

"Claire Reinhard is my name and I'm happy to meet you, too."

"I see a couple of chairs over yonder which look awful inviting right now," said Nellie. The two women sat in the chairs and Claire let out a little sigh.

After sipping some eggnog, Claire set hers down on the table. Twisting a handkerchief a little nervously, she said to Nellie, "I'm not quite myself these days. I hardly know which way to turn."

Nellie perked up, looked at Claire and said, "Would it help if we had a little talk?"

Claire finished her cup of eggnog and after returning the cup to the table, settled down to begin her story. "Well, you know my poor dear husband quit driving his car about three months ago and when I visit him he always repeats the same warmed over stories. But I'm glad he remembers some things."

"One story is Roy coming out of a parking lot and just as he reaches the end of it, he notices this woman carrying two sacks of groceries. Somehow they both came to a sudden stop, and the poor woman dropped one of the bags and out spilled some eggs and a loaf of bread. Roy said he didn't realize it, and when he looked into the street he saw two black tire marks on

two pieces of bread and also saw the lady shaking her fist at him. But Roy just took off like a scared rabbit."

Then as Claire starts to twist her hankie she rolls her eyes to heaven and says a small prayer, "Oh Lord, give me strength."

Nellie sweetly pats Claire's shoulder and said, "Go on—that is, if talking helps."

So Claire said, "One day when it is pourin' rain, Roy is telling her I was driving my car down Winter Street and I see this little kid with a bag of papers he probably plans to deliver, and he has an umbrella. Well, the wind is blowin' something awful. Along comes a big puff of wind and the boy's umbrella is going way up in the air like Mary Poppins. I was so busy looking at the boy I accidentally drove into this puddle of water and splashed water all over the boy's papers. Well, he's crying and jumpin' around, and he stuck his tongue out at me. I did feel sorry for the poor kid."

Finally Claire looks at Nellie and she says, "What can I do, Nellie? He can't help it and I'm the only one who understands him. I just can't turn away from him when he begs me to listen to one more story, just one more, 'I promise Claire' he says raising his hand scout honor fashion. Okay Roy, let's get it over with!"

"Claire, remember when I went over to the Young's place and Jenny was so thrilled, she made a blouse to enter into the county fair and she asked me if I wanted to see it? Sure, go git it, and soon she came out of the house and raced to the car. I had raised the window some because it looked like a big rain was heading this way.

Anyway, Jenny held the blouse and started to pass it into me kinda like and my elbow touched the automatic window closer, and here was Jenny's blouse half in and half out the window, and as she was tuggin' on the blouse to get it out in time, I heard a tear in the material. And she's a cryin' and carryin' on so and she yells 'I'm calling Claire, Roy Reinhard. Just look what you did to my blouse' and turns away and runs into the house."

"So this is what I mean," said Claire to Nellie, "when I say I'm not quite myself these days," as she gets her bus fare out of her purse. "I guess I'll leave so I can get the bus. Nice meeting you, Nellie, and thanks for everything."

"Nice meeting you, too, Claire. I hope things get better for you real soon."

The bus is now on its way to the super highway and as Claire settles back in her seat, she gives one more glance to the red brick building and reads the sign brightly lit for the dark evening, "Welcome to Eternal Rest Nursing Home!"

(Miss Dailey is a member of Little Flower Parish.)

## Recites peace prayer

VATICAN CITY (NC)—An Australian Catholic women's group has decided to recite a peace prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary every day at noon, Vatican Radio reported.

The women also asked churches and schools to show support for this campaign by ringing church bells at noon to remind people to pray for peace and they invited people of other religions to join them in the campaign, said Vatican Radio.

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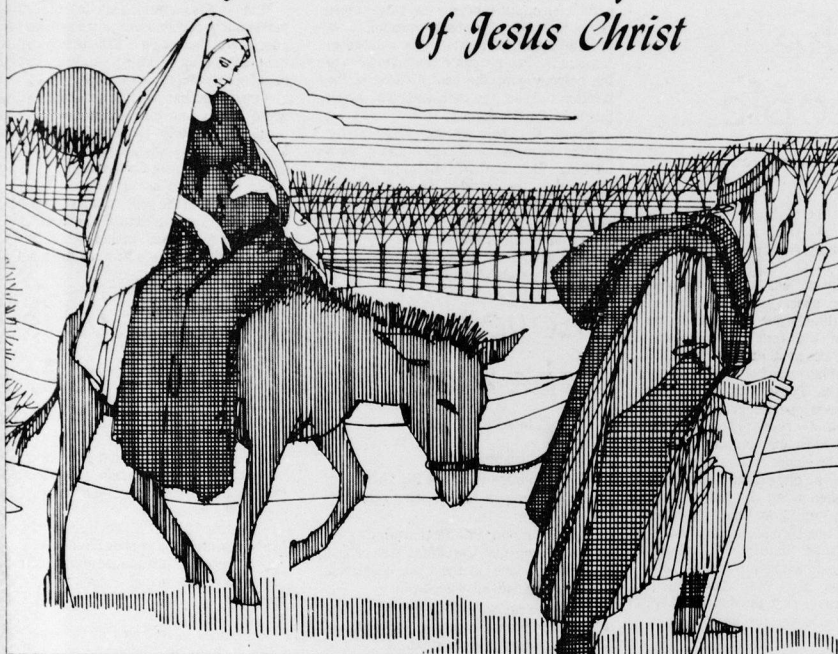
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# Pope John Paul II marks Christmas like many other people

by Fr. KENNETH J. DOYLE

VATICAN CITY (NC)—Christmas trees, carols, presents and cards are distinctive features of the Christmas season for many people.

Pope John Paul II is no different, say members of his household staff.

Although the pope has to devote time to preparing several major addresses and has to allow for extra hours of prayer during the Advent and Christmas seasons, he still carves out slices of time for cherished homey celebrations.

Pope John Paul also has brought some familiar Christmas traditions to the public life of the Vatican. More than a million Christmas visitors last year were beneficiaries of a papal brainstorm. For the first time a Christmas crib with life-sized figures and a 40-foot Christmas tree decorated St. Peter's Square.

According to his staff, the pope also had a tree placed in the hallway of the papal apartment and a crib scene in his private chapel.

As for cards, the pope sends none but receives thousands from across the globe, say members of his staff. Many of them are acknowledged by the Vatican Secretariat of State, but the pope personally responds to old friends, heads of state and church dignitaries.

"THE POPE has no time to shop" for gifts, says a staff member, but he receives hundreds of presents, including food, from around the world. Much of the food is donated to orphanages in Rome.

"He wants people to know that

Christmas is a time for sharing," says a staff member, "and that what is his, is everyone's."

Members of the staff also outlined the pope's personal Christmas schedule, marked by customs from the pope's native Poland.

The pope marks Dec. 24 in a Christmas vigil spirit. He observes strict fast and abstinence, with only one full meal in the evening, when the first star appears. Joining him at this meal are his "family," the members of his household staff. During the meal, as is Polish custom, family members express special gratitude, ask forgiveness and re-establish loving relations with each one present, if any difference has developed among them.

The pope has no close family living. His only brother died when the future pope, Karol Wojtyla, was 12, and his only sister died before he was born so his staff makes up his Christmas "family." Since this Christmas vigil is a special time of good will, the pope also may invite poor neighbors or travelers to the dinner, where a special place is set for an "unknown overseas guest."

Before eating, all who have gathered exchange good wishes and share a thin white wafer, the symbol of Christ born in Bethlehem.

THEN BEGINS the traditional meal of Polish dishes such as beetroot soup, fish, sauerkraut with mushrooms and macaroni with poppyseed. No meat is served as the day of abstinence is still observed.

After dinner, guests join in Christmas hymns and carols.

On Christmas, the pope celebrates three Masses. The first is a public midnight Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, with the Sistine Choir providing the music. After a short night's sleep, the pope celebrates Mass again, this time in the early morning in his private chapel. At 10:30 a.m. he celebrates Mass in St. Peter's, after which he goes to the balcony over the central door of the basilica to greet the thousands who await him in St. Peter's Square.

From the balcony he delivers his traditional message of peace and gives a blessing "Urbi et Orbi," Latin for "to the city and to the world." He also delivers Christmas greetings in about 40 languages, which, his staff says, he practices beforehand with a tape recorder.

Throughout Christmas day, the sound of Christmas carols flows through the papal

apartment from a record player. Christmas night, the pope places several telephone calls to old friends and to ailing church officials.

The pope is known for his love of music, particularly carols. Five years ago, on the pope's first New Year's Eve as pontiff, he invited a group of Polish students to the papal apartment to join in some caroling.

One of the carols is traditionally sung while people join hands and sway to the music. An elderly priest was beside an attractive young woman and declined in shyness to reach out for her hand. Then he heard the pope call out his name.

"I see," said the pope with a wide smile, "that father is not used to this custom."

Everyone laughed, including the priest, who took the woman's hand as the singing went on.

## Love being repaid by love is the meaning of Christmas

by ALICE DAILEY

What is Christmas?

To paraphrase words of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus, it is love being repaid by love.

Sparked by divine affection which gave us the ultimate gift, Christmas is an echo, a lavishing of love on those we cherish, a kinship with all of good will.

How else can we explain the warm glow which prompts us to remember the many who have shown us some kindness?

How explain those modern counterparts of St. Nicholas, the patient Santas who take on what must be an endurance test. Surely it can't be just the extra income. Maybe a greater reward comes from the trust and confidence placed in them by wide-eyed little innocents.

What is it that motivates long hours in the kitchen baking mounds of treats to hand out? Or sends us traipsing in the cold, searching for the perfect gift to express our

feelings? Isn't the divine spark behind it all?

Christmas is the sound of music. Of "Silent Night," which raises goose bumps. Of "Judah's Land," which seems to take us right to the manger.

Christmas is the Salvation Army people braving winter's bite to beg for others.

It's the extra gift placed in our church basket in recognition of a pastoral job well done; a giving back to God a part of what he has given us.

Christmas is reflected in the spanking clean curtains at shining windows; in the garlands we hang on a door to welcome the Christ Child and humanity.

It is not "Rudolph, the Rednosed Reindeer," nor any of the other allowable public trappings which de-Christianize the holy feast.

Christmas is the paramount gift of all time. It is Jesus Christ, the friend who laid down his life for us.

"Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can we keep from singing?"

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# Mary reflects living image of church, pope says to crowd

VATICAN CITY (NC)—Mary, the mother of God, reflects the living image of the church, Pope John Paul II said Dec. 11, three days after the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The pope spoke to 25,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square for his weekly Angelus blessing.

"Placed at the meeting of the old and the new covenant, Mary is the end of the messianic church of Israel and the beginning of the church born with Christ," the pope said.

"With Mary, therefore, are concluded the promises, the plans, the prophecies and the spirituality of the Old Testament church. The New Testament church begins, without stain or wrinkle, in the fullness of the grace of the Holy Spirit," he said.

The Immaculate Conception of the church itself is seen in Mary, the pope added, and in her the church reaches its "highest perfection, without the shadow of sin."

## Personal phone call from Santa cheers university kids

NEW ORLEANS (NC)—Children of alumni, faculty and staff members at Loyola University, New Orleans, have received a personal phone call from Santa.

Rachelle DesVaux, 19, a Loyola sophomore majoring in communications, started the "Santa's Calling" project as a community service.

As a member of the Variety Unlimited committee of Loyola Union, Ms. DesVaux wanted to involve students in a special Christmas project. She and several other students are calling children aged 4 to 10.

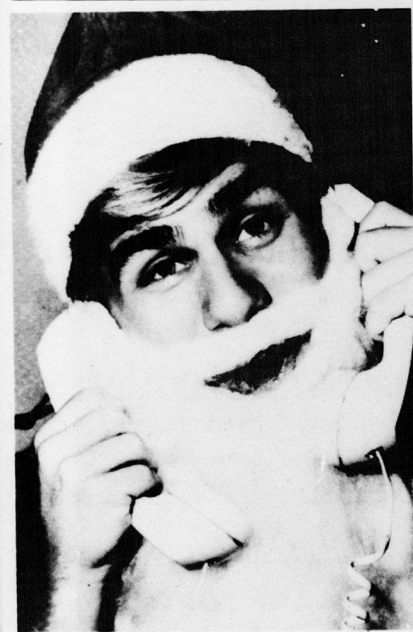
The children usually react in one of two ways, she said. "Either they drop the phone and yell, 'Mom! You'll never guess who's on the phone!' or they say, 'Hey, give me a break. I'm nine years old.'"

But, she said, the kids always stay on the line to hear what Santa has to say. They are overwhelmed, she said, that Santa knows their name and what the child has done well during the year.

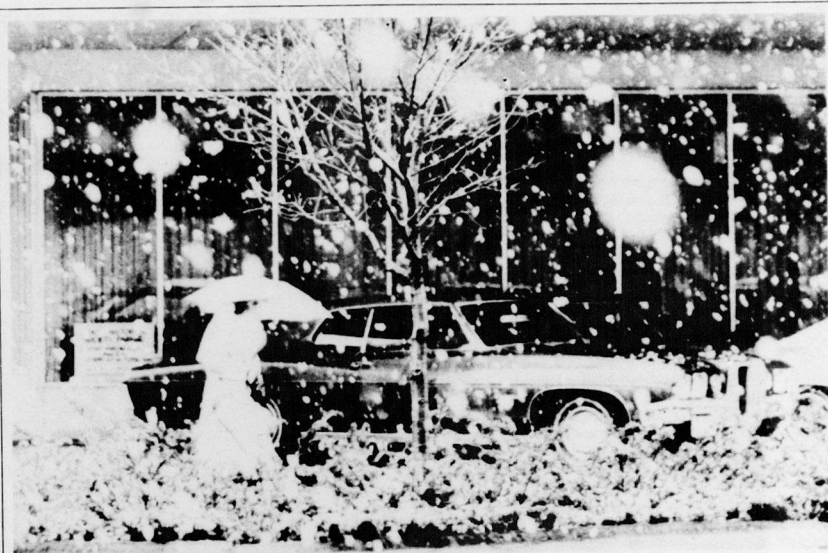
Each parent fills out a form, telling the child's name and age, the names and ages of brothers and sisters, the child's grade and teacher's name. The form also asks the parents what things the child does well and where the parents would like to see some improvement. Most important, Ms. DesVaux said, is what the child wants for Christmas.

One four-year-old was convinced by her call.

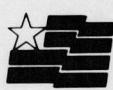
"Mama," she whispered. "That was Santa Claus! He's going to bring me a doll for Christmas. He knew my name. I'm going to be extra good this year."



YOUNG SANTA—Mike Waddington of Kirkwood, Mo., a junior at Loyola University of New Orleans, plays Santa on the phone to children in the New Orleans area. The "Santa Calling" project was the idea of Rachelle DesVaux, 19, a Loyola sophomore from Las Vegas, Nev., majoring in communications. Loyola students phoned children to wish them a Merry Christmas from Santa. (NC photo)



POLKA DOT WHITE—Big snowflakes dot the scene as Omaha, Neb., experiences its first snowfall of the season. (NC photo from UPI)



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## Pope discusses need for peace

VATICAN CITY (NC)—Peace should be restored through "dialogue and a willingness to negotiate," said Pope John Paul II Dec. 15.

The pope discussed the need for peace in an address to Ratu Josua Brown Ioganivalu as the pope accepted his credentials as the first ambassador to the Holy See from Fiji, a small island country in the South Pacific.

"I am appreciative of the reference which you make to the cause of peace and to efforts which are being made to bring an end to conflict and to promote concord in areas of tension and strife," the pope said, noting that the tiny country has sent volunteer soldiers to Lebanon and Sinai.

"The establishment of diplomatic relations," the pope added, "gives expression to the desire of countries to promote peace through mutual understanding, knowledge and fruitful cooperation."

The pope also noted the multiracial and multireligious composition of Fiji, where there are numerous Christians, Moslems and Hindus. Catholics form 8 percent of the 640,000 population.

"The Catholic Church has great respect for other worthy religious traditions, and she upholds the dignity and freedom of conscience of every person, regardless of race or creed," the pope said.

"The Church in Fiji will always seek to collaborate with all races and religions in efforts to further the common good and welfare of all, while at the same time proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ," he added.

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Shiny balls.

Box or trough, as in a stable.

Gold, frankincense and \_\_\_\_\_.

Birth of Christ.

Hung from the fireplace.

Red-nosed Rudolph's keeper.

Wise men from the east.

A heavenly light.

Those who tend a flock.

Nativity scene.

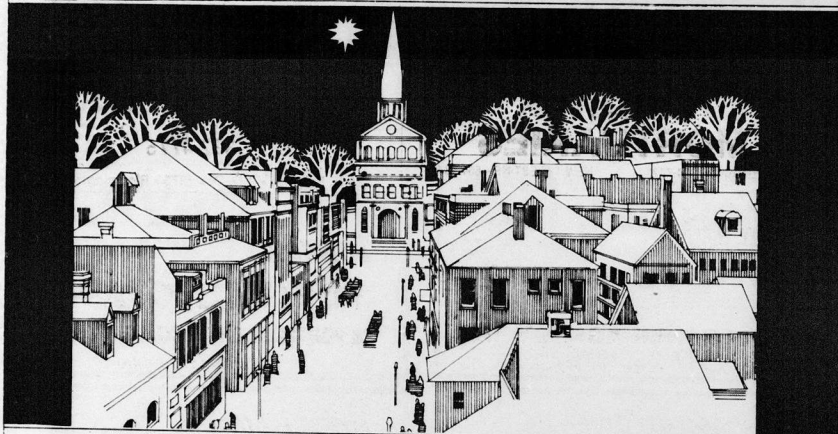
Evergreen.

Sugary swirled stick.

Slang for Christmas.

S	N	I	E	E	R	T	K	D	S	A	M	X	O
U	F	Y	T	I	V	I	T	A	N	P	H	Q	U
N	M	H	S	C	B	N	L	U	Q	R	F	I	L
O	X	P	T	D	W	I	A	M	R	R	O	W	M
L	S	A	N	T	A	D	R	Y	A	S	R	S	E
E	G	R	E	G	N	A	M	T	P	G	E	H	H
N	N	P	M	L	U	V	S	F	H	N	P	E	C
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C	K	Z	N	W	T	O	E	H	S	K	S	H	R
Y	C	B	R	R	I	L	T	U	J	E	K	E	C
D	O	R	O	D	P	L	M	X	N	E	I	R	T
N	T	N	C	B	Z	Y	A	H	W	R	O	D	R
A	S	A	M	T	S	I	R	H	C	H	G	S	I
C	O	R	Q	M	E	H	E	L	H	T	E	B	H

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## A Christmas Journey

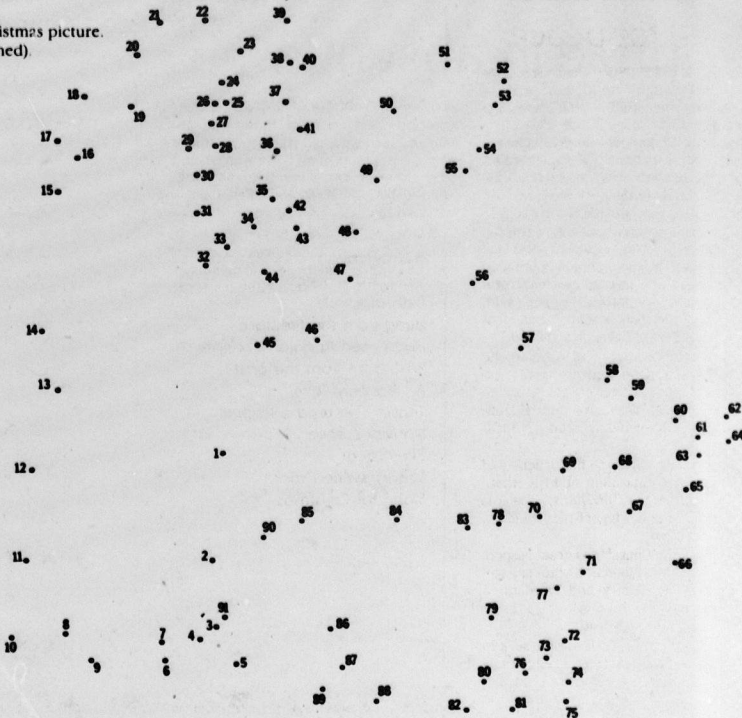
Connect the dots in order from 1 to 91, to form your own Christmas picture.  
(You may color it in if you wish when you are finished).

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Fill in the missing vowels.

1. C \_ R \_ L \_ R S
2. H \_ R \_ D
3. R \_ \_ N D \_ \_ R
4. \_ C \_ C L \_ S
5. S H \_ P H \_ R D S
6. T \_ R K \_ Y
7. M \_ S T L \_ T \_ \_
8. \_ N G \_ L
9. S \_ V \_ \_ R
10. T \_ N S \_ L
11. \_ N C \_ N S \_
12. M \_ D N \_ G H T M \_ S S
13. \_ P \_ P H \_ N Y

Answers: 1. carols, 2. herod, 3. reindeer, 4. icicles, 5. shepherds, 6. turkey, 7. mistletoe, 8. angel, 9. savior, 10. tinsel, 11. incense, 12. midnight mass, 13. epiphany



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# Walesa receives Nobel prize in absentia

OSLO, Norway (NC)—Lech Walesa received the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize in absentia Dec. 10 and his Nobel lecture appealing for a political dialogue with Polish authorities was delivered for him by an exiled Solidarity leader.

Walesa's wife Danuta and son, Bogdan, 13, accepted the prize in Oslo for him while he followed the activities by radio in Gdansk, Poland. Walesa did not attend as an expression of support for jailed comrades and in fear that he might not be allowed to return to Poland.

Walesa's Nobel lecture was read for him Dec. 11 by Bogdan Cywinski, an exiled leader of the outlawed Solidarity union.

Walesa listened to a Radio Free Europe broadcast of the Nobel ceremony in the study of his friend, Father Henryk Jankowski, and attended an evening Mass with hundreds of Solidarity supporters.

The awarding of the peace prize to Walesa was noted by the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, in an editorial marking the 35th anniversary of the United Nations "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which occurred the same day.

Walesa's prize should be considered not political, but "a recognition of this man and the (Solidarity) movement," the editorial said. The efforts by Polish workers were guided by ethics shared by Polish society, conducted without violence and open to dialogue, L'Osservatore Romano said.

In his acceptance statement Dec. 10 Walesa said that "with deep sorrow I think

of those who paid with their lives for their loyalty to Solidarity, of those who are behind prison bars and who are victims of repression. I think of all those with whom I have traveled the same road and with whom I share the trials and tribulations of our time."

Walesa, 40, who described himself as "a Polish worker from the Gdansk shipyard," had been imprisoned for several months by the communist government for his trade union activities.

"We desire peace and that is why we have never resorted to physical force. We crave for justice, and that is why we are so persistent in the struggle for our rights. We seek freedom of convictions, and that is why we have never attempted to enslave man's conscience nor shall we ever attempt to do so," he said.

In his Dec. 11 lecture Walesa repeated the goals of the outlawed union and the peaceful means it has used to pursue them. He said he believed the Nobel prize was awarded not just to him personally but to the Solidarity movement, its supporters and its ideals.

"The Polish people have not been subjugated, nor have they chosen the road to violence and fratricidal bloodshed. We will not yield to violence. We will not be deprived of union freedoms. We will never agree to sending people to prison for their convictions. The gates of prisons must be thrown open and persons sentenced for defending union and civil rights must be set free."



**SINGING TREE**—At St. Louis Church in Batesville, more than 100 children, between grades 4 and 8, climb a five-tiered wood and evergreen pyramid to form a living, singing Christmas tree and welcome the arrival of the baby Jesus. (NC photo by Ruth Ann Hanley)



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# Is Edith Stein destined for sainthood?

by Fr. DAVID K. O'ROURKE, O.P.

The most extraordinary event in our human history took place in the most ordinary of circumstances. God became one of us by being born into a human family.

This mixing of the ordinary and extraordinary is one of the hallmarks of Christian living. I want to illustrate this mixing of the ordinary and extraordinary by looking at the life of a woman from our own era.

We will look at her life because it is so tied up with the outstanding events of our own century. Yet I suspect that as she went through life she did not find anything to make her stand out from life's other pilgrims and, eventually, its other victims.

Her story sounds so modern. She was born into a religious Jewish family but became a non-believer in her youth. Later she became a recognized scholar, a Catholic, a refugee from Nazi persecution and finally a victim in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Her name is Edith Stein.

Some say in future years Edith Stein may well be declared a saint. Without any doubt she typifies the complexities of our human path to God today.

Edith Stein was born in Poland in 1891. As she grew up she separated herself from her family's religious roots and considered

herself as not having any real faith or religion.

The great name in philosophical studies in Europe during the first part of the 20th century was Edmund Husserl. He was the chief proponent of a new philosophical system called phenomenology. Many intellectuals were quite taken by Husserl's ideas because he was so interested in what was going on in the world, right here and now.

Edith Stein became his follower. Then, as she finished her university work, she became one of his assistants at Gottingen University—quite an accomplishment for a woman scholar at that date.

But her religious interests were not quite as dead as she had thought. She began reading religious works, then came across the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila.

St. Teresa was a great mystic, a religious reformer and a leader of the renewal of the Catholic Church in Spain during the Reformation. This autobiography made the difference for Edith Stein. She felt called to the church and was baptized at the age of 31.

She became a teacher in a Dominican girls' school and also undertook an active intellectual ministry, writing and lecturing. Because of her great abilities she was called back to teach on the university level. But her exposure to the life and writings of St. Teresa continued to play in her mind. She finally resolved the pull by entering St. Teresa's religious order, the Carmelites. She would be known there as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, though to the world at large she is still most often called Edith Stein.

At that time Adolf Hitler had come to power in Germany. Soon he began his harassment and arrest of Jews. Edith Stein, now a Carmelite nun, fled to a Carmelite convent in Holland. For her Polish Jewish origins made her a prime candidate for arrest.

For the moment she was safe. But then

came the war and Hitler's invasion of Holland. With the occupation came the Nazi's anti-Semitic policies and the arrest and deportation of Jews.

The final act in Edith Stein's life is a painful memory for us. For this modern woman of prayer, who once wrote that all who seek truth seek God, was among the millions killed as Hitler tried to wipe out the Jews.

When the Nazis began their persecution of the Jews the Dutch bishops spoke out very clearly and forcefully. They wrote a pastoral letter condemning Nazi anti-

Semitism. And promptly, to show the bishops who held the power in Holland, the Nazis rounded up the Dutch priests, nuns and Religious who had any Jewish blood and sent them off to the gas chambers.

Edith Stein was taken from her Carmelite monastery and sent East, back to her native Poland, to Auschwitz. She died in a gas chamber, around Aug. 10, 1942. A victim among other countless victims, killed just like millions of others. And yet a tribute to the uniqueness of every person, even in our own day.

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## Simone Weil identified with the suffering

by Sr. CHRISTINE HOPE ALLEN, RSM

Simone Weil was preoccupied with the suffering and affliction she saw in human beings. Her concern led her to identify as much as possible with those who suffer. She was a French woman philosopher who died in 1943.

Although recognized as a brilliant thinker and trained as a teacher, in 1934 she left the academic world to work as a common laborer in an automobile factory. She wanted to experience the affliction of manual labor and to share the poor working conditions of the average industrial worker in France. Her decision to live in poverty distressed her parents who urged her repeatedly to pay attention to physical needs.

Ms. Weil believed that all of creation contained painful situations which we cannot change. Her recognition of the light of Christ in work situations which tend to push people increasingly into a kind of physical slavery drew her close to Catholicism, despite her Jewish background.

After she left the factory she journeyed to Assisi where she "fell in love with St. Francis." In 1938 she spent holy week in retreat at a Benedictine monastery in France. She said, "The passion of Christ entered into my being once and for all."

However she never became a Catholic, for reasons which aren't completely known. Her reluctance may have stemmed in part from her identification with the Jews and their terrible circumstances during World War II.

After being denied a teaching position in 1940 on the grounds of her Jewish identity, Ms. Weil wrote to the minister of education explaining that she had never been in a synagogue or even witnessed a Jewish religious ceremony. At the same time, not wanting to escape the situation of the Jewish people, she concluded that she would submit to the law.

In exile in England, Ms. Weil continued to identify with the victims of World War II and to search for a way to return to France. She frequently proposed a woman's nursing corps which would serve side by side with the military on the front lines.

The constant rejection of that proposal and her other offers to serve directly in the war effort caused Ms. Weil to become utterly frustrated. Refusing to eat any more than the French ate on rations, she became seriously ill and died in 1943.

While it may be difficult to identify with the more extreme positions taken by Ms. Weil, I think we can learn a great deal from her deep appreciation for the value of prayer, especially the Our Father.

During the last period of her life in France before leaving for England, Ms. Weil worked in a vineyard near Marseilles. She writes: "I recited the Our Father in Greek every day before work and I repeated it very often in the vineyard." She added that saying the prayer led her to feel Christ "present with me in person." She also wrote a lengthy meditation on the Our Father, phrase by phrase, which brought out its simple beauty and strength.

Let me quote just one example:

Our Father: "He is our Father. There is nothing real in us which does not come from him. We belong to him, he loves us, since he loves himself and we are his."

Ms. Weil concluded her meditation by observing: "The Our Father contains all possible petitions; we cannot conceive of any prayer not already contained in it. It is to pray what Christ is to humanity. It is impossible to say it once through, giving the fullest possible attention to each word, without a change, infinitesimal perhaps but real, taking place in the soul."

Ms. Weil's forceful love for the Our Father is impressive. And it leads me to wonder if, as we repeat the prayer during Mass, the words may bring about a change—infinitesimal but real—in us too.

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### Resources

"The Gates of the Forest," by Elie Wiesel. This novel, by a survivor of Nazi concentration camps, tells the story of Gregor, a young lad, making his way from childhood to maturity through the Holocaust. It tells as well of how the Jewish people were able to find God in spite of prison and persecution. (1966, Avon Books, 1790 Broadway Ave., New York, NY. 10019.)



A SAINT?—Some say Edith Stein one day will be declared a saint. The Polish Jew became a non-believer in her youth. While teaching at Gottingen University she read the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, which set her on a path toward her Baptism at age 31, and eventually entered a convent. Her Jewish roots made her a prime candidate for arrest by the Nazis during World War II so she fled to a Carmelite convent in Holland. When Hitler's army invaded Holland, she was arrested and returned to her native Poland to die in the Auschwitz gas chamber. (NC photo)

## GOD in the human situation

### This Week in Focus

Who is likely to know the meaning of God, or the meaning of prayer, in a special way? One of our writers this week suggests that people who are persecuted sometimes seem to gain a special insight about God. Two other writers look at two modern women of prayer who were persecuted.

Dominican Father David K. O'Rourke writes this week about Edith Stein. She was a philosopher and a Catholic nun of Jewish background who was killed during the Nazi Holocaust of World War II. Her religious name was Sister Teresa Benedicta. She is a modern woman of prayer whose life illustrates some of the complexities of the human path to God, the writer states. O'Rourke is on the staff of the Family Life Office in the Diocese of Oakland.

David Gibson writes about the suffering of the Jews during the Nazi Holocaust. He quotes the comments of a rabbi in a book by Elie Wiesel. The rabbi's comments, says Gibson, point to the mystery within such suffering and within the prayer of those who are persecuted. Gibson is editor of the Know Your Faith series.

Mercy Sister Christine Hope Allen writes about another modern woman of prayer, Simone Weil. Her life was lived close to workers and to the poor. Sister Allen is a philosophy professor at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec.

Father John Castlot writes about the ways God is encountered in unexpected places. The God we meet in Scripture, he says, is a God of surprises. People need to remain open to those surprises.

# Mystery in suffering helps us to experience God

by DAVID GIBSON

To discover who experiences God today, it may be wise to search among those who were made victims—victims in concentration camps, for example. Author Lawrence Cunningham made that suggestion in a book titled "The Meaning of Saints."

What Cunningham says is interesting—and, some people might say, curious. After all, do we really want to learn about life from the world's victims? Aren't these people likely to be bitter and disillusioned by their plight? Won't their encounters with death and with life's darker side turn them off to life?

Similar questions would arise if we intended to look for people of prayer among victims of persecution and oppression. Some might say that people in such desperate straits have no choice but to pray—they have to pray. But what does their prayer have to do with anyone else, anyone not in such desperate circumstances?

A rabbi, speaking in a book by Elie Wiesel, offers an insight about this. Wiesel is a survivor of the Holocaust of World War II. He survived the sufferings of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, but his parents and a younger sister did not. Nor did 6 million other European Jews.

Wiesel survived, and lives now in the

United States. He has published numerous books and novels that grow out of his experiences of the Holocaust. They probe the meaning of suffering, as well as the purpose of life in a world where anything as bad as the Holocaust could occur.

In Wiesel's book "The Gates of the Forest," a rabbi teaches about suffering. He says:

"A man who is put to the trial, he said, must give triple thanks to the Almighty: first for giving him strength to endure the trial, second for bringing the trial to an end, third for the trial itself. For suffering contains the secret of creation and its dimension of eternity; it can be pierced only from the inside. Suffering betters some people and transfigures others. At the end of suffering, of mystery, God awaits us. And at the beginning? It depends on man whether or not God is present at the beginning as well."

There is a mystery in the suffering that Wiesel and millions of Jews knew. Some will say the mystery is that all such victims have not turned forever away from God for allowing humanity to create such evil.

But it is also a mystery that, in seeing life and people and God from this condition of victimization, people might be bettered and transfigured, as the rabbi says.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor who became a victim of the Nazis and finally was hanged for his

role in the resistance movement during World War II. He wrote in his "Letters and Papers From Prison" that people ought to avoid thinking of suffering and blessing as mutually exclusive. Suffering can be a way to freedom, he added. "In suffering, the deliverance consists in our being allowed to put the matter out of our own hands into God's hands."

In recent years, many warnings against overemphasizing suffering in Christian teaching have been heard. Many Christian scholars worried that overemphasis causes Christians to lose sight of the joy of their faith. The scholars have warned too that the wrong sort of emphasis on suffering could cause Christians to lose sight of their responsibility to try to overcome the evils that cause suffering.

That's important. But the kind of insight that the rabbi had in "The Gates of the Forest," or that Bonhoeffer had, or that developed in St. Maximilian Kolbe—the priest who chose to give his life up for another man in the concentration camp of Auschwitz—does not reflect any love of suffering for its own sake.

Somehow, mysteriously, it reflects a new level of awareness. The prayer of such a person is not simply prayer borne of desperate straits. It develops when God is believed to be present by someone suffering the worst of circumstances.

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*Merry Christmas and a  
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The Irish-American Heritage Society would like to thank everyone this year; not only our own members, but everyone who has supported us during the past two years.

We are a non-profit organization open to all persons regardless of religion, sex or national origin. Our concern is with the renewal of Irish traditions and preserving Irish culture in Central Indiana. Through our newsletter, speakers and the study of Irish history, we keep alive Irish tradition.

Important to all of us is our concern for our brothers and sisters in Northern Ireland. We strongly believe that only through a unified and free Ireland will human rights be guaranteed for all her citizens. So, we hope that all Irish-Americans and friends of the Irish this Christmas season pause for one moment to pray for peace with justice for Northern Ireland. We would also like all of you who call yourselves Irish-Americans to ask—"What have I done, or what can I do to understand the continuing violence in Ireland and help bring about a free and peaceful Ireland?"

So, if you are really concerned about Ireland, and want to learn more about what is actually happening, fill out the attached application form. Or come to any one of our meetings, which are held monthly in Indianapolis at K of C #437 (downtown Indianapolis) the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM.

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## THE QUESTION BOX

### Reader puzzled by stress on Jesus' coming

by Mgr. R.T. BOSLER

**Q** Every year I am puzzled by the season of Advent. I can understand preparing for a proper religious remembrance and celebration of the birth of Jesus, but why all the stress on longing for the coming of Jesus when he has already come? A sermon I heard explained that we should long for the second coming of Christ in glory at the end of the world. Why should we want the world to come to an end?



**A** Advent and the Christmas season remind us of the grounds of our hope for the future of the human race—an extremely important hope today as we face the possibility of a nuclear disaster that could destroy most of the living beings on earth.

The coming of Christ in glory should be understood in the light of the whole good news of the Bible.

During Advent the church reads for us the glorious passages from Isaiah about the age of peace to come, when men "will beat their swords into plowshares . . . one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."

The Gospels portray Jesus as declaring that the inauguration of this age begins with his coming.

Luke's Gospel describes Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth quoting from Isaiah: "He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free." Then Jesus claims he is the fulfillment of the text. (Luke 4:18)

Elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus identifies the new era with the kingdom of God that is already here and yet to come.

In its beginning it is insignificant, like the tiny mustard seed yet to become a tree where birds can nest.

The followers of Jesus are to carry on his work of building up the kingdom, striving with the power of his spirit to make the new era possible.

To this we pledge ourselves when we pray as Jesus taught us: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's will is that the kingdom of justice and peace promised by the prophets be fulfilled not only in the life of heaven but here on earth.

In his letters, St. Paul writes with the conviction that the death and resurrection of Christ opened a new future for the world. And he sees the second coming of Jesus as the climactic event when not only human beings but their world will be transformed, not dissolved or destroyed.

When the church asks us to long for the coming of Jesus in glory, therefore, we are not asked to desire the destruction of the world but its transformation and perfection according to God's promises.

The prophecies of Isaiah are not to be read by Christians as merely historical accounts of how the Hebrews longed for the coming of the Messiah. Christians should read them with the same longing for the coming of the age they describe, strengthened in hope through belief the Messiah has already come and demonstrated God's power to fulfill the promises.

Our faith and hope in the coming of the messianic age are not so different from that of our Jewish brethren.

The Jews are special witnesses to the belief that the messianic hope has something to do with this world.

Christians in the past have tended to think it had something to do with only life in the hereafter, so our Jewish brethren need not feel left out completely from our Christmas celebrations. They can help us better understand the lesson of Christmas.

(Monsignor Bosler welcomes questions from readers. Those of general interest will be answered here. Write to him at 600 N. Alabama, Indianapolis, IN 46204.)

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**ANGRY CROWD**—The crowd was angry with Stephen for the things he had said at his trial. They picked up big rocks and began throwing them at him. He prayed in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (NC sketch by Beryl E. Newman)

## Children's Story Hour

by JANAN MANTERNACH

Stephen was on trial for his life. Enemies had lied about him. They said he broke God's law and taught others to turn against God.

Stephen stood alone before his judge. His accusers shouted insults at him. The members of the court stared at him, puzzled. Stephen seemed very much at peace.

"Is what they say about you true?" the judge asked Stephen. "Have you done the things they accuse you of?"

"My brothers!" Stephen answered. He looked slowly around the whole courtroom before continuing. Everyone listened hard. "I am not guilty of turning people against God. God has been good to me and to all of us. God led us out of Egypt to freedom. The Lord was with our fathers in the desert. God gave us this land and raised up David as our king. I love and thank the Lord for so many favors."

Stephen stopped for a moment. He took a deep breath, looked straight at the judge, then at his accusers, and slowly looked into the eyes of each person in the court. "No," he continued, "it is not I who am guilty of turning against God. It is you who have done so."

Everyone was angry with Stephen. They frowned and scowled at him. The Holy Spirit was with Stephen. He looked up to the sky and saw Jesus standing there with God.

"Look!" Stephen shouted. "I see an opening in the sky. I see Jesus standing there with God."

The whole courtroom seemed to explode with anger. Everyone was shouting and screaming. Then they rushed at Stephen. They began to beat him. They knocked him down and dragged him through the city streets. They dragged him outside the city walls.

They left Stephen standing there all alone. Then they began to take off their cloaks. They piled their cloaks in a stack at the feet of a young man named Saul. Then they picked up big rocks and threw them at Stephen.

As the stones hit Stephen all over his body, he began to pray out loud. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

The rocks continued to strike his wounded body. Finally Stephen fell to his knees in pain. He knelt there on the ground as they kept throwing stones at him.

He prayed in a loud voice. "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Just as he finished his prayer, Stephen slumped to the ground. He breathed his last breath and died. Those who stoned him picked up their cloaks and went silently to their homes, wondering how he could pray for them.

### Questions

1. After reading the story of Stephen, think about how easy it is to misjudge someone—to get the wrong idea about why a person is the way he or she is. Do you think you have ever misjudged anyone?

2. God can sometimes get a message to us through someone who is persecuted and who is forced to suffer. Who has suffered in our modern world? Does God tell us anything through such persons?

### Children's Reading Corner

All the little Wood Duck could do was swim in circles. This annoyed his brothers and sisters and angered his mother. All the other animals laughed, shouted and growled at the little Wood Duck. Others teased him unkindly. The little Wood Duck suffered much from the unkindness of those who misjudged him. However life changed for the Wood Duck when the owl found out why he could not swim like the others and, also, after he saved his brothers and sisters from a hungry fox. "The Little Wood Duck," by Brian Wildsmith is a story that parents and other adults can use to help children deal with prejudice and misunderstanding. A story like this also can awaken children to the reality that there are "Stephens" today as well as in the early church. (Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY. 1975. Hardback, \$9.95.)

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### Discussion Points and Questions

1. What does the experience of persecution and oppression do to the faith of believers, in your opinion?

2. Do you know, or have you read about, a believer who has suffered imprisonment? Did the experience cause the person's prayers to change?

3. Do you see a relationship between persecution and the search for meaning in life? What is it?

4. Edith Stein and Elie Wiesel were two of the victims imprisoned by the Nazi regime. Do you think they found a way of remaining free in spite of imprisonment?

5. What kind of prayers do you think people being persecuted are likely to say?

## We must expect surprises from God

by Fr. JOHN J. CASTELOT

The ancient philosopher Heraclitus once wrote: "Unless you expect the unexpected, you will never find truth."

Our thirst for truth is insatiable: It can be satisfied only by the possession of truth itself, and God is truth. As St. Augustine put it in an oft-quoted dictum: "Our hearts are restless, and they will know no rest until they find their rest in you."

All yearning for truth and love and

fulfillment is at least the beginning of prayer. Unfortunately, people often frustrate themselves in this. They close off horizons, deciding in advance that they will find truth in a certain ideology or that they will find happiness in a certain way.

They close their minds to the unexpected. As a result, they go through life frustrated, tantalized, impoverished, perhaps eventually bitter and despondent.

But God is a God of surprises. He is always faithful to himself, to truth and

love, to his promises. But he often fulfills these promises in a most unexpected way. If we are not open to the unexpected, we miss the fulfillment and conclude that God has been unfaithful.

People at the time of Jesus took God's promise of a Messiah very seriously. But they fashioned their own ideas of what that Messiah should be like. As a result, when he did come and didn't meet their expectations, they rejected him.

John the Baptist himself was caught completely by surprise. He apparently was expecting a stern, uncompromising Elijah-figure. Then, in prison, he heard of Jesus' ministry of compassion and forgiveness and healing. And John sent some of his disciples to ask: "Are you 'he who is to come' or are we to expect someone else?"

In answering, Jesus points to his fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah and subtly challenges: "Blest is that man who finds no stumbling block in me" (Luke 7:19, 23).

This challenge is now directed to Luke's readers: It asks, "Are you going to be scandalized because Jesus doesn't meet your personal expectations?"

What about us? How does this biblical message address us?

Who could possibly have dreamed that a carpenter's son, a nobody from nowhere, an executed criminal, condemned to a form of capital punishment reserved for slaves—who could have dreamed that this failure, this disgrace, was the Messiah, indeed the Son of God?

And Paul—here was a sincerely religious man, seeking God, serving the truth as he saw it. But he found both truth and God in a shattering revelation of the very Jesus he was persecuting. Talk about surprises!

Will we find God among those who are persecuted today?

Our yearning for goodness, truth, beauty, love, fulfillment is a prayer, conscious or unconscious. But it must never close itself off to the God of surprises.

## The SUNDAY READINGS

CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25, 1983

by Fr.  
JAMES A.  
BLACK

Isaiah 9:1-3, 5-6  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14

**Background:** The theme in all of the readings for Christmas Day is that of joy fulfilled.

In the first reading, Isaiah speaks with great hope about the next ruler to come to his kingdom. In its fullest sense, obviously, the passage applies to the coming of Jesus as well.

The gospel account from Luke is the Christmas story, familiar to virtually everyone. It speaks of Bethlehem, the inn, shepherds, angels and the manger.

In the second reading, the author of the letter to Titus reflected on what Jesus' coming as man really meant.

**Reflection:** I opened a few Christmas cards the other day, looked hurriedly at the signature, and set each aside. Once I realized what I was doing, I slowed down.

I remembered that when I was picking out my own cards for this season, I was very careful to find some that really reflected my feelings toward the people to whom I would send them. Surely, the

through the same procedure. I should at least take the time to read the message in each card.

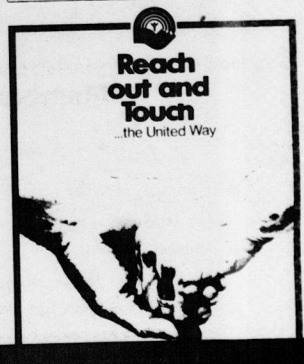
Essentially, all the cards said the same thing; at least, they did until I realized who had sent them. Then the messages became far more personalized and more important.

There were good wishes from my present and former students and their parents; from priest friends throughout the country, and even from readers I've never met.

For me, Christmas becomes most real when people take the time to relate to other people. That only seems to work when we slow down a bit and immerse ourselves in all the joy of the season.

Let me close by extending my prayers and sincere best wishes to all newspaper staffers and readers in the dioceses of Nashville, Evansville, Biloxi, Miami, Atlanta, Erie, Louisville, Indianapolis and Covington. Thanks to each of you for your many kindnesses. All the best to you in the

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# St. Bernard Parish

Frenchtown, Indiana

Fr. Frederick J. Denison, pastor

by JIM JACHIMIAK

On the outside, St. Bernard Church in Frenchtown looks much the same as when it was dedicated in 1894—it's just a little shorter. But inside, chairs have replaced pews and the church has a modern appearance.

The Harrison County church is shorter now because the steeple was shortened during the pastorate of Father Andrew Diezeman, which lasted from 1960 to 1969. "We're on one of the highest points in the county," the current pastor, Father Frederick Denison, explains. Parishioners feared that high winds would damage the steeple.

The interior renovation was led by Father Donald Evrard, pastor from 1969 to 1973. Parishioners completed most of the work in the church, which is the third one to house the parish since it was founded in 1849.

Another change was made in the church this year. "It got so hot this summer that it melted the candles," Father Denison explains. "So to stop the candles from wilting and the priest from wilting at the same time, we put in air conditioning."

Father Denison sees "a real spirit of cooperation" at St. Bernard. "The people have a lot of know-how. If you want something done, they'll know how to do it and they'll have the equipment to do it." For example, parishioners recently built a shelter house, with some lumber coming from a woods on the parish's 18 acres of land.

Parishioners have been "very flexible with the changes in the Mass." Although they had to adjust to using the chairs, "I think they've come to appreciate the fact that this has given the church more flexibility."

**THE PARISH** is "very much a community," according to Father Denison. But members also have a good relationship with other churches. "There are a lot of small congregations. It's not a predominantly Catholic area, but there are a lot of churchgoers." St. Bernard participates in a joint Thanksgiving service.

Softball, too, is "kind of an ecumenical thing." During the summer, a local league uses the parish softball diamond three times each week.

Parishioners also have a history of

serving their neighbors. Residents of Frenchtown once drew water from the parish's 100,000-gallon underground tank. "It was a pretty self-sufficient community," Father Denison points out. Now, the town is connected to a municipal water system in nearby Ramsey. But the tank, 14 feet from top to bottom, is still full in case of fire in Frenchtown.

On July 4, St. Bernard sponsored an outdoor dance, fireworks and live music for the community. Father Denison notes that the event was held in appreciation of community support of parish dances and other activities. It drew "well over 1,000 people," he says.

A parish festival is held annually, with 25 percent of the profit going to fire victims or other needy residents of the area.

"The parish provides on-site meal service for senior citizens," Father Denison adds. Community Services of Corydon provides the meals.

**"WE ALSO** have an emergency clothing closet that is a government project," Father Denison says. Clothing is available for fire victims and other needy residents, whether Catholic or not. "Any time there's a need, the clothing is here."

St. Bernard is also a distribution site for federally-subsidized butter and cheese programs.

In addition, Father Denison says, "through Community Services, should we have a bad winter, our school building will be used as an emergency shelter." He notes that the school served as a shelter after a tornado 15 years ago.

"We've never had a day of school in the building," according to Father Denison, "although it has been used in a number of different ways." The original parish school closed in 1896, and the new building was completed in 1966 but never opened as a school. "I think that while the people were disappointed, they have always looked for new ways to use the building. So that is a credit to them," Father Denison believes.

The building houses a CCD program, coordinated by Jo Ann Smith. "We have very high attendance—almost 100 percent," Father Denison says. "I'm very pleased with the program that we have here."

And he is so pleased with the parish, he says, that "I only let retired priests come here. I'm afraid that if the active ones

come, they'll want to take it away from me."

But he does receive assistance from Steve Donahue, a second year theology student at St. Meinrad School of Theology. "This is his adopted parish," the pastor explains. "He's been a great help to us. He's done all kinds of things, from maintenance to communion calls."

Organizations include "both an active men's club and an active women's club, which is unusual."

The men's club "underwrites the activities of the CYO," sponsors activities for children and plans an annual outing for parishioners. Members of the women's

club assist with charitable works and "just serve as general all-around helpers."

St. Bernard's parish council has been "instrumental in guiding the parish," especially in its service projects, Father Denison points out.

He sees an emphasis on family at St. Bernard. Parishioners "look upon the parish as an extension of their families," he says. "It's a parish that is growing through the families that are here." Because of that growth, a second Sunday Mass was recently added.

"And," he says, "we have lots of babies."



Father Fred Denison

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# YOUTH CORNER

## St. Meinrad marathon benefits CACD

by SUSAN M. MICINSKI

Students at St. Meinrad Seminary literally kept the ball bouncing, and raised nearly \$1,000 in the process during their second annual basketball marathon for Cooperative Action for Community Development (CACD), a non-profit program organized and operated by St. Meinrad seminarians.

Proceeds from the marathon will be used by CACD to continue community service programs for residents of the Lincoln Hills region of southern Indiana. The program has been serving youth, mentally and physically handicapped, senior citizens and low-income people in the local area for almost 20 years.

Eighty people participated in the marathon, including students, faculty and residents of the town of St. Meinrad. Several students played for a total of 18 hours. Almost all the money raised was pledged by residents of the local area.

Refreshments were donated by McDonald's of Jasper. Another marathon is being planned for next year.

The CYO holiday basketball tournaments which began Dec. 16 will conclude some time between Christmas and New Year's.

Cadet A is being sponsored by Our Lady of Lourdes; Cadet B, St. Philip's; Cadet

C, CYO Center; "56" A, Holy Spirit; "56" B, Little Flower; and "56" C, St. Luke.

The dance held at the CYO Center on Dec. 12 netted \$180 which was donated to the Caritas program. Some handcrafted toys made by a brother of William Kuntz, executive director of CYO, were also donated to the Catholic Social Services program.

St. Mark's parish is hosting a citywide holiday youth dance on Thursday, Dec. 29 from 7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Tickets are \$2.

Over 200 prospective students and their parents, as well as alumni, passed through the halls of Seccina Memorial High School during its annual Open House held Dec. 4.

The Open House, designed to show the public various facets of Seccina, included tours through the school, classroom presentations, computer lab demonstrations and a reception hosted by Seccina's Booster Club parents.

Raymond F. Riley, principal, gave two special presentations about the many benefits Seccina has to offer its students and the surrounding community.

The placement test for incoming freshmen will be administered Jan. 7, 1984 at Seccina beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Some people may dream of seeing their name in lights, but for those attending Chatard High School, this has become a reality, thanks to the recently installed data sign board that flashes moving words across a screen.

Lawrence Bowman, principal, explained that the board can be used for announcements, birthday greetings and correct time. "It's actually a computer with a six foot long display board that's something new for high schools."

Each night the computer is programmed with the next day's announcements. "It's really an effective tool," the principal stated.

Permanently installed in

the cafeteria, the board is secure from theft and vandalism.

Ritter High School will host an Open House on Jan. 12 for prospective students and their parents.

Representatives from Ritter's 10 feeder parishes will be on hand to guide parents and students through the school, informing them of what educational programs are available. For further information contact the school.

Brebeuf Preparatory School will present the



**CHRISTMAS SPIRIT**—A crowd of about 300 pushes and shoves in Hills department store in Lynchburg, Va., stripping the shelves of 138 Cabbage Patch dolls within a few seconds after the store opened. Some customers arrived at 6:30 a.m. to stand in line for the store's 9 a.m. opening for a chance to grab one of this season's hottest toys, which includes "adoption" papers. (NC photo from UPI)

drama, "Jimmie Shine," on Jan. 13, 15 and 16. For ticket information contact the school.

An academic honors convocation, open to the public, will be held on Jan. 20 at 11:15 a.m.

The school will host an invitational speech meet for sixth, seventh and eighth graders on Jan. 28.

## DORIS ANSWERS YOUTH

### Reader challenges Doris' advice

Dear Doris:

I would like to comment on a column in which you told a young girl, who felt that girls abiding by "the rules of good behavior" never get asked out on dates, that you didn't agree that "good girls" never got asked out.

Anne M. was concerned and wanted to know why Sunday sermons didn't contain a little "human feeling and reach out to guys to reaffirm what they are taught at home."

You told her to "take your time and select only those friends who meet your own moral standards," and that you agreed home and church share the responsibility of moral guidance but that it should be done in many ways, not just in sermons, because "sermons are for everyone, not just the young."

You said you were against the church "drumming" things into people like lines of a play and that you felt the "real way of life based in church teaching should be taught at home by love, discipline and example."

I felt your answer to be a bit of a put-down. Everyone needs support and reinforcement. Have you forgotten how difficult the "dating game" is?

It is great for home to be the example, but the church has its responsibilities, too, because it teaches all families about this part of life.

To me your advice seemed gratuitous—"select only

those who meet your moral standards." Anne M. sounded as though she was doing that and she was still having trouble.

The church has a great opportunity, and mission, to teach moral values. It is especially important when society is fostering an opposite way of life.

"The family alone" is an overused answer in the church today. The church's power to inform and inspire a person regardless of other influences has always been a way of spreading the Good News. It should not let this issue, or any other, go by default.

A Reader

Dear Reader:

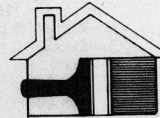
Thanks for reading and taking the time to respond.

Perhaps you are right and the church should take a stronger stand and raise its voice louder in order to be heard in today's stifling society.

Let us be careful, however, to separate the institution of the church from the church which is in reality the people. The institution is fallible and must be taken with a grain of salt. It, in itself, is not representative of church.

You are church, I am church, Anne M. is church, the local priest, the local street people, we are all church and we must work together to discern the words of Christ and the values that make us all Christian.

You are right, there



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## Lifesigns

Sunday, Dec. 25 (Christmas Day), "Lifesigns," the new and exciting radio show for youth, will feature a rebroadcast of "Partying" with youth from St. Thomas Aquinas in Indianapolis. The show previously announced for this date will be aired Jan. 15, Sunday, Jan. 1 (New Year's Day), the show will feature "If I Had to do It Over" with youth from St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg. The program is aired at 11:35 a.m. on WICR 88.7 FM.

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# The ACTIVE List



The Active List welcomes announcements of parish and church related activities. Please keep them brief listing event, sponsor, date, time and location. No announcements will be taken by telephone. No pictures, please. Mail or bring notices to our offices by Friday prior to the week of publication.

Send to: The Active List, 1400 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206

## December 26

Northside and Westside Separated, Divorced and Remarried Catholics will meet at 7:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Center. Discussion on "Creativity." Call Jan Mills 259-4422, Sara Walker 259-8140 or Mary Jane Oakley 247-0286 for information.

## December 29

A Parish Christmas Dinner will be held at 6:30 p.m. at St. Benedict Church, Terre Haute.

## December 31-January 1

A Young Adult Retreat will be held at Mount St. Francis Retreat Center. Call 812-923-6817 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. for information.

## December 30

Youth groups from the Batesville Deanery will enjoy a dance from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence Gym, Lawrenceburg. Cost is \$1.

## December 31

St. Bernadette Parish, 4838 Fletcher Ave., will hold a New Year's Eve Party beginning with Buffet Dinner from 7 to 9 p.m. DJ Jay Reynolds will play music for all ages from 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. \$20/couple, \$10/singles.

The Catholic Widowed Organization (CWO) will enjoy a New Year's Eve Party at the home of Bob Beckerich beginning at 8:30 p.m. BYOC. Call 253-8771 for information.

Separated, Divorced and

Remarried Catholics are planning a City Wide New Year's Party at 9 p.m. Bring snack and beverage to share. Call Judy Guillian 545-7204 or Bob Lawless 546-3453 for further information.

A New Year's Eve Dance sponsored by Holy Cross Church will be held in Holy Cross Hall, 125 N. Oriental St., from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. D.J. Gary Amonett. BYOC; beer and setups available. Donation: \$5 per person.

## January 1

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed for quiet prayer and reflection from noon until Benediction at 5:45 p.m. in St. Joan of Arc Church, 4200 Central Ave.

## January 2-6

A Directed Retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius will be conducted by Benedictine Sister Gwen Goss, Beth Ann Hughes and Holy Cross Father Robert Nogosek at Beech Grove Benedictine Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Deposit: \$50, balance: \$100. Call 788-7581 for further information.

## January 3

A Directed Retreat of the Successful Living course conducted by Franciscan Father Justin Belitz will be held from 7:30 to

9:30 p.m. at Alverna Retreat Center, 8140 Spring Mill Rd. Phone 257-7338 for information.

## January 5

A Support Group Meeting will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Kordes Enrichment Center, Ferdinand.

The Successful Living course conducted by Franciscan Father Justin Belitz continues from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Alverna Retreat House, 8140 Spring Mill Rd. Call 257-7338 for information.

## January 7

The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima will hold its First Saturday Holy Hour at 3 p.m. in St. Jude's Church, 5353 McFarland Rd.

## January 8

Kordes Enrichment Center, Ferdinand, offers an eight-day Directed Retreat beginning today at 7:30 p.m. Call 812-367-2777 for more information.

St. Joseph Church, Terre Haute, will hold a pitch-in Parish Epiphany Party in the Gregorian Room at 12 noon. Bring a wrapped gift for Saints' names drawing.

## Socials

MONDAY: St. Ann, 6:30 p.m.; Our Lady of Lourdes, 6:30 p.m.; St. Thomas, Fortville, 7 p.m. TUESDAY: K of C Plus X Council

3433, 7 p.m.; Roncalli High School, 6:30 p.m.; St. Peter Claver Center, 3110 Sutherland Ave., 5 p.m.; St. Simon, 6:30 p.m. WEDNESDAY: St. Anthony, 6:30 p.m.; St. Patrick, 11:30 a.m.; St. Roch, 7-11 p.m. THURSDAY: St. Catherine parish hall, 6:30 p.m.; Holy Family K of C, 6:30 p.m. Westside K of C, 220 N. Country Club Road; St. Peter Claver Center, 3110 Sutherland Ave., 5 p.m. FRIDAY: St. Andrew parish hall, 6:30 p.m.; St. Christopher parish hall, Speedway, 7 p.m.; St. Rita parish hall, 6:30 p.m.; Holy Cross, 5:30 p.m.; Holy Name, Hartman Hall, 6:30 p.m. SATURDAY: Cathedral High School, 3 p.m.; K of C Council 437, 1305 N. Delaware, 4:30 p.m. SUNDAY: Cardinal Ritter High School, 6 p.m.; St. Philip parish hall, 3 p.m.

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Classes are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. beginning January 3 and include such topics as: *How to Overcome Failure, Overcoming Fear, Motivating Yourself, Motivating Others, Creative Thinking, Visualization*, etc.



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Registration:  
TUESDAY  
January 3  
7:00 p.m.

Cost:  
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Instructor:  
Father  
Justin Belitz  
O.F.M.

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Weekdays

The program, which will meet two hours a day, once a week for six weeks, will offer instruction in assertiveness training, relaxation techniques, communications skills, sexuality and spirituality. Sessions will be conducted by Roseanne Killen and Jo Ann Weber, CSS social workers who are Indiana University graduates and members of the National Association of Social Workers.

In addition to the women's group, Killen has worked as a school and family counselor, and with the "Children of Divorce" program. Weber is presently working as a family counselor at St. Luke's.

"We want women who are at home to learn some coping skills in dealing with the significant people in their lives—such as husbands, children and other social groups," stated Killen. "Many women feel they're torn in many directions; constantly giving and having little left for themselves.

We'd like to help women find time for themselves, and help them discover and meet their own needs rather than looking for satisfaction beyond themselves."

Fees for "Women's Growth Group," which will be an on-going program to be held at the Catholic Center,

will be on a sliding scale depending on the family's income. The counselors are planning on six to 10 participants for this first-time offering. For registration or further information call either Killen or Weber at Catholic Social Services, 236-1500 as soon as possible.

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## PROGRAMS 1983/1984

- Jan. 2-6 Directed Retreat  
Gwen Goss, OSB, Beth Ann Hughes, Robert Nogosek, CSC
- Jan. 11 A Day of Reflection for the Unemployed  
Fr. Jim Byrne: The BGBC Staff
- Jan. 14 The Dynamics of Prayer  
Gwen Goss, OSB
- Jan. 18 When Communities Become Destructive — A Workshop for Parish Staffs  
Tim Fallon
- Jan. 21 Leading Small Groups  
The BGBC Staff

For Further Information Call: 788-7581

Or Write: Beech Grove Benedictine Center  
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## Cardinal condemns London terrorist bombing

Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich of Armagh, Northern Ireland, condemned a terrorist bombing in London by members of the outlawed Irish Republican Army as "a monstrous crime against God and humanity." Pope John Paul II asked prayers for the victims. More than 25 pounds of explosives were set off Dec. 17 in

a small car parked amid lunch-hour Christmas shoppers outside Harrod's, a leading London department store.

## Suicide right denied

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (NC)—Elizabeth Bouvia, a 26-year-old quadriplegic cerebral palsy victim, may not starve herself to death in a public hospital, a judge ruled Dec. 16. California Superior Court Judge John H. Hews ruled that Ms. Bouvia may have a right to terminate her own life (suicide is not illegal in California), but that "this right has been overcome by the strong interest of the state and the society—preservation of life." A month earlier, Bishop Philip F. Straling of San Bernardino, Calif., had deplored efforts to establish a legal precedent to justify suicide.

## Sex guidelines lauded

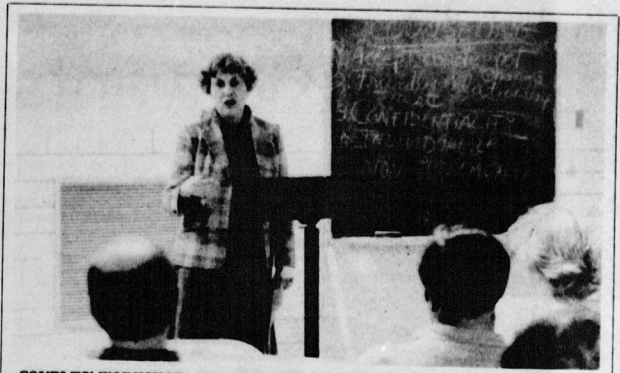
WASHINGTON (NC)—The recent sex education guidelines issued by the Vatican are a "carefully balanced treatment" of the subject, said Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. In a statement issued Dec. 19, the bishop said the document, "Educational Guidance in Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education," encourages those involved in "the delicate task of education for human sexuality."

## Lutherans praise pope's visit

The World Lutheran Federation has praised Pope John Paul II's visit to a Lutheran Church in Rome as an important world ecumenical event and "a unique signal which should encourage more local Lutheran-Roman Catholic encounters throughout the world." The official statement was issued Dec. 16 by Carl Mau, federation secretary general, after the editor of a federation newsletter had criticized the Dec. 11 papal visit as a "staged ecumenical show."

## Nun killed during prison break

WASHINGTON (NC)—Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde Terry said the shots which killed an American nun and injured another Dec. 14 were unauthorized, and those responsible will be punished. Columban Sister Joan Mary Sawyer, a U. S. citizen born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, was killed after she and three other American nuns involved in prison ministry were taken hostage by inmates attempting to escape from a prison in Lima, Peru, and police began shooting at the escape vehicle. The wounded nun, Marist Sister Theresa J. Pasterczyk from Dracut, Mass., was released from a hospital after a bullet was removed from her arm.



**COUPLES' WORKSHOP**—Valerie R. Di'na, archdiocesan family life director, leads a workshop for sponsor couples in the New Albany Deanery. Sponsor couples help in the preparation of couples for marriage. (Photo by Fr. Louis Manna, OFM Conv.)

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- 25th (\$1,000) — Edward Mullikin, Indianapolis, Indiana

## IN THE MEDIA

## Patch Kid wants to sell ideas

by JAMES BREIG

I was about to begin my Christmas column when a stranger walked into my office. I had never met her before, but I had read a lot about her type.

She was a Cabbage Patch Kid, like the one my wife and I had got our daughter for Christmas. I was beginning to feel guilty about having one when so many other people were just about killing to find one.

From the looks of the doll who approached my desk, she was fresh out of the garden. Nonetheless, she was articulate when she asked me to pop a clean tape into my recorder so I would get her message straight. (Cheeky lot, aren't they? And I don't mean just the size of their faces.)

So here it is—my interview with a Cabbage Patch doll, unedited and unhearses:

Me: Let's begin with your name.

See? Miriam. That's what it says on my adoption papers.

Me: Cute. Why have you come to see me?

Miriam: I heard you could get my story out to the public. I want to talk to people about Christmas. And what they could give each other.

ME: WAIT a second! I can't use this column to advertise toys, even one as popular as you. You know, I've been reading about you and your kind. You've caused quite a disturbance this year.

Miriam: I know. That's why I'm here, but I don't want to sell me; I want to sell some ideas.

Me: What's with your type this Christmas? Why is everyone going nutty over you? I heard one woman on a



TV news report say, "They're ugly, but I've got to have one."

Miriam: That's part of our allure. We're so homely we're cute. Like real people. It's better for children to love us than to love a flame-throwing tank or a Darth Vader figure. Agree?

Me: But what about the news stories I've read and seen about people fighting to get one of you? I've seen shoppers mug each other. That can't be good.

Miriam: That can't be Christmas. That's why I am here. I would like people to stop back and think a little. Maybe they could think about why we're coveted so.

Me: I've read theories from psychologists and adoption workers and just plain folks. Maybe people want you so much because of the adoption papers. It's like you're for real. You're supposed to be different from every other doll.

MIRIAM: Again, like real people. But if real people are so unique, too, then they are more lovable than us and should not be pushed around in department stores. They should be respected. All year and everywhere, too.

Me: I'd get a little sad watching those scenes. The same newspeople who talk about the rush for you could also report on the one and a half million real babies who are aborted every year. Or about the real parents who can't have children and can't adopt because the babies are dying. Or about the children who could be adopted but aren't because they are black or handicapped or just too old.

Miriam: It's so sad. And Christmas isn't supposed to be sad.

Me: My sister works in an adoption agency. She compares your friends with real life. You can find all the black Cabbage Patch Kids you want, but no one takes them. They sit on the shelves. They can't make enough white ones.

Miriam: There's another reason I'm sad. I worry about being forgotten in a year. Or

three days after Christmas, as one person predicted. We'll be forgotten by those who wanted us so bad. Or maybe even by those who have us. We'll be flung in the corner with all the teddy bears and Raggedy Anns from Christmas past. It's like that for the first Christmas baby, too.

Me: Jesus? How so?

Miriam: People pay attention to Him at Christmas. Then they forget Him. He's cute in the crib, but He's not so cute when he asks people to do without, to pray hard, to sacrifice for others, to follow Him, to carry a cross. A lot of people don't want to hear that. They

crowd the church at Christmas, but you won't find them on Good Friday. They'll wear mistletoe but not ashes. Maybe they are the same people who rush to grab dolls and knock down their neighbors doing it.

Me: I'll see your message gets out. Funny thing—Miriam was probably the Blessed Virgin's name. It's Hebrew for Mary.

Miriam: I know...

And with that she left my office.

Merry Christmas.

## Vatican art featured on TV

by HENRY HERX

NEW YORK (NC)—For the millions of Americans who have not visited the exhibit of art treasures from the Vatican, a 30-minute documentary on it, "Lift Up Your Heart," is being syndicated to television stations around the country.

The program introduces the exhibit with a short history of how the Vatican art collections began and developed over the centuries. It also provides the 1982 announcement of this unprecedented tour of 237 works selected from "the patrimony of art preserved in the Vatican." In that statement, Pope John Paul II extols the importance of art, particularly in its ability "to uplift the human spirit to the uncreated source of all beauty."

The documentary was filmed in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art where the Vatican collections

were displayed in five sections, beginning with early Christian art and ending with the collection of modern religious art initiated in 1973. Guiding viewers through the many splendors of this exhibit is Philippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum.

It's a short tour but a full one during which Montebello singles out various works for detailed appreciation, but always within the context of the exhibit and how they relate to what he calls "the

dialogue between the papacy and art."

The exhibit is a very rich visual experience, a cultural event that is also deeply spiritual. Part of the reason this television tour proves so successful is Montebello's commentary, which is as enthusiastic as it is knowledgeable. In communicating his own pleasure in these works of art, he helps us to share in their joy, in their ability "to uplift the human spirit." The program's title is indeed an apt one.

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# OBITUARIES

† **BAILEY, Steven L.**, 29, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, December 13. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Gowdy; brother of Michael, Gerald, Kenneth, Sandra and Kimberly.

† **BARRETT, Viola Fischer**, 73, St. Gabriel, Connersville, December 13. Wife of Andy; mother of Joseph L. and Sister of Elmer and Herman Barnhorst and Mary Fritsch; half-sister of Freida O'Brien.

† **BECHT, Clifford V.**, 65, St. Gabriel, Connersville, December 6. Father of James E. and Thomas E.; grandfather of two; brother of Elizabeth Fields.

† **CAITO, Florence E.**, 64, Little Flower, Indianapolis, December 10. Mother of Anthony, John M., Francis, Anita K., Mary Ann Maio, Patricia Shreiber and Theresa M. Cook.

† **COLLINS, Thomas E.**, 60, Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis, December 15. Husband of Helen

E.; father of Donald, Christina, Carol Routh and Sue Stoffer.

† **DIEMER, Patricia C. Mulvaney**, 55, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, December 8. Wife of James R.; mother of Jim, Patrick, John, Robert, Kathleen, Mary Ellen and Colleen Lupiezowicz; daughter of Bettie Barber; sister of Dennis and Mark Mulvaney; grandmother of six.

† **ERHARDT, Julius**, 78, St. Anthony of Padua, Morris, December 5. Husband of Leona; father of Rose Marie Grunkemeyer and Richard; grandfather of 11.

† **FETTIG, Wilhelmina**, St. Gabriel, Connersville, December 13. Sister of Kathryn, Charles, Paul, and Martha Schlichte.

† **JACKSON, Della Hill**, 78, St. Bernard, Frenchtown, December 5. Mother of Walter, Dennis, Millie Ward and Betty Preflatish.

† **KRUPA, Vilma**, 86, St. Andrew, Richmond, December 8. Mother of Mary Wiley, Rose Czerlau,

Ella Steed, Robert and George; grandmother of 19; sister of Frank Gilmore.

† **LAMB, Gwyneth M.**, 50, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, December 12. Wife of Gerald; mother of Joseph, James, Scott and Karen; daughter of Armond and Sylvia Guilmond.

† **MODLIN, Helen E.**, 75, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, December 10. Mother of Gerald, and Theresa Murnan; grandmother of seven; great-grandmother of 16.

† **MONROE, Margaret Cushing**, 74, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, December 8. Sister of John A. and Bernard A. Cushing.

† **MONTGOMERY, Mabel M.**, 71, Assumption, Indianapolis, December 10. Wife of Everett; mother of Jack, James, Gerald, Robert, Leticia Scruggs and Jean

Key; sister of Ann Carter; grandmother of 16; great-grandmother of five.

† **OWENS, Richard**, 64, St. Philip Neri, December 12. Brother of Thomas; uncle of Rick and Janet.

† **REUTER, H. William**, 80, Assumption, Indianapolis, December 12. Father of William L., Earl R. and Robert E.; brother of Ernest, Dorothy Draper and Mabel Fowler.

† **RISCH, Cecelia**, 85, St. Gabriel, Connersville, December 14. Mother of Rita Haviland, Betty Pluff, Rosemary Brown and Wilbur; grandmother of 19; great-grandmother of 29; brother of Frank and Joe Rippberger.

† **SKEHAN, Donald T.**, 53, St. John the Apostle, Bloomington, December 6. Father of Mark, Kim Corso, Brian, Kathleen and Michael.

† **SNYDER, Anthony**, 83, St. Gabriel, Connersville, December 5. Father of Paul J. and Charles E.; grandfather of 10; great-grandfather of 12.

† **THOMPSON, Hildegard**, 82, St. Bernard, Frenchtown, December 2. Sister of Lawrence Steerstedter, Pauline Churchill, Elsie Jacobi, Bonna Holzheimer and Rosalie Colson.

**Rites held for Sister Byrnes**  
ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS—Providence Sister Mary Kathleen Byrnes, age 85, died here on Dec. 19 and received the Mass of Christian burial on Dec. 13. The former Mabel Byrnes was born in Hammond, Ind. where she attended All Saints Elementary School and St. Joseph High School.

After studying at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Sister Mary Kathleen entered the

† **THORNE, Warren E.**, 44, Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis, December 13. Husband of Carol; father of Michael and Anne; son of Mrs. Bula Thorne; brother of Donald, and Laura Morganson.

† **WILLIAMS, Lillian M.**, 61, St. Michael, Brookville, November 28. Sister of Richard and Viola VanLoo.

Congregation of the Sisters of Providence in 1932 and made her Final Vows in 1940. She was a second grade teacher in Chicago, Massachusetts, Maryland and Indiana schools staffed by the Sisters of Providence, including St. Catherine's in Indianapolis and Sacred Heart in Terre Haute. Sister Mary Kathleen retired in 1966. She is survived by a cousin, Mrs. Robert Miller, of Highland, Ind.

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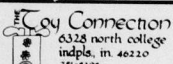
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VIEWING WITH ARNOLD

# 'Story' warms most hearts

by JAMES W. ARNOLD

"A Christmas Story" has the right title for this time of year, and it will warm the funny bones if not the hearts of nearly everyone with a disposition sunnier than Scrooge's—especially those ancient enough to remember bravely drinking Ovaltine and sending metal covers to the Little Orphan Annie radio show for a secret decoder ring.

Let's clear up a few things right away. This is literally "A Christmas Story," since the plot is built around the Christmas season 40 years ago in a city in northern Indiana (probably Gary, but the movie locale is Cleveland). A nine-year-old kid named Ralphie yearns for a special gift—a genuine Red Ryder air rifle. But it's as much a nostalgic comedy about Ralphie's friends and family, and the nuttily innocent pop culture and mores of the 1940's, as it is about Christmas.

While kids are the main characters, the tale is told from the perspective of an adult—American expert Jean Shepherd, whose wry voiceover adds wit and insight to the nonsense on screen. The extensive use of narration-behind-dialog is unusual in movies these days; here, it works like magic to broaden and deepen the appeal to adults as well as bright children.

Shepherd, of course, was once really Ralphie, and he's entertaining us with zanily creative memories of his own midwestern boyhood. Many viewers will know Shepherd from his books and radio commentaries, especially on

"All Things Considered," and his comedy-nostalgia films on public TV.

IN FACT, those who were lucky enough to see "Phantom of the Open Hearth" on PBS several seasons ago will recognize a couple of episodes.

Most memorable is the battle of nerves between Ralphie's Mom and Dad over a lamp "the Old Man" wins in a contest. The base is a net-stocking female leg, the shade is a fringed miniskirt, and Dad insists on installing it in the middle of the front window.

It's also important to say that there is no religious note or Christ in this purely secular Christmas memory, and that is a disappointment. But the spirit is there, just as it is in such secular classics as O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi" and Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

Ralphie, played by bespectacled, round-faced Peter Billingsley, is a frustrated dreamer, Charlie Brown-type who tries to convince parents, teacher and eventually a mean department store Santa that the air rifle would make a sublime gift. They tell him exactly what every other adult tells a kid who wants a BB gun: "You'll shoot your eye out."

Other small-fry characters in the film include an over-confident school chum who is "triple-dog dared" into seeing if his tongue will stick to a metal flagpole in cold weather (it does); a classic bully who comes on like a cross between Ted Koppel and Attila the Hun, and whom Ralphie defeats in a "Rocky"-like brawl sequence; and Ralphie's very funny little brother, Randy, who is so bundled up for the cold snowy weather that he can't put his arms down. Adds Shepherd: "Every family has a kid who won't

eat. Randy hadn't eaten voluntarily in three years."

In many ways, "Story" is a live-action cartoon. It succeeds because the adult actors—Darren McGavin as the frenetic "Old Man," Melinda Dillon as harrassed but spunky Mom—so brilliantly find a balance between the outrageously absurd and the warmly human, and because director Bob Clark and Shepherd so studiously avoid the sentimental, except for the single moment of epiphany when Ralphie is united with his BB gun.

The funniest sequence begins when in a moment of extreme anguish, innocent Ralphie blurts out the mystical Very Bad Word (we never hear it)—"the queen mother of all dirty words"—and is made to stand with soap bar in mouth until he tells where he heard it. (He can't say it was his Dad, who in battling the stubborn furnace could be heard "weaving a tapestry of obscenities still hanging in space over Lake Michigan.")

"Story" is really about Ralphie learning about "the World"—standing up to the bully, finding the "secret message" from Orphan Annie is just another commercial for Ovaltine, discovering that Santa can be impatient and rotten when it's almost closing time. Director Clark indeed gives the Santa sequence a nasty edge—it's not "sweet" one little bit, the toughest put-down of commercial Yuletide schlock I've seen in years.



IN TRAINING—The South Dakota plains are the training ground for Indian runner Billy Mills, played by Robby Benson in "Running Brave," based on the true story of events leading to Mills' trip to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and his gold medal victory in the 10,000 meter competition. Benson was Mills' personal choice to play the role. (NC photo)

(Clark is a Canadian whose last film was the infamous "Porky's.") But he's done respectable movies before, including "Tribute" with Jack Lemmon, and "Murder by Decree," a fresh Watergate-influenced version of Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper.)

Ralphie also finds that Christmas is full of love, as well as inevitable human failings, and that the present you receive when you're nine is the one you always remember. (Warm and wise seasonal nostalgia, but not quite what the title suggests; satisfactory entertainment for all ages.)

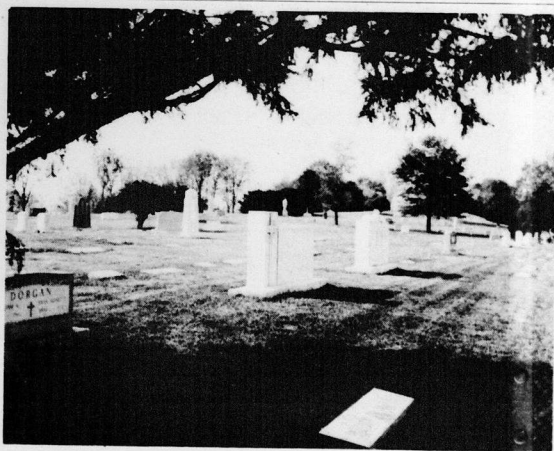
USCC rating: A-2, adults and adolescents.

## Recent USCC Film Classifications

Amityville 3-D	A-III, adults
Christine	O, morally offensive
A Christmas Story	A-II, adolescents and adults
The Dresser	A-II, adolescents and adults
Fire and Ice	O, morally offensive
A Night in Heaven	O, morally offensive
Sudden Impact	O, morally offensive

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