

THE VOICE

Vol. 36 No. 26

Archdiocese of Miami

Dec. 22, 1989

'Glory
to
God
on
high'

*'The Virgin shall be with child and
give birth to a son, and they shall
call Him Emmanuel, a name which
means 'God is with us' '*

Voice photo by Mariens Ovaron

Mary and Joseph are portrayed by Anita Aedo-Morejon and Lino Morejon, and Jesus by baby Mario Morejon at St. Brendan's in southwest Miami, where a whole Bethlehem street scene was created as did St. John Neumann's in Kendall. Parishes and schools throughout the Archdiocese celebrated Christmas with plays, decorations, devotions and prayer. A few of these are featured on pages 9-12.

Inner-Voice

On this joyous feast of the birth of Christ, I offer cordial greetings to all members of our community from their Roman Catholic neighbors.

May this holy season be one in which all of us find renewed joy, peace and commitment as we reflect on God's incredible love for each of us, the spiritual meaning of our lives, and the promise of everlasting happiness.

And may the sense of the spiritual enlighten and liven, refresh and strengthen us as we live our lives together in this beloved community.

--Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy



World



Mother Teresa of Calcutta is recovering after the installation of a cardiac pacemaker

Mother Teresa recuperating after pacemaker installation

CALCUTTA, India (CNS) — Mother Teresa of Calcutta was discharged from a hospital Dec. 11 and doctors said her condition was good. The 79-year-old founder of the Missionaries of Charity was fitted with a pacemaker Dec. 1. After her release, she was taken to her order's headquarters for two days of rest before returning to work.

Report: Trimming joblessness is N. Ireland's top priority

DUBLIN, Ireland (CNS) — Reducing unemployment should be the major economic priority in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, said an advisory body to the Irish bishops' conference. The report by the bishops' Council for Social Welfare said the British government must be aware that efforts to contain paramilitary activity are hampered by persistently high joblessness in urban areas. Seventeen percent of the workers in the republic and 15.1 percent of those in Northern Ireland are registered as unemployed, said the report. It noted that the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland is almost two-and-a-half times that of the average United Kingdom rate.

Group leader sees resolution of Catholic-Orthodox problems

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The new president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is optimistic that Vatican negotiations with the Russian Orthodox will resolve problems caused by the Soviet legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Before being named to head the Vatican's ecumenical agency, Australian Archbishop Edward Cassidy said Catholics and Orthodox wanted a peaceful solution to problems involving rival church claims to church buildings and Orthodox who might want to transfer to the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The archbishop's new post means he will be the chief Vatican official responsible for relations with the Russian Orthodox and for the ecumenical talks aimed at resolving Ukrainian Catholic questions.

3 Catholic leaders in custody, 1 missing, source says

HONG KONG (CNS) — Three Catholic leaders in northern China were arrested and a Vatican-appointed bishop disappeared in November and December, according to a Hong Kong-based Catholic source. The source told UCA news, an Asian church agency based in Hong Kong that Bishop Peter Joseph Fan Xueyan of Paoting was missing after being taken away by local police authorities Dec. 11. Bishop Fan, who is believed to be the leader of a pro-Vatican underground church, reportedly has often been required by government authorities to travel away from Paoting since his 1987 release on parole from his second arrest. The Hong Kong Catholic said the bishop might be on another such "journey." The three arrested were Bishops Peter Liu Guandong of Yixian, Joseph Li Side of Tianjin, and Father Zhang Gangyi of Sanyuan.



Sisters Bernardine Bellm (left) and Sheryl Hernandez care for poinsettia plants grown at an Independence, Mo., greenhouse owned by the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Most Holy Eucharist. The plants, sold to the public during December, provide revenue for the order.

CNS Photo

Nation

Bible Association official dies of surgical complications

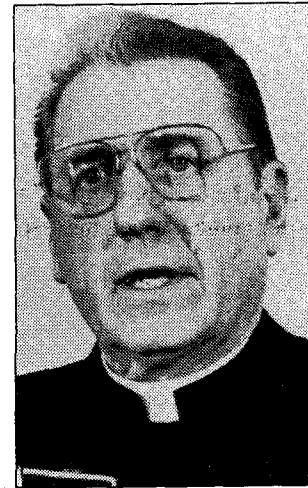
NEW YORK (CNS) — Oblate Father James M. Reese, of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, died Dec. 3 in New York of complications after surgery. A funeral Mass was celebrated Dec. 6 in Wilmington, Del. with burial in the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales cemetery in Childs, Md. Born in 1926, Father Reese entered the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales in 1943, making his first profession in 1944 and perpetual profession in 1947. He was ordained into the priesthood in 1953.

Nun, relief agency founder among Caring Award winners

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A Mercy sister and a self-described "funny Protestant" who founded a relief agency in response to a request from Pope John Paul II were two recipients of Caring Awards given Dec. in Washington. Sister Rosemary Connelly, executive director of the Misericordia Homes in Chicago, was one of 10 awardees, as was Robert Mcauley, founder and president of AmERICARES, an emergency distribution agency. The awards were given by the Caring Institute, a Washington non-profit agency promoting caring, integrity and public service.

Northern Floridians plan to commemorate first Mass

TALLAHASSEE (CNS) — Bishop J. Keith Symons of Pensacola-Tallahassee will commemorate the 450th anniversary of what is believed to be the first Christmas Mass in North America with a Christmas Day Mass at the recently discovered site of Hernando DeSoto's 1539 winter encampment. The site was uncovered in 1987 when the land was being prepared for construction. Links of chain mail, boot tacks, horseshoe nails and a 15th-century Spanish coin identified the site as the location where DeSoto's expedition spent the winter on their trek through "La Florida." Twelve priests traveled with DeSoto to evangelize natives of the new territory. Tallahassee was home to the Apalachee Indian tribe.



Cardinal John J. O'Connor has been backed by other religious groups in his condemnation of tactics used by homosexual-rights groups

Church leaders decry protest by gay rights advocates

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York said Dec. 11 that another protest like the one that disrupted Mass a day earlier at St. Patrick's Cathedral would only happen again over "my dead body." He made the remarks to reporters outside an annual fund-raising luncheon the cardinal was attending at the Waldorf-Astoria for needy mothers and children. Christian and Jewish leaders in statements and New York newspapers in editorials also said the intrusion in the cathedral during the cardinal's Sunday Mass by homosexual-rights protesters occurred at the wrong time and place.

First Native American parish opens in Wisconsin

MILWAUKEE (CNS) — What is believed to be the first urban Catholic parish for Native Americans has been established in Milwaukee. Called the Congregation of the Great Spirit, the parish became official on Dec. 21. Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland, who announced the new parish, said the fact that 10,000 to 12,000 Native Americans live in the archdiocese led to the first discussions on forming such a congregation.

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Devotedly yours



'...Catching the long-range view of the purpose of life, rejoicing in realizing that there is eternal happiness in the ultimate landing place of heaven'

--Abp. McCarthy

Christmas over Dade, Broward

My beloved:

Today I am not at 33,000 feet. My cockpit is my desk, but I am flying high with the Christmas spirit, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, our saviour, out hope and our joy, the founder of the Church.

And my thoughts are still flying related. Last week I was returning from Jacksonville where the Bishops of Florida had a meeting at the lovely new retreat house there. We talked about promoting respect for life, about concerns for the needs of the poor and the homeless in Florida, about an effort to seek some tax help for parents who choose to send their children to non-public schools, and many other things.

A friend of Bishop Nevins, our former Auxiliary Bishop and now Bishop of Venice, Florida, was riding home in the plane of a friend. He offered to drop me off (not literally!) in Miami. After going through the necessary contortions and gymnastics, I found myself in the co-pilot's seat.

Flying at night over Broward and Dade Counties was a beautiful Christmas experience. We delight to see homes sparkling with Christmas lighting. On that clear night, with all the lights of the cities below sparkling in the dark, it was as though the whole Archdiocese had been decorated for Christmas.

Earlier, as we took off, it was still daylight. The skies were gray and overcast. As we gained altitude and emerged above the clouds, we suddenly found ourselves in a fantastic wonderland—the sun was shining brightly, the sky was blue above, and below us was the iridescent white blanket of clouds. For me it represented something of what our spiritual life in the Church is all about.

Life at times is gray, depressing, clouded with worries and problems. The spiritual person is ever seeking to rise above to be free of all that, to experience the spectacular vision, the transfiguration of what life is truly all about—it is the new freedom of a very personal relationship with the Lord, knowing His presence, catching the long-range view of the purpose of life, rejoicing in realizing that there is eternal happiness in the ultimate landing place of heaven.

Now and then the air will be bumpy. We might even fly through more dark clouds, but we will not be deprived of the awareness of the splendor of life brought to us in Bethlehem at the first Christmas.

I discovered that even small planes these days have all kinds of marvelous gadgets. The pilot pressed one button that directed us to Miami. On the screen the word "Miami" appeared as well as a figure indicating how many miles we were from there. On pressing another button a figure appeared to indicate how many minutes it would take to reach our destination. The twist of a dial and we were hearing the voice on the traffic control tower guiding us in. Other illuminated dials assured us both motors were functioning properly and we had an adequate amount of fuel in the tanks.

This, I reflected, was the Church, the community of faithful—the clergy, religious and laity, word and sacrament. It guides us, keeps us airborne on our spiritual journey.

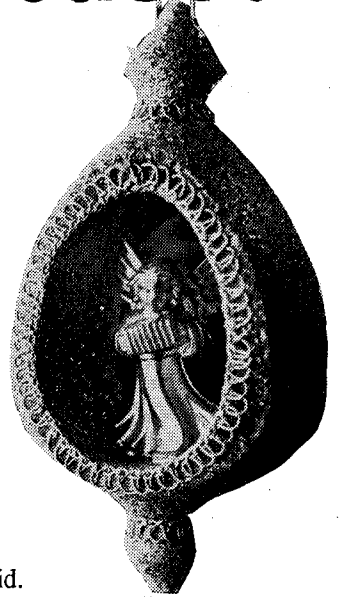
Especially at this Christmas time, I pray that your journey will be filled with the grace, health and joy of those who have lifted up their hearts to the Lord.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Edward A. McCarthy
Archbishop of Miami

'Secular Christmas' symbols religious based

Ornaments came from an 'old European custom' of hanging decorations made from cookies and bread on the tree in thanks for 'our daily bread'



Are Santa Claus, candy canes, Christmas trees and ornaments religious symbols?

Many people blame those familiar Christmas symbols for secularizing the feast of Christ's birth, but Sacred Heart Father Brian McCullough of the Sacred Heart Monastery in Hales Corners, Wis., has urged people to take a closer look.

"Much of the Christian meaning behind the symbols of Christmas has faded from the memory of our society," he said. "They've become secrets."

Writing in a booklet titled "The Twelve Secrets of Christmas," Father McCullough uses biblical references to trace the beginnings of the most familiar Christmas images "lest they be lost or totally eclipsed by the interpretations of secular society."

Among the symbols explained by Father McCullough are:

— Santa Claus, who "seems to overshadow the true meaning of Christmas ... there's a sad irony in this since he is really St. Nicholas." The priest recalled that St. Nicholas was generous to the poor and always gave gifts secretly, which was imitated by what began as an anonymous gift giving at Christmastime. "Today, this beautiful tradition has been grossly commercialized," he added, suggesting people take time "to explain the Christian origin of this great historic figure we call Santa Claus."

— Candy canes, which Father McCullough said should serve as reminders of the crooked staffs of the shepherds who "on the sacred night when Jesus was born, in a stable near the hillsides of Bethlehem," were invited by the angel "to go and see the newborn Messiah of Israel."

— The Christmas tree, a tradition brought to this country by German-speaking immigrants. "The tree is an 'evergreen' ... for this reason it is a symbol of everlasting

life, the precious gift from Jesus to all believers," the priest said.

— Ornaments, which came from "an old European custom" of hanging ornaments made from cookies and bread on the tree in thanks for "our daily bread," according to Father McCullough.

— Holly, used to adorn homes, churches and public places. Its red berries and green leaves "bear a deeper message than simple decorations," the priest said in the pamphlet.

"Long ago, the sharp thorns and berries reminded Christians of the suffering" for which Christ was destined, and "they saw in the thorns the crown which would pierce his head. The crimson berries reminded them of the blood he would shed."

— Christmas candles are reminders of Baptism and "symbolize Christ who is our light in the darkness."

— The star, such as that used on the top of trees, recalls "the star which led the Magi to the humble crib of the newborn King."

— Red and green, which as Christmas colors hold special meaning in church tradition. "Red symbolizes the blood of Christ and the martyrs who loved God and remained faithful to him," Father McCullough said. "Green is the color of hope and has always been a sign of life and growth in nature."

Priest: Use the day to teach kids about giving

WASHINGTON (CNS) — At Christmastime "little kids really get wrapped up in what they need and want, and they tell Santa Claus," but they should be asked what they "think other people need," said a priest-counselor from The Catholic University of America.

Father Douglas Morrison, associate dean of the university's School of Religious Studies and a licensed clinical social worker, said "a way to go to Santa Claus" is to go to him "for other people ... we go to Jesus for other people."

"We give Jesus a present," he told Catholic News Service in a Christmas interview, by showing we "really care about people."

Christmas celebrates the birth of a person who cared, he said, a person who reached out to the poor, sick and outcast, and let them know they counted.

Today's children learn about those in need — the homeless, the hungry, families with problems — from television. They are impressionable and they receive "very vivid, emotional impressions," the priest said.

Children "know something about war, homelessness, starvation," he said. "World problems get too big and withdrawn from them, but they are no less affected by them."

Christmas is a time "to be very sensitive to the needs of others and to care about the needs of others."

By asking a child the right questions, he said, the child can learn the "good news, that (Christ) reached out to the world.... He dared to reach out to the world, to walk into it, to become part of it. He showed a way to touch and heal."

Father Morrison said miracles were "the most marvelous part of Christ's life" and resulted from his loving.

"If you dare to love, if you dare to care, to reach out and touch people who hurt," he said, "love will cure them."

"The whole Christmas message," he added, is that "Jesus became part of our world. God, all powerful, became one with us here: the crib, the straw, Mary,

Joseph, shepherds. He really wanted to be part of us."

Children can be told of "the scene at Bethlehem, the fact that God really became one of us, he became a child, a child just like themselves, who grew up seeing a lot of things wrong and wanted to do something about them."

Father Morrison said the "present we can bring Jesus is to really love people who have needs the way Jesus does."

Parents can see what can be done, as a family, for other people, whether that be food or clothing or whatever, he said, and thus "give Jesus a present."

Mass schedule at the Cathedral

South Florida Catholics will begin their Christmas celebration on Sunday, Christmas Eve, with Midnight Mass at St. Mary Cathedral. Edward A. McCarthy will be the principal celebrant.

Beginning the festivities will be performances by the Cathedral Brass Quartet at 10:45 p.m., joined by the Cathedral Choir at 11:15 p.m..

The following is scheduled for Christmas Day:

6:30 a.m. Mass in English

7:30 a.m. Mass in Creole

9:30 a.m. Performance by the Cathedral Brass Quartet & Cathedral Children's Choir.

11:00 a.m. Performance by the Cathedral Brass Quartet & Cathedral Choir.

12:30 p.m. Mass in Spanish.

For further information please contact Sister Mary Tindel at St. Mary Cathedral, 759-4532, or the Communications Department of the Archdiocese of Miami at 757-6241 exts. 320, 321.

Cardinal denies charge that Bush 'bought' Church's silence on Salvador

BOSTON (CNS) — Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston struck back at the *Boston Globe* after the newspaper published a column alleging that President Bush had bought "the public silence" of the U.S. cardinals on El Salvador.

At a press conference held in Boston the same day the column by *Globe* columnist David Nyhan was published, Cardinal Law denied the column's accusation, calling it part of a "pattern of hostility to the Catholic Church which permeates the *Boston Globe*."

"Efforts have been made at all levels and in various ways to address this matter, but to no avail.... Freedom of the press is not license to irresponsibly sow distrust and suspicion of individuals and institutions," said Cardinal Law.

In his column, Nyhan charged that Bush paid for the cardinals' silence on the

administration's handling of the murders of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador with his support of the church's agenda — "against abortion, for prayer in public schools and tax money for church-sponsored child care."

The column was printed two days after a Dec. 12 gala black-tie affair at the U.S. Pension Building in Washington, the final event in centennial observances of The Catholic University of America, at which Bush addressed six U.S. cardinals and some 1,300 guests.

Bush vowed at the dinner to "do everything we can to bring to justice" the killers of the Jesuits in El Salvador.

All five active residential cardinals of the country — Cardinals Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, James A. Hickey of Washington, John J. O'Connor of New York, Edmund C. Szoka of Detroit and Law — attended the



Controversial dinner: President Bush and Cardinal John J. Krol, retired archbishop of Philadelphia, attend a dinner honoring the nation's cardinals hosted by Catholic University. (CNS photo from UPI)

dinner, as did retired Cardinal John J. Krol of Philadelphia.

At the press conference, Cardinal Law described Nyhan's column as "a slanderous attack at both the cardinals of the United States and the president."

"As a matter of fact, the cardinals have been quite vocal in their opposition to the violence in El Salvador. The National Con-

ference of Catholic Bishops and individual bishops have and continue to use our moral authority in the cause of justice and peace," said Cardinal Law.

He said he had personally raised the issue of El Salvador with Bush after the dinner.

A Dec. 15 banner headline in the *Boston Globe's* competition, the *Boston Herald*, read "Cardinal Blasts *Globe* 'Slander.'

Bishop cautions against penalizing politicians

ALBANY, N.Y. (CNS) — Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, in commenting on court, political and bishops' decisions on abortion, said church penalties against Catholic politicians should be used "only in rare and extreme cases."

While calling for "charity and civility in our public discourse" on abortion, he also said that to argue "that one's personal, religious and moral convictions should not influence one's political decision on abortion is untenable."

Writing in *The Evangelist*, his diocesan newspaper, Bishop Hubbard tied together last July's Supreme Court Webster decision, the U.S. bishops' recent resolution on

abortion, and the barring of a California state assemblywoman from Communion.

He said he did not know all the facts in the case of Assemblywoman Lucy Killea. Bishop Leo T. Maher of San Diego denied her the right to receive Communion because of advertising supporting abortion rights that ran as part of her campaign in a special election for the state Senate, which she won.

Bishop Hubbard said he could not comment "specifically on Bishop Maher's action ... although it would seem to me that church penalties of this kind would be considered only in rare and extreme cases and in accord with appropriate church canons governing such matters."

He noted Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago and Cardinal John J. O'Connor of St. Louis had all indicated that the bishops' resolution on abortion — approved Nov. 7 during their Baltimore meeting — "does not deal with a question of penalties, and they have warned against talk of excommunication."

The comments were made in a session with reporters following the bishops' vote on the resolution.

Bishop Hubbard said he concurred "wholeheartedly" with Archbishop May, who also stated that "penalizing Catholic supporters of abortion rights" might have

"an adverse effect" rather than change America's thinking about abortion.

The bishops' resolution, which urged Catholic politicians to protect the weak and defenseless, also resolved that "no Catholic can responsibly take a 'pro-choice' stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taken of innocent human life," Bishop Hubbard said.

To do so, "is clearly to put oneself at variance with the authentic teaching of the church."

Bishop Hubbard said that on abortion as well as other moral issues "we expect Catholics to be guided by the moral wisdom of the church in forming their consciences."



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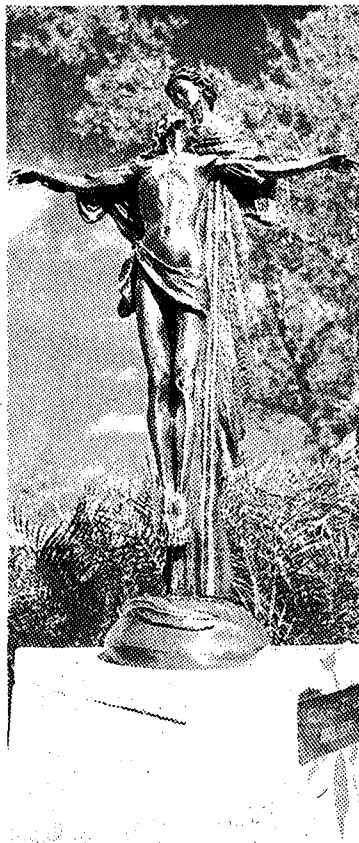
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Church joins chorus: Protect the environment

WASHINGTON (CNS) — With widespread public concern about air and water pollution, endangered species, oil spills and global warming, both church and state are expressing alarm over threats to God's green earth.

Joining an ecological chorus are the U.S. bishops and Catholic Charities USA, which both addressed environmental matters in the context of fall statements on food and agriculture, and Pope John Paul II, who devoted his 1990 World Day of Peace message to the environment.

Meanwhile, the White House and Congress have pursued legislative efforts. President Bush recently signed legislation providing increased conservation of wetlands — marshes, bogs and swamps being lost to the nation at the rate of about 400,000 acres annually but crucial to clean water supplies and cultivation of marine wildlife and waterfowl. "Even in times of serious fiscal constraints, we can still meet our highest environmental priorities," Bush said.

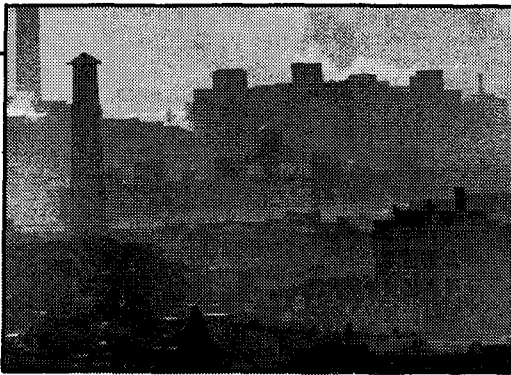
Earlier this year, promoting such legislation, he suggested that "we can and should be nature's advocate — and that means an active stewardship of the natural world."

The pope, too, has encouraged stewardship of creation, using the World Day of Peace message to discuss the "plundering of natural resources" and an all too prevalent "callous disregard" for nature.

Detailing various environmental problems, the pontiff said that "gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related 'greenhouse effect' has now reached crisis proportions" while continued "industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides" and other chemicals are all "known to harm the atmosphere and

'Today, the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone...'

Pope John Paul II,
World Day of Peace message



a very special way on this planet," said Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland of Milwaukee, during the bishops' fall meeting in Baltimore.

Bishop Warren L. Boudreaux of Houma-Thibodaux, La., cited threats to the marine environment and, consequently, the livelihoods of those in the seafood industry. The coastal waterway system "is being polluted, it's being destroyed," he warned.

Catholic Charities USA released a fall policy paper on "A Just Food System" that, among other things, reminded Americans that "a clean environment is necessary for a safe supply of food."

The paper urged "vigorous protection of improved environmental protection laws; expanded programs of reforestation; protection of topsoil, groundwater, oceans, coastal bays and inlets, inland waters, and fragile ecosystems" and international "resource management and environmental replenishment, particularly of fragile ecosystems such as tropical rain forests."

U.N. diplomats also are busy. "The United Nations, as of last year turned up the volume on its own interest in environmental issues," said Msgr. John Muthig, an attache at the Vatican's Permanent Observer Mission at the United Nations.

"It certainly is the issue of the late '80s at the United Nations, there's no question about that," he said. "Many of the developing countries feel very strongly that most of the problems" can be traced in part to developed countries, Msgr. Muthig said. Yet, "they're not denying that they currently have some serious problems of their own."

Father Martin says the church is environmentally aware now "because the spirit of God is speaking to us."

environment."

"Today," he said, "the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone. Christians, in particular," the pope added, "realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."

For religious believers, "the issue that exists is fundamentally a spiritual one — our understanding of what the universe is about and where we fit into it," said Father Daniel Martin, a member of St. Patrick's Missionary Society, an Irish order, and consultant to the U.N. Environment Program.

For one thing, he said, Americans, who make up only 5 percent of the world's population, consume 40 percent of its resources.

The environment "is really a big, big responsibility" for Christian churches, Father Martin said. "What's required is much more than having a few prayers."

Getting churches substantively involved won't be easy, he said. "We're all part of the problem, including American bishops and popes and so on."

Concern for creation "is at the heart of where we're called" as Christians to be, said another priest, Jesuit Father Joseph Hacala, director of the Jesuit Social Ministries national office in Washington. It involves "values, morality, ethics. I think we're long overdue," in addressing environmental issues, he said. "I think we're reaching a crisis here."

The U.S. bishops too, are pondering environmental topics.

"By acknowledging that the earth is the Lord's and that God is present in all of creation, we show respect for God's creation," they said in their new statement, "Food Policy in a Hungry World: The Links that Bind Us Together."

In January, the U.S. Catholic Conference Committees on Domestic Social Policy and International Policy will "explore what the conference could do to respond to the moral dimensions of the environmental questions facing us," said John L. Carr, USCC secretary for social development and world peace. One possibility, he said, is a statement focusing on ecological issues.

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Number of U.S. seminarians falls for fifth straight year

WASHINGTON (CNS) — For the fifth straight year, the number of U.S. Catholic seminarians has dropped at all levels, according to data released in December.

At the start of the 1989-90 school year, there were 8,394 seminarians, down 500 seminarians or 6 percent from last year.

The figures represent an 11 percent decline in two years and a drop of 37 percent since 1979-80, when the total of seminarians was 13,263.

At the theology level — the most important indicator of future ordinations — the decline over the past decade has been 12 percent.

The new data, collected by seminary researcher Benedictine Father Adrian Fuerst, were published in the Seminary Directory 1990, an annual publication of the Washington-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

According to the data:

— In theology or related post-college

studies, the number of seminarians dropped from 3,826 in 1988-89 to 3,698 in the current school year, a 3.3 percent decline.

— The number of college seminarians went down from 2,247 to 2,081, a 7 percent loss.

— At the high school level there was an 11 percent decline, from 2,295 last year to 2,051 this year.

Only in the novitiate, a separate year of formation for religious life undertaken by priesthood students entering religious orders, was there an increase: from 526 in 1988-89 to 564 this year.

Novitiate figures tend to fluctuate significantly from year to year, in part because many religious orders do not have a novitiate program every year, according to Father Fuerst. In general, however, the novitiate numbers have dropped from an average in the mid-600s a decade ago to an average in the mid-500s at the end of the 1980s.

Father Fuerst said about one-third of the

recorded decline in theology-level numbers was due to a decision by one institution to discontinue its former practice of keeping a number of students on its lists for several years as "on leave" because they had not completed their academic degrees. That administrative change accounted for elimination of 46 people from theology rosters, he said.

At the high school and theology levels, the declines of the past year occurred basically among diocesan students while religious order numbers remained steady. But at the college level the drop was due almost entirely to a decline in the number of students for religious orders.

Overall, the total number of students for diocesan priesthood dropped from 5,813 last year to 5,531 this year. The number preparing for priesthood in religious orders dropped from 2,605 to 2,501. The number of seminarians not yet affiliated with a diocese or religious order dropped from 476 to 362.



Fewer young men are opting to study for the priesthood in the U.S.

Catholic educators still not pleased after meeting

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic educators, including superintendents from the largest Catholic school systems in the nation, met recently with U.S. Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos about offering more parental choice in education and other issues.

But some of those who attended said afterward that the meeting, along with one held in June at the White House with President Bush, still did not make amends for snubs of Catholic educators by the Bush administration in its handling of education issues.

"We want to be recognized as a major player in (national) conversations on education," Sister Catherine T. McNamee, presi-

dent of the National Catholic Educational Association, told Catholic News Service Dec. 14 in an interview about the meeting with Cavazos on Dec. 11.

"Neither this meeting nor the White House meeting make up for not being around the table when major educational issues are discussed," she said.

The meeting with Cavazos came after educators fired off letters in November to him, Bush, White House Chief of Staff John Sununu and Roger Porter of the White House Executive Office for Policy. The educators wrote to complain about being initially excluded from the President's Education Policy Advisory Committee.

Also meeting with Cavazos Dec. 11 were Father Thomas G. Gallagher, education secretary at the U.S. Catholic Conference, and heads of the Catholic school systems in New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Newark, N.J., Cleveland and Brooklyn, N.Y.

Although he praised Cavazos for his interest in "providing the best education for all youngsters," Father Gallagher said Cavazos' meeting with Catholic educators had few "practical results."

Father Gallagher and Sister McNamee said they were taking a "wait-and-see" attitude toward the course of future dealings

between the administration and Catholic educators.

Father Gallagher told CNS Dec. 14 the true test for the Bush administration would be more meetings between Catholic educators and administration officials as well as developments which arise in the future to benefit Catholic schools.

Catholic educators hope to meet again with Bush in the spring, Father Gallagher said.

Catholic educators discussed several topics during the hourlong meeting with Cavazos, including parental choice and tuition tax credits for families with children in private schools.

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Church official lauds letter on meditation

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The new Vatican letter to Catholic bishops on Christian meditation encourages Christian dialogue with scholars of Eastern religions, said John Borelli, director of interreligious relations of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

The letter was issued Dec. 14 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It describes Christian interest in Eastern meditation practices in recent decades as sign of the "keen desire" of Christians for a deeper prayer life. It outlines fundamental elements of authentic Christian prayer and meditation.

It especially urges a rediscovery of Christian traditions of meditation, but it says that the efforts of other great religions to achieve "union with God in prayer" should not be "rejected out of hand simply because they are not Christian."

It warns both against historical aberrations in Christian practice and against those aspects of non-Christian practice which are not in accord with the divine-human relationship understood in Christian faith.

Borelli, in a written reflection provided to

U.S. media inquiring about the letter, said the document contains "an implicit recognition of the importance of studying the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, to name two, so that there will be no misunderstandings of what these traditions teach regarding meditation.

Among elements discussed in the document that are common to Christian and non-Christian meditative traditions, although they may be practiced in different ways, Borelli cited:

— "The importance of bodily posture as an integral part of meditation," although it should be viewed as an aid and not as an end in itself.

— "The universal acknowledgment of the need for a master or spiritual guide."

— "The need for asceticism" which all meditative traditions emphasize.

— The importance of "tradition" as a means of testing and safeguarding the authenticity of particular meditative theories and practices.

— The fact that "there should not be an overemphasis on technique."

— The need for "interior watchfulness, which is habitual union with God and not

necessarily interrupted when one is engaged in contact with others."

The Christian idea of "interior watchfulness" as described in the document, Borelli said, is "similar to the insight or wakefulness of Buddhism or the forms of cognitive contemplation of Yoga."

He said Eastern meditative traditions share the recognition with Christianity that there are "perils of meditation" into which students can easily fall if they have no reliable spiritual director.

Borelli said the Vatican letter was directed at bishops as an internal church document for guidance in directing authentic Christian prayer life. It refers briefly to a number of issues that could be a source of fruitful dialogue between Catholics and the meditative Asian religions, but it "is not an exhaustive presentation on the topic," he said.

The letter "recognizes the restlessness experienced by many in our contemporary world," he said. "In such a situation, many feel a need for silence, recollection and meditation. The upshot of the text is an encouragement for people to pursue that interest, but within the carefully defined disciplines of religious traditions."

Pontiff to meet with Arab envoys

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II scheduled a late-December meeting to discuss Lebanon with three Arab League envoys, repairing what had threatened to become a diplomatic dispute.

The Vatican announcement of the papal audience, scheduled for Dec. 23, came less than a week after a little-known Lebanese extremist group threatened the pope's life, saying he had refused to meet with the Arab delegation earlier in the month.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Dec. 19 that the pope's busy schedule had made an earlier meeting impossible. The Arab League group had been in Europe to ask support for its peace plan, opposed by Christian forces led by Gen. Michel Aoun.

The peace plan is supported by much of the international community, including Syria, which has close to 40,000 troops in Lebanon.

Pope: Recognizing common-law marriages damages values

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When a state recognizes common-law marriages as legitimate, it damages true family values and presents "disorder as a good and correct situation," said Pope John Paul II.

The pope's remarks Dec. 17 to a group of Italian legal experts immediately provoked controversy in Italy, where a proposed law on the rights of cohabitating couples was under debate.

The pope warned that civil societies should not "disavow the specific value that the correctly constituted family brings to the good of society."

"It does not help personal or social well-being to devise laws that would pretend to recognize 'de facto' marriages as legitimate, equalizing them with the natural family founded on matrimony," the pope said.

He said cohabitation "does not involve any assumption of responsibility or guarantee of stability, which are essential elements in the union between man and woman as understood by God and confirmed by Christ."

"It is one thing to guarantee personal rights and another thing to promote misunderstanding by presenting disorder as a good and correct situation," he said.

The pope said recognition of cohabitating couples could be socially damaging and that the state should instead be giving help — including various subsidies — to correctly formed families.

The family is the first and main ally in society's fight against such ills as unemployment, drugs and even AIDS, the pope said.

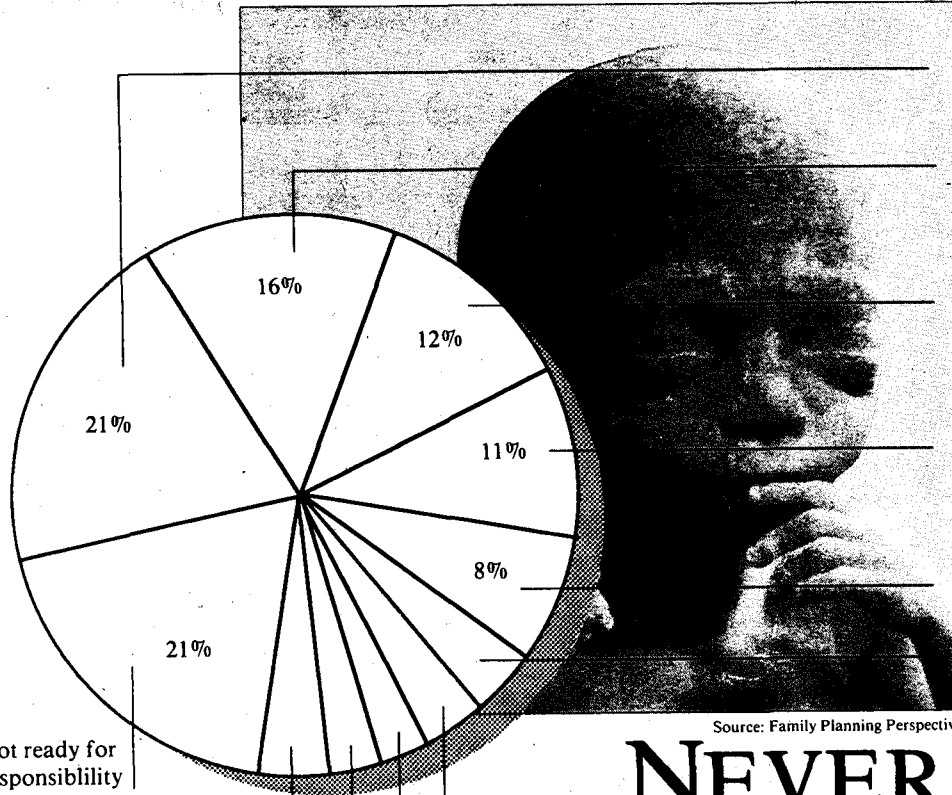
He said lawmakers have a specific duty to work in favor of the family and should not simply "remain in passive contemplation of changes in society."

The pope's remarks drew criticism the next day from some members of Italy's Socialist Party, sponsor of the proposed law. The legislation would extend certain legal guarantees to spouses and other members of "de facto" families that have lasted more than three years.

Elena Marinucci, a Socialist health care expert, said the pope's comments were "uncalled-for interference" in an area that belongs exclusively to the state.

Alfredo Biondi, a parliamentary leader of the Liberal Party, many of whose members are supporting the legislation, said a religious point of view was out of place when dealing juridically with this kind of social phenomenon.

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Priests slandered, then killed--prelate

Salvadoran Jesuits' deaths planned in advance, Rivera Damas says in Miami

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The November murders of six Jesuits, their cook and the cook's daughter in El Salvador has continued to provoke comment, controversy and protest on a number of different fronts.

There have been pleas for regional peace in Central America from Pope John Paul II, and disputes between churchmen and the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador over the truthfulness of a witness at the scene of the slayings.

President Bush has also vowed "justice" for those who killed the eight in an overnight raid at the Central American University in San Salvador, the capital.

In St. Paul, Minn., a hunger strike protesting the murders ended. In Kansas City, Mo., a pastor from El Salvador said the situation in the country is "very bleak."

And in Miami, where church worker Jennifer Casolo was flown following her expul-

sion from the country, San Salvador Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas said the Jesuit killings were premeditated.

Archbishop Rivera Damas has been at the forefront of the ensuing controversy following the murders. At a Miami meeting of the Association of Latin American Studies, he said, "There is no doubt that this vile action had been thought out in advance."

The killings followed "an irresponsible campaign of accusations and slander" against the Jesuits, he said.

After he returned to San Salvador, the archbishop in a Dec. 10 homily accused U.S. officials of intimidating Lucia Barrera de Cerna, an apparent witness to the murders.

Archbishop Rivera Damas charged that Mrs. Cerna was "subjected to a veritable brainwashing" during questioning and to "blackmail that she would be deported if she did not tell the truth."



Salvadoran soldier escorts a woman to the marketplace in an environment filled with violence for civilians as well as military. (CNS/UPI photo)

After four days of questioning in Miami by FBI investigators and a Salvadoran official, which the archbishop described as "psychological torment," Mrs. Cerna retracted sworn testimony that she saw armed men in military uniforms enter the university rectory at the time of the murders.

Jesuit Father Paul S. Tipton, president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, accused U.S. ambassador to El Salvador William Walker of "trying to subvert the evidence that has been given and the veracity of the witness."

Father Tipton said Walker's "apparent participation in efforts to discredit the testimony" of the witness forced the priest to question the U.S. government's commitment to a fair investigation in the slayings.

In an interview with The Washington Post, Walker addressed Archbishop Rivera Damas' criticisms by saying, "You don't find the truth by slinging around charges of psychological torture when you don't really know what you're talking about."

Martha Doggett, a lawyer for the Jesuit association who interviewed Mrs. Cerna following her questioning, said investigators "broke her down emotionally and she told them what they wanted to make her say."

The FBI responded in a statement that Mrs. Cerna was treated "in a professional and personable manner."

Bush, speaking at a Dec. 11 dinner in Washington honoring six U.S. cardinals, said the United States would "do everything we can to bring to justice" the killers of the Jesuits.

In St. Paul, eight hunger strikers at the diocesan cathedral ended after 18 days a water-only fast that began on Thanksgiving. The strikers had said they would continue until all U.S. military aid to El Salvador stopped.

On Dec. 10, a day before the hunger strike ended, 3,000 gathered for a rally outside the cathedral. Among them was Minn. Gov. Rudy Perpich.

A Spanish priest who is pastor of a parish in El Salvador made a quick tour of parishes in the Kansas City area in early December.

Father Daniel Sanchez said that while the situation is "very bleak" in El Salvador, "the voice of justice and truth cannot be killed by anyone."

Father Sanchez likened the Jesuits and the two laywomen murdered Nov. 16 to the four churchwomen killed in El Salvador nearly nine years earlier.

"Just as with the Jesuits, they (the churchwomen) were killed because they were good, just and lived the Gospel," Father Sanchez said.

Pope John Paul sent an appeal for joint efforts for a stable peace to the five presidents of Central America who met Dec. 10-11 in Costa Rica.

"Mutual respect among nations" and "the social and political circumstances of each nation" must be part of any regional peace plan, the pope wrote.

The pontiff asked for "sincere and constructive dialogue" to end the region's "new

tensions and painful conflicts."

One tension was eased Dec. 13 when Ms. Casolo, a church worker charged with terrorism for allegedly storing an ammunition cache at her home, was released from prison and expelled from El Salvador. All charges against her were dropped.

Ms. Casolo, a former member of St. Thomas Parish in Thomaston, Conn., worked for Christian Education Seminars, which provided tours of El Salvador for U.S. lawmakers, religious leaders and other Americans.

Critics said Ms. Casolo's arrest, like the Jesuit murders, was another attempt to stifle the work of the church in the war-torn nation. ---

New starving expected in Ethiopia

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Millions of Ethiopians face famine in early 1990 potentially as severe as the deadly privations of 1984-85, said a Catholic relief official.

"Well in excess of 1 million" Ethiopians in civil war-torn Tigray province alone will "require some form of assistance," said John Waiter, Catholic Relief Services country director for the east African nation. He said upwards of 2 million people in Eritrea province, where there has been a shaky, informal truce in that rebel conflict, might need food aid as well.

The rapidly developing crisis is driven by severe drought, which has caused crop losses of up to 100 percent in some areas, and the continuing civil war in which Tigrayan and Eritrean rebels are battling for independence from the central government.

Waiter, a CRS veteran who took the Ethiopia post in 1987, said that food supplies could run out in Eritrea in early January. In Tigray, he said, shortages will become severe in April "when they'll be eating up the last of their meager harvests."

A "peak critical time" will arrive in May, he said.

Waiter spoke by telephone from CRS headquarters in Baltimore.

He said relief services have the manpower and transport needed to provide food to the needy, but might not have the means to reach them. That is especially true in Tigray where government and rebel troops are locked in battle and from which the government has barred outside groups, he said.

Waiter said that the relief services hope for guarantees from the rebels and the government allowing aid convoys to use "corridors of tranquility," to reach the needy population. The other, far less desirable option is to wait for the refugees to arrive from Tigray after their food supplies are exhausted.

"WILL YOU HELP ME PRAY FOR MY KIDS THIS CHRISTMAS?"

In this Christmas Season, we asked our boys and girls to share their reflections about the meaning of Christmas and especially about how Christmas can be a time of healing and hope:

"The gift that could start healing in my family this Christmas would be if my mom and my sister would stop fighting. They are really tearing our family apart, especially me. I love them both a lot. I ask God for some day when my mom and sister will stop fighting and love one another." . . . Tommy — age 10

"The gift that could start healing in my family this Christmas would be if the sexual abuse, yelling, lying, cheating, fighting, threatening, bossing, drug using, getting busted, arguing, and stealing would stop." . . . Chuck — age 13

"My way of helping start this healing this Christmas would be if my mom would write to me more often. I pray for that." . . . Patricia — age 11

"The gift that could most help my own healing this Christmas would be to see my father. I haven't ever seen my father. But my father was the only thing that I would like to have for Christmas." . . . Tom — age 11

"The gift that could most help my own healing this Christmas would be if I could let go of the memories that hurt me. To see that they love me and accept me as part of the family would be the best gift to help my healing process." . . . Jerry — age 13

"The gift that could most help my own healing this Christmas would be if someone in my family would put their trust in me." . . . Sean — age 14

"The gift that could most help my own healing this Christmas would be to repeat the Christmas when my family didn't fight, argue, or have people lose their tempers." . . . Paul — age 13

"The funniest thing I have ever seen happen at Christmas was when we used a plant for our Christmas tree. We were poor. We were thankful that we got what we did. I am thankful to God that we could rejoice together as a family, even if we only had a plant and not a tree. Thanks God." . . . Mary — age 12



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AMEN.

Local Section

The Voice

Miami, Fl.

Dec. 22, 1989

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Christmas around the Archdiocese

There was a special emphasis on faith at a Christmas Mass at the Schott Memorial Center for the Deaf and Handicapped on Dec. 17.

Before the Mass was celebrated in the facility's chapel, its director, Fr. James Vitucci read the response of Jesus to the deputation of John the Baptist: "Go and report to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the gospel preached to them." Then handicapped children presented a Christmas play about a shepherd boy who is angry because he is blind. In the play, the shepherd, played by Tony Conley who also is blind, travels to the stable where Jesus was born and sees a wonderful light that releases him from his negative feelings. After Mass, Santa landed aboard a Miami Fire Rescue helicopter on property adjacent to the center and handed out presents to the children. At right, Tony Conley takes center stage. Below, Fr. Vitucci signs the liturgy for the hearing-impaired students



There's no snow, sleds or sleighbells to be found on the beaches within the Archdiocese of Miami, but the holiday season is readily and obviously at hand. Many South Floridians decorate their homes, hedges and coconut palms with strings of colored lights; nativity displays are numerous throughout the three-county area. But South Floridians aren't blinded by the glitter and glitz and hold dear the real meaning of Christmas -- the birth of Jesus Christ. In their homes, churches, schools and other venues within the archdiocese, the faithful take time to rejoice and celebrate the holy days and holidays of the winter. Below, over a thousand worshipers flocked to Little Flower Church in Coral Gables to take part in a Mass celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of Latin America, who was honored by children garbed in native dress and bearing flags of their homeland. We invite you to read on; pages 10,11 and 12 also bring you scenes of South Floridians celebrating Christ's birth



Voice photos/Prent Browning

Official

Archdiocese of Miami

The Pastoral Center announces that Archbishop McCarthy has made the following appointments:

Father Gilberto Fernandez - to Administrator of St. Kevin Church, Church, Miami, effective December 27, 1989.

Father Jose P. Nickse - to Dean of the West Dade Deanery, effective Dec. 1, 1989.

Father George Sardinias - to Associate Pastor of Holy Family Church, North Miami, effective Jan. 3, 1990

Father Salvador Planas - to Associate Pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Church, Miami, effective Jan. 3, 1990.

Father Michael Souckar - to Associate Pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church, Miami Shores, effective Jan. 3, 1990.

Father Fermin Solana - to Associate Pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Church, Miami, effective Dec. 1, 1989.

Miami volunteers celebrate decade of service to impoverished in Haiti

By Cynthia Thuma
Voice News Editor

Volunteers of the Missions to Haiti celebrated a decade of service to Haiti's poor with a Mass at St. Agatha Church in southwestern Miami recently.

At the Mass was an additional offering of 15,000 pounds of foodstuffs — two full truckloads — for the impoverished island nation.

"We started it like a club," said spokesman Arnoldo Rafuls. "We asked each member to contribute a minimum of five pounds of rice, five pounds of sugar and four cans of evaporated milk."

Donations are collected on the third Sunday of each month. From the churches, the donations are taken to the St. Vincent de Paul convent and from there, transported to Haiti. Since they began collecting, the group has collected over \$1 million in foodstuffs and has added several churches to their group. Also participating are parishioners from St. Brendan parish, St. John the Apostle and St. Timothy.

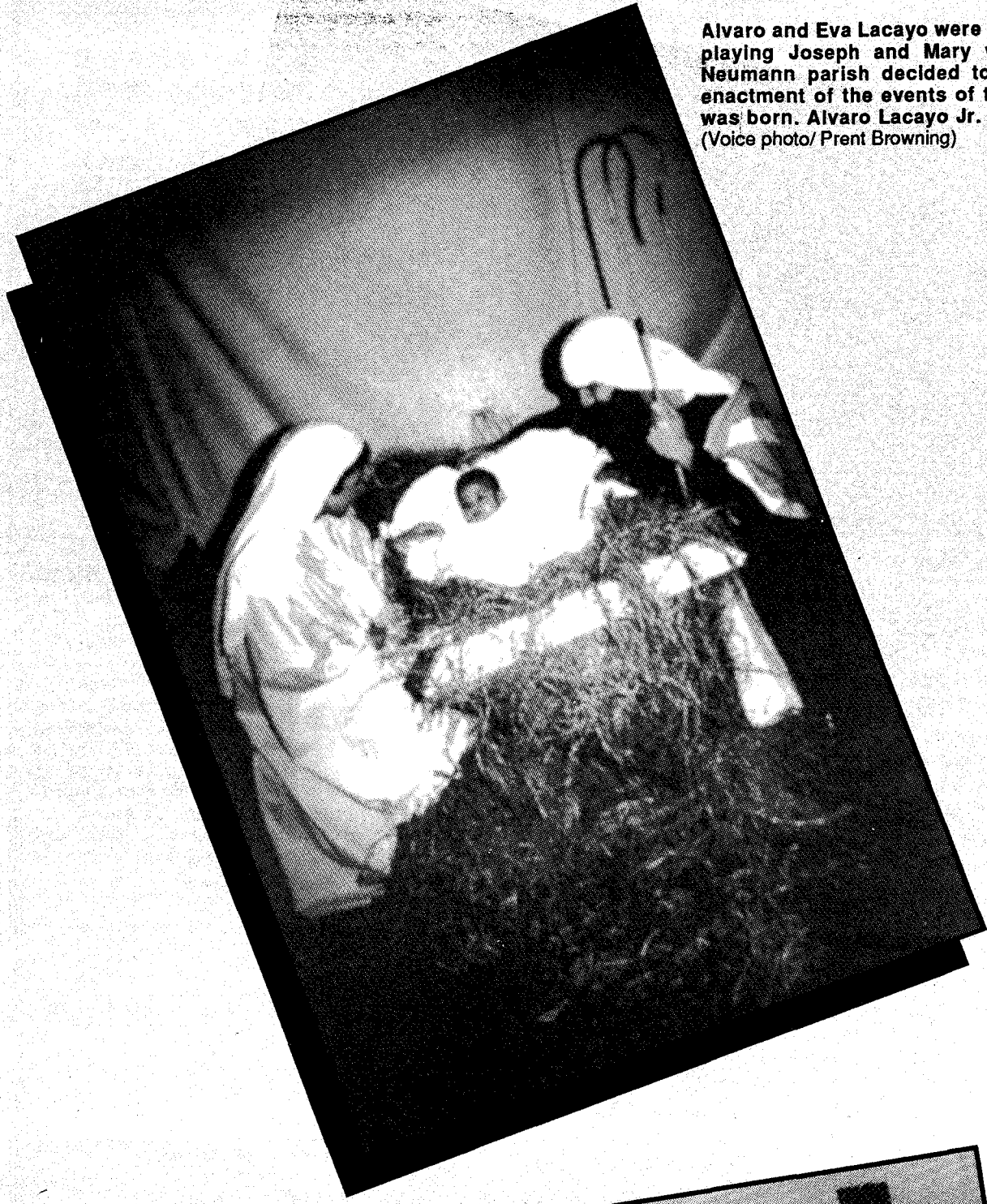
"We decided to pick a country that was very poor and needed our help," said Rafuls. "With all the food we throw away in Miami, we knew it could be done."

'We started it like a club. We asked each member to contribute a minimum of five pounds of rice, five pounds of sugar and four cans of evaporated milk'

Group leader Arnoldo Rafuls

Re-creating Bethle

Alvaro and Eva Lacayo were just one couple playing Joseph and Mary when St. John Neumann parish decided to present a re-enactment of the events of the night Jesus was born. Alvaro Lacayo Jr. plays the baby. (Voice photo/Prent Browning)



Two South Dade Catholic p living nativity one step furthe "living Bethlehem" complete deta makers, and other realistic deta

St. John Neumann and St. Br ments last weekend of what occ night of the birth of Jesus.

Both featured live animals ar dressed as shepherds, s .ee residents.

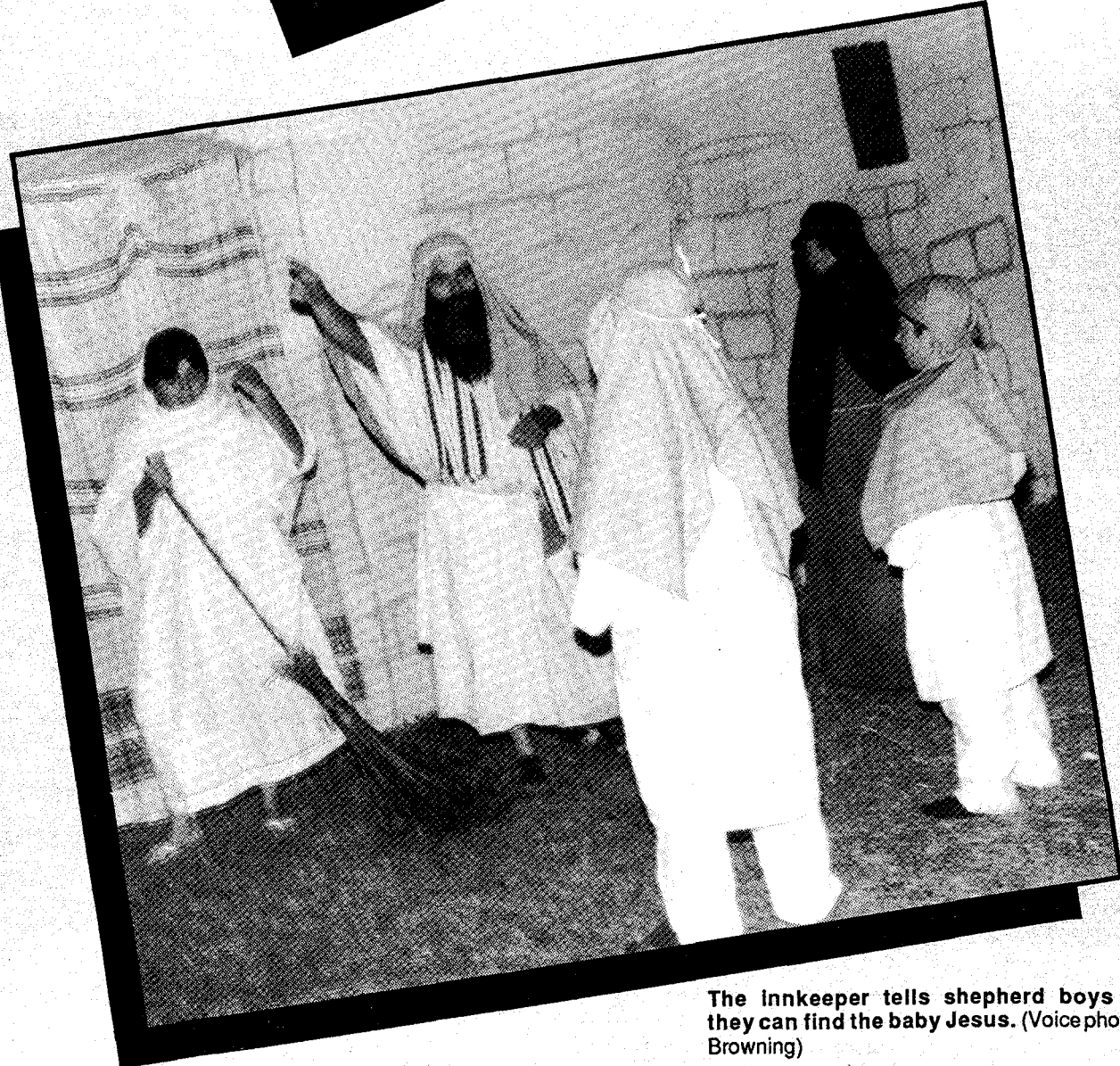
At St. John Neumann, you c a Jewish wedding, students of t praying, and shepherds listeni newborn King.

During St. Brendan's re-e cluded a Jewish wedding, tow baked pita bread and traded live 2,000 years ago. Prior to enteri census-taker asked visitors to s

The visit at each Bethlehem stable where Jesus was born.



Juan Cunill played the Chl synagogue scene during the s enactment. (Voice photo/A n



The Innkeeper tells shepherd boys where they can find the baby Jesus. (Voice photo/Prent Browning)

Bethlehem's holy night

...c parishes took the idea of a
...her this year and created a
...with animal traders, pottery
...stalls.

Brendan presented re-enact-

...occurred in Bethlehem on the
...s and around 200 parishioners
...cepers c ther Bethlehem

...u could witness by torchlight
...f the synagogue studying and
...ing as angels told them of the

...-enactment, which also in-
...ownspeople weaved baskets,
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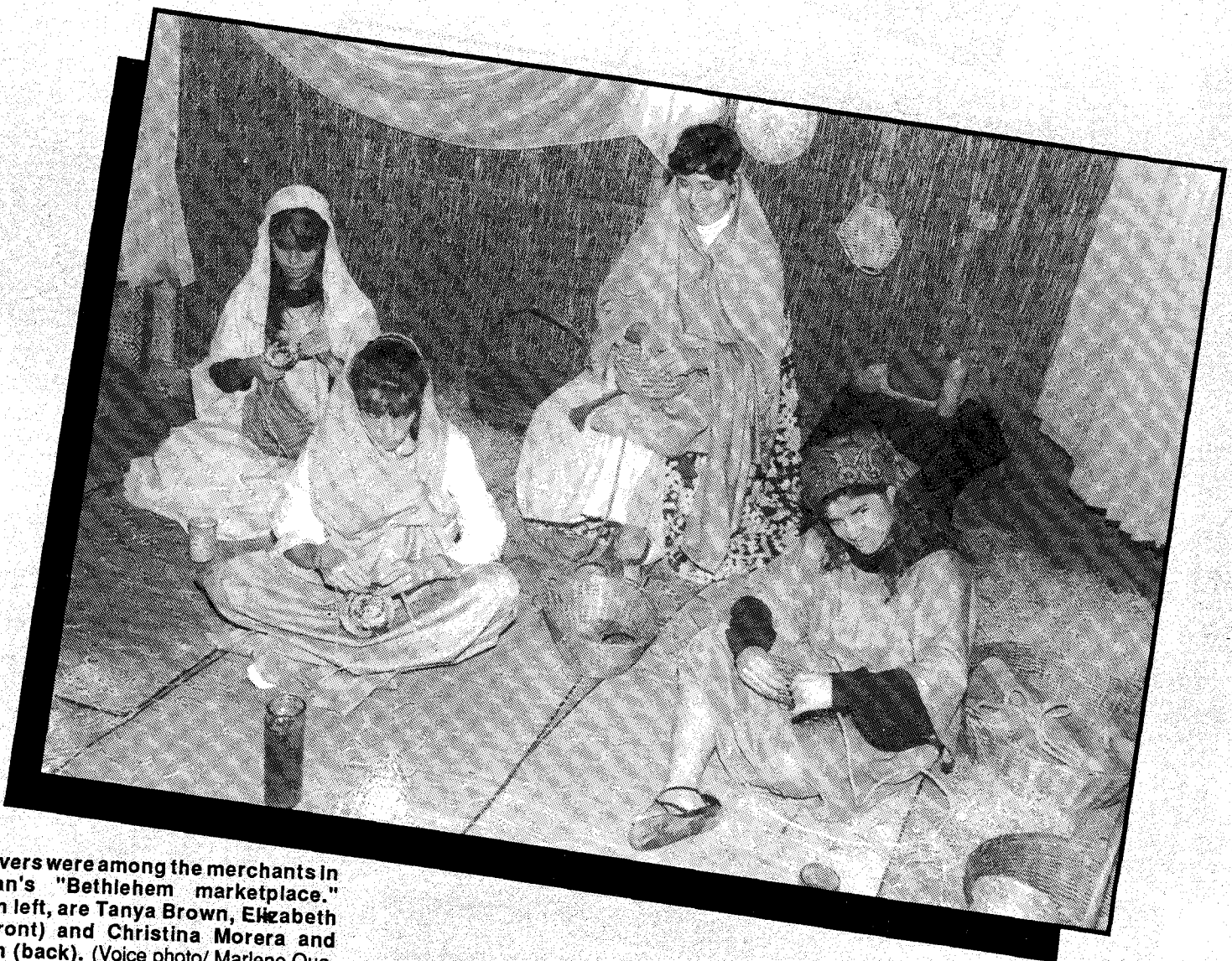
-- Prent Browning



Parishioner Bruce Lyon, playing an animal trader at St. Brendan's "Bethlehem marketplace," chats with a passerby as a burro named Gabriel keeps watch. (Voice photo/ Marlene Quaroni)



Chief Rabbi in a
St. Brendan re-
ne Quaroni)



Basket weavers were among the merchants in St. Brendan's "Bethlehem marketplace." Above, from left, are Tanya Brown, Elizabeth Sanchez (front) and Christina Morera and Rosa Brown (back). (Voice photo/ Marlene Quaroni)

Chinese Santa brings cheer to elderly's Christmas

Once there was a Chinese man who was poor during World War II. The Catholic Church helped him and he never forgot. After the war he became wealthy and dedicated himself to philanthropy.

If this sounds like the beginning of a Christmas story—it is. Dr. Thomas Liang of Hong Kong, the Chinese gentleman in question, has for the past four years donated Christmas presents to Archdiocesan senior residences in South Florida. The gifts are meant as an expression of the Chinese traditional respect for the elderly that is not always so prevalent in Western societies. He likes to choose residences that are located next to schools so that school children can become involved also.

This year, over 100 tenants of Opa Locka Village in Opa Locka received a variety of gifts that included porcelain bowls, silver trays and oriental vases. Children of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Elementary School next to the Archdiocesan facility helped serve lunch and performed a Christmas musical for the residents.

-- Prent Browning

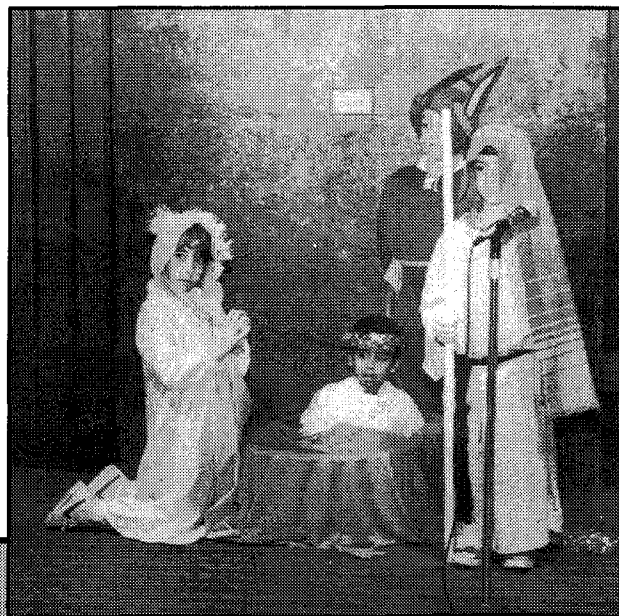


Opa-Locka Village resident Peggy Haywood receives one of Dr. Liang's gifts from the residence's manager, Roslyn G. Williams. (Voice photo/Prent Browning)



Blessed Trinity students stage pageant

Blessed Trinity Elementary school in Virginia Gardens, like many Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese, celebrated the Christmas season with a pageant put on by the students. Kindergartners (above) dressed as shepherds and sheep in a presentation of the Nativity story (right). Following that, older students performed musical numbers dedicated to such symbols of Christmas as bells and holly. (Voice photos/Prent Browning)



After divorce where do I stand with the church?

Q. My husband of 13 years came home one evening recently and told me he had been in love with another woman for over five years. Ten days later he found an apartment, packed his bags and left me and his three children. We are legally separated now. After a year he can, and has

By Fr. John Dietzen



stated that he will, divorce me to marry her. How can I remain married "until death do us part" to a man who is someone else's husband? Believe me, I have tried everything to keep this marriage together. Where do I stand with the church? (New York)

A. First, I hope you realize that you are still a Catholic in good standing. Nothing keeps you from continuing full membership and participation in the church, including the sacraments. I am reminded constantly from my correspondence that many Catholics still believe they cannot receive Communion just because they are divorced. That is not true, and you need all the spiritual strength you can get.

Your situation is truly tragic. The behavior of your husband is, if not unheard of, at least strange. It certainly raises serious questions about some phases of his character and personality development and his emotional maturity. My advice is to go to a priest you know to be knowledgeable and helpful, explain your circumstances and ask his advice on how you should proceed.

Q. I have just attended a seminar for catechists. One teacher stated that a physician who performs an abortion is a murderer. What is the church's position on this? Is the physician or mother guilty of murder? (Ohio)

A. Abortion is killing a preborn human being. Nearly no one disagrees with that today. Even those who are pro-abortion, or pro-choice if you wish, and who are knowledgeable scientifically, do not deny that what is in the womb before birth is human life. The questions today revolve rather around the relative importance of the lives of mother and child.

Every science, from genetics to psychology to biology, agrees that we have no reason whatsoever, from any scientific viewpoint, to assume that the life in the womb of a human mother is anything other than human. That, of course, has been the conviction of human beings all along. Now it is supported by physical and psychological sciences.

Calling an act of abortion murder is something else entirely. In both civil law and moral theology, murder generally means intentionally taking the life of an innocent human being, which brings in the aspect of personal moral guilt.

It seems certain that a number of those involved in acts of abortion have managed somehow to convince themselves that what is being destroyed is not truly a human being. If that is in fact what they sincerely believe, wrong as it is, they would not be personally morally guilty of that crime.

Anyone who knows, or even strongly suspects, that he or she is destroying a human life, of course, would be guilty of murder, as would anyone else who takes an innocent life.

For the mother particularly, other factors such as fear, emotional panic or severe pressure from family or friends could diminish greatly any moral guilt.

Thus it is wrong to refer to all who perform or procure an abortion as murderers. We have no basis or right to make that judgment. We can make our position quite strong and clear without using such language.

Handle people with care

One day recently paper where I wor' offended and an special event h his event was i

It was clear someone said, for flag raisin

At that poin the executive c problem.

It turned out that the affair had been a memorial for his deceased wife, who had been active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies' Auxiliary.

He had gotten a statewide honor for her and officers of the VFW came to the cemetery for the services, which had included a flag raising.

As he talked it became very clear that he was not concerned about publicity for the event. This was a remembrance for his wife, who had died a year earlier. He told me they were known for always being together. They always held hands, he said, clasping one hand over the other to show me.

The man was not really there to complain, I realized. He was here to cry out his love story and I was glad I had taken the time to listen.

I assured him we would do a follow-up story, probably timed for Veterans Day.

People might think he deserved a brushoff. Unpleasantness is sometimes unavoidable. But the truth is, most of my life I have been concerned about never wanting to hurt someone's feelings. This stems back to an incident that happened to me in the fourth grade.

That year a boy in my class was extremely disruptive. He was not noisy or cruel. In fact, he was quiet. He just had a way of doing things which were upsetting to our teacher, who saw a lot of harm coming to him if he did not stop his sneaky ways.

Then one day he came to class late, escorted by the

of the news-scene. He was shown up for a d to know why

to him. Then photographers

yself to him as and tell me his



By Antoinette Bosco

principal. Mother Superior gave him, in front of the whole class, a little speech about discipline and then, surprisingly, asked us what we thought of our classmate. Hands shot up, and as she acknowledged them, one by one his faults were listed.

"He steals my homework." "He talks back to Sister." "He tells lies." "He chews gum in class." The comments went on and on.

I sat there, wanting to be part of the action, racking my 9-year-old brain to see what complaint I could come up with.

Then I had it. I raised my hand, and said, "He always scratches the blackboard with the chalk and laughs when it makes us shiver."

I was suddenly ashamed. Then mother said softly, "I let

all you children talk about him because I was waiting, hoping, to see if anyone, just one of you, would say something nice about him."

Her words stunned me. My sense of shame for joining in the beating burned into me permanently. The experience taught me to take care — a lot of care — before responding strongly to the negative side of another person.

To this day my tongue becomes paralyzed if I have to say something I think is going to hurt another person. It is a pause that buys time, forcing me to examine honestly if my act is necessary, reminding me to pray a moment for God's help in seeking that honesty.

"Then mother said softly, "I let all you children talk about him because I was waiting, hoping, to see if anyone, just one of you, would say something nice about him."The experience taught me to take care - a lot of care - before responding strongly to the negative side of another person."

Spreading joy this Christmas

There is more joy in giving than in receiving. That's one reason why the Christmas season is a good time to think about giving something back to God. You have the power to please Almighty God not only by your actions, but by your good intentions and holy desires. Your desire to please Him already delights His heart.

"The entire life of a good Christian is in fact an exercise of holy desire. You do not yet see what you long for, but the very act of desiring prepares you... to be utterly satisfied." (St. Augustine)

The joys of heaven are the object of Christian hope, but it's possible here and now for you to experience the joy of delighting the Lord. Delight is pleasure quickened by a specific event or circumstance. When I speak of God's delight I know I am touching on mystery, but it is a fact that God reacts warmly to every gesture of love offered to Him.

When you desire to do God's will, you please Him. When you actually do His will, you delight Him. When you endure your cross courageously or when you sacrifice some legitimate good out of love for your neighbor, you delight Almighty God.

Delight is pleasure at high tide. By God's grace we humans have the power to be intimate with the Lord.

St. Clare writing to St. Agnes of Prague wrote this passage which leaves little to the imagination: "Consider also His

By Fr. John Catoir



indescribable delights, His sigh for your heart's content as you cry out: 'Draw me on! Your left hand rests under my head, Your right arm joyfully embraces me, and You kiss me with the sweet kiss of Your lips.'

God responds to every gesture of love.

As you celebrate the Lord's birthday, this Christmas let your heart's desire expand to new heights.

Delight the Lord, through your careful attention to little actions performed lovingly for Him and for your neighbor. "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did for Me." (Mt. 25:40)

Jesus Christ entered the world as an infant not only to give us a message about God's love, but to communicate Love itself. When we become carriers of divine love, we give pleasure to God Himself.



Time capsules

By Frank Morgan

Steigel died poor but he left his beautiful glass as legacy

In 1750, glassmaker Henry Steigel came to Pennsylvania from Germany and created a glassware that became famous throughout the colonies for its beauty.

Steigel then built Manheim, Pennsylvania as a model town for his workers and crowned it with a magnificent home of his own.

High living earned Steigel the nickname, "The Baron," and eventually a place in debtors' prison.

Destitute after coming out of prison, Steigel took a janitor's job at the factories that he had once owned. In 1785, the Baron died a pauper, but his glass is still a treasured collection at New York's Metropolitan Museum.

a Paris newspaper traced his return with these headlines:

"The Corsican Monster Has Landed in the Gulf of Juan."

"The Cannibal is Marching Toward Grasse."

"The Vampire has Entered Lyons."

"Napoleon is Marching Toward Fontainebleau."

"HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS EXPECTED TOMORROW IN PARIS."

Benjamin Franklin wrote:

"When a man and woman die, so the poets sung, His heart's the last part moves, her last is her tongue."

When Napoleon escaped from Elba and headed for Paris,

The Word became flesh and dwells among us

There is a charming story in the book "If I Were Starting My Family Again" by John M. Drescher. It goes like this: I remember a little fellow, frightened by lightning and thunder, who called out one dark night, "Daddy, come. I'm scared." "Son," the father said, "God loves you and he'll take care of you." "I know God loves me," the boy replied, "but right now I want someone who has skin on."

You and I and all who share humanity with us are like that little boy calling out in the night. It is indeed very important to know that there is a God who is in charge, who has control over what is happening. But knowing alone provides cold comfort, as the saying goes. What we need in life, in times of joy as well as times of sorrow, is "someone who has skin on," some close enough to touch us, someone we can embrace and hold onto, who will embrace and hold onto us in return.

Sociologist Father Andrew Greeley writes, "The principal 'sacrament' by which loving goodness [God] is revealed to us are other human beings." I know this is true for me. We can believe that God-in-heaven loves and cares for us because someone here on earth, someone with skin on, has loved and cared for us. A person who has not felt loved cannot believe in a loving God. Such a person may want to believe, may long to believe, but it is hardly possible if they

By
**Carol A.
Farrell**

have not experienced a personal, selfless love from another human being. God depends on us to make him believable. For this He very especially relies on families. Another aspect of this worth reflecting

'Jesus is God's love with skin. So are we. Jesus continues to live, continues to be real and touchable to the extent that we allow him to be present through our love and concern and care for each other.'

on as we prepare to celebrate Christmas is that God so loved the world that He sent His son as physical evidence of His love for us. "The Word became flesh and dwells among us." Jesus became the bridge

between the Father's divinity and our humanity.

In the taking on of our humanity, Jesus demonstrated what it means, and how to be, human; what it means, and how to be, Christian. The one implies the other. The whole idea of the humanness of Jesus, ("He was like us in all things but sin.") offends some very good people.

For them the idea of bodiliness is troublesome. The fact of our flesh, that skin is soft and life is messy, that we feel and hurt and bleed and desire is something that real Christians should be above, they think. But our flesh and blood and skin are the thresholds which must be crossed if the heart is to be reached.

Jesus is God's love with skin on. So are we. Jesus continues to live, continues to be real and touchable to the extent that we allow him to be present through our love and concern and care for each other.

If Christmas is to have meaning, we will have to literally "flesh" that meaning out for each other. Christmas is not just a day. It is a way of life. It is a celebration of the gifts of God's love and our humanity.

May the love reach out and touch you during these holy days through someone with skin on. Merry Christmas!

(Carol Farrell is the Director of the Family Enrichment Center).

How to correspond to unwed son's child

Dear Mary: My 10th grandchild will be born soon. I could certainly use your advice now. This child's father, my son, is unmarried, 20 years old and in college. He wants little to do with the baby's mother. The mother is a few years older than my son, a college graduate with a good-paying job, living with another man hundreds of miles away.

She calls me frequently looking for the emotional support missing from my son. She does not need financial support and my son gives none.

This child is biracial, the main reason, I think, that my son has not acknowledged to his sisters and brothers that he will soon be a father. He expresses interest in the baby to me and sometimes to the baby's mother.

I told him that when the baby is born, I will have a real role in the baby's life and will tell the happy news to all our family. Until then I need advice about how to support and encourage my son (I frequently am angry with him because of his indifference to his child's mother) and how much support I should give the mother. (Ohio)

A. You are taking a positive and caring approach to your role of grandmother in a difficult situation. I applaud your decision to support your grandchild and the child's mother. While your anger and frustration

By Dr.
**James and
Mary Kenny**



with your son are understandable, there is little you can do to change him. Your son is young, rather immature and clearly in a situation beyond his depth. He may well be indifferent because he does not know what else to do. You cannot make him become a mature, responsible father and lectures probably will only drive him further away from his responsibilities.

I do not think it is wise of you to announce the birth within your family. It is your son, not you, who is becoming a parent and, right or wrong, I think it is his prerogative when and how to tell his brothers and sisters. At the same time, you need not hide your activities. If you should go to visit your new

grandchild, and your other children ask where you are going, you might tell them simply and directly. There is a fine but important line between announcing your son's information and discussing your own whereabouts.

Under the present circumstances your son is not likely to play a significant role in this child's life. The mother and child are hundreds of miles away and, while the mother would like emotional support from the father, she does not appear likely to get it at this time.

As the grandmother, you can be a significant person for the mother and child. Extend to them as much love, friendship and emotional support as your time, resources and personal energy allow. Reach out to this mother and child as you would to any other grandchild. Continue your interest as the child grows.

By becoming an involved grandmother, you accomplish several things. You provide family support which this young mother needs and desires. You provide a model of caring and concern for your son which is far more powerful than criticizing him or lecturing him. You keep the ties to this child alive should your son choose to take more responsibility later.

Finally, you have the joy of sharing in the growth of yet another beautiful grandchild and its mother. Congratulations, grandma!

(Reader questions on family living or child care to be answered in print are invited. Address questions to The Kennys, Box 872, St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Ind. 47978.)

Enjoying the Holidays in a better way

Every year around this time we say it: this year we are going to slow down and enjoy Christmas. And every year after Christmas we shake our heads and ask ourselves what happened.

We receive cards showing people sitting around fireplaces or strolling in the snow and we get pangs of nostalgia for the holiday we can't seem to achieve. We find ourselves running to get our cards written, homes clean and decorated for visitors, cookies baked, gifts bought and wrapped, kids outfitted and parties over with.

"Get it over with," seems to be the driving impulse rather than "Enjoy it." Yet, some people and families do manage to enjoy the holidays.

In a survey of such people last year, researchers found a remarkable agreement among them in holiday attitudes.

They have lower expectations than others. They don't try to make a production out of Christmas and are more willing to abandon duties and traditions that interfere with enjoyment.

They entertain and party less, 56% responding that trying to entertain at holiday time adds too much stress to an already overloaded system.

They write fewer Christmas cards, sending only to those who are near and dear or live far away. "Why send a card to people you see every day?" one asked. "Why not just wish them a Merry Christmas?"

They shop early, before the holiday mobs. Many

By
**Dolores
Curran**



shop throughout the year, buying gifts while on vacation or at sales. "Shopping can be the added stress," one woman said. "It can consume hours of time at a time when there is no time."

Many -43%- shop from catalogs and 35% give money or gift certificates. They don't seem to be so concerned as the highly-stressed in getting the 'just right' gift. "It's not that important to me," one remarked. "The idea is that you remember someone, not read their minds."

They send more gifts like fruit, nuts cheese, and magazine subscriptions. In reflecting on this finding, I recall an older friend who said she told her children, "I don't have room for doodads or china. If I can't eat it or read it, forget it." She may have been

abrupt but she was honest.

Families who enjoy Christmas also party, visit, and decorate less than families with pressure from trying to do it all. Saying no seems to be easier for the stress-reduced.

One couple explained that they once tried to decorate lavishly both the outside and inside of their home but they no longer decorate the outside. They, like other respondents, emphasized the need to list common Christmas chores and activities, and then go through and prioritize.

For those who want to prepare less enjoy more, here is a list.

Why not go through it with your family and see what lands on the top and bottom of your lists? And then agree to drop the bottom activities.

Christmas cards, outdoor decorations, indoor decorations, shopping for holiday clothing, shopping for gifts, attending community affairs, attending school and church programs, viewing lights, caroling. Advent wreath observance, baking and giving homemade goodies.

Also holiday sewing, visiting relatives and others, wrapping gifts, decorating tree, enjoying each other, entertaining, playing games together, sleeping late, helping kids make gifts, making gingerbread house, praying, reflecting and getting along with one another in peace in love.

(Copyright 1989 Alt Publishing Co.)

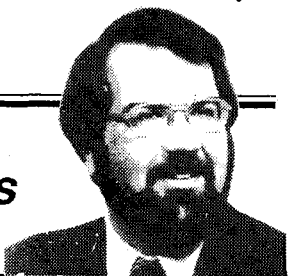
Classic films to enjoy during the holidays

What's a family to do during the Christmas season as far as suitable entertainment goes?

Assuming that the family has taken care of its Advent obligations of prayer and good works, I would suggest they check out the following 10 movies at the local video store, on television — and in their own closets.

1. "It's a Wonderful Life." Everyone

By
**James
Breig**



agrees this is *THE* classic Christmas film and not just because its conclusion takes place during the holidays. Its messages of each person's dignity and worth, of community spirit and togetherness, of family warmth and marital love fit in perfectly with the Christmas season. Make sure, of course, that you watch the original version with Jimmy Stewart. Subsequent remakes (such as Marlo Thomas', which reversed the genders) are like tinsel next to real gold. Almost every TV station runs this movie during the holidays so it's not difficult to find.

2. "A Christmas Carol." I used to think that the best version of this often-filmed story was the one with Reginald Owen. Then George C. Scott came along a few years ago in made-for-TV film on CBS. That remake of the Scrooge story got it all right in every detail (on CBS, Dec. 24).

3. "Jesus of Nazareth." What Christmas movie collection would be complete without a film about the main character? The birth of Christ has been put on celluloid numerous times in such biblical epics as "Ben-Hur" and "King of Kings," but the mini-series "Jesus of Nazareth" focuses on His entire life in reverent way (available in video stores for rent and from mail order houses for purchase).

4. "A Charlie Brown Christmas." This animated perennial puts the stress where it should be — on Jesus. In this story of the Peanuts gang's attempt to decorate a tree and hold a pageant, cartoonist Charles Schulz doesn't miss the main point of the season. The ending, when one of

the children recites the infancy narrative, is very moving (on CBS, Dec. 22).

5. "Dumbo." Dumbo? The flying elephant? That Dumbo? Walt Disney, who produced so many family films, never turned out a Christmas classic. That's because all his films are about the beauty of creation. There's no need to make a Christmas movie when all your films re-tell the story of how God-in-man dignifies our nature. I chose "Dumbo" as my suggestion for Christmas because it seems truest to the incarnational theme of the value found in every person — no matter the size of his ears.

6. & 7. "White Christmas" and "Holiday Inn." Anyone who can tell the difference between these two musicals is excused from watching both. The remainder of us get to relax with these twin trifles. They have no deep message; you won't be brought to tears; but you will experience a relaxing sensation which you'll welcome during these hectic weeks.

8. "Three Godfathers." Not many Westerns have Christmas themes, but this one, directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne, is an allegory about self-sacrifice and commitment as a trio of hombres (the three wise men) struggles to bring a newborn child across the wasteland to civilization.

9. "A Christmas Movie." This neglected film is the hilarious story of a boy's longing for a Daisy air rifle and it's packed with all the traditions that surrounded a child's Christmas in the Forties. Every detail, from the parental warning about "you'll shoot your eye out" to dad's eccentricities, is perfect (on TBS cable, Dec. 24).

10. "Your Home Movies." No, this isn't the title of a movie you'll find at the mall.

I mean your real home movies or videotapes or snapshots. Get the family together, drag out the projector or the shoebox full of Polaroids and take a nostalgic trip through your own Christmases and other happy moments.

Jesus came to give us life and some of our family's liveliest moments occur when the kids can see Dad in his crewcut and Mom in her prom gown.

So there they are: ten for the time between now and 1990.

Don't watch them all, but select a few to enhance your holiday spirit. Then drop me a line to let me know your choices for classic Christmas viewing.

'...Messages of each person's dignity and worth, of community spirit and togetherness, of family warmth and marital love fit in perfectly with the Christmas season.'



Holiday laughs -- Comic Chevy Chase (center) is back as Clark Griswold in "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," a slapstick satire of earnest family Christmases. The U.S. Catholic Conference says that adult audiences "will have much to chuckle over" and it classifies the film A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. (CNS photo)

'We're no Angels'

(Paramount)

Heavy-handed comic misadventure in which two escaped convicts (Robert De Niro and Sean Penn) hide out in a monastery pretending to be priests while they figure out a way to cross the border into Canada.

David Mamet's script has plenty of comic possibilities in contrasting the cynicism and spiritual impoverishment of the two earth-bound clods with the innocence and rich faith of the unworldly monks, but director Neil Jordan plays the piece so broadly that the result may appear to some as an irreverent farce, questionable in taste and treatment of religion.

Some sexual references, several scenes of hard-edged violence and a bemused agnostic attitude toward religion.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-IV -- adults, with reservations.

The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Volunteers are needed

Volunteers are needed to promote Catholic Television (Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Network). Please call Knights of Columbus 940-8303.

**Caution.
O'Sheas' can be habit
forming.
Take only as directed.**

DIRECT YOURSELF TO 1081 BALD EAGLE DRIVE ON MARCO ISLAND. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO S.W. FLA. 'TIL YOU'VE BEEN TO O'SHEAS'. OFFERING LUNCH, SUNDAY BRUNCH, COCKTAILS, LITE DINNER. FULL DINNER OVERLOOKING MARCO BAY. 394-7531

Catholic television and radio schedule

Television programs

- 'La Palabra de Vida' In Spanish, at midnight five minutes on a nightly basis on cable HIT-TV Channels 41 and 20.
- 'Living Faith' In English every Wednesday and Friday at 2:30 p.m., on Selkirk Cable Company, Channel 23.
- 'Rosary' In Spanish with Auxiliary Bishop Agustín Román, every Sunday at 8 a.m., on Tele-Miami Cable, Channel 40; also every Saturday from 4 to 4:30 p.m., on Dynamic Cable, Channel 13.
- TV Mass in English every Sunday, 7:30 a.m., on WPLG-CH. 10.
- TV Mass in Spanish every Sunday, 7:30 a.m. on WLTV-CH. 2 with Father Jose Nickse; and 9 a.m. on WSCV-CH. 51, with Father Francisco Santana.
- 'Raíces Cubanas' with Father Santana, every Saturday at 5:30 p.m., on Dynamic Cable, Channel 13; every Sunday at 8 a.m. on Channel 51.
- 'El Día del Señor' with Father Federico Capdepón, every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., on Channel 40, also every Sunday at 5 p.m. on Channel 51.
- 'Nuestra Familia' In Spanish, at 7:30 a.m. Sundays on WLTV-CH. 23.
- 'New Breed of Man' / 'El Hombre Nuevo' Hosted by Father Ricardo Castellanos, on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (WHFT-CH. 45), Sundays at 9 a.m. in English and Saturdays at 5

p.m. in Spanish and in English at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in Spanish on Channel 51.

Cable Programming On Storer Cable (Acts / Public Access): Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Channel 14 in Broward; and Saturdays and Sundays from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Channel 38 in Dade.

'Mother Angelica' Her Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) is carried on some cable channels in South Florida; check with your local cable company.

'Catholic Focus' on Channel 6, WCIX, Father Thomas Wenski will air at 6 a.m. on December 24th and then on January 24th.

Radio programs

In English

'The Rosary' (sponsored by the World Apostolate of Fatima), Saturdays at noon on WEXY 1520 AM.

In Spanish

- 'Panorama Católico' Hosted by Sister Bertha Penabad and Father José Nickse, Sundays at 7:30 a.m. on WQBA, 1140 AM, and at 5:30 a.m. on Super Q, 107.5 FM.
- 'Los Caminos de Dios' Hosted by Father José Hernando, Sundays at 8 a.m. on WQBA, 1140 AM.
- 'Domingo Feliz' Hosted by Father Angel Villaronga and Bishop Agustín Román, Sundays at 9 to 10 a.m. on WRHC, 1550 AM.
- 'Una Historia de la Vida' Hosted by Pepe Alonso, (produced by Kerygma), Sundays at 5:15 a.m., on Radio Mambi, WAQI.
- 'Una Vida Mejor' Hosted by Pepe Alonso, Thursdays at 12:30 a.m. on Union Radio WOCN.

'Habla el Obispo Roman' Hosted by Bishop Agustín Roman, at 12 midnight on La Cubanísima, WQBA AM.

'Caminos de Fe' Hosted by Bishop Agustín Roman, at 9 a.m. on Union Radio WOCN, 1450 AM.

'Mensaje de Fe' Hosted by Bishop Agustín Roman, at 9:30 a.m. on Radio Mambi WAQI, 710 AM.

'Encuentros Familiares y Temas de Actualidad' Hosted by Father Florentino Azcoitia, S.J., on Sundays from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. on Radio Mambi WAQI, 710 AM.

'Conflictos Humanos' Hosted by Father Angel Villaronga, Mondays to Fridays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon on WQBA, 1140 AM.

In Creole

'Kok la Chante' (The Rooster Crows) Sponsored by the Haitian Catholic Center, Sundays at 7 a.m. on WVCG, 1080 AM.

Office of Worship workshops set

All Workshops: Saturdays, 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Eucharistic Ministers

Jan. 20: St. Andrew, Coral Springs; Feb. 3, Blessed Trinity, Miami Springs (Spanish); February 24, St. Augustine, Coral Gables.

Requirements for Commissioning: Candidates must be recommended by their pastors or spiritual directors and attend a full day of training. Letters of recommendation must contain \$10 registration fee (includes lunch) and a specification of which workshop the candidate will attend.

Lectors

Jan. 27: St. Timothy, Miami; Feb. 17: St. Agatha, Miami (Spanish); April 21: St. Maurice, Ft. Lauderdale.

Reservations and \$10 registration fee (includes lunch) required.

Make all checks payable to the Office of Worship and Spiritual Life and mail to: Office of Worship and Spiritual Life, 9401 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida 33138. Deadline for reservations to all workshops is the Wednesday prior to the specified workshop. For more information call the Office of Worship at 757-6241 (Dade) or 522-5776 (Broward), Ext. 351 and speak with Mrs. Lopez.

Christmas Mass to be celebrated at DeSoto site

On Christmas day at 3 p.m., Bishop J. Keith Symons will celebrate Christmas Mass at the recently discovered site of Hernando DeSoto's 1539 winter encampment located at DeSoto Circle and Lafayette Street in Tallahassee. This will commemorate the 450th anniversary of the first Christmas Mass in North America.

In the Spring of 1987, the Tallahassee Development Corporation was preparing the area for construction when Calvin Jones, a state archeologist visited the area and immediately found Spanish artifacts identifying this as the place where the DeSoto



SCOUTING CELEBRATION. St. Andrews Girl Scout Troup 320 of Coral Springs got some help from former girl scout leaders in celebrating Veterans Day with a patriotic sing-a-long at St. Andrews Towers in Coral Springs. From left to right in the front row are: Gerry Price, Nancy Gray, Eleanor Arhern, Dorothy Fleischman, Ellen Tooney, and Ann Reiff.

Bons Secours Hospital seeks volunteers

Volunteers are needed at Bon Secours Hospital/ Villa Maria Nursing Center.

Volunteers are needed in the following areas of interest: recreation, pastoral care, clerical, adult day care. No special skills are

required.

Hours can be adjusted for your convenience.

Call Pat Higgins, Volunteer Coordinator, at 891-8850, Ext. 5215 for details.

Mass for parents who have lost a child Dec. 28

It may have happened in infancy or adulthood; by illness, accident or prenatally due to abortion or miscarriage. The loss of a son or daughter may be the most painful and difficult experience for a parent.

Auxiliary Bishop Agustin Roman will be the principal celebrant of the first Mass dedicated to parents who have experienced the loss of a child.

The bilingual Mass will be celebrated on Thursday, Dec. 28 at 9 p.m. at Our Lady of Charity Shrine, 3609 South Miami Avenue Miami.

For further information please contact Carol Farrell at the Family Enrichment Center at 651-0280, The Respect Life Office at 653-2921 or the Communications Office of the Archdiocese of Miami at 757-6241, Exts. 320, 321.

Support group for women formed

Have you experienced a loss or new experience in your life with which you have difficulty coping? Has decision making become an overwhelming chore? Do you have feelings of depression, boredom, insecurity? Come and share your questions with other women, get some support, learn about these feelings and how you can change them. Women in Transition meets Wednesdays at 10 a.m. For a pre-group interview call Sr. Sue Fitzpatrick from Catholic Community Services at 428-5281. Fees are on a sliding scale.

St. Kieran burns mortgage

Ten years and two days after construction began on St. Kieran's Church, the church's mortgage of \$550,000 has been paid in full. In a joyous special ceremony at 11 a.m. Mass on Dec. 10, the mortgage papers were symbolically burned. Bishop Agustin Roman was principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass. The day's celebration was capped off with a dinner-dance at the Hotel Intercontinental. St. Kieran's Church, at 3605 South Miami Ave., began construction under the direction of Father Daniel Barrett, who now works in the Diocese of Palm Beach. Father Vincent Duffy, a Salesian priest, followed Father Barrett. Father Duffy was succeeded in August by Father Emilio Allue.

percent of the property and opening it to the public. The response from the Tallahassee community was tremendous. Many businesses donated money and equipment, and volunteers poured in to help the archeologists sift through tons of earth.

Christmas Mass will be celebrated inside former Governor John Martin's summer home located on the DeSoto site at 1022 Lafayette Street. The public is invited.

Deacons to be ordained

Eight candidates for the Diaconate will be ordained on January 6 at 11 a.m. in the Cathedral.

Candidates for Permanent Diaconate are: Luis Gonzalez of Our Lady of Lourdes; Jose Lezama of San Isidro; Daniel Moretti of St. Elizabeth of Hungary; Donald Raymond of St. Martha; and Jorge Rodriguez of All Saints.

Candidates for Transitional Diaconate and Priesthood (Seminarians) are: Armando Alonso, Michael Davis, and Kenneth Schwanger.

Free legal advice available for seniors

The legal hotline for older Floridians opened for business on August 10. It offers free over the phone advice and information for Florida residents 60 years of age and older. Qualified lawyers who are specially trained to handle the legal concerns of older people will answer all inquiries. Phone toll-free: 1-800-252-5997 (576-5997 for Dade

County residents). The hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Related services are available at low cost such as follow-up action (free for low-income people), wills, and referrals to carefully selected attorneys charging negotiated low rates.

It's a date

Spiritual renewal

The Schott Memorial Center for the Deaf and Handicapped invites the deaf and disabled to a midnight Mass on Dec. 24. Prayer service: 11:30 p.m. Solemn Mass: Midnight. The Schott Memorial Center for the Deaf and Handicapped is located at 6591 S.W. 124th Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. 33330.

A Catholic Revival at San Isidro, 2310 Hammondville Road in Pompano, will be held Jan. 7 at 2 p.m. Fr. Ricardo Castellanos will be teaching and praying for healing for a healthy and happy New Year.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Charity at 3609 S. Miami Ave. in Miami will host a bi-

lingual Mass at 8 p.m. on Dec. 28 on the Feast of the Holy Innocents for the consolation of parents who have experienced the death of a child. Bishop Agustin Roman will be the principal celebrant and homilist.

A Damascus will be held Jan. 7 from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at St. Monica Church, 3490 N.W. 191 St. in Opa Locka.

The Cenacle in Lantana will host a New Year's Eve overnight. Given by Fr. Tom Cauley. \$30. Conferences and Eucharist included. Call (407) 582-2534.

Single/divorced/widowed

Catholic Singles in Action will host a

New Year's Eve Party at 9 p.m. at St. Gregory's Catholic Church, 200 North University Drive. \$10 at door. \$7.50 in advance.

The Catholic Widowers Club of Hollywood will hold its monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 5th at Griffin Park Hall, 2901 S.W. 52nd St., Ft. Lauderdale. Music, dancing and refreshments.

Potpourri

Fr. Flanagan's "Love After Marriage" excitement seminar—FLAMES—will be offered by the author himself from 7-8:30 p.m. each Monday evening from Jan. 8-Feb. 5 at St. Luke's

parish center in Margate. Catholic Community Service sponsors this seminar and the fee is \$40 per couple. For more information and to register please call Fr. Mike at 731-3001.

St. Henry Catholic Church will host a New Year's Eve party from 8 to 11 p.m. Rich Williams Orchestra. Polynesian buffet. Dancing from 9:30 p.m. until 1:30 a.m. \$45 per person. For reservations call 785-2450.

Holy Family Catholic School is planning a reunion of eighth grade graduates from the years 1969, 1970, and 1971. For more information about the reunion call Mary Herrick Quinn in Dade at 652-4746 or Karen Adamese Spencer in Broward at 434-6934.

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Sapp schedules 2nd Run-for-Life

Sacred Heart parishioner Michael Sapp has recently announced that he will again run to St. Augustine to raise money for care for expectant mothers. In February of this year the 346-mile Run-for-Life from St. Mary's Cathedral in Miami to the Shrine of Our Lady de la Leche in St. Augustine raised \$12,000. The money paid the mortgage of St. Gerard House, a 16-bed residence for pregnant mothers in St. Augustine.

This year donations will be divided between St. Gerard House and seven other maternity homes and care programs in the state, most of them near the marathon route. They include Archdiocesan sponsored St. Vincent Hall in Miami and Angelica House in Tamarac. Donations can be sent to Run-for-Life, P.O. Box 4782, Princeton, FL 33092.

Next year's run, which will also begin Feb. 9, is even more ambitious. Sapp will begin from Sacred Heart parish in Homestead and plans to finish at the shrine only nine days later. Like this year's run, it will be sponsored by the Homestead Knights of Columbus of which Sapp is a member.

Author debunks papal murder theory

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT: THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF POPE JOHN PAUL I, by John Cornwell. Simon and Schuster (New York, 1989). 339 pp., \$19.95. Reviewed by Joseph R. Thomas, Catholic News Service.

Previous books about the death of Pope John Paul I—and there have been several—have sold reasonably well, probably for the same reason the National Enquirer sells well: curiosity about that which is thought to be bizarre. John Paul I's death was thought to be bizarre, at least by some, because Vatican functionaries more concerned with appearances and medieval proprieties bungled some minor details in announcing the death of "the smiling pope" on Sept. 28, 1978, just 34 days after his election.

The shortness of his reign coupled with the inconsistencies—had a nun in fact been the first to discover the body of the dead pope, or was it one of his secretaries; was he reading the "Imitation of Christ" at the hour of death, or a list of prelates he was about to sack?—led to speculation about a conspiracy, a cover-up, even an assassination plot or a poisoning by someone within the

Vatican. For the most part, the Vatican ignored the talk but the talk apparently reached the point where it was thought it might not be a bad idea to put the rumors to rest.

That would explain the unprecedented cooperation the author of "A Thief in the Night," John Cornwell, received after the suggestion that he look into the pope's death was allegedly made to him by an American prelate at the Vatican. One will understand, then that Cornwell has approached this as if it were a detective story with he himself playing the part of Ellery Queen and giving us a running account of each clue uncovered until, at the end, the mystery is unraveled.

Mysteries, of course, are as mysterious as you care to make them. Thus it would not serve Cornwell's purpose to say simply that it looks as if bureaucrats unaccustomed to a prying press thought that the details of the pope's demise weren't all that important and so made some serious mistakes in judgment. Instead Cornwell concocts a conspiracy of obfuscation designed to protect the pope's two secretaries from charges of being derelict in their duties.

Cornwell is entitled to his view, of course, and his theory does explain the

unexplainable although it might do so at the expense of two men who might otherwise be seen as loyal functionaries. On the positive side, however, there is this: the author pretty much demolishes the notion that Archbishop Paul Marcinkus was involved in the pope's death (although the archbishop's role in the Vatican bank scandal and his operational style come in for severe criticism). He also makes an excellent case for the cause of death having been misdiagnosed as a heart attack when it was more likely a preventable embolism stemming from a previous condition coupled with overwork and neglect on the part of those around him.

So "A Thief in the Night" is not without merit. It is also padded.

Cornwell, for instance, gives an entire chapter over to a meaningless, gossipy interview with an anonymous fop and fleshes out his tale with other material sure to tickle the gossip-mongers in the congregation.

Although "A Thief in the Night" is only mildly interesting, it is nevertheless the best of the books about the death of John Paul I, if that is still of concern to you.

(Thomas is assistant director of the Christophers)

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Thanks to St. Jude, St. Pancracio, St. Cristo de Los Milagros, Virgen Milagrosa for prayers answered.
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St. Jude Healer of the sick, pray for us.

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Gemma

Thank you Saint Anthony and Saint Jude for prayers answered.
M.S.S.

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Espiritu Santo. Tu que me aclaras todo, que iluminas todos los caminos para que yo alcance mi ideal. Tu que me das el don Divino de perdonar y olvidar el mal que me hacen y que en todos los instantes de mi vida estas conmigo, yo quiero en este corto dialogo agradecerte por todo y confirmar que nunca quiero separarme de Ti, por mayor que sea la ilusion material. Deseo estar contigo y todos mis seres queridos en la gloria perpetua. Gracias por tu misericordia para conmigo y los mios. Gracias Dios mio.
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A.A.R.V.

ORACION AL ESPIRITU SANTO

Espiritu Santo. Tu que me aclaras todo, que iluminas todos los caminos para que yo alcance mi ideal. Tu que me das el don Divino de perdonar y olvidar el mal que me hacen y que en todos los instantes de mi vida estas conmigo, yo quiero en este corto dialogo agradecerte por todo y confirmar que nunca quiero separarme de Ti, por mayor que sea la ilusion material. Deseo estar contigo y todos mis seres queridos en la gloria perpetua. Gracias por tu misericordia para conmigo y los mios. Gracias Dios mio.
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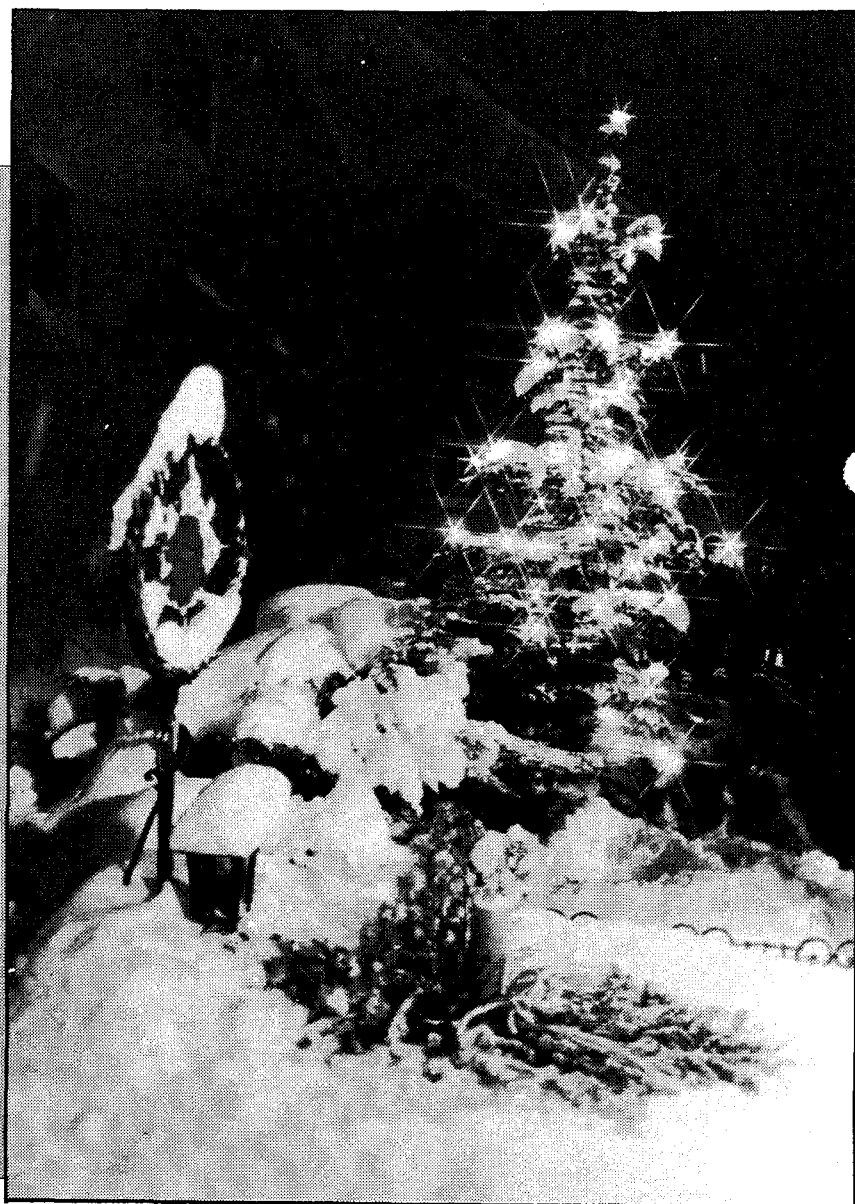
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Christmas: A season for caring



By Father Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS
Catholic News Service

Christmas is the season of care, writes Father Eugene LaVerdiere. When we reach out to the needy and the forgotten, our caring has a profoundly human quality. (CNS photo)

The word "care" has an extraordinary number of meanings.

It can refer to anxieties, as when we speak of someone's cares and troubles.

It can refer to personal concern for someone. In this sense we speak of people who are deserving of our care.

It can describe someone who is attentive to others, as when we refer to someone as a caring person.

When we think of Christmas as a season of care, we mean that it is a time to reach out and help the needy and forgotten. In this sense, caring is a profoundly human quality.

For Christians, caring is an aspect of love, one of the three fundamental attitudes of a good Christian, along with faith and hope.

The best way to grasp this last meaning of care is to find examples of people who exemplify it in their lives.

We can begin with Jesus. As one who died for sinners, Jesus is the ultimate caring person. The attitude of caring characterizes all his ministry.

There was the time, for example, when Jesus called the disciples to join him for some rest and quiet. But when they went to a place they thought would be deserted, a huge crowd was waiting for them.

Mark's Gospel says that Jesus' heart went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

On that occasion Jesus' care for the crowd was expressed in his teaching. He began to teach them and later he saw to it that they received the nourishment

they needed. Care can be pretty tough. It even can be expressed in anger, as when Jesus berated some Pharisees for hypocrisy. Had he not cared, he would not have done that.

Jesus' care also was courageous, as we see so clearly when he stood up for the woman who was caught in adultery. It took courage to tell a violent and enraged crowd, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).

For a second example of a caring person, we need look no further than Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A young pregnant woman who travels across the hills and deep valleys of Galilee, Samaria and Judea to visit a relative who is pregnant is someone who cares.

The ultimate expression of Mary's care, of course, was at the foot of the cross on which her son was dying, the same son she had wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger some 30 years earlier.

When I think of caring people, I also think of many people around me, family, friends, fellow priests and brothers, not to mention Mary, my secretary, and Gigi, my travel agent.

Christmas is a time to notice and express appreciation for all the care with which all these people surround us.

An elderly woman, now deceased, stands out among all the caring people I have known. Her last name was Salomone but everyone called her Mama Bessie.

Her husband, of whom she always spoke lovingly, had died quite young. A barber, he was able to leave her a

house in Cleveland and a modest income.

With no children of her own, Mama Bessie adopted our whole seminary, including the faculty. That was way back in the 1950s and 1960s, when small seminaries had not yet merged to form the larger seminaries of today.

Having a whole seminary full of "children" made for some interesting stories.

Once, while Mama was visiting with people at a funeral parlor, she referred to her children and someone asked how many she had.

Pausing to think, she answered with the musical intonation of her native Napoli, "about 40."

The one who asked turned around and walked away.

Mama Bessie loved to make spaghetti and meatballs. She had a little machine to make her own pasta. It was quite a production, but a month did not pass without Mama spending the better part of a day and a half making and serving spaghetti to her children at the seminary.

Everyone who met Mama remembers her and she often comes up in the conversations of those whose eyes rolled as she overloaded their plates. What remains of those meals — each one an event — is Mama's warmth, humor, smile and love.

Caring people like Jesus, Mary and Mama Bessie — She would laugh to see herself included in such exalted company! — are very creative.

To know them is to become better human beings. Those who benefit from their care actually become caring people themselves.

Scriptures

Finding the Christmas' spirit in the Gospels

By Father John J. Castelot
Catholic News Service

Christmas as we know it was not celebrated in New Testament times. It was a long time before Dec. 25 was chosen for the liturgical celebration of Jesus' birth.

All the customs associated with that day developed only slowly over the centuries, like the giving of gifts. Actually, in a large part of the Christian world gifts are exchanged on Epiphany, the day associated with the presentation of gifts to the newborn child by the Magi.

Yet the custom of gifts is thoroughly biblical. It stems from an acknowledgment of God as the supreme giver of gifts to humanity: life, well-being, food, the grand universe, all given out of love and concern for our

happiness.

Sharing gifts with others was a way of imitating God's overwhelming generosity. It was a way to become truly Godlike.

The three great acts of religion for the Jews were prayer, fasting and almsgiving. God's faithful people always showed a practical concern for others, especially the less fortunate.

The king, as God's representative, was charged with the care of the disadvantaged. Isaiah (11:4) described the ideal king of the future in these terms: "He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted."

When people complained that God paid no attention to their fasting, they got this answer: "This, rather, is the

Posadas, a Hispanic Christmas tradition brings joy & warmth for all

By Joe Michael Feist
Catholic News Service

To many Hispanics in the U.S. Southwest, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without "posadas," tamales and family. These elements proclaim a "feliz navidad" that is universal.

Spanish missionaries to the New World, in explaining the faith to native populations, often turned to plays or pageants as a vehicle for evangelization.

Hundreds of years later, Hispanics in the Southwest still retain this physical and living approach to catechesis, most notably in the Christmas "posadas" (shelter or hospitality).

The "posada" is a kind of Christmas novena that uses prayer, song and celebration to re-enact the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

"Traditionally, we have nine-day 'posadas' beginning nine days before Christmas," said Virginia Arista, a member of the Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe in Dallas. "It's usually done through the parishes. Nine different families host Jesus and Mary each night."

Before the procession to the designated house, there is an opening hymn that sets the theme for the "posada." The song emphasizes a journey and "following the way" of Jesus. A house-to-house procession then takes place, with the pilgrim group singing, "En nombre del cielo, os pido posada, pues no puede andar, mi esposa amada" — "In the name of heaven, I ask you for lodging, because to keep on going, my beloved wife is unable."



For many Hispanics in the U.S. Southwest, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without the "posadas" celebrations. It is a kind of Christmas novena that re-enacts the journey of Mary and Joseph, writes Joe Michael Feist. (CNS photo)

Those inside the house respond, "This is not an inn, continue on your way. I can't open the door, you may be ríffraff." After being rejected by a number of households, one takes in the pilgrims. "There's a great joy when the pilgrims are finally accepted into the house," Ms. Arista said. "People carry in the statues of Joseph and Mary on a donkey. The family is proud to have Jesus and Mary in their home. Then you might have a Scripture reading or sharing. There's usually food and it sometimes ends with a pinata for the kids." While a nine-day "posada" is still held in many communities, said Ms. Arista, "with the hustle and bustle of the 20th century, many Hispanics have a one-night 'posada' or a parishwide 'posada.'"

Sister Mickey Espinoza, director of religious education at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Dallas, said the "posadas" put a halt to all the Christmas hoopla. "It's a warming up for the big feast and the family gatherings, a way of working up momentum."

Sister Espinoza, a member of the Monterrey, Mexico-based, Missionary Catechists of the Poor, said another Hispanic Christmas tradition is called "acostando el niño" — "laying down the child." On Christmas Eve, following the last "posada," she said, families invite "padrinos" (sponsors or godparents) to rock the baby Jesus to sleep.

"First, the padrinos pass (the statue of the child Jesus) around for everyone to kiss," said Sister Espinoza. "There

are certain prayers and songs and the rosary is recited. Then they rock the baby to sleep and place him in the manger." The same padrinos, she added, would be invited back on the feast of the Epiphany for "le vantamiento," or taking the child out of the manger. This, too, is accompanied by prayers and songs.

In many Hispanic homes, said Ms. Arista, the "most important thing is not the Christmas tree, but the Nativity scene. You can go in some Hispanic homes and that's all they feature."

The custom of making and eating tamales on Christmas, usually following midnight Mass, is widespread among Hispanic families, she said.

"For us, it's a family project," she added, because making tamales is a lot of work.

"The whole family goes to Midnight Mass, babies and all, and then home to eat tamales," she explained.

"The main thing is families being together, worshipping together and then sharing a meal," she said. "We'll have tamales, pan dulce (Mexican sweet bread) and 'champurrado' (a thick, hot drink with a masa base and flavored with chocolate). It's a time for family unity."

She concluded by noting the importance of handing down Hispanic customs. "Sometimes it's possible and sometimes it isn't," she said, "but we have to make our children aware of the traditions."



Silent Night Holy Night!

By Janaan Manternach
Catholic News Service

It was Christmas Eve morning in 1818 in the snow-blanketed village of Oberndorf in

the Bavarian mountains of Germany.

Inside the cold village church of St. Nicholas a young man climbed the creaking steps to the choir loft. Franz Gruber wanted to practice the music for Midnight Mass one more time. But the organ made no sound. He ran to the priest's house. "Father Mohr," he shouted breathlessly. "Mice ate through the bellows of the organ. What will Midnight Mass be like without music? What can we do?" Father Joseph Mohr was stunned. Midnight Mass without music was unthinkable. But no repairman could get through the snow-filled roads leading into Oberndorf. Then Father Mohr put on his coat and set out into the snow to visit the sick and poor of his parish. One of Father Mohr's visits

touched him. A woodsman's wife had just given birth. The delighted parents wanted the priest to come to bless their baby. Father Mohr shared their joy, blessed their baby and then went on to visit others confined to their homes.

The warm image of the woodcutter and his wife holding their newborn baby stayed with him as he trudged through the deep snow. His mind drifted back over the centuries to a carpenter named Joseph and Mary, his wife, holding their newborn son Jesus. By the time he got back to his house next to the church, Father Mohr had an idea. He sat down and wrote a poem. He drew upon his feelings about the woodcutter and his wife with their newborn baby as he wrote about the birth of Jesus. When he

finished the poem, Father Mohr called his organist. He showed Franz the poem. "Write a simple tune to go with my poem, one you might play on your guitar at Midnight Mass." "But it's already evening," Franz protested. "Let's try," Father Mohr said. Priest and organist read and reread the poem. Soon Franz began to hum a simple melody. Father Mohr started to sing his words as Franz continued to hum the melody. "Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht! Silent Night! Holy Night!" "It's beautiful!" the two agreed.

That night, at Midnight Mass, the people of Oberndorf, led by Father Mohr and accompanied by Franz Gruber, sang for the first time what has become one of the world's best loved Christmas carols.

fasting that I wish... sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own" (Isaiah 58:6-7).

All through his ministry Jesus preached selfless generosity to others, especially to those in need. Luke records Jesus' words: "You are to be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). To be Godlike and authentically human is to show practical concern, to share God's gifts.

God's supreme gift to us was his Son, the gift that we celebrate at Christmas. Even if the early Christians did not celebrate as we do, they celebrated Christ's coming

every day. The lives of the early Christians were marked by mutual concern and sharing. Luke's vignette of the first community at Jerusalem may be a bit idealized, but it expresses the deep, practical love that Chris-

tians showed one another:

"All who believed were together and had all things in common. They would sell their property and possessions

and divide them among all according to each one's needs" (Acts 2:44-45).

You would look in vain for any examples of Christmas gifts in the New Testament. What you will find instead is an ongoing "Christmas," a selfless return to others of God's gifts to us.

The whole meaning of Christmas is summed up in the climactic verse of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel: "And the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Jesus embodied God's generous love and urged his followers to live it, too, to show their gratitude to him by imitating his generosity in their lives. Nothing could be more biblical than to give gifts at Christmas — especially to give to those whom no one else remembers.

'You would look in vain for any examples of Christmas gifts in the New Testament. What you will find instead is an ongoing "Christmas," a selfless return to others of God's gifts to us.'

The Nuremberg Angel's story is one that touches our hearts

By Teresa Geiger
Catholic News Service

Once upon a time about 300 years ago in the Black Forest of Germany, Christmas came to Nuremberg a little differently than you know it today.

Boys went to the woodcarver's shop to look at the toy soldiers' cannons and carts, toy towns, circuses and exotic nutcrackers. Little girls went to the doll shop in Nuremberg and feasted their eyes on fairy dolls, baby dolls, dancing dolls and carriages and cradles, dainty tea sets and lacy outfits for their own dolls. Nuremberg was nestled into the mountains where snow lay deep much of the year. Icicles and frosted roofs made it look at Christmastime like a wonderland of crystal palaces and ice cream forests. Here in this lovely city lived a doll maker and his wife. They ran a doll shop. Many blonde, pink-cheeked and blue-eyed little German girls frequented their store at Christmastime.

The doll maker and his wife worked late into the nights all year long to make each doll special for each little girl in Nuremberg and in the surrounding area. Even in the forest cottages little girls dreamed of the doll they would find under the tree on the feast of the Nativity. Year after year the doll maker and his wife talked of the day when they too would have a little girl of their own. One year their dream came true!

After their daughter, Anna, was born, they worked longest and hardest on a very special doll for their own lovely and loving child, so much so they hardly had time to sleep during the days before Christmas. But when Anna was 5, alas, she caught a fever and soon afterward she died. The doll makers were so unhappy that they closed their shop and made no dolls at all that year.

Christmas Eve came. Snow fell, making a soft white blanket. A hush filled the town as all the people went



Throughout time the tradition still continues, as little girls are dressed in angel costumes as part of the Christmas celebrations. Just like then, they fill the season with the joy and innocence of childhood, giving their parents and all of those around the happiness of waiting with joy for the baby Jesus to be born. (CNS photo)

to their snug homes to prepare for Christmas Day. They went about trimming the fir tree, hanging garlands of greens, wrapping mysterious packages and baking luscious pastries.

But in the doll maker's house nothing of the sort was taking place. As the sun crept behind the mountaintops, the doll maker went out to walk in the pure white snow. He tried not to look into any shop windows for fear that the toys would make him long for Anna. But at his old doll shop the falling sun reflected in the window attracted his attention and in its radiance he saw an apparition — his Anna dressed in a gown of gold with a finely pleated skirt. Her curly hair wreathed her pink-cheeked face and she was smiling. She was surrounded by light.

A great joy came over the doll maker's soul when he saw Anna so happy and full of grace. After a few minutes, he hurried home to his beloved wife. He told

her of the apparition of light and the joyful appearance Anna had made. Then he exclaimed, "Dear wife, our Anna has appeared to me as an angel, a Nuremberg Angel."

They hugged and kissed each other and wiping the tears from their eyes immediately set to work. The doll maker carved and his wife stitched far into the night. On Christmas morning they quietly stole from their home to leave the first doll-angel at the home of the poorest little girl in the village of Nuremberg. This was the first Nuremberg angel. The couple's joy was overflowing —

Anna was happy and full of grace and she had helped them to bring the gift of Christmas joy and love to another little girl, very like their Anna.

Now, even after 300 years, in Nuremberg at the toy festival each year, a beautiful young girl is chosen as the Nuremberg angel. She is dressed for the festival just as Anna appeared to the doll maker so many years ago.

Christmas is a season like no other

By Maryann Miller
Catholic News Service

Christmas is a time like no other for me.

Sometimes Christmas is the desperate race to get out-of-town packages mailed in time. Every year I tell myself to start early, to make use of those lazy summer days to get my shopping done. But somehow I really don't find my summer days all that lazy.

What bothers me most about last minute shopping isn't the mile-long walk to the store from the parking lot. It isn't the woman who runs over my foot with her shopping cart. It isn't the clerk who can't possibly tell me where to find a teen-age mutant ninja turtle.

What bothers me most is wondering whether I'll make it through the checkout line before the child I bought the tricycle for is ready for a car.

Though Christmas shopping can be a hassle, I sometimes find an excitement in that "something special" I find for each person on my list. The excitement tells me my feet don't hurt as much as I think they do, and perhaps I can make it through one more store.

Sometimes Christmas is the two weeks of intensified scrambling to get the house decorated and finish the baking. Why is it that as a child I thought it was great fun to have target practice with candy BBs, and now as a mother I've lost my sense of humor?

Sometimes I'd like to forget all about the Christmas season and just spend two weeks in a rest home. It's hard to think positively when a child has followed you around the house for a week reading a Christmas list as comprehensive as the local telephone book.

Sometimes Christmas is the frustration of cookie crumbs mashed in the carpeting, candy canes stuck on the sofa cushions and the 18 truckloads of trash strewn around the living room on Christmas morning.

Sometimes it is a sense of futility as I wonder if we'll ever overcome our children's basic selfishness and teach them the concept of giving as well as receiving. And sometimes it is a feeling of anxiety over whether we've maintained the proper balance between Santa Claus and Bethlehem. But that's only sometimes.



...Christmas is a warm feeling of closeness when I share my granddaughter's wide-eyed wonder at the concept of Santa and all his magic... Other times I have a sense of awe when a child wants to bake Jesus a birthday cake and sing "Happy Birthday."

Other times Christmas is a warm feeling of closeness when I share my granddaughter's wide-eyed wonder at the concept of Santa and all his magic; or when I share my son's pride in the surprise he created for his dad out of a chaos of construction paper and glitter; or when I share my youngest daughter's satisfaction as she transforms our living room into a wonderland of tinsel and holly; or when my other son asks me for the umpteenth time to get my guitar and play "The Little Drummer Boy" and it reminds me mistily of another time, another place. Somehow my dad never could refuse either.

Other times I think my heart will burst when I watch

one of my children spend a last dollar on a present for the brother I was sure was hated; or when I find something totally impractical under the tree for me and I look up to see my husband smiling in delight.

Other times I have a sense of awe when a child wants to bake Jesus a birthday cake and sing "Happy Birthday." Other times I'm filled with an incredible sense of tenderness and love when I watch my oldest daughter set up the Nativity scene and explain to her children what happened that magical night 2,000 years ago.

Yes, indeed, Christmas is a time like no other in my life!