



The

Criterion

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THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

—Matthew 2:16

ABOUT THE COVER

A photo of a manuscript illustration dating from the late 12th or early 13th century depicts Joseph leading Mary and the infant Jesus into Egypt after the warning about Herod's intention to destroy the newborn Christ.

CNS photo from Art Resource

Clergy sex abuse tops Catholic news for second year

By Jerry Filteau

WASHINGTON (CNS)—For the second straight year, the scandal of sexual abuse of children by priests dominated much of the religious news for U.S. Catholics.

In 2003, however, there was a significant difference. Instead of 2002's almost uninterrupted flood of daily new revelations of past clerical crimes, more of the news in 2003 concerned developments in the Church's response to the crisis.

There were new allegations, new lawsuits and new criminal investigations. But there were also major financial settlements of hundreds of lawsuits, diocesan and religious-order policies being strengthened, and safe environment and sex-abuse education programs being implemented.

A nationwide audit of each diocese's policies and practices was conducted and an unprecedented national study was carried out to determine the full extent of clergy sexual abuse of minors in the U.S. Catholic Church since 1950.

Pope John Paul II, though slowed down considerably by age and failing health, remained the world's leading religious figure.

Pope John Paul II

Celebrations in October of his 25th anniversary as pope brought an outpouring of academic and media efforts to assess his numerous accomplishments, his place in history, and the strengths and weaknesses of what has become one of the longest and most prolific papacies in history.

During the year, Pope John Paul traveled to Spain, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovakia. He issued an encyclical on the Eucharist and apostolic exhortations on bishops and on the church in Europe.

In October, he presided over the beatification of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta and created 30 new cardinals—setting a new record of 194 living cardinals and equaling the record he set in 2001 of 135 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote for a new pope.

The new cardinals included one U.S. prelate, Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia.

The War in Iraq

The U.S.-led military invasion of

Iraq—by far the biggest secular news story of the year—had significant moral and religious dimensions as well.

Before the war, the pope and top Vatican officials engaged in an intense diplomatic campaign that included sending personal papal legates to President Bush and heads of other key governments to try to prevent the invasion.

Catholic and other religious leaders warned against acting without U.N. backing, and many moralists argued that just war principles of self-defense against attack and use of war as a last resort were not met. Some administration backers countered with theories of justifiable pre-emptive defense that sought to reshape traditional just-war doctrine in light of the new realities and threats of global terrorism.

With a dangerous postwar occupation dragging on amid increasing terrorist attacks aimed especially at peacekeeping troops and Iraqi police, U.S. troops achieved a major breakthrough in mid-December with the capture of the elusive former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein.

Early signs that the Iraq conflict was causing increased Muslim-Christian tensions and might be exploited by some to engender wider conflict between the world's two largest faith groups prompted new efforts by the Vatican and leaders in many other quarters to promote better relations and more mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims.

Some said the pope's vigorous efforts to avert the war played a significant role in developing public perceptions of the conflict as secular, not religious in nature.

For Americans, events in Iraq often overshadowed other major world problems that would otherwise have received far greater attention.

Among these were the widespread hunger in Africa, where an estimated 30 million people are at risk of starvation, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian crisis in the Holy Land, and the global spread of AIDS—now affecting 40 million people worldwide, about two-thirds of them in Africa.

For U.S. Catholics, the ongoing sex abuse crisis diverted attention from, or

Gary Bergeron clutches a copy of the \$85 million settlement between 552 alleged victims of clergy sexual abuse and the Archdiocese of Boston as he and other victims leave the Suffolk Superior Court in Boston on Sept. 9. His lawyer, Robert Sherman, is at left. The agreement is the largest financial settlement in U.S. Church history.



Pope John Paul II prays during an evening Mass for university students at St. Peter's Basilica on Dec. 11. Despite his frailty, the 83-year-old pontiff was concluding a busy 12 months during which he marked his 25th year as pope.

often colored media coverage of, a wide range of other events and developments of religious interest.

- These included:
- Major new challenges in the United States and elsewhere to the traditional understanding of marriage, as gay rights activists sought through courts and legislatures to extend the rights and benefits of marriage to same-sex unions.
 - Enactment of the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, followed immediately by court challenges to its constitutionality.
 - Statements by the Vatican and the U.S. bishops on responsibilities of Catholics in politics.
 - A U.N. debate on whether to establish an international covenant banning all cloning of human embryos or banning it only for reproduction while permitting cloning to obtain embryonic stem cells for biomedical research.

The Sex Abuse Crisis

One of the major developments in the clergy sexual abuse crisis in 2003 was the July appointment of Archbishop Sean

P. O'Malley to head the Boston Archdiocese. The archdiocese, epicenter of the crisis, had been vacant since the resignation of Cardinal Bernard F. Law in December 2002.

In mid-September, barely six weeks after his installation, Archbishop O'Malley reached an \$85 million settlement with most of the 550-plus plaintiffs seeking damages for alleged sexual abuse by Boston priests. Several separate settlements after that brought the total up to about \$90 million.

In December, the archbishop announced he would sell the prestigious archbishop's mansion in Brighton and about half the 60-acre archdiocesan property it sits on to help pay for the settlement. He mortgaged the archdiocesan cathedral and seminary to obtain interim loans so the settlement payments to victims could begin before the anticipated property sale or settlements between the archdiocese and its insurers.

Other eight-digit sexual abuse settlements during the year included \$25.7 million with 240 plaintiffs by the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky., and \$21 million with 40 plaintiffs by the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn.

The Seattle Archdiocese settled 15 cases for \$7.87 million in September. The following month, the Diocese of Covington, Ky., settled 27 claims for \$5.2 million.

John Geoghan, the laicized Boston priest whose criminal trial for child molestation in January 2002 precipitated the national crisis, was brutally murdered in his prison cell on Aug. 23, allegedly by fellow inmate Joseph L. Druce.

The all-lay National Review Board—formed by the bishops in 2002 to assess the dimensions of the abuse scandal and oversee diocesan compliance with national policies to address the problem—made news in June when the chairman, former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, said some bishops were behaving like the Mafia in

The Criterion's last issue until Jan. 9

This week's *Criterion*, which includes the annual Christmas Supplement, is the last issue of 2003. *The Criterion* will be published again on Jan. 9, and will resume its regular weekly schedule.

The Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 24 through Jan. 4. †

The Criterion 12/19/03

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Staff:
Assistant Editor: Mary Ann Wyand
Reporter: Brandon A. Evans
Business Manager: Ron Massey
Accounting Clerk: Dana Danberry
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Graphics Specialist: Louie Stumpf

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their handling of the problem.

A few days later Keating resigned from the board and Illinois Appellate Court Justice Anne Burke, the vice chair, became acting chairwoman.

The review board commissioned the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York to study every known allegation of clerical sexual abuse of minors in every U.S. diocese and religious order since 1950. Its report is due in February.

The board also commissioned the Boston-based Gavin Group, composed mainly of former FBI agents, to visit each diocese and audit its compliance with the mandates of the bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." Its report is due in January.

During the past year, the board interviewed scores of experts in various fields, sex-abuse victims, bishops and priests to develop a first-stage report, to be issued in February, on the nature and causes of the sex-abuse scandal in the U.S. Church.

In May, Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien of Phoenix reached a deal in which he avoided prosecution by ceding his authority over diocesan sexual abuse policy and practice to others, reimbursing the local prosecutor's office \$100,000 for investigative costs and giving \$300,000 each to a county compensation fund for victims and a diocesan victims' fund for counseling services.

In June, Bishop O'Brien abruptly resigned from office after he was arrested on felony charges of leaving the scene of a fatal accident. He allegedly hit and killed a pedestrian while driving home from a parish confirmation service.

In November, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati pleaded "no contest" to five misdemeanor charges that archdiocesan officials had failed to report sexual abuse of minors by priests in the late 1970s and early '80s. He paid a \$10,000 fine and set up a \$3 million compensation fund for victims.

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a California law that had retroactively eliminated the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution of those who sexually abused minors, more than a dozen priests were among the hundreds of Californians who had pending charges dropped or convictions erased.

Local clergy sexual abuse scandals also made headlines often in a number of other countries around the world, including Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines and Malta.

In response to a call from some U.S. bishops to convene a U.S. plenary council to deal with deeper Church issues underlying the sexual abuse crisis, the bishops in June spent a day discussing what they regarded as the highest priority issues—the Church and culture, spirituality and identity of priests and bishops, and problems in U.S. Catholic faith formation and sacramental practice. In November, they agreed on a framework to continue the

discussion in greater depth next June and make a decision on a plenary council next November.

Other fallout from the crisis included demands for more financial accountability from bishops and for more lay participation in Church decision-making.

Reports from dioceses across the country and results of several opinion polls indicated that U.S. Catholics generally sustained or increased their financial support for their parishes, but were less inclined to support diocesan and national appeals because of the crisis.

A group of Milwaukee priests urged the U.S. bishops to begin ordaining married men to stem the priest shortage and assure the access of Catholics to the Eucharist.

They did not link the issue of mandatory clerical celibacy to the sex-abuse crisis, but some other Catholic groups made such a link. They argued that the absence of wives and children in the Catholic clerical culture had been a significant factor behind bishops being more sensitive to the spiritual and psychological needs of their accused priests than they were to the needs of the young victims.

Marriage and Family

Pro-life marchers in January marked the 30th anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* and *Doe vs. Bolton*, the twin 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions that removed virtually all legal restrictions on abortion.

The federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act was adopted by Congress in October and President Bush signed it in November. Its constitutionality was immediately challenged in court.

In September, the U.S. bishops' Administrative Committee called for a federal constitutional amendment upholding the traditional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

In November, the entire body of bishops adopted a statement explaining why

the Church considers marriage so central to family life and the common good that the unique legal status and benefits society accords to marriage cannot be extended to same-sex unions.

One event giving rise to new concern about legalizing same-sex unions was a November decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that it is a violation of that state's constitution to deny the right of civil marriage to same-sex couples.

Another was a June decision by the U.S. Supreme Court overturning anti-sodomy laws in Texas and about a dozen other states. The minority dissent opined that the ruling had undermined any constitutional basis for distinguishing between marriage and same-sex unions.

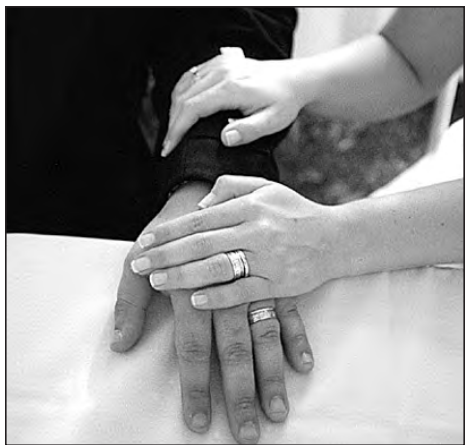
The Vatican issued a statement in July calling on Catholic politicians to oppose laws that would give same-sex unions or other forms of unmarried cohabitation the same legal standing as marriage.

The world Anglican Communion faced a major internal rift when its U.S. branch, the Episcopal Church, ordained as bishop of New Hampshire Bishop V. Gene Robinson, who as a priest has been living in an openly gay relationship for more than a decade.

The ordination provoked ecumenical stresses as well. U.S. Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold, who conducted the ordination, resigned as Anglican co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission to avoid having the controversy jeopardize the work of that official dialogue between the two Churches. Work of another joint international commission, on unity and mission, was suspended, however, and top Vatican and Anglican officials agreed to form a joint panel of experts to study the ecclesiological implications of the ordination.

Artificial contraception came back into the news in several ways.

The California Supreme Court in **See YEAR END, page 7**



CNS file photo by Karin von Voigtlander, Catholic Courier

The U.S. bishops' Administrative Committee, in a statement released on Sept. 10, offered "general support for a federal marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution." The committee warned that marriage is "under attack" in U.S. courts, legislatures, culture and media, which are promoting "equivalence" between marriage and homosexual relationships.



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Christmas

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This beautiful 30-minute Mass will be produced from the Crypt Church at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of the Archdiocese of Washington (D.C.) will be the presider of the Christmas Day Mass. The music will be provided by the Elizabeth Seton High School Concert Choir from Bladensburg, Md.



WB4/WTTV
Thursday, December 25
6:30 a.m.



The TV Mass can be seen at 6:30 a.m. every Sunday on WTTV/WB4.

* * *


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Editorial



CNS photo from Reuters

Palestinian boys herd animals in front of a concrete wall, part of a controversial Israeli security barrier, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on Dec. 12. Israeli officials say the barrier is necessary to curtail suicide bombing attacks. Palestinians condemn it as a land grab. Church officials, including Pope John Paul II, have decried suicide bombings, but also have criticized Israel for building the wall, which if completed would stretch 200 miles.

No peace in Bethlehem

Perhaps Mary and Joseph wouldn't recognize much about Bethlehem today, but one thing is the same: the city is occupied by foreign troops. For the Holy Family, it was Caesar Augustus' soldiers. Today, it is the Israeli armed forces.

As we approach another anniversary of Jesus' birth, the sad fact remains that there is no peace in Bethlehem—or in the rest of the Holy Land. Isn't it time for Americans to demand that the Palestinians and Israelis negotiate a just peace?

The Israeli human-rights group B'Tselem reported that, in the three years from the beginning of the Intifada in September 2000 to the same time in 2003, some 406 Palestinian children and 70 Israeli children were killed. This madness has to stop.

There are, unfortunately, many obstacles to peace. On the Israeli side, there is the fear of terrorism from the Palestinian suicide bombers. There is also the knowledge that some Palestinian extremists are not going to be satisfied until the state of Israel is destroyed. Moderate Palestinians must take the necessary steps to stop the violence.

But the Palestinians, too, have just complaints, including the fact that they have been living as an occupied people for the entire lives of most of them.

Most observers agree that the greatest obstacle to peace is the settlements that Israelis have built on land confiscated from Palestinians. The purpose of those settlements, as Ariel Sharon stated when he was minister of housing, was to create a *de facto* situation on the West Bank so that there would be large settlements of Jews when negotiations would begin on the boundaries for the state of Palestine. It has worked.

Home demolitions are another obstacle. More than 8,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed to make way for Israeli settlements or bypass roads built for the settlers.

The newest obstacle to peace is the fence, or wall, being built to separate Israel from the West Bank and to keep terrorists out of Israel. The fence is 9.8 feet high, with touch-sensitive sensors and barbed wire on top. In some

places, the fence will include 25-foot-high concrete walls.

All this is planned to extend about 400 miles around the West Bank, going miles into Palestinian territory to surround 10 Jewish settlements that now have 19,000 residents. It will also surround 13 Palestinian villages with 12,000 residents, preventing them not only from entering Israel but also preventing them from entering the West Bank, including their agricultural lands. The people are prisoners in their own town. Already, in order to build the "fence," the Israelis have destroyed 100,000 Palestinian olive and citrus trees, 75 acres of greenhouses and 23 miles of irrigation pipes.

Curfews are another obstacle to peace. Because of the curfews, the Palestinians can't earn enough money to buy food. In Gaza, 70 percent of the people live on less than a dollar a day. In the West Bank, a World Bank report found that more than 55 percent live on less than \$2 a day.

Travel restrictions and guarded checkpoints are another obstacle. Recently, a Palestinian woman pregnant with twins was refused permission to cross a checkpoint to a hospital in Bethlehem. She delivered the twins while the Israeli soldiers watched. The twins died. Sick children have died because they could not reach a hospital.

So how can we achieve peace with justice? The politicians know what has to happen. There must be a crackdown on extremist militants by the Palestinians and the removal of at least some of the obstacles to peace by Israel. The so-called roadmap to peace carefully shows how it must be done. (The Vatican, by the way, has endorsed the roadmap.) It's getting both sides to follow the roadmap that's the problem.

We also now have the Geneva Accord, negotiated by former Israeli and Palestinian officials and announced on Dec. 1. Not surprisingly, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and militant Palestinians have not endorsed the plan, but it seems to be a fair and practical solution.

It's past time for the United States to force the parties to agree to a just settlement. Perhaps the Geneva Accord can accomplish that.

— John F. Fink

Letters to the Editor

Pondering "Peace on Earth"

Recently, I returned from a pilgrimage, sponsored by Marian College's "Rebuild My Church" program, to Assisi, Italy, the birthplace of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare—two great saints of the 13th century. While in Assisi, on a sunny, blue-sky day, I saw tens of thousands of jubilant people marching for peace.

The march was a spectacular sight: Boy Scouts, religious, priests, communists, environmentalists, socialists, old people, young people, short people, people of African heritage, people of Asian heritage, tall people, people in wheelchairs and even mothers pushing babies in strollers. All kinds of people from all over the world seemed to be marching through the narrow streets of Assisi. Multicolored peace flags were everywhere. "Peace" (peace), they proclaimed! It seemed everyone wanted peace. Outside the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, a huge banner was draped over the wall and hung to the street 30 feet below. It proclaimed peace in over a dozen languages.

That entire day, I wondered: What is *peace*? When people say they want *peace*, what do they mean? As the result of discussions with professors at Marian College in Indianapolis and others, I have learned a lot about peace.

For the ancient Romans, peace meant the end of war. That has been a durable definition. Today, I suspect many Americans define peace that way or as a time when nations are not at war.

For the early years of Christianity, peace meant the end of persecution. It also meant the peace Christ Jesus brought between man and God: the peace that Christ Jesus achieved through his redemptive death. Peace also meant the feeling that one had when resting in God's goodness.

The Catholic Church has taught for 1,500 years that peace is also, as St. Augustine called it, "the tranquility of order" with God at the top. In 1963, in his encyclical *Peace on Earth*, Pope John XXIII, stated that peace "can be firmly established and sustained only if the order laid down by God be dutifully observed." Social peace is based on truth, justice, love and freedom. Importantly, he advocated the recognition of civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights for each person as an essential aspect of peace.

Earlier this year, on the 36th annual celebration of the World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed Pope John XXIII's message, stating, "Truth will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties toward others. Justice will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfills his duties toward them. Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, espe-

cially the values of mind and spirit which they possess. Freedom will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions."

Men and women of goodwill are working to make this type of peace a reality. For example, recently, Franciscan Father John Quigley, visited Marian College and spoke of the efforts of Franciscans International—an organization representing more than 1 million religious and secular Franciscans around the world—to encourage the recognition of every person's civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights.

As we approach the birth of Christ Jesus and while our nation is at war, it is appropriate for each of us to ponder the questions: What does peace mean to us, to our families, to our community, to our nation, and to our world? And how should we join with others in our neighborhoods, workplaces and around the world to achieve a lasting peace?

Robert W. Golobish, Carmel
(Member of St. Luke Parish in Indianapolis and vice president of marketing communications at Marian College)

A day for visiting churches

For the Christmas season, most parishes have beautiful decorations and very attractive crib scenes in their churches. Unfortunately, except for those who belong to the parish and attend Mass there, little opportunity is present for others to share the beauty. At other hours, most churches are necessarily locked.

Could it not be possible to designate one Sunday, like the Sunday between Christmas and New Years, as a day when the churches will be open in the afternoon for others to visit and see the decorations? A time period like 1-4 p.m. would be manageable. If necessary, the parish could have some parishioners present during those hours to keep tabs on things.

The Feast of the Holy Family would be an excellent day for families to visit the churches in the afternoon hours.

Just a thought.

Fr. Matthias Neuman, O.S.B., Beech Grove



CNS photo from Reuters

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper's commitment to "the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God" (*Communio et Progressio*, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.



SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD

BUSCANDO LA CARA DEL SEÑOR

Embracing the mystery and wonder of the birth of Jesus

On a snowy morning as I sit at my computer to write this Christmas message (in my second-story office at home), a chubby squirrel just climbed up to the windowsill and decided to watch me at work. I'm not sure who was more fascinated by whom. In any case, it seems to me that this is a fanciful setting and it is somehow appropriate for a Christmas reflection.

Angels greet shepherds with song in the middle of the night: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. Glory to the new-born king!" We romanticize the manger and the animals at the crib with poetic song and crèche scenes in our homes and churches. It occurs to me that we ought not take the poetic flourishes that we associate with Christmas for granted. Nor should we allow ourselves to be tempted to dismiss them as too fanciful for our real and less than romantic world. We romanticize Christmas joy and the possibility of peace on earth because we need to do so. How else would we embrace the wonder of God, who is almighty yet mysteriously becoming someone like us and making his home with us?

Words like "incarnation," "nativity" and "epiphany" seem vague and abstract to us. The mystery of divinity embracing

humanity is difficult for us to imagine and understand. Yet the Incarnation is not a philosophical abstraction. Jesus Christ is not an abstraction. It is important that we understand that the Incarnation is a historical reality. The birth of Jesus, miraculous as it was, nonetheless is a matter of history. He was born in a cave in Bethlehem where animals were kept, and he grew up in a carpenter's home in Nazareth.

I like the way one author put it: "There is a tremendous truth contained in the realization that when God became man he became a workingman. Not a king, not a chieftain, not a warrior or a statesman or a great leader of nations, as some had thought the Messiah would be. The Gospels show us Christ the teacher, the healer, the wonder-worker, but these activities of his public life were the work of three short years. For all the rest of the time on earth, God was a village carpenter and the son of a carpenter. He did not fashion benches or tables or beds or roof beams or plow beams by means of miracles, but by hammer and saw, by ax and adz. He worked long hours to help his father, and then became the support of his widowed mother, by the rough work of a hill country craftsman. . . . He did the work all of us have to do in our lifetimes"

(*He Leadeth Me*, Father Walter J. Ciszek, S.J., Ignatius Press, pp.102-103).

God would grow up to become a carpenter—a workman—in a real place and in real time. This reality alone helps infuse our workaday lives with respect and dignity, not only for work, but for the laborer as well. Equally important is the realization that Jesus, the Son of God and of Mary, worked hard in his woodshop for years, perhaps "to convince us that God doesn't ask anything more tedious, more tiring, more routine and humdrum, more unspectacular of us than God himself has done" (Ibid. p. 103). Work would never be the same. Because of Jesus, God and man, we can view our labors not only as a way to make a living but also as a way of sharing in the divine work of creation and redemption.

The birth of Jesus as a real, human person, then, is something historically true and absolutely important. But, of course, the Son of God becoming the son of Mary in real time and place is of

ultimate importance because as the "new Adam," both human and divine, Jesus could win our redemption from sin and death. And so, he experienced his humiliating passion and death, and yet as God he rose victorious for us. While it is so valuable to appreciate the historic reality of the humanity of Jesus, it is also important to keep in balance our vision of the reality of his divinity. The wonder of the paschal mystery begins with Christmas.

The wonder of Christmas then carries a double message that is truly fanciful. God has made his home with us in every aspect of our humanity except sin. And so we sing joyfully of the birth of Jesus because he would know our own joys and sorrows, our suffering and hard work, our successes and our losses. And we romanticize the humble birth of Jesus because he is the Son of God and that makes all the difference.

I wish one and all a fanciful Christmas! †

Archbishop Buechlein's intention for vocations for December

Catholic Grade Schools: that they may teach our children the Catholic faith and assist them in hearing and answering God's call to service in the Church, especially as priests or religious.

Comprendiendo el misterio y la maravilla del nacimiento de Jesús

En una mañana nevada cuando me dispongo a escribir este mensaje de Navidad (en mi oficina del segundo piso de mi casa) una ardilla regordeta acaba de subirse al borde de la ventana para observarme trabajar. No sé quién está más fascinado con quién. En cualquier caso, me parece un escenario fantástico y de alguna forma apropiado para reflexionar sobre la Navidad.

Los ángeles saludan a los pastores con cantos en mitad de la noche. "Gloria a Dios en las alturas y paz en la tierra. ¡Gloria al recién nacido rey!" Idealizamos el pesebre y los animales en torno a la cuna con canciones poéticas y escenas del nacimiento con las cuales adornamos nuestros hogares e iglesias. Se me ocurre que no deberíamos dar por sentado los toques de trompeta que asociamos con la Navidad. Ni deberíamos permitirnos la tentación de descartarlos por ser demasiado rebuscados para nuestro mundo verdadero y bastante menos romántico. Idealizamos el gozo de la Navidad y la posibilidad de la paz en la tierra porque es una necesidad para nosotros. De otra manera, ¿cómo podríamos abarcar la maravilla de Dios que, siendo todopoderoso, también es misteriosamente similar a los hombres, y hacerle un lugar entre nosotros?

Palabras como "encarnación", "natividad" y "epifanía" nos parecen vagas y abstractas. Para nosotros es difícil imaginar y entender el misterio de la divinidad abarcando a la humanidad. Y

sin embargo la Encarnación no es una abstracción filosófica. Jesucristo no es una abstracción. Es importante que entendamos que la Encarnación es una realidad histórica. El nacimiento de Jesús, además de un milagro, es también un hecho histórico. Él nació en una cueva en Belén, donde guardaban animales y creció en el hogar de un carpintero en Nazaret.

Me agrada la forma en que un autor lo menciona: "Es una estupenda verdad el darse cuenta de que cuando Dios se hizo hombre también se convirtió en un trabajador. No en un rey, un jefe, un guerrero, un estadista o un gran líder de naciones, como algunos habían pensado que sería el Mesías. Los Evangelios nos muestran a Jesús el maestro, el sanador, el asombroso trabajador, pero estas actividades de su vida pública constituyeron su trabajo sólo por tres cortos años. Por todo el resto de su vida en la tierra Dios fue un carpintero de pueblo y el hijo de un carpintero. No fabricaba bancos, mesas, camas, tejados o arados por medio de los milagros sino con el martillo y la sierra, con el hacha y las herramientas. Trabajaba largas horas para ayudar a su padre y luego mantuvo a su madre viuda por medio del trabajo arduo de un artesano de un pueblo de las montañas. Desempeñó el trabajo que todos nosotros tenemos que hacer en nuestras vidas". (*He Leadeth Me*, Padre Walter J. Ciszek, S.J. Ignatius Press, pág. 102-103)

Dios crecería y se convertiría en carpintero – un trabajador – en un lugar verdadero y en una época verdadera. Solamente esta realidad es suficiente para infundir nuestras vidas de trabajo diario con respeto y dignidad no sólo por el trabajo sino por el trabajador también. De igual importancia es el darse cuenta de que Jesús, el Hijo de Dios y María trabajaron duro en su carpintería por años, quizás "para convencernos de que Dios no pide de nosotros nada más tedioso, más agotador, más rutinario y monótono, más desprovisto de espectacularidad que lo que Dios mismo ha hecho." (Ibid pág. 103). El trabajo nunca será lo mismo. Gracias a Jesús, Dios y hombre, podemos ver nuestros trabajos no sólo como una forma de ganarnos la vida sino como una manera de compartir en el trabajo divino, la creación y la redención.

El nacimiento de Jesús como un ser humano verdadero es entonces algo históricamente real y absolutamente importante. Pero, por supuesto, el Hijo de Dios que se convirtió en el hijo de María en una época verdadera y en un lugar real es de fundamental importancia, porque como el "nuevo Adán", humano y divino,

Jesús podría otorgarnos nuestra redención del pecado y de la muerte. Y de este modo Él sufrió su humillante pasión y muerte y sin embargo, como Dios, se levantó victorioso por todos nosotros. Aunque es importante valorar la realidad histórica de la condición humana de Jesús, es también importante mantener el equilibrio de nuestra visión con la certeza de su divinidad. La maravilla del misterio pascual comienza con la Navidad.

La maravilla de la Navidad entonces es portadora de un doble mensaje que es verdaderamente fantástico. Dios se ha hecho similar a nosotros en cada aspecto de su condición humana excepto en el pecado. Y por ello cantamos gozosos el nacimiento de Jesús porque Él sabía de nuestras alegrías y de nuestras penas, de nuestro sufrimiento y de nuestro trabajo arduo, de nuestros éxitos y de nuestros fracasos. E idealizamos el humilde nacimiento de Jesús porque Él es el Hijo de Dios y eso marca toda la diferencia.

¡Les deseo a todos una fantástica Navidad! †

Traducido por: Language Training Center, Indianapolis

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein para vocaciones en diciembre

Escuelas primarias católicas: que ellos puedan enseñar la fe católica a nuestros niños y puedan ayudarles a oír y contestar la llamada de Dios para ser vir en la Iglesia, sobre todo como sacerdotes o religiosos.

Check It Out . . .

The Saint Meinrad Abbey Guest House in St. Meinrad will offer a retreat titled **"The Tools of the Trade from the Rule of St. Benedict"** on Jan. 30-Feb. 1. Benedictine Father Columba Kelly will lead the retreat, which will examine the practicality of the Rule of St. Benedict and how to use those time-tested tools to become closer to God. The suggested donation for the retreat is \$175 per person, or \$300 for two people in a double room. For more information, call 812-357-6585 or 800-581-6905.

The Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., in Beech Grove, will host an ongoing series titled **"Women of Scripture"** from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month during 2004. Dominican Sister Romona Novak will present the series, which will study women of the Bible and encourage participants to relate to them by being grace-filled women in this century. The cost is \$10 per session or \$100 for all 12 sessions. There will also be a retreat titled **"Tools Matter"** from Jan. 18-24. Benedictine Sister Mary Margaret Funk will

lead the retreat, which will be a chance to practice guard of the heart, manifestation of thoughts, the Jesus Prayer, the Little Way, Colloquy, manual labor and the Emptiness Practice of the Cloud of Unknowing, among other things. The cost is \$375 for residents, \$285 for commuters. For more information, call 317-788-7581.

Tony Avellana, a member of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Westfield, Ind., in the Diocese of Lafayette, will present a **Christian music concert** from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Dec. 19 at St. Lawrence Parish, 6944 E. 46th St., in Indianapolis. A free-will donation will be appreciated. For more information, call the parish office at 317-546-4065.

St. Malachy Parish, 326 N. Green St., in Brownsburg, will conduct an ongoing series titled **"Catholics Returning Home"** at 7 p.m. on six consecutive Wednesday evenings beginning on Jan. 7. The sessions are for non-practicing Catholics who are seeking answers to

questions about returning to the Church. There will be informal sharing and an update of the Catholic faith. For more information, call 317-858-8422.

The Richmond Catholic Community will host a **Pro-Life Vigil** on Jan. 9-10. The event will begin with a prayer service at 7 p.m. on Jan. 9 at St. Andrew Parish, 235 S. 5th St. There will then be a candlelight procession to Holy Family Parish, 815 W. Main St., where there will be a presentation to the high school youth and then exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until 8 a.m. on Jan. 10. There will be a chance for reconciliation at 12:30 a.m. and other planned activities for the youth throughout the night. There will be a Mass at 8 a.m., a presentation about the Elizabeth Ministry at 9:15 a.m., a living Rosary at 10:15 a.m., a presentation about Natural Family Planning at 11 a.m., lunch at noon and a community talk at 1 p.m. Crosses in memory of babies killed by abortion will be placed on the lawn at 2:30 p.m., which will be followed by a walk to St. Mary Parish, 720 N. "A" St., in Richmond, where there will be a youth liturgy at 4 p.m. For more information, call Cathy Funkhouser at 765-983-3914.

The choir of St. Benedict Parish, 111 S. Ninth St., in Terre Haute, will present a **Christmas Eve Prelude Concert** at 11 p.m. on Dec. 24. Midnight Mass will follow. For more information, call the parish at 812-232-8421.

Charles Gardner, secretary of spiritual life and worship for the archdiocese, will teach a three-hour course on **"Music in Catholic Worship"** on Tuesday evenings from Jan. 13 to April 13 at Marian College, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis. The course will examine the theory, history and present practice of music as an integral part of Roman Catholic worship. For more information or to register for the course, call Gardner at 317-236-1479, or 800-382-9836, ext. 1479 or e-mail cgardner@archindy.org. †

Red Hat Ladies

Judy Hedberg, from left, Cathy Farney and Rosemary Boyle, members of the Red Hat Society and the Guild at St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis, applaud at a Christmas party for the Little Sisters of the Poor and the elderly residents of St. Augustine Home on Dec. 10, where they served food and visited with the residents. Their mission at the annual event was to spread joy and have fun.



Submitted photo

VIPs . . .



Jerome and Marjory (Schuster) Cahill, members of Holy Name Parish in Beech Grove, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a family Mass on Nov. 28 at their parish. The couple was married on Nov. 28, 1953, at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Indianapolis. They have eight children: Christie Denzer, Anne Elliott, Cathy Huser, Helen Stephon, Ed, John,

Mike and the late Tom Cahill. The couple has 31 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. †

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CRT 12/03

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office for Film and Broadcasting movie ratings

Big Fish (Columbia)

Rated **A-II (Adults and Adolescents)** because of brief violence, an instance of rear nudity and minimal mildly crude humor and language.
Rated **PG-13 (Parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.)** by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).

Love Don't Cost a Thing (Warner Bros.)

Rated **L (Limited Adult Audience)** because of a parental figure encouraging casual sex and condom usage and crude sexual references.
Rated **PG-13 (Parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.)** by the MPAA.

Something's Gotta Give (Columbia)

Rated **A-III (Adults)** because of benign treatment of promiscuity, a sexual encounter, fleeting full nudity and an instance of rough language.
Rated **PG-13 (Parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.)** by the MPAA.

Stuck on You (20th Century Fox)

Rated **A-III (Adults)** because of recurring sexually crude humor and language, an off-screen sexual encounter and brief alcohol abuse.
Rated **PG-13 (Parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.)** by the MPAA. †

YEAR END

continued from page 3

December heard arguments in a Catholic Charities challenge, on religious freedom grounds, to a state law that requires employers to include contraceptives among drug prescription benefits in their health insurance plans.

Catholic and other religious groups lost the first round of a challenge to a similar law in New York in November, but said they would appeal that ruling.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops registered its opposition to a Food and Drug Administration proposal to permit over-the-counter sales of certain emergency contraceptives.

In November, the bishops approved a proposal to draft a new pastoral statement in the coming year explaining Church teaching that the use of artificial contraception in the conjugal act is intrinsically wrong.

Africa

President Bush helped turn world attention to the growing problem of AIDS in Africa with his state of the union address in January. He pledged to seek \$15 billion from the federal budget over the next five years to combat AIDS around the world, with a special focus on Africa.

At the start of the year, relief agencies warned that 30 million Africans were at risk of starvation. Near the end of the year, a new United Nations report said the number of hungry people worldwide was growing at the rate of 5 million a year.

Pope John Paul told participants at a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization conference that ending hunger is a form of peacemaking.

In November, the U.S. bishops met with representatives of the Church in Africa and discussed the growing needs of the Church on that continent. The

bishops were asked to consider taking up voluntary collections for the Church in Africa now and, eventually, starting a yearly national collection like those conducted for the Church in Latin America and in Central and Eastern Europe.

Catholic Politicians

In January, the Vatican addressed growing conflicts between Catholic teaching and public policy in many countries with a doctrinal note that said Catholics in public leadership positions must oppose laws or policies that conflict with fundamental moral principles. It particularly cited human life issues like abortion and euthanasia, but it also called on Catholics to oppose efforts to grant legal rights of marriage to same-sex unions.

The Vatican reinforced that message in July with its document devoted specifically to the unique importance of marriage in society, calling on Catholics everywhere to defend marriage against campaigns to give equal status to other partnerships.

At their November meeting, the bishops also took the first step toward developing guidelines for themselves in calling Catholic politicians to be accountable for consistency between their public policy positions and the faith they profess.

The level of difficulty they may face in that task was highlighted during the year by partisan wrangling in the Senate over Catholics with pro-life views nominated by the Bush administration for federal judgeships.

Immigration

Despite complaints by Church leaders that crackdowns on immigrants do little to combat terrorism, for the third straight year the United States admitted far fewer immigrants than were allowed under federally set quotas.

The death of 19 illegal immigrants abandoned in a truck in Texas highlighted

the dangers faced by many who cross the U.S.-Mexican border illegally in search of work.

In January, the bishops of the United States and Mexico issued a first-ever joint pastoral letter calling on both their governments to improve immigration policies. Bishops of seven border dioceses in Texas, citing "grave moral issues" in current U.S. policy, urged the Bush administration to resume its negotiations with Mexico, on hold since events of Sept. 11, 2001, on important guest worker and immigration issues.

At a rally ending a two-week Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride—a bus caravan of 900 people from Los Angeles to New York to call attention to injustices in U.S. immigration law—Bishop Nicholas A. DiMarzio of Brooklyn described U.S. policies toward immigrant workers as "immoral."

The Holy Land

The Holy Land saw an unending spiral of violence in 2003 as Palestinian terrorists and the Israeli military responded constantly to each other's attacks.

In July, Israeli authorities demolished the foundations of an unauthorized mosque begun five years ago by Islamic fundamentalists on a square adjacent to the Basilica of the Annunciation, a revered Christian shrine in Nazareth.

Church leaders decried the suicide bombings by Palestinian radicals, but also criticized Israel for building a "security wall" which, if completed as intended, will stretch along some 200 miles of the Israeli border.

In November, the Vatican urged the United Nations to revive the "road map" to Israeli-Palestinian peace, a two-state solution proposed by President Bush in a 2002 speech to the UN General Assembly.

In December, 32 U.S. Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders, including two Catholic cardinals, urged the Bush administration to take new leadership on the



Relatives and neighbors surround the casket of Hector Ramirez on May 23 in Pozos in the Mexican state of Guanajuato. He was among 18 illegal immigrants who died from suffocation and heat exhaustion at a highway rest stop outside Victoria, Texas, in mid-May.

issue and spelled out a 12-step program to give new impetus to the peace process. The joint statement was one of several signs of revived trilateral collaboration among U.S. Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders.

That collaboration had waned in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the resurgent intifada in the Holy Land, but it gained new ground in 2003 as leaders saw a need to forestall religious tensions over the U.S. war in Iraq. In April, 75 leaders from the three faith groups held a summit in Chicago at which they publicly criticized the Iraqi war, U.S. unilateralism, the erosion of civil liberties at home and the shift of resources from human needs to military purposes.

On an international level, about 160 Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders from across Asia gathered in the Philippines in August, seeking to promote Asian peace and development through greater interreligious dialogue and understanding. †

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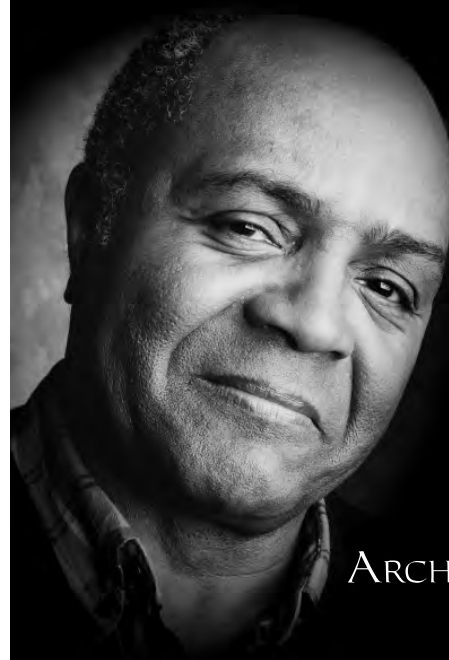
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ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

Blessed to be a Blessing

Pope says waging war unilaterally violates inter national law

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Nations have a right to defend themselves against terrorism, but the unilateral use of force cannot be justified, Pope John Paul II said.

In his annual message for the World Day of Peace on Jan. 1, the pope said international bodies established to protect nations and settle disputes need to be reformed to deal with the threat posed by a surge in terrorist movements around the world.

But countries cannot renege on their formal commitments to respect international law and work through the United Nations, he said in the message released on Dec. 16 at a Vatican press conference.

Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said it is clear in the pope's message and in the more than 30 peace appeals he made in 2003 that the pope believes the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was not a just war because it did not have the support of the United Nations and the U.N. Security Council.

At the press conference, the cardinal said that "it would

be illusory" to think the Dec. 13 capture of Saddam Hussein "will repair the damage caused by that great defeat for humanity which war always represents."

Before, during and after the invasion, Cardinal Martino said, the pope "said 'no' to war" and "called it an adventure without return and a defeat for humanity."

The United States and members of the coalition that attacked Iraq had an obligation to act according to the international agreements they freely signed, the cardinal said. Those agreements prohibit the use of force except when necessary for national defense or collective security and, even then, only in concert with the Security Council.

"A nation cannot invent initiatives outside national and international law," the cardinal said.

In the text of the message sent to heads of state around the world, Pope John Paul said, "Peace remains possible. And if peace is possible, it is also a duty."

The pope condemned terrorism and specifically appealed for peace in "Palestine and the Middle East."

Giving his message the title "An Ever Timely Commitment: Teaching Peace," the pope said that his peace day messages for the past 25 years and the 11 messages written by Pope Paul VI beginning in 1968 provide a "syllabus" of necessary ingredients for teaching people how to promote peace with justice, dialogue, freedom, charity, forgiveness and respect for human rights.

"What remains now is to work to ensure that the ideal of a peaceful coexistence, with its specific requirements, will become part of the consciousness of individuals and peoples," the pope wrote.

In teaching peace, he said, "there is a particularly urgent need to lead individuals and peoples to respect the international order."

Throughout history, but particularly after World War II, the international community has developed principles, laws and treaties aimed at resolving conflicts peacefully and putting an end to all war, he said.

"Accords freely signed must be honored," he said.

"The violation of this principle leads to a situation of illegality and consequently to friction and disputes which would not fail to have lasting negative repercussions," he said.

Nations must be called on to uphold their commitments to peace, "especially at times when there is a temptation to appeal to the law of force rather than to the force of law," the pope said.

Pope John Paul acknowledged that the phenomenon of terrorism is difficult to deal with through established international law because the law was designed to regulate relations between states.

"The scourge of terrorism has become more virulent in recent years and has produced brutal massacres which have in turn put even greater obstacles in the way of dialogue and negotiation, increasing tensions and aggravating problems, especially in the Middle East," he said.

New international instruments must be developed for the prevention, monitoring and suppression of terrorist groups and other forms of international criminal activity, he said.

But the absence of a specific international tool for dealing with terrorism does not justify one nation acting on its own and violating basic human rights, the pope wrote.

"Democratic governments know well that the use of force against terrorists cannot justify a renunciation of the principles of the rule of law," he said.

"Political decisions would be unacceptable were they to seek success without consideration for fundamental human rights, since the end never justifies the means," Pope John Paul wrote.

As he has said before, the pope also said, "the fight against terrorism cannot be limited solely to repressive and punitive operations."

Even if the use of force is necessary, he said, it still must be accompanied by "a courageous and lucid analysis of the reasons behind terrorist attacks," a solid commitment to eliminate the injustices that lead some groups to lash out with violence and real efforts to educate everyone on the absolute obligation to respect human life.

At the press conference, Cardinal Martino said the pope was convinced that "you can eliminate one terrorist, or 10 terrorists or a thousand terrorists, but if we do not eliminate injustices, there will always be other terrorists."

In his message, Pope John Paul said respect for law is the first path to peace, but order is not transformed into peace without love and forgiveness.

Particularly in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East, Pope John Paul said, "a solution to the grave problems which for too long have caused suffering for the peoples of those regions will not be found until a decision is made to transcend the logic of simple justice and to be open also to the logic of forgiveness." †

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An Iraqi child plays amid the rubble of a former rocket factory that was hit by bombs in Baghdad during the U.S.-led war. In December, at least 10 homeless families were occupying the damaged building. The invasion came in mid-March despite the U.S. failure to win U.N. support and over the objections of many religious leaders, including Pope John Paul II.

Christmas Supplement



*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel. (John 1:23)*

This child is our Savior, Messiah and Lord

Editor's note: The following news story and accompanying letter are fictional, but the facts in the letter are true.

By John F. Fink

ANTIOCH, SYRIA—Archaeologists here is this ancient city, where the followers of Christ were first called Christians, have discovered a letter apparently written by Luke, the author of both a Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

Although both the date and the recipient of the letter are undecipherable, experts say that its contents indicate that it was written around the year 60 A.D.

Luke, the only Gentile author in the Bible, was a native of Antioch and presumably was writing to a friend in his hometown.

The letter follows:

"I'm afraid that I have bad news for you. Perhaps you have already received word about the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She had been living with the Apostle John here in Jerusalem. I was particularly saddened by her death because it happened shortly after I had a chance to talk with her at length.

"More bad news is the fact that Paul has been imprisoned here in Jerusalem. I accompanied Paul here. As you know, I was with him on some of his missionary journeys, and some day I plan to write about them. Despite the warnings of many of Paul's converts, he was determined to come here. I will remain near him no matter what happens.

"Since I was here in Jerusalem, I was particularly eager to meet Jesus' mother, Mary. I'm glad that I did because she told me details about Jesus' birth that I had never heard before. Despite the fact that the events she talked about happened



CNS photo courtesy Knights of Columbus Museum

For centuries, artists have been inspired in countless ways to announce and interpret the wondrous events of the birth of Jesus Christ. This photo of a 17th-century oil painting from the school of Bartolome Esteban Murillo—*L'Adorazione Dei Pastori*—portrays an idyllic stable scene. It blends soft earth tones with a masterful use of light that radiates from the baby Jesus to his mother Mary and then to a lamb with its legs tied together, symbolizing the sacrifice of Jesus.

60 years ago, it was obvious that she kept all those things in her heart.

"I found Mary to be a remarkable woman, definitely the model for all Christians. She was Jesus' first disciple because she heard the Word of God and kept it. She accepted God's will for her, with all its joys and sorrows.

"Mary told me that the archangel Gabriel appeared to her when she was a young girl living in Nazareth. The angel told her that she would conceive a son and that she should call him Jesus. The

angel then told Mary just who this child would be: 'He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

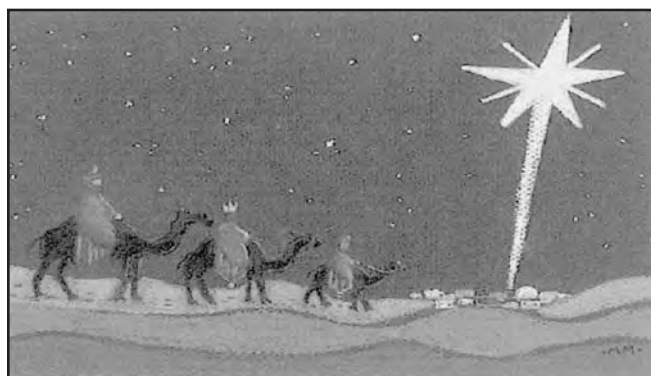
"Mary said that she asked the angel how that could be because she had taken a vow of virginity. That's when the angel revealed God's intervention. Mary told me that the angel said, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the

Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.'

"Mary knew from the beginning that Jesus had a unique relationship to God. He was God as well as a human being from the time he was conceived. Besides that, Mary remained a virgin through the direct intervention of God.

"Mary then told me about her trip to Judea so she could help her relative, Elizabeth, with the birth of John the

Continued on next page



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Baptist. I was impressed that Mary—only on the word of the angel that Elizabeth was pregnant despite the fact that she was over the normal childbearing age—traveled all the way from Nazareth to Elizabeth's home in Judea. This was about 75 miles, and the caravan she joined would have taken about five days to make the trip. It shows how resourceful and independent Mary was while still a teen-ager.

"It occurs to me, as I'm writing this letter, that I neglected to ask Mary when she and Joseph were married. She didn't mention it, but if it was after she returned to Nazareth three months after she left—and she returned pregnant—she must have been the subject of gossip throughout Nazareth. I wish I had thought to ask her about that.

"Did you know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth? I don't remember ever hearing that from Paul during our travels together. Paul never talked about Jesus' birth or his childhood. But Mary did.

"She said it happened because she and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem for some kind of census that Caesar Augustus decreed. I'm not too clear about the details of that census, but, of course, it happened long before I was born. Anyway, they traveled to Bethlehem because Joseph was of the house and family of David, even though Mary was ready to have her child.

"When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no room for them in the inn because of the large number of people there for the census. Joseph was resourceful, though, and asked the innkeeper if they could use his stable so they could have some privacy. Mary gave birth to Jesus there.

"One of the details surrounding Jesus' birth that Mary recalled was the visit by shepherds who had been keeping the night watch over their flock. The

shepherds learned about Jesus' birth from an angel who appeared to them. The angel gave them the great news that the long-awaited Savior, Messiah and Lord had been born.

"I'm not a Jew, but I've learned from Paul that the Jews were expecting a savior who would rescue humanity from sin and its alienation from God. The Hebrew term *masiah* means "anointed one" (like the Greek word *christos*). Some groups among the Jews applied this name to an expected royal leader from the line of David who would restore the kingdom to Israel, but I believe the angel meant it as the one who brings salvation to all humanity, Jew and Gentile. "Lord" points to Jesus' transcendence and dominion over humanity.

"Someday, when I find the time to write about all this Good News and tell about Jesus' birth, I intend my basic message to be precisely what the angel told the shepherds: that this child who was born is Savior, Messiah and Lord.

"Mary told me some other things about the child Jesus, including his presentation in the Temple in Jerusalem when he was 40 days old and an incident that happened in the Temple when Jesus was 12 years old. But I'll save that for another time.

"Please give my best wishes to all those in the Church at Antioch. Paul, too, has asked me to send you his greetings. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

(Author's note: There's no way of knowing if Luke actually got the details of his infancy narrative directly from Mary, but we can speculate about it. Perhaps, though, since it is believed that Mary died when she was 70, she had already died before Paul and Luke arrived in Jerusalem.)

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion.) †

Some suggestions for living the Beatitudes at Christmas

By Mary Jo Pedersen
Catholic News Service

Is there any way to put the Beatitudes into practice at home this Christmas season?

I have five suggestions.

1. Encourage poverty of spirit by keeping the focus on giving instead of getting.

Toss out the catalogues that create unrealistic expectations or limit how many your family is allowed to see.

Suggest that family members give gifts that don't cost a lot of money, maybe a coupon for shoveling the walk or a dozen muffins delivered whenever the receiver requests. An hour's worth of labor that can be cashed in when needed is a great gift. As a gift for aged people, the promise of a visit per week or per month is worth a pile of doo-dads.

2. During Christmastime, make a special effort to be in solidarity with those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

One practical way to do this is to cut out newspaper or magazine pictures of families in refugee camps, migrant workers, recent immigrants and others who do not have the benefit of such basics as shelter, food, health care or safety. Place the pictures in a prominent place (refrigerator, prayer space, bathroom mirror) and pray daily for these people.

Join community efforts to alleviate poverty and injustice. Consult your parish staff or the local Catholic Charities office for ideas.

3. Be a peacemaker by resisting the culture's preoccupation with violence in movies, music and games.

Consider refusing to buy violent and aggressive Christmas toys for children or adults.

Bring about peace in your personal relationships at home and in the workplace. One step is to write a Christmas note to an estranged friend or relative. Extend a peaceful hand to those who are rude or unfair to you. Apologize to those you have hurt, and do it without expectations.

4. Seek righteousness if you want to be satisfied this Christmas.

Christianity teaches that nothing on Earth ever will satisfy us or make us completely happy. Only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. Hungering for the perfect purchased gift is surely futile.

5. Christmas is a time for purity of heart.

The pure of heart try to keep their priorities straight. Their "to do" list looks different at Christmas. It includes daily prayer. It lists clearing some of the clutter of life away to focus on how to bring Christ's presence to others in simple ways, such as visiting the sick and lonely, comforting those who are grieving or lending a helping hand to neighbors.

The Beatitudes are the secret to a truly joyful and happy holiday season.

(Mary Jo Pedersen is coordinator of the Leadership in Family Life Training Program for the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb.) †

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War will keep many families apart this Christmas

By John B. Reynolds

Catholic News Service

Twenty-year-old Michael Felish is a sniper for the Army's 10th Mountain Division. Recently deployed from Fort Drum, N.Y., he is now in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Twenty-seven-year-old Andrew Fish, an Army reserve veteran of 10 years, is stationed in Kuwait and ships into Iraq for 10 days at a time to train military personnel there.

Michael and Andrew don't know each other, but they have things in common.

They are both soldiers in service of their country.

They are both in harm's way.

And to the regret—but understanding—of their loved ones, neither was expected home for Christmas.

Michael was told to expect a one-year deployment. He is hoping to be home in six months. His father, Bob Felish, is splitting the difference.

Regardless, Christmas is out, and Michael's dad knows that things will be different this year.

"This will be the first holiday that we've been apart," he said. "We've always had Christmas morning together, so it's going to be tough."

To make things easier, though, he talks to his son once a week or so by phone whenever the young man calls, usually on Saturday or Sunday. Beyond an occasional letter, it's how they stay in touch.

The senior Felish, who lives in Illinois, said, "I can't wait for that phone to ring!"

Andrew's mother, Patricia Fish, a Wisconsin resident, keeps in touch with her son by e-mail.

"It's the best thing that ever happened," she said, explaining that she and "Andy" exchange e-mail messages almost daily.

When I spoke to her, she was hoping that these messages would confirm her son's two-week November furlough so that he could see his wife and his 4-year-old daughter again—and his newborn son for the first time.

But his mother knew he would have to be back in Kuwait come December. As such, she planned to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas on the same weekend.

"It will be hectic," she said, but added, "I'm just so excited!"

If he wasn't away on active duty, Michael, an extreme in-line skater, might be dreaming of roller blades under the Christmas tree.

This Christmas, Andrew might be wishing for a new book or two, and the time to finish his degree in international finance.

But the roller blades and the degree will have to wait.

Michael's father is hoping that he and the other members of the 10th Mountain Division can pull together for emotional support. He is hoping, too, that the soldiers know we appreciate them.

"There's support for our troops," he said, "yet often we hear politicians claiming that we made a mistake by going into Iraq and Afghanistan. We have to let these kids know that we're behind them."

Patricia Fish, in turn, is hoping that friends will step up this Christmas and do something nice for the soldiers' loved ones back home.

"These guys are worried about their families," she said. "Often, the wives of reservists don't have the built-in support network that the soldiers have, so people need to do things to let the families know that they haven't been forgotten."

Fish suggests that these can be little things, such as an occasional phone call or even an offer to watch the children for a few hours. She hopes this will comfort her son and other military personnel away for Christmas.

And she knows how Michael's father feels.

"He's out there," Bob Felish said, "and he's so far away. And you just want to hug him, but you can't."

(John Reynolds interviews respondents to the Marketplace questions for Faith Alive!) †

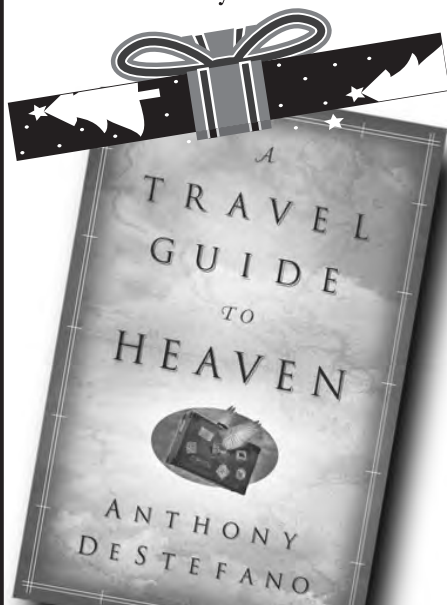


Students at St. Peter's School in Rome, N.Y., including fourth-grader Mark Melioris, make Christmas tree greeting cards for U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. Schools throughout the city will send Christmas greetings and care packages to soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, N.Y., who are serving in Afghanistan.

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Finding the real meaning of Christmas in a children's cartoon

By Stanley J. Konieczny

Catholic News Service

For 38 Christmases, countless families have gathered in front of the television to watch a children's holiday classic, the late Charles Schultz's animated "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

It is a real holiday treat, but like so many gifts, the deeper, more profound meaning can be lost.

Christ's Sermon on the Mount echoes throughout this 30-minute cartoon, challenging viewers to find the true meaning of Christmas. The eight Beatitudes of Matthew's Gospel are woven throughout the video.

Jesus prefaced each Beatitude with an acknowledgment of happiness: "How blessed are they ..."

And there is an overall happiness about the children in the Peanuts' cast as they ice skate, dance, throw snowballs and try to catch snowflakes on their tongues.

Yet, one little boy, the hapless Charlie Brown, mourns his lack of understanding of Christmas. He expresses his hunger and thirst for something beyond all the commercialism and consumerism.

Now, after more than 38 viewings, we know that Charlie Brown realizes the Beatitude promise of satisfaction and comfort.

Just as the Beatitudes are a call to Christian action, Lucy, the amateur psychiatrist, encourages Charlie Brown to get involved in order to overcome his holiday doldrums.

Charlie Brown tries his hand first at directing the Christmas pageant and later at buying a Christmas tree for the auditorium. Both projects are seemingly disastrous, and Charlie Brown gains only the ridicule of his peers. He concludes that he has absolutely no understanding of Christmas.

Then enters Linus Van Pelt, bearer of the original "security blanket." Linus stands as an icon of the Beatitudes.

The cartoon tot readily agrees to explain to Charlie Brown what Christmas is all about. His willingness reveals his purity of heart. There is a great innocence and sincerity in Linus' willingness to share the Good News of Christmas, not to mention his loyalty to his belittled friend.

In Linus' happy purity of heart, we can see God.

Linus begins his soliloquy with a simple request, "Lights, please." It is less stage command and more a meek prayer asking for guidance and betraying the gentleness of one who already has inherited God's kingdom or at least is not far from it.

Despite his fear of memorizing lines for the holiday program, Linus quotes by heart the Gospel story about angels announcing a wonderful birth to shepherds watching their flocks at night.

Watch closely. As Linus recounts how the angels told the shepherds not to be afraid, he loosens his clutch on the ever-present, frayed, blue security blanket, which slips to the stage floor.

As together as he seems, even Linus is called to greater faith by the Good News of Christ's coming.

Then the cast gathers outside under a starry December sky. Here, Linus proves himself a true child of God, a peacemaker bringing reconciliation between Charlie Brown and his friends.

More important, Linus helps the children reconcile themselves to the season's real meaning.

Linus could well have been ridiculed—"persecuted"—by his playmates, but he took the risk to make the kingdom of heaven more real for his friends.

In the end, the children are happy. They even embrace a certain poverty of



In "A Charlie Brown Christmas," the hapless Charlie Brown mourns his lack of understanding of Christmas. He expresses his hunger and thirst for something beyond all the commercialism. Christ's Sermon on the Mount echoes throughout the late Charles Schultz's animated holiday feature that has charmed viewers for 38 years.

spirit in accepting and decorating Charlie Brown's poor, little tree. Now they've detached themselves from the holiday consumerism that is accompanied by big, shiny, pink-painted aluminum trees.

"That's what Christmas is all about,

Charlie Brown," says Linus as he concludes his proclamation of the birth of a Savior.

(Stan Konieczny is a seminarian at Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Ill.) †

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Readers share favorite Christmas memories

Giving presents to Jesus is part of Filipino Christmas

By Carmen A. Henson
Special to The Criterion

Memories of Christmases past while growing up in a small community in the Philippines always fill my heart with joy at remembrances of one of the happiest times in my life.

St. Bridget's College, operated by the sisters of the Order of the Good Shepherd, was where I went from grade school and high school, and finished my degree in college.

I have never ceased thanking the Lord for this opportunity since I felt that the Catholic education I received at my alma mater gave me not only the academics, but more so, the complete education that molded a person's character and soul, in preparation for the time when he or she goes out to the world.

After Thanksgiving Day, we would start a project of making sacrifice counters by stringing together rosary beads (those not blessed) in groups of 10. Each time we made a sacrifice, a bead was pushed down to the end of the string.

Little acts of kindness made by denying oneself and gladly giving a less fortunate classmate my snack or a piece of candy that she would otherwise not have or spending time to console a friend who felt sad, when I would rather be off with the others playing, were examples of sacrifices and self-denial that we were encouraged to do to give to the Lord for Christmas.

A Nativity scene, with the Baby Jesus at the center, was placed in the school lobby. After the whole string of sacrifice beads was down to the end, we would take a straw and put it into the crib, where the Baby Jesus lay. The idea was to offer all those little sacrifices to the Baby Jesus as he lay in his crib.

By the time Christmas came around, it was so heartwarming to see the Baby Jesus kept warm with a thick swath of straw placed there by members of the student body, all from little sacrifices done in the silence of the

heart and offered with love to God!

On Christmas Eve, the round of parties at friends' houses started the evening. These were the times when everybody showed off the latest dance steps on the dance floor. In those days, we were escorted by a parent or an older sibling to the parties, and the parents giving the party were always around. There were no hard drinks or alcohol served, just good old soda and sandwiches. Besides, who wanted to eat when we would rather be having fun dancing!

By around 10 p.m., my father would come to pick me up, as would the parents of the other kids, in order to get ready for midnight Mass.

After attending midnight Mass, we would come home to the *Noche Buena*—a late-night snack of all kinds of good things to eat shared with family, after which we were bundled off to bed.

On Christmas Day, we would wake up to a hearty breakfast, after which we opened our Christmas presents. And it was always satisfying to know that, even when I hadn't been perfect, Santa Claus had shown his love in the presents that I wished for and received that Christmas Day!

(Carmen A. Henson is a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis.) †

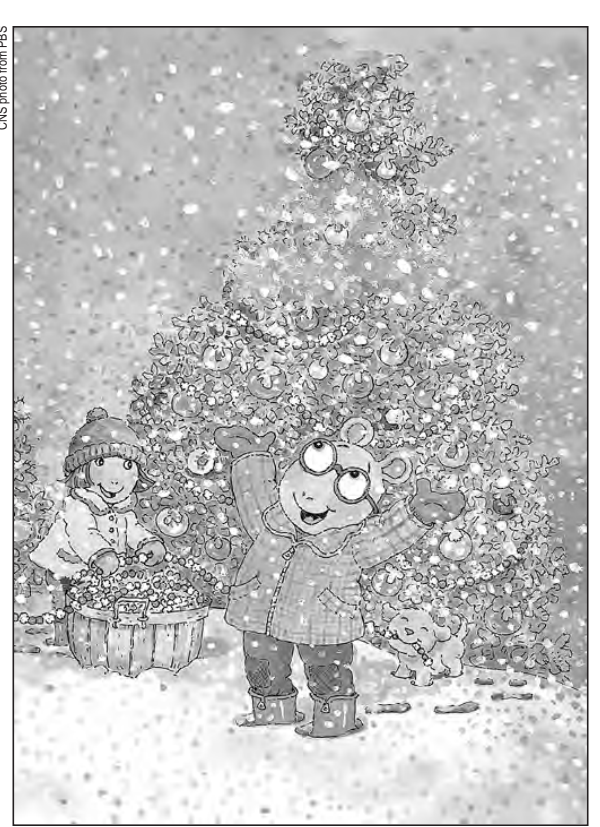
Neighbors help family after Christmas tree catches on fire

By Margaret Jacobi
Special to The Criterion

I grew up in St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. On Christmas Eve in 1950, when I was a junior in high school, I walked several blocks to the store in the bitter cold to buy some cotton batting to place under the Christmas tree.

My sister locked me in the living room to keep my younger siblings from discovering Christmas before the appropriate time.

I placed the cotton batting under the tree and switched



'Arthur's Perfect Christmas'

Arthur the Aardvark makes preparations for a wonderful holiday in the PBS animated feature "Arthur's Perfect Christmas." The holiday special is scheduled to air from 8-9 p.m. EST on Dec. 24 on public broadcasting stations. Check local PBS listings to verify the program date and time. Arthur and his animal friends were created by author Marc Brown, who has written and illustrated a number of Arthur books.

on the lights. To my horror, a bulb flickered and ignited the cotton. Before I had time to think, the room was ablaze.

My sister was in shock and unable to unlock the door, and the newly remodeled room and furnishings were burning around me.

The window was stuck shut, but I somehow managed to open it and jump to safety.

Chaos ensued but, between the fire department and caring neighbors, the fire was eventually extinguished in our house.

The realization of what might have happened left me with a cold fear.

That evening, a crate of oranges materialized on the front porch with other gifts.

But what I remember most about that Christmas was going to Midnight Mass, singing with the choir, and saying "Thank you" to Baby Jesus for watching over us and giving us the best gift of all—the gift of himself.

(Margaret Jacobi is a member of St. Michael Parish in Bradford.) †

Family welcomes visiting priest for Christmas dinner

By Fr. Joseph B. Sheets
Special to The Criterion

For a number of years, my brother and I served five and sometimes six Masses on Christmas at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville.

During that time, a Jesuit priest came to assist the pastor.

Each priest was permitted to offer three Masses, one of which was the Midnight Mass at a mission church, now St. Agnes Parish at Nashville, if the weather permitted.

After the last Mass, the pastor, Father Francis Kull, would go away to visit relatives, leaving the visiting priest to wait until late afternoon when he caught the bus to return to West Baden, where the Society of Jesus established a seminary in 1934 and operated it for 30 years.

My parents always invited the visiting priest to share dinner and enjoy the holiday fun and games at our house until the time for the bus ride back to West Baden. There was always room for one more in our home.

Each year, we looked forward to having the visiting priest, ordained only a few months before, at our parish for Christmas.

I still have the ordination card from one of the Jesuits. It is dated June 13, 1945.

(Father Joseph B. Sheets retired from active ministry in 2001. He formerly served as pastor of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour and administrator of Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown. He resides in Seymour.) †

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Family learns true meaning of Christmas during snowstorm

By Tom Maier

Special to The Criterion

My greatest Christmas of all time was less than a year ago, when I discovered the true spirit of the day, and what it stands for, in the face of adversity.

Christmas Eve was to be a great experience. We would have our usual family celebration at my sister's house just north of Indianapolis then experience the celebration of Christ's birth at St. Jude Church on the south side. I had offered to do one of the readings for this special liturgy.

We had a great, traditional Christmas Eve with my family then left early so we could make it to church by 10:30 p.m. to enjoy the choir's music and reflect on the significance of the Midnight Mass and the day to come.

As you may recall, Dec. 24, 2002, was highlighted by a classic Indiana "White Christmas." As we traveled south on I-65 in near-blizzard conditions, my wife and I thought the icy, snow-laden highway was not only slow due to the severe weather conditions, but unusually bumpy as well. Eventually, through our minivan's heating ducts came the smell of something burning, possibly rubber.

When I could finally find a safe place to pull over on the highway in the worsening driving conditions, I got out and walked around the minivan to discover that we had a flat left front tire. Because the flat tire was on the left side toward the traffic on the slick and snow-blinded highway, I assured my wife and children that we would sit there and wait for a state policeman patrolling the highways that night or a Good Samaritan to come along and assist us. We didn't have a cell phone.

As the car ran with the flashers and heater on for what seemed like an eternity, our two children entertained themselves with the video games they had received as gifts. My wife and I talked about how we were going to miss participating in our first Midnight Mass in many years, short of watching the papal Mass at the Vatican on television as we assembled toys and wrapped presents.

It seemed like an eternity, but finally an Indiana State Policeman from the Lebanon, Ind., post stopped behind us, with his car lights flashing, and asked if we needed help.

I showed him the destroyed tire and told him we needed a tow off the highway to the nearest truck stop or service facility available because it would be dangerous to even

attempt to change it on the slick roadway during the snowstorm. He called a tow truck—the only one available in the area, we found out later—and stayed with us for the half-hour or so until the tow truck driver arrived to help us.

The super-nice tow truck operator carefully lifted our crippled vehicle onto his tow rig and, after many thanks and wishes of Merry Christmas to the state trooper, we squeezed into the cab of the tow truck.

It was about 11:45 p.m. and we had missed the opportunity to attend Midnight Mass. I felt bad about being unable to contact anyone about doing the reading in my absence and also not being there with my family.

At a truck stop off the interstate, the only mechanic there said he could help us out even though it was close to midnight. I rolled up my sleeves and gave him a hand. As I heard the clock ring out midnight, I looked outside and thought about how this is a real Christmas because the Almighty had sent his extra angels to help us tonight.

I asked the mechanic who had stayed at work late to help a traveling stranger how much I owed him for his service, and he smiled and said, "Nothing. Have a Merry Christmas!" I asked again, and he said, "Consider this as my gift to you!"

I felt a glow then that I had not felt in many years of celebrating Christmas, and it happened at, of all places, a truck stop early on Christmas morning. The Almighty truly took a few minutes to hold us in his hand that night, and he worked his miracle through the kindness of the Indiana State Trooper, the tow truck driver and the mechanic. We attended the 10 a.m. Mass later that day with a new spirit.

(Tom Maier is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Christmas reminds woman of fun times with her friend

By Jean Knarr

Special to The Criterion

In recent years, several stories written by Mary Jo (McHugh) Keegan about her cherished Christmas memories were printed in *The Criterion*. Mary Jo grew up in St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis and was part of the close-knit second generation of Irish families that

worshiped there.

In September of this year, Mary Jo died after a long battle with cancer. The last time I saw her, at the former St. John Academy's annual alumni reunion in September 2002, Mary Jo asked for my prayers because "that monster [cancer] was back." On the day she was dying, a friend called and requested prayers for her.

While asking for God's mercy for Mary Jo and for St. Joseph's intercession as the patron saint of the dying, a surprising memory flashed into my mind.

I could see the girls on stage during the academy's 1952 Glee Club Christmas Program. In the darkened auditorium, they were singing "Silent Night," accompanied by autoharp music. I was the accompanist and had only had one or two practices on the instrument before the program. The good sisters often assumed that a person who could play the piano, with a little coaching, could play whatever—an organ or autoharp or another musical instrument.

After the performance, Mary Jo, noting that I was listed as the accompanist, told me with twinkling eyes and her distinctive little laugh that she had not heard the sound of the autoharp. I was grateful. Her inquiry and puzzled look lessened my embarrassment. Remembering this incident on a sad day 50 years later, I chuckled and was comforted by the realization that a smile and laugh were appropriate while holding Mary Jo in prayer.

We were students together for two years at the academy, made Sunday Legion of Mary visits to patients at Wishard Hospital in Indianapolis, and enjoyed our continuing friendship while students at Marian College in Indianapolis.

But we were bound closest by our memories of the downtown complex where St. John Academy stood near the church, grade school, rectory and diocesan chancery offices. Our Glee Club sang Christmas carols to the priests who worked in the chancery offices on Georgia Street.

Mary Jo continued worshipping at her beloved St. John Church for many years, and brought Christmas joy to hundreds of public school students during 43 years of teaching.

At her funeral Mass, several priests expressed their gratitude for Mary Jo's life. At the closing, we wept as her godson, Father Joseph Moriarty, tenderly sang the Irish Blessing. Mary Jo, this Christmas, we pray that you are reunited with all your departed loved ones from St. John's. I can imagine you smiling as you hear an angelic glee club accompanied by heavenly autoharps.

(Jean Knarr is a member of Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis.) †



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Girl offers her music as gift to Jesus at Midnight Mass

By Mary Jean Wethington

Special to The Criterion

Christmas Eve 1957 was truly a "Silent Night," mantled and muffled in softly falling snow.

Our family, relatives and friends as well as the rest of the Catholic community had gathered in the darkened, festively decorated and candlelit church, which was filled to overflowing, for the Midnight Mass to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child as Savior, as Lord, as God!

I was 11 years old, and the entire family had traveled from Dayton, Ohio, for Mass at St. James of the Valley Church in Cincinnati because their youngest relative would be playing "Silent Night" on the massive pipe organ for the first time at this Midnight Mass.

In preparation, I must have practiced that lovely, holy song for many hours, alone in the silent, darkened church, during the weeks before Christmas. From those musical, prayerful moments in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament Reposed, a vocation was born.

This was my "Little Drummer Boy" gift to the Christ Child, my family and the assembly gathered on that Christmas Eve—the simple gift of playing "Silent Night" as the choir descended from the choir loft and joined the procession to receive Holy Communion.

What I received from the Lord, I responded with in return. "Holy Infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace."

(Mary Jean Wethington is a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright.) †

Family remembers Mom as they prepare for Christmas

By Gina Langferman

Special to The Criterion

My mother-in-law, Clara Langferman, passed away on Dec. 21, 2002, and her funeral was on Christmas Eve.

The holidays hold a special meaning for our family, especially when our memories are so closely tied to a loved one that is no longer with us.



Photo courtesy of Cathedral High School

Living Nativity

Faculty, staff, students and friends of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis will present a Living Nativity from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. on Dec. 21 on the school campus at 5225 E. 56th St. Visitors are welcome, and there is no admission cost. The Cathedral Choir and the "Pride of the Irish" Band will also perform during the evening. This photo was taken during the school's Living Nativity last December.

In Memory of Mom

Mom always made Christmas so special from the time we first believed that Santa would bring us presents while she "cleaned up" on Christmas Eve. We remember those Christmases long ago and the freshly cut fragrant cedar, no matter what our presents were the joy was in being together. And Mom, then "Grandma," always gave her gifts with special care, the love behind them showed her joy in always being there. She taught us the meaning of Christmas from the time that we were small, until last Christmas, when Jesus gave her the greatest gift of all. We now know all she taught us is true, and although we are sad, there is joy for us, too. At Christmas, we'll remember our loving mother as we share our Christmas meal and give gifts to each other.

(Gina Langferman is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Boy can't imagine Christmas without eating peanut butter

By Ruth Griffin

Special to The Criterion

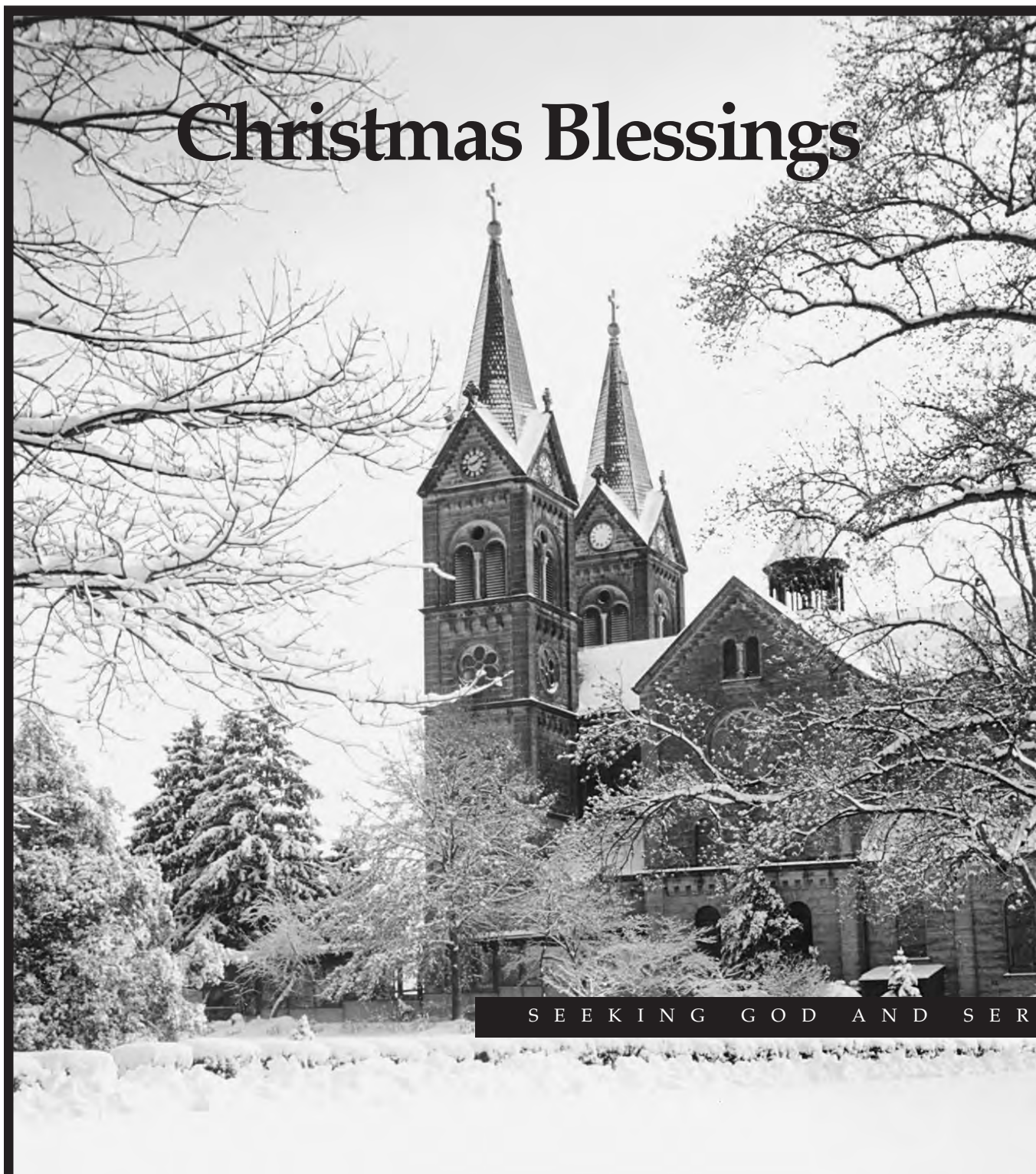
Years ago, on Christmas Eve afternoon, my husband and I purchased two carts full of groceries for a needy family of five.

At the dinner table that evening with our son and daughter, I suddenly remembered something and said to my husband, "Do you realize that we spent \$200 on food and forgot a very important item? Peanut butter!"

Our 10-year-old son, who couldn't survive a day without his beloved peanut butter, looked so pained and said, "Mom, you don't mean those three kids have to have Christmas without peanut butter!"

I assured him that I would return to the store for it so that the children wouldn't have to endure Christmas without peanut butter.

(Ruth Griffin is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †



Christmas Blessings

May the angels' song
of peace be heard
in your heart this
Christmas season
and throughout
the New Year.



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Christmas is a good time to meditate on the Beatitudes

By Fr. Dale Launderville, O.S.B.

Peace cannot be won by human efforts alone.

The balance necessary to live in right relationship with God and with others is a gift from God.

This message is found in the Beatitudes, which offer us considerable food for thought at Christmas in these times of violence and suffering on the world stage.

The Beatitudes offer a new way to understand the sufferings and anxieties of this life.

Each of the eight Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10 begins with the phrase, "Blessed are ..."

Through it, Jesus pronounces that the person or group about to be described is "in a good place."

Jesus addressed audiences that included the rich and the poor, the politically powerful and the disenfranchised, the proud and the humble, the satisfied and the hungry, the aggressive and the gentle, the deceivers and the truth-tellers, the violent and the nonviolent, and the persecutors and the persecuted.

Our well-being or happiness depends on how well we are able to balance the opposing forces mapped out by these pairs.

Jesus urged his disciples to travel lightly and not to over-invest in this world. He exhorted his audience to "think bigger" about their lives and not simply to imagine life as that which happens between one's first and last breaths.

Jesus tells his audience, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Those who are poor in spirit recognize that neither they themselves nor others in the world can bring sufficient meaning and depth to their lives.

Because they know that something vital is missing in their experience, they are in a favored position to receive Jesus' message about God's rule over heaven and Earth.

Though they may feel low, Jesus encourages them with the message that God accepts them and will bless them.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

This mourning could refer to the loss of loved ones, which often results in a void that other humans cannot fill.

But Jesus seems to refer to mourning

over other kinds of losses as well, perhaps over the loss of reputation or a job or a friendship. In such times of loss, we know how fleeting and fragile our lives are.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Those who truly see themselves as creatures under the Creator's care know that they must let go of earthly symbols of power and status. They refrain from aggression and violence, and try to treat others with gentleness and understanding.

By relinquishing their efforts to secure themselves, the meek inherit the world, even if only partially, in this present life.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

To be in right relationship with God gives a person the sense that all is in order and that life is good.

Fasting is a practice that helps us understand that we do not live by bread alone. So if we fast from this world's ways of making us feel important, then we will show that we are hungering for incorporation into God's life.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Jesus calls us to live gently with others.

He sets high expectations for us, but also calls us to help one another to meet them.

He forbids us to judge one another, by which we would be using God's standards to compare ourselves with one another and to presume to declare who is acceptable and who is not.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

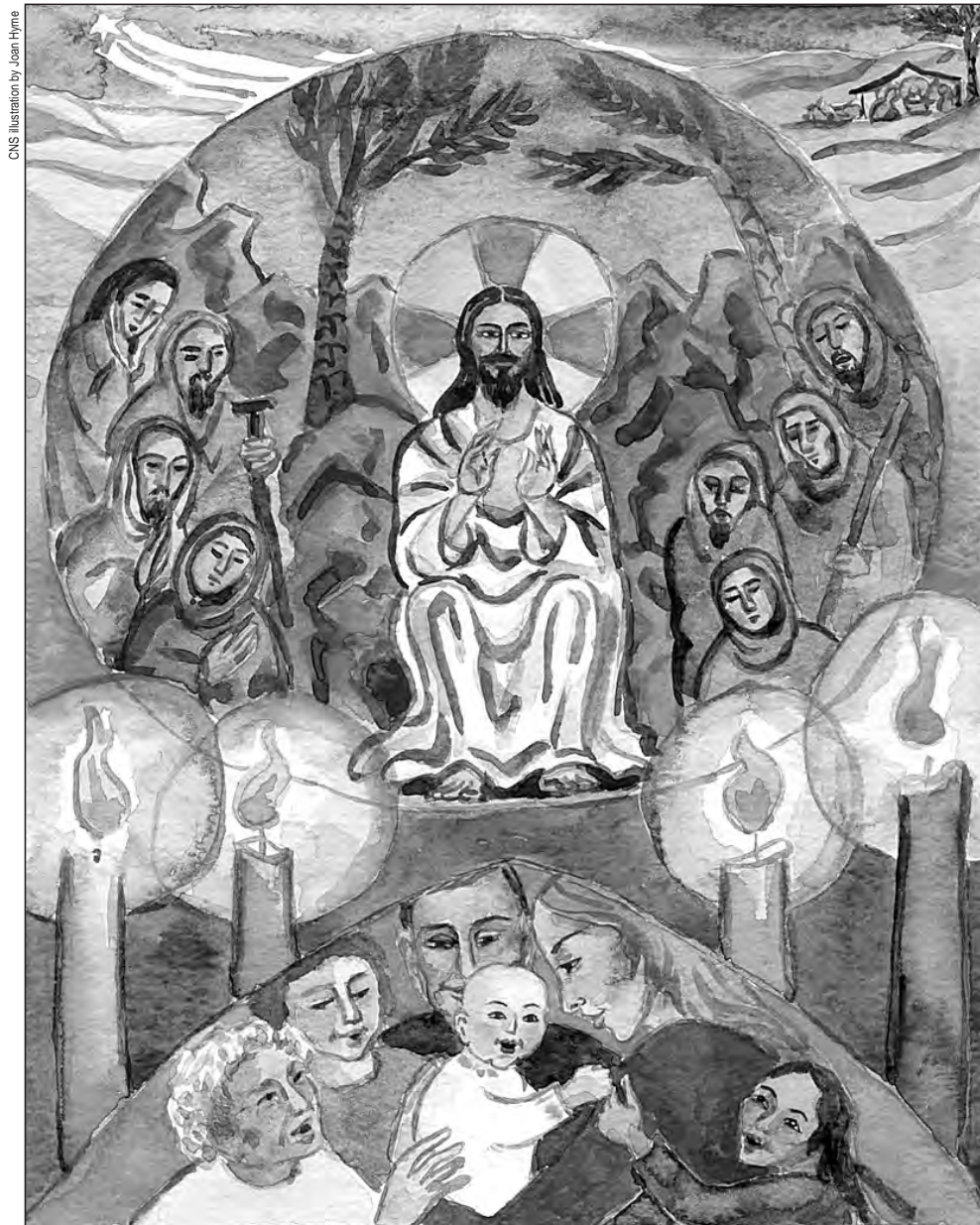
Those who long for God and want to do God's will above all else are pure in heart. They have their priorities straight in life and value the gift of their faith.

Jesus promises that those who commit themselves to God will encounter God.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Those who make peace are not simply those who avoid unnecessary conflict. Peacemakers actively promote harmony in their relationships with others in daily life situations.

Jesus promises that those who strive for justice and harmony will be adopted into God's family.



At Christmas, the Beatitudes offer a new way to understand the sufferings and anxieties of this life. Each of the eight Beatitudes begins with the phrase, "Blessed are ..." Through it, Jesus pronounces that the person or group about to be described is "in a good place." Jesus calls his disciples to be little ones who realize that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. This message offers us considerable food for thought at Christmas in these times of violence and suffering on the world stage.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This eighth and final Beatitude in Matthew 5:3-10 echoes the promise of the first. Those who commit themselves to God and symbolize by their person a way of life and a set of values at odds with those of the world often provoke the world's hostility.

But Jesus assures them that they will inherit God's kingdom.

Jesus calls his disciples to be little ones who realize that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world.

To live according to the Beatitudes means to live humbly, nonviolently, gently and attentive to others, but to do so with conviction, self-sacrifice and focus upon God.

(Benedictine Father Dale Launderville is a Scripture scholar at St. John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minn.) †

Discussion Point

Seek Christ in others each day

This Week's Question

Describe a concrete way that a Christian can serve this Christmas as a much-needed peacemaker.

"Christmas is actually a very lonely time for a lot of people. I try to be aware and sensitive to those who are alone—something as simple as joining someone who usually sits alone in the pew during Mass. I think we need to enjoy the season by enjoying each other." (Kelly Schmidt, Portland, Ore.)

"I will try to treat the person directly in front of me with respect and kindness, and really try to consider what life is like lived in the shoes of the other. This should happen not just in our house, but in traffic, in the checkout line and in the wide world." (Jeannie Fleming, Bethany Beach, Del.)

"[I am] principal of St. Ambrose Elementary School. One focus of our religion program is service. Learning to serve others with a happy heart leads to respect, which leads to a more peaceful environment for all. The children will perform many acts of service this year. During the Christmas season, we pick angels [each one requests a gift for someone in need] from the giving tree in our church and purchase Christmas gifts for them." (Laura Kazmierczak, Buffalo, N.Y.)

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: How can a busy husband and wife find the time they need for each other?

To respond for possible publication, write to *Faith Alive!* at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. †



From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

Catholic patriots: Archbishop John Hughes (III)

Tenth in a series



John Hughes became bishop of New York in 1842 and archbishop when New York became an archdiocese in 1850. He quickly became recognized not only as a great American patriot, but also as a great defender of the Catholic Church.

1844 saw the rise of the Native American political party. This party, bitterly anti-Catholic, had provoked riots in Philadelphia. Two churches and rectories and two convents had been burned, 40 people had been killed, more than 60 had been seriously injured, and 81 homes had been looted or destroyed. When this happened, Philadelphia Bishop Francis Kenrick asked his flock to bear with the outrages, to return good for evil, to do nothing to fight back. "Rather let every church burn than shed one drop of blood or imperil one precious soul," he said.

This might be all right for Bishop Kenrick and the Catholics of Philadelphia, but Bishop Hughes wasn't built that way. He believed in standing up for his flock's rights. "If any single Catholic church is burned in New York," he warned, "the city will become a second Moscow." The reference was to the burning of the Russian city by Napoleon Bonaparte's soldiers.

On election day of 1844, a mob of 1,200 Nativists paraded through New York's streets, shouting insults at the Irish Catholics. This was the way the Philadelphia riots had begun. The mob swung into Spring Street toward the old St. Patrick's Cathedral on Mott Street. (Archbishop Hughes was later to build the present St. Patrick's Cathedral.) "But there they halted," said Bishop Hughes later, "for a reason they had." Two thousand well-armed members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians were waiting for them. The Nativists were at least smart enough to disperse.

A few weeks later, a Nativist mass meeting was planned for City Hall Park—to be addressed by the leaders of

the Philadelphia rioters. Bishop Hughes organized men to guard every Catholic church in New York, and then he personally strode down to City Hall to see the mayor, Robert H. Morris.

"I did not come to tell you what to do," he told the mayor. "I am a churchman, not the mayor of New York. But if I were the mayor, I would examine the laws of the state and see if there were not attached to the police force a battery of artillery and a company or so of artillery, and a squadron of horse. I think I should find that there were; and if so—I should call them out!"

The mass meeting was canceled.

Soon the ruling statesmen of the nation recognized Bishop Hughes as the leading voice of the Catholics in the United States. In 1847, he was invited to speak before a joint session of Congress. With his usual eloquence, he spoke on the subject "Christianity—The Only Source of Moral, Social and Political Regeneration." One of those who listened carefully to him was a tall congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. †

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

Remembering what Christmas is really about

Not to sound like Scrooge or anything, but have you noticed the humbug that



passes for Christmas celebrations these days? In fact, if you were Scrooge suddenly returned from the dead, would you even recognize what's gone on lately as preparation for Christmas?

Of course, the world has become too complex and too diversely populated to allow for the old morning church bells and goose-hanging-in-the-butcher's window kind of Christmas. But, what's with penguins and polar bears and grinchies? Not to mention the hype for selling everything from somewhat useful items to clappers and Chia "pets."

Frosty the Snowman and Santa Claus and such are certainly sweet stories for kids to enjoy, but they really haven't much to do with Christmas, either. At least they're moral tales, which promote good values with a connection to virtue exemplified in the baby Jesus, and to the salvation his birth promises.

Further down the food chain, we have

a recent television ad, which promised a "Fear Factor" Christmas show. Hmmm. Is that a contradiction in terms or what? And a newspaper story told of someone who protested the display of fir trees and poinsettia plants in a public place. Somehow to them, according to society's current "freedom from religion" attitude, this was an offensive display of religious preference.

Unfortunately, Christmas has been kidnapped by secularists. Not just secularists, but mean secularists at that. They've become so intent upon separation of church and state that they've lost their common sense. Harmless old fir trees and poinsettias minding their own business have become guilty simply by association with a Christian holiday.

This is especially ironic when you consider that customs like decorating fir trees and poinsettias, etc., originated mainly in pagan celebrations, which were later adapted to Christian use. Instead of criticizing such public displays, maybe we should use a Janus effect to change them by dedicating them to pagan gods on one side, and Christmas on the other.

Such a move might seem suitable for this time of year's end/beginning, if it

weren't just another silly example of how symbolism can get out of hand. Many public administrators are wrestling as we speak with trying to mount non-offensive, all-encompassing holiday displays friendly to Hanukkah for Jews, Kwanza for African-Americans and probably something for Wiccans, along with Christians' Christmas.

But, not to worry. We Christians know what Christmas is really about and we had the religious celebration of the holiday in place first. Besides, sticks and stones may break our bones but ridiculous words and actions can never hurt us. Right?

It seems to me we should ignore the materialism, the political correctness, the turf wars of ideology, and remember what Christmas really means. Customs of celebration may change, and our holy days may have been hijacked by other beliefs and even non-beliefs, but we're still here to welcome the Good News.

On Christmas, God became Man to save us from our sins. He loves us that much. That's what it's all about.

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.) †

Faithful Lines/Shirley Vogler Meister

Don't forget to be a blessing to others

Last week, I wrote about anticipating the holidays. The next best thing, of



course, is experiencing them, and the next best is remembering them. As this Christmas issue of *The Criterion* goes to press, many of us still have preparations to make or last-minute gifts to buy before enjoying the biggest and holiest birthday party of the year.

Others look forward to a quiet yet joyous holiday.

However, not all Christians are jubilant.

Remember in your prayers—or with practical action and support—anyone you know whose holidays will be lean or sad because of lack of employment or illness and medical expenses or because they are grieving over the death of a loved one—or for any other upsetting reasons. Remember the forgotten residents in nursing homes; they number in the thousands

in Indiana alone. Even in some faith-based care centers, there are lonely souls throughout the holidays and beyond.

During my own childhood, my family experienced hard times while Dad was undergoing neck cancer treatments. There was no medical insurance then, so Mom worked in a St. Louis shirt factory to help make financial ends meet. However, we children didn't understand much of this. Then a few days before Christmas, one of the men at the factory brought Mom home in a car—unusual because she normally walked. In he came with an abundance of good food in a huge box.

It wasn't until long after the fact that I learned the reason we received this: We were "the poor family." Yet we were so rich in family love and friendships and faith that I didn't realize this at first. My younger siblings didn't understand our true situation until years later.

During another lean Christmas, we children received a box of surprises from an aunt. She also sent beautiful fabrics so that Mom could sew new clothes for my sister and me. I started wearing my pretty

red Scottish plaid skirt with its hem at the ankles. As I grew, it eventually became a short roller-skating skirt. I have wonderful memories despite uncertain conditions!

Those experiences awakened in me the importance of helping others during difficult times, especially if children are involved. I admit to slacking off more than I've contributed, but I enjoy recalling such projects, done openly or anonymously, even for those with non-Christian religious beliefs.

Please remember such friends, neighbors and co-workers when they celebrate their traditions. I've learned that Jews often volunteer to work for Christians on Christmas Day. I'd also like to know about Christians, especially Catholics, who reciprocate this kindness.

Let's be grateful for blessings in our lives. Better yet: Share them as willingly as God the Father shared his son, Jesus.

(Shirley Vogler Meister, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.) †

Evangelization News and Notes/
Karen Oddi

Let's reach out to inactive Catholics this Christmas

A few years ago, midway through Advent, a priest concluded his Sunday



homily with, "In a couple of weeks, the 'Kreesters' will be here; let's be ready to give them a warm welcome." When my brain caught up with my ears, I realized that Father was talking about the "Christ-Ers"—the countless

number of persons who attend Mass on Christmas and Easter only.

He was asking that we overlook the fact that pews designed for 12 persons will be packed with 20 and that the parking lots will extend several blocks into the neighborhood. He was asking that we consciously welcome people to our parish community. No one could fault his request, since our welcome could possibly make the difference in turning a "Christ-Er" into a regular Sunday worshiper.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, a major Catholic research organization, recently reported that Mass attendance by Catholics has been continually declining since 2000. CARA cites a 2002 Gallup poll indicating that "at least once a week" Mass attendance had dropped from 44 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2002, a rather shocking fact since 75 percent of Catholics attended weekly Mass in the 1950s and 1960s.

The implications for parish evangelization efforts are astounding. Not only do we need to welcome the twice a year Mass-goers at Christmas, in the hope that they will be back before Easter, but we also need to think about those persons who have become more permanently inactive or alienated. Many parishes have or will soon begin outreach ministries to those who have left the active life of the Church. These ministries are turning out to be complex yet enlightening, since the reasons people leave the Church are not easily categorized or explained.

James Lopresti, who developed the *Re-Membering Church* ministry, identifies three general types of alienated Catholics while cautioning against oversimplification.

First are the "unawakened," or those people who were fully initiated in their youth, but have never really known Jesus Christ or the Gospel message. This group can patiently be helped to develop a mature faith.

The second group is composed of the "prophetically" alienated, who stay away because of felt injustices or contradictions to the Gospel within the Church itself. The key here is to help them with their feelings about the Church, whether those feelings are valid or not, and to correct misinformation in a non-judgmental way.

The third group is made up of the "truly alienated," who are often bearing the burden of multiple pain and sin in things they have done or not done and perhaps what has been done to them. Helping the truly alienated requires an especially compassionate ministry with a focus on reconciliation and re-conversion.

Reaching out to the inactive or alienated Catholics that Lopresti describes may seem like a tall order for most of us. Yet the Holy Father and the U.S. bishops have asked us to do that so we might as well get started. Look around you this Christmas, and you may just see a person who has been missing for a while, someone for whom your warm welcome and Christmas greeting will make a big difference.

Have a very Blessed Christmas!

(Karen Oddi is associate director of faith formation for the archdiocese.) †

Fourth Sunday in Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, Dec. 21, 2003

- Micah 5:1-4a
- Hebrews 10:5-10
- Luke 1:39-45

The Book of Micah is the source of the first reading for this fourth and last Sunday of Advent.



This book's author was a contemporary of Isaiah. Little is known about him. He came from a small community about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Like the other prophets, Micah felt the obligation to denounce the disobedience to God that he saw all around him.

As did the other prophets, Micah devoutly believed that he spoke not just on his own authority, but also, more importantly, as the spokesman for God.

In this weekend's reading, Micah predicts that the savior of Israel will come from Bethlehem.

David, the great king who established a personal covenant with God and whose kingship had as its chief purpose the guidance of the people in the ways of God, was from Bethlehem.

This new savior will "shepherd" his people, a term reminiscent of David himself, a shepherd that prefigured Jesus. This savior's majesty will shine to the ends of the Earth. He will be the savior of all humankind.

For the second reading this Advent weekend, the Church presents the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews is distinctive in part because of its strong reliance upon ancient Hebrew symbols. This reading certainly is in keeping with this characteristic. Highlighted is the ritual sacrifice, the heart of the ancient Jewish religion.

The other central characteristic of this writing is its developed and eloquent Christology. Its message about the Lord, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer, is profound. This characteristic also is abundantly clear in this weekend's reading.

St. Luke's Gospel supplies the Gospel reading.

It is the account of the familiar story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth.

As the story makes clear, Mary already

is expecting the birth of Jesus. He has been conceived.

This reading identifies Christ.

Elizabeth and Zachary were very special people. They were becoming parents because of God's direct intervention in their lives. They were holy people.

Their unborn child would be John the Baptist, the great forerunner of Jesus.

These holy people recognized Mary as the mother of the unborn Redeemer, which testified that Mary's child was the savior long promised.

The reading also reveals the great longing for God, coming to humanity in the person of Jesus.

Ages had come and gone. Nothing else had satisfied this longing. God alone would satisfy the longing by sending Jesus.

Reflection

Elizabeth and Zachary, mentioned in this weekend's Gospel reading, were persons of deep faith. They were mature people. They had pondered life. They understood the greatness, and certainly the reality, of God.

Yet, as in the lives of all human beings, a vacuum was present. In their wisdom, a wisdom derived from holiness, they realized that only a knowledge of, and union with, God could fill this vacuum.

So Elizabeth rejoiced when she saw Mary. She rejoiced because she knew Mary was bearing the unborn Redeemer, the Lord who would bring God's presence and peace to the world.

Hebrews proclaims the majesty of this Lord. Micah predicted not only the Lord's eventual coming, but also identified the need for God, a need that was sensed by Elizabeth.

In only a few days, the Church will celebrate the birth of Jesus. His birth occurred at a given time in history in a given place in the world.

Advent points us toward the celebration of Jesus' birth. It also reminds us that we await not an anniversary, but perhaps, more importantly, a renewal of God's presence with us through Jesus.

We all experience a vacuum in life. If we are holy, we will be wise enough to know what alone can fill the vacuum. It is Jesus, the Lord, the son of Mary, the Son of God. †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 22

1 Samuel 1:24-28
(Response) 1 Samuel 2:1-8
Luke 1:46-56

Tuesday, December 23

John of Kanty, priest
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Wednesday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-70

Vigil of Christmas

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25
or Matthew 1:18-25

Thursday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord
(Christmas)
Midnight Mass
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14
Mass at Dawn
Isaiah 62:11-12

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20
Christmas Day Mass
Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalm 98:1-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18
or John 1:1-5, 9-14

Friday, December 26

Stephen, first martyr
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc-17
Matthew 10:17-22

Saturday, December 27

John, Apostle and evangelist
1 John 1:1-4
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:1a, 2-8

Sunday, December 28

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14
Psalm 128:1-5
Colossians 3:12-21
or Sirach 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

(continued on page 21)

Question Corner/Fr. John Dietzen

Priest may determine form for sacrament of penance

Q Is it mandatory now to receive the sacrament of penance behind a



screen? Many people prefer to go to confession face-to-face, but that is not allowed in our parish. The priest says he does not like that way of hearing confessions.

For years, we understood that either way to participate in reconciliation is permitted by the Church.

Has that changed? Can a priest decide that only one way is allowed for the sacrament of penance? (Iowa)

A As of a few years ago, a priest does have permission to make that decision for anyone who comes to confession to him.

The 1973 revision of the *Roman Ritual* for the sacrament of penance provided that conferences of bishops should determine "the place proper for the ordinary celebration of the sacrament of penance" (#38). Fixed grates or grills between penitent and confessor should always be provided, however, so those who wish to use them can do so (Canon 964).

Priests, especially pastors, are to "choose a place more suitable for the celebration according to the regulations of the conferences of bishops so the entire celebration may be enriching and effective" (#40).

The following year, the conference of bishops decreed that for the United States it is desirable that reconciliation rooms be provided in which people might choose to confess either informally face-to-face or kneel to speak with the priest anonymously through a stationary screen. This, of course, is what most Catholics have become accustomed to since then.

However, in July 1998, the Pontifical

Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts said that priests have the right to refuse face-to-face confessions, even if penitents request it.

For a just reason, said the document, "and excluding cases of necessity (emergencies, in hospitals, when patients are dying at home, etc.) the minister of the sacrament can legitimately decide, even in the event the penitent asks otherwise, that sacramental confession be received in a confessional equipped with a fixed grill." In other words, the priest may decide not to minister the sacrament face-to-face.

In 1999, the U.S. bishops' conference reiterated that the choice is open to people to confess either way, but noted that the above 1998 Vatican interpretation is still in force.

Why did the Vatican agency require this change? When the new interpretation was presented, a council official referred to two reasons. Confessing behind a grill is an ancient practice, the official said, and it "responds to the need for prudence."

"It is a protection against human weakness both on the part of the priest as well as on the part of the penitent," he said. "The sacrament of confession should not be an occasion of sin for either priest or penitent."

To answer your question, if a priest feels he should hear confessions only with a grill between him and the penitent for these or other "just" reasons, the ritual gives him permission to do so.

(A free brochure answering questions that Catholics ask about the sacrament of penance is available by sending a stamped and self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 325, Peoria, IL 61651. Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail in care of jjdietzen@aol.com.) †

My Journey to God

Abounding Love for All

When in winter's tether
Cold invades our lives
Day to night surrenders
Light, our peace, our guide

Shades of darkness falling
Suggest we hope in vain
Cold and darkness gripping
Reveal death's sting and pain

Amid all dark surrounding
Cold sting of pain and death
Faithful souls of longing
Await the promised guest

Ages all have sung him
Good prophets reveal the name
Emmanuel, God with us
Here our souls to claim

Despite our sins abounding
Despite our darkest night
Despite cold chill of winter
Comes he true peace and light

Guideth then our souls
Good Shepherd and child of light
From death of sin and darkness
To your true peace and light

Let not this season pass us
And we ignore your call
To follow your example
Abounding love for all

For only in this sacrifice
Of life laid down for thee
Can we escape life's winter
Our goal, eternity

By Father Joseph B. Moriarty

(Father Joseph B. Moriarty is vocations director for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, sacramental minister for Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis and Catholic chaplain for the Indianapolis Fire Department. He wrote this poem "in loving memory of Mary Jo Keegan, godmother, teacher and friend.") †

The Active List

The Criterion welcomes announcements of archdiocesan Church and parish open-to-the-public activities for "The Active List." Please be brief—listing date, location, event, sponsor, cost and time. Include a phone number for verification. No announcements will be taken by telephone. Notices must be in our office by 10 a.m. Monday the week of (Friday) publication: The Criterion, The Active List, 1400 N. Meridian St. (hand deliver), P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 (mail); 317-236-1593 (fax), mklein@archindy.org (e-mail).

December 19

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., **Indianapolis**. "An Evening of Praise and Worship" presented by Christian musician Tony Avellana, 7:30-9 p.m. Information: info@journeysongs.net.

Marian College, St. Francis Hall Chapel, 3200 Cold Spring Road, **Indianapolis**. Catholic Charismatic Renewal, praise, worship, teaching, healing prayers, 7 p.m. Information: 317-927-6709.

December 20

Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony Dr., **Mount St. Francis**. "Advent Retreat Day," 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., "brown bag lunch," free-will offering. Information: 812-923-8817 or e-mail mtstfran@cris.com.

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., **Indianapolis**. Indianapolis Arts Chorale concert, "Celebrate the Child," 8 p.m. Information: 317-635-2021, ext. 23.

December 21

Holy Name Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., **Beech Grove**. Christmas

Concert XLII, 3 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., \$5 per person. Information: 317-784-5454.

Cathedral High School, 5225 E. 56th St., **Indianapolis**. Living Nativity, 6-8 p.m. Information: 317-542-1481.

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 5333 E. Washington St., **Indianapolis**. Advent prayer service for dismissal of anxieties, 7 p.m.

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Covenant Sunday Holy Hour" 2:30 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

December 22

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Family Faith Talks" 7 p.m., Mass 8 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or

e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

December 24

St. Anthony Church, 379 N. Warman Ave., **Indianapolis**. Christmas Eve anticipation Mass, 4:30 p.m., evening Mass, 10 p.m. Information: 317-636-4828.

St. Benedict Church, 111 S. Ninth St., **Terre Haute**. Christmas Eve Prelude Concert, 11 p.m., doors open 10:30 p.m., followed by Midnight Mass. Information: 812-232-8421.

December 25

St. Anthony Church, 379 N. Warman Ave., **Indianapolis**. Christmas Day, Mass, 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m. (Spanish), 11:30 a.m. Information: 317-636-4828.

December 26

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, 7-8:30 p.m., followed by a youth lock-in for girls in grades 6-9 from 9 p.m.-9 a.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 27

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Kujichagulia" (self-determination), 7-8:30 p.m., followed by a youth lock-in for boys in grades 6-9 from 9 p.m.-9 a.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 28

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave.,

Indianapolis. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Ujima" (collective work and responsibility), 10 a.m. Mass, "Pandemonium 3" with Gregg Bacon, 1-4 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Schoenstatt Spirituality" 2:30 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

December 28-29

Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Oldenburg, motherhouse, 22143 Main St., **Oldenburg**. Tours of motherhouse, traditional holiday decorations, performances by the sisters' Chime Choir, Sun. 2-4 p.m. EST, Mon. 6-8 p.m. EST. Information: 812-933-6464.

December 29

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Ujamaa" (cooperative economics), 7-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Family Faith Talks" 7 p.m., Mass 8 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web

site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

December 30

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Nia" (purpose), 7-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 31

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Kuumba" (creativity), 10 p.m.-2 a.m., Karamu Feast, 2 a.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

January 1

St. Rita Church, 1722 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Khrist Kwanzaa 2003, "Imani" (faith), 10 a.m., Mass. Information: 317-632-9349.

January 4

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Schoenstatt Spirituality" 2:30 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

January 5

Mary's King's Village Schoenstatt, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles), "Family Faith Talks" 7 p.m., Mass 8 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com

or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

January 5-9

Kordes Retreat Center, 841 E. 14th St., **Ferdinand**. "Going Home to Where I Have Never Been: Thomas Merton Retreat." Information: 812-367-2777 or 800-880-2777.

January 6

St. Simon the Apostle Church, 8155 N. Oaklandon Road, **Indianapolis**. Informal listening session, 7 p.m. Information: 317-826-6000, ext. 5.

Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School, 2801 W. 86th St., **Indianapolis**. Indiana Autism Sertoma Club meeting, 7-9 p.m., child care provided. Information: 317-885-7295.

January 7

St. Malachy Church, 326 N. Green St., **Brownsburg**. "Catholics Returning Home" series, first of six sessions, 7 p.m. Information: 317-858-8422.

January 10

Bishop Chatard High School, 5885 N. Crittenden Ave., **Indianapolis**. Placement test for 2004-05 freshman class, 8:30 a.m., arrive 15 minutes early. Information: 317-251-1451.

January 11

St. Paul Catholic Center, 1413 E. 17th St., **Bloomington**. Archdiocesan deacon formation program, Benedictine Father Bede Cisco, presenter, 1 p.m. Information: 317-236-1491. †

St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis, is changing its weekday Mass schedule, effective Monday, December 1, 2003.

Monday-Saturday

Confessions heard, 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Mass of the Day, 12:10 p.m.

Saturday only

Confessions also heard, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Holy Days

Masses at 10:30 a.m. and 12:10 p.m.

Secular Holidays

Mass at 12:10 p.m.

Christmas Day

Mass at 9:30 a.m.

The Sunday Mass schedule is unchanged (Saturday, 5:30 p.m.; Sunday, 8:00 and 11:00 a.m.). For information about special events (such as Mass after Colts Games or special music concerts) call St. John's 24-hour information line at (317) 637-3941.

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NEW YEAR'S EVE MASS

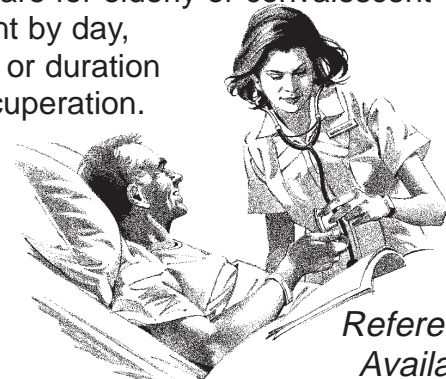
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1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN

Come to a Catholic way of celebrating New Year's Eve with a Mass of thanksgiving for the past year and renewal for next year. The December 31st service will begin with songs of worship at 11:00 p.m. followed by the Eucharistic Celebration of the Mass at 11:30 p.m. Private security will be available at both parking lots; behind the Cathedral and behind the Catholic Center (corner of Illinois and 14th sts). Sponsored by the Catholic renewal groups of central Indiana. For information call 927-6709.

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Vatican trims pope's schedule for Advent, Christmas seasons

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope John Paul II's Christmas season schedule has been trimmed, apparently excluding his usual ordination of new bishops on the Jan. 6 feast of the Epiphany and his custom of baptizing infants on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

The pope's liturgical schedule for December and January lists him as presiding over six events, but does not specify if he will be the principal celebrant of the liturgies.

The Vatican released the 83-year-old pope's schedule for the Advent and Christmas seasons on Nov. 25, which included laying a wreath at a Marian statue in central Rome on the Dec. 8 feast of the Immaculate Conception. However, the pope did not make his annual visit afterward to the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

He also participated in a Dec. 11 Mass with Rome university students in preparation for Christmas.

The pontiff is scheduled to preside at the Christmas Mass at midnight in St. Peter's Basilica.

At noon on Christmas Day, the pontiff is scheduled to offer a solemn blessing, "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world), as he has in previous years.

The pope also is scheduled to participate in an evening thanksgiving prayer service on Dec. 31 in St. Peter's Basilica.

On Jan. 1, the pope is scheduled to preside at the Mass for the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day in St. Peter's Square.

In addition, Vatican Radio reported that the pope would hold his annual meeting with cardinals and Vatican officials on Dec. 22. His speech for the occasion usually provides a review of the past year in the life of the Church.

Vatican Radio said the pope would not hold his weekly general audiences in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

A Vatican official said the fact that the calendar did not go beyond Jan. 1 indicated that no other papal liturgical events were scheduled for the month. †

Daily Readings, continued from page 19

Monday, December 29
Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 John 2:3-11
Psalm 96:1-3, 5b-6
Luke 2:22-35

Tuesday, December 30
1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Wednesday, December 31
Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Thursday, January 1
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Friday, January 2
Basil the Great, bishop and doctor of the Church
Gregory Nazianzen, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 John 2:22-28
Psalm 98:1-4
John 1:19-28

Saturday, January 3
The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 John 2:29-3:6
Psalm 98:1, 3-6
John 1:29-34

Sunday, January 4
The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:2, 7-8, 10-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, January 5
John Neumann, bishop
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-11
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, January 6
Blessed André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:2-4ab, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, January 7
Raymond of Peñafort, priest
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:2, 10-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, January 8
1 John 4:19-5:4
Psalm 72:2, 14, 15bc, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, January 9
1 John 5:5-13
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, January 10
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, January 11
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1a, 2, 3ac-4, 3b, 9b-10
Acts 10:34-38
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

MARRIAGE SUPPLEMENT



Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our **Marriage Supplement**

February 6, 2004, issue of **The Criterion**

If you are planning your wedding between January 30 and July 1, 2004, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement on the form below.

Pictures

You may send us a picture of the bride-to-be or a picture of the couple. Please do not cut photograph. The picture must be wallet-size and will be used as space permits. We cannot guarantee the reproduction quality of the photos. Please put name(s) on the back of the photo. Photos will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by Thursday, January 15, 2004, 10 a.m. (No announcements or photos will be accepted after this date).

— Use this form to furnish information —

Clip and mail to:
ATTN: BRIDES, *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202
Deadline: Friday, January 15, 2004, 10 a.m.

Please print or type:

Name of Bride: (first, middle, last)

Daytime Phone

Mailing Address City State Zip Code

Name of Bride's Parents

City State

Name of Bridegroom: (first, middle, last)

Name of Bridegroom's Parents

City State

Wedding Date Church City State

Signature of person furnishing information Relationship Daytime Phone

Photo Enclosed No Picture

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

ARMSTEAD, Mary Helen (Reed), 74, St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Mother of Cheryl Barker, Marilyn Puckett, Joy Thompkins, John and Reed Armstead.

BEIGHTOL, Mary (Eisenman), 80, Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville, Dec. 3. Mother of Dan, David, Jerry Jr. and Michael Beightol. Sister of Norma Folletti and Barbara Pries. Grandmother of five.

BLINCOE, Joseph D., 84, St. Paul, Sellersburg, Dec. 3. Father of Janet Nichols and Joann Tribbey. Brother of Ann Barnett and Richard Blincoe. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of seven.

BUSSING, John E., 72, Annunciation, Brazil, Nov. 29. Husband of Sipriana (Rodriquez) Bussing. Father of Cecilia Miles, Kirsten Kumpf, Melanie Taylor and Eric Bussing. Brother of Peggy Arnold, Mary Jo Cox, Paulette Johnson, Stephen, Michael and Robert Bussing. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of one.

CALDWELL, Petrea, 53, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Wife of Gus Caldwell. Stepmother of Jenetria Darty. Daughter of Nellie Winfrey. Sister of Michelle Brown, Merri Lisa Dardy and Shirley

Winfrey III.

COBURN, Blanche, 90, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 9. Sister of Anna Mae Osier, Jerome and Melvin Brinkman.

DAUGHERTY, Marie M., (Hoerstring), 93, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Mother of Patricia Berberich, Edward, Joseph and Thomas Daugherty. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of 28.

DETHY, Charles M., 99, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyds Knobs, Dec. 5. Father of Dorothy Allen, Kay Hoehn, Rosalie Schenck, Cletus and Jim Dethy. Grandfather of 17. Great-grandfather of 35. Great-grand-grandfather of four.

FARLEY, James Patrick, 56, St. Ann, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Husband of Sandra Farley. Father of Jennifer and Christopher Farley. Son of Elizabeth Farley. Brother of Shirley Fitzgerald and Edward Farley.

GARNER, Mary B., 82, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Nov. 30. Mother of Robert Garner. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of seven.

GREIN, Dennis W., 83, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Nov. 10. Husband of Mary (Kellams) Grein. Stepfather of Judith Ryerse and James Duggins. Brother of Franciscan Sister Mildred Grein. Step-grandfather of nine. Step-great-grandfather of 16. Step-great-great-grandfather of two.

GUELDEEN, Josephine (Bisesi), 84, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Wife of Herbert G. Guelden. Mother of Tammy Miller and Ronald Guelden. Sister of Mike Bisesi. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of seven.

HAUSER, James A., 89, St. Paul, Sellersburg, Nov. 20. Father of Jeanne Doyle, Ann Truman, Mary Whitaker, Rita and Steven Hauser. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of two.

HITTLE, Eugene Charles, 80, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Dec. 2. Husband of Mary Imogene Hittle. Father of Colleen Stone, Brian, Conrad, Daniel and Timothy Hittle. Grandfather of 10.

HYATT, Michael W., 44, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Father of Zachary Hyatt. Brother of Cathy Chaffines, Patrick and Richard Hyatt. Grandfather of two.

KOERNER, James F., O.D., 71, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 2. Husband of Carolyn Jean (English) Koerner. Father of Karen Koerner-Smith, Greg, James II and John Koerner. Brother of Mary Riley, Mildred Stafford and Paul Koerner. Grandfather of 10.

KRUKEMEIER, James Earl, 84, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 2. Husband of Betty M. (Bratton) Krukemeier. Father of Diane Craig, Janet Green and Karen Sigler. Brother of Frances Abraham, Donald and Richard Krukemeier. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of one.

Providence Sister Ann Mary Dietz served as a teacher and secretary

Providence Sister Ann Mary Dietz died on Dec. 11 in Lourdes Hall at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. She was 87.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 16 in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed in the sisters' cemetery.

The former Eleanor Ottilia Dietz was born on Dec. 20, 1915, in Indianapolis. She entered the congregation of the

LITTLE, Loretta Mae (Forbeck), 75, St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute, Dec. 7. Wife of James H. Little Sr. Mother of Patricia Calaski, Susan Flora, James Jr., Ronald and Stephen Little. Sister of Margaret Donnehoffer and Bernard Forbeck Jr. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 14.

MASSEY, Dorothy J., 83, St. Mary, New Albany, Dec. 4. Wife of Ira Massey. Mother of Karen Bishop, Rosita Fleischnman, Jane Smith, Ed and Larry Massey. Sister of Kathleen Dunkel, Dorothy Trapp and Vernon Willett. Grandmother of 10.

MOONEY, Michael H., 81, Sacred Heart, Jeffersonville, Dec. 2. Father of Carol Jackson and Michael Mooney. Brother of William Mooney. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of five.

MOORE, Michael Irwin, 59, St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, Dec. 5. Husband of Patricia Moore. Father of Jennifer Barnett, Melissa Kreutzer, Laurie Torrance, Richard and Thomas Moore. Brother of Anita Daly. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of two.

MUELLER, Arthur R., 84, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Husband of Marybeth Mueller. Father of Judith, Joseph and

Robert Mueller. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of three.

REED, Mary Catherine Riley (Childs), 66, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Mother of Helen Childs, Anthony, Charles Jr., Lawrence and Norman Reed. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of one.

SARLES, Rita C. (Losson), 82, St. Mary, New Albany, Dec. 3. Wife of James H. Sarles. Mother of James F. Sarles. Sister of Jane Leist.

SCHLATTERER, Lorene V., 84, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Dec. 3. Mother of Frederick and Stephen Schlatterer. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of eight.

STEWART, Melza A., 76, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Husband of Clara Stewart. Father of Ursula, Gorm and Whitedove Stewart. Grandfather of eight.

STEVENS, Joseph F., Sr., 85, St. Michael, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Husband of Sylvia E. (Konechnik) Stevens. Father of Veronica Dolan, Cecelia Kiley, Bernadette Snyder and Joseph Stevens Jr. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of eight.

Benedictine Father Frederick Walsh was a hermit and contemplative

Benedictine Father Frederick Walsh, a monk and priest of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, died on Dec. 10 at the archabbey following a brief illness. He was 90.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 13 in the archabbey church. Burial followed in the archabbey cemetery.

The former Paul Walsh was born on Nov. 24, 1913, in Connersville. He was from a family of six children, all of whom became Benedictine priests or sisters.

He enrolled in Saint Meinrad Minor Seminary in 1927. In 1931, he was invested as a novice, with his brother, Joachim, and professed his simple vows on Aug. 6, 1932. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 7, 1938.

For several years, Father Frederick taught Latin in the minor seminary, where he also served for a year as assistant house prefect. He also fulfilled the duties of monastery guest manager and later served as assistant pastor at St. Mary Parish in Huntington, Ind.

In 1956, Father Frederick became a hermit when Benedictine Archabbot Bonaventure Knaebel permitted him to take up residence in a

TANNER, Jacqueline L. (Beeler), 77, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 29. Mother of June Kochert and Jim Tanner. Half-sister of Harriette Barr. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of two.

TEBBE, Sylvia L., 79, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 1. Wife of Louis Tebbe. Mother of Luann Anderson and Mary Hornbach. Sister of Rita Amberger and Delores Voegel. Grandmother of three.

TUMMERS, Catherine A., 74, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 4. Wife of Joe Tummers. Mother of Randy, Stephen, Tim and Tom Tummers. Sister of Edith Grawey, Helen Drake, Marguerite Wells, Frank and Johnny Grawey. Grandmother of seven.

WURTZ, Raymond A., D.D.S., 90, St. Paul Hermitage, Beech Grove, Nov. 22. Uncle of several.

ZINSER, Raymond G., 92, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, Dec. 3. Husband of Mary Ann (Kappes) Zinser. Father of Mary Kay Cortelyou, Carole Rae Davis and Martin Zinser. Grandfather of eight. †

lakeside cabin located in an orange grove belonging to St. Leo Abbey in Florida.

In 1970, Father Frederick's three Benedictine sisters received permission to begin a contemplative foundation in Durham, N.C., and he began a more than 30-year association with this new community. He accompanied the sisters when they moved to Labadieville, La., then to their current location at Tickfaw, La.

Throughout this life, he remained a hermit and a contemplative, maintaining his solitude except for the interactions required by his duties as chaplain for the Benedictine sisters.

Surviving are Benedictine Sister Mary Herbert Walsh and Benedictine Father Marion Walsh.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad, IN 47577. †

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Dr. Kim Pryzbylski
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Gary
9292 Broadway
Merrillville, IN 46410
Phone: 219-769-9292
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Mrs. Elberta Caito
Assistant to the President
Bishop Chatard High School
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