Special message from the Pope

"In the silence of the night a voice rings out..." In the silence of the night a voice echoed across the fields near Bethlehem, linking the glory of God in heaven with the peace of men on earth. The same voice later spread out from the countryside around Bethlehem to more and more places throughout the world, and today it echoes in the silence of Christmas night in every continent of the world.

And in a special way this Christmas voice, the voice of the Midnight Mass, rings out in this place to which Christians come, like the Bethlehem shepherds and the wise men long ago, to gather round the crib; they come to this place which so clearly reminds us of the shelter in which God came into the world because He could not find a proper roof.

"In the silence of the night a voice rings out, 'Rise up, shepherds, God is being born.'" And then it adds, "Run with all speed to Bethlehem."

May this Christmas which we are celebrating increase the birth and presence of God in your souls and in all souls, in the soul of the whole nation, which prays to the infant Jesus: "Raise Your little hand, O Holy Child, and bless our beloved homeland."


Archbishop’s Greeting

Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy’s 1985 Christmas greetings to the community:

On this holy feast of the birth of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour, the Catholic members of our community express warm greetings of peace and joy to their brothers and sisters of all faiths. We recommit ourselves in union with them and with the help of the newborn Prince of Peace to creating a South Florida where we all live together in harmony, as God fearing people. We pray that, as we renew together our lives of faith, our community will be enriched by a new commitment to mutual respect and assistance, to integrity, social justice, peace, security and prosperity.

A special Nativity

Children of the Marian Center perform their annual Nativity Play for parents and friends of the facility, an Archdiocese of Miami organization for special children. Shepherds, Magi, soldiers and choir (not shown) also are played by the children. (Voice photo by Prent Browning)

In the Nick of time

Is St. Nicholas good role model? — Page 11

Jesus’ step-father

The Nativity story from St. Joseph’s point of view — Page 18-19
Diocese loses suit against abortion clinics

Top officials from Sudan hold private meeting with pope

VATICAN CITY (NC) — Three top government officials of Sudan, where Catholic bishops have complained about discrimination under state law, held a private meeting with Pope John Paul II. At the meeting were Prime Minister El Gizouli Dafalla, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Taha Ayoua and Hilary Paulo Logali, Minister El Gizouli Dafalla, Foreign Minister

Bishops and the yearlong debate over abortion clinics.

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Sometimes, Congress and the White House don’t waste much time: In short order Dec. 11, both House and Senate passed the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction legislation and within 12 hours President Reagan had signed it into law.

However a key question — how the measure would affect the poor — remained unresolved after the final votes of 61-31 in the Senate and 271-154 in the House.

A flurry of activity had surrounded the legislation, named after Republican Sens. Phil Gramm of Texas and Warren Rudman of New Hampshire. No hearings were held on the bill, it did not linger on the president’s desk and in less than 24 hours of its passage on Capitol Hill it had been challenged in a court suit by Rep. Mickey Synar, D-Okl., who questioned the constitutionality of some provisions.

Advocates on both sides noted the measure’s potential to affect the poor, while noting the importance of dealing with the deficit, also expressed fears that the budget balance might harm the poor by cutting funds for essential services.

Under the plan, which reduces the deficit in yearly increments through 1990, Congress and the president agreed to a freeze which means they would have to agree on what programs should be cut. If one White House and Capitol Hill do not agree, automatic budget cuts would be imposed in January, for about half of the $210 billion in domestic spending and half out of non-defense programs.

As agreed by House and Senate, the measure is supposed to exempt certain basic anti-poverty programs, such as the Women, Infants and Children’s food delivery; Medicaid, the low-income nutrition program; Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the main welfare program; and Medicare, the health insurance program, from the mandatory cuts.

Nonetheless, budget analysts said, those programs would only be protected at the second stage of automatic cuts they would not be spared at the earlier stage if Congress and the president agree on what to do about the budget and jointly decide to cut them. Thus, the two branches of government could axe anything.

“They have no protection at all in the first stage. It’s a free-for-all then,” said Ronald Krietemeyer, director of the USCC’s development program.

The pope criticized economic exploitation by international groups and local “elites” and exhorted business leaders to include the poor in their economic development.

The pope warned that economic development “must go beyond ideologies, by the defense of one’s own privilege and wealth must be abandoned.”

The pope called for “a new solidarity” between people of all countries that goes “beyond the barriers of ideologies and systems.”

“Mental outlooks and political views contaminated by the lust for power, by ideologies, by the defense of one’s own privilege and wealth must be abandoned.”

The pope praised ongoing U.S.-Soviet arms reduction talks in Geneva and other international forums as part of the necessary dialogue that must occur.

But dialogue should go beyond ideologies, he said, and should involve people who meet “in the reality of their human lives.”

“I am thinking of dialogue when borders are open and people are free to travel.”

“I am thinking of the kinds of dialogue that take place when borders are open and people can travel freely” or “when scholars are free to communicate,” and “workers are free to assemble,” the pope said in an apparent reference to totalitarian countries.

In past years, the pope has appealed for dialogue to heal world tensions and avoid war. This year, he tied that call in a particular way to economic injustice.

“The popular imagination is often paralysed by fear of nuclear weapons and ideological blocs of nations have engaged in economic and ideological rivalries,” he said.

“Mental outlooks and political views contaminated by the lust for power, by ideologies, by the defense of one’s own privilege and wealth must be abandoned.”

The pope congratulated those programs which form the ‘North bloc’ and those of the ‘South bloc’ there is a social and economic abyss that separates rich and poor countries.

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VATICAN CITY (NC) — The Vatican hopes to issue a second document on liberation theology in mid-February, said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The document is being prepared in consultation with bishops' conferences, he said at a Dec. 12 press conference.

In September 1984 the doctrinal congregation issued a document on liberation theology warning that uncritical borrowing of Marxist concepts — such as class warfare and use of violence to promote social change — is against Catholic teachings.

The document also praised many aspects of liberation theology, especially its desire to correct social injustices, and promised the congregation would issue another document concentrating on the positive aspects of liberation theology.

This cardinal also said that formulation of a compendium of church teachings suggested by the Nov. 24-Dec. 8 extraordinary Synod of Bishops would probably be a co-operative effort among several Vatican congregations.

"But it is still too early after the synod for a formal plan to have been worked out," he added.

The press conference was called to announce Vatican publication of a collection of the 58 documents issued by the doctrinal congregation since the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

Cardinal Ratzinger told journalists he would answer only questions having to do with the congregation's work since Vatican II. He refused to answer several questions asking his overall assessment of the extraordinary synod, which was called to evaluate the teachings of Vatican II.

One of the synod suggestions was to "skip over" these points of doctrine or fail to present them clearly.

Another section will delineate church teaching on moral issues, he said. That part will be modeled on the 10 Commandments, he said.

Both sections will be supported, point by point, by citations from Scripture, papal documents and teachings of councils and church fathers, he said.

The new catechism emphasizes traditional church teachings on such matters as original sin, the soul, hell and punishment.

"But this would require cooperation among several congregations," he said. Regarding liberation theology, Cardinal Ratzinger said the congregation had been consulting with local bishops' conferences and hopes to have the document ready in time for Lent.

Liberation theology, he said, is against Catholic teachings. "The congregation has been consulting with local bishops about what is really good, the pope said. On the other hand, the magisterium, the church's teaching authority, helps the conscience discover "the truth of things."" 

"The church's magisterium does not present truths that are impossible to live out," he said. But neither does the church "limit itself to proposing 'solutions' that are rather easy and of immediate effect."

Rather, "like a good doctor, it seeks to cure the causes of the disorder," he said. In this case, a misunderstanding of the sacred relationship in marriage, the pope said.

He was speaking to a plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which deals with pastoral and teaching questions on family matters.

Later in the day, he told an Italian group of national family planning teachers that even the natural methods approved by the church — which rely on periodic sexual abstinence — must not be seen as merely biological practices but must be a part of a fully lived faith.

In his talk to the family council, the pope said church teaching on responsible parenthood has been clearly stated in Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical "Humanae Vitae" ("Of Human Life"), in his own apostolic exhortation on the family, during his several years of weekly audience talks on the subject, and in pastoral statements by bishops around the world.

In instruction of Catholics, he added, the church should be careful not to relativize its teachings.

"One is not allowed to speak of the 'graduality of the law,' as if the law were more or less exacting according to the concrete situations," he said. All teachers should keep personal situations in mind, but "without weakening the principles."
Washington (NC) - The church in Haiti needs outside support to help it stand up to government repression, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit, president of Pax Christi USA, said this week.

His remarks came at a Washington press conference held to release a Pax Christi report on Haiti. A Pax Christi international delegation visited Haiti in early 1985 to "give support to the church in Haiti so that it can stand up for the poor," Bishop Gumbleton said.

The "hopeful sign" in Haiti today is the church, which is "fragile unless the people of Haiti, the church of Haiti, receive support from the outside," Bishop Gumbleton said.

Anti-government demonstrations took place in November to commemorate a 1984 crackdown on media and political opposition. Three students, including one who was inside a Catholic school, were killed by Haitian troops Nov. 28, and the two Catholic radio stations in the country were forced off the air after reporting the protests.

"If the Haitian government succeeds in getting the church not to take sides, just as in 1980 — when it crushed militants fighting for the rights of humanity, unions, politicians and free-lance journalists — the Haitian people will have no one left to stand up for them," Bishop Gumbleton said.

The average annual income in the small Caribbean nation is estimated at $225, according to Pax Christi. It has been ruled by the Duvalier family since 1957.

Pax Christi is a Catholic peace group.

The "hopeful sign" in Haiti today is that the church is awakening, Bishop Gumbleton said. But because of government repression that hope is fragile "unless the people of Haiti, the church of Haiti, receive support from the outside."

Another asks how much influence the individual feels his or her faith has had on family, friends, employers and other elements of society.

It also asks Canadian Catholics to rate the changes in the church since the Second Vatican Council.

The survey would also be helpful for "future pastoral planning," Daigeler said.

Pax Christi: Haiti church persecuted, needs support

Bishops survey laity to prepare for synod

OTTAWA (NC) - Canada's bishops are preparing for a 1987 synod on the laity by asking Canadian Catholics about their lives as Christians.

The Canadian bishops' conference has distributed 4,600 questionnaires asking individuals for information on subjects ranging from their participation in parish organizations to the quality of their prayer life.

"The responses will help the bishops obtain a widely based sample of what people are currently feeling about their lives as Christians in society and the church," said Hans Daigeler, staff coordinator for the project.

He said the survey would also be helpful for "future pastoral planning."

Daigeler said that the bishops also hope that dioceses and other groups will use the questionnaire "as a springboard for other initiatives in their local areas."

The survey seeks answers from a cross-section of Catholics, based on age, sex and residence.

Some questions focus on individual faith life, others ask whether Catholics should be more involved in the church's institutional life.

One asks whether prayer, Mass attendance, books, involvement in Catholic organizations, or other factors counted most in developing the respondent's faith.

Another asks how much influence the individual feels his or her faith has had on family, friends, employers and other elements of society.

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The bishops also hope the survey will help them stand up to government repression, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit, president of Pax Christi USA, said this week.

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Priest: Divorced-remarried Catholics should seek help in Church's courts

WASHINGTON (NC) — The church's courts are the real answer for Catholics in irregular second marriages, said Father Donald Heintschel, a leading U.S. canon lawyer and associate general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Father Heintschel dismissed as "simply impossible" a suggestion, raised in Rome at the Nov. 24-Dec. 8 world Synod of Bishops, that the church should find some new pastoral way of readmitting divorced-remarried Catholics to the sacraments.

Archbishop Karl Berg of Salzburg, Austria, had suggested to the synod that the church take a "more merciful approach to the divorced and remarried," such as readmitting them to the sacraments after a "period of penance."

A similar question had been raised five years earlier, at the 1980 synod on marriage and family life, by Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, England. He asked if divorced-remarried Catholics must be "forever denied "full eucharistic communion with the church and its Lord." Similar questions were raised by several other bishops at that synod.

The problem with some kind of penitential reconciliation, that does not tackle the problem of the first marriage, Father Heintschel said, is that "the indissolubility of marriage is a church doctrine."

It is "the presumption of law" that the first marriage is "a valid union which remains binding "until the opposite is proven," he said. "It is where the ministry of the tribunal comes in."

He emphasized that just having a divorce or separation itself does not cut a person off from the sacraments. That is a mistake often made in the media and a source of confusion to many people, he said, citing news reports from the synod which failed to distinguish between divorced Catholics and divorced-remarried Catholics.

When a couple separates or gets a civil divorce, "they may receive the sacraments," he said.

Also, if a divorced person seeking to remarry obtains an annulment of the previous marriage first, "that person is still in full communion with the church."

But when a divorced person remarries outside the church, he said, "this is the case where the person is prohibited from receiving the sacraments... This is where the pastoral ministry of the courts comes in — they can help the person who desires to come back to the sacraments."

Rockville Centre has invited priests, members of religious orders and some pro-life leaders to join him Dec. 28 for a prayer service followed by "a walk for life" in front of an abortion clinic.

But the clinic's owner, abortion advocate William Baird, in a letter to the bishop termed the action "belligerent" and "divisive" and said the bishop's announcement was "inflammatory and offensive."

In his letter of invitation, Bishop McGann said the prayer service and walk will show "that a respect for all human life is a principle we cannot compromise."

Baird, who runs two clinics in New York and one in Boston, accused Bishop McGann of comparing "decency moral pro-choice Americans" to Herod the Great by choosing to stage the march on the feast of the Holy Innocents which commemorates the infants killed on Herod's orders by soldiers seeking to kill the baby Jesus.

Although he did not respond directly to Baird, the bishop said in a column Dec. 12 in the Long Island Catholic, diocesan newspaper, that "the choice of this feast is not meant to reflect on any religious group."

He also wrote that he wished "to make clear that in resisting the evil of abortion I no way condone any kind of violence."
Pro-lifers offer reward for capture of clinic bombers

NEWARK, N.J. (NC) — Five pro-life groups have offered a $5,000 reward for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of those responsible for the bombing of a New York City abortion clinic.

The New Jersey Right to Life Committee, the Connecticut Pro-Life Council, Families for Life and The Long Island Coalition for Life all shared in the reward.

A $5,000 reward was offered by the right-to-life community, he said.

The bomb exploded in a bathroom of the Manhattan Women's Medical Center the afternoon of Dec. 10. 

'Obviously pro-life organizations had no motive for such an insane action. We were the beneficiaries only of bad publicity...'

— Adolph Schimpf, New Jersey Right to Life

A man called 11 minutes before the explosion, then five minutes later, to warn people to get out. After the explosion, the man called a third time to ask if the bomb had gone off, according to authorities.

Adolph Schimpf, president of the New Jersey Right to Life Committee, said the pro-life groups' response to the bombing was a departure from the familiar Spencer Tracy or Bing Crosby priest characters that were "too good to be true and, hence, finally not good at all."

Some Catholics have been "so profoundly educated to believe in the perfection of priests as a necessary sign of the validity of their faith and their church that they blind their eyes to the real condition of priests and demand only the most edifying—that is, the most heroics—priests in the lively arts," Father Greeley wrote.

He praised the series for its portrayal of the humanity of priests, weaknesses and all, which he said was a departure from the familiar Spencer Tracy or Bing Crosby priest characters that were "too good to be true and, hence, finally not good at all."

'If you want priests who do not find women attractive, then you want either robots or asexual or homosexual priests,' he said. "If you want priests whose anger is not stirred—even to the point of being tempted to punch someone out—by the oppression of God's people...then you want angels in Roman collars and not men."

But Father Sherry told columnist Breig that the series "doesn't help build up the image of priests."

"It's difficult to capture what a priest is because what we do doesn't make good television," Father Sherry said. He criticized the program for giving "only a single dimension of the priesthood" by focusing only on the social ministry and not even touching on the sacramental ministry.

Father Sherry also objected to the show's sexist language, its portrayal of nuns and the way the priest treats women.

However, he was pleased to see "the priest refer to prayer so frequently and with such sincerity."

Father Sherry told Breig he had watched one of the early episodes with several other priests. "One of them said, 'Can you imagine anyone watching that show if they didn't have to?'

'His simple statements of faith in God and moral choice...are the best that mass entertainment media have done for religion in a long time.'

— Fr. Andrew Greeley

Robert Blake as Fr. Hardstep.

'Obviously pro-life organizations had no motive for such an insane action. We were the beneficiaries only of bad publicity."

— Adolph Schimpf, New Jersey Right to Life Committee

‘Of course we would not respond to this contrived hysteria by the abortion industry, but it is perhaps time for us to be as vocal and aggressive as they are,' he added.

Any responsible individual "must question if the New York City bombing was truly an act of violence or a publicity stunt," he said.

'Obviously pro-life organizations had no motive for such an insane action. We were the beneficiaries only of bad publicity after spokespersons for abortion and the abortion industry made inflammatory remarks that were intended to imply some involvement by the right-to-life community,' he said.

Schimpf said the bombing took place after the CBS-TV series "Cagney and Lacey" aired a "blatantly pro-abortion episode" Nov. 11 which depicted the bombing of an abortion clinic.

'Law enforcement agencies tell us often events like this trigger the unstable, and copycat crime is common.'

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'His simple statements of faith in God and moral choice...are the best that mass entertainment media have done for religion in a long time.'

— Fr. Andrew Greeley

'My children have suffered from some self-inflicted wounds,' including scripts that were "sometimes weak and sentimental" and TV程式化 saccharine characters.

"Silly, I find his simple statements of faith in God and moral choice to be utterly persuasive and the best that mass entertainment media have done for religion in a long time," Father Greeley said.

He praised the series for its portrayal of the humanity of priests, weaknesses and all, which he said was a departure from the familiar Spencer Tracy or Bing Crosby priest characters that were "too good to be true and, hence, finally not good at all."

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To Our Dear Pastor
Father
Ignacio
Morras

Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year

Get well soon, we miss you

—Your parishioners
at St. Kevin Parish
Doctor criticizes amoral sex ed

Right-to-life president says schools must teach 'sexual morality'

By Betsy Kennedy

Voice Staff Writer

Giving teenagers contraceptive information — without teaching them virtue along with it — is like handing them a shotgun, Dr. James C. Willke, president of the National Right to Life, said. In a recent interview, Willke weighed in on the debate over the teaching of contraceptives, saying that schools should be teaching teenagers about sexual morality, not just how to engage in the act of sex.

Willke pointed out that teenagers are engaging in sex at an alarming rate. According to Dr. Willke, the cities where Planned Parenthood has the most clients are those that have the highest abortion and unwed pregnancy rates. The figures show little indication of diminishing.

"What Planned Parenthood is doing is teaching a situational ethic — look, everybody is doing it, so we're going to show you how. They are giving the teenagers a subtle form of permission for pre-marital intercourse," Willke said.

The Willkes were the guest speakers at the annual celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe sponsored by the Respect Life Office of Miami and held at Annunciation Church in Hollywood on Dec. 14. Organizations like Planned Parenthood "scream" about the number of unmarried pregnant teenagers and step-up their efforts to saturate schools with sex education materials, but it does not result in fewer unwanted pregnancies, said Dr. Willke. Planned Parenthood claims there are 1,000,000 unmarried women a year who have babies but the figure is actually closer to 400,000, he said, because they do not consider the number of teenagers who get married after they are pregnant or who were married in the first place.

The Planned Parenthood approach to contraceptive teaching is "a colossal failure," pointed out Dr. Willke, because teenagers engage in sex when they are taught about the act of sex but not about the morality of it. They are taught about pleasure, passion and how to get a license to get pregnant, said Willke.

During the celebration, the Respect Life office honored community members whose contributions to the pro-life movement have exemplified a true sense of dedication to the sanctity of all human life.

Dr. Willke and his wife Barbara, who serves as chairman for the National Right to Life, have authored nine books on abortion and with his wife Barbara, he has authored nine books on abortion and will be giving a lecture on "Abortion Questions and Answers," Jan. 16, at 7 p.m., at the Miami-Dade Public Library.
Jewel of a gift
Broward Catholic donates $75,000 ring to Archdiocese

By Betty Kennedy
Voice Staff Writer

Two weeks before Christmas, the Archdiocese of Miami received a gift which shines with a message of love. Rosalie Heveran, 84, a staunch Catholic and until recently a member of St. John the Baptist Church in Ft. Lauderdale, wanted to do something to help deprived and orphaned children. So she gave the Archdiocese her six-carat diamond engagement ring worth $75,000. Described by her son, Bill, as a sincere and religious woman who never wants attention for her donations to charity, Heveran had planned on giving the ring to Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy in private, at the Pompano nursing home where she lives with her husband.

Instead, an embarrassed Heveran found herself surrounded by glaring television camera lights and several reporters, after someone tipped off the media.

"It was a simple offering... I don't want it exaggerated... I don't want this published," she told The Voice in a brief telephone interview several days later.

"She is a lovely woman and her action exemplifies the Christian spirit of giving... We are very grateful," the Archbishop said.

Proceeds from the sale of the ring will be donated to the Archdiocese Foundation for education, which helps subsidize teachers' salaries and provide tuition for poor students in Catholic schools.

Heveran said she will miss the ring because it was an anniversary gift from her husband to replace her original engagement ring, but added that she has no real need for it.

"Our life style is completely different now, so I wanted to give it to a worthy charity and the Archdiocese was the best place I knew of."

The Heverans have been together for 44 years, since they met and were married in Toronto, Canada. They lived in Golf and Skokie, Ill. and moved to Ft. Lauderdale many years ago.

Last year, William, 81, became ill with Alzheimer's disease and was moved to a Pompano nursing home. Heveran refused to be away from him. So she sold their Ft. Lauderdale home and joined him at the home. Their son Bill said Rosalie Heveran has always had a generous heart.

"In the struggling years before my father became successful there wasn't much to give. But whenever they had the means they made very private donations to religious organizations and charities which feed the hungry."

Rosalie, who was his father's second wife, also instilled in Bill a loyalty to the church.

"She is not a self-directed person," he said. "She did not want publicity about this gift. She just loves the church."

Cuban bishop, 92, celebrates 50th

A Cuban-born Bishop, now 92, is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the episcopacy.

Bishop Eduardo Dalmau, a member of the Congregation of Passionists, came to Miami in 1960 after being exiled by the Castro regime from his Diocese of Cienfuegos, to which he was appointed bishop in 1935.

Born in Havana on June 29, 1919, he studied for the priesthood at the International College of the Passionist Fathers in Monte Celo, Rome. He was ordained at the Church of St. Apollinare in Rome in 1945. For several years he taught theology in Rome until his appointment to the Diocese of Cienfuegos by the late Pope Pius XI.

One of the first members of the Cuban hierarchy to resist the Castro regime, he took refuge in South Florida as a guest of the late Archbishop Coleman F. Carroll, first Bishop of Miami and for five years was chaplain at the former novitiate of the Sister of St. Joseph in Jensen Beach. From 1965 to 1966 he served as chaplain at the Pennsylvania retirement hotel in West Palm Beach.
Who is that fat man? Could he be a man with a mission?

By Kenneth Guentert

"Harry, guess who is my favorite social-justice saint?" Charlie asked me one day. "Dorothy what's-her-name, the one with the raggedy sweaters," I said.

"No, no, I mean, officially canonized and everything," he said. "I give up — Santa Claus, for all I know." "You guessed," I said. "You're kidding. You don't mean the clown in the red suit who appears in the store ads shortly after Labor Day asking us to redistribute our funds to starving retail conglomerates?"

"Look, you don't need to be snide about this," Charlie said. "Ever hear of St. Nicholas?"

"Of course I have. I went to Catholic school, with you as I recall."

"So what do you know about him?"

That his feast day is December 6, that he was a bishop in Asia Minor, that he's good buddies with St. Christopher, who never existed either."

"Okay. So this butcher runs out of bacon. Three boys come into his store, he entices them around the corner with some penny candy and then chops them up and stores them in his salt barrel. And what does St. Nicholas do? He brings the boys back to life."

"I know, I know. It's a fairy tale."

"Well, so much for your social-justice theory."

"How so?"

"Besides, it's perfectly appropriate for Santa Claus to operate inside and outside of department stores."

"Why?"

"Because he's the patron saint of merchants."

"Well, so much for your social-justice theory."

"How so?"

"Well, he can't be patron saint of the oppressed and patron saint of merchants, too."

"Don't be ridiculous. Where is it written that being patron saint of merchants means helping those children when they grow up?"

"'The poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden. Et cetera.'"
The impact of a few people doing nothing, we dare to do something.” Who were the “we” doing something? A photograph and words announced it was the Guardian Angels, that group of volunteers seeking to end violence in cities and bring peace to neighborhoods.

• Doing something is the first step to renewing the face of the earth and making our world a better place in which to live.

• But doing something with others to bring about changes is a second essential. Seagramsr may never have shifted its approach had a number of letters like Dr. Luckena’s come to the corporate headquarters.

On both the east and the west coast during the past year, two physicians have discontinued flourishing abortion practices. Why? They ceased not because of any change in the surgical procedures, but because these men recognized the need of helping those who did not want to have babies. Their change brought them into a world of acceptance and respect. It is this kind of crisis. If crisis is used to indicate there is destruction then, of course, the Church is not in a crisis. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII corrected the difference between the sun and the calendar by dropping 10 days. But it was not until 1792 when the Gregorian Calendar, as we call it today, was adopted in the United States.

Bethlehem, ‘house of bread’

Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is today a town of 45,000 people. It is five miles north of Jerusalem. It’s name comes from the Hebrew words which mean “house of bread.”

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar moved the beginning of the year from March 1 to January 1. To realign the calendar with the seasons, Caesar ruled that the year we know as 46 B.C. would have 445 days. It is not true that this changed the calendar, but it did change the way we measure our time. The Church is a living Church. Because the world with a natural diversity, there is one world catechism that would state clearly those answers that all Catholics in the world are in the Southern Hemisphere, most in Africa and South America, said the Church is culturally and ethnically more diverse than ever before and faces the problem of being everywhere different, yet everywhere the same.

“The problem may rest in the general public’s reluctance to react in an intelligent, constructively critical and organized manner to objectionable presentations in the advertising, communication and entertainment fields.’

among other things, exist in approach. The professor first thought of cancelling their subscription in protest, but some of the dismay from his colleagues led him to another path. Luckena is a fine written letter to both the magazine and to the Seagrams’ Company outlining his objections to what he termed a socially irresponsible style of marketing and advertising. Neither the father nor the family expected any response.

It can also be truthfully said there has been in the history of the Church a succession of crises. This is not to belittle the present situation but to place it in proper historical context. It is important not to be overwhelmed by the idea the Church is in a time of tension — this is not unique to our own time. Newsweek noted that the late Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner said the cultural shift necessary in adaptation of the Church from European to world orientation was unprecedented since the first century. It will not be true but it will be not to the heart of the truth about the Church today.

The extraordinary synod that ended on the Fourth of July. The Immaculate Conception in Rome was the occasion for the Newsweek evaluation of the situation of the Church today. It was in its realiza-

What was most significant about that synod was not that diverse views were expressed, diversity is in the essence of the Church, nor was it in the very serious discussions about the way the collegial relationship of bishops all over the world, communication, there is likely to be a greater awareness of the diver-

Newsweek, pointing out that nearly half of the Catholics in the world are in the Southern Hemisphere, most in Africa and South America, said the Church is culturally and ethnically more diverse than ever before and faces the problem of being everywhere different, yet everywhere the same.

This is not something new for the Church, it has always been true. Mass celebrated in a small town in China and in a village in Mexico is the same Mass, but the setting and the way the people worship, one hands folded, the other arms outstretched, greatly differ. If the Church is to be, what the Church should be, to people everywhere, then forms of its teaching in the Church should be, and everywhere different. This is not something new for the Church, it has always been true. Mass celebrated in a small town in China and in a village in Mexico is the same Mass, but the setting and the way the people worship, one hands folded, the other arms outstretched, greatly differ. If the Church is to be, what the Church should be, to people everywhere, then forms of its teaching in the Church should be, and everywhere different.

But diversity must always exist in unity. There must be a core of truth that exists wherever the Church catechism that would state clearly those answers that all Catholics in the world are in the Southern Hemisphere, most in Africa and South America, said the Church is culturally and ethnically more diverse than ever before and faces the problem of being everywhere different, yet everywhere the same.

The Church is a living Church. Because the Church is a living Church, the developing ideas of the world examined their roles as ordinaries of the Church can best be realized, there was unity in diversity. As the Church should be, to people everywhere, then forms of its teaching in the Church should be, and everywhere different.

• But doing something with others to bring about changes is a second essential. Seagramsr may never have shifted its approach had a number of letters like Dr. Luckena’s come to the corporate headquarters.

• Do not do something with others to bring about changes is a second essential. Seagramsr may never have shifted its approach had a number of letters like Dr. Luckena’s come to the corporate headquarters.

The Gospels say that Jesus was born while Herod’s throne was empty. Herod according to the Roman calendar or about 4 B.C. Also the census mentioned by St. Luke as the reason why Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem was held in the Roman year 747 or 6 B.C. So that Jesus Christ was born correctly enough, between 4 to 7 B.C.

...
The sudden ending

Q. What do you do when you date someone for a long time and it ends abruptly with really no sign that this is going to happen? (Maine)

A. The first thing you can do, if you wish, is ask for an explanation. It is possible your friend has misunderstood something you have done and an explanation will bring this to light and perhaps clear the air. Such discussions, however, are easier to handle in each other's presence than by phone.

Ask for an explanation in a matter-of-fact way. Don't be demanding. Don't beg or demand yourself in any other way. Simply get across the point that you have valued the friend and would like to know why it is being ended.

You may get only a vague or flimsy explanation or none at all. It could be that your friend objects to something about your personality and knows that your friend objects to something else. It could be that your friend has tired of you or has found a new friend he or she considers more attractive now.

'The truth may be that your friend has tired of you or has found a new friend he or she considers more attractive now.'

that you cannot change without ceasing to be the real you.

Or the truth may be that your friend has tired of you or has found a new friend he or she considers more attractive now.

Such a truth is hard to take. It can hurt in a devastating way. At some point you may want to have one or several conversations, either in private or on another friend's shoulder. A good cry can be healthy and helpful.

But don't go on crying and don't try to ease the pain with marijuana, alcohol or other such drugs. Avoid self-pity and be human and express love or friendship in a tangible way.

Jesus instituted a church, a body of faithful followers who would honor and worship the Father, not as a mass of unrelated individuals, but as a people. Jesus said to Peter, "He who hears you, hears Me." Authority was given. He called us to community, "that all may be one." He knew that every society needs some structure. It is the way we become connected to one another and show we care for one another.

It's never been a mystery to me that Christmas is a time for gift giving. It is after all, the season to remember again that God touched us with His benevolence in a tangible way — by bringing love in the person of His Son Jesus to earth.

We imitate God's benevolence when we give a gift and express love or friendship in a tangible way. Jesus is the only true authority. Trying to find out the real reason your friend has ended the relationship will leave you with only more confusion and hurt.

We've often heard people say the gift they gave wasn't appreciated or that they expected one in return. When gifts are spoken of in terms of obligations, strings attached or gratitude, they really aren't gifts at all. The minute a condition accompanies an offering, it becomes a barter, a bribe or an obligation, not a gift. This kind of giving is only an exchange of a thing that does nothing to form a bond between two people.

In the concept of bonding lies the reason why we give gifts. Consider two people in love. When they exchange rings they have not simply decorated each other with twin circles. The rings signify the bond that exists between two individuals.

On Dec. 25, when the bustle is all calmed down for another year, and the gifts rest beautifully under the tree, I wonder how many will be just merchandise and not true gifts?

If they have been given to make someone feel better, happy, special, beautiful or enhanced in someway, they will be truly gifts, delivered out of the same motivation as the Lord's in giving us His Son. Then we can feel truly, through the centuries, giving has added to the store of goodness in the world.

Copy the Christopher News Notes, "Who is Jesus Christ?" send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 East 48th St., New York, NY 10017.

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Parents accused of child-abuse

Dear Mary: Three months ago our two daugh-
ters, ages 7 and 14, were taken from our school by
the child-protection agency saying they were
physically and sexually abused, which is not true.
We have at home three sons and one infant daugh-
ter. There has been no investigation, and we,
the parents, were not questioned.

We have gone everywhere and done everything
this agency said, for we want our girls home
again. Also our girls have repeatedly expressed the de-
sire to come home, saying their words were taken
out of context, but this agency will not release
them. We are going to family therapy and have been
told, "You have been found guilty and need help" or "You are insane." Our words have fallen on
dehearer ears. We have been to our lawyer and
he is behind us. Can you please help? — Texas

Your letter forcefully affirms a point we have of-
ten made, namely, that the whole complex
family system family work simply by referring people to
an agency. You seem to have been wrongly
wronged, and we believe the bureaucratic procedure.
You claim you have cooperated and have taken
every action you can think of. Your behavior does
not seem correct.

If your rights have been abused as you describe,
your need legal assistance. Hire a lawyer or seek
help from legal aid. Inform your lawyer of all you
have done in cooperating with the agency and of
the lack of investigation. You might fear that legal action will alienate the
agency which has charged your daughters. How-
ever, agencies exist to serve the public. A good
agency doing its job has no problem with scrutiny
from the courts or with review by citizens. They are
accustomed to public scrutiny.

Enlist the aid of relatives and friends. Ask your
parish priest to write a letter in your behalf or to
accompany you if you must present your case.
Find neighbors and friends who can vouch for your
character. Make a list of people who support you
to give to your lawyer.

Try to make contact with other parents who
have had their children taken away. Find out the
circumstances and actions they have taken.

Political action is another avenue. Contact your
city, county or state representatives. Follow up to
find out what action is taken by your representa-
tive's office.

If you belong to a minority group, contact your
minority-rights organization. They too can provide
you with support and suggestions or take action on
your behalf.

Finally, many newspapers have a consumer-as-
sistice department which helps readers with
problems in the purchase of merchandise or serv-
ces. Your problem is far more compelling. Per-
haps a letter to the newspaper would prompt the
paper to examine and publicize your case. An
even more effective action might be to have your
daughters write the newspaper and tell their story.
They are old enough to speak for themselves.

We have several avenues open. Choose those
you think will be most effective. It might be painful
to publicize your story. On the other hand, you
might save another family from a similar experi-
ence.

Our system holds that the accused is innocent
until proven guilty. In your case the presumption
seems to have been reversed. While difficult, the
actions you take might help not only your family,
but others who suffer abuses in our system.

Reader questions on family living and child care
to be answered in print are invited. Address ques-
tions fo Kenny, Box 872, St. Joseph’s College,
Rensselaer, Ind. 47978.

(NIC News Service)

Never enough Nativity sets

I have never been a collector. Little figurines
such as some people collect do not interest me. I
don't care about signatures of artists.

What I love is the diversity of cultures these sets
represent. I have one from Germany with Mary
and Joseph in lederhosen. And one from Santa Fe in
New Mexico, I bought a scene with a mariachi band
playing at the fiesta of Jesus' birth. From Alaska, I
have Eskimo parents and infant, with huskies as
animals.

What fascinates me is that peoples all over the
world have taken the Nativity scene and applied it
to their culture. Some are crudely fashioned,
definitely not pictures of art, that's fine with me.
I don't hide my Nativity sets away and bring
them out at Christmas, either. I rotate them and
keep one or two sets out to enjoy throughout the
year. They give me pleasure and I don't apologize
for being out of season because I like to remember
the joy of the Nativity during the year.

Collecting creches, however, creates problems.
When I collect turtles, one buys a piece but a
piece

Curran to speak at family life conference

Encounter movement, will present the same topic in Spanish, which focus
on different areas of family life such as: "Strengths in the Single-Parent
Family," "Creative Ways to Grow in Marriage," "Drug and Alcohol Abuse in
the Family: What Can We Do," and "Teens and Sexuality.

What an exciting way to begin our efforts to grow in closeness and under-
standing within our families! We look forward to seeing you there.

Registration Fee: $15 per person — lunch included

Conference will be held at St. Thomas University, 16400 NW 32 Avenue,
Miami, from 9-5 p.m.

FAMILY: A PLACE TO LEARN, TO LOVE AND TO GROW
January 11, 1986
Mail this form with the registration fee payable to:
Family Enrichment Center, 19378 NW 12 Avenue, Miami FL 33169
Registration Fee: $15 per person — lunch included
Name __________________________
City __________________________ ZIp __________ Phone ____________________
All but Christ’s love shall pass

BACKGROUND:
Kings and monarchies are not the best images to use today to convey the thoughts they would have represented in Jesus’ time. At least in Europe today, kings symbolize national unity and identity, they stand for the supremacy of constitutional law and of democratic processes over individual personal wishes, and they call for a patriotism and national interest that are above politics. In literature, they project a different image: an appearance often of greed, tyranny and immorality. Neither is anything like the ancient Jews’ view of good kings.

Good kings were protectors, models, and fathers for the people. And, they were God’s genuine servants. David’s life had its ugly moments, but, ultimately, Jewish history judged him to be great.

The second reading this weekend is from Hebrews. Hebrews frequently appears in the Liturgies of the Word (unlike Micah). Its focus is Jesus, the lamb of God, the glorified priest and victim. St. Luke’s gospel presents John the Baptist once more in this Advent’s Liturgy of the Word. In the passage today calling Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, when both were pregnant, it is clear that Mary’s child would bring the world’s salvation.

REFLECTION:
- The Baptist is mentioned several times in the Four Gospels, and very often he painstakingly reminds his own followers that a leader far greater than he is about to come. Of course, that leader would be Jesus.
- In this Sunday’s gospel reading, the focus once again is upon Jesus — with John the Baptist as his subordinate and harbinger.
- That focus occurs also in the second reading, and in Micah which supplies the first reading and reinforces the supreme role handled. The financial difficulty of another loan is no occasion for a lender to exploit the situation. There is a deeper message. It is of detachment. Ultimately it calls us to the spirit and its needs. Material things pass away. They cannot in themselves bring peace and happiness, now or in the future.
- John the Baptist would not allow himself to stand in the Lord’s way. Do we allow other interests or preferences to block our way to God — or his way to us?

‘Do we allow other interests or preferences to block our way to God — or his way to us?’

Did Jesus really born on Dec. 25th?

By John Dietzen

Story: It says that Jesus was probably born in late September or early October and not on Dec. 25. I always assumed that we celebrate Christmas because that is His birthday. According to this article, it is actually a pagan holiday, I would really like to know. (Massachusetts)

Q. I just finished reading the November copy of a magazine with an article titled ‘Jesus’ Birth: The Untold

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Sr. Gott leaves separated and divorced ministry

By Betsy Kennedy
Voice Staff Writer

The fragile beauty of brick-a-brac and paintings which symbolize a remarkable ministry are being tucked away in boxes. The group's office, a quiet haven, will also be put away, but only for safekeeping.

Sister Agnes Bernadette Gott, O.P., Di- rector of the Ministry to Separated and Divorced Catholics for the Archdiocese of Miami is leaving. On Jan. 1, she will assume the position of Director of Parish Ministry for her order, the Dominican Sisters of Media, Pa.

A Mass of Thanksgiving and farewell reception was held for Sr. Gott at St. Maurice Church in Ft. Lauderdale on Dec. 16. Bishop Agostin Roman was the main celebrant, and Fr. Jim Young served as homilist. Dozens of Sr. Gott's friends as well-wishers attended.

Sr. Gott, who is a native of New Castle, Delaware, graduated from St. Peter's High School and earned her B.A. from the College of St. Rose, Albany, N.Y., and her M.A. from Manhattanville College, N.Y. When she came to the Family Enrich- ment Center at the Archdiocese seven years ago, the church was just beginning to adopt a more pastoral approach to sepa- rated and divorced Catholics. Through her efforts, the ministry became shaped into what Fr. Jim Young, founder of the North American Conference for the Sepa- rated and Divorced, calls, "one of the best programs of its kind in the country."

Normally a shy person who avoids the limelight, Sr. Gott willingly took on assertive leadership task when she thought it would benefit those she served.

"She was an inspiration to all of us. She was the sparkplug that kept all of the sepa- rated and divorced groups at the parishes running smoothly. They tend to change and disband, but she kept them unified and knew how to develop membership," said Mike Moloney, a coordinator for the separated and divorced Catholics support group at St. Louis Church in South Miami.

After Sr. Gott's departure, Sr. Virginia McCall, of the Sisters of Presentation of South Dakota will assume the position of Director of the Ministry to the Separated and Divorced.

Anyone who wishes to keep in contact Sr. Gott may write to her c/o T. Dominican Sisters, 2850 North Pro- virad Road, Media, Pa., 19060.

Scripture brunches offer inspiration in Dade, Broward

Good News! Catholic women of the Archdiocese of Miami are ministering to one another at monthly scripture brunches. Both the Dade County Women of Light Brunch, held on the second Saturday of the month, and the Broward brunch, held on the third Saturday, continue to attract women hungry for deeper knowledge of the Word. The format of each brunch consists of song and scripture instruction, as well as an inspirational talk from someone witnessing to how the Lord is working in her life. Women from dif- ferent parishes join together in fellowship and support — realizing that Christ reaches us very powerfully through the witness of others.

An exciting dimension of the brunches is the increasing spirit of outreach to women alienated from the Church. Dade organizer Kitty Janelle has also been impressed by this spirit of reaching out to others. Kitty says: "One of the areas that excites me is seeing mother and daughter relationships growing closer as they experience Jesus in the Word and wit- nesses. The young women, sometimes sepa- rated from the Church for various reasons, find their way back into a renewed Church due to the changes of Vatican II."

The Dade County Women of Light Brunch will celebrate its third anniversary on January 11th from 9:30-1:30 a.m. at the Sheraton River House, 900 N.W. 21st Street, Miami. Call Kitty Janelle at 887-8455 for information. The Broward brunch will celebrate its third anniversary on January 13th, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (including the closing liturgy) at the church, 5500 SW 202 Ave., in Miami. Call for reservations.

Training set for ministers to elderly

Anyone interested in ministering to the elderly is encouraged to register for a 10-week training course which will begin on January 13, 1986.

Classes will take place on consecutive Monday evenings between 7 and 10 p.m. at the St. Joaquin and Anne Center for the Elderly, 18340 NW 12 Avenue, Miami.

The training is an intensive two week course for anyone interested in ministry to the elderly. Those who have completed the course will be able to become a registered minister to the elderly.

For more information, call the center at 453-2021 or contact the Office of Liturgy, 525-5157 in Broward.

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Our 39th Year

CLOSED MONDAY
Christina’s story
By Stan Konieczny
NC News Service

Joseph quietly slid out of the makeshift bed he had arranged in a corner of the stable. He did not want to wake his wife, Mary, who had given birth to her first child just a few hours earlier. Brushing straw from his robe and rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Joseph was ready to begin his usual morning prayers. But today the schedule was altered.

Today was special because, before he prayed, Joseph wanted to check on Jesus, the new addition to his family.

The sturdy carpenter crouched beside the manger-turned-crib and with childlike wonder marveled at how the blankets barely moved with the soft breath of this tiny, newborn miracle. The workman’s hand gently caressed the back of the infant as he said, “Welcome, my little fellow. I hardly had a minute to myself with you last night. Things were pretty hectic.”

“You’re safe and warm and dry here,” Joseph whispered. “But this isn’t what I wanted for you. I tried so hard and you end up in this stable! Your mother and I have waited for you for so long. It seemed like an eternity but actually those weeks and months flew by as we tried to prepare everything for you back home.

“All that work helped me through the most difficult days of my life. See, I couldn’t understand when Mary first told me about you. I still don’t understand, but that doesn’t mean that I have ever doubted my love for you or your mother,” he said with grim finality.

“It was bad enough to change plans and prepare for an unexpected trip but I also had to cope with a thousand questions. Did I really need to buy extra provisions? If I did, how would we provide for you? Could Mary handle such a strenuous trip? Who would help her once we arrived in Bethlehem?”

“We made it all right. We shared each other’s strength. Your mom is a remarkable woman. You’ll see. We came into Bethlehem late yesterday afternoon and every room was already taken.

“When I knocked at the last innkeeper’s door, my knuckles were white. In that tense moment, I whispered a prayer for the three of us. I was so nervous that my voice cracked and the sweat streamed down my neck.”

“But there was no need to worry. The roly-poly innkeeper seemed like a jovial guy, although he acted like he had a little too much wine last night. Anyway, he brought us out to this stable.

“You were in such a hurry to join us that I ended up rushing all over the place, sweeping the floor and piling straw to make some sort of a bed for Mary. I was out breath and my pulse pounded at my temples. But then all the rushing stopped and I held you in my arms for the first time,” Joseph said.

“Sleep on, little one,” the carpenter told the baby, adding as he stood up, “I guess you will want to hear that story time and again as you grow up. I know I will never forget it.”

Savor the season

By NC News Service

Before Christmas “we dash about hurriedly writing cards, attending parties, shopping, cooking, supporting worthy causes, seldom if ever stopping for a moment of reflection and peace.

“Then on Christmas Day we abruptly end it all. We wash the dishes, throw away the ribbons and the wrapping, stack the toys and sigh, ‘Thank God, it’s over.’”

Does this scenario sound familiar? Bishop Joseph Maguire spoke of it in a pastoral letter to the people of the Diocese of Springfield, Mass. Christmas is a moment to “savor,” he said.

Earlier generations seemed to know “a more leisurely way of doing things,” partly by concentrating festive celebrations during the 12 days of Christmas, Bishop Maguire wrote. Could modern celebration be extended into the days after Christmas?

Consider holding an open house tied to the feast of St. John on Dec. 27, traditionally a day of hospitality, he suggested. In parishes, an open house for young people home from college can remind them “are
Appalachian Christmas

A time for sharing despite hardships

By Cindy Liebhart
NC News Service

Rodney Frey remembers one special Christmas six or seven years ago.

Some weeks before Christmas, a man Frey knew was injured in a logging accident in the hills of southern Kentucky. The man, a husband and father of eight children, was unable to work because of his injuries and the family was "in a pretty tight situation," Frey said.

He and his brother, who lived nearby, knew of the family's hardships. They decided to bring a couple of large hams to the family on Christmas morning.

It wasn't an extraordinary or heroic gesture to Frey. It was just what a person did to help a neighbor in need.

The family, in turn, invited the two brothers in to share their Christmas meal. With the hams, there were sweet potatoes and cornbread, canned vegetables from the root cellar — a simple but festive meal.

For Frey, the family's hospitality transformed what might have been a bleak Christmas into a celebration filled with warmth and meaning.

"My brother and I didn't have any family then," Frey recalls. "We supplied the meat for the table, but they supplied us with the family that Christmas."

"You can get a ham at a grocery store but you can't get a family there," he reflects.

Now 34, Frey grew up in a "very poor but happy family" just outside Somerset, Ky., a town nestled in the western foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Frey, who is raising his 3-year-old daughter as a single parent, has been disabled since 1980 by a disease of the central nervous system. He volunteers much of his time to help out at St. Mildred's Outreach Center — stacking groceries for the food pantry, sorting clothes at the clothing center, fixing electrical appliances people bring in, delivering loads of coal to nearby families, or just visiting with someone who needs a friend.

He remembers that while presents and pretty decorations were uncommon in his home, Christmas was still a colorful time as the entire family would come together — parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

They would talk and eat and talk some more.

Later the adults would sit out on the big porch surrounding Frey's parents' house. Heavy snows don't usually cover the hills until January, and the mild December air made it quite comfortable to be outside.

"People would bring guitars and banjos and my father played the violin," Frey said. "They would play music out on the porch into the night."

The children would listen for awhile. They would then play hide-and-seek or tag, build large bonfires or stay outdoors until midnight.

People anticipated the Christmas celebration with great excitement because this was often the only time the entire family was able to get together.

For most of the people whose tin-roofed houses dot the hills and hollows outside Somerset, home and family are still what make Christmas special.

"Christmas is everyone in the family coming home to eat, to talk, to laugh, to take care of the babies," — Sr. Marty Conrad

"You can get a ham at a grocery store but you can't get a family there."

Rodney Frey

still a vital part of the parish..."

Children's parties for the feast of the Three Kings extend the feast of Christmas, as do liturgical celebrations like Christmas Vespers and caroling, the bishop said.

"The 12 days of Christmas revolved around family gatherings," he explained. "There are values and blessings in this that we should reclaim and never lose."

And Christmas is "a serious matter," he stressed. "Unless we take it seriously, we will find no real joy" and "will not really celebrate what the feast is all about." He observed:

• Christmas is about sharing and forgiving and reconciling and being one as a human family.
• Christmas is about us: about our yearning for peace; about the lowly and the forgotten, the castaways, the homeless, the imprisoned, the rejected and abused.

Christmas Maze

The Three Wise Men have a long journey to make to find the Baby Jesus. They know they should follow a star in the East but they are having difficulty. Can you help them find their way?
By Father Eugene Hemrick
NC News Service

Without a doubt, anyone who has been married for a time has raised the question: "Is it worth it?"

During a particularly bad week in which every couple I ran into was quarreling, I had a feeling that all married people must live some of their lives very unhappily. In a half-joking manner I blurted out to a woman that all the lovey-dovey propaganda about the bliss of married life was "hogwash!"

No sooner had the words left my mouth than she replied with a gleam in her eye, "Oh, no, it isn't! There are golden moments that make it all worthwhile!"

She reminded me how precious is the experience of a special moment in life, short as it may be. How true her words are! Those moments may not come in the same manner for everyone but one thing they have in common is the feeling of wanting to hold onto them forever. Their memory is the hope and glue that holds together so much and keeps so many going.

Often the golden moment is found in an embrace which says, "You are everything to me." A reunion with a beloved can so stir the heart that it heaves with a sigh that can only be called heavenly.

Music and the arts can rouse the very spirit in us and create an instance in which we feel ourselves literally lifted out of self.

Mother Nature is no slouch in creating golden moments, be they her dazzling colors on a clear, crisp fall day or fir trees blanketed in snow under a blue sky.

Golden moments have an irony about them. They sometimes develop when they are least expected. They might be found in letting go of something or someone we felt bound to. In a moment of total release, a sudden peace so desperately sought can be found in the most unlikely place.

Nor is it unheard of that what seemed at the moment to be the blackest day of one's life turned out to be a cross that became a necessary step for moving toward new life.

Then there is the golden moment of moments when the presence of God is felt so strongly that it leads to total contemplation. As beautiful as the world and those closest to us may be, all melts into insignificance at such a moment. The eyes of the spirit supplant our human eyes and life is seen in the most beautiful relationship it can produce — when Creator and the created embrace.

It is my New Year's wish that no matter what manner the Christ Child chooses to touch you, you be blessed with a precious moment, one that has the life expectancy of gold.

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. (NC) — Christian Brother Joseph Kernan doesn't have to worry about old age catching up with him — he's running too far ahead of it.

At age 55, Br. Kernan says he feels more physically fit than he did 20 years ago. As director of fitness at Iona College in New Rochelle, and member of the New York Masters Sports Club, which holds track events for runners age 40 and up, he spends most of his day doing physical activity.

He used to be one of the oldest runners in the age 50-54 category, but now he is one of the youngest in the 55-59 group.

"Many Masters look forward to getting old ... other people dread it," he says.

In his 14 years of Masters competition, Br. Kernan has nearly covered two jackets with patches proclaiming his achievements, and set club records for ages 50-54 in the outdoor mile, the indoor 1,000-yard run and the indoor quarter mile. He didn't run his first competitive race until he was 40 years old.

"It's gratifying to know that I am in better shape at 55 than I was at 35," he said. Br. Kernan has weighed as much as 218 pounds, which he considers heavy for his six-foot frame. His competitive weight is 185.

He joined the Christian Brothers in 1943. After teaching religion, math and social studies at the grammar and high school levels, he volunteered 17 years ago to instruct physical education at Rice High school in New York City. He has been involved with physical education ever since.

He came to Iona in 1976 as director of physical fitness. For the past four years he has supervised about 150 students, faculty and alumni who use the fitness center. He instructs them on proper use of the equipment, which includes exercise bicycles, and Nautilus and rowing machines.

"This job gives me the opportunity to encourage people to care for their health, which is important to their happiness," he said.

Br. Kernan is happy competing and keeping fit. After recently spending six months in Rome, he said he considered himself out of shape and was looking forward to preparing for the next outdoor season, joining his new age group and competing in his favorite events, the 800- and 1,500-meter races.

Love paints our world golden