Joy to the World!

'The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God is with us."

Matt. 1:23-24

Leandro Andres Fernandez, 4, and Nataly Veronica Rendon, 5, enjoy the beauty of a ceramic Nativity scene. (Voice photo/Pread Browning)

Pope pleads for brotherhood

VATICAN CITY (NO) — Pope John Paul II’s 1987 World Peace Day message is more than a plea to world leaders to resolve the main threats to world peace.

It is also an urgent call for individuals and nations to see that lasting peace cannot be achieved unless “we truly grasp that we are brothers and sisters in a common humanity.”

The pope defines this as problem-solving from the perspective of human solidarity.

Unless problems are examined from this viewpoint, chances of lasting solutions are limited, the pope warns.

“What unites us is so much more than what separates and divides us: It is our common humanity," he says.

“To look into the eyes of another person and to see the hopes and anxieties of a brother or sister is to discover the meaning of solidarity,” the pope says.

Applied to governments this means that policies must be based on “the radical equality of all men and women.” States should foster “policies and programs that build open and honest relationships among peoples, that forge just alliances, that unite people in honorable cooperation.”

In international relationships it means nations must deal with each other “as equal partners.”

“Seeking economic, military or political superiority at the expense of the rights of other nations places in jeopardy any prospects for true development or true peace,” the message says.

My beloved:

On this sacred feast of Our Lord’s birth, I offer the reverend clergy, religious and faithful of our Archdiocese my warmest greetings and blessings of this Holy Season.

As you kneel before the crib, like the Three Kings you bring your gifts to the newborn Saviour. You bring your gifts of love and faithfulness to the way, the truth and the life that He was born and died to proclaim and to give to us. Your gifts are more precious than those of the Wise Men. My prayer is that, by God’s grace and Mary’s intercession, you will ever be faithful.

In a special way during this Jubilee Year, as we prepare for the visit of the Holy Father, I ask a New Year’s resolution of each of you—to become peacemakers. First of all, be at peace with God, help others to be at peace with God.

Be promoters of peace among families, relatives and in our community. The song in our hearts at this Holy Season and throughout the year must be “Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom His favor rests.”

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Edward A. McCarthy
Archbishop of Miami
FCC: Who started false rumor of atheist petition?

WASHINGTON (NC) — The Federal Communications Commission started tracking the source of an 11-year-old petition which falsely states that atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair has asked for a ban on religious broadcasting.

Sharon Jenkins, an FCC consumer information specialist, said Dec. 12 the commission has been keeping track of the origins of phone calls it receives about the bogus petition, which has plagued the FCC since 1975.

The FCC hopes to find the source of and put an end to the petition, which it estimates the American public has “wasted about $1.5 million,” Jenkins said.

Since the petitions started arriving at the FCC the agency has received “16 million letters” and about an equal number of calls to protest the bogeyman associated with O’Hair, who fought successfully to end prayer in public schools in 1963.

Currently, the FCC gets 50 to 60 calls a day to oppose the non-existent O’Hair petition, Jenkins said. She added that the effort is completely worthless since the FCC could not approve a call for such a ban even if it were sought because of guarantees of freedom of speech.

Monitoring FCC telephone calls has proven inconclusive so far, added Jenkins, who said that calls have come in “from California to Maine.” The only pattern in the calls is that they increase around major religious holidays like Christmas and Easter, she said.

“Don’t know who,” she said. Jenkins said she too was “ mystified” by the wildness of the petition drive “how or why it continues”, said Jenkins, O’Hair

High Court: Pro-life group can’t be denied freedom of speech

WASHINGTON (NC) — The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that subjecting a massachusetts pro-life group to federal laws restricting corporate political activity violates the First Amendment. In its 5-4 decision, the high court ruled that applying the restrictions on the pro-life group, Massachusetts Citizens for Life, is unconstitutional because it “fringes protected speech without a compelling justification.” The court majority noted the narrowness of the decision and said that the number of time organizations affected “by our holding today will be small. That prospect, however, does not diminish the significance of our holding: the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech plays a fundamental role in a democracy.”

Catholics no longer preach ‘Gospel of hatred’ for Jews, rabbi says

CHARLESTON, S.C. (NC) — Old Catholic-Jewish hatreds have given way to a revolution of mutual esteem, said Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, director of interfaith relations for the American Jewish Committee. “The Gospel of hatred for Jews” for Jews is no more, he said. “This is why the rabbi told a

U.S. dioceses should put economy pastoral into practice, bishop says

NEW YORK (NC) — Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, chairman of the follow-up committee for the U.S. bishops’ new pastoral letter on the economy, said that dioceses should apply the pastoral’s principles of economic justice to their own structures. But he also said dioceses should not wait for that to be completed before doing anything else. Implementing the pastoral within the church itself, he said, will be important for “our credibility — with the wider public.”

Judge upholds pro-lifers’ right to picket doctor’s home

CHICAGO (NC) — Pro-life pickets cannot be banned from in front of the home of a doctor who performs abortions, a federal appeals court ruled in a case brought by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled that picketing in public places, including residential streets, is constitutionally protected and “the inevitable consequence of living in a free and restive democracy.” The case began in May 1985 when the town of Brookfield, Wis., a suburb of Milwaukee, issued an ordinance prohibiting picketing on public property “before or about the residence or dwelling of any individual.”

L.A. bishop bans AIDS education group from Church facilities

LOS ANGELES (NC) — Archbishop Roger Mahony of Los Angeles withdrew permission granted to an AIDS education program to use church facilities because the AIDS program promotes use of condoms. AIDS Project Los Angeles, a counseling, lobbying and assistance service for AIDS victims, has had its permit to conduct an education program aimed at Hispanics. The workshops were to include information on the use of condoms as a means of preventing the spread of the disease. When this became known, the archbishop withdrew permission for use of church properties for the sites at the program. A statement issued by Archbishop Mahony said Catholic doctrine prohibits the use of contraceptives and forbids sexual activity outside of marriage.

Catholic editors: Abp. Hunthausen was top newsmaker in ’86

WASHINGTON (NC) — Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle took clear first place as both religious personality and news event of 1986 in the annual National Catholic News Service poll of Catholic editors. It was the first year since Pope John Paul II’s election as pope in 1978 that the pontiff was not voted the leading religious news maker. He finished third. Forty-four U.S. and Canadian editors answered the poll. Archbishop Hunthausen has been in the national news since early September when he revealed that under Vatican instructions he was ceding full authority over certain archdiocesan affairs to his auxiliary, Bishop Donald Wuerl. A clear second in editors’ votes, both as news personality and news story of 1986, was moral theologian Father Charles E. Curran and the controversy over the Vatican decision that he can no longer teach as a Catholic theologian.

Chief Justice says good Christians should be ‘slow to sue’

WASHINGTON (NC) — A good Christian, “just as he is slow to anger, should be slow to sue,” Chief Justice William Rehnquist said Dec. 12.

Cardinal-Staff Writer

Betsy Prentice Browning—

Robert L. O’Steen

Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy
President, The Voice Publishing Co., Inc.

Prayer Petitions

"Call to me and I will answer you" Jer. 33:13. The employees of the Archdiocese of Miami Pastoral Center gather each Monday morning for the intention of you, our brothers and sister of the Archdiocese. Petitions will be included in our individual daily prayers each week as well as during this special time of community prayer. We invite anyone with a prayer request to write (no phone calls, to us at this address: Parish Petition, Archdiocese of Miami, 9401 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33138.

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"denies initiating it," she added.

The petition was received by the agency Dec. 6, 1974, the number given to a real petition filed with the FCC in 1974. That petition, which O’Hair had nothing to do with, sought to freeze applications of religious groups seeking to operate television and radio stations for educational purposes. The FCC denied the petition in 1975, but shortly thereafter the bogus petitions began to flood the agency.

Stuffed animal Mass

At St. John Evangelist Church in Rochester, NY, Father Matthew Kawiak is surrounded by children as he celebrates a stuffed animal Mass. Each of the children brought a stuffed animal to the Mass to be given later to an underprivileged child for Christmas. (NC photo)
Two Haitian boys sit through powdered milk at a Catholic Relief Services warehouse.

We also were told of those who exploited the Haitian people by charging them $2,000 American dollars to smuggle them into the United States. The refugees get this money by selling all they have, borrowing, and with help from Haitians already in the United States. The Bishops are concerned about the Mormons and other denominations that are proselytizing vigorously in Haiti. We heard a report from the Haitian Bishops on how they had used financial help from American Catholics. With Catholic Relief Services assistance and help from other sources, they have undertaken a massive project to teach the people to read, write and thus become active citizens. The simple textbook they have designed has been also adopted for use by the government. According to evaluations, the program is proceeding on schedule and with higher enrollment and enthusiasm than expected. The Bishops also reported how they had worked in Haiti with about 230 seminarians, and how they have been working with a Cuban Catholic radio station that reaches 60% of the population and is highly listened to. The Haitian Catholics are as yet unable to read.

We detected a new spirit in Haiti since our arrival last month. There seems to be a fresh sense of dignity, expectation, freedom to speak out, to protest. There is uncertainty about political developments. There is suspicion, there is in the air suspicion of the United States government. There are graffiti saying CNG (the government) and Americans = 1915 (the time when the United States Marines occupied Haiti). There is talk about the American government and suspect their effort to tell the United States government to implement it. This is said to be a plot to destroy the little farmers in Haiti and make it possible for large land owners to buy the property to grow rice. They are fighting the Haitians' disapproval of American food aid and refuse to accept it. They see this as creating dependence on the United States and undercutting Haitian farmers—a way the United States politicians please the Haitian government by demonstrating American surplus. They resent the smuggling of rice shipments from Miami to Haiti and undercutting the Haitian rice growers and putting them out of business. They resent any change in the policy. Some say, "Let the United States destroy all the pigs of Haiti because they were supposed to have been infected. They feel the step was necessary. It destroyed small farmers. They say that American-subsidized pigs were sold at a price the farmers could not afford, and the breed required expensive food and care.

Indeed, it was an interesting trip. I was inspired by the unity of the Bishops' approach to creating an exciting new nation, their building their hopes on the Lord and unity with His Church.

Devotedly ours in Christ,

Edward A. McCarthy
Archbishop of Miami

Cathedral sets Christmas Masses

Archbishop McCarthy will be the principal celebrant of Pontifical Christmas Mass at midnight on Christmas Eve at St. Mary Cathedral, 7325 NW 2nd Av. A special program of traditional carols and excerpts from Handel's "Messiah" will be presented in the Cathedral Choir and features soloists accompanied by a brass ensemble and organ. Mass will be celebrated in French at 8 p.m. on Dec. 24. On Christmas Day Mass will be celebrated in French at 7:30 a.m. and at 9:30 a.m. A Mass at 9:30 a.m. will feature the children's choir and the 11 a.m. Mass will feature the choir from St. Anthony. The Archbishop McCarthy. Music will be provided by the Cathedral Choir accompanied by brass ensemble.

Mass will be celebrated in Spanish at 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 25 and provided by the Cathedral Hispanic choir.

Churches in the 105 parishes of the Archdiocese will have Masses at midnight on Dec. 24, including the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity, next to Mercy Hospital in Miami.
Government OKs first Hungarian religious order in 35 years

VATICAN CITY (NC) — The Hungarian government has given permission for the formation of the country's first new religious order in more than 35 years, according to Vatican officials. But at least one knowledgeable Vatican observer says government in the new congregation may make it unattractive to many potential members. The order, called the Sisters of Our Lady of Hungary, is to be based in the Archdiocese of Esztergom. Its members will work with the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, as well as participate in some spiritual formation programs.

Reaction by Vatican officials — all of whom declined to be further identified — has been mixed. "It's a step forward," said one, because Hungarian officials "recognize the need for Christian charitable institutions." He estimated that the new congregation would begin with about six to eight members.

Another official familiar with the issue said the new congregation is intended at least in part to attract members of religious orders long banned by the Hungarian government.

However, because of extensive government involvement in the formation and supervision of the new congregation, he added, many Religious may be unwilling to participate in it.

The freedom of religious orders in Hungary has been a source of church-state tension since 1950, when the government suppressed all orders. An estimated 10,000 Religious were interred at the time.

The government exempted four orders — the Benedictines, Franciscans, the Order of the Pious Schoolmasters, and the School Sisters of St. Margaret — from total suppression, however. These orders were allowed to staff two schools each. They have not been allowed to expand their educational activities or move into other religious activities during the intervening 35 years.

Cardinal: Pope's visit to Chile will boost human rights there

VATICAN CITY (NC) — Pope John Paul II's April visit to Chile will be of "major importance" in the fight for human rights and for a return to democracy, said Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, 73-year-old bishop is director of the Catholic Church in Chile, said most Chileans want a return to democracy after 13 years of military rule. "The visit of the pope will have a major importance, not only for human rights but also for the return to democracy, which is the overwhelming majority of the Chilean people want," Cardinal Silva, told Vatican Radio.

China, Vatican slow in resolving differences, cardinal says

ROME (NC) — Progress has been slow in resolving differences between the Catholic Church and Chinese officials over religious relations, the Vatican's top diplomat said. Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli added that the Vatican sees the China problem as "simple and complex." "Simple because it is enough that they accept the common hierarchy — and then not too many other things are needed. The real problem is communion with Rome," he said. But Chinese authorities, who sponsor the National Association of Catholic Bishops, which rejects ties with Rome, are apparently not about to change their position, the cardinal said. "I think that in this case, it's better for more than we who are going slowly," he said.

Pope: Protecting children must be one of humanity's top priorities

UNITED NATIONS (NC) — Humanity must "protect and promote the well-being of children everywhere," Pope John Paul II said in a message marking the 40th anniversary of UNICEF. "Today, in addition to war, poverty, and famine, children are being subjected to new forms of suffering as a result of moral and cultural crises," the pope said. The message, addressed to UNICEF Director James Grant and released at the United Nations, added that "religious faith confirms the special claim that children have on our love and care."

Asians, Africans encouraged to take up liberation theology

MEXICO CITY (NC) — A conference of Third World theologians has called for greater participation by Africans and Asians in defining liberation theology. Participants said that the adaptation of the Gospel to concrete social situations is not exclusively Latin American. They said it is adaptable to other world regions and cultures. Conference participants also promoted an increased role for women in the Catholic Church and noted the presence of more women than at previous meetings.

Bishops protest arrest of Catholic editor in South Africa

PRETORIA, South Africa (NC) — The southern African bishops have issued a protest and warning after the black editor of their newspaper The New Nation was detained in a pre-Christmas crackdown by police. The detention of editor Zwelakhe Sisulu means that "one more prominent person is added to the 20,000 and more already in detention" since South Africa declared a state of emergency in June, the bishops said. Sisulu and an unspecified number of government opponents were arrested in an early-morning raid in Johannesburg.

Artificial insemination, pre-natal diagnosis criticized by cardinal

PARIS (NC) — Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris, in a letter to medical personnel, warned against some artificial insemination procedures, attacked the "banalization" of abortion and called pre-natal diagnosis potentially dangerous to fetuses. The letter was issued about two months after a baby girl was born as the result of in vitro fertilization at a hospital attached to the Catholic University of Lille. The procedure involves the fertilization of an egg in a laboratory dish, after which it is implanted in the mother's womb for normal gestation.

Latin American bishops giving more aid to needy children

UNITED NATIONS (NC) — A report of the U.N. children's fund shows the Latin American church increasing its aid to the region's poorest children. The report by UNICEF said the Latin American bishops' conference resolved in a November meeting to support a program for child survival and development "as a special mission of the church." It said that UNICEF's experience is being tapped by church programs in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela. Bishops from Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Haiti and Paraguay have expressed interest in launching similar programs, the report said.

Bishop accuses Britain of 'blocking justice' in South Africa

GLASGOW, Scotland (NC) — Two South African bishops said Britain's reluctance to apply major economic sanctions against the apartheid regime in their country is seen as a roadblock to justice. "The perception of black people in South Africa is that Britain is an obstacle to the resolution of the problem by its continual support of ineffectual measures," said Bishop Wilfred Nadler of Kokstad, South Africa. "Only heavy economic pressure could bring about the end of apartheid, South Africa's system of racial segregation, he said.

Vatican may set up department to handle labor disputes

VATICAN CITY (NC) — The Vatican is studying a plan to create a permanent department to handle labor matters and a tribunal for employees' grievances, according to church and lay employee representatives. Both bodies, if approved, could have a major impact on the way labor disputes are handled at the Vatican. At the same time, the Vatican and the 1,700-member Association of Vatican Lay Employees agreed on a 10-level wage scale, ending a dispute that lasted several years and which twice brought lay workers to the brink of a strike.

Bishop will head cease-fire committee in Philippines

MANILA, Philippines (NC) — Philippine President Corazon Aquino named Bishop Antonio Yapasuco Fortich of Bacolod as chairman of the National Cease-fire Committee to oversee the 60-day truce with the communist-led National Democratic Front. The 73-year-old bishop is director of the Philippines bishops' National Secretariat for Social Action. He has been involved in local peace negotiations and recognized for having the respect of the government and the guerrillas.
Cardinal calls AIDS crisis a 'moral Chernobyl'

LONDON (NC) — The AIDS crisis is "a moral Chernobyl" which will force people to reconsider personal and sexual relationships, said Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster, England.

"Just as Chernobyl made us question that we were living well with our human environment, so I think this AIDS question, agonizing though it is, is going to force us to consider our attitude toward personal relationships, human relationships, and how sexuality fits into that," he said in a television interview.

Cardinal Hume was interviewed following Catholic Church criticism of government and British Broadcasting Corp. campaigns concerning AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

The cardinal said he thought the campaign did not place enough emphasis on the moral aspects of AIDS. He said advocating the use of condoms was "a counsel of despair," and it was not a question of using contraception or getting AIDS.

"There is a third way, and that is the way of self-denial and living chastely," the cardinal said. People are urged not to smoke, not to drink and drive, not to take drugs, and to diet and exercise because all of these are questions of the quality of life, the cardinal said.

"Each of them implies that we have to be able to say ‘no’ to ourselves," the cardinal said. "It is a manifestation of self-discipline. If it is so in these matters, why should it not be so in respect of sex?"

CARDINAL CALLS AIDS CRISIS A 'MORAL CHERNOBYL'

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA—University sociologists throughout the world are outwardly baffled by the success of an innovative child outreach program run on a shoestring budget in this city.

This experimental program, developed and run by a Salesian priest, has to date saved the lives of 85% of the children it helps—and has turned their lives around. This is an astonishing accomplishment in a city where 50%-60% of hopeless children die within the first year.

A Secret 100 Years Old

According to those scrutinizing the renowned "Bogota Project," the success of this program stems from a 56 year old Catholic priest named Javier de Nicoló, and his adherence to a 100 year old Salesian philosophy of caring.

"It's really a matter of focus," relates Father Xavier. "Most organizations seem to have a short term focus to a problem like helping homeless kids. So much time is devoted to helping a child live for that day, and not much thought is put into providing for that kid tomorrow!"

"Our approach is different," the Father continued. "Here we run a four-phased program built entirely around the concept of Voluntarism, or participation. So, when an abandoned kid off the street comes to us, we can direct him down a real path of hope!"

The First Step

To a Bogota street urchin, distrust isn't just an emotion—it's a way of life. Scarred and abandoned by their parents, these street kids have no one to help them but themselves. By the age of ten, the Gamines (French word for street urchin) has already experienced sex (oftentimes by being raped), violence, the thrill of stealing, capture, punishment and escape. He has been sick with hunger so often he has grown sick of the outside world.

This is its backdrop that Father Xavier steps into these lives, with step one of his program—"Operation Friendship."

"These kids have learned not to trust anyone. So my workers and I go to them, offering food, a bus trip—anything to gain their confidence. Soon, they come to our day Center to hang out, have a bath, and test us out."

Making a Life and Death Choice

"The second step is ‘The Movement’. In addition to the Day Centre, we have two night shelters in the city. They’re welcome to come and stay for a month, but at that point they must make a choice—stay or leave."

"Once the child decides to stay (and most do) they begin the third step—Operation Education. Here, in one of our four boarding schools, the kids learn to read and write, and just as important, how to co-exist with each other."

"Getting along" is a key element in this incredible program. In order to remain in the program, each Gamine must prove himself, day-in and day-out. A visitor will never forget a walk through the immaculate dormitories. The blankets on the cots are so tight you can bounce a quarter off them.

The Incredible Last Step

It is the final step that is most incredible, and most inspiring. After weeks of training and love, and love and training, the Gamines go off to "La Florida," a huge complex outside Bogota.

A tour throughout this complex is like a tour through a beehive. All throughout the "La Florida" complex 500 young boys rush through the adventure of discovering hope and opportunity. Here, amidst immaculate grounds, the boys run their own orchestra, sports team, a cooperative shop, a cafeteria, a bakery and their own bank—with their own currency. At the same time, they take part in primary and secondary school, they learn basic industrial and farming skills, and they become further introduced to an indispensable friend—the Lord.

"Religious training has special meaning to these kids. Take Juan over there" whispers Father Xavier, as he motions to a slender eight year old boy.

"When we found him on the street, he was totally alone. His mother didn’t want him, his father beat him. It was terrible."

"Juan didn’t need a meal, he needed a full-course of God’s love! We took him in, and now look at him. He’s going to make it!"

A Shoestring About to Break

Unfortunately, dark clouds are now hanging over Father Xavier’s "Bogota Project!" For years now, a large portion of the funding has come from the Colombian government. But, because of recent financial troubles, the government has cut funding.

People in America Keep the Miracle Alive

In order to keep the "Bogota Project" (and its kids) alive, the Salesians have turned to America—and a special group of Americans called New Life Partners.

By making a monthly contribution of $10 a month, the Salesian Missions New Life Partners fund the "Bogota Project!"—and many other unique Salesian projects around the world.

In return for this modest contribution of $10 a month, New Life Partners receive a story of the month telling how an actual child was helped, the "World Bulletin" newsletter, a membership card, the colorful Salesian quarterly magazine, and books of inspirational poems.

The program now is nothing short of a miracle. It would be a tragedy to see it die now.

Cardinal calls AIDS crisis a 'moral Chernobyl'

In order to save the flood of children desperate for life-saving help, the Salesians have set up a Bogota Emergency Fund. People wishing to support these children are asked to send their gifts to:

SALESIAN MISSIONS
"Bogota Emergency Fund" TV Box 728, New Rochelle, NY 10802
Name
Address
City
State
Zip
Monthly Gift One Time Gift

Father Xavier mentions he needs gifts of $10, $20, $50. In return for a gift of $25 or more, if you ask, the Salesians will send you a video cassette of the TV special about the "Bogota Project" entitled "Children of the Streets!" If you would like a copy, please specify VHS or Beta format with your request.
Quit if you can't stop abusing human rights, cardinal tells government

SEUL, South Korea (NC) — Cardinal Stephen Kim of Seoul said the South Korean government should resign if it continues to violate human rights.

The cardinal’s statement — his strongest public criticism yet of governing crackdowns on political opponents — was made during a homily at Myong-dong Cathedral during a Mass marking Human Rights Week.

The cardinal also opposed the ruling party’s campaign for a constitutional amendment which would change the current presidential form of government to a parliamentary one.

Attacking what he called piecemeal amendment of the constitution, the cardinal said the country needed a constitution that served as a protective umbrella for human rights.

The government of President Chun Doo Hwan has encountered mounting protests by Koreans criticizing its policies as anti-democratic. Opposition groups are calling for direct presidential elections, which they say would be less susceptible to manipulation than the current system.

Currently, the president is elected by a popularly chosen electoral college.

Cardinal Kim said that among those whose human rights have been violated are hundreds of political dissenters — mostly students — whom the government has imprisoned and charged with being communists.

The indictment of civil rights activ-

ists under the National Security Law splits the nation and hurts na-
tional reconciliation, the cardinal said.

He described the more than 2,000 political prisoners as people who chose to follow "the law of conscience and morality" over the "law of the state.

"We must not forget our brothers and sisters who are held in cold prison cells for their beliefs and convictions," he said.

Quoting the late Indian Prime

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Cardinal Kim said that a government should be prepared to "lose people's tears away." But apparently alluding to the use of tear gas at demonstrations, he said the current government was making people weep.

Christmas at Vatican

Giant tree, basket of bananas among signs of season

VATICAN CITY (NC) — On a re-
cent morning at the Vatican's bronze doors, a basket of bananas arrived with a card addressed to Pope John Paul II.

A few steps away, in the middle of St. Peter's Square, workers were un-
loading truckloads of iron pipe and scaffolding under the shadow of the ancient Egyptian obelisk.

And somewhere amid the still-

flowing gardens behind St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City officials were preparing to haul a 300-foot string of plastic-covered light bulbs — a policy that not always finds favor among other Vatican City residents.

The signs of the times were obvious: Christmas at the Vatican was just around the corner.

At his desk in the Vatican City governor's office, Chicago-born Arch-
bishop Paul Marcinkus was tracking the pilgrimage of what he hoped would be the tallest Christmas tree to grace St. Peter's Square.

"We've been promised a certain height, but I can't tell you what that is yet. I'm not saying anything until it's up in the square," said the arch-
bishop, who runs the Christmas decorating operation with a banker's caution.

Archbishop Marcinkus, head of the Vatican bank, is also pro-president of the commission for the Vatican City-

State. Since 1982, when the pope ask-
ed for "something Christmassy" in the square, he has helped call the shots — setting up a larger-than-

life nativity scene and the tree along-

side.

"You can't just put a tree up, you've got to have a tree, too," Arch-
bishop Marcinkus said, espousing an

Even the Pope makes a 'surprise' visit to the crib scene, usually on New Year's Eve.

American philosophy in the country where the "presepio," the creche, is king. The first year, he said, he had only 10 days to find a decent fir tree — not an easy job in Italy.

But since then, tree growers have visited the Vatican and the tree has grown to three or more trees every year.

"We're always got one in reserve," said Arch-
bishop Marcinkus.

At week's end, this year's tree rolled into the square on a flatbed truck after an odyssey from near Italy's border with Austria. Its unofficial height was put at about 76 feet — a Vatican City record.

When it comes to decorating, Arch-
bishop Marcinkus has fought against "too much time. In favor of a simple string of plastic-covered light bulbs — a policy that not always finds favor among other Vatican City residents.

"They ought to get the people who do Marshall Field's tree (in Chicago) to do this one. The whole world sees it, after all," said one resident who thinks the Vatican should spend more time on its tree.

Nearly everyone agrees, however, that the traditional crib scene and tree have given the square a needed touch of Christmas and made it a pilgrimage spot for thousands of children. Even the pope makes a "surprise" visit to the crib scene, usually on New Year's Eve.

How did that tradition start?

"The first time, he wanted to see what kind of job we'd done," said Archbishop Marcinkus. The "manger" today takes a work crew more than a week to set up.

We're Proud of Our Membership

The Lithgow Funeral Centers have been a member of an association for reputable funeral directors known as the International Order of the Golden Rule. Lithgow Funeral Centers have been a member of an association for reputable funeral directors known as the International Order of the Golden Rule.

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DIPLOMAT:

Pope criticizes rights abuses of all forms of government

ROME (NC) — Pope John Paul II,]: po

position on hu-
mans, comes from spec-
nal criteria rather than politi-
cal ideology and applies to all political sys-
tems, a top Vatican diplomat said.

The pope criticizes the unjust distribution of material goods as "the first systematic threat to human rights," said Archbishop Archille Sil-
vieni, secretary of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.

The second great threat to hu-
mans, he said, is the violation of religious freedom, which the pope considers a "radical injustice," Arch-
bishop Silvieni said.

He said the church seeks human rights as "an extremely solid task" and also a measure of the "legitimacy of political authorities."

"The critical position of the popes concerns all the social systems," the West tries to legitimize itself through "Rights of freedom," the East through "human rights," he said. But the prob-
lem is the integration of all rights into a system of truth and values in which man is considered globally," he said.

Archbishop Silvieni spoke at a meeting of the Italian Society for International Organization. The event celebrated the anniversary of the B.N. U.N. Declaration on Human Rights.

The cardinal said human rights in the Third World are threat-
ened by "action and interference by the West and the East."
WASHINGTON (NC) — The Vatican’s decision to prohibit Father Curran was “not suitable nor eligible to teach Catholic theology” because of his positions on several moral issues, from artificial contraception to abortion, euthanization and divorce.

In his statement, Bishop Torres wrote that Father Curran’s “strategy of church discord” is not suitable for use in the church. He said that the church “has no basis” since the teachings he has promulgated are not the teachings of Christ.

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Immigrants told how to become legal

WASHINGTON (NC) — A report spelling out who will qualify for legalization under the new immigration reform law has been published by the U.S. Catholic Conference’s Department of Migration and Refugee Services.

The four-page report also describes the penalties to which employers are subject for hiring illegal aliens.

Written in Spanish and English and in question-and-answer form, it is available in diocesan resettlement offices. (In South Florida, call 751-4439 in Dade for information.)

Aliens eligible for legalization, according to the USCC report, are those who arrived in the United States before Jan. 1, 1982, and have resided here legally and continuously, except for short trips outside the country.

In addition, according to the report, to qualify

USCC outlines requirements of new immigration law

for legalization an alien alien must:

* Have not committed a felony or three misdemeanors in the United States;
* Demonstrate a history of employment in the United States and not have received public cash assistance;
* Undergo a medical examination at his or her own expense;
* Not have assisted in the persecution of another person or persons;
* Be registered or willing to register for the draft.

The report says there will be a 12-month application period starting within the six months after the bill became law in November.

Illegal aliens who qualify would first become aliens eligible for legalization, according to the report. They may apply for legalization through employers or co-workers, must be provided.

Celibacy and intimacy

 Priests told not to avoid intimate friendships

PARK CITY, Utah (NC) — Leading a celibate lifestyle need not prevent one from establishing intimate relationships nor require a denial of one’s sexuality, Salt Lake Diocese priests were told.

“Sexuality is ‘more than coitus and copulation,’” said Jay Feierman, a consulting psychiatrist to the Servants of the Paracletes, during a full convention on sexuality in Park City.

He called sexuality one aspect of an individual’s personality.

“We need to deal with our lives on all levels,” he said. “We live our lives on intellectual levels, emotional levels and spiritual levels, as well as sexual levels.

“People need for intimate relationships on the non-genital level,” he said. Priests, like everyone else, he said, must develop intimate social relationships.

“We are all sexual people,” said Father Bill Perri of Jemez, N.M., a priest of the Servants of the Paracletes, “even if we are not genitally active.”

He said the church has never considered celibate priests and Religious to be asexual. “When I am at a party, for example, and see an attractive person, people assume I’m not having feelings. That’s absurd. I’m made in God’s image, and I am a sexual individual.”

Feierman said in the past some priests may have dealt with their own sexuality by denying it.

“If a person doesn’t have an understanding of his or her own sexuality, blind spots occur... and the rest of the personality suffers,” he said.

Father Perri said priests who understand standing of their own sexuality, blind spots occur ... and the rest of the personality suffers,” he said.

Jan Parker, Diocese of Fort Worth-South Bend, Ind.

‘Celibacy doesn’t deny a full experience of that gift’

SEATTLE (NC) — Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen underwent major surgery to remove his prostate gland after test results showed a malignant tumor in the gland, the Seattle Archdiocese announced.

After a six-month period during which doctors monitoring the situation had determined he was in good health, the doctors decided late Dec. 15 to operate. They said that as far as they could tell all of the cancerous tissue was removed.

Abp. Hunthausen underwent surgery to remove malignant tumor

In September, Archbishop Hunthausen announced that, under Vatican instructions, he had ceded his authority over several archdiocesan matters to his auxiliary, Bishop Donald Wuerl.

The presence of a malignancy in the prostate gland, but they thought it was contained within the prostate.

But later test results showed a microscopic amount of the tumor had spread into some of the surrounding human tissues. The doctors decided late Dec. 15 to operate. They said that as far as they could tell all of the cancerous tissue was removed.

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Brian Brodeur — Epiphany Parish

PAGE 8 / Miami, Florida / THE VOICE / Friday, December 26, 1986
Construction of S. Dade residence/nursing center, new fund-raising group announced

By Ana Rodriguez-Soto
Voice News Editor

Calling it "a very special Christmas gift to the elderly," Archbishop Edward McCarthy announced this week:

"The construction of a new Archdiocesan agency to deal exclusively with the building and management of apartments and health care facilities for the aged;

"The construction of a Catholic nursing and rehabilitation center in South Dade; and

"The establishment of a foundation to ensure that poor elderly can be admitted there.

Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh, director of Catholic Community Services (CCS), will also head the new agency, which will be known as Catholic Health and Rehabilitative Services (CHRS).

Announcing the construction of the South Dade Catholic Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, the Archbishop noted that "the need to care for the aged is greater than in other parts of the country."

He stressed the Archdiocese's desire to meet the needs of the elderly through "varying levels of care": affordable apartments for those who can live independently; collegiate living facilities for those who need a little help with housework and cooking; and nursing homes for those who cannot care for themselves.

The South Dade facility, scheduled for completion in April of next year, will comprise a 180-bed nursing care center and a 120-bed congregate living facility. It is located at Quail Roost Drive and SW 119 St.

"Once a person is in our system no one will be abandoned," the Archbishop said, stressing that elderly residents will be able to move through the different levels of care as their needs change.

Moreover, he said, the Archdiocese plans to ensure that at least one-third of those in its health-care facilities are poor. To accomplish that goal, the Catholic Health and Rehabilitation Foundation has been established and charged with raising $1 million by June of 87.

The foundation's long-term goal is between $3 and $5 million, the interest from which will pay for the care of needy elderly.

"We're not asking for money to build these institutions. We're asking for funds so that poor people can be admitted to these places," said Msgr. Walsh, pointing out that a Dade County bond issue - guaranteed by the Archdiocese - has paid the $10 million construction cost of the South Dade facility.

Anthony R. Abraham, a Miami industrialist and philanthropist, and Ralph A. Sanchez, auto racing entrepreneur, have been named to head the Catholic Health and Rehabilitation Foundation.

Others on its board of directors are: Horacio Aguirre, publisher of the Spanish-language newspaper, Diario Las Americas; Carlos Arboleya, vice-chairman of Barnett Bank; R. Ray Goode, president of The Babcock Co.; James McLaughan, president of McLaughan Mortgage Co.; John H. McDowell, former executive director of the Dade Foundation; Rafael Penalver, a Miami physician; and David M. Walters, former U.S. envoy to the Vatican and now president of the Miami Children's Hospital Foundation.

The South Dade Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is modeled after St. John's Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Broward, which opened in 1980 and houses a 42-bed congregate living facility and a 180-bed nursing center.

CHRIS will take over management of both St. John's and the South Dade home, along with the eight Archdiocesan housing projects for the elderly which until now were managed by CCS.

The Archdiocese also plans to begin construction next year on three more housing projects for low-income elderly who are able to live independently: Hurley Hall in Hallandale; Palm House in West Dade; and St. Mary Tower near St. Mary Cathedral in Miami.

Construction funds for all the Archdiocesan housing projects are provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

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

THE REVEREND CYRIL HUDAK - to Pastor, St. Sebastian Church, Fort Lauderdale, effective December 14, 1986.

THE REVEREND ERNESTO MOLANDO - to Associate Judicial Vicar in the Metropolitan Tribunal, Miami, effective December 3, 1986.

THE REVEREND RAFAEL ESCALA - to Associate Chaplain of the Legion of Mary, Regina Pacis, Miami (Spanish), effective December 4, 1986.

THE REVEREND JOHN MERCANTANTE - to Associate Pastor, Immaculate Conception Church, Hialeah, effective January 19, 1987.

THE REVEREND PEDRO LLEO, SCH. P. - to Associate Pastor, Little Flower Church, Coral Gables, effective January 28, 1987.
Local

Christmas is love!

Groups throughout Archdiocese put meaning into season by giving to others

Presents arrive in 'nick' of time

Santa Claus almost didn't come to LaSalle High School for a special celebration December 15th. He was held up by customs. Two hundred and fifty presents were held up, to be exact, donated by a school principal in Hong Kong and destined for elderly residents of Carroll Manor. The celebration, a dinner hosted by LaSalle High School students for the Manor residents (LaSalle is located a block from Carroll Manor, overlooking Biscayne Bay), was actually the idea of the Hong Kong principal, Thomas T.S. Liang, whom Archbishop Edward McCarthy met when he visited China this summer. Liang, a philanthropist as well as a principal, likes to sponsor events expressing the traditional Chinese respect for the elderly. The presents (right), 250 Seiko clocks and Chinese mugs, were clogged by "red tape" at U.S. Customs several days before the event, and it looked like they might never arrive. Florida Congressman Claude Pepper, however, intervened and the gifts cleared in the "(St.) Nick" of time. At the celebration, which included a Chinese meal catered by one of Liang's Miami relatives, LaSalle students (below) dressed as Santa's elves and performed dances and songs. (Voice photos/Prent Browning)

For migrants

Children of St. John Neumann elementary school in South Dade (above) place donated food onto a truck bound for migrant workers in Immokalee as part of a food drive they conducted this Advent season. Pictured are, from left, George Diaz, George Minosa and Leo Capizzo.

Adopted families

Seventh and eighth grade students (left) at Sts. Peter and Paul School in Miami "adopted" ten area poor families for Christmas. The families recently received deliveries of toys and food donated by the children or bought with monies they raised through a bake sale.
Thanks to generous readers of The Voice and La Voz, a number of South Florida families will really have a Merry Christmas this year.

Two schools will be able to continue their education at Holy Redeemer School in Liberty City; a wife will be able to care for her husband more easily thanks to the gift of a breast prosthesis; an elderly grandmother will be able to buy clothes for her grandchildren; a Broward family will get their refrigerator repaired; and a teenager will ride a 10-speed bike for the first time in his life.

These are only some of the people helped by Project Magi, which as of Dec. 19 had collected $6,035 with South Florida's needy.

Two of the latest donations were very special. Knights of Columbus Father Flynn Council 4772, Hialeah, sent in a $1,000 check "to be used at any time as a replenishment of funds for the recorded programs," according to Gene Fitzpatrick, past Grand Knight of the council.

"We feel it would be a good time, particularly at Christmas, to help some of the families who are really in need," he said. The money was raised by the Knights during their annual Tootsie Roll Fund Drive.

Seventh-graders at St. James School in North Miami also decided that "the Advent season would come into play," according to the teacher, Joyce Pickover. Although the students had collected toys for underprivileged children and food for the Sisters of Charity of Mother Teresa, they chipped in an extra $50 to Project Magi.

"We hope our small contribution will help someone have a brighter Christmas," wrote Pickover. "Thank you. It did. On behalf of all those who were helped, The Voice and La Voz with our "Magi" a Christmas filled with all the love and peace that the Christ child came to bring. And may His blessings be with you throughout the New Year.

The following are the names of the most recent contributors. Duplicate gifts will be used to help needy families in similar situations:

- Nahom Perez, Miami
- Miriam Izquierdo, Miami
- Diane Buchino, Miami Lakes
- Carmen Salcedo, Pembroke Pines
- Hannah P. Donohue, Hollywood
- Carmen Larriovire, Hialeah
- Julia C. Solis, Miami
- Christina Cafero, Hollywood
- Anthony D. Giargro, Margate
- Marie R. Nunez, Pine Key
- Margaret Froehling, Miami
- Sherry and Jud Ewing and family, North Miami Beach
- Jackie Bain, Ft. Lauderdale
- Nancy Kearns and family, Pembroke Pines
- St. James School 7th graders, North Miami Beach
- Knights of Columbus Fr. Flynn Council 4772, Hialeah
- And anonymous contributors

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Project Magi

Thanks, Magi! Needy's wishes came true

By Ana Rodriguez-Soto
Voice Contributor

Sending guns to Central America is not the way to solve the region's problems says Ed Owens, who works in Honduras. In fact, U.S. weapons only ensure that social justice will never flourish there.

Father Joe Owens, a Jesuit and former Florida director of the National Farmworkers Association, says the military build-up" which the U.S. is making is a means of "keeping the rich rich and the poor poor.

"The basic war is against the poor people. Society is being structured in such a way that the poor people cannot get organized," the anti-war priest sold The Voice recently, during the last leg of a 10-day trip through Florida with "old friends" in the farmers' movement.

Father Owens's message was simple: the U.S. should "move toward a more peaceful settlement of the conflicts down there" by endorsing the Contras in Nicaragua, which is the Central American bishops support.

The Contrass nations -- Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama -- have been trying, so far unsuccessfully, to reach a negotiated solution to the conflicts between Nicaragua's Sandinista government, the U.S.-backed "contras" who oppose it and neighboring nations worried about their security.

Father Owens said even Nicaragua's bishops, who are the Sandinista regime's hardest critics, have endorsed the Contra effort, which is that the Sandinistas are deploying a massive army in order to destabilize neighboring countries and bring them into the sphere of the Sandinista image.

"In the perception of most people down there that's simply not the case," Father Owens said. "Nicaragua's Sandinistas' arms build-up is "almost certainly a reaction" to U.S. hostility.

He admitted, however, that in Nicaragua "there's a lot of disillusionment" with the Sandinistas, due mainly to the severe shortages of food and other economic staples.

In addition, he said, there's tension within the Catholic Church and within the Jesuit order itself because several members whom he supported the Sandinistas while others are wary of them.

The closing of Nicaragua's only independent newspaper, La Prensa, and the expulsion of a prominent bishop and priest (Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega and Church spokesman Mgr. Bismarck Carballo), have helped the Sandinistas' image, Father Owens admitted.

"These actions just seem to be unnecessary and unjustified. They're mistakes, really," he said. "But even though they are mistakes, they don't justify fighting a war.

From speaking with other Jesuits who live and work in Nicaragua, he estimated that between 60 and 70 percent of the people still support the Sandinistas. Most of those who are leaving the country are "middle class people who found it hard to maintain the same lifestyle after the revolution.

"A lot of young men who don't want to be recruited by the army" also are leaving, Father Owens said, but their numbers don't compare to the numbers of refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala. He has heard reports that as many as 30,000 Salvadorans and about 1,000 Guatemalans have fled their country's civil war.

Father Owens personally has not come into contact with Sandinistas, because he ministers in the northern part of Honduras, away from the Guatemalan border area.

He has worked in the Honduran town of El Copan since 1968. He has one younger brother, John Paul.

Right after high school, Rev. Mr. Vallejo entered St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, where he obtained a Bachelor's degree in philosophy. He then entered St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in North Miami, where he was awarded a Master's in theology last spring.

As part of his pastoral internship he worked at St. Luke's Drug Abuse Clinic last summer and

2 Are ordained deacons

Rev. Mr. Castaneda Rev. Mr. Vallejo currently serve at St. Mary Cathedral.

Rev. Mr. Castaneda, 32, was born in Moron, in the province of Camaguey, Cuba. He moved to South Florida with his family in 1968, and had in Hialeah's Immaculate Conception parish ever since.

Rev. Mr. Vallejo, 25 and a native of Warwick, R.I., is a graduate of Holy Family elementary school in North Miami and Miami's Edward Pace High School in Hialeah. His parents, Robert A. and Tina Vallejo, have lived in Holy Family parish since 1968. He has one younger brother, John Paul.

Rev. Mr. Vallejo attended Miami Springs High School with a Bachelor's degree in elementary education from Florida International University. Rev. Mr. Castaneda studied pre-theology at St. John Vianney, then entered St. Vincent de Paul, where he also was awarded a Master's in Theology last spring.

Rev. Mr. Castaneda has been working in Corpus Christi parish in Miami since last January.

Both Rev. Mr. Vallejo and Rev. Mr. Castaneda will continue their studies at St. Vincent de Paul Seminary while working part-time in their largest-scale projects until the time of their ordination to the priesthood, which is set for next May.

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Priest: Guns won't help Central America
Jesuit missionary says U.S. should seek peace

By Ana Rodriguez-Soto
Voice Contributor

Father Owens says the American people should "move toward a more peaceful settlement of the conflicts down there" by endorsing the Contras in Nicaragua, which is the Central American bishops support.

The Contrass nations -- Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama -- have been trying, so far unsuccessfully, to reach a negotiated solution to the conflicts between Nicaragua's Sandinista government, the U.S.-backed "contras" who oppose it and neighboring nations worried about their security.

Father Owens said even Nicaragua's bishops, who are the Sandinista regime's hardest critics, have endorsed the Contra effort, which is that the Sandinistas are deploying a massive army in order to destabilize neighboring countries and bring them into the sphere of the Sandinista image.

"In the perception of most people down there that's simply not the case," Father Owens said. "Nicaragua's Sandinistas' arms build-up is "almost certainly a reaction" to U.S. hostility.

He challenged the U.S. justification for the arms build-up, which is that the Sandinistas are deploying a massive army in order to destabilize neighboring countries and bring them into the Sandinista image.

"In the perception of most people down there that's simply not the case," Father Owens said. "Nicaragua's Sandinistas' arms build-up is "almost certainly a reaction" to U.S. hostility.

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Baby Jesus, troublemaker

By Father John Shea

Is the Christ child a cuddly kid, cherub-fa, hallucinatory angels into a sleep as sweet as peace—a virgin's gift? Or is he string-bean thin, with a colic cry and thrashing arms, hanging onto life with a scream—a mother's worry?

There is probably no need to choose. The presence of God in this world is manifest in the baby who symbolizes, in both an event of peace and an event of struggle. But most people have a deep preference for peace; and so Christians quote, in liturgy and on cards, the words of Wisdom:

For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone thy all-powerful word leapt from heaven mighty and strong.

Those who quote tend to misconstrue the passage at that point. But the second half carries a complementary message:

Victory will be won by the poor and the powerless. This is the truth that came into the world at the birth of Jesus-unreachable love can transform suffering. This truth is symbolized by the star which "rests over the place where the child was." The star is the symbol of fate. Life is ultimately ruled by the unerring course that twists and turns across white hills and slopes. We would give you rainbows and the warming of his love. Tonight we add another prayer - that you will walk slowly to see the changing leaves in fall, to hear the creaking of the porch, to have the smell of the cozy kitchen.

By Father John Shea

The birth narratives in Matthew and Luke were woven in the light of the total event: the two. They reflect the major themes of his life, death, and Resurrection. When the angels in Luke sing "Glory to God and peace on earth," they encapsulate the double solidity of Jesus' life - praise to God and reconciliation among people. The theme of peace is prominent. This is the birth of the one who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt rather than on a warrior's horse.

But the stories also foreshadow the fight that characterized Jesus' life. This child is not only the bringer of peace. He is immediate and unremittably there. In these times Christians may have to look unflinchingly at the struggle the child initiates before they can receive the peace the child brings.

In Matthew as soon as Mary is pregnant "by the power of the Holy Spirit," Joseph is in a dilemma. The law demands one thing; his love demands another thing. He follows the royal the strategy of "divorcing her quietly." The first news Gospel readers have of Jesus is that he is precipitating the conflict of law and love.

But Joseph is not the only one troubled. When the wise men tell the king and the king the impending birth of the king of the Jews, "Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." Here is the beginning of the enduring Christian tension of ultimate allegiance. Which king will be served? The king in the crib or the king on the throne? The birth of this child is a threat to all authority that is built on terror and fear.

Lake also notes this conflict in a subtle way. The census of Caesar is the unwitting accomplice of the census of God on earth, which will help finish what the old Herod had started. Jesus will be crucified; but God's love will resurrect him.

"This child is not only the bringer of peace. He is immediate and unremittently fighting. In these times Christians may have to look unflinchingly at the struggle the child initiates before they can receive the peace the child brings.

Merry Christmas, Son (from the heart)

By Emelyn Swan

It's Christmas Eve. The tree stands in the window, fully trimmed. Child-crafted ornaments reflect the dancing lights, and I recall a treasury of memories. Your kindergarten angel, precariously clinging to the toppen branch for the eleventh year, bears small resemblance to the immortal "angel of the Lord" who hovered over Bethlehem.

Twelve small oval pictures fill a frame across the room. One center space awaits your senior picture, soon to come.

Where are the years that linked those smiling faces? Could our children be the Christmas when every twist with a little boy could conjure up was magically fulfilled, when every world dream became reality? The days are now so fast that no woman who fancied chimneys over doors could touch your heart and lead you to believe all things were possible, if only once a year.

Somewhere on the journey from that child's world to yours, you have come to realize life isn't quite so simple. Sadly, inevitably, you discovered that the source of all this seasonal splendor is a mercenary world and that the rosy recipes cookbook had its limits, and you began to give your Christmas lists more careful thought. The number of items gradually diminished as the importance of each was diligently weighed and added in order of priority.

I found your list today when I was tidying your room: an amplifier - technical description follows to guarantee results desired. We'd rather give you quiet, to sense the Lord's presence and hear his voice.

Your second item is a ski jacket, sky blue with yellow stripes and filled with down. We would give you snows and the warming of his love.

You'd like a pair of skis. I can see you on a red slope that twists and turns across white hills and slopes. We would give you patience and the white light of a star to guide you through the paths of life.

You've listed goggles to protect you from the blinding brilliance of the snow. We wish you his presence. It's midnight now. Your father and I kneel before the crèche and place the Infant Jesus in the shadow of his mother.

Merry Christmas, Son.

(Reprinted from Salt, 221 W. Madison, Chicago)
The first Christmas card

For days I listened as co-workers and friends bemoaned the fact that they hadn't yet sent out their Christmas cards. The comments come across like complaints about an annual "chore."

Certainly it is a big preoccupation for people in December, just as it is for big business. The major manufacturers—Hallmark, American Greetings, and Gibson and the 300 or so other card companies in the United States all report that Christmas cards are the most popular of all the 7 billion cards they produce each year.

This year alone the prediction is that about 300 million Christmas cards will be sold over the counter and 1.7 billion boxed cards sold for a value of about $700 million. But all this activity is certainly not just for the sake of business. People do have some feelings about it. If they didn't, busy people would soon break the habit.

My friends and I send cards precisely because they do have feelings about it. They are a way of sharing with our friends and loved ones the essence of what Christmas really means to us.

The spokespersons for the major card companies I interviewed said that Christmas as reflected in people's choice of cards is warmth, family, caring, giving, hears, home, fireplace, holly, Santa, nostalgic scenes and religious feelings.

An American Greetings spokesperson said, "There's definitely a religious content. People are looking for a sense of devotion in receiving the Eucharist.

"Five years ago the trend for religious themes was down but in the last two or three years the interest in religious cards is increasing," a spokesperson from Gibson told me.

For me, there was never any question that the cards I sent would reflect the original religious meaning of Christmas and the message of Jesus' birth—love and peace entering the world, goodness and caring for one another.

Interestingly enough, in researching the history of Christmas cards I found that the very first Christmas cards reflected the basic religious values of caring for others and sharing with them.

Saturday is a time for giving, and while you're getting into the Christmas spirit, why not think about doing some volunteer work after the holidays?

There are over 84 million volunteers in America providing $64.5 billion worth of free services every year. In terms of time, they give away more than 8 billion work hours annually, and they love every minute of it.

Gladys Longo, a retired social worker and diabetic from Providence, R.I., volunteers at the local Lung Association, and the local chapter of the American Diabetes Association. She also finds time to work as a court-appointed advocate for neglected and abused children. "Helping others helps me," she said. "It makes my life worthwhile."

Some people volunteer on the spur of the moment because of an urgent need. In Fort Wayne, Ind., 30,000 teenagers volunteered and hoisted 900,000 sand bags when heavy rains threatened to burst the dykes.

You're never too old or too young. In downtown Philadelphia, an 11-year-old was moved by Christmas cards year after year. As Christians there always should be a meaning to the cards we write out each year—a chance to spread the joy and traditions of Christmas—feeding the hungry and clothing the needy.

As Christians there always should be a meaning to the cards we write each year—a chance to spread the joy and traditions of Christmas—feeding the hungry and clothing the needy.

Memorial, it's better to light one candle than curse the darkness.

By Fr. John Dietzen

Time capsules

Fixing the date for Christmas

In 354 A.D., Pope Liberius Christianized a pagan festival day by calling for Christians to celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th. He also replaced Saturday as the Sabbath with Sunday because the Resurrection took place on a Sunday. He made it a weekly holiday and forbade anyone to work on that day.

Then there's the story of the man who dreamed that he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. In each scene he noticed two sets of footprints, one belonging to the Lord and the other to the man. But many times he noticed that there was only one set of footprints in the sand. He also noticed that this happened during the lowest times in his life. This bothered him and he questioned the Lord: "Lord, you said you would walk beside me all the way, but I noticed that during the most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. Why did you desert me?"

The Lord replied, "My son, during your times of trial when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

According to legend, Clovis I of France was given an iris by an angel for accepting Christianity in the early 500s. The iris was called at the time, flower of the lily or fleur-de-lis, which he then used as his and his country's coat of arms.

By Frank Morgan
Dear Mary: My daughter, a sophomore in high school, wants to have a New Year's Eve party. We have never permitted any such gathering, and we don't wish to begin to now. By Dr. James and Mary Kenny

Confine the party to one area of your house. Your presence can prevent guests from seeking out empty rooms for privacy. You might invite another couple to chaperone with you. Your own teen might feel more comfortable if you are visiting with your friends and not standing like a stone fence in on the party. The teens will be even less inclined to seek out other areas of your house if you and friends are using them.

Party crashing is popular. Frequently, an entire carpool of friends uninvited guests will arrive. A host or hostess cannot get rid of them. However, party crashers will not generally stand up to parents; party crashers are often the most shy teens. While your daughter may not appreciate your presence, she will probably be grateful not to have to face uninvited crashers alone.

Parents, schools, churches and teens themselves often complain that teens have no place to go and nothing to do. You are providing the most obvious and effective solution to that problem, opening your house to your daughter's friends. Be glad she wants to bring her friends home. You are fortunate to have such a daughter, and she is fortunate to have you.

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

By Dolores Curran

God was imaged as a stern and punitive taskmaster who kept a careful log of our wrongdoing and virtues, totting them up daily to keep us aware of our eventual fate on that fearful day we would meet and answer to Him. Celebrations were considered the work of the devil, not of Christ.

We see vestiges of this still today—people who cannot smile at the exchange of peace because they are in church, parishioners who frown at children who frisk in the pew, partisans who won't chuckle over a homily joke. But we're getting better as we discover a less serious liturgy.

Some of the charismatic and evangelistic congregations discomfit us because they are Baptist and joyous. A few years ago, when I delivered a lecture on family before a large interfaith group, someone in the audience shouted out enthusiastically, "Amen, Sister," and two or three others echoed him.

I was non-plussed, stopped in mid-sentence and laughed. "You have to forgive me," I said. "I'm a Catholic and this doesn't happen in our church. But I think it's wonderful." They reacted with applause.

The Puritan law makes me reflect on how we would observe Christ's birth today if it were illegal to do so. Let's pretend a totalitarian regime ruled our country, and it does others, and minute "tithing" is on open celebration of the holiday.

Gone would be department store materialism, parties, trees, trapping that has subsumed the real celebration of Jesus' birth. In its place we would be furiously planning quiet liturgies and get-togethers to mark the religious meaning of the holiday.

If we were putting our lives or reputations on the line by acknowledging the significance of Christmas in our beliefs and daily lives, I wonder how precious the nativity scene would be and how meaningless the tinsel and gifts would become.

Would we be courageous enough to defy the law? Would we do in the secrecy of our homes to celebrate? Would we, like earlier Christian forebears, develop secret codes and meeting places? Would we risk all and jobs to celebrate an illicit Christ lewurgy?

I pray we will never have to face such decisions but thinking about it might help us put the real celebration of Christmas in perspective.

Remarks on teen New Year's parties

Tips on teen New Year's parties

What if Christmas were illegal?

Christmas, the high festival of our culture, is the one time during the year when we Puritan work-ethic heirs nullify our cake and wine Celebrations. In our own Puritan Massachusetts, it was likewise against the law to celebrate Christmas. The Great Court there decreed in 1651, "Anybody who is guilty of observing birthdays, the Holy days, or any other way, any such day as Christmas day shall pay for every such offence five shillings." The law remained in effect for thirty years.

In our own European relatives enjoy. We pack everything into December.

As a parent, your job is to be in the home all through the party. You must be available without troopes. In our own Puritan Massachusetts, it was likewise against the law to celebrate Christmas. The Great Court there decreed in 1651, "Anybody who is guilty of observing birthdays, the Holy days, or any other way, any such day as Christmas day shall pay for every such offence five shillings. The law remained in effect for thirty years.

What would we do in the secrecy of our homes to celebrate? Would we, like earlier Christian forebears, develop secret codes and meeting places? Would we risk all and jobs to celebrate an illicit Christmas lewurgy?

I pray we will never have to face such decisions but thinking about it might help us put the real celebration of Christmas in perspective.

Family matters

Gifts of all shapes and sizes

by Carol A. Farley

Director of the Family Enrichment Center

In the frenzy of buying that precedes Christmas, it is easy to overlook the fact that the gift is not the focus of the gift-giving. Gifts are meant to celebrate relationships and love for each other, the gift for us is from our Son, and our echoings of that love in the love we have for each other.

When I was writing the book of an unknown author, I share it with you today in the hope it offers you an opportunity to quietly reflect on all the gifts in your life.

***

Persons are gifts which the Father sends to me in different wrappings.

Some are wrapped very beautifully; they are attractive when I first see them.

Some are in very ordinary wrapping paper.

Others have been mishandled in the mail. Once in a great while there is a Special Delivery package.

Some persons are gifts which come very loosely wrapped; others tightly wrapped.

But the wrapping is not the gift! It is easy to make the gift Christmas it's amusing only when children make this mistake.

Sometimes the gift is very easy to open. Sometimes help is needed to open the others.

Is it because they are afraid? Does it hurt? Maybe they have been opened up before and been rejected.

I am a person before, I am a gift to others. A gift to myself, first of all.

A gift to myself to open up 

A gift to others, to use the gift to see if I ever really looked inside the wrapping? Am I afraid to?

Perhaps I've never accepted the gift I am. Could it be that there is something else inside the wrapping than what I think there is?

Maybe I've never seen the wonderful gift that I am. Could the Father's gifts be anything but beautiful?

I am always happy the gifts others give to me. Why not this beautiful gift from the Father?

And I am a gift to other persons. Am I willing to be given by the Father to others? A person for others?

Do others have to be content with my wrapping never permitted to enjoy the gift?

Every meeting of persons is an exchange of gifts. This exchange of gifts is Friendship. Friendship is a relationship between persons who see themselves as they truly are:

A Friend is a gift not just to me, but to others through me. The more I share this gift, the more the gift grows.

Persons are gifts which the Father sends to me in different wrappings.
Now throw in the angels, that choir above, and I begin seeing the meaning of love.

The play and the scene that we see on TV are nothing compared with God's great love for me. His love and affection, His care and concern are tender and wholesome, I've started to learn.

He makes no conditions; He gives it for free; it's not something offered on late-night TV.

My prayer for this season is that we all know His love from above that’s more than a show.

"Crimes of the Heart" (De Laurentiis) is a portrait of three sisters whose mutual love and uncompromising acceptance of each other's flaws help them survive in a small town in Mississippi.

Traumatized as youngsters by a father who abandoned them and a mother who hanged herself in the kitchen along with the house cat, three grown-up sisters reunite at their grandfather's homestead.

Lenny (Diane Keaton) has stayed at home leading a sheltered existence, trying to maintain some moral standards. Meg (Jessica Lange), rebellious and promiscuous, has just returned from an extended but failed attempt to launch a career in Hollywood. She's accustomed to taking what she wants. Babe (Sissy Spacek) is in the midst of legal action. She's released from jail after shooting her husband who caught her having a fling with a local black.

What surfaces from their comical interaction is a vibrant and lilting interaction that is a portrait of the human spirit." says filmmaker Ann 

Meg's one-night stand with a married man, Doc (Sam Shepard), and Babe's attempted suicide are amply de-emphasized and are mere threads in the complex fabric of characteristics that leave the viewer with an overall positive outlook on life. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III - adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 - parents strongly cautioned to provide special guidance for attendance of children under 13.

(Reviewed by Tony Zaza. Zaza is on the staff of the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication.)

Mother Teresa opens in Miami

The acclaimed film, Mother Teresa, opened its exclusive Miami engagement at Wometco's Sunset at Kendall Theatre, Sunset at Kendall Mall, 107 Ave. Kendall Drive on Friday, Dec. 19.

The film documents the work and life of Mother Teresa and was made over a period of five years, starting in 1980. It was filmed in ten countries on four continents in the world's worst trouble spots: the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, India and the urban ghettos of the United States.

"Whenever there is a catastrophe in the world or some real failing of the human spirit," says filmmaker Ann Petrie, "you can count on Mother Teresa to be there."

"She works with the sisters and brothers of her order in the slums of New York, Chicago and Detroit," Petrie, who produced the film with her sister Jeanette, said in an interview with the Denver Catholic Register.

"She doesn't evangelize or try to convert," she said. "She only talks of the importance of God's love. I think in her heart she still prefers working directly with people."

Mother Teresa had six world premiers at the United Nations and the film has had unprecedented screenings in the United States Senate and the Vatican.
Christian Unity week activities planned

In connection with the international celebration week of Prayer for Christian Unity 1987, the Miami community will hold a number of activities, over a one month period, in celebration of oneness in faith for those who have been brought into the Covenant by Jesus of Nazareth.

In South Florida the mix of ethnic and religious beliefs is fertile ground for sowing the seeds of harmony and respect for each other in shared prayer and opportunity for dialogue. Celebrations are being planned for Jan. 17- Feb. 15. The theme for the 1987 observance is ‘Reconciled to God in Christ.’

The planning committee, chaired by Rev. Samuel Jones, Pastor of South Miami’s First Baptist Church, and Carlos Cuello, a Catholic Layman from St. Louis Parish, announced the two main interfaith celebrations.

The opening ecumenical service will be held at St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Church on Jan. 17 at 4:30 p.m. This service will be led by His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America. After the service there will be a fellowship hour when no admission fee and people of all Christian denominations are cordially invited to attend.

The closing ceremony will be held on Feb. 15 at 3 p.m. at the Miami Shores Presbyterian Church. It will be led by pastor Timothy Croft and attended by Archbishop Edward McCarthy. Fellowship hour follows.

Its a date

Dr. Ivan Drayse, S.M. and the Chaminade Community of Faith invites you to attend its annual Week of Prayer for Healing and Annointing of the Sick. The Mass will be held on Jan. 6th, at 11 a.m. at the school’s gymnasium, 6923 Northwest 40th Lane, Chaminade Drive, Hollywood.

Mrs. Linda Artsy, University of Miami, is sponsoring a luncheon/dinner at 7 p.m. Jan. 7, at the Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre. Meeting at 10 a.m. the committee is: "You Can't Take It With You" starring Brian Keith, "The_ts of Miami Beach: St. Patrick Church; 963-2229; .

Miami Beach walk will be held on Jan. 30, 1987, featuring a one hour prayer and visitation at the church followed by the celebration of the Eucharist. Your local Respect Life office, The St. Andrew churches; 753-0770; Coral Springs: St. Bernard and St. Andrew churches; 733-0770; Fort Lauderdale: St. Coleman Church; 656-8506; .

St. Clement’s Writer’s Club invites you to be a part of the 15th Annual National Pastoral Council of the U.S. Women’s Conference. The conference will be held from Jan. 29-31 at 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 24. Fr. Edward Koves, Pro-Life Activist Director for the U.S. Catholic bishops, will be the keynote speaker. For reservations call Doris Feick at 763-2187.

The Barry University Auxiliary in the Nursing and Applied Health Sciences is sponsoring an event to benefit the Miami Beach Community. The event will be held on Feb. 15 at 3 p.m. at the Miami Beach Community Center. It will be led by pastor Timothy Croft and attended by Archbishop Edward McCarthy. Fellowship hour follows.

World Peace Day

Archbishop McCarthy will celebrate World Peace Day on Jan. 11 at 11 a.m. in observance of the World Day of Peace. Municipal, Church, Union, and the Community will hold a Mass. The theme will be: "The Keys to Peace."
Call 758-0543

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that you will lend your assistance.

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The wonder of Christmas

God made it so simple; why do we complicate it so much?

By Dan Morris
NC News Service

I leaned my axe and then myself against the stump of the Douglas fir I had fallen the day before. My arms and back were tired from limbing the tree. I'd rest a bit before firing up the chain saw and bucking the log to saw more firewood. Using the front of my sweatshirt I toweled sweat out of my eyes and off my forehead and neck.

The forest was simultaneously quiet and full of gentle sound.

Interestingly to me, my thoughts turned to Christmas as they have so many times in recent months. To my delight, those thoughts -- even unplanned meditations -- were neither stimulated by merchants' pre-Halloween Yule decorations nor by an avalanche of Christmas catalogues addressed to "occupant."

Rather they have come during quiet moments in the woods or on the beach. They have come as I watched a spider weave its web in the twigs of an older branch. As I marveled at the intricate and delicate ferns that grow near our trailer house. As I whittled a chunk of sweet-smelling cedar. As I closed my eyes and listened to sea gulls cry and call to one another.

Our family's recent decision to attempt a more basic lifestyle--moving from a major metropolitan area to a small island off the coast of Washington state near the Canadian border--has brought us dramatically closer to creation. And creation has brought us closer to Christmas.

Maybe because we are more vulnerable to the elements, financial and earthly. Maybe because we were too distracted in the city. Maybe because God speaks so powerfully and profoundly through his gifts of sea and earth. Whatever the reasons, the Christmas story for us has become more concrete. We wonder about the worry and physical discomfort Mary must have endured in those anxious hours in Bethlehem.

After moving to a small island away from any large city, "the Christmas story for us has become more concrete," writes Dan Morris. "We wonder about the worry and physical discomfort Mary must have endured in those anxious hours in Bethlehem." (NC photo)

As we sit around our own wood stove, we imagine the gratitude Joseph and Mary must have felt finding some place warm and out of the weather. We talk about the flesh and blood reality of childbirth and how Jesus' first moments of life must have swirled with the experience of the warmth of his mother's body, the scents of domestic animals, the sounds of his stepfather's voice, the feel of simple cloth.

We are awed by the simplicity of God's way and we are curious about our attempts to complicate it. Isn't it wonderful that Christ and the church bring us Christmas every year to again patiently remind us of the remarkably ordinary birth of Christ?

No thunder, no earthquake, no storms. God speaks to us through a young family's struggle, a mother's pain, an event as accessible to four shepherds as to Persian kings.

"No thunder, no earthquake, no storms. God speaks to us through a young family's struggle, a mother's pain, an event as accessible to four shepherds as to Persian kings."

Scriptures

The Biblical meaning of 'peace'

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

"Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).

Peace--What's in a name? Well, there is no little irony in the name given the son of David and Bathsheba. He was called Solomon, "man of peace."

The irony is that David was primarily a warrior king, a fighter from his youth. And Bathsheba's first husband had been a soldier in David's army. One can only speculate on the reason for Solomon's name. Was it wishful thinking? Did it reflect David's weariness with war? Was the name a sort of prayer from Bathsheba's heart, broken by violence and healed by love?

Whatever, that was the new prince's name and it turned out to be quite fitting.

When Solomon came to the throne, Israel's enemies had been subdued. So there was no need for him to go into battle. He was able to devote himself to setting up an efficient administration, initiating ambitious building projects, creating a vast financial empire, promoting general prosperity.

Unfortunately Solomon forgot that there can be no peace without justice for all people. His insensitive treatment of his subjects prepared the way for the civil war after his death.

However, there is a message for us in the efforts made by this "man of peace." They did not involve overcoming hostility by violence. Instead he promoted what he conceived to be well-being.

And well-being is what the biblical notion of peace is about. The word itself is "shalom," which is still the usual form of greeting in Israel. It...
What is Christmas peace?

By Cindy Liebhart
NC News Service


As the days grow closer to Christmas, mailboxes fill up with cards bearing these colorful images. Cheerful, soothing, warm, tranquil scenes. Cards conveying in a hundred different ways wishes for happiness, love, God's blessings, peace.

The cards leave no doubt: Christmas is a time for peace among people of goodwill.

But it would seem that the images of peace proclaimed by cards and holiday advertisements are only part of the picture.

If peace is to have real meaning in life today, with all of its stress and pain, change and disappointment, busyness and conflict, it has to encompass more than fleeting warm feelings.

What does peace imply for a busy family whose parents work outside the home, juggling career demands, the needs and hectic schedules of growing children, their own needs as a couple plus outside commitments to their community?

What does peace mean to a 50-year-old father of five who, after being laid off from his job, is now a home businessman trying to support his family and maintain a sense of purpose and peace?

What does peace mean to a 20-year-old soldier stationed thousands of miles from home, perhaps planning to return to a life with no particular immediate plans, but knowing he has a future to look forward to?

What does peace mean to a lonely elderly woman, perhaps reflecting on a lifetime of accomplishments and losses, with little or no one to share the thoughts and feelings that well up in the quiet of the night?

What does peace mean to a newly married couple who have just moved into a new home, looking happily toward a bright, albeit changed, life?

What does peace mean to a 50-year-old father of five who, after being laid off from his job, is now a home businessman trying to support his family and maintain a sense of purpose and peace?

What does peace mean to a homeless person? To the spouse of an alcoholic? To a widow, facing her first Christmas without her husband of more than 40 years?

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What does peace mean to a newly married couple who have just moved into a new home, looking happily toward a bright, albeit changed, life?
Imperfect but holy families

The following is a reflection by the staff of the Family Enrichment Center.

One of the most enduring and damaging myths that haunts most of us is the belief that our family is flawed or lacking in some essential way, but that others see and know seem perfect, or nearly so. Quite unnecessarily, we experience shame and unhappiness for unfavorably comparing our family to others who appear to be untouched by the realities that are a part of our life. Our experience of family on a daily basis makes us painfully aware of the effects of our own sin. The desire of each of us to have our own way, to be at times selfish and uncompromising, to use people to resolve issues, to be unfaithful to ourselves, to be intolerant and disrespectful of the deeper needs of others - these are the issues we must face in our own family.

Many of us have had visions of perfect Christmas scenes or perhaps have even experienced that one "perfect" storybook Christmas. Maybe we even feel cheated when reality does not measure up to our unrealistic expectations.

One of the most enduring and damaging myths that haunts most of us is the belief that our family is flawed or lacking in some essential way, but that others see and know seem perfect, or nearly so. Quite unnecessarily, we experience shame and unhappiness for unfavorably comparing our family to others who appear to be untouched by the realities that are a part of our life. Our experience of family on a daily basis makes us painfully aware of the effects of our own sin. The desire of each of us to have our own way, to be at times selfish and uncompromising, to use people to resolve issues, to be unfaithful to ourselves, to be intolerant and disrespectful of the deeper needs of others - these are the issues we must face in our own family.

Many of us have had visions of perfect Christmas scenes or perhaps have even experienced that one "perfect" storybook Christmas. Maybe we even feel cheated when reality does not measure up to our unrealistic expectations. The usual experience of Christmas may be one of NOT having the entire extended family gathered at Christmas dinner, of NOT being able to decorate the tree singing carols and having all the children present and joyfully participating, or even of setting up the drum tree straight in its stand without a scene. How many times do we need to experience models of healthy families within our friendships and communities, and to see them on TV also, but at the same time, we must remind ourselves that we are only aware of a small slice of their life, not the whole of it. If we could know that family on a more intimate level, we would see that they are tainted by the same imperfections that touch our lives.

Perhaps it is the effect of reading too many fairytales when we were young that it seems natural to expect the perfect family on a more intimate level, we must remind ourselves that we are only aware of a small slice of their life, not the whole of it. If we could know that family on a more intimate level, we would see that they are tainted by the same imperfections that touch our lives.

Reality is harsher - but infinitely richer as we struggle to grow, to forgive, to accept and to love even when we don't feel very loving. Real families, as opposed to mythically perfect families, have had to learn to cope with the human imperfections of its members and, more often than we realize, with problems bordering on tragedy. The tendency is to keep pain and growth from public view.

We need not shout our faults and failures from the rooftops. However, there is a certain element of bonding, healing and wholeness experienced through our willingness to share our pain with other families.

Letting our family as flawed and others as perfect is an injustice to both. To expect perfection of ourselves or to assume it in others only serves to maintain distance and falseness. The lived experience of family struggle and growth is authentic, genuine and holy.

Let us not pour out our faults and failures from the rooftops. However, there is a certain element of bonding, healing and wholeness experienced through our willingness to share our pain with other families.

Letting our family as flawed and others as perfect is an injustice to both. To expect perfection of ourselves or to assume it in others only serves to maintain distance and falseness. The lived experience of family struggle and growth is authentic, genuine and holy.

Pope John Paul II urges families to "become what you are . . . communities of love and intimacy. We add: You don't have to be perfect. Celebrate what you are! Today is your day.

Impenetrable but holy families

The following is a reflection by the staff of the Family Enrichment Center.

One of the most enduring and damaging myths that haunts most of us is the belief that our family is flawed or lacking in some essential way, but that others see and know seem perfect, or nearly so. Quite unnecessarily, we experience shame and unhappiness for unfavorably comparing our family to others who appear to be untouched by the realities that are a part of our life. Our experience of family on a daily basis makes us painfully aware of the effects of our own sin. The desire of each of us to have our own way, to be at times selfish and uncompromising, to use people to resolve issues, to be unfaithful to ourselves, to be intolerant and disrespectful of the deeper needs of others - these are the issues we must face in our own family.

Many of us have had visions of perfect Christmas scenes or perhaps have even experienced that one "perfect" storybook Christmas. Maybe we even feel cheated when reality does not measure up to our unrealistic expectations. The usual experience of Christmas may be one of NOT having the entire extended family gathered at Christmas dinner, of NOT being able to decorate the tree singing carols and having all the children present and joyfully participating, or even of setting up the drum tree straight in its stand without a scene. How many times do we need to appreciate the goodness of what is because we mentally place it next to perfection?

Some even experience depression or weep after watching episodes of "The Bill Cosby Show" or "The Waltons" because their experience of family life is so lacking in comparison. Or they come home after hearing someone share some extra-ordinary family experience and say to themselves, "Why can't my family be like that?" Many single-parent families even have difficulty recognizing themselves as 'family' because they don't fit the traditional mold. All of us have felt something similar at some time in our life.

Certainly we all need to experience models of healthy families within our friendships and communities, and to see them on TV also, but at the same time, we must remind ourselves that we are only aware of a small slice of their life, not the whole of it. If we could know that family on a more intimate level, we would see that they are tainted by the same imperfections that touch our lives.

Perhaps it is the effect of reading too many fairytales when we were young that it seems natural to expect the perfect family on a more intimate level, we must remind ourselves that we are only aware of a small slice of their life, not the whole of it. If we could know that family on a more intimate level, we would see that they are tainted by the same imperfections that touch our lives.

Reality is harsher - but infinitely richer as we struggle to grow, to forgive, to accept and to love even when we don't feel very loving. Real families, as opposed to mythically perfect families, have had to learn to cope with the human imperfections of its members and, more often than we realize, with problems bordering on tragedy. The tendency is to keep pain and growth from public view.

We need not shout our faults and failures from the rooftops. However, there is a certain element of bonding, healing and wholeness experienced through our willingness to share our pain with other families.

Letting our family as flawed and others as perfect is an injustice to both. To expect perfection of ourselves or to assume it in others only serves to maintain distance and falseness. The lived experience of family struggle and growth is authentic, genuine and holy.

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