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## CHRISTMAS AT GREATEST U. S. CATHOLIC CENTER

By FRANK HALL

(N. C. W. C. News Service)

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—With representatives of almost a score of the great religious houses of the world gathered about her in their houses of study, the Catholic University of America at Washington provides perhaps the most varied symposium of the picturesque old customs of Christmas-time to be found in America.

Here are gathered the men to whom Christmas is in a sense the most real—the religious—those who share in the fostering of these pious rites through the centuries. They come from many lands; they bear with them every peculiar observance contributed by the birth-lands of far-dung Orders, every distinctive act of Yule devotion garnered from adopted peoples and carried on down the years.

Most elaborate and perhaps most impressive of all the eglemonies is that at the Franciscan Monastery, Mt. St. Sepulchre. Here Christmas-time brings forth a scene that is unique in America. It is the enactment, faithful in every detail, of the exact observances which at the same time are held on the other side of the world in the Holy Land itself, where the original Christmas took place.

### Climbing to Mt. Sepulchre

As midnight approaches on the eve of the great festival, hundreds will climb the ascent to Mt. St. Sepulchre for the ceremony, as hundreds on the same eve will wind their way through crooked, narrow streets to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. On the stroke of 12 the Solemn High Mass will begin, the ancient formula, the venerable chants duplicating those of the Old World.

On the altar in the center of the great monastery church, as the celebrant ascends the steps, there will repose an exquisite little image, life-size, of the new-born Saviour. It

lies there only at Christmas, as does its double which at that other Mass far away is reposing on the altar at Jerusalem.

All the stately beauty of the plain-song chants, sung by the whole community, scores of priests and brothers in their picturesque habit, will mark the Mass itself. Then, the Sacrifice over, the celebrant will come down from the altar bearing in his arms the image of the Babe, resting on a white pillow. Behind him will form the procession—the officers of the Mass in their vestments, the monks, two by two in their rude brown garb, then the congregation. Now the cortege, headed by the image of the Saviour of the world Whose birth it commemorates, will slowly circle the interior of the church to the entrance of the Grotto of Bethlehem, singing hymns as it goes.

### In the Tiny Grotto

At the Grotto steps the celebrant will slowly descend, followed by as many as may, for the passage is small and the grotto, a replica of that in the Holy City, is tiny. Arrived at the manger, again a duplication of that in Jerusalem, the little image will be deposited tenderly and reverently on the wisp of straw which covers the plain little niche, there to remain until Epiphany, when with equal solemnity it will be borne back to the church proper and then laid away until another Christmas.

The greater part of the congregation will now ascend to the upper church, but there will remain priests and a scattering of the visitors; for carols will be sung in the grotto and there will be two low Masses, beside the manger. Gradually the church will empty, as the great shrine church in Jerusalem empties, the faithful departing one by one.

In the afternoon there will be Benediction, and again the church

will be crowded to the doors. Here again the ceremony will be a duplication of the day in Jerusalem. Every turn, every genuflection, from the start of the midnight Mass till the close of the day, is the exact counterpart of the Holy City observance.

While this elaborate ceremony is proceeding, in half a dozen other houses of religious Orders other midnight Masses will be in progress. At the stately Dominican College there will be the chanting of the magnificent old notes of Matins, before the Mass begins at 12. Toward the end of the ceremony, priests and brothers again will join in chanting Lauds.

### Typical American Christmas

At the Paulist College there will be a midnight Mass and the entire community also will join in the solemn plainsong chant. The old Christmas carols will mingle with the more stately music. But here, the solemn religious ceremonies of the day will give way in the evening to a typical American Christmas night, fittingly reflecting the nationality of the first great Order of distinctively American origin. There will be a "party" at which all will be fun. It will be in charge of the students, who will enact a skit of their own writing and take turns at aiming jests at everyone present. The "party" is held annually, and there is an unwritten law that on this night the faculty, from the Superior down, may be made the butt of a thousand jokes with impunity to the jesters. It is a night gleefully prepared for and awaited by the whole community, faculty and student body alike.

A more purposeful note is added by the fact that the friends of the college who are invited include as many converts to the Church as may be gathered together in keeping with the special mission of the Paulists—the bringing of the Faith to the non-Catholic. Germany's splendid choral Christmas

Masses will be recalled at the house of the Friars Minor Conventual, which has more foundations in Germany than in any other country. Here, at the Mass there will be sung the hymns of old, all translated into English save the great masterpiece of the German choral writers, "Stille Nacht."

A beautiful bit of charity, brought with them as a sacred tradition of their order, will be enacted at the house of the Fathers of the Atonement. It is the caring for the "Brothers Christopher," famous at the motherhouse at Graymoor, New York, and transplanted to the house of studies at Washington, even though meager facilities almost forbid the practice. The "Brothers Christopher" are wayfarers who, going nowhere in particular, stop in as the guests of charity at houses of the Fathers of the Atonement. There they are provided with food and otherwise cared for, in return for which they perform various kinds of labor for the religious. At Graymoor, when winters are particularly bitter, Christmas sees as many as 150 of these men at the monastery. They have been dubbed "Brothers Christopher" by the members of the Order because St. Christopher, renowned in story, is the patron of travelers. They are devoted to their benefactors. Some have remained with the Fathers for years, and there are never fewer than 25 or 30 at Graymoor.

### Caring For The Stranger

With the arrival of Christmas, the Fathers do their best to provide cheer for their strange guests. There is always an entertainment and such of the "Christophers" as have some small attachment at home, be it a little girl, a mother, a brother, a sister, or a friend, are invited to the Christmas dinner. A playlet given by the children under the tutelage of the Sisters has become a tradition.

"The Vinedresser," home of the Graymoor Fathers in Washington is less than a year old and the community thus far numbers only 25. Yet the custom has not been forgotten.

There are now 150 Brothers Christopher at Graymoor, and they will be cared for as the Fathers in their own way. There will be food and shelter, and while no entertainment will be feasible, the good tradition will be kept alive, and added to the symposium of Yule customs at the University.

At other religious houses of the University there will be Christmas Masses, and in some cases, as at the Franciscan Monastery, Mt. St. Sepulchre, the observance will be particularly elaborate. At St. Augustine's, for instance, where the Benedictines have their headquarters, there will be the Christmas Mass and the observance of the feast of the Nativity. The monks of the order, who have been in the country since 1863, will observe the great time-honored festival in their own land. They will observe the memory of the birth of Christ annually, forming a picture of the birth of Christ, and in stately array, carrying the Babe to the manger in the grotto, and in the traditional "Stille Nacht" in German, the whole community will sing the beautiful strains of the German choral writers. The observance will be the most complete of any in the country, and the monks of the order will observe the great time-honored festival in their own land. They will observe the memory of the birth of Christ annually, forming a picture of the birth of Christ, and in stately array, carrying the Babe to the manger in the grotto, and in the traditional "Stille Nacht" in German, the whole community will sing the beautiful strains of the German choral writers.

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## Rash Prophecy of Holy Year Made Ridiculous

By MSGR. ENRICO PUCCI

(Rome Correspondent, N. C. W. C. News Service)

ROME, Dec. 1.—It is nearly a hundred years ago since Marie Henri Bayle, better known under his novelist's nom de plume of Stendahl, wrote in *Memoirs of Rome*, under date of November 24, 1827: "St. Peter's have five doors, one of which is walled up and is only opened every 25 years for the ceremony of the Jubilee. The Jubilee that once brought 400,000 pilgrims of all classes to Rome, only gathered 400 mendicants in 1825. It is necessary to hurry if one wants to see the ceremonies of a religion which should be modified or extinguished."

A century has passed and the Church has not been extinguished. Its ceremonies have not been "modified," but in the hundred years since the brilliant skeptic wrote, the world—which he knew has been "modified" in most marvelous manner. Never, perhaps, in the history of mankind has there been record of a century of such profound change in the political and material life of the peoples of many nations. Institutions, nay, the very ideas by which the public and private life of millions of people were ruled, have dissolved—they were, they are not. Only one institution has experienced no change—the Catholic Church for which Stendahl rashly predicted extinction remains unchanged and firm in its divine foundation.

### Million Disprove Prophecy

Seldom has prophet of desolation been so unfortunate in pointing his prophecy as was this hater of Catholicism. Of course he lied in his statement of the Jubilee conditions in 1825, but the thunder of nearly a million voices from every corner of the earth has given the lie to his prognosis of future Holy Year celebrations in Rome.

Since last Christmas, Rome has truly been the Holy City to which people have flocked from every continent, desirous—as the Pope has so often said—to be nearer the throbbing heart of the Church. They have come dressed in all fashions: Europeans and Americans in the correct garb of their countries; Egyptians swathed in fine silk mantles; Indians with heads draped in large turbans; Breton fishermen in plain jerseys; Spanish ladies with rich mantillas and the high tortoise-shell combs;

Polish peasants in costumes of all colors of the rainbow; Swiss mountaineers in their Alpine dress; Moravian agriculturalists in costumes ornamented with silver buckles and artificial flowers; Rumanian ladies wearing large veils and wraps of silver cloth; German students in their traditional high shining boots and white and flame-red jackets; Bosnians and Albanians in small jackets ornamented with frogs, wide sashes and white trousers; Scottish Highlanders in kilts.

They have come, and in thousands of processions both in the churches and in the streets, they have lifted up their voices to God in prayers and hymns in all tongues. Like brothers at each other's side, though perhaps not understanding a word of their respective languages, they have been uplifted by consciousness of the same profession of faith, the same spirit of piety and the same divine and only charity.

### Rich and Poor Together

They have come, rich and poor alike. At the Piazza San Pietro which seemed to be the general headquarters of the pilgrimages, one saw drawn up along the porticoes scores of automobiles belonging to parties of rich people who were praying in the Basilica or visiting the Vatican Palace, and between the same columns, seated on the marble steps, were poor peasants, sometimes entire families who had brought their bread and cheese and between visits allayed the pangs of hunger and drank water from the nearest fountain. Among those who came from afar, from America and Australia, and who had therefore to incur heavy expense, there was one who had sold his house to find the means necessary for the journey. The Pope himself related this fact whilst conversing with the eminent French writer, Georges Goyau.

A group of Neapolitan laborers, when the Jubilee was promulgated on the Feast of the Ascension, 1924, proposed to put aside each week a day's wages so as to have at their disposal the few hundreds of lire that were necessary for the journey and stay in Rome. Among the pilgrims of places nearer Rome the spirit of sacrifice was even more eloquent and visible. These poor peasants came in hundreds and thousands, and as they could not be more than a day absent from their work in the country, had permission to make the visits to the Basilicas and all the prescribed practices in a single day. They arrived by the early morning train and many of them had begun to walk at dawn, some indeed at midnight, because they had to travel four, five, or six hours by foot before reaching the nearest station. On their arrival at Rome, they

heard Mass and went to Communion, and still fasting, as only commenced the visits to the Basilicas in long processions behind the cross, singing and chanting psalms. The last visit was reserved for St. Peter's where they arrived at noon, and after the visit entered the Vatican for the audience of the Pope. In the atrium of the entrance to the Papal Palace they left the poor provisions they had brought with them: bread, cheese, and fruit. Until two o'clock and even later, they were kept at the audience and only after it, amidst the gigantic columns of the colonnade, tired and hungry, did they partake of their frugal lunch. They then walked to the railway station, and after the train journey, they had still four, five or six hours of trudging before they could rest in their own homes.

### Pilgrims Who Came On Foot

But what shall be said of the pilgrims who came to Rome on foot from France, Spain, Switzerland, Poland and Germany? They have been many—some hundreds. And not a few might be seen with bare feet walking along the streets of the city leading to the holy Basilicas.

Side by side with these poor and humble folk, how many of the great, how many titled and rich people, how many scientists, how many magistrates, how many senators and deputies and ministers, from the President of the Belgian Senate, the Dutch Premier, the Belgian Minister for Colonies, the Princes of the Sovereign House of Spain, and the former reigning Houses of Germany, Austria, Bavaria, Hungary, Portugal and Saxony, to President Cosgrave, who, in honor of Ireland, came humbly among the last of the pilgrims to this Holy Jubilee.

Every nation that has an ancient history of the past has its church in Rome: St. Louis for the French, St. Maria in Monserrato for the Spaniards, St. Maria dell'Anima and St. Maria in Campitello for the Germans, St. Isidore for the Irish, St. Anthony for the Portuguese, St. Stanislaus for the Poles, St. Wendel for the Bohemians, St. Silvester for the English, St. Julian for the Belgians, St. Athanasius for the Greeks, St. Jerome for the Yugoslavs, St. Salvatore for the Rumanians. And the churches recently constructed or assigned, as the beautiful Church of St. Patrick for the Irish, and the ancient classic church of St. Susanna for the Americans of the United States. Finally, a dozen or more churches for the various Italian provinces, for the Lombards, the Venetians, the Tuscans, the Ne-

apolitans, the Sicilians, etc. All these national and provincial churches were during this Holy Year made centers at which the respective pilgrimages made their headquarters, so that, even outside the greater Basilicas, the life of piety and intense religious fervor of the crowds who flocked to the Jubilee was manifest in every part of the city.

But besides these, how many other pious manifestations? How many processions? How many ways with beautiful glass canopies, Via Appia, Via Ostiense, Via Ardeatina, etc.—flanked by ruins and famous monuments, which are found everywhere in Rome, were also traversed without ceasing by the crowds of pilgrims who were the Catholics and who, after having chanted psalms in stately groups in sunlight, disappeared into the subterranean ways, into the mysterious recesses where so many martyrs still sleep in the peace of the Lord, and prostrated themselves to pray where prayed the Christians of the early centuries, while before them under the snow still adorned with the paintings of those times the priests renewed the mystic rite that in older days had given strength and heroism to generations who lived under the continual shadow of death.

### Watching Pope In Garden

What is that small crowd that stops from time to time in the afternoon on the central terrace which overlooks the Vatican garden, in front of the marvelous pile of the Dome of St. Peter's? They are all looking towards a certain point of the garden and there are excited but subdued cries: "There he is, there he is. He has gone again!" It is the Pope whom they see and there in a corner of the garden, a large fountain where a handsome gold fish disports themselves, Pope XI taking his daily walk, the only moment of pause, at least between the audience and the other when, after having received thousands of pilgrims in the morning, he prepares to receive other thousands in the evening. And every day when he descends for his walk he invariably stops at the fountain and amuses himself throwing morsels of bread, which a servant has brought for the purpose, to the fish. And every time visitors to the "Pope's" point him out to others: "The Pope, the Pope!" And usually a group forms, the little crowd that large throngs of people with their

or time, many of the pilgrims of the Holy Year, and they will be cared for as the Fathers in their own way. There will be food and shelter, and while no entertainment will be feasible, the good tradition will be kept alive, and added to the symposium of Yule customs at the University.

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