

### Christmas Day in Alpine Heights At Hospice of St. Bernard Brings Faithful Near Rejoicing Angels

By M. MASSIANI  
(N. C. W. C. News Service)

An altitude of 8,115 feet. To the left, Switzerland. To the right, marks the frontier Italy. At the left, peaks. At the right, peaks. Everywhere, snow. Solitude. Silence.

Moonbeams cast their silvery light on a little frozen lake, over the tortuous immensity of the Alps covered with a uniformly white cone, and on the thick walls of a fortress-like convent where, for six centuries, Augustinian Monks, from generation to generation, have played a heroic and beneficent role in the service of travelers lost in the mountains, menaced by the cold, the precipice and the avalanche. Here, on the road that leads from the Canton of Valais to the valley of Aosta, lies the Hospice of the Grand Saint Bernard.

A spot far from men, protected from them by the rigor of the ice, by the hostility of the snow; a celebrated spot, nevertheless, where once Jupiter had his temple, and where 400 years before Christ—Gallic legions on the march took the oath and 23 centuries later—the armies of Napoleon set out on their conquest of Lombardy.

But, between these rare instances, separated by the life of 50 generations, where the tumult of armies resounded, what an interminable pause for contemplation, where the solitude of the pass is disturbed only by the passage of isolated travelers—tourists in the summer; smugglers, emigrants, beggars in the course of the extremely long winters of these altitudes!

**Comfort the Traveler**  
How redoubtable and treacherous the pass! How many unfortunate ones have been lost there, have slipped to the bottom of the precipice and have been carried off by the avalanches!

It is to protect and succor the voyagers that, there in the mountains, the 20 Monks of the hospice, with their marvelously trained dogs, keep watch.

Every curve of the pass, some miles from the monastery, beginning with the entrance into the most dangerous zone, a refuge is built and is now equipped with a telephone.

Is a traveler on the road? When he reaches the refuge, a telephone call will notify the monastery. If the stranger is not perfectly familiar with the place, if he has need of the least aid, a Religious with a dog sets out on the road to find and guide him. There in the remoteness of the mountains the pedestrian will find fire, a hot drink, food, a bed.

The transient, more often than not, is somewhat fortunate. For the 7,000 tourists that visit the monastery each year, hospitality is afforded 17,000 indigents.

In the choir stalls, all the monks have taken their places, except the Prior and his two assistants who are at the altar. The harmonium is being accompanied with its frail tones the masculine voices of the monks who chant, in Gregorian melodies, the fulfillment of the Promise, the joy of humanity delivered, peace to men of goodwill.

It is cold despite the heater; the joy air seems to penetrate the walls, to creep in under the doors. Glasses are clinked; fingers are numb. But being here close to one another, in the center of nature at its uttermost, far above remote humanity, hearts seem warmer.

There are no regrets at such a moment for the splendor of the ceremonies which deploy their pomp under the vaultings of cathedrals or the wealthiest parish churches in the capitals of the world—illuminated throughout the night, on Christmas Eve.

Here one has the sensation of having approached more advantageously the intimacy of the crib and when, Holy Communion received, the three Masses heard, the faithful express to the Master their gratitude that He has granted them this unique night, they thank Him for having permitted them to utter their murmured prayers far from the agitations of the world, closer to the divine peace, nearer the rejoicing of the angels.

### Catholics Should Support Their Press, Says Pope Pius

Vatican City.—The interest of Catholics must be aroused so that they will not only read their Catholic newspapers but will also give them the proper financial support, His Holiness Pope Pius XI. declared, addressing an Italian Catholic university group he has just received in audience.

The university group includes a special solicitude for the Catholic Press in its program of activities, and Pope Pius heartily endorsed its intention to stimulate interest in and support of Catholic newspapers. The persons received by His Holiness are all members of Catholic Action.

Catholic newspapers, Pope Pius XI. told the university group, have too few subscribers, particularly paying subscribers. Whenever his blessing is requested for the Catholic Press, the Holy Father continued, his intention is always to give a special blessing to those who are paying subscribers to the Catholic Press.

Pope Pius took occasion to point out the extensive apostolate that is open to the good press, and invited all those belonging to Catholic Action to participate actively in this apostolate.

### Scientific Missionary Institute Inaugurated at Propaganda College

Archbishop Salotti Cites Two-fold Scope of New Mission Institute Set Up by Propaganda College To Train Workers for Foreign Fields

(Fides Service)

Rome.—The Scientific Missionary Institute of the Urban College of Propaganda, Rome, has just been inaugurated by His Excellency, Archbishop Carlo Salotti, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. His Excellency delivered the discourse on "Missionary Science and Missionary Action." In instituting this new course of "Missionary Studies," the Congregation of Propaganda is corresponding with the inspiration given in the "Maximum Illud" and in the "Rerum Ecclesiae" and stands true to the noble tradition which it has followed for the last three centuries in giving to the missions a select personnel.

The Scientific Missionary Institute with a Faculty of Missionology and a Course of Languages, proposes for itself a twofold scope: (1) To give the more talented among the students of the Urban College an opportunity of investigating more deeply, with a truly scientific method, into all the missionary questions, thus qualifying themselves to act as teachers in Catholic Colleges and Universities; (2) To make possible for the students of Religious Institutes with members working in mission lands, the study of scientific, historical, religious and philological problems connected with the character and customs of the people among whom they will work and thus being better fitted for their missionary career. For this also special lessons will be given at the Lateran Mission Museum, and the Congregation of Propaganda will place at their disposal the immense amount of precious material in its Archives and in the new Missionary Library.

Students wishing to continue for degrees, as well as those who do not so aspire, may be enrolled in the missionology course. Those wishing to study for degrees must have finished their theology and philosophy. The others will be admitted in accordance with the judgment of the Rec-

for Magnificus who will decide upon their fitness. The course is of three years and takes in fundamental studies, special studies and auxiliary studies. The first regards the missionary doctrine contained in Scripture and Tradition and connected with Dogmatic and Moral Theology; Mission Law and Mission History in general and in particular. The special studies will be concerned with religious conditions and political and social questions in mission lands.

The language course offers Chinese, Arabic, Armenian, Syrian, Chaldean, and others.

The faculty for this year will be as follows: (1) Dogmatic Missionology, Rev. Dr. Cordovani, O. P. (2) Missions in Holy Scripture, Magr. Ernest Ruffini. (3) Missionary Law, Magr. Dini. (4) History of the Missions in the Second and Third Centuries, Rev. Hugh Bertini. (5) History of the China Missions in the Thirteenth Century, Rev. Fr. Dindinger, O. M. I. (6) Mission Statistics, Rev. Hugh Bertini. (7) Missionary Pedagogy and Pastoral, Rev. Fr. Perbal, O. M. I. (8-9) History of Religions and Ethnology, Compared, Fathers Schmidt and Schuller, S.V.D. (10) Mission Medicine, Dr. Perez.

**RELIGIOUS GETS PRIZE**  
Paris.—The Geographic Society of Paris has awarded a gold medal to Father Marie Bernard Mancel, of the Ursulines, and the Congregation of Propaganda will place at their disposal the immense amount of precious material in its Archives and in the new Missionary Library.

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### Poetry of Christmas In Popular Legends

By MSGR. ENRICO PUCCI  
(N. C. W. C. News Service)

Rome.—The exquisite sense of poetry which emanates from the mystery of the Nativity of Our Lord has not only given rise to the pious Christian custom of solemnizing the annual recurrence of the memorable date with rites and customs all pervaded by a sweet sense of intimacy but has also awakened the muse of popular poetry which has created round the event related by the Gospel a number of legends and poetic representations.

This is so not only at present but it was true also as far back as the first centuries of the Church. Early Christian writings mention a number of books forming a complete literature, which, in certain circles, had such a vogue that apocryphal books were confused, or indeed completely mistaken, for the genuine Gospels. Some of these books are in Greek, and contain a narration and description of the Nativity and infancy of the Saviour. The critical investigation of ecclesiastical writers, including those of the earliest centuries— suffice to mention St. Jerome, the great Doctor of the Scriptures—and the authority of Bishops, Popes and Councils were forever aiming at separating the true from the false in this field, therefore apocryphal books in spite of having at times enjoyed great favor, were soon relegated to the class of spurious documents of Christian literature and lost any religious authority, their recollection surviving only for the literary and documentary value they may have, like any non-religious work.

The Canon of inspired books belonging to the Old and New Testaments, dating back to the fourth century and which was solemnly confirmed in the Council of Trent, represents the definite document of this work of action between the true and the false, inspired by the Holy Ghost and those of an authority purely human and therefore often erroneous, which had been gathering round the former books.

**Poetry Flowers**  
The appearance at such an early date of a literature of imagination round the dearest and most important facts of Christian faith and piety, did not always represent a fraudulent attempt to deceive the public; as was the case when apocryphal books were compiled with the intent of accrediting heretical doctrines. Often they were expressions of the popular fancy that tried to color with ever more efficacious images the events and truths which Christian conscience believes and professes in the symbol of its Faith. In such cases the believer is well able to differentiate between what he believes on God's revelation and what he himself thinks, imagines and creates to give fuller expression to the feelings that rise in his heart.

This is so of all times and all places and does not belittle nor alter the purity of the faith while it develops the sense of piety. For instance, when the king of some dynast on Mount Calvary was professed our faith in the Redemption and believed in the infinite value of the sufferings of the Son of God immolated on the Cross for the salvation of mankind. But if we add to that thought a recollection of the legend of the Little Child, which, sorry for the sufferings of Jesus in agony, tried to reach his head and tried in vain to tear off the thorns from the crown covered with blood, only to cause for itself the wound which forever after will be recalled by its tuft of red feathers— we are well able to distinguish Faith's truth as announced by the Gospel and taught by the Church, from the fruit of our imagination and this only leads us to adorn the dogmatic truth, on which our intelligence dwells, with a charming image in which our piety takes delight.

One of the subjects which particularly lends itself to the flowering of poetry and legend is that of Our Lord's Nativity and the events of His infancy strictly related to the Nativity itself. This is only natural because indeed the theme of birth and infant's graces is one forever dear to the human heart. If to this are added the wonderful circumstances, divine as well as human, connected with the birth of Our Redeemer—the virginity of His mother, the poverty in which God's omnipotence and greatness are hidden, the tidings of peace to men and the simple adoration of the shepherds, the rage and suspicion of Herod who sought to put to death the announced King of the Jews—we must realize that it is not surprising if around so wonderful an event, all peoples and places where Christian truth is known have their poetic fancies and legends, so full of exquisite grace at times that in vain would we seek to find the equal among any other subject or cycle of events.

**Charming Sicilian Legend**  
There is a legend which the Sicilians repeat in preference to all others concerning an episode connected with the birth of Jesus—the snare set for Him by the suspicious tyrant Herod, in the new revelation from the Wise Men, saw a threat to his throne. Slightly is one of the Italian regions where, more than any other, all local traditions are kept, and where the spirit of faith is very strong; these two factors contribute to the handing down from father to son of the beautiful and pure narrative. We regret that translation must necessarily diminish the efficacy which we admire in the simple form of the dialect, but in compensation for this defect may be brought, no doubt, the charm of



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