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Santa Claus In A Subway

By THOMAS J. HENNESSY, S.J.

(Reprinted from the "Catholic Deaf-Mute")

It was shortly before Christmas that Father Bowen took the Cambridge subway at Harvard Square to go into Boston. He dropped into a seat and was settling himself for the ride in, when he realized that he was very much an object of attention.

A group of youngsters in the seat opposite were smiling at him and gesturing to attract his attention. He took in the situation at once. "Deaf children on their way to school," he remarked to the passenger on his right, who was very much amused at the antics of the children, "and all primed for the holidays."

"They are certain you are a Catholic priest," the other said.

"Oh, yes, they sense that somehow," Father Bowen smiled cheerily and gave a broad wave of his hand to his new friends. That was more than invitation enough. He was fairly bombarded with signs, questions, accounts of what was going to take place today and in the happy free days just ahead. They didn't seem to care much whether he understood or not. He was a Catholic priest and they had a sort of ownership in him.

Picture of Santa Claus

Father Bowen's eye twinkled. He made no reply to their messages, but with his forefinger drew the outline of a fat and rollicking Santa Claus. That met with universal recognition and laughter. Soon Santa was dragging a heavy sled, all in imagination, and distributing gifts to one and all. That was just what was in the minds and hearts of every one of them and signs started from them quicker than the lightning flashes of mid-summer.

But soon the inevitable brevity was brought out, and at sight of the black book, the merriment subsided and the youngsters returned to discuss the matter among themselves.

"Maybe he's not a priest," suggested one lad doubtfully.

"Of course he is," replied a companion, "anybody could see that."

"At any rate he can't use the signs," interposed another.

"No, that's too bad," was the reply, "we could have lots of fun with him if he could."

"I'll bet he's a Jesuit," came another suggestion.

"No, sir," returned the boy who was so confident of his knowledge of priests, "he has a new hat and Father Consoidine says no Jesuit has a decent hat."

But Father Bowen had been watching the conversation all along out of the corner of his eye, and can restrain his chuckles no longer. The black book is put away, and suddenly his fingers begin to sign. "Suppose a friend gave a Jesuit a new hat, he would have to wear it, wouldn't he?" The question fell on them like a thunderbolt. They felt for a moment as if they had been caught stealing jam in the pantry.

They found a friend.

But for a moment only. Then their faces lit up with great excitement. They had found a friend indeed and they crowded around him and engaged in the most animated conversation until the train jolted into Park street, when all prepared to move out, tipping their caps reverently and smiling affectionately.

"You know, Father," said the passenger on his right, "I have been out of work now for over six months and there isn't a thing in sight; I have two children and the wife to think about, and I must say it's gotten me rather discouraged, but seeing those children so cheerful in their handiwork—sort of almost—one up to carry the load with a smile... But—here's my station, and I must get off... and say, Father, how and where and why in the world did you pick up those signs?" And Father Bowen, smiling, took out his Breviary once more in answer.

WIDER USE OF CATHOLIC PRESS IN SCHOOL CURRICULA IS URGED

Chicago—(NCWQ)—That every Catholic school—elementary, high school and college—make a systematic use of the Catholic press, not as an isolated activity but one related to the various school subjects is recommended in the November issue of the Journal of Religious Instruction published by De Paul University here.

The recommendation is made in an article entitled "In Anticipation of Catholic Press Month," and reads as follows:

"Is it possible that Catholic education may be to blame for the insecure position of the Catholic press in this country? Why is it that in so many homes a Catholic publication is not found? How do we diagnose the home that subscribes for one or more Catholic periodicals that are never read? We read and hear a great deal about supporting our press, but a fragmentary subscription or two is not support. On the other hand, moral support that springs from a genuine appreciation is far more enduring than a desultory subscription. It is surprising to observe the homes into which Catholic papers enter but remain unread. This is not conducive to a lasting interest in the press. At this moment it would not be inappropriate to answer this question: What are our schools doing to develop a Catholic press conscience in pupils and students? Press month activities are good. An increase in subscriptions is most desirable. But are these activities of sufficient weight to instill into the boys and girls of all ages a devotion to the press, an eagerness to pursue it, a confidence in its pages and a willingness to support it financially? Learning, at its best, is a slow process. One can hardly expect a special week or month to develop an ability to use the Catholic press intelligently. The elementary school, the high school and the college have an opportunity, and we believe it is also an obligation, to guide pupils and students in an intelligent use of the Catholic press. The boys and girls in our intermediate grades read the daily papers. Do they read the Catholic weekly? To what extent do our older pupils and students find satisfaction in the diocesan paper? Do they know how to read it intelligently? What do they think of its world news and feature articles, editorials, local news, national news? What about Catholic weeklies? How many of our high school and college students have the habit of reading them intelligently? Are they eager to discover their interpretations, of current questions? Are they familiar with national figures in the Catholic press? If not, why not? We would recommend for every school, elementary, high school and college, a systematic use of the Catholic press, not as an isolated activity but one related to the various school subjects. Religion and the social studies alone offer an unusual opportunity for this correlation. Only when Catholic education has made its students truly intelligent about and appreciative of the press can we hope for an adequate support of the Catholic press in the United States."

Four Observances To Help Keep Yule Spirit Suggested

The following have been recommended as "four observances which will help to keep the Christmas spirit in Christmas":

1. Send Christmas greetings which are religious in character, cards which bear the sacred images of Christian art.
2. Give Catholic reading matter—books, subscriptions to Catholic newspapers and magazines—for Christmas.
3. Be generous to the poor. Some people make their Christmas giving a selfish bounty, bestowing only on those from whom they hope to get a return.
4. Forgive old enemies and get rid of grudges and of ill-will.

Clipped For Fun

Ruling Justice.—Judge: Too old! Why, I could give you twenty years.
Friend: Now, how, Judge. Don't start talking about—Sydney Bulletin.

If a child begins to become unmanageable, advises a Chicago expert, switch his attention. Ah, how we progress! That wasn't what they used to switch when we were a boy.

"This a good river for fish?" asked the onlooker.
"Must be," replied the angler.
"They won't come out."

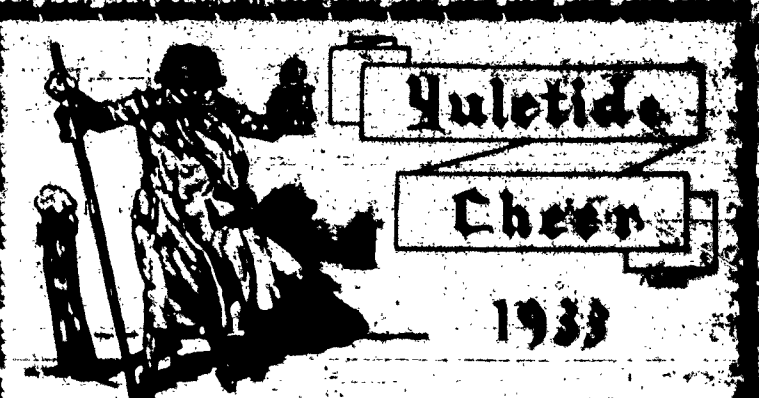
Just visited the Colosseum by moonlight, he wrote from Rome to his wife. I thought of you as I gazed at the old ruins.

Jimmy, I wish you'd learn better table manners; you're a regular pig at the table.
Deep silence on Jimmy's part. So father, in order to impress him more, added: I say, Jimmy, do you know what a pig is?
Yes, sir, replied Jimmy meekly. It's a hog's little boy.

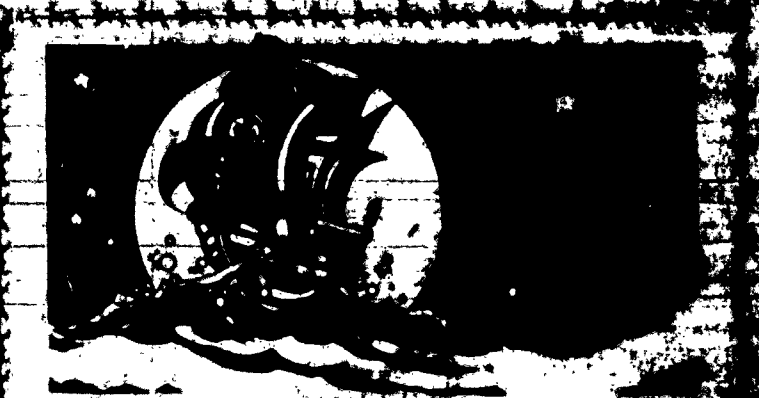
A newly-married couple were entertaining and among the guests was one whose conduct was rather suspicious. At supper he held up on his fork a piece of meat which had been served him, and in a vein of extended humor, remarked, "Is this pig?"
"To which end of the fork do you refer?" asked a quiet-looking man sitting at the other end of the table.
—Montreal Star.

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