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CHRISTMAS NEATH THE SOUTHERN CROSS

By **PAUL KAVANAGH**
(Written for N. C. W. C. Christmas Supplement)

Christmas is Christmas the whole world over, be it spent amid winter snows or summer sunshine. The first Midnight Mass to be celebrated anywhere during the coming holy season will, owing to their geographical situation, be offered in lands beneath the Southern Cross which are washed or wholly surrounded by the South Pacific Ocean.

In these countries, where, on Christmas Day, the thermometer registers anything from 80 degrees upwards, it is hard to visualize the Christmas story in its setting of a snowbound countryside. But the old-world traditions brought to New Zealand, where this is written, or to the neighboring continent of Australia, by the pioneer settlers from the Promised Land are enshrined in the hearts of their descendants, so that climatic conditions have little effect on their observance of the Christmas customs or the traditional celebration of Yuletide.

Children Taught They Are Favored By the Christ Child
We tell our children who read of the cold of Bethlehem that they are especially favored by the Christ Child. We have a legend that He, when he was old enough to run about, wished His Birthday came in summertime, so that He and all other children might spend it happily out of doors. And in order that some boys and girls, at least, should be able to celebrate His Birthday feast in conditions more nearly approximating the May-time of the northern hemisphere.

Thus in these southern lands we know, He sent us flowers instead of snow. And bright, warm, summer skies that glow When Christmas Day is dawning.

In our cities, towns, and villages, Midnight Mass is the rule, and no other Mass-time in the year, and the churches more crowded or with greater numbers approaching the Communion rails. Away in the backblocks, in places too remote for a visit from a priest at this busy season, scattered families kneel beside a radio set and join with their brethren in the city at Midnight Mass in a distant Cathedral. Both in Australia and in New Zealand, the official broadcasting stations remain open on Christmas Eve to relay Midnight Mass. The children in these distant country places their faith learned almost entirely by correspondence conducted by the well-organized diocesan Christian doctrine correspondence schools, can follow the Mass with their misals, and join with their elders in the Adeate Fideles in Silent Night after the last Gospel. And in the islands of the South Pacific, many a long Christian family feels, while listening in to Midnight Mass, that it still retains kinship with the rest of the world.

Old-World Customs Persist Strongly In South Pacific
Even if we do eat Christmas plum-pudding for dinner on a swelteringly-hot mid-day (as strong to the old-world customs persist among us), and sing again the loved old-time carols taught us by our parents and grandparents, we

Christmas Broadcasts From Noted European Abbeys Being Arranged
New York (NC) Christmas broadcasts from two famous European abbeys are being arranged by the National Broadcasting Company. It is announced here that midnight services from the Benedictine Abbey in Devon, England, will be broadcast as to be heard from 8:15 to 9:30 p. m. Eastern Standard Time, December 24. Dom William Michael Ducey, O. S. B., of St. Anselm's Priory, Washington who is now visiting in England, will handle the program for the National Broadcasting Company.

There is also being arranged a special broadcast from the Benedictine Abbey of Solemes in France. The singing of the monks at midnight services will be heard from 8:15 to 9:30 p. m. Eastern Standard Time, on December 24.

Christmas Carols Of Early Centuries Songs of the People
In addition to their literary value, carols—songs of the people—offer an attractive field to the research student of social history. Sister John Elizabeth Creamer points out in a dissertation on English Fifteenth Century Carols, prepared for the faculties of the Graduate School of the Catholic University of America.

The verses of carols are not the cultured work of a superior class of poet, the author points out, but belong to the people at large and breathe the spirit which animated their lives. The songs and carols of the early centuries were transmitted orally for the most part and were recorded only rarely, or by accident. In the Fifteenth Century, however, the great bulk of them were written down, though not necessarily produced at that time. The Oxford Book of Christmas Carols refers to them as "songs with a religious impulse."

Several classifications of carols have been suggested by different authors but the two main divisions generally are the Sacred and the Secular—outgrowths of the double aspect of worship and merry-making attendant upon the Christmas feast. It is believed that the former were sung by the Christmas "Waits," groups of villagers who traveled through the countryside singing their joy while the latter are associated more properly with the feasting in the great halls of the nobles.

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Christmas Guild Of Harlem Dates From Year 1300

By **REV. ANTHONY COPPENS**
The Christmas Guild of Harlem in Holland would be notable if only because of its great longevity. It has come to us in unbroken succession from the Middle Ages, despite the 300 years of persecution which Catholics underwent in Northern Holland, and today is vigorous and flourishing. But, over and above this, there are numerous other points of interest connected with this unusual organization.

Founded about the year 1300, the Christmas Guild of Haarlem has nothing in common with the craft, as one might expect from the use of the word "guild," but is a spiritual confraternity whose aim is the celebration with the greatest splendor of the Feast of the Nativity of the Holy Child Jesus, and the furtherance of social intercourse among its members.

ALTAR IN PROTESTANT CHURCH
The Guild has a special altar in what is now the Protestant Cathedral of St. Bavo. In the spirit of the new Catholic Cathedral dedicated to the same Saint, there is a chapel with altar reserved for the Guild. It was blessed in 1929 by the late Bishop Aegerter. Every year the solemn High Mass at the Guild altar is sung for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the members of the Guild. Solemn High Mass is also sung for members of the Guild on the Feast of the Holy Innocents and the Feast of St. John the Baptist. In addition Mass is offered up for the deceased members of the Guild four times each week. A principal feature of the Guild's efforts to stimulate the social contacts of its members is the "Feast of the Guild," which, in addition to the members, is poor women chosen by the Secretary are invited. The number of poor invited guests is fixed at 13 in memory of the Last Supper. The number of the members of the Guild has always been limited to 14 "seats."

As no mention of sex or social position is made in the Guild's regulations, and as one becomes a member by right of succession, as well as men, and people of all stations of life are on its lists. This explains why the records of the Guild list some members as living abroad—in Belgium, France, etc. The headquarters of the Guild is in the city of Haarlem and it is required that the secretary-treasurer be a resident of that city. Heerckens Thyssen, a distinguished Catholic and member of the Senate of Holland, occupies that office at present.

CITY'S DESTITUTE AIDED
The strict statutes of the Guild date from 1410. During the persecution of Catholics in Holland, the regulations concerning the offering of Masses could not be kept, and beginning in 1617 several Protestant ministers, "by right of succession" took the "seats" of Catholics. The Mass regulations were resumed in 1823 when the practice of the Roman Catholic religion could again be considered safe, and in 1831 it was settled that thereafter the members of the Guild should be Catholics. It was also decided at this later date that the annual dinner of the members should take place in June and that the 13 poor women, instead of being guests at the dinner, would be invited to a "feast in the country" where a good meal would be served.

All the other regulations have remained unchanged. The Deas of the Guild determines each year just what sum shall be distributed to the destitute of Haarlem. On St. Nicholas' Day December 6, the good news that for one guild-member's worth of corn (approximately 20 cents' worth) each of them can obtain provisions sufficient to last them the following 12 weeks. Donations to the Guild and other of its funds some of them dating from the very beginning of the Guild, have remained safe all during the period of Protestant persecution and during the French regimen in Holland.

A True Christmas Story

By **J. M. TORO-NAZARIO**
(Written for N. C. W. C. CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT)

It happened once. With the increased tempo, the new outlook and changing standards it could hardly happen again. My grand-

mother had made a new party in her youth to take care of the Christmas dinner of every prisoner in the jail at San Juan. The place was swarming with the population. Swallowing of the bread and gruel was a common experience. She implored God to spare her family, and promised. The family was spared. The promise was kept. Year after year she came to town on Christmas Eve. It was a difficult trip. There were no automobiles and the roads were not good. The warden gave her the hat of a prisoner. Twenty, fifty, a hundred perhaps. It was a costly gift at the time. She did the cooking herself. It was her own promise and she took care of every detail. Money was not a consideration. Her social position she disregarded.

OPEN WIDOWED MEN
BOMBY (N.C.W.C. F.M.) A few night school four widowers have been started at...
It was a promise...
Time passed, but the peace was not forgotten...
"How many widowers have you this Christmas?" asked...
The warden looked at it with a forced smile...
"Remember, he said, the jail is empty. It is empty as if the loved were willing to...
Money was not a consideration...
Her social position she disregarded...
many a day!

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