

# KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN ELECT FRED WEGMAN COLONEL

## Heads Knights



COL. FRED J. WEGMAN

## Father McArdle Slated to Address Holy Name Men

Rev. Patrick McArdle of Scottsville who has recently returned from a trip abroad will address the Holy Name Society of Blessed Sacrament Parish in the School Auditorium on Monday evening Dec. 14 at 8:30 p. m.

Father McArdle will tell of his experiences and his observations while traveling through Spain and France.

Electing officers for 1937 will take place prior to the start of the meeting.

Members of the Society will receive their Monthly Communion on Sunday morning Dec. 13 at the 7:00 o'clock Mass.

The Society will also form a guard of honor in procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the Church at the 11 o'clock Mass when Forty Hours Devotion will begin.

## Monday, Deadline For All Christmas Church Programs

Next week the CATHOLIC COURIER will publish news accounts of Christmas services and programs of special Christmas music in churches throughout the diocese. To insure publication, pastors and choir masters are requested to have their programs in this office not later than Monday, December 14, at 6 p. m.

## Gets Post On Biel's Resignation

### Supreme President Of Order to Devote Full Time to His Office

Senior Major Frederick J. Wegman, 49 Bardonia Street is the new Colonel of Rochester Regime I, Knights of St. John having been elected to the office at the district commandery meeting at headquarters, Franklin St., Friday evening last week.

Due to pressure of his duties as Supreme President of the Knights of St. John of North America, Colonel Wegman has resigned the Regiment as Colonel for several years resigned to devote full time to the Supreme office.

**A Military Leader**

Colonel Wegman who is president of the William J. Wegman Mattress Company before serving as Senior Major and Captain of St. Eastace Commandery and has been captain and drill master of the District Auxiliary Drill Corps. He has had wide experience in the military department of the Knights of St. John, and under his command of the Commandery was many competitive drill prizes.

Lieutenant Colonel William H. Rosenbush retains the office of Major of the Knights of St. John, and under his command of the Commandery, was elected Senior Major Fred J. Kinz is Junior Major of the Regiment.

**Campaign Renewed**

First act of Colonel Wegman will be to see the membership campaign of the regiment to extend to Nov. 31, 1937. In the campaign, which closed Dec. 1, St. Bernard Commandery, No. 72 won first prize.

The Rev. Joseph H. Coffey, regional chaplain congratulated the new officers of the Regiment. Reporting on the testimonial dinner given Supreme President Biel and Mrs. Teresa Ganster last month, Father Coffey emphasized the growing recognition being given to the Knights of St. John.

The Regiment will accept a customary donation to the three Catholic orphan homes for Christmas cheer.

Following the meeting Supreme President Biel is to attend a meeting of the Supreme Board in Philadelphia where it was decided to hold the next national convention in June 1938.

The Regiment voted to hold a memorial inspection in 1937 in lieu of an inspection of individual commanderies.

St. John practices the Last Supper with the significant words: "Jesus having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

## How St. Francis Came To Build First Crib

### The Story of God's Poor Little Man of Assisi and the Christ Child

By REV. H. J. HEAGNEY

Like children careless of the day, God's poor little man of Assisi and his good companions were making their way homeward from the Holy City when Christmas Eve overtook them.

It was the year 1223 when Pope Honorius III had, on the 23rd day of the preceding month, solemnly approved the rule of the Friars Minor. At that time, too, he had spoken words of praise for that long-cherished dream of their leader, the Christmas Crib.

With his own hands Francis would fashion it and furnish it with everything needed to recall the birth of the Divine Child at Bethlehem long centuries before. It's thoughts took happy flight to the little chapel of the Portiuncula in the plain just outside his city of Assisi. There beside the altar of St. Mary of the Angels he had hoped to see his Christ child in loving homage to the New-Born King.

But there were weary miles between the friars and the fair Umbrian grove where the lux hedge enclosed the Portiuncula and the huts of swart mud and straw which made up their retreat.

They must stop at the nearby town of Greccio to celebrate the great feast of Christmas, to attend the Midnight Mass and to prepare their souls to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord. For Francis and his Minorites it was the day of greatest rejoicing, a gladness of celebration on which even the lowly beasts of the field and birds of the air should rejoice.

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## EARLY CRIBS



These interesting sculpture groups present two Fifteenth Century representations, one French and the other Italian, of the scene in Bethlehem on the first Christmas. Above, the French Fifteenth Century representation of the Nativity group. Below, a sculpture group from the workshop of Rossellino, a Florentine, who lived from 1427 to 1478.

## Site Of The First Crib Is 'Bethlehem' Of West

### Hallowed by St. Francis, Greccio Draws Many Pilgrims

By SIGOR ENRICO FIORE

The Valley of Rieti, situated about 110 miles from Rome and constituting the geographical center of Italy, is frequently referred to as the Valle Santa (the Holy Valley) because it abounds in memories of St. Francis of Assisi.

One of the great sanctuaries within this area is Greccio, "the Bethlehem of the West," for here was situated the practice of erecting the crib at Christmas time. The erection of this first Christmas crib by St. Francis in the year 1223 is still a live and vibrant memory in this place.

The spot where the first crib was erected is now enclosed in a small and inspiring chapel in which the original simplicity has been retained. The back wall is decorated with a fresco executed by an unknown artist of the Fifteenth Century depicting the scene of the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. In the background is seen the altar with the chalice prepared for the Divine Sacrifice. In a corner of the painting, kneeling among the people of the place, is the good Cavalier Giovanni Vellita.

**Sanctuary Is Hallowed**

The Sanctuary of Greccio is situated on the side of a mountain and seems to be clinging to the rocks like an eagle's nest. A marvelous panorama opens out from its lofty location, and the eye embraces the beautiful sight of the whole Basilica Valley.

Until a few years ago in order to reach this sanctuary, it was necessary to travel a long and steep road which one could traverse only on foot or on mule. Now, at the personal order of Pope Pius XII, a magnificent road for automobiles has been constructed, leading up to within a few feet of the sanctuary itself.

**The Burning Brand**

St. Francis first took up his abode far from Greccio and a little mountain that dominates the village. The saint began to live there in 1217. The place was a long and very tiresome journey from the village.

Giovanni Vellita, a shepherd, knight of Greccio, who was devoted to St. Francis, bought the Poor Man of Assisi a piece of land a little nearer to the village, both for his own and for the village's benefit. The saint accepted and smilingly promised that his would not be far from the center of the village, only the distance that a child could throw a burnt stick.

While the burning brand fell, the candles were lighted on the main altar and the bells pealed forth the midnight hour when Christ was born in Bethlehem. The Mass proceeded. The sanctuary was sweet, yet powerful, voice of St. Francis floated over the multitude, chanting the Gospel that had thrilled men's hearts from the dawn of Christianity, and will continue to do so until the end of time.

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## Chancellor Defends the Parole Plan

### Fr. Bergan Says 90 Percent of First Offenders Paroled Make Good

By REV. FRANK BERGAN

Chancellor of the Rochester Diocese, Rev. William F. Bergan, Chairman of the Board of Prisoners, defended the parole system against unwarranted attacks by propagandists.

"Ninety per cent of first offenders are paroled," he said. "Cases of crime are not subsequent to parole are frequently cases over which the Parole Board originally had its control."

An example, Father Bergan referred to a notorious young gunman who with several other persons had shot a policeman in New York City. The man was released from prison on an order from New York while the Parole Board looked on helplessly.

Excessive sentences—15 to 20 years, 12 years to life, and so on—were particularly being the crying sin of the present parole system. He said, "If a man is paroled, a person could be imprisoned for twenty years for receiving a stolen good. The sentence is made for the value of the article received, he continued.

Father Bergan stated that in the past, a person could be imprisoned for twenty years for receiving a stolen good. The sentence is made for the value of the article received, he continued.

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### Knights Arrange Christmas Party And Fund Appeal

### SILVER STAR MARKS SITE OF NATIVITY

Within the Holy Grotto, inside the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, one sees a silver star with this inscription: "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est." ("Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born.")

Today precious marble, rich tapestries and numerous silver lamps, burning olive oil surround the spot where on that first Christmas night a rude stable gave poor shelter to the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son.

For 700 years, the Franciscans, as the representatives of the Catholic world, have watched and prayed at this sacred spot. As one historian has written: "In spite of wars, invasions, persecutions, in spite of all the aggressive rivalries of the schismatic sects, the sacred rites have always been celebrated over the Crib of Jesus Christ. This is the glory of the Franciscan Order."

### Decorating of Crib Stirs French Rivalry

In Southern France, where the practice of erecting Christmas cribs is particularly widespread, persons vie with one another in lending rich belongings for the decoration of the manger. Elderly people tell of rings, necklaces and other precious jewelry being lent to decorate the manger over a long period of time and never any of them being stolen or lost.

The practice of erecting Christmas cribs was imported into France from Italy, where St. Francis of Assisi erected the first one.

### Guild's Christmas Fete, Election Set

Election of officers and their annual Christmas party will be conducted by members of St. Elizabeth Guild, Tuesday, Dec. 15 at the Guild House on Field St.

Mrs. John H. Gould, president of the guild will preside.

### Auxiliary Plans Christmas Fete At Sacred Heart

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### Grecian Fishing Boats Blessed on Christmas

There is a custom among fishermen in Greece to have their boats blessed on Christmas morning, and it is said that no fisherman who is ashore for the holidays will ever go to sea again before this is accomplished.

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