

Library Signpost

Happy New Year

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

Why should we Catholics not give each other that blessing next Sunday when we begin the new Church Year? For the year of grace is the real year, the year that is registered in eternity. The genuinely lasting things take place in the Church Year: the renewal of Christ's Mysteries in the Liturgy, the daily round of Divine Prayers, the rebirth of souls into God's life, the return of the prodigals to their Father's house, the feeding of God's children on the Bread of Life, the extending of Christ's priesthood, the pledging of marriage vows, the maintenance of Christian families, the Christian education of youth, the propagation of the faith, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the aspiration of faithful souls like candle flames, to the central Flame of all being, the consecrated departure of God's servants into the joy of the Lord, all this will make up the fabric of the Year of Grace, December, 1941 - November, 1942. This is the Lord's good, the Lord's peace, which no one can take from us.

And the living river which inundates all this and feeds it for the harvest of eternity is the Christ-Life brought into the here-and-now amongst us by the Holy Sacraments. Deep down under the foundations of St. Peter's in Rome, even below the ancient Etruscan wall which the pilgrim can see submerged in subterranean gloom, one can hear the rushing of mighty waters. I will never forget the awe which gripped me as I stood in the shadows underground below the great church and heard that relentless rush of invisible waters, coming (so the guide told us) from no one knows what source and plunging to no one knows what floodgate.

So do the living streams of the Christ-Life flow in the seven Sacraments through the Church of God. As the Psalmist sings: "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful: the most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle." (Psalm 47: 5)

This life of grace and the works which it produces consecrate time for the service of eternity. These are the treasures laid up "where neither rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." (Matthew 6: 20) Time spoils all things but not these.

The Catholic therefore sets more store by the calendar of the City of God than by the calendar of the City of Man. Men perish, and his works with two. Festivities, words, a bitter wisdom. "There is nothing new under the sun." The Happy New Year wish of January 1 comes from no farther back than the lips if it hopes to turn that dying-upside-down. But a Happy New Year wish in the spirit of the Church's Advent will imply all those potential riches of grace which are unfolded each Church Year in the Mysteries of Christ.

Sursum Corda

The Forgotten Freedom

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

President Roosevelt has familiarized us with the phrase "Four Freedoms." But why four? Why not fourteen? Or forty? As a matter of fact, there is one freedom more fundamental than all the rest, and it has not had so much as honorable mention in the present discussion. Perhaps it has been ignored or avoided because it has to do with philosophy and still worse in the minds of many, it is associated with theology. But unless you accept and accentuate this one first fundamental freedom, all the others fall to the ground.

I refer as you must already have guessed, to Freedom of the Will. The odd thing about Freedom of the Will is that it is still being denied in most of the "great" colleges and universities of the United States while the other freedoms are harped upon ad lib. All other freedoms without freedom of the will are like a skyscraper with no first story or rather with no foundation. Or like fruit without a tree. If you can erect a 50 story building on air, nothing if you can pick apples and oranges out of the atmosphere, you can have freedom of worship, freedom of speech and the rest without freedom of the will.

Yet for the past 50 or 60 years, in fact ever since it became necessary to have a German Ph.D. to get a good job in an American university, the doctrine of Freedom of the Will has been rejected with scorn in the circles of the learned.

I remember reading in the newspapers perhaps 30 years ago of a murderer on trial for murder in Berlin or Stuttgart or Hamburg or somewhere in the Reich. He made a speech in his own defense. It ran like this: "Honorable Judge and gentlemen of the jury, there is no man in this court, on the bench, at the counsels' table or amongst the spectators who, if he be a college man has not been taught that the will of man is not free. That being the accepted doctrine in the Fatherland, neither the judge nor the jury can hold me responsible for what I have done. If I have done murder it is not I but the genes and the hormones in my blood that are responsible. Since I am not free, I cannot be to blame. I have acted as I did because I was impelled to do so by forces over which I had no control. If you execute me for a crime which I may have committed but which I could not help committing, it is not I but you who are the murderers."

My mind leaped back to that incident when I read the other day, in the syndicated column of Benjamin de Casseres an extract from the biography of Clarence Darrow by Irving Stone. De Casseres reminds us that it was Darrow who defended the McNamara and Leopold and Loeb and other murderers. And here is the philosophy on which he saved them from the electric chair.

"This weary old world goes on, begetting with birth, and with living, and with death, and all of it is blind from the beginning to the end. I do not know what made him do this act, but I do know there is a reason for it. I know that any one of an infinite number of causes reaching back to the beginning might be working out in his mind. If there were such a thing as justice it could only be administered by those who knew the inmost thoughts of

READ:

The Year of Our Lord, by Emiliana Locher. The Layman's Christian Year, by Ernest Edmundo. The Spirit of Catholicism, by Karl Adam (Chapt. II).

Matters of December: We will publish next week a list of Christmas book recommendations. There ought to be still more converts this year to the practice of sending only religious Christmas cards. Mary Kretzer and Mary B. Finegan, have some attractive ones with liturgical texts and representations at only 5 cents. I like especially the one in red with the text beginning O Day Spring.

If you are interested write to these girls at 29 Diana St., Newport, R. I. It will be a boost for two bookshelters besides. Then there are some unusual and inspiring cards published by The Communal, 364 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C., at 5 cents and by the Liturgical Arts Society, 300 Madison Ave., N. Y. C. also at 5 cents. Be apostolic with your Christmas cards, choose one that says something to make your friends see deeper into the real meaning of Christmas. What better gift could you give them than such a favor?

Santa Claus gave me much pleasure when I was a little boy. I am grateful for it. But now that I know better I say, Of course, there is a Santa Claus, a real one. St. Nicholas, whose feast is on Dec. 6. I think he wants very much to go back to December 6 where he belongs. He feels very bad to be taking little children's attention so much away from the Christ Child. He wants to give his little gifts in the stockings on his own day, and not to let the birthdays mixed up. He is going to give a stiff reckoning to the merchants who use him only as a catchpenny in their ads, and store windows.

I know this is all going to sound pretty stuffy and impossible to a lot of people. They will wonder what kind of Christmas I spend. They will pity my little niece and nephew with such an uncle. Well, I don't think I should as first cousin to St. Nick just because I speak for the real Saint Nick who wants the Christ Child to have His birthday all to Himself.

All this sudden spurge in the papers about a crime scene in Harlem! All right, if it makes responsible people ashamed of themselves, for the frightful living conditions there, and that means you and me, for we're responsible for crooked politicians, tenement racketeers, and slingers of all kinds. We have to pray for such people and make good somehow, the loss they bring, as a father does for his naughty boy. Maybe we know how to pray. But maybe we don't know how else to make good the loss. There is one little way. Help the Baroness de Haack's Friendship House at 34 West 135th St. We can do everything necessary to make good the white man's shame. But we can work might and main at little things, an occasional dollar bill. Clothes we no longer use, interesting other people in the work. December will be cold in Harlem, colder than the stable at Bethlehem. Have we room for our Negro brothers in the inn of Christmas Eve?

The man to whom they were melting it out. Ave you knew the father and mother and the grandparents and the infinite number of people back of him, who knew the origin of every cell that went into the body, who could understand the structure and how it is fed, who could feel how the emotions that sway the human being affected that particular fruit piece of clay. It means that you must appraise every influence that moves them, the civilization where they live, and all society which enters into the making of the child or the man. If you can do it you are wise and with wisdom goes mercy.

De Casseres cuts this stuff quite rightly. "bleary rhetoric." What the whole paragraph means could be said in a line. This man committed a murder but he could not help it. It was not he but the cells in his body that did it.

And adds the commentator, "if society were to adopt Darrow's ideas, police and courts would be obliterated and the law of the jungle would take their place."

True, but the columnist might have gone on to say that Darrow's philosophy was not his. You can get it at Harvard or Yale or Princeton or Pennsylvania, Leopold and Loeb as a matter of fact got it from the University of Chicago. It is taught in all the non-sectarian, that is to say, the non-religious centers of "learning."

If some one high up in the nation who is really concerned about defense would look into the Negro myth and the ethics being handed down to boys and girls in college and made a crusade against it, perhaps we should have defense indeed. If it be true and I am sure it is, that there can be no freedom without freedom of the will, it is also true that we cannot defend this nation unless we defend it against the subversive doctrine, the most fundamentally subversive of all the doctrine that man is an animal only with no spiritual soul, no free will and hence no moral responsibility.

Copyright 1941 N. C. W. Co.

Five Years Ago--

in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Nov. 26, 1936, Edition. Archbishops and Bishops of the United States in General Meeting at Washington called upon the nation to turn to the Papal Encyclicals in the battle against Communism and despotism for control of Western civilization in a bridling message issued by the Administrative Board, National Catholic Welfare Conference.

Experiments attempted by Communism in the domain of family policy, had disastrous effects. The Soviets were forced to renounce methods which they had installed and to become reconciled with traditions, were conclusions reached after profound study by the 533rd Congress of Catholic Jurisconsults at Paris.

Characterizing Communism as the most dangerous foe to peace and freedom, John J. Kelly of Troy, past district deputy of the Knights of Columbus, appealed to more than 300 members of Auburn Council to rally with Catholic forces in a concerted effort to stamp out the menace.

The capacity to terminate is a special grace. Emily Dickinson

Page My Pastor

The Bridal Racket

By Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter M. H. Wynhoven

Editorial Chief, Catholic Action of the South

Well, Cedic, the die is cast. Bob and I will get married after Christ-



mas.

That's for us, Fran! And are all these discussed and agreed upon?

No, we went to see the pastor last night to inform him officially.

Why did you go to see him so early, Fran?

You're afraid something would slip unless you had things tied up at least sacramentally.

No, stupid, but don't you think it's proper that after you have accepted and consulted your parents, the next person to take into confidence is your pastor? After all, he is our spiritual father.

Not a bad idea, precious, but you must confess it takes you to think of that angle.

Yes, it's too bad that so few Catholics nowadays look upon their priest in that light. There is a distinct loss in this impersonal attitude toward one's pastor. I think every good priest appreciates it if you go to him in momentous periods of life.

That may be true, Fran. How ever tell me in what way do you depend on your pastor when you're going to marry Bob?

Say, listen, girl, Bob was more affected than I when the pastor spoke to us about the dependence on God's grace for our future happiness, and when he promised to give us a little memento in his Mass every morning, is that worth depending on him for?

Fran, I'm jealous of you!

Life

Life seems to pass so swiftly And carry down its stream So many a cherished heirloom So many a golden dream

I see them drift and vanish And as each disappears My heart is filled with sadness And in my eyes burn tears

I feel my soul grow stiffer And lonelier each day I pass my hours dreaming And longing for life's May

And suddenly a vision That bears my mother's face Speaks with a voice most tender Through all the long year's haze

I've gathered all thy treasures And kept them safe with me All life's most precious gifts will Be thine eternally

Frederick M. Lynd, S.V.D.

Sacrifice of the Mass

The purpose for which Mass is said, to give God honor and glory to thank Him for His benefits, to obtain all graces and blessings through Jesus Christ, and to continue to represent the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

We belong to God. He created us. He also loved us so much that the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity came down from heaven and became man, and brought salvation for us out of the slavery of sin by His Most Precious Blood, shed for us on the Cross. We must, therefore, look up to Him as our Creator, our Father in heaven, our Redeemer, our Lord, and give Him all the honor that we are able. We cannot give God greater honor than by offering to Him the most acceptable Sacrifice of the Holy Mass.

Why pulling? You folks will soon come juking by the way Brother Frank is burning the night out across your threshold.

I'm not thinking of that, Cedic. I'm jealous of your technique, trusting in God so beautifully in all your doings.

Heavens above, child, in what way of life do you think we need God more than on the day we sign the contract that may be either the making or breaking of our happiness for the rest of our days here on earth and hereafter in eternity? I tell you something else, Bob and I have promised each other to go to Mass every morning and go to Communion together every Sunday as a preparation for our wedding day.

Well, darling, all I can say is that this holy union is surely going to be foolproof. Who will be the bride and who the best man, Fran?

Of all things, Cedic, you'd a question? Of course it will be pretty you and handsome Fran! Who else will be in the bridal party?

No one else, Cedic. We will have a first class wedding, but early enough so that everybody can go to Holy Communion. We want to make it a real Catholic impressive ceremony, and not a holy mess in which God is overboard and shoved aside.

May I help you to send out the invitations, Fran?

Thank you for the kind offer of assistance, Cedic, but I fear not much help will be needed for we do not intend to send out written invitations by the wholesale.

What? No engraved invitations?

No, Robert and I will visit our nearest relatives and close friends and if we don't have time we will personally telephone them. Then we'll have a dignified announcement in the papers.

Of all things, Fran, what's the big idea?

The big idea is this, Cedic, that we do not want to cheapen our wedding by basely commercializing it. The way things are worked these days, one gets the impression that a woman gets married primarily to get showers and gifts. By doing it the way we intend, no pol-

liteness may or the fellow who'll be coming with Dad ten years ago will feel really con-

scious to send a gift.

I believe you're right, Fran, because the way you hear people talk and gossip, when they get an invitation, they seem to look upon it as a necessary nuisance of a refined racket.

You take your modern bridal showers, they have it down to a fine point. Today they are no longer satisfied with a pre-nuptial gathering of real friends who joyfully bring some useful presents, no places, dates, and people are carefully checked chosen and canvassed for a string of showers, miscellaneous, personal, kitchen and what have you, and as a rule these affairs underneath are as cold as April showers.

You got something there, girl? Listen, Cedic, if I had to walk up that aisle through a churchful of people gotten there by the modern method, I wouldn't need range on my wedding morning. I would be blushing back to my neck for shame and discomfort. A few truly sincere and praying friends, will give me more hope, happiness and reliance. And their presents, given with a good heart, I will gratefully accept.

Don't bad, Fran, you add I that last sentence, I was figuring where I'd save about two dollars and fifteen cents.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 18)

When that plan is disturbed, then stability ends. Then our support departs. Then the ordinary things we have been used to live by and to plan by, are taken from us.

Unusual portents, mysterious changes in the sun and the moon and stars, shall presage the end of the world, according to the words of Christ in Sunday's Gospel. Astronomers and ordinary men will know these changes as signs. God will place them as signs of the impending dissolution of the heavenly bodies, which will include the destruction of the earth.

To those who know not God, these heavenly changes along with the earthly portents, shall cause such fear as to make them withdraw away in the face of the impending annihilation of the material creation. To those who know God and fear God, who do God' will, they will be another kind of a sign, a sign of joy. "When you shall see these things come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption is at hand." The coming of the Son of Man shall not be a cause of fear to the just, but rather an indication that their promised salvation is at hand.