

Library Signpost

Happy New Year

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

Why should we not give each other that blessing next Sunday when we begin the New 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 record of Christ's Mysteries in the Liturgy, the daily round of Divine Prayers, the rebirth of souls into the life of the return of the prodigals to their Father's home, the feeling of God's children on the Road of Life, the extending of Christ's presence, the plea of marriage vows, the marriage of the Christian family, the Christian education of youth, the preparation of the aspirant of faith, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the aspiration of faith, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the aspiration of faith, the joy of the Holy Spirit...

And the living river which irrigates all this and fertilizes 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 Ebraean 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 me) 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 65)

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. His parish and his work with his Ecclesiastical word is 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 of it hopes to turn that saying up side down. But a Happy New Year wish, in the spirit of the Church's Advent will imply all those perennial wishes 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 airy nothing, if you can pluck 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 (Dr. 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 counsel's 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 Emiliann Locher
The Layman's Christian Year, by Ernest Oberholzer
The Spirit of Catholicism, by Karl Adam (Chapt. 11)

Matters of December. We will publish next week a list of Christmas book recommendations. Those ought to be still more converts this year to the practice of sending only religious Christmas cards. Mary Kreuzer and Mary K. Finigan have some attractive ones with liturgical texts and illustrations, 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 Thomas St., Newport, R. I. It will be a boost for two Redemptorists besides. Then there are some unusual and inspiring cards published by The Commonwealth, 350 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?

St. Nicholas gave me much pleasure when I was a little boy. I am grateful for it. But now that I am a man, 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 his stockings on his own day, and not to get the holidays mixed up. He is going to give a stiff reprimand to the merchants who use him only as a cash-carry in their ads and store windows.

I know that I am 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 qualify as far as St. George 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 at 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 are responsible for crooked politicians, crooked racketeers, and crooked lawyers. We have to pray for such people and maybe somehow the law they bring as a father does for his naughty boy, maybe we know how to fix it. But maybe we don't know how else to make good the loss. There is one little way. Help the House of Deacons' Friendship House at 34 West 12th St. We can do everything necessary to make good the white man's shame. But we can work night and day at little things and 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 the room for our Negro brothers in the night of Christmas Eve.

the man to whom they were looking out. Are you know 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 acted, who could tell how the emotions that set the human being affected that particular frail piece of clay. It means that you must appreciate 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 calls 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 of society here to adopt Darrow's ideas "police and courts would be obliterated and the law of the jungle would take their place."

True, but the communist 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 "nonsectarian" 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 philosophy and the ethics being handed down to boys and girls in colleges, 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 doctrines that man is an animal only, with no spiritual soul, no free will, and hence no moral responsibility. (Copyright 1941 N. C. W. C.)

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 Espionage for control of Western civilization in a stirring message issued by the Administrative Board National Catholic Welfare Conference.

Experiments attempted by Communism in the domain of family policy all 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 53rd 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 join 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

Editor: Catholic Action of the South

Well, Cedic, the date is cast, Bob and I will get married after Christmas.



Murch for us Fran? And are all details—discussed and agreed upon? No we went to see the pastor last night to inform him officially. Cedic.

Why did you go to see him so early? Fran? You're afraid something would slip unless you had things tied up at least semi-officially?

No stupid but don't you think it proper that after you have approved 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 the angle.

Yes, 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 moments of periods of life and make him feel that you opened on him.

That may be true Fran, however, 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 momento 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 dream So many a golden dream

I see them drift and vanish And as each disappears And in my eyes burn tears

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

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

EDITORIALS

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When that plan is disturbed, then stability ends. Then our comfort 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 waver away in the face of the impending annihilation of the material creation. To those who know God and fear God, who do God's 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.