

# Library Suggest Singing Envoys Of Christ

By Rev. Benedict Dammann

The director and all the staff of the Catholic Reference Library join in wishing all our readers all the joys of a Christmas richly blessed by the Infant King.

We must not forget the many homes whose Christmas is shadowed this year by the absence of loved ones. Such families must be especially dear to the Saviour who was Himself born away from home in a cheerful stable. There is something very gracious in the plan of God that the homeless birth of His Son should be celebrated through the centuries as the most homely of all the feasts, full of domestic warmth and cheerfulness. If countless seas of modern homes are forced to celebrate this Christmas away from home, many of them on strange, far bivouacs, there will be comfort for them and their families in the thought that the first Christmas of all took place away from home, and that out of the abandonment of that first lonely vigil has come all our faith and hope and love.

As a Christmas surprise this year, I am going to take you on a visit to an Old World family who will be celebrating their Christmas this year in the New World far away from home.

There are ten children in this family, three boys and seven girls. The father and the mother belong to the old nobility of Austria. The family home was in the Austrian Tyrol, which is one of the loveliest spots of Europe. The Tyrolese are deeply religious, deeply Catholic. The family we are visiting is exceptionally so. Each member of it is a gracious flower of the rich soil of Catholic Europe. All of them radiate the joy, the simplicity, the purity of genuine Catholic life.

They express their joy and simplicity by singing together, singing by the hour lovely lyrics of faith in God and gladness for His beautiful world. Once a famous soprano heard them in a contest. It was no less a celebrity than Lotte Lehmann. They won first prize in the contest. But better for them was the praise of the great lady. For this praise opened up to them a new world where they were welcomed with open arms. It wasn't that they were fascinated by aristocratic applause. But they saw a wonderful chance sent by God to share their faith and their joy with others through singing.

And so they became a singing family, world-famous. But always they kept the emphasis on the family. Wherever they went, they kept up their family life prayers together, meals together, conferences together to discuss their problems. All their

concerts were family concerts. Hearing them was like taking in unobscured on a family evening full of beauty and glory. So concerned were they to keep this family bond unbroken that for a long while they turned down American offers for a concert tour, feeling so they did that this would mean the drastic interruption of their family routine.

But the tide of time brought them to American shores. Hitler's absorption of Austria rushed their affairs to a stormy climax. They would not stay peacefully, for with the father and the eldest son had turned down offers of service in the Nazi movement, and they had no desire to compromise their Catholic position. If they left the country, it might mean never being able to come back again. They chose the second course, with the Americans after giving them their opportunity. While they were away, the Nazis appropriated their estate.

The homeless family came to America with less than 10 but with more than ordinary faith in God. And God has led them every step of the way during the five years since that time. Today their position in the American concert world is secure; they have adopted America as their new homeland, and Americans have taken them in their hearts.

We know that God's goodness design works out even through evil circumstances.

"Out of the mist, a star,  
Out of the mire, a flower."

This family, so radiant with faith and with the purity and joy of the Gospel, are surely God's ambassadors to our people. They are ambassadors without portfolio, bearing witness by the living order of their souls borne out on wings of song that there is an imperishable life, which no time of darkness can efface.

As they sing I am reminded of the little candles lighting the candles for the Holy Mass. From one candle to the next the little flame is carried, until all are aglow. So many of our countrymen are good wax ready for God's flame. But the sparks are waiting to catch the fire. It can come to them in hundreds of ways, of God's own choosing. To some of them it comes through the music of hearts ardent with the Holy Spirit. Those who hear this sacred family choir feel themselves warmed by a spirit not of this earth. The enthusiasm, the laughter, the evident tears, the affectionate applause, which greet its singing, are like nothing else I've ever heard in a concert hall. One knows that the Holy Spirit is working in all those groping hearts.

These singing ambassadors of God are the Trapp Family. If you have liked the visit with them in person this Monday night in the auditorium of Mercy High School where they are going to present their famous Christmas concert—an evening full of carols and folk-songs of grandeur and light gayety blessed with the spirit of the first Christmas.

Auf Wiedersehen!

## Sursum Corda

# Christmas: The Little Man's Day

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

In Francis Mauriac's "Life of Jesus" there is many a shrewd and unusual observation. One of them, though it concerns Christ before Pilate, is appropriate also to Christ in the cave at Bethlehem. When Pilate asked Jesus "What is truth?" "Our Saviour might have answered," says Mauriac, "if Pilate had been a beggar or a sinful woman, or a tax gatherer. But Pilate was one who realized his own importance as a grand functionary. 'If Jesus had told him 'I am the Truth,' Pilate would have shrugged his shoulders."

You can tell a simple ignorant man a great deal, but you cannot tell an intellectual anything. The simple man knows not and knows that he knows not. That is to say he is wise. But the intellectual knows not and knows not that he knows not, and that makes him, as the old adage says, a fool. Jesus could tell Peter that He was the Son of God; He could tell Philip that He and the Father were One; He could tell the woman at the well in Samaria that He was the Saviour of the World. Peter was a fisherman with no education except in the rudiments learned at the synagogue school. Philip had little if any more education than Peter. The woman at the well had had five husbands and as Jesus told her "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband." She didn't think very well of herself, had no pride of intellect. Poor men and poor women can learn.

People who "know it all" have such crowded brains (crowded with things false as well as true) that there is no room to squeeze in a new truth. If the truth comes from an unexpected and unlikely source the intellectuals will have none of it. There is no one so allergic to information as the highly educated man. If he recognizes himself as highly educated. Pontius Pilate was not only a governor, he fancied himself as somewhat of a philosopher. So, he couldn't learn anything. Imagine being face to face with Jesus (Christ and not finding out who He was! Seeing that Pilate was not receptive, Jesus didn't tell him.

Now let us switch from the palace of Pilate to the Cave of Bethlehem. Suppose that some intellectual big-wig in the days of Tiberius Caesar had been told that the Saviour of the World was about to appear. That ancient savant would receive the information with an indulgent smile and a skeptical shrug of the shoulders. Learned people are everywhere and always the same.

But suppose he were by some chance persuaded that the coming of the Greatest Light the world had ever known were possible. Ask him "Where do you suppose the Great Man might be born?" The answer would naturally be "I cannot say with certainty, but surely in some place where civilization is at its peak, and the intellectual life at its highest. Perhaps at Athens. If not Athens, Alexandria. Maybe Ephesus. More likely Rome." How about Jerusalem? "No; not Jerusalem. The Jews call it their Holy City, and it may be, in their sense of the word, but it is no intellectual center in the Roman or the Greek conception. As for Bethlehem, where and what is Bethlehem? Nazareth? Even the Jews say 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?'"

The intellectuals quickly weary of importunate people with foolish questions. But don't reject. Be-

fore you are given an abrupt dismissal ask one more question: If an angel, the Saviour of mankind appears, to what class of people will he first reveal himself? Your wisacre being "learned" and "enlightened" may perhaps vouchsafe you one more answer: "The whole thing is unlikely, but if any such person ever does come, he will no doubt be found among the philosophers on the Areopagus at Athens. Or perhaps he will be entertained and patronized by Tiberius the Emperor on the Palatine at Rome, as the great men of the Renaissance were guests in the palace of the Medici at Florence."

"You wouldn't imagine, would you, Mr. Self-Importance, that a great prophet, a Person of the profoundest wisdom, One whose life and teaching will give a new direction to the course of the world, would make himself known to shepherds and live among peasants?" "Nonsense! Don't be ridiculous. When the Great Man comes He will introduce himself first to the learned; convince them of his genius, persuade them to accept his teaching. Once they put the seal of approval on what he has to say, they will disseminate it over the earth from the centers of learning. How else could it be done?"

All of which goes to show that the mind of the learned is a closed mind. Truth has to come to them in a certain way in such and such circumstances, and from a person of standing in the community.

But even rough and ready old miners who had no "book-learning" and no language but the lingo of the deserts and the mountains, could have set the learned ones right. "Gold is where you find it," the old prospectors used to say. "Geology is all right in its way. Mineralogy is all right. But, stranger, gold is where you find it."

As with gold so with truth. Truth is gold. Truth is where you find it. And if you run through the history of the race, you will see that truth has generally come out of unexpected places. The most unlikely spot of all was that hole in the rock in the poor little village of Bethlehem. Not at Athens did the Truth appear, nor in Rome. Not even in Jerusalem. Not to the philosophers on the Areopagus or in the academy at Alexandria. Not to the Emperor, not to Herod the King, not to Pilate the Governor. But to shepherds, peasants, fishermen, carpenters, farmers, small artisans. The Truth appeared where it would be welcomed. It was an unusual intellectual who said "sit down before the fact like a little child." The shepherds had learned that wisdom, and more. They knelt down before the Truth like little children.

Later on, the "Magi" came, whether or not they were learned, they were "wise." The Gospel has the right word. If they had been "intellectuals" they would not have gone to Palestine, but to Italy or Greece or Egypt, looking for the Light of the World. If they had been "important" in their own eyes, they would have turned back as soon as they found that the King was not to be born in a palace. But they made themselves little children, like shepherds, peasants, fishermen. And they found Him whom they sought. You have to be "little" to find Truth. Christmas is the day of the little man.

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## Five Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Dec. 23, 1937, Edition  
An official mandate for Catholic Action was granted by His Excellency, Bishop Kearney, to the Rochester Branch, Catholic Central Veterans of 1937.

# Ballad of Wheat and Wine

By Sister Maryanna, O.P.

(From the N.C.W.C. Christmas Supplement)

Upon His bed of wheaten straw  
Their infant King the angels saw  
Whiter than wheat flour's sifted snow,  
Brighter than gold was His halo's glow,  
The Blood in His veins ran red as wine,  
Royal Blood of David's kingly line,  
Guarded 'til then in a virgin shrine,  
But from this Child to flow.

Today, wrapped in wheaten veil  
This same Child lies, still snow-flake pale  
Chaliced within the golden glow  
Of altar vessels here below.

Precious Blood pressed from the fragrant vine  
Bears but the semblance of ruby wine;  
Bethlehem's miracle, Christ Divine  
'Neath Wheat and Wine we know.

## EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 10)

home to the boys, attempting to punch-bit for the honor and faces they left behind.

When the local officials asked for priests to serve in the Chaplain Corps of the Civilian Protective Services, more than enough rushed to volunteer. The majority have had First Aid and are trained in Bomb and Gas Control.

It has been a pleasure to work with the city and county Civilian Protection officials. We appreciate the worthwhile job that is being done, and we feel confident that, in case of actual attack, we are prepared. We regret the besmirching criticism that was hurled at these authorities by one who evidently failed to get the true facts. For our part we want precedents and it means inconvenience to some that's too bad. It would seem far less inconvenient to voluntarily push an electric connection and blackout than to have the walk come tumbling in as the result of a Nazi "black-out."

In short, the Catholics, both clergy and laity, of the Diocese can be justly proud of the enviable record we have set. And to the discomfort of our enemies, let it be said that we're going right on breaking records until "Victory with Justice" has been assured.

## GOOD NEIGHBORS

The Bishops of America know whereof they spoke when last year they condemned the activities of Protestant missionaries in Latin America as a difficulty in the way of the Good Neighbor policy. They were dealing with a condition, not a theory. They had first hand information on the subject. They were protesting against a policy that actually had interfered with the attempt to begin better understanding between the United States and her sister republics in the south.

No Catholic community will find any lawful reason for interference with the faith and practice of its people. No people steeped in Catholic culture, Catholic traditions, will be able to understand the mentality of those who would hurt their Catholic faith, would wrench them away from the Mass and the confessional and the Table of the Lord; who would supplant the teachings of the Church of the Apostles with the doctrines of those who four hundred years turned away from that Church.

The Catholics of Latin America are content with the truth they possess, with their membership in God's Church, with the faith of their fathers. They are not an unschooled lot lacking in culture, lacking in religious instruction; they are a people whose Catholic way of life goes back hundreds of years, whose devotion has found expression in a series of churches, cathedrals, schools, hospitals, hospices, that are a monument to their faith and in their attitude temperament so proper to Latin peoples. Protestantism may be able to take away from so few what they already possess of Christian equipment; it has nothing that can replace what it would take away.

If we are to be good neighbors to our brethren in the South, we must first of all respect their rights, their sentiments, their Catholic faith.

## A SAVIOUR WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD!

Christmas brings us three Masses, three separate readings concerning the new born Saviour. The first Mass, the Mass of St. Luke's account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem; the second Mass tells the tale of the shepherds; the third gives us St. John's inspired record of the eternal birth of the Word from the Father and His birth in time when the Word was made of flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, the eternal expression of the Father's infinite knowledge of Himself; the Word was with God, the Word was God. Through Him were made all things that are made. He came to enable men to become sons of God through receiving Him and His grace.

The shepherds needed no explanation of what the Angel meant when he said Saviour. They knew the world was awaiting the coming of the promised Redeemer. Therefore, they prayed for His coming; therefore, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy at the Angel's message; therefore, they hastened over to Bethlehem to see this word which had come to pass.

Caesar's census brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, and marked that little town as the birthplace of the Christ. It was proper that a world census should include as one of its early registrations Him who was to save all men. Mary brought forth her first born Son, laid Him in a manger in the stable on the hillside. Simple and quietly the Gospel history tells of the greatest event the world has seen. No ordinary Saviour was here, no mere great one of the angels, but the earthly creature of God. Here was the Eternal Son of God, made flesh; here was a Saviour who is Christ the Lord! We men of earth join the Angels, the Shepherds, the Holy Family,