

FOR SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

By Mary E. FitzGerald

The love of His little Ones was so often evidenced during the public ministry of our Divine Saviour, that it would seem that devotion to Him as the Divine Infant must be very dear to His Sacred Heart.

Knocking before Christmas the weary hearts have felt a peace for which they have vainly sought through out many months. Frequent visits are made to our Catholic Churches during the Christmas season by our people, who do not come often at other times. This it would seem is just another indication in the words of Monsignor Schoen, "That man can not love anything unless he can put his arms around it."

Forget, if you will, the pressure of many things, turn for the moment, in spirit, to the last visit you made to a Christmas crib. See in your memory's scrapbook, a page that is bright and glowing, and note that it represents that brief moment, when you knelt before the manger. Conscious you were of our Blessed Mother, and the kindly St. Joseph, vaguely you noted the shepherds and the lambs they had brought as gifts to the Messiah. Clearly and indelibly engraved almost to the exclusion of all else however in your mental photograph of that tiny Infant Jesus with outstretched arms. You remember as though it were yesterday the love that seemed to emanate from that lifeless image you almost saw there in that pile of straw Your Lord and your God as a helpless living Infant on that first Christmas Day.

INFANT OF PRAGUE

All this is a natural explanation of the devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague which has recently become so "popular" with our Catholic people. To China, as well as to many other communities, has come this year around devotion to our Divine Redeemer, as we know Him at Christmas.

This devotion to the Infant was explained at all the Masses at our Lady of Lourdes Church last Sunday by the pastor, the Reverend Len G. Schwab. Announcing the gift of a statue of the Infant of Prague he explained that a set of garments in the different liturgical colors had been made by two Elmira nuns. Father Schwab also mentioned that jewels and other adornments had been contributed by parishioners and persons outside the parish. Father Schwab told "how the original statue of wax, was made in Spain. It was presented to a community of poverty-stricken nuns in Prague in 1628 by the Spanish widow of a Polish nobleman who had died in Prague. During a religious war, three years later the statue was thrown in the wreckage of the monastery but when peace came again the members of the community located the statue and in 1637 enshrined it in a private Chapel.

DEVOTION SPREADS

Devotion to the Infant has spread throughout Europe and into this country. In our Elmira alone, hundreds of small statues of the Child Jesus of Prague are distributed each year by His grateful clients. A traditional practice, built upon the experiences of His devoted followers is that one must show their thanksgiving for favors received by giving a statue to some one and explaining the devotion to him. From this tradition has grown the belief that one must not purchase a statue for himself but must rather have it given to him. These as well as other traditions are the results of the thinking of pious people, and do not have any canonical approbation.

The Statue which has just been placed in the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes is appropriately in the sanctuary, below the grotto of our Blessed Mother. Many who come to pray to her will turn to Her Infant Son, to remind Him of His Promise, that He will hear and answer all petitions made to His beloved Mother.

Just one week before the Lourdes incident, the members of the Committee of the Infant of Prague of the Ladies of Charity met in the corridor of the Children's Ward at St. Joseph's Hospital. On this Dec. 6 almost the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor the Rev. Philip McCham, Hospital Chaplain, blessed a beautiful statue of the Divine Infant. It was a gift from the Committee, dedicated to the Infant of Prague, and marked another step in their care of His

little Ones, who are patients at St. Joseph's. Gay, new draper, formed a background for the little King, and pure white rose buds, graced His tiny throne, as one by one the Ladies of Charity, who are members of this Committee, knelt for a moment on the small platform, before the statue.

ANOTHER STATUE

Such was the brief ceremony which marked the conclusion of a solemn triduum for affiliates and members of this organization. Strangely enough, as Divine Providence so often plans, this society of the Ladies of Charity, the child of St. Vincent de Paul had its beginning in France just a few years before the original statue of the Infant was presented to the monastery at Prague.

And so, on Christmas Eve, the anniversary of the birth of that Infant Saviour another statue will be placed in the sanctuary of St. Mary's Church in Horseheads. It will be twenty-two inches in height, and will wear the white mantle garment and velvet cape and crown, which characterizes the "Babe" whom His Blessed Mother wrapped in swaddling clothes on that first Christmas Eve.

Dear to the heart of your writer, will be the statues at Lourdes and St. Joseph's because of their close association with our Ladies of Charity. A part of her heart however will be at the feet of the statue in St. Mary's. It is a Christmas gift to her own father, on this, her first birthday of our Lord, without a dear parent, who has gone Home, God willing, to the Infant of Prague for a Christmas with Him.

CYO Notes

CHRISTMAS PARTIES

An annual treasure hunt, a mystifying magician act, stories, singing, presents and refreshments, brightened the afternoon Christmas party for the art and crafts class of the CYO, which is sponsored by the Ladies of Charity Recreation Committee. Lucky seekers in the treasure hunt were rewarded with a present, while unlucky ones each received a book for consolation. A German legend for Christmas was read by Mrs. Joseph Dawdle, director of the group. The Rev. Joseph Hogan offered mystery stories and his magician tricks.

Mothers of the children were invited, and were presented with the gifts made for them in class. The following mothers attended: Mrs. Harold Wood, Mrs. John Schmollenberg, Mrs. Schmidt, Mrs. Joseph Graboski, Mrs. Joseph L. Kosmicki, Mrs. Francis O'Connor. Novelty dances and an exchange of gifts featured the period from 7 to 9 P. M., when seventh and eighth graders met for their Christmas entertainment. Defense stamps were given to the children. A Snow King and Queen presided over the final session of merry-making, for the high school students, who met from 9 to 11 P. M.

FOOTBALL BANQUET

A banquet for members of the CYO Touchfootball League will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 29, in Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall. It is sponsored by the Recreation Committee of the Ladies of Charity.

MAKES CITY LEAGUE

Last year's Champ CYO Basketball team, St. Cecilia's outfit, this year is playing as junior varsity representatives of Co. E. team in the city league.

LEAVES FOR ARMY

Joe Lynch, leader of sports for boys in the CYO, and of the Messenger Drill Corps, leaves in January to be inducted into the army.

Services Resumed In Mexican Church

MEXICO CITY. Religious services were resumed last week in the church at Acambay, State of Mexico, with the Most Rev. Luis M. Martinez, Archbishop of Mexico, presiding. This church was badly damaged by an earthquake in 1912.

The Light to Victory



An original cut-out by Sister Annetta Gabriel, C.R.V.

MEN ARE PERSONALLY UNITED TO GOD BY SANCTIFYING GRACE

By Linus Riordan

Christ lived and died almost 2,000 years ago, yet we personally are united to Him and gain the benefits of His life and death through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies, enlightens, and moves the faithful so that, if we cooperate with grace, we may attain everlasting happiness in heaven.

The chief supernatural graces bestowed on the soul with sanctifying grace by the Holy Spirit are the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Faith, hope and charity are special favors freely given to man by God as the fruits of grace. They are called theological virtues because God is their immediate object. Faith is the virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths that God has revealed because God can neither deceive nor be deceived. Hope is the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us the means to attain everlasting life. Charity is the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake and our neighbor as ourselves for love of God. We receive these supernatural powers to render us capable of performing good works simultaneously with sanctifying grace.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are the crowning endowments of the soul aglow with sanctifying grace. These gifts are: Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. When God's grace is showered on man in Baptism his soul is raised to the supernatural level and the supernatural virtues are infused. The gifts of the Holy Spirit move the soul to exercise these virtues by making man alert to discern God's truths and to do His will. Thus for example, faith is aided by the gift of understanding, which enables us more clearly to know the mysteries of faith, and by the gift of wisdom, which enriches us with a relish for things Divine.

The principal effects in man as a result of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the beatitudes. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are 12: Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity. They are the habits of virtue that make life more sweet and pleasant. They regulate the life of a Christian either internally or externally.

The eight beatitudes are the ideal of Christian perfection as described by Christ in His beautiful Sermon on the Mount. They are: 1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 2. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth. 3. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied. 5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. 6. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. 7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. 8. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Each of the beatitudes has its own reward. Each leads to the perfection of man whereby he is deserving of the great reward promised to those who do the will of God. The soul elevated to the supernatural order by the infusion of grace and further enriched with supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit is given every aid to perform the duties and works necessary to gain life eternal. Such a soul is described by St. Paul in those words: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. II, 20). The Western Catholic.

CONSTANT PROTECTION

God extends a constant and special protection over those who place at their confidence in Him, and they who do so may rest assured that no harm will happen to them. - St. Vincent de Paul.

Hitler's 'Real' Aim To Oust Christianity Says Secretary Ickes

NEW YORK. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, in an address at a dinner of the National Council for Palestine of the United Palestine Appeal, declared that "at last we have come to realize that Hitler's real aim is the submergence of Christianity not of Judaism alone."

His final objective, Mr. Ickes asserted, was the destruction of the Christians as well as the Jews, and his most numerous victims are the Catholics.

"He singled out the Jews as his first victims because they were the weakest, not the strongest, group that was immediately available to slake his criminal thirst," he said. "The majority of the peoples who are temporarily enslaved by the Nazis are Catholics - Frenchmen, Poles, Belgians, Czechs, Austrians and Jugoslavs. The Catholics, inside and outside Germany, have been undergoing a systematic campaign of terror and of slow extermination."

"Although this attitude seems somewhat late in coming, it came nevertheless. Both Protestant and Catholic leaders have protested strongly against anti-Jewish laws and discrimination. In France, clergymen, both Huguenot and Catholic, have denounced the infamous Laval's anti-Semitic decrees. Pope Pius XII's statement - that it was not possible for Christians to take part in anti-Semitism - was sung in his face."

BOOKS COLLECTED BY POPE REACH WAR PRISONERS

VATICAN CITY. Following the collection and distribution by His Holiness Pope Pius XII of thousands of books to United Nations soldiers held prisoners of war in Italy, it is now announced that the International Red Cross in Switzerland has been requested by the Papal Nuncio in Bern to forward 16,000 volumes similarly collected for distribution to Italian soldiers held in German hands.