

# Scarred London Awaits Christmas

By John A. Greaves

London—(NC)—Here in London, even as Christmas approaches, many people find it difficult to realize that after almost six years there is now no war.

Some of them still wear the luminous badge with its large white "R" which tells the world they are Catholics. If some of them are away, in camps, in the country, they should be glad to see an air raid.

Perhaps it is something in the air of this new atom age which makes them stick to a practice they began back in those early war days of the little bombs. Or perhaps it is the fact that the air does not seem to be at peace yet.

The houses are of course economic, and Britain must still remain on something of a war footing because it must export before pre-war comforts or luxury can return.

The street lamps are all right, but nothing gleams in the countless electric bulbs of hundreds of advertising signs. Lighted letters do not flicker across the

giant electric newspaper as they used to, for the homes of Britain need coal to burn this Christmas and you cannot have both coal and dancing electric signs.

There is a festive air and people say "Merry Christmas." It is the best Christmas for six

years, although hundreds of thousands of our men are still away, in camps, in the country or across the seas. At Rainbow Corner, the little piece of the United States just off Piccadilly, GIs cluster around the boarded-up site where the famous insignificant statue of Eros used to welcome the dawn of Christmas Day. That is where they celebrated VE and VJ day in American style, but now it is another day and they wish they were across 3,000 miles of ocean. A left turn and we are going through the wooden doors into the French Church. It is shored up all around with iron girders, as it has been for four or five years. Another blast, or a near miss, and the whole structure would have toppled, the good French Father tells us.

cover on the left there are some blocks of masonry, piled up but sagging in the center, looking like an altar; two Christmas trees in pots on each side; the table behind cracked and peeling with faint traces of mural design showing here and there.

## FROM AFAR THEY CAME



Returning servicemen from the four corners of the earth will flock to USO Clubs operated by the National Catholic Community Service, where the spiritual significance of Christmas will be observed by the presence of a crèche and programs of religious activities. (NC Photos)

## Curfew Eased For Berlin Mass

Berlin — For the first time since 1939, Midnight Mass will be offered in the German capital at Christmas this year.

Bishop Conrad von Preysing of Berlin has been officially notified by the American district command that curfew, which is normally fixed for 10:30 p. m., will be extended to 3 a. m. during the night from December 24 to 25, thus enabling the faithful to attend Midnight Mass without risking arrest by street patrols.

The Mass will be offered by Bishop Freysing in his church in the suburb of Zehlendorf, in the heart of the American zone in Berlin, where he now resides.

Military district commanders all over the American zone, it is understood, have been authorized to extend the curfew during Christmas night to 3 a. m., at their own discretion.

German Bishops are expected to make ample use of the privilege of Midnight Mass, which they had to forego six years ago under the Nazi regime. Troops stationed in the American zone will be able to attend Midnight Masses in many localities.

In Frankfurt-on-Main Midnight Mass will be celebrated in St. Bernard's Church by Magr. L. Curtis Tiernan, of Kansas City, chief of chaplains in the theater. The Rev. Thomas F. O'Connor, C.S.S.R., formerly stationed at St. Joseph's Church, Rochester, and now attached to

Frankfurt headquarters command, will be deacon, and the Rev. Berwin Sikora, O.F.M., formerly of Albany, N. Y., sub-deacon. The sermon will be given by the Rev. John A. Keegan of the Archdiocese of Boston, who is chaplain of the Frankfurt headquarters command.

## The Christmas Story

(Continued from page 1)

She was to be a Virgin Mother, the Angel revealed. Her Motherhood was to be accomplished by a miracle of God's power.

Mary also tells Luke how the Boy Christ was once lost in the Temple. This is the kind of an incident that only a mother would remember.

All these recollections which the Virgin Mother revealed to Luke, near the evening of her life, are preserved by Mary's confident in the first two chapters of his gospel.

And because these two chapters present such rich and intimate details about the birth and infancy of Christ we can only conclude, as Archbishop Goodier does, that they were "virtually dictated" to St. Luke by Our Lady herself.

It was Luke's facile pen which wrote down for posterity the Story of Bethlehem but the story he tells comes from the lips of Christ's own Mother.

This is the common conviction of all who read Luke's account of the Nativity with a careful eye.

Father Lettey, the English Jesuit, designates the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel as "Our Lady's Gospel," because "their contents or matter come to us from our Lady herself. The fact is unmistakable. It is the mother telling how it all happened."

"Christian intuition," declares Father Lettey, "indicates to any

reader of Luke's Nativity account that "in all this it can only be the mother that is speaking. It is what she most had to tell, and it is told as she above all would tell it."

St. Luke expressly tells us, observes Archbishop Goodier, that he has taken his narrative "from those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses." Luke states that he writes not on his own authority, nor scarcely in his own words, but "as it has been delivered unto" him.

When, then, Luke plunges immediately into the account of the Annunciation, Archbishop Goodier asks, "What other eye-witness was there of that scene but Our Lady?"

When Luke relates the Story of the Nativity, who but the Mother would have thought of revealing the little detail, that "she wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger?"

As a physician, Luke had a professional interest in recording this intimate detail but only the Mother of Christ would be able to remember after many years what she had done on that wonderful night in Bethlehem.

Mary's storehouse of memories is the only explanation of the accuracy and wealth of detail which mark Luke's account of Christ's birth and infancy.

The disclosure that Christ was born in a "stable"; that "there was no room in the inn"; that angels told the shepherds; that the shepherds were "frightened" when they heard; that they came to Bethlehem and found the Holy Family — all these things only a mother would remember and be able to tell years afterwards.

Even the way in which Luke concludes points to Our Lady as the real story-teller guiding Luke's pen. "Mary," he writes, "kept all these things pondering them in her heart." Luke would hardly dare such a bold statement about Mary's thoughts on the night of Christ's birth unless she herself had told him.

One feels that here Luke is quoting Christ's Mother almost directly. As if she had concluded her interview with Luke by saying, "I never told these things before. I have kept them in my heart all these years and thought about them ever since."

Year after year at Christmas time the whole world stops and listens to the Story of Bethlehem as recorded by a Greek physician.

But the Christmas story is not really St. Luke's story. The Christmas Story is Our Lady's story and it is told in the simple language of a mother talking to her child.

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