

CBS Uses Children's Class To Picture Church Customs

By ELINOR INMAN
CBS Director of Religious Broadcasts

What does the ritual of the Mass signify to Catholic worshippers? What is the symbolism invested in the Holy Eucharist? How does a "liberal" Protestant church depart from the conventions of a "conservative" congregation of the same faith?

Why do Jews the world over celebrate the Feast of Chanukah and how did it originate? How does the Presbyterian church train its youth for spiritual maturity?

THESE AND MANY similar questions are posed and answered on the Columbia Broadcasting System's new Sunday afternoon television series, "Lamp Unto My Feet" (CBS-TV, 4:30-5:00 PM, EST), a program unique in the realm of television broadcasting.

Each week the program uses a group of eight to ten youngsters and an adult leader, who demonstrate the "project" method of religious instruction, whereby various aspects of religion are learned through active participation in the teaching program.

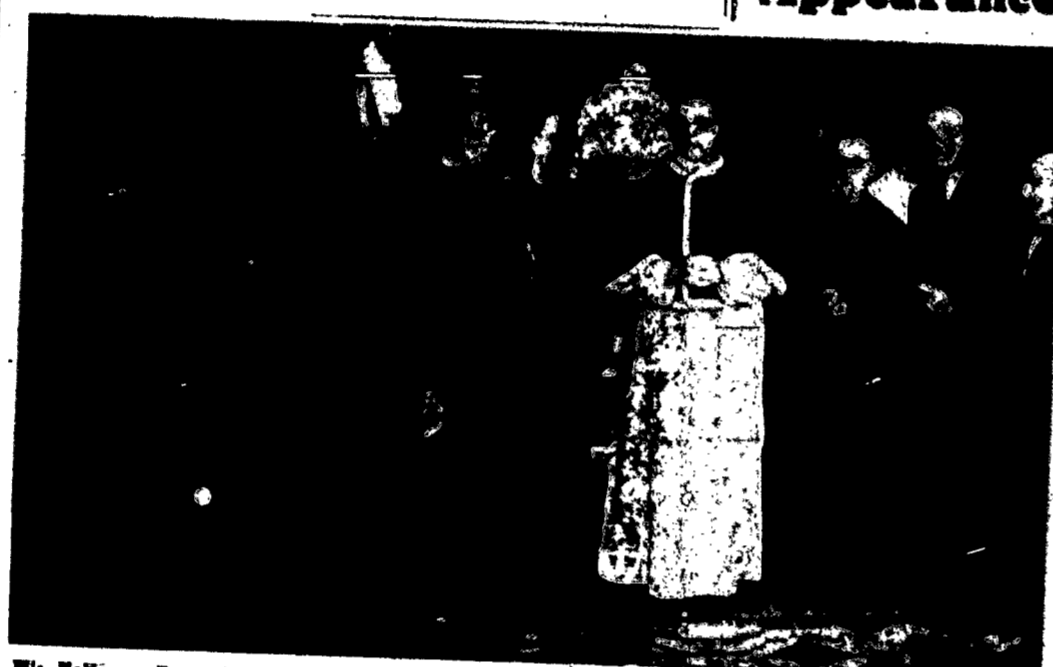
Representing major faiths, "Lamp Unto My Feet" is planned and produced in collaboration with four New York religious organizations, the Riverside Church, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Jewish Theological Seminary and the Corpus Christi Parochial School.

NO LESS THAN radio, television is morally enjoined to fulfill its public service responsibility by developing and broadcasting programs of valid religious content. But as raw material for the camera, the subject poses serious difficulties, chiefly in how it can be presented effectively, palatably and in terms of the medium's visual demands.

Sold on the theme of "Lamp Unto My Feet," the CBS Television Public Affairs staff was confronted with the task of molding a program format that would prove in performance a satisfactory answer to a difficult challenge.

With children's activities appealing to people of all ages, the staff agreed that the Sunday school classroom offered the best setting and cast of characters for dramatizing their proposed message of enlightenment.

Then someone hit happily on the notion of building the program around groups of children



His Holiness Pope Pius XII with some of the technicians who televised the Holy Father and recorded his message of gratitude for American contributions to the Bishops' War Victims Fund. This first television appearance of the Holy Father was seen on U.S. television screens on Mar. 27.

Pope's First Television Appearance

N.Y. Station Awarded For Church Show

"Television Chapel," the regular weekly religious program of WPIX, The New York News station, has been awarded the distinguished merit citation of the National Conference of Christians and Jews for its "outstanding contributions during the past year to mutual understanding and respect among people of diverse background."

Paying tribute to "the powerful medium of television," the National Conference of Christians and Jews made their annual award to a television station for the first time.

IN ACCEPTING the award, Robert L. Coe, station manager, said:

"No greater honor could be bestowed on a television station than this recognition of a public service in the field of religion."

"Television Chapel" went on the air June 20, 1948, the first Sunday of WPIX's operation. It is a half hour devotional program dedicated to both major and minority faiths in America. Aiming at a spiritual experience, the Sunday program regularly presents prayers, scripture reading and sermons by leading ministers as well as religious music.

IN THE PAST year, television audiences have seen services delivered by Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Catholics; by Reformed, Conservative and Orthodox Jews; by Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Evangelists, Reformed Protestants, Protestant-Episcopalians, and African-Methodist-Episcopalians, and by Buddhists.

"Television Chapel" avowedly using television as an instrument for spiritual broadcasting, seeks to give each faith an opportunity to explain its tenets, rites and customs to members of other religions, and to dispel ignorance, superstition and half-knowledge about all religions.

It also offers the spiritual service for shut-ins and others not able to attend church regularly. Among religious subjects covered in the series have been the ancient Jewish thanksgiving and Chanukah; the missions, vestments and rosary prayer of the Catholics; Lutheran services for the dead; and the Negro spirituals manifesting confidence in God.

Church Eyes Television As Valuable Teaching Tool

Beauty of the liturgy and other visible parts of religion will be brought to the attention of millions of persons through the wonder of television.

Potentialities in the spread of Christianity through video, already recognized by many religious leaders, are intriguing those who foresee the varied possibilities of its use.

Pope Pius XII himself, who has been televised several times, had this to say:

"What will be when the universe can directly observe, at the time of their very happening, manifestations of Catholic life?"

"Then the enlightened mind will lift its eyes, will observe with delight the light which shines on it from the maternal countenance of the Church, and will acknowledge the glory of God."

Besides the prospect of televising the Mass and other church ceremonies of major interest is the probability that significant religious motion pictures will be presented by video. There is possible also the showing of children's story hours, discussion clubs, film strips, charts, slides and so on—a big step forward in education techniques.

The common question raised "Does a Catholic satisfy his obligation to hear Mass when he sits home and watches a televised Mass?" was officially answered last Christmas when the New York Archdiocese Chancery announced that "as always, physical presence in church is re-

quired for fulfillment of the obligation to attend Mass."

Religious video programs are not new. Two years ago the first Solemn High Mass ever televised in the Eastern United States was pictured in the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul at Philadelphia—available to 14,000 home receivers in that area.

LAST YEAR saw the first telecasting of Christmas Midnight Masses at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral and at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Other Midnight Masses have been presented from Detroit, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

The first televised consecration of Roman Catholic bishops was offered last March, when three prelates were raised to the episcopacy in Chicago by Cardinal Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch.

Special Easter programs also have been presented from New York City during 1948 and 1949, featuring the Rt. Rev. Magr. Fulton J. Sheen and a vested choir.

VESTMENTS EXPLAINED



The Rev. Justin Kanley, assisted by an altar boy from St. Ignace Loyola Church in New York City, demonstrated to the television audience of WPIX's "Television Chapel" the meaning and use of vestments worn for the Catholic Mass. The explanation was part of a weekly half-hour program featuring Catholic symbolism and presenting inspirational talks. (WPIX photo).

Doctors See No Eye Harm

Looking at television does no permanent harm to the eye, according to leading ophthalmologists.

While extended viewing may result in eye-fatigue, particularly in children, the specialists note that it does not in itself cause physical injury to the eye.

THE FACTOR of fatigue in looking at television is most important in the case of children and the ophthalmologists emphasize that it is a problem to which parents should give close attention.

In the opinion of ophthalmologists, parents should insist that children remain a minimum of six feet away from the screen, preferably even farther.

ORATOR FACES TV CAMERA



Magr. Fulton J. Sheen, assistant pastor and chaplain of Catholic University in Washington, appeared before the cameras of WPIX, The New York News station, when he spoke during a "Television Chapel" service. The public service offering is presented at 8:30 each Sunday. (WPIX photo).