

Around Tree and Table Closer Union With Child No Greater Gift First Of All Carols

By MONSIGNOR HART

Christmas On Earth

The joys of Christmas mean more when shared with our loved ones. The younger families go to Grandma's to make merry around the gayly lighted tree and to be honored guests at the Christmas Dinner.

Later when their boys and girls are approaching adult age, they may cater to the advancing years of Grandpa and Gramma by reversing the process—the tree and table are at one of the sons with the oldesters feted as guests of honor.

Each new Christmas here on earth brings all the family closer together. Love is deepened, joy is intensified, as the wider circle of children and grandchildren, of aunts and uncles, headed by Grandpa and Gramma in all their glory and dignity come together.

See the gleam in the old eyes as they fasten a loving and admiring gaze on the littlest angel. A chain of angels, each link just a bit older than the last, gladdens each glance of parents and grandparents with rosy cheeks and hair in all its varied hues, with charm of childish caroling, and quips and wise-cracks declaring to all and sundry the new accretions of intelligence and appreciation the new generations are bringing to the grand family.

The cold outside accentuates the warmth of the Christmas heart, and gives new being to the hearty glow within each breast. From Christmas eve till the later hours of Christmas night the observance grows apace, till weary merry-makers young and old feel called on to close the great day. God makes happy our 1952 Christmas with all our loved ones here on earth! God center our observance in the three Masses for the Nativity of Our Lord!

Christmas in Heaven

Christmas brings Heaven near to us! Each of our beloved dead, a father, a mother, a brother or sister, a cherished son or daughter, has come into closer union with the Child of Bethlehem in the passing from earth.

The joys of many an earthly Christmas have been augmented and sublimated by the first Christmas spent in Heaven. As the days go by, we that are left on earth forget our bereavement in the thought that the Christ Child in blessing our parents and other dear ones departed, is preparing us for union with Him and with them on our never-ending Christmas Day!

Christmas in Heaven! Each new one numbering more of our dear ones and dear ones. Each new Christmas finding us joining new members of the choir above. Each new association with holy souls so recently a happy part of our earthly homes, will help us to realize all that the Lord meant when he said: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!"

As we with joy and reverence pass our Christmases on earth, may we feel we are close to our departed ones and looking to join them in a never-ending Christmas theme—"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will."

Hopes For Peace

Every American heart looks forward with our President-elect to an early end for the War in Korea. No greater Christmas gift can come to our people than such a peace. Our Christmas prayers to the Prince of Peace center around this very special intention.

Our daily prayers to God for peace on earth, our prayers to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our union with all the hosts of Heaven in constant petitions for an early end to earthly strife, should secure the desired Christmas blessing of peace on earth.

Christmas Carols

Even the Angels of God with their supernatural gifts of superhuman wisdom sensed that Christmas joys called for expression in the highest form of music.

We have the words of the Angelic Choir which they sing at midnight over the Bethlehem stables: "Glory be to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will." But we long in memory the words without keeping also the sacred melodies that carried them to earth.

Perhaps some lingering strains of the heavenly music remained in the minds and hearts of holy souls in and about the Stables at Bethlehem. Perhaps among all the things that Mary kept in her heart of the Christmas story were at least slight traces of the Angelic Harmonies.

With no document to give historic support to our cherished estimate of the rich treasures of Christmas Carols, we store away the thought that as much of beauty and inspiration and religious fervor in a modern as well as in a traditional setting, marks our Christmas Carols as being a little more than a human product?

Out of many hearts, thoughts concerning the Nativity of Christ have been revealed; may we not feel that along with these thoughts went the rudiments of a musical setting which men reverent and love almost as much as the message they carry?

Since then the Christmas songs! Carol joyfully the Christmas message! Emulate the celestial choir, invite them to come to give to earth the great message from Heaven: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will!"

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JOSEPH BREIG

Bishop Sheen,
Good GuyBreig
apologizing, I will defend it as exactly the right word.

Jimmy, aged 6, sat watching Bishop Sheen on television. His sister Geena, aged 4, was playing with her doll, and not watching.

Suddenly Jimmy, galvanized with delight, cried out, "Hey, Geena, look—this guy makes jokes!"

For Jimmy's use of the word "guy," I have no intention of apologizing. I will defend it as exactly the right word.

NO CRITIC or commentator, I think, has succeeded in explaining as precisely as Jimmy did why Bishop Sheen is so successful on TV.

In the American language as spoken by today's American youngsters either a man is a guy, or he is pretty hopeless.

Bishop Sheen's success has its deepest roots in the fact that he is a guy. That is to say, he is what he is, and he is for what he is for.

THERE ARE TWO kinds of guys of course—Good Guys, and Bad Guys. Now the point about a guy is that you know where he stands. He is not a fence-sitter. He is not a barabazgon-jumper.

If he is a Catholic, it is because he believes in the Catholic faith and he works at it. If he is a communist, it is because he believes that communism is right and he works at that.

A guy is a man who does not sit around holding up his wet forefinger to find out which way the wind is blowing before he takes sides. He doesn't care which way the wind is blowing. In the popular phrase, he'd rather be right than be dead. That's why he's a guy.

Bear in mind that I am defining the word as I understand it in my boyhood, and as Jimmy understands it today. A Bad Guy, like a Good Guy, can be brave and self-sacrificing, although he is in error about the worthiness of the cause he serves.

A GUY is a man who is loyal to something, even if his loyalty is a mistaken loyalty. He cares about something outside himself, even if it is a wrong something.

And a man who can be loyal to a wrong something can also be loyal to a right something. If only his view of life can be corrected. American youngsters, with their pure instinct for morality, are for all Good Guys, and against all Bad Guys. But they do not despise Bad Guys.

THEY DESPISE only the character who isn't a guy at all—the lousy who will serve any cause, so long as it fattens his bread. In other words, the materialist.

American youngsters sense that a Bad Guy, unlike the Good Guy, is a danger rather than a blessing. A Good Guy, if only his eyes can be opened, will change if he can be brought to realize that badness is beneath his manhood—that only the service of God and neighbor is worthy of him and that serving evil is stealing from God, who made him for Himself, for goodness.

The non-guy is a more difficult problem. The trouble with the non-guy is that he cares only for self, and the self he serves is so small, so rusty that the more loyal he is to it, the worse he becomes.

It is very hard to make a Good Guy out of a non-guy.

PERHAPS THE whole thing can be boiled down to this—a guy is a man who when all is said and done, is childlike. And we know that only those who are childlike can enter the kingdom of Heaven. Children are very quick to recognize childlikeness.

Bishop Sheen, as Jimmy saw instantly, is childlike for all his learning and ability.

HE IS A Good Guy who makes good jokes about angels, and about people hitting bishops on their butts. He is for goodness, and against badness. He is only against their badness; he is for their goodness. He wants Bad Guys to be Good Guys. That is why he is on television.

A week after first hearing Bishop Sheen, Jimmy reminded me to tell him again.

Then those Jimmy and Geena sat down before the TV set wearing their beanies and everytime the bishop adjusted his, they adjusted theirs; just as they adjust their holsters when Hopalong Cassidy another Good Guy, adjusts his.

THAT'S THE secret of Bishop Sheen's success. He is such a Good Guy that he can talk theology and philosophy with us, and while doing so, fascinate a small boy and a smaller girl.

Fellow Travelers



—Cartoon by Carroll of King Features

GRETTA PALMER

Mission
Adaptation

Gretta Palmer

Since we are all, without exception, expected to be apostles of the Faith, missionary techniques should be of intense, personal interest to every Catholic.

* How are we going to spread the Faith to those in our environment who do not share it?

To find an answer it seems logical to turn to the branch of learning known as "missionology"—to learn whether the experience of missionaries among the Eskimos and Indians, the peoples of Africa and Melanesia can give us any clue to the right approach to Mass.

Smith and Brown of Main St., U. S. A.

When we investigate the mission textbooks, by even a cursory peep or two, we discover that the basis of all successful rapport with pagan peoples is based on "mission adaptation."

THE APOSTLE must familiarize himself with the culture and beliefs of the people among whom he lives. He must discover the truths among the falsehoods of the native religion.

He must evaluate what is true and good in it and must help the groping, foreigner-to-the-Faith to sanctify this good. He must build on whatever the pagan already knows in the realm of natural religion.

IF WE attempt to study the beliefs of those about us in America from the missionary viewpoint, we discover several curious things.

We find that, according to a thorough survey recently completed by the Catholic Digest, 87 per cent of Americans are "absolutely certain" that there is a God, 10 per cent are "fairly sure" and only one per cent are outspoken atheists.

With this general background, we can now turn to a recent, very fascinating book called "This I Believe," in which Edward E. Murrow has collected the convictions of numerous well-known Americans.

Most of them have been to college, many of them live in big cities, but even those facts do not prepare us for the astonishing disclosure that barely half of the contributors, in expressing their profoundest beliefs, find it necessary to mention the word "God."

What do American leaders of thought believe in? Listen to a few of them and you will hear: "I believe in people, in their unadulterated humanity," says Henry Taylor, president of Sarah Lawrence College.

THEN, WITH what seems a mental skip, he adds, "I believe we must, each of us, make a philosophy out of believing in nothing."

Pearl Buck, the writer, says: "I feel I need for any other faith than my faith in human beings."

Then David Belinfante in "deceit" which he defines as "respect for other people."

Thomas Mann believes "that man is meant as a great experiment whose possible failure, or man's own guilt, would be paramount to the failure of creation itself."

MARGARET MEAD believes that life derives its meaning "through the relationships which the individual's conscious goals have to the civilization, period and country within which one lives."

Defying humanity is a blasphemous doctrine—but running away from blasphemy has never

been the way of the great missionaries.

Even when our neighbors cry, with Swinburne, "Glory to man in the highest, for man is the highest of things," they are pronouncing a partial truth: man is, indeed, the highest of created things upon this earth.

LOVING YOUR neighbor is not a bad apprenticeship for loving God. Humanitarians can be fed, without great difficulty, to see that what they really venerate in any man is the potential saint, the saintless man they want the man they revere to be.

When humanists have reached that stage, they are not too far from the Kingdom of God. When we have helped them reach that stage we are where we want to be so presentation a word or have never heard of it—putting into practice the best kind of "missionology." We are being apostles, as we ought to be. We are practicing "mission adaptation" among our contemporaries. And that is every Catholic's job.

Sunday Sermon

By Mgr. Hart

THE JEWS had heard the Voice! It was the Voice of John. It sanctified their wickedness, their hypocrisy. It warned them to do penance.

Religious men, knowing the threat of the promised Redeemer to be close at hand, and disturbed at the charges made against them, sent their messengers to John asking if he was the Christ.

John said he was not the Christ, nor was he Elias or the prophet. He was the Voice: The Voice of one crying in the desert: Make straight the way of the Lord.

The Voice spoke clearly to those left there no doubt. It spoke of John's Baptism, a Baptism with no sacramental power, no power to forgive sin. It was John's means of preparing men for the One who would baptize with water and the Holy Ghost: the One Whose superiority over John was clearly shown by His power to forgive sin, by His conferring of the Sacrament of Baptism unto the remission of sin.

The Voice clearly, resoundingly, authoritatively, delivered its message: Behold the Christ! Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Behold One superior in every way to John: the One whom John pointed out as most worthy: John with all his reports for holiness and power was infinitely below Him in all things: John was not worthy to loose the strap of His sandal.

The Voice spoke: It spoke its word of Witness! It pointed out to men the Redeemer who was to save men from their sins. John presented to the people Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Who then began His public ministry for man's salvation.

THE DAY One trouble with our schools is that the teachers are afraid of the principal, the principal is afraid of the school board, the school board is afraid of the parents, the parents are afraid of the children, and the children are afraid of nobody. —Amalie Regier.

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You Can Win Converts

Peep-Too Sandals
ByRev. John A. O'Brien, Ph.D.
(The University of Notre Dame)

Mary Carls, a bookkeeper at Barnhart & Merriams, had to balance her books at the close of each day. Being of the dreamy sex, she never had more than half her mind on the ledgers and found that figures had a most disconcerting way of getting into the wrong columns.

Carl Frederickson, the head accountant, often had to come to her help.

ONE EVENING, after rearranging a few recalcitrant figures for her, Carl surprised Mary by asking, "Could I take you to the show tonight? I don't want to miss a single night."

"Geel! That's a big order... every night for two weeks?" said Mary. "I don't think anyone could take that much religion."

Half an hour later Carl was back at Mary's desk.

"SAY, CAN anyone go to this mission and if so, will you take me? Mind you, I'm not interested in religion of any sort. I've not darkened the door of a church for twenty years. But if you won't come to the show with me, it looks as if I'll have to go to church with you. But don't think there's any chance of roping me in."

"Listen," said Mary, "I'll tell you where St. Paul's Church is and you can go by yourself."

"No fear! Wild horses wouldn't get me inside a Catholic Church on my own!"

There was no way of getting out of it. Mary had to take him. When they arrived, the church was packed. But an usher found seats for them in the front row, which Catholics generally slip away from as the devil does from holy water.

THEY WERE scarcely seated when Carl with much rustling of paper opened an enormous box of chocolates and handed it to Mary, asking in a low audacious tone if she liked that brand.

Mary had just asked him to lower his voice when Carl spotted the missionary and whispered, "Who is that funny little bald-headed fellow, with a rope around his middle... and peep-toe sandals?"

"Carl found out when the Franciscan Father entered the pulpit," Mary says. "He spoke so simply and yet so eloquently of the love of God and of our duty of returning that love that I forgot all about my restless companion."

Later on, I stole a side glance at Carl and was amazed at the change in him. He was leaning forward, his head bowed, at the missionary and thus he remained till the end.

ON THE WAY home Carl was strangely quiet, simply remarking, "That missionary has got me thinking. The beginning to realize that there's more to life than leggers, books and adults. I've given some thought to God or to where I'll spend eternity. It's about time I put first things first and got my house in order."

"Every night," reports Mary, "he went with me to the mission and every night the missionary opened up to him a new vista of truth and beauty and holiness. Carl's cocksureness and bravado had all evaporated. Though he had come to scoff, he began now to pray. I knew that was the beginning of the end for Carl. For God never withholds the grace of faith from those who humbly ask for it."

AT THE CLOSE of the mission, Carl said, "Mary, I want to go into this thoroughly. I want to take a complete course of instruction and see if I can get squared away with God and make up for twenty years of negligence."

When Carl received his First Holy Communion three months later, he exclaimed, "Mary this is the happiest day of my life! I owe it all to you!"

Then, smiling, he added, "No, not at all. I'll have to credit that missioner with the peep-toe sandals for a mighty assist. He really laid it on the line... so I couldn't back out. God, indeed, has been good to me."

"OH, YES, Carl and Mary got married and God blessed them with two children. So Mary's invitation has netted three souls for God. Incidentally, Mary tells with a nibble wit and sprightly humor the full story in the fascinating book of convert stories, "Fatha to Christ," just off Our Sunday Visitor press.

The Apostles' Creed

'I Believe...!'

By Rev. Albert J. Shamon

"This is a series of articles on 'The Apostles' Creed' written by Father Albert Shamon, professor at St. Andrew's Seminary and author of 'Behind the Mass.'"

IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD—Very, very many people admit that God is a Father, that He has a Son. But very, very few people will concede that Jesus Christ is this Son of God made man. Yet it is so.

Christ Himself said so. Said so, when He was on trial for His life. Said so, when "saying so" meant a death sentence.

You remember the circumstances I am sure. Christ's trial was a midnight trial, like those of the Communists—at night it is so easy to black out justice. Every attempt to condemn Christ legally failed wretchedly. So Caiaphas—the judge at the trial—became the accuser.

HE ASKED A LEADING QUESTION. Pontifically, with all the majesty of the spiritual head of Israel, Caiaphas administered a solemn oath: "I adjure thee," he said, "by the living God! thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God?"

A truthful answer would draw the razor across the throat of Christ. But Christ was the truth; in clear and measured tones, therefore, He answered: "Thou has said it." That was the Jewish way of pleading guilty to the charge.

THE JEWS understood this answer as a claim to be God, for the High Priest ripped his outer garment from neckband to waist. Further witnesses were dispensed with. The words of Christ were branded as blasphemous. And the whole Sanhedrin voted Him guilty of death.

NOW CHRIST WAS EITHER THE GOD He claimed to be or He was not. If He was not God, then He must have been either insane or a liar to stake such a claim.

You have undoubtedly seen crazy people. So often, they think they are someone else. That is why they are crazy.

Once a group of people were being escorted through an insane asylum by one of its inmates. As they ambled past the different cells, the guide fervently described the aberrations of the confined:

"This one thinks he's Napoleon. That one thinks she is Garbo. This one, a business executive. That one, a fireman." So it was, until he came to the last cell. Here, as if contemplating an utterly hopeless case, his head shook commiseratively.

"You see that man," he whispered confidentially: "He's one of our worst cases. He thinks he is God." Then chuckling cannily, he continued: "He can't be, because I am."

Was that the trouble with Christ? Was He daft? Well, let's look at the record. A tree can be known by its fruits.

When Christ was only twelve, gray-haired Doctors of the Law blinked in wonderment at the brain that burned behind His youthful brow. As a poet put it, "Did not the wisest change mouths into ears, to hear him?"

WHEN, AS A YOUNG MAN, HE BEGAN TO TEACH, the intellectuals of Judea and the unlettered of Galilee were mesmerized. He struck them, not as one who was seeking the truth, but as one possessing it. It was all so effortless for Him. Cardinal Newman likened two days just to write a single paragraph. Ben Johnson, eulogizing his master, William Shakespeare, confessed that "he who attempts to write a living line must sweat."

Yet Christ took the most daring and complicated of truths and presented them with the liquid ease of water cascading down a mountain side. In short sentences, He packed revolutionary doctrines destined to endure until the end of time.

THE TEACHING, TOO, SCINTILLATED. Like the Teacher, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle never propounded what Christ taught. His doctrines were not borrowed from any school. His teachings were not just new labels put on old truths.

They were a creation. They were brand new—fresh and refreshing as a summer's rain. They smacked entirely of heaven and not of earth. Who, before Christ, for instance, ever heard of the Trinity, the Mystical Body, the Holy Eucharist? No wonder the crowds were in a clamor at His teaching. Never did a man speak as this man.

Consider, too, the keen reasoning Christ displayed in parrying the thrusts of His enemies. Crazy people cannot reason. Yet when shrewd Scribes and sly Sadducees, again and again, thought to gild Him on the horns of a dilemma, Christ, like an expert mauler, gracefully sidestepped and plunged the sword of reason into the heart of the problem and destroyed it.

Should tribute be given to Caesar or not? To have said "yes," Christ would have alienated the Jews. To have answered "no," He would have been denounced to the Romans. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," was the simple, on-the-spot-of-the-moment solution.

The case of the woman taken in adultery concealed a similar trap. "Should she be stoned or not?" The Law of Moses said "yes." If Christ had said "no," then He would have been branded as a lawbreaker. If He had said "yes," then where was the mercy He preached? Did Christ's answer savor of insanity? "Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone." As simple as all that.

WAS CHRIST A LIAR? Did He utter a falsehood when He claimed to be God?

Christ was too good to lie. Judas confessed he had betrayed in mortal blood. Five times Pontius Pilate, as if echoing the thunder of his conscience, called Him "a just man." To His enemies, Christ hurled the challenge: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"

In His relations with God, He could say: "I do always the things that please Him." He prayed incessantly—whole nights. He taught others how to pray and brought them to God. He loved the poor, the sick, the lepers.

The eight beatitudes but reveal His inner life—He is poor in spirit, meek, merciful, clean of heart, a peacemaker; He hungers and thirsts after justice, therefore He suffers persecution—not because He was thought to be a liar.

His, moreover, don't do for lies. When the great Tarrat was in the land, lay dying on the glistening sands of the Ganges, and the Hindu, the Farhan hero, who had dealt the mortal blow, questioned the dying words of the wounded Solah, the Tarrat in anger burst out: "Truth sits upon the lips of the dying Christ!"

Christ died for truth, the truth that He was the Son of God. Obviously, since He was neither insane nor a liar, that must have been the truth.

That should have killed indifference. How can anybody still say it doesn't make any difference what one believes? It made all the difference in the world to Christ. In fact, He died for what He believed. For was He not judged guilty of death simply because He believed Himself to be the Son of God, our Lord?

Fortune Telling

Washington—(NO)—The question "Is Fortune Telling Sinful?" is answered in the December issue of Catholic Men, organ of the National Council of Catholic men, by Father P. Parente, theology professor at the Catholic University of America.

FATHER PARENTÉ points out that fortune telling is "one of the oldest and most widespread forms of superstition." He said that any form of it which involves "intervention of evil spirits" is a grave sin.

Whereas no explicit or implicit invocation of evil spirits occurs (as is commonly the case today), but the means used are thought to be sufficient in themselves for predicting the future, for some individuals into a deep account reasons or law of nature, rooted superstition.

"WHEN SOME of the popular forms of fortune telling are indulged in for amusement only," he added, "putting no trust whatever in the means used, there seems to be no sin at all because every element of superstition is lacking." But he warned that what sometimes is started as an innocent diversion, may develop with the individual into a deep account reasons or law of nature, rooted superstition.