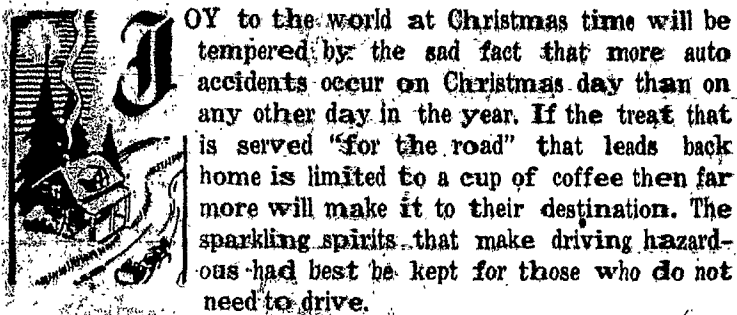


## Happy Holiday



OF all the gifts of good, will we can give our fellow men there is one we certainly owe them, and that is our care and concern for their lives and safety. Safe driving is a contemporary wise man's gift to his community.

## LIFE Looks At Christianity

LIFE magazine for Dec. 26 is a special edition illustrating and describing the history and beliefs of the major Christian churches. Four specifically Catholic sections show the administration of the Chicago archdiocese, monastic life in a Benedictine abbey in Kansas, American Catholic problems as discussed by Jesuit Father Murray, and finally an exquisite story of Pope Pius XII.

An eleven page history of Christian faith written by Paul Hutchinson accurately traces the growth of the Church from Christ's resurrection to the present day "Catholic clarity" and "Protestant obscurity" which characterizes the principal divisions of those who call Christ their Savior.

Catholics cannot condone either the scandals that stained late medieval churchmen's lives nor the violent revolts which erupted from the defiance of Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII, and subsequent church-makers like them.

These ancient rancors ought not now to prevent Catholics and Protestants from a mutual effort to recognize what Pius XII terms "the great and good realities" in the hearts of all sincere men.

LIFE's editors, sometimes caustic in their comments on Christians, have produced a publishers' masterpiece. It may indeed serve as "an instrument of peace" according to its concluding prayer of St. Francis.

## DOINGS AT THE DALYS

## Merry Christmas

By Mary Timley Daly

For the ninth consecutive year, it is the privilege of this column to wish its readers a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS!

By the time this column will be published, the current long list of "To Do's" will have been whittled down, we hope, as will the "To Get's" list. The house will be clean — or will it? — and the Christmas tree will have been bought, or chopped down from the forest, and decorated with lights, tinsel, and perhaps a few extra gifts to send to neighbors in appreciation for favors received. The Christmas tree will have been bought, or chopped down from the forest, and decorated with lights, tinsel, and perhaps a few extra gifts to send to neighbors in appreciation for favors received.

The Christmas crib will be in place of honor waiting for the three important figures to be put in place on Christmas eve — for this is still Advent, that exciting time of waiting. Some of the greenery in the Advent wreath will have sprouted beside new leaves.

As the Advent wreath is dismantled to make way for the Christmas wreath outside the front door, those new tendrils will be planted to grow on the kitchen windowsill the rest of the winter, put into the porch boxes next fall and be "parent greens" for next year's Advent wreath.

The ever-continuing spirit of Christmas will prevail, we trust, not just in these physical manifestations.

And, two days before Christmas, the Head of the House will decide that this year he is going to do his Christmas shopping early — not wait as usual until the stores are about to close on the 24th.

A MONTH AGO, we planned it all out sensibly: each child would get something useful and suited to his or her own needs. These gifts are stretched — I won't say where, for now and then somebody at our house reads this column.

Since then, though, there have been the most outlandish hints. Can you imagine anything sillier, for instance, than 10-year-old Ginny's wish for a ballet costume? She doesn't take dancing lessons, is to be in no play, is growing so fast that anything that would fit her now will be too small by spring, and just too cold to wear a ballet costume even if she had one. Where and when would she wear it? Nevertheless, I know what the Head of the House will say when he starts his shopping. (Might as well get the tarleton, the glitter ribbon, set aside a few hours.)

Then, there's Markie and her scarab bracelet. "Her" scarab bracelet what am I saying? She has never said openly that she wants one. Matter of fact, Markie's whole enthusiasm goes into getting "hearts" desired" for others. Hours and days of baby-sitting proceeds are gladly given

to buy for someone — always someone else. But how she admires scarab bracelets — dried bugs, aren't they? Well, maybe in the meantime we can round up an artificial one — partially dried-up bugs, perhaps?

Over-indulgence children — spoil them? I wonder if it happened too often, it would be over-indulgence. Goofy requests? Certainly! Being of a practical nature of later years, this columnist might have sensibly turned thumbs down on such nonsense — except for the memory of a growing girl out in the Midwest many years ago who had a wish for, of all things, a monocle!

"But a monocle is either an affection or a prop for one falling eye," my father argued. "You're not the affected type and both your eyes are good. Why the monocle?"

"I dunno, Papa," I mumbled. "But lots of the kids in the sixth grade have 'em. I just want one." To this day I can see the non-plussed expression on my father's face. How he and Mom, God rest their souls, ever saved their consciences over that one I'll never know. But there was a monocle in my Christmas stocking that year. (And I can't remember a single "sensible" gift received at age 11.)

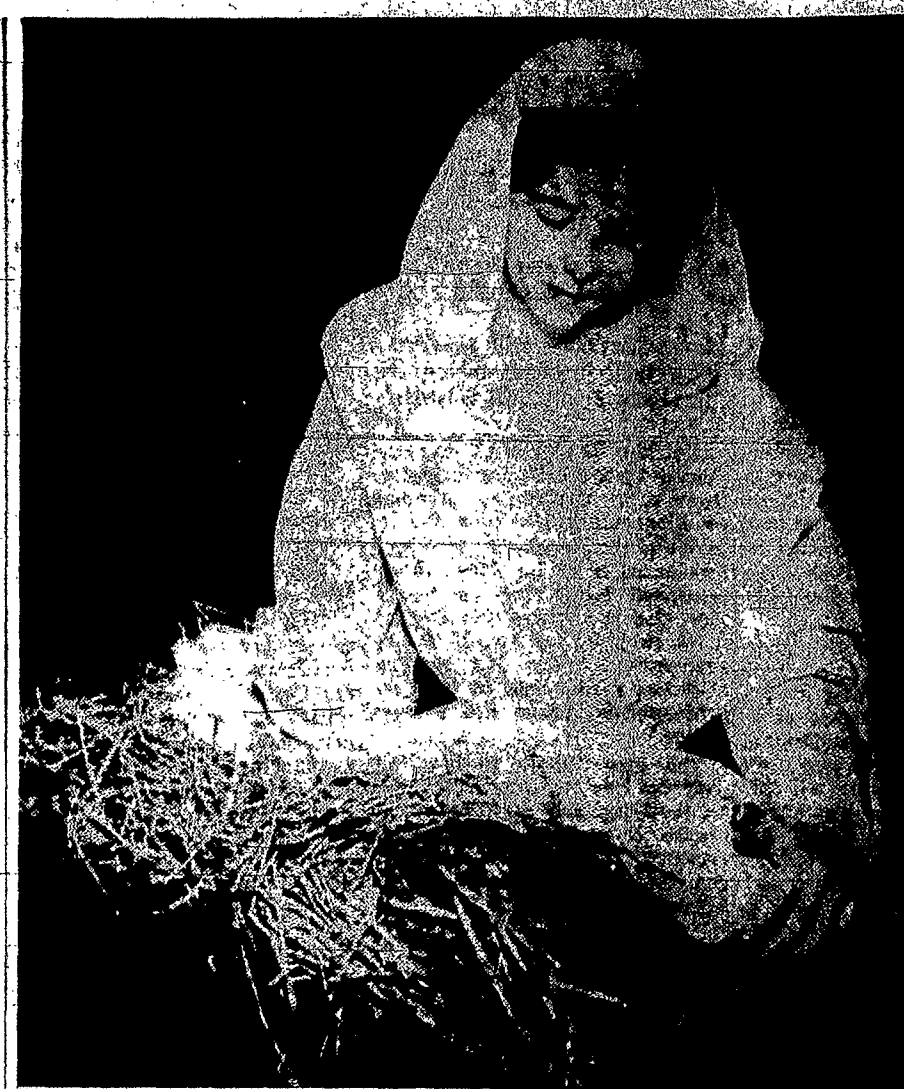
A FEW years from now the scarab bracelet will go, probably, to a white elephant sale, the ballet costume will be worn for play until it is a sodden mess. (I've no idea where that long-ago treasured monocle is!)

If an imitation scarab bracelet and a ballet costume can provide the same "It's just because we love you" feeling, well and good.

It's the spirit behind that Christmas giving that counts.

## Daily Mass Calendar

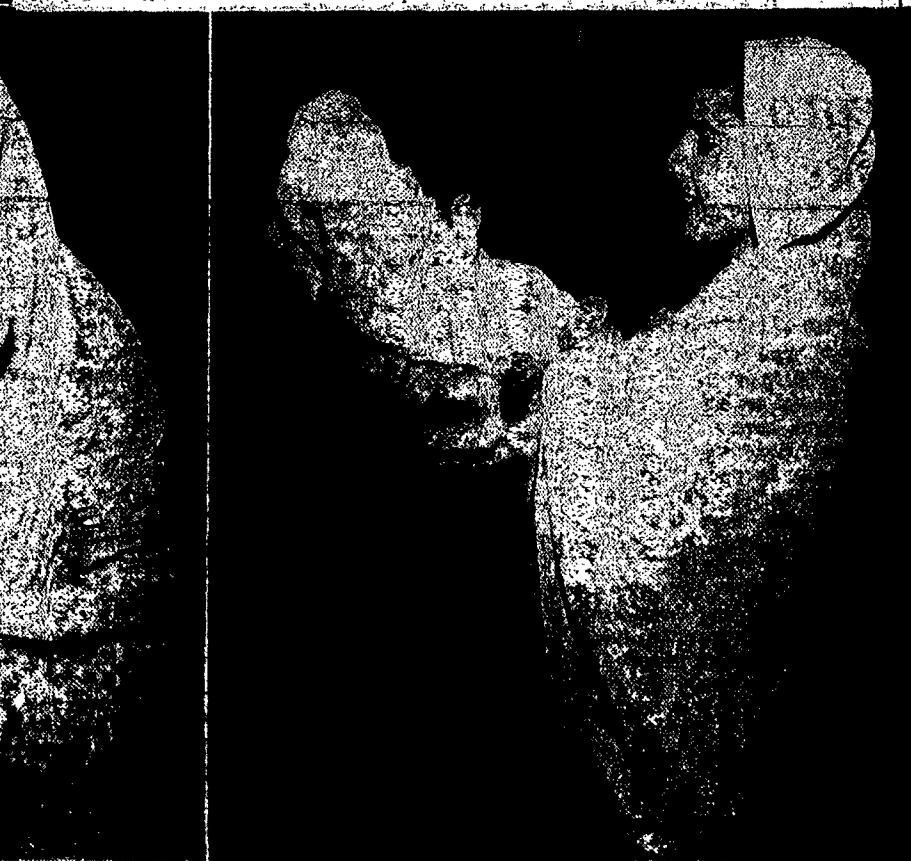
Sunday, December 25 — Christmas, Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ (white). Three special Masses, as in Missal. Monday, December 26 — St. Stephen, first martyr (red). Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface. Tuesday, December 27 — St. John, apostle (white). Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface. Wednesday, December 28 — Holy Innocents, martyrs (purple). No Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface. Thursday, December 29 — St. Thomas Becket, martyr (red). Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface. Friday, December 30 — Mass of the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's Day (white). Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface. Saturday, December 31 — St. Sylvester, pope (white). Gloria. 2nd prayer of Christmas. Creed. Christmas Preface.



AND the angel said, "This shall be a sign to you: you will find an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."



Portrayals of Our Lady honoring the Christmas Season were given in traditional Nativity plays during the past two weeks by students of area schools. Shown in the role of the Blessed Mother are: (above) Kathleen Sheehan of St. Agnes High School in "Crib"; (left) Mary Ann Handon of Nazareth College in the "Nativity Play"; and Barbara Pichello of Our Lady of Mercy High School in "Song of the Crib." Photos by Thomas Casey.



## Town Of Bethlehem, Focus Of Faith Of Millions

IN A GROTTA beneath Bethlehem's St. and slept, and there are few tombs comparable to the eternal gaze of curious eyes. To protect his wife from hostility where, Christ was born.

Across a hundred thousand altars of Bethlehem at Christmas midnight Mass, the angels that are quite common in the limestone hills of Judea. Country people of that time, often used to hear the angels in the fields around Bethlehem.

Within a few miles of Bethlehem lay the desert country of Judea, the haunt of marauders and wild beasts. To protect their flocks of sheep and goats, shepherds kept watch at night over their sleeping animals. About Israelites scorned these half-savage nomads who lived with animals and sometimes lived like animals. They could not conform to the prescribed Jewish practices and their attack kept them out of Temple and synagogue alike.

IT WAS TO these outcasts, lean of body and fortune, that the good news of great joy was first announced. Imagine their amazement and fear when they found themselves surrounded at night by light and to hear the angel's message telling them, "This day is born to you in the city of David a Savior Christ the Lord."

When the shepherds recovered from their fright, they took counsel together, left some of their members to guard the flock while the rest went in haste. St. Luke tells us they "found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger."

An infant put into a crib of hay like a castaway, yet surrounded by the attentive care of Mary and Joseph? The shepherds had no hesitations like the Magi, but they gave what they had, faith and love.

We may well believe that Mary and Joseph told them the mystery which eyes could not see, that here was the very Son of God, that Word made flesh, the incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Privileged to be the first to worship the just-born God, the shepherds left the grotto blessing God and telling everyone what they had seen and heard, and all were amazed at their story.

And now nearly two thousand years later, this story of shepherds, wise men, and the events which occurred in the little town of Bethlehem are still able to

feel it bitterly. JOSEPH MUST have had relatives or acquaintances in Bethlehem, and why he did not knock at their doors remains somewhat of a riddle. Perhaps because of Mary's condition, Joseph wanted a place of privacy for her.

Houses in Palestine were one room affairs where every member of the family worked, ate, and slept.

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## Apostleship Of Prayer

## Sadness At Bethlehem

You can say what you want about Christmas being a joyful feast, but, for most of us, there is a big element of sadness in it. Tears come easily to the eye at Christmas.

With all the giving of gifts and in spite of the hilarity of music and bottle, we cannot escape the truth that Noel is the feast of the poor. Of all the times of the year, we are most conscious of them now, with the hundreds of homeless, the street corner Santa Claus, and the haunting music of the carols filling the sharp air of night.

The Crib does not help us overcome this melancholy. Of all the children born of women, Christ chose the circumstances of his own birth. It could have been a birth surrounded in splendor the grandest, royal wedding. Instead, the Son of God had his first Christmas night in the lowest of necessities: a spot on the earth to be born in, a manger, a foster-father, Saint and sinner alike will fill up when he thinks of this.

So for all of us there is sadness at Christmas; for all of us save the children. For them it is unadulterated joy. At night of the Crib they tingle all over. What do they see which we oldsters miss? (I am remembering here that slight of hand finds it hard to fool children; how they have a way of waiting the left hand.)

WHAT THEY SEE is what Jesus wants them to see. St. Paul tells us that He came into the world teaching us. Even before He could speak, He taught; and what He taught was so elemental and so simple, that He did not need the vehicle of words for his expression. As during the Public Life, as before Pilate, as on the Cross, so too at Bethlehem there is greatness.

At no time in his life did Jesus ever deny that He was the greatest of all men. The children see this at the Crib and rejoice.

This is why Christmas is merry, the joyful mystery of heaven and earth. This is the Gift of Christmas. If we have tears, let them be for our own unworthiness. We are the empty — which God has chosen to fill with good things.

## JOSEPH BREIG

## The Funniest Man Alive

This is an odd kind of Christmas column, but I've got to tell somebody why I've been practically rolling on the floor with laughter for the past two or three weeks.

The comedian who laid me in the aisle is a fellow named M. P. Koritsyn, who made a speech on the Russian radio for the Soviet Ministry of Culture, where he works.

Comrade Koritsyn had a lot to say about intensifying the communist campaign against religious beliefs because they are growing stronger instead of weaker, and so on. But we can skip all that.

WHAT SMASHED ME was the part where Koritsyn solemnly assured the Russian people (and I quote) that "science has proved that Christ never existed." Yes, he really did. The speech was heard by western radio monitors, and was reported by the U.S. Information Agency.

Being an argumentative character, and sometimes entirely serious, I was tempted at first to push my nose up against Comrade Koritsyn's and challenge him to produce his proof and to define what he meant by "science."

But all at once I had to laugh. I have been living ever since in a state of hilarious joy. And the fact that this is the Christmas season has not detracted from my merriment. I see nearly bust every time I see Nativity scenes and Christmas trees and colored lights and happy children and all that.

IT BEGINS TO look as if I will go to my grave chuckling. I mean to say, after all, I am not totally devoid of a sense of humor, and you know what a sense of humor is?

Well, if you will pardon the big words, it is the ability to per-

ceive the preposterousness of the incongruous, and the incongruity of the preposterous.

That being so, Comrade Koritsyn, whether he knows it or not, has earned the right to be considered the funniest man alive, he having come up with the most preposterous statement of the century.

"SCIENCE HAS proved that Christ never existed." This is really colossal. No infants were slain in Bethlehem. No one named John the Baptist ever came out of the desert. No young man went from synagogue to synagogue preaching.

Millions followed him. There was never any tumult and shouting. No Sermon on the Mount was uttered. Scribes and Pharisees were not sent to investigate. No voice ever said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

"Science has proved that Christ never existed." We will have to tear down our churches and hospitals and orphanages. We must smash half our sculpture, and burn art and literature. We must toss history into the rubbish heap, rewrite drama, and throw overboard the most vivid expression in every language.

JUDAS NEVER betrayed anybody. There were never any thirty pieces of silver. Peter denied nobody. The cock did not crow. The High Priest cross-examined nobody about blasphemy.

No one was taken before Herod. Pilate washed his hands of nobody's blood. Barabbas the murderer was not freed. Nobody was scourged, or crucified, or laid in a tomb guarded by soldiers to prevent him from carrying out his promise to rise again.

Christ, about whom more has been written and spoken, for and against, and who is more celebrated in art, music, philosophy, theology, architecture, history, archaeology and scholarship generally, than any thousand other men who ever drew breath!