

Scripture in Space



Mrs. Sue Borman, wife of the commander of the Apollo 8 moon flight, leaves St. Christopher Episcopal Church in League City, Tex., after attending Christmas services. She is holding tapes of her husband's greeting from space which were played for the congregation. (RNS)



Father Larry Carney, C.S.B., former Aquinas Institute teacher, greets Astronaut William Anders in Houston, Tex., after Mass on the Sunday following the Apollo 8 splashdown. Father Carney teaches at the Basilians' St. Thomas High School in Houston. (RNS)

Down to Earth about Religion

Houston — (RNS) — The space flight of Apollo 8 was described here by a NASA official as "the triumph of the square—the guys with computers and slide rules who read the Bible on Christmas eve."

"Whether squares or not, it is generally agreed here that the three astronauts and their families are sincerely dedicated Christians who take prayer seriously."

Col. Frank Borman, who commanded the flight, is an Episcopal lay reader. It was he who decided to read the Genesis account of Creation as the astronauts' Christmas greeting to the people of Earth.

Just seven minutes after the splashdown in the Pacific Ocean, the family of Major Bill Anders, a Catholic, gathered for a Mass of thanksgiving in their home, offered by a family friend, Father Dennis Berry.

The third member of the Apollo 8 crew, Navy Capt. James Lovell, is a regular communicant in the Episcopal church of St. John in La Porte, Texas.

Mrs. Lovell had begun the day of her husband's return the same way she had started the day when he left on the moon-orbiting flight, by receiving Holy Communion at an Episcopal church.

The Rev. Donald R. Raish, her rector, described the Lovells as a family whose faith "is extremely personal and strong."

Col. Borman's pastor, the Rev. James C. Buchner of St. Christopher church, League City, Texas, explained why the astronaut read the Bible.

"The other eight lay readers," he said, "were kidding Frank about going out of town so much, telling him he was doing it just to avoid taking a turn at the services."

"Then someone suggested, 'Frank, why not take part in the Christmas eve service and say something on radio when you come out of lunar orbit?' So he did."

According to Mr. Buchner, the Genesis account "was completely Frank's idea. He wanted to give people some rough idea of how the earth looked to God at the time of creation."

Mrs. Borman interpreted her husband's action as an attempt to remind people of their unity.

"Frank wanted people to understand that this is the good earth," she said. "When they read the Book of Genesis, it was their message to the peoples of the world. They wanted to bring people together."

After the safe return of the astronauts she exclaimed, "Oh to have all our prayers answered so completely. Look at all the prayers around the world that pulled this thing through."

The wives of the three space pilots had gathered together after the safe return of their husbands to say prayers of thanksgiving.

"Giving thanks is a course from which we never graduate," Mrs. Valerie Anders said.

"We weren't really worried," she added, "we had people around who knew what they were talking about and they reassured us. I really feel there is peace on earth and good will toward men, with good wishes to us from so far away, not only from friends but the friends of friends."

Orthodox Leader Hits Ban on Collections

Brooklyn — (RNS) — An American Orthodox leader said here that a decision by the Primate of Greece to exclude collections from worship services "smells of the ancient heresies that refused to recognize the human nature of our Lord or the true nature of man."

Father P.W.S. Schneirla, general secretary of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, responded to a mid-December report that Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece had banned offering plates effective Jan. 1.

The implication was that collections in church were degrading to the religious service.

Father Schneirla, a clergyman of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America and pastor of St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Brooklyn, told his congregation that Archbishop Ieronymos heads a state Church "and he is a prelate favored by the present Greek regime, so we may assume that the Church of Greece is well supported."

"For this we may be grateful, but contributing during the service is not degrading; it is an act of worship as much as singing, censuring, lighting candles or praying."

He supported his position by citing the practices of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant rituals.

"When we give our money, our earnings, we make an offering of our lives to the church," the priest said. "This gift need not, should not, be hidden in any way."

Father Schneirla suggested that any attempt to divorce Christianity from giving is a tendency to "exclude man's human nature and conceive of him as a pure spirit."

Father Schneirla said that the concept that collections during the service are degrading is "unhistorical, unliturgical and probably heretical in its implications."

D'Youville Student Makes Who's Who

Batavia — Miss Sandra R. Putnam, a senior majoring in French at D'Youville College, Buffalo, is included in the 1968 edition of Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Putnam, 15 Woodrow Rd., Batavia.

The annual directory's listing of campus leaders from more than 1,000 of the nation's institutions of higher learning carries the names of those academic-standing, service to the community, leadership in extracurricular activities and future potential are considered above average.

PRIESTS' RETIREMENT CONFERENCE SUBJECT

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — A three-day institute on planning for priestly retirement will be held in New Orleans Jan. 20-22, the National Conference of Catholic Charities announced here.

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