

COURIER-JOURNAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

Vol. 81 No. 14

10 Pages

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Rochester, New York

Price: 15¢

Friday, Jan. 2, 1970



Where Christ Was Born

Waiting for their Christmas to come, two Arab youngsters sit in a littered Manger Square in Bethlehem where the Church of the Nativity rests on the traditional birthplace of Christ. (RNS)

Administration Warms More School Lunches

Washington — The Nixon Administration opened the way this week for hundreds of thousands of poor children to receive airline-style hot lunches in schools that lack food facilities.

The step was announced by Dr. Jean Mayer, special consultant to the President, as he reaffirmed the Administration's intent to double the number of children benefited by school food programs.

Dollar details notwithstanding, he said, "6.6 million needy children will get free or reduced-price lunches by Thanksgiving, 1970 — and it will cost what it will cost."

At a White House news conference, Dr. Mayer reviewed and praised recent Administration actions against hunger and malnutrition.

Under the new step announced today, the Department of Agriculture is revising a regulation that has kept private food management companies out of the school food business.

Until last year, Dr. Mayer noted, only 2.2 million poor children benefited from subsidized lunch programs. Now the total is 3.4 million. But at least as many more children still do not benefit, he said.

"The major reason," Dr. Mayer said, "is that many of them go to old urban schools, which lack facilities to prepare and serve food." That, he

said, is a problem that can be solved, "as any of us who fly in airplanes at 600 miles an hour and five miles up know."

The new regulation would permit the employment by schools of the same private food management companies that provide food in colleges, airlines, and factories, he said.

Such companies have been largely excluded from the school lunch program since it began in the early nineteen-forties. One reason was that legislation limited Federal assistance to nonprofit organizations.

A second was that opposition from state and local school administrations arose when a new regulation was considered in the nineteen-fifties.

'Indiscriminate' Card-Sending Criticized

Boston — (RNS) — "Stop the Avalanche" was the heading for an editorial in The Pilot, newsweekly of the Boston archdiocese, which urged an end to the indiscriminate sending of Christmas cards which are "glutting" the mails.

The original meaning of Christmas card greetings has been lost, the Pilot said, by the "senseless" sending of cards through the mails to total strangers and wholesale mailings by business houses and corporations.

Today's practice, the Catholic news-

'True Humanism Must Be Christian,' Pope Declares in Christmas Message

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul, in his annual Christmas message, transmitted throughout the world, called on mankind to spare itself "the fateful experience of a Christless humanism" that can "degenerate into . . . contradictory views" and lead to emptiness and futility.

Declaring that "true humanism must be Christian," the pontiff said that many people today consider humanism "the modern term in which Christianity finds its resolution. They would wish today to be the celebration of the birth of man, not that of the word made flesh, not that of Jesus come to us as Saviour, teacher, brother, but that of man saved by himself, of man progressing by his own wisdom and strength, of man as his own principle and end."

Pope Paul spoke to thousands in St. Peter's Square after he had offered his third Christmas Mass in the Vatican basilica. His message and blessing — "Urbi et Orbi" (To the city and to the world) — was televised throughout Western Europe.

Proclaiming the traditional "peace, peace to men of good will," the Pope bestowed special blessings on the people of Nigeria, Vietnam and the Middle East, expressing his hopes for peace in those lands.

The pontiff offered his first Mass at midnight in the Sistine Chapel for the Vatican diplomatic corps and members of the Vatican household and staff. His second Mass was celebrated at 8 a.m. in the decrepit nursery school of a parish in the Borgatta Prenestina section of Rome.

The more than 2,000 persons that crowded into the school heard the Pope say that those people, though poor, who "felt themselves the children of God" were buoyed by an "interior force and sense of defense of dignity that no other power can give."

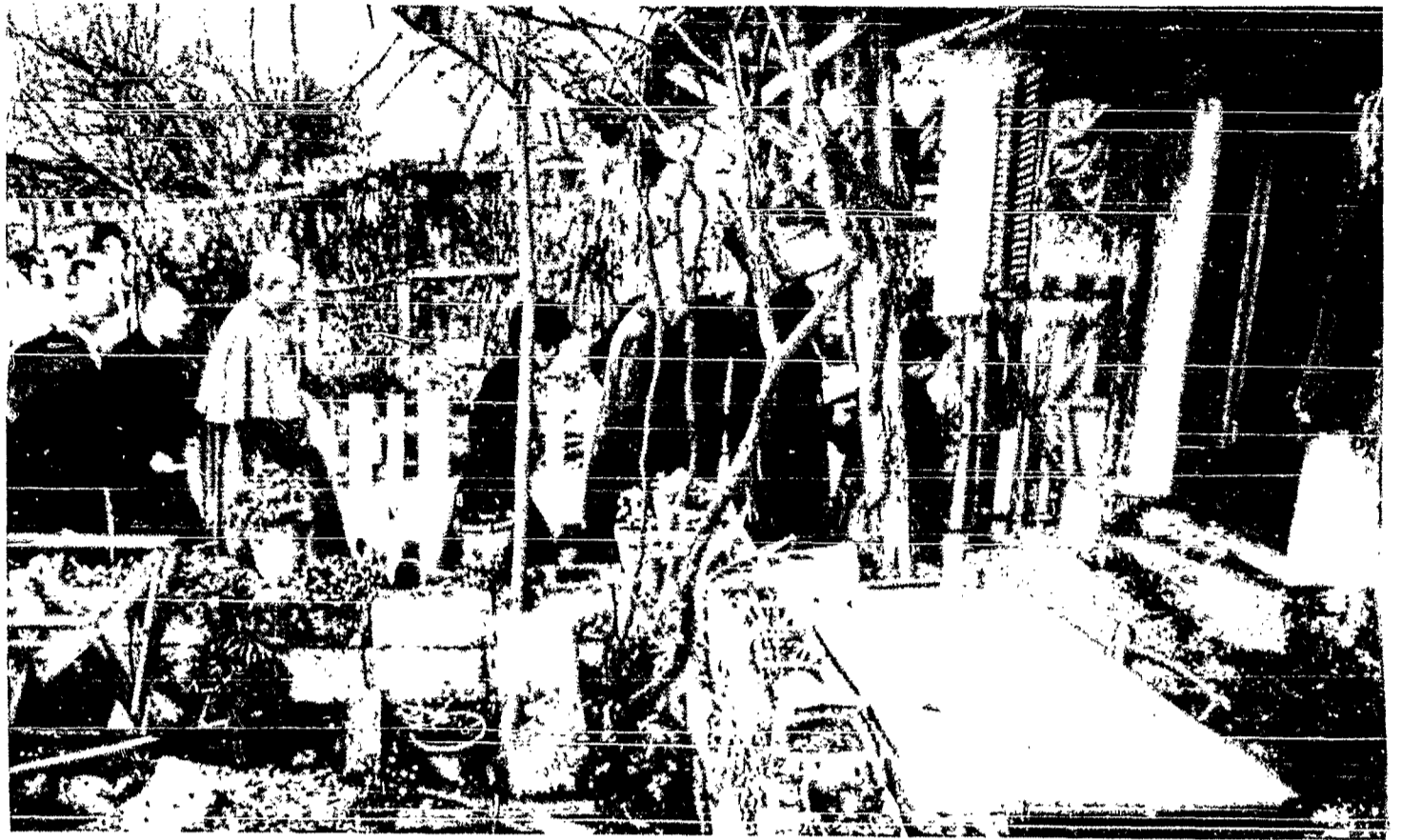
He later visited with a widowed mother of five and left a gift of some 300,000 lire (about \$500).

In his message at St. Peter's Square, the Pope issued special Christmas greetings to those "in positions of responsibility, guiding the world . . . to you workers and to you scientists . . . to you, the old, the people of yesterday, and to you young, the people of tomorrow . . . to you, the poor, to you the suffering, to you our friends all, to you Christians and non-Christians."

Dwelling on the relationship between Christianity and the humanism in the world today, the pontiff asked: "Are we all Christians?" He noted that a philosopher of standing recently said that modern people can all be called Christian.

But the Pope replied that everyone does not respond to the name Christian with the same enthusiasm, add-

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Pope Paul VI, third from left, visits a shack in one of Rome's worst slums on Christmas Day to bring gifts to a recently widowed mother of five. Earlier, the pontiff celebrated Christmas Mass in a ramshackle hall in the slum section. (Religious News Service)

Tenn. Bishop Labor Peacemaker

By JOSEPH SWEAT
(NC News Service)

Memphis — A plan designed by Bishop Joseph A. Durick of Nashville helped end the three-month old strike at St. Joseph Hospital.

During the Christmas holidays a wide range of Memphis leaders in both the white and black communities voiced strong support for the bishop's proposals to end the strike, which has had bitter racial overtones.

Bishop Durick's emergence as the chief architect of racial peace in Memphis was unprecedented in this predominantly Protestant community.

Bishop Durick asked in his appeal to the city that all striking workers return to work; that the hospital accept all of them without reprisal; that black leaders call off all boycotts, demonstrations and marches being conducted in support of the strike, and that both sides accept mediation to settle the unresolved issues in the dispute.

After making the appeal, Bishop Durick made a personal pilgrimage to the several warring leaders in the dispute. He said he did this to symbolize the kind of effort that is needed for reconciliation in Memphis.

First the bishop went to St. Joseph Hospital, which is operated by the Franciscan Sisters. There he exchanged Christmas greetings with hospital administrator Sister M. Rita, the spearhead in the fight against the union.

Then the bishop carried similar greetings to Jessie Epps, the black union leader.

At the Shelby County jail Bishop Durick paid his second visit in a week to five clergymen who had refused to post \$1 bonds and had been conducting an Advent fast inside the jail. The clergymen were indicted.

along with 14 other persons, for urging black children to boycott school in support of demands being made by the black community.

The clergymen included the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Father Milton Guthrie, one of Bishop Durick's own diocesan priests; the Rev. James M. Lawson Jr., the Rev. Malcolm Dickson and the Rev. Ezekiel Bell.

The day after Christmas the clergymen posted bond, emerged from their cells and announced they supported Bishop Durick's proposals for ending the strike.

The striking workers subsequently voted to return to their jobs.

Hospital officials had issued a statement earlier saying they would accept all workers back without reprisals with the possible exception of those whose jobs had already been filled. Those workers, the hospital said, would have to wait until jobs opened up.

The Memphis Commercial Appeal.

morning newspaper, had given strong editorial backing to the bishop's proposal saying: "The appeal by the head of the Roman Catholic Nashville diocese is indeed in keeping with the spirit of the season."

The influential paper said Bishop Durick and other church leaders "have been trying to bring about a new awareness of the need for social justice in our society."

The strike at St. Joseph Hospital began Oct. 5 when over 200 workers walked off their jobs to support demands that the hospital recognize the union as bargaining agent for employees in nursing service, dietary and laundry departments. Most of the union members are black and the strike received strong backing from the black community at large.

Bishop Durick, who has no direct control over the hospital, called on five different occasions for mediation of the dispute. The bishop continued to remind all concerned that since the time of Pope Leo XIII the right of union representation has been part of Catholic social teaching.

Natchez Bishop Decries Racial Split in South

Jackson, Miss. — Bishop Joseph B. Brunini, of the Natchez-Jackson Diocese of Mississippi, in a Christmas sermon here called for a statewide meeting of Christian and Jewish leaders to prevent a racial polarization over Mississippi's public school crisis.

The 60-year-old Roman Catholic prelate in remarks at a midnight Christmas Mass at St. Peter's Co. Cathedral, said: "Christmas 1969 sees the great masses of our Mississippians drawing further and further apart, suffering from polarization that has grown wider in these days."

The leader of Mississippi's Catholics said: "Here we are with more than one million blacks, most of them Christians, facing more than one million whites, most of them Christians, with the opportunity to come together to live together as brothers in Christ, sons and daughters of a common father."

He asked: "Can this be done? Certainly it can be done with the grace of God. Will it be done? That depends on you and me."

Bishop Brunini, a native Mississippian who is in his third year as head of the Natchez-Jackson Diocese, which embraces the entire state, called for a gathering of religious leaders of all faiths to "meet together and issue a clarion call to all Mississippians so that we may gird ourselves for this great leap forward in our growth in the best principles of our Judaic and Christian teachings."

He obviously referred to the growing concern in the state over the status of public education in view of the recent United States Supreme Court decision that ordered the immediate integration of public school districts in Mississippi.

Bishop Brunini said, regarding conversations with other religious leaders in the state: "I think the time is quite ripe for such a united voice that will be heard throughout Mississippi and will help to lead our people out of the bondage of past prejudices and hatreds and injustices that still linger

in our beloved state from the days of slavery."

If religious leaders "cannot speak with a united voice," he said, "we stand condemned at a prophetic time, a time when the Holy Spirit is calling to us to exercise the charisms of our office as men of God, as men dedicated to speak in the name of Jesus Christ and the name of Almighty God."

"In many ways," Bishop Brunini said, "the voices of religious people are as silent as those of the infant Jesus, as He lay in His manger in the stable of Bethlehem. So we who are His professed followers must speak for Him."

"In many ways the voice of the religious leaders in Mississippi are muted. If they do speak, they speak, if not with the confusion of the tongues of Babel, certainly without a forceful voice to be heard throughout the land."

Many Mississippi public school districts face a doubtful future when schools reopen Jan. 5 with a large-scale transfer of Negro and white school children to achieve total integration. On Oct. 29 the Supreme Court ordered an end to "all deliberate speed" in school desegregation.

Throughout the state white parents' groups have warned that the public schools will be abandoned if their children are ordered to attend previously all-Negro schools. Warnings have also been heard from some political figures that the effect of the new ruling can end public financial support of the schools in many districts.

SATURDAY MASS IN CHICAGO

Chicago — (NC) — John Cardinal Cody has announced that the Sunday Mass obligation may be fulfilled on Saturday evening in the Chicago archdiocese, effective Jan. 1.

Cardinal Cody also announced that Sunday weddings would be permitted in all parishes. Traditionally, weddings are held on Saturdays.



Christmas in the Space Age

The era of space travel enters the Christmas picture in this manger display in Rome's Piazza Navona. A statue of an astronaut kneels in front of the creche. (Religious News Service)

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