

A Jewish Mama and A Parish Magazine

Catholic Press Feature

West Babylon, N.Y. — This Long Island community has found an attractive link between Judaism and Catholicism—a pretty, Jewish mother of four, who "moonlights" as a staff writer for a Catholic parish's monthly magazine.

Mrs. Elissa Fried is active in the nearby Lindenhurst Hebrew Congregation, where she is a member of the Sisterhood and prepares the layout for her temple's bi-monthly newsletter.

But for the past 18 months she has been writing articles about the Jewish faith for "Our Parish," published each month by Our Lady of Grace parish, which proudly lists Elissa Fried's name on the masthead as a staff feature writer.

Mrs. Fried's articles describe, for the Catholic readers, Jewish holy days, the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, the synagogue she attends, and once in a while she throws in a Jewish recipe, such as the one for Hamantaschen she provided along with her article on the Jewish feast of Purim, the holy day marking the overthrow of the persecutor, Haman.

Last May, while the cover of "Our Parish" featured a statue of the Virgin Mary, in connection with Mother's Day, Mrs. Fried used her space to tell her readers the Old Testament story of Ruth and her devotion to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

In the Christmas issue last December, Mrs. Fried explained the Jewish feast of Hanukkah, showing Catholic readers the similarity between the Jewish and Christian holidays: "Hanukkah is a time for family celebrations. Delicious foods are served, songs are sung and gifts are given to the children. In every Jewish home candles burn for eight nights to remind us of the great miracle which took place in those days."

The first column Mrs. Fried wrote for "Our Parish" was headlined "The Invisible Barrier" and was about her reaction to attending a Catholic adult education class.

"Having known and loved Christian people, I have always had a basic understanding of Christianity," she wrote. "But of course, the 'Invisible Barrier'—you were different to me, as I must have been different to you."

Music Teacher Forms Trio

A Rochesterian who is beginning his eighth year of teaching music in two area parochial schools last month launched his own trio orchestra.

Joseph Giancursio, 866 Grand Ave., a parishioner of St. Ambrose Church, teaches brass and drums at Our Lady of Mercy School, Greece, and Holy Trinity School, Webster. He is a former member of the Ien Hawley orchestra.

Giancursio, who features saxophone and clarinet, has been joined by an accordionist and a drummer to form the Jan Cursio Orchestra, now playing in a local restaurant in Friday and Saturday nights.

He teaches more than 100 children in the two schools, providing them one hour weekly—a half hour's practice with an instrument, the other half in rehearsing with the school band. Besides sax and clarinet, he teaches trombone, lute trumpet, tuba baritone horn and drums.



Courier and the Parish

Many times pastors come up with ideas that are so worthwhile that other parishes may be interested in trying them. The Courier-Journal from time to time will describe some of the more unusual projects.

"A very dear friend, a Catholic, knowing of my interest in religion, asked me to attend the class, 'The Conscience of a Modern Catholic Adult.' And a miracle occurred. A very small one, but still a miracle. I discovered that the 'Invisible Barrier' did not exist.

"Listening to the priest speak, and the discussions that followed, I looked around at all of you, and realized that your faith was really no different than mine. Our rituals are different, our traditions are different but our goals are the same."

Mrs. Fried's motivation for writing her column has been reinforced by several personal experiences.

She once attended a party where a Catholic woman called contemporary Jews "Christ-killers."

On another occasion, a Catholic friend offered her a ham sandwich, then withdrew it with embarrassment. "That's right," the friend said, "you worship the pig, don't you?"

Mrs. Fried encountered some opposition to writing for a Catholic publication from fellow Jews. Three members of her Sisterhood objected, but they later changed their minds when they lost their fear that the Catholics might "coopt" their sister or that editing of her writing might distort its message.

There is no editing of Mrs. Fried's way of spelling "God." She writes it—and it's printed—"G-d," following the Jewish law that the name of God must never be set down on anything that may be destroyed or discarded.

Mrs. Fried's ecumenical work is supported by her husband, Jack, and her children, although it has created, at times, some confusion in the Fried household.

When Mrs. Fried was preparing to leave for an evening meeting recently, her 6-year-old daughter, Heene, asked:

"Mommy, are you going to church or to temple?"

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