

The Slot Man

Everybody's Praying

By Carmen Viglucchi



Merry Christmas!

There! Who said people don't pray much anymore.

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Although many of us feel a bit chagrined at the increasingly commercial aspect of Christmas, it helps to remember that on no other occasion do so many wish so much goodwill to so many others.

We may criticize merchants who annually inch up Christmas a bit to reap a little more holiday profit but from a slightly different angle we may be able to see that this is the rare and wondrous season when Christ affects even the modern marketplace.

Admittedly we may lose sight of what it's all about amid the shoving, bumping, parking problems, long lines and short tempers but even all that amounts to some sort of prayer inspired by the birth of a baby 20 centuries ago.

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Feeling guilty because you're edgy, perhaps even depressed, right in the middle of the Christmas season? Psychiatrists will tell you that you're only acting normally.

"Christmas puts an unusual strain on otherwise happy people," one says. "It creates very high expectations, some so high

that reality can never match them."

A bit of theology, that.

But it nevertheless breeds neuroses, perhaps because we put the sleigh before the reindeer. Maybe if we concentrated on the simple fact that Christmas is the anniversary of the birth of the most loving and lovable baby ever born, things would get better.

It is indeed sad that we have been taught as children (in well-meaning manner but nevertheless wrongfully) to so depend on the illusory aspects of this great day that we lack the glorious strength and joy of its true meaning.

I can't even lecture for I have fallen prey to the same mistake of steeping my own children in the tinsel and neon delights of Santa Claus and reindeer and elves and mistletoe and other irrelevant oddities.

It may amount to miniscule effort in the face of such a self-imposed tide of chicanery but at our house we also bake a birthday cake with one candle; we tell our children that the Baby Jesus is forever young. And we tie in the gift-giving with a reminder that it all started in a manger some time ago. Kind of telling it like it is.

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Merry Christmas!

There, I've said it again.

Salting the Earth

'A Herald's Voice'

By Father John Hempel

What I am about to write probably will be misunderstood by many people, but I feel it must be said. This period of Advent offers us an opportunity to hear the voice of one crying in the desert demanding that the way of the Lord be made straight.

As the memorial day of Christ's earthly appearance draws near, we are reminded by so many of those who have so little, for whom the joy of Christmas will mean so little. For so many seeing the wonder of a child at the first glimpse of a glittering tree and gleaming gifts will be but a never-never dream. For too many, hearing the laughter of children gathered around a table covered with the food of a bountiful society will be but musical notes never written.

Conscience-stricken by this nightmare of a deprived people and the feast of giving, we are eager to make them capable of grasping one fleeting moment of joy and happiness. We scurry around to provide Christmas baskets for those so unknowing such luxury; we give toys to delight those so unaccustomed to wonderful new playthings.

But what about the next day? What happens after we have done our thing? Do we question our society and its efforts or lack of effort to bring about the necessary changes in the area of housing, education, welfare and employment? Or do we feel that our band-aid approach has solved the tragedy of poverty until the next time our conscience is awakened by the probe of a Christian feast-day?

Writing as I have, I may appear

as "Scrooge" in Dickens' classic. I can assure you that Christmas always has meant one of the most glorious days of my life — my tradition, my background, my family have always made this possible — but not everyone has been so fortunate. But if some consider the spirit of Christmas a reality lasting but one day, then for them, truly it is "humbbug."

Advent is the time of searching; a time for honesty; a time of preparation. If only men would be prepared not to be distracted by the poverty of the stable, but he prepared to know what the Child was all about!

The Christmas message should be the message of every day — and not just one day.

How to Help

Marist Sisters

Editor:

For some years, I have been in correspondence with the Marist Sisters of Waltham, Mass., whose work with missions in many areas of the world has been outstanding.

Last year, I was fortunate in having friends of many denominations willing to donate their canceled stamps, so it may be that you, too, might like to participate.

The address is:

Marist Missionary Sisters
Public Relations Office
66 Newton St.
Waltham, Mass. 02154

Mrs. William J. Knitter
799 Long Pond Road
Rochester

RACL Viewpoint

A Worthy Campaign

By J. E. Koller

When an expression of need is so compelling as to compete successfully with bubble gum for the pittance which our children call their weekly allowance, the cause must indeed be a worthy one. Yet this is precisely what happened when the "Campaign for Human Development" was conducted in our parish, as elsewhere, on Nov. 22. Let us hope that this augurs smashing success for the campaign across the United States.

The two-pronged program conceived by the U.S. Catholic Bishops has a multitude of admirable features. Foremost, it reminds us of our Christian responsibility for the welfare of all of our human brothers and gives us an opportunity to meet a small part of this responsibility. This feature alone would justify the program.

Another encouraging sign is the direction of the proceeds of the campaign toward self-help programs. Such local experts as Fathers David Finks and John Hempel convinced many of us long ago that this type of program must inevitably be more successful than outright gifts to the needy because it contributes to the development of the all-important elements of self-re-

liance, self-respect and human dignity.

An especially important feature of the local program as it was described in the *Courier-Journal* (11-18-70) is that the fund will be administered "in association with the poor themselves". It is to be hoped fervently that this most essential principle also will be followed nationally.

The second and equally important goal of the campaign is the education of "all of us who may be called the 'spiritually poor'"; to quote Bishop Hogan, regarding "the harsh reality of the degrading poverty that exists in America." Plans to "conduct a year-round program to lead the people of God to a new knowledge of today's welfare problems" are a necessary prelude to the establishment of the atmosphere of continuing concern which must exist for the campaign to be a permanent success. As our education improves, the probability of disorderly confrontations and of antagonistic reactions by some Catholics to them will certainly be diminished.

On the local scene this process of education should include efforts toward a broader understanding among Catholics

of the splendid work of the diocesan Office of Human Development. High among the virtues of this agency, formerly called the Office of Human Concern, is the ecumenical setting in which it exists. For far too long, however, it has been forced to operate with too little understanding among and too little support from the majority of us. Recent issues of the *Courier-Journal* have been most informative on this subject.

I would like to close this discussion with a suggestion that the process of our education would probably be hastened and made more effective by direct involvement of as many Catholics as possible in the disbursement of funds. Expertise in "playing the market" comes from practicing that science, and competence in investing for human development can probably best be achieved through practice as well. For maximum effectiveness this practice should be obtained at the parish level. Perhaps in future years a portion of the funds collected should remain in the parishes to be invested by parish representatives in projects of their own choosing which qualify for the campaign.

be a sport!



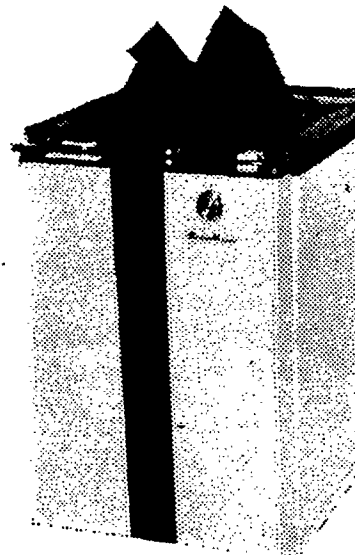
Come on, be a sport. This Christmas give her the gift she'd really like to receive—an automatic dishwasher.

If you've ever washed dishes—and what husband hasn't—you know why an automatic dishwasher is at the top of her Christmas list. Washing dishes by hand is a bore! It's perhaps the most tedious household job. But it has to be done. Three times a day, week after week, year after year. So why not give her the gift that really keeps on giving every day.

Besides, with an automatic dishwasher you'll be able to enjoy every minute of the football game without a "Help!" call from the kitchen.

give her a DISHWASHER

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