

# Live the Meaning of Christmas to Fullest -- Bishop

(Continued from Page 1)

tion and in its obvious hopelessness of self-redemption uttered this cry for salvation: "Drop down de, ye heavens from above and let the clouds rain the just one — let the earth be opened and send forth a savior."

In His love, always beyond our full understanding, God answered humanity's anguished plea and sent His son to save us, to give us new hope, to bring humanity to the full stature of perfection through contact with divinity.

A perfect man had been born and all humanity had received a divine guarantee that human growth in perfection

would never be robbed of its ultimate fulfillment as long as there would be vital contact with Christ.

Yet the Gospel narrative of the events of the first Christmas records also the tragedy of the event — the response of most helpless humanity to God's generosity:

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"; "there was no room for Him in the inn"; "this child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many — and for a sign that shall be contradicted".

There were doors closed to God on the first Christmas, and hearts and minds not receptive

to messages from heaven; to the word of God.

An analogy from our modern world of medicine may help us to understand this rejection:

Just about 3 years ago the news media reported to the world a modern miracle of medical science and surgical skill. The heart of a dead person had been immediately transplanted into the body of a person threatened with death because of a damaged heart. For 18 days the transplanted heart continued to beat. A strong heart functioned in place of failing heart and strong life replaced ebbing vitality.

Eventually the patient died as the greatest fear of doctors was realized; the new heart could be rejected as alien to the body.

Some 2,000 years ago, divine wisdom and generosity placed the living heart of His son into the body of a dying humanity to give it new hope, new life that would be eternal because it was divine life. But the body of sin found this new

heart alien to its existence and rejected it.

That is the tragedy of the first Christmas. And it is a great grace to remember the whole story — its joyous news and the tragedy of its non-acceptance.

And now, for the second grace for which we pray today — the grace of this moment offered to us to live the message of Christmas. For the story of what happened once, so long ago, means nothing unless and until it comes alive within our own hearts.

It is much easier to thrill with emotion to the memory of the remote past than it is to live out the challenge of Christmas of 1970.

The second Bethlehem which the grace of personal salvation takes place in the same circumstances as those that surrounded the first — acceptance by the poor in spirit who value the riches of heavenly gifts — and the rejection by those whose treasures lie elsewhere.

And so today your celebration of Christmas depends on your acceptance of Christ — the Child in the crib who grew to human maturity and delivered us from ourselves by His death on the cross.

His birth in a cave and the first visit by lowly shepherds considered in his day to be living at the margins of society (social outcasts) point the way to the second Bethlehem — which will never be a reality to those who think too much of social distinctions, their own respectability, their careful and cozy niceties and their aloofness from so many of their brothers.

Our choice this day is very simple — either live the implications of Christmas to the fullest — which means that by our charity, our unselfishness, our integrity we present the image of Christ to the world and thus edge ourselves and others to Bethlehem and to Christ, — or keep on trying to hide our inevitable desperation with the tinsel of merriment.

## Pope's Trip Rated Top Story of Year

New York — RNS) — Pope Paul's Asian tour and furor over World Council of Churches' anti-racism grants were the top news developments in religion during 1970.

Chosen by editors of Religious News Service, the ten top stories of the year are:

1. Pope Paul's visit to Asia and the attempt on his life in Manila.
2. Controversy over the World Council's gift of \$200,000 to liberation groups, mostly in Africa, including some reportedly guerrilla operations.
3. Financial and membership losses by U.S. Catholic and mainline Protestant Churches contrasted with increases for conservative groups and surging quests for religious meaning.
4. (Tie) Anti-war priests Father Philip Berrigan, SSJ and Father Daniel Berrigan, SJ,

jailed for destroying draft records.

5. Completion of the plan of union by the U.S. Consultation on Church Union and the formation of the United Church of North India.

6. Crisis in parochial school education.

7. Clergymen contending for public office; Father Robert Drinan becoming the first priest elected to Congress.

8. Controversy over abortion legislation.

9. Publication of the New English Bible, under British Protestant sponsorship, and the New American Bible, under American Catholic auspices.

10. Discussion of women's liberation in Churches, coupled with decisions by the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America to ordain women.

Other developments placing high:

The visit of Anglican Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury to South Africa.

Religious opposition to apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia.

Allegations of "nun running" in India.

Increased attention to conscientious objection.

Church backing for farm workers led by Cesar Chavez.

Shift of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly to France because of political conditions in Brazil.

New mixed marriages norms for Catholics.

Pope Paul's decision to bar cardinals over 80 from voting for his successor.

### R. F. Smith Heads Settlement Board

Robert F. Smith of Castlebar Road has been elected president of the board of directors of Genesee Settlement House.

Smith, president of Tarant Contractors, 114 Bay Street, replaces Charles E. Fitzgibbon, director of public affairs planning at Eastman Kodak Company.

Other officers are James N. Wurtz, of Fairport, a neighborhood businessman, and Nathan Harris, Jr., 108 Garson Avenue; secretary, Miss Joan D. Staffieri, 115 High Street; treasurer, William T. Roach, Jr., 56 Thackeray Road; and assistant treasurer, Mrs. Beverly Santo, 291 Scio Street.

The Genesee board completed a reorganization program Nov. 21 with the election of 18 neighborhood representatives to the 30-member board.

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