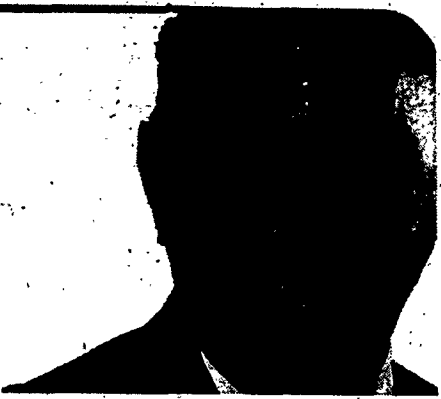


BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Merry Christmas!

How's that again? You say this isn't Christmas? Well, can you prove it's not? There is no record, either by the Apostles or the Evangelists, that Christ ever had a birthday party. So the actual date of His birth is shrouded.

In the 5th century, A.D., the monk named Dionysius (also called Denis the Little) tackled the Julian calendar that had been in vogue in the Western World for about 600 years and attempted to make it more authentic. He determined that the year in which Christ was born should be thereafter identified as the Year One, Anno Domini. About nine centuries later it was deduced by scholars interested in man's uncertain tabulations of his days, weeks, months and years that Christ was probably six years old when Dionysius decided He was a babe in swaddling clothes.

The Julian calendar was created during the reign of Julius Caesar. The emperor called in his astrologers and mathematicians and said that something must be wrong with the calendar which Rome had been living by, and with, since the second Roman King put one together about 600 years previously. The calendar in Julius Caesar's time had been pushed around atrociously. Conspirators against some of his predecessors had knocked off entire months in order to shorten the terms of certain leaders, or the leaders had added days to the calendar to prolong their stay in office.

On advice, Julius ordained that one year of his reign should last 445 days — to get things back in tune. Anyway, the ancient month of Quintillis was renamed for him. We call it July. Augustus Caesar made additional changes, which may not have cleared things up but it resulted in the giving of his name to what had for hundreds of years been known as the month of Sextilius.

A thousand years after Dionysius, Pope Gregory XIII corrected the monk's calculations. We still live with the Julian Calendar, more or less. But by 1752 it had gotten so out of tune with the sun and the moon that it was 11 days slow. Hence it was ruled, with the consent of Europe and the European colonies in the New World, that the day after Sept. 2, 1752 would leap to Sept. 14. People actually rioted, demanding "Give us back our 11 days!"

This accounts for the fact that George Washington has two birthdays, and, as of this year, still another — thanks to the guy who keeps moving national feast days to Mondays.

The first Christmas anchored to Dec. 25 was borrowed by the early Christians in 330 A.D. from a Roman pagan feast day celebrating the birth of the "unconquered sun," just as St. Patrick later, melded pagan Irish religious days with Christian teachings.

This Christmas there will be another truce of sorts observed in Vietnam. There will be the customary debate over how many days the conflicting sides should refrain from killing and maiming. Both sides will claim infractions of the truce, and the bloody business will resume on dictation from a wristwatch or a flare.

Suppose someone should say, as the war began to resume, "Hey, wait a minute! The word has just come that today is the real Christmas." Who then

Courier-Journal

Lourdes Celebrates Unique Liturgy

Last Sunday was a special day for the junior high students, parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

At 5 p.m. members of the junior high led the parish in a unique Advent liturgy to celebrate the themes of truth, justice and joy.

The traditional scripture prophecies about the Messiah were interspersed with psalms, songs and original poetic passages, plus student-prepared homilies to illustrate some of

the major steps in Christian salvation history.


Mrs. Richard Ognibene and Sister Monica Weis, language arts and humanities teachers at Lourdes, collaborated to prepare this humanistic approach to Advent.

The climax of the evening's prayer gathering was two modern dance interpretations based on "Child's Song" from the currently popular African Trilogy.

The African Trilogy is a new

mode of Christian worship, a liturgical dance that has been in use at Our Lady of Lourdes on special occasions for the past two years. In this year's presentation were area residents of the school's modern dance troupe who have performed for several educational groups and at Nazareth Arts Center.

Following the liturgy, to continue the spirit of joy initiated by the service, friends were invited for refreshments in the school hall.



At This Time

The faculty and students of Our Lady of Mercy High School wish all of their friends a Joyous and Blessed Christmas.

With the money we would have spent mailing Christmas cards, we will aid the poor and needy in your name.

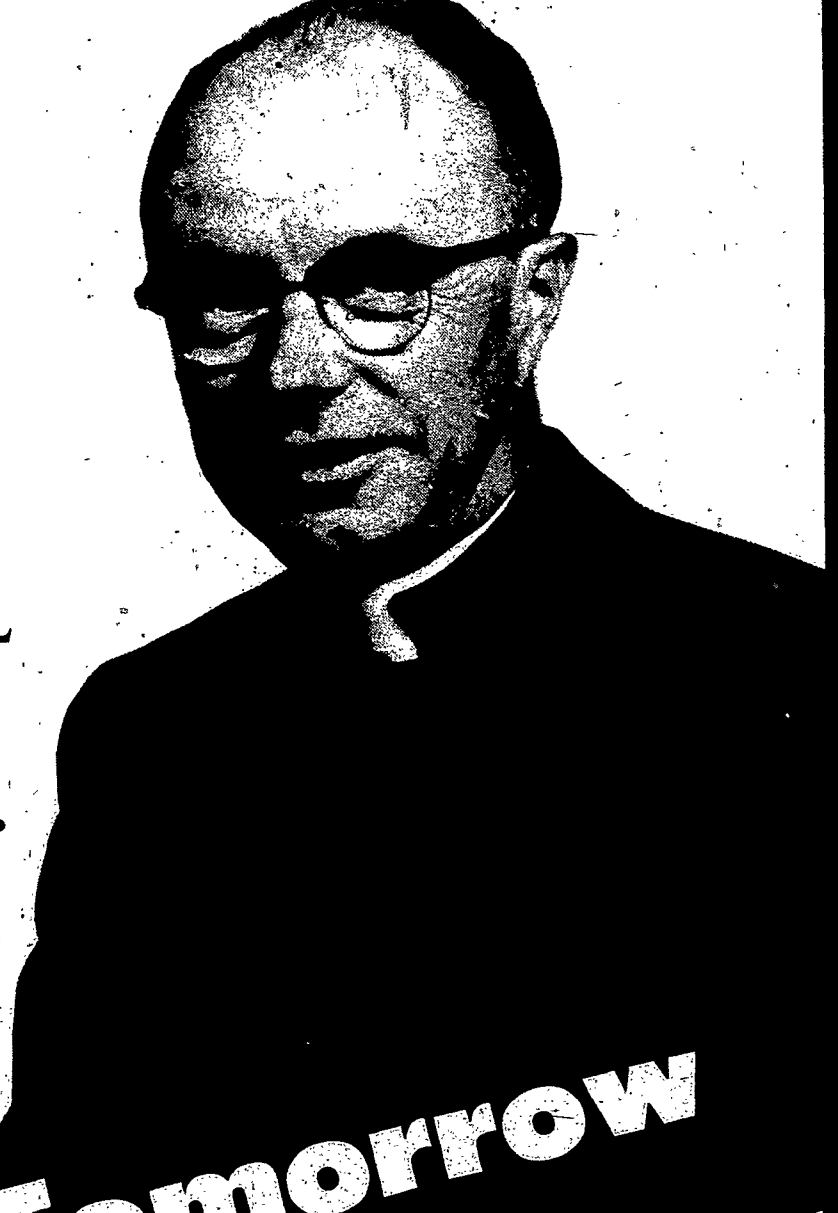
Sister Mary Bryan

NEXT WEEK!

FATHER ATWELL

returns to the
COURIER-JOURNAL
as a
regular columnist.

Watch for
his column.



Toward Tomorrow

by Father Henry Atwell

a regular feature
in the **COURIER-JOURNAL**