

## For Advent: Simplicity and Gentle Care

The joy and love of the Christmas season begins to abound once more as greetings from so many friends arrive at my desk.



Among those this week was a small unpretentious card which pictured Mary and the Child sketched in black ink. Inside was the wish: "Let us honor Him simply with gentle care for those we love." What a good thought to ponder during the Advent season.

The Christian life, after all, is a life of simplicity. Recall that crowds of people went out into the wilderness to see John the Baptizer. Jesus asks these people "What did you go out to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings." (Matt. 11:7-8). It was the man of the simple life, the one who dressed humbly and ate

commonly, that impressed the spiritually hungry crowds.

It was Jesus Himself who made these statements: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20); and "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things." (Matt. 6:31-32) The whole life of Jesus was a proclamation that "show" and "one-upmanship" were to be replaced by a simplicity in life style and a gentle care for our neighbor. The first description of the Christian community seems to indicate that the example of Jesus was being followed: "And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need." (Acts 2:44-45).

Living a life of simplicity in today's society is a real challenge. Much of our modern philosophy dictates against it. In fact,

the problem has become acute. Ecologists continually point out the dangers of consumerism. The more we continue to amass great possessions at the expense of the environment, the less we can expect to be supported by planet Earth.

In this Year of Renewal, we who claim to follow Christ might resolve to try harder to live a life of simplicity. But where to begin? Maybe by pausing to reflect on what is really important in life and what our needs really are. Maybe by giving away some of those possessions that sit unused week after week. Maybe with a concrete effort not to buy anything unless it is really needed.

But this life style is not a goal in itself. Simplifying one's life is only done in order that we might be free — free to care for our neighbor, free to meet his needs, free to fulfill the words of Michah, the prophet: Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.

### The Slot Man

## When a Newspaper Drops One

By Carmen Viglucci

The local newspaper which prematurely announced Harry S. Truman's death must have imagined, in the aftermath, the unlikely scene of the former president holding up that edition a la his 1948 performance with the Chicago Tribune, which in a heroic blunder headlined his defeat in the presidential election.



The mistake by the Rochester newspaper was horrendous and nobody realizes it more than those involved in it. When a newspaper makes such an error it is like the football player who drops an easy pass in the open field before perhaps millions of people. There is nothing to do but hope it won't happen again, though deep down you realize that it probably will.

What is ironic is that the same news-

paper, back in the middle 1960s, was all set for the imminent announcement of the death of the same ex-president. It had a tip from a very high source that Truman would go at any minute. An even Higher Source, however, decreed otherwise.

I have a feeling that of all U.S. presidents, dating back to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman has held the most general respect (I said respect, not love) among newspapermen. His sense of leadership, straightforwardness, unconcern with "charisma", conviction and simplicity have a natural appeal for those who toil in journalistic trenches trying to make sense of an inane barrage of half-truths, whole lies and public relation-oriented political announcements.

Because he was basically a simple man, what we saw was what we got — his public life was as controversial as his personality, witness his anti-McCarthyism, the Marshall Plan, the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Newspaper workers, like all Americans, end up on all sides of these issues but among that special breed called copy editors Truman indirectly sparked a dispute which at certain times could almost equal in vehemence debate over the firing of Gen. McArthur. Believe it or not, the concern was over whether to put a period after the S in Truman's name. Since he really had no middle name, the argument on one side was that the S, standing for nothing but itself, was not an abbreviation and thus not entitled to a period.

Such a debate may seem minute and even picayune but it is just one facet of the anguish that most newspapermen endure in the hope of maintaining journalistic and grammatical perfection. It could be called quality control.

Nitpicking? Perhaps. But it's something to be considered along side of the far more visible mistakes we all know about.

### Editorial

## Let's Keep Christmas Safe

The subject of safety at Christmas-time can be so mundane and so enmeshed with common sense that it may be a waste of space to write about it.

If just one reader, however, avoids an accident because of this editorial then the space is, of course, well worth it.

A simple message should be heeded — don't get yourself killed, or maimed, or bilked.

Every holiday, drivers reveal a strange and unrelenting quirk that makes prophets of those concerned with traffic statistics and who predict with the accuracy of a political pollster how many people will be killed on the highways.

This year, you make sure you're not among the statistics.

No less a personage than Pope Paul has taken up the cudgel. He recently told members of the Italian Automobile Club that he must "emphasize the ethical aspect of the matter which invests the re-

sponsibility of individuals and society before man and before God."

It is a moral problem, he said, when lives are threatened or taken by "open defiance of laws, daredeviltry" and that those guilty of such behavior display "the degradation and vulgarity to be found in some facets of modern society."

Tough to accept that highway tomfoolery can be likened to other excesses such as war, pornography, drug addiction, etc.? Why? The results may be the same.

This part of the world and this part of the country in particular leads us to even greater risks, because of poor weather, faulty road conditions and the acceptance of drunkenness, especially over the holidays. Don't be victimized. Drive carefully and if you've had too much to drink, stay where you are. Don't make Christmas 1972 a date you'll regret for the rest of your life.

There also are other risks, if you have

a real Christmas tree, take special care to keep it watered. Don't put lighted candles on its boughs. The County Health Department has warned against using lead icicle decorations. Young children eat them and, well, who would want to poison a child for Christmas. Look for plastic icicles.

Be scrupulous about the kinds of toys you buy. Be on the lookout for hidden pins, flammable materials, objects that can be swallowed, projectiles, etc.

And in another area, don't be taken by flim flam artists, of whatever ilk. No. 1 — just ignore any strangers who want to talk about money, period. Be careful with all charitable causes; most are honest, others are get-rich schemes dependent on Christmas generosity. Think twice.

Finally, as they say in British war movies, let's all meet back here after the holidays, safe, sound and with nothing but pleasant memories of the celebration of Christ's birthday.