



Holiday and feast day messages are written in her neat script printing.



Sister Christine Francis proudly displays an African violet which is part of her "garden" of 50 plants.

Communicating with Kind Deeds

[Sister Christine Francis Saldanha died Wednesday, Nov. 22, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, after suffering a second cerebral hemorrhage. Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated Saturday, Nov. 24. Msgr. William Shannon was celebrant. The following story was written two days prior to her death.]

Photos by Susan McKinney
Text by Pat Petraske
An interest in her homeland

prompted her to rise at 5 a.m. last week to watch the fairy tale marriage ceremony taking place in England. The petite, 64-year-old sister was missed at early morning Mass, but when she exclaimed "wedding!" her friends knew why Sister Christine had been curled up in front of the television set.

Sister Christine Francis Saldanha suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in 1960 and although

"she can understand what you say, she finds it hard to communicate," explained Sister Liguori Dunlea, a nurse at St. Joseph's Infirmary where Sister Christine now lives. Sister Liguori has been a close friend since Sister Christine was stricken and has learned to translate for her.

"If they love each other, then that's okay," Sister Christine smiled in answer to the question of whether it was permissible for a commoner, Capt. Mark Philips, to marry Princess Anne. Her enthusiasm for the royal family also inspired her to send a congratulatory note to Queen Elizabeth after the birth of her first son Charles.

"She naturally was quite thrilled when she received an acknowledgement from Buckingham Palace," Sister Liguori said.

Born in Kent, England, Sister Christine came to the United States in 1938 to become a missionary. She performed office duties and lived with the Sisters of Mercy in Selma, Alabama. When the Sisters of St. Joseph came South to work with the fathers of St. Edmund, she decided to enter the convent.

Sister Christine became noted for her plants and every year she raises approximately 50 plants to

sell at the St. Joseph Motherhouse Fall Festival. Her "green thumb" springs from a strong interest in botany Sister Christine taught science at St. Agnes High School and Nazareth Academy after receiving her B.S. from Nazareth College where she also taught. Later she obtained her master's degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Thanks to her master's dissertation, all the trees on the Nazareth College campus have been identified.

A slight aphasic condition, the partial loss of the ability to use or understand words, is the only major noticeable result of the cerebral hemorrhage. During her subsequent hospitalization Sister Christine had to relearn the everyday things that most people take for granted. She now occupies her time with helping the other infirmed sisters or watching television especially "Family Affair" and "I Love Lucy."

On each of the feast days of the sisters in the infirmary, Sister Christine displays her ability in script printing by making small signs that are hung on the bulletin boards. The neat, self-taught writing style is also used for holiday messages.

"Sister does so many kind things. She is being gracious without needing to talk," Sister Liguori said.

One of her proudest claims is that she is a descendant of St. Francis Xavier and has a first class relic whose papers have been authenticated in Rome. Enclosed in a small round box, the relic looks like a speck of dark ash but is actually a piece of bone. Also in her collection are relics from St. Benedict and Pope Pius X and a piece of the original cross.



WORD FOR SUNDAY
Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R1) Jer. 33:14-16. (R2) 1 Thess. 3:12-4:2. (R3) Lk. 21:25-28, 34-36.

Each Advent begins a new cycle of Sunday Readings. This Advent starts the Year C. This means St. Luke's Gospel will predominate throughout the year. St. Luke was not a Jew. He was probably a doctor from Antioch in Syria. We know he was a close friend and companion of St. Paul. His Gospel reflects the Pauline theme, namely, God's salvation is meant for all men, not just for the Jews. Luke wrote for non-Jews, perhaps around 75 A.D.

The first Sunday of Advent always has a Gospel which speaks of the coming of Jesus at the end of time.

If we stop to consider the coming of the Lord which most of us generally observe in Advent, it is His coming at Bethlehem. But that was 1900 years ago. We sing, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," and by a psychological somersault try to situate ourselves in Old Testament times. This kind of distortion is not altogether healthy for a mature spiritual life.

Actually, it would be better to reflect during Advent that the coming of the Lord is more a present and future event than a past. What happened at Bethlehem is still awaiting fulfillment in our own personal lives then in the life of the world at large. "The days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will fulfill the promise" (R1). These words have as much impact now as when Jeremiah uttered them 2500 years ago.

The world, as we know it, is still in need of Christ. What Jeremiah promised was completely fulfilled neither by the earthly life of Jesus nor by His continued life in the Church. The fullness of His Kingdom has not yet come.

Unlike the coming of any other person in history, the advent of Jesus is a continuing reality — a contemporary presence.

Every Mass celebrates His presence among us in His word and in the consecrated species. And He comes and comes and comes in word and in sacrament, again and again and again, that He "may strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before our God and Father" (R2).

What is needed among Christians is that we respond lovingly to His presence now and to the challenge of His first coming, hoping for the fulfillment of His Kingdom.

The trouble is, we are perhaps too well satisfied with things as they are. That was the trouble with the Thessalonians: Paul pleaded with them. "I know you know how to conduct yourselves in a way pleasing to God," he told them. "I know you are so conducting yourselves. But the problem is, you must learn to make still greater progress."

There you have it. Life is like rowing against a fast moving current. Should one stop rowing, the boat is swept backward. The fable of the race between the turtle and the tortoise is ad rem. Victory belongs only to those who plod ever onwards, no matter how slowly and laboriously, and not to those who glory in their God-given talents and rest on their laurels.

Advent is a call "to make still greater progress," to make more room in our lives for the coming of Christ.

Should we let Him in our lives a bit more, would this not be like the sun falling from the heavens and the earth being shaken? Which may not be all that bad!

POTTER FILM

"Peter Rabbit and Tales of Beatrix Potter," a film featuring the Royal Ballet of England, will be presented in three performances at the Memorial Art Gallery at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 30 and at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 1 and Sunday, Dec. 2.

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