

**Editorial**

# Let's Light Up The Darkness

The energy crisis with its attendant restrictions is having an effect this year on the modern American way of celebrating Christmas. Bright and colorful lights are gone from downtown streets and suburban plazas are dimmer.

Yet the difference is only superficial. The stores are well-stocked and will have few problems selling wares to a populace, which generally already has everything.

But for a great many people in the diocese, those living below the poverty line, neither the energy crisis nor the subdued tones of this particular Christmas will make much difference. Their Christmases are already bedimmed and a lack of oil will have little effect on those already unable to afford heat.

For some five weeks now, the Courier-Journal has been listing needy cases as provided by various agencies of Catholic Charities. They provide actual case histories of the afflicted, the infirm, the despairing, the distraught, the forgotten. It amounts to our Christian duty not to forget such people, especially during this season of seasons.

Yet there is another group among the needy which deserves all the special attention possible. The children. The eyes of poor youngsters grow big and their little hearts beat quickly at the anticipation of Christmas, despite the warnings and protestations of those near them who must warn them of the emptiness that will be their fate. Still the children, intuitively reflecting the true spirit of this holy day, cannot do less than hope. It remains for all of us to make sure that hope is not squelched.

While the 100 neediest cases in the diocese are all true it must be remembered that they only represent countless others who will be suffering come Christmas and beyond unless they see love in a gift, a remembrance, a promise of future concern.

So while we may be prone to bemoan the energy crisis and complain that our Christmas is diluted by the lack of glitter on our streets and about our homes, let us avoid that temptation. Let us instead concentrate on those who have real problems.

Rather than curse the darkness let us instead offer a torch of hope to those languishing in despair. One way of doing this is to contribute to the fifth annual Courier-Journal Christmas Fund. You may send donations to Courier-Journal Christmas Fund, Catholic Charities, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. Gifts of food, clothing, blankets, toys also may be delivered there.

Act now so that your gift will bring somebody alive this Christmas. Then settle back and enjoy God's blessings on you and yours.

## Turn Off the Dark

"When the lights go on again all over the world"

A bit of World War II nostalgia. But who would have guessed at the end of that holocaust that:

No. 1. Nations of the world would start new wars in the elusive dream of settling disputes.

No. 2. That one of these wars would indirectly turn out lights all over the world again.

Enough, is the message of the world. We ask when will those in power realize that what we all truly want is the realization of another sentiment expressed in that long-ago song.

"... and rain or snow is all that may fall from the sky above, a kiss won't mean goodbye but hello to love"

There have been too many goodbyes. Too much of the coldness of war. Come on, world leaders, turn off the dark. Turn on the warmth.

# Opinion

## Rote Learning Is Faulty

Editor:

In his reply to "a discouraged CCD teacher" Father Hohman (Courier-Journal, 11-14-73) wrote: "... we must make a stronger bid to educate our adults. ... Maybe all these years we have been starting at the wrong end of the line, ending up with adults who are juvenile in their faith and hence are unable to give anything to their own juveniles — the blind leading the blind."

Religious education up to 10 or 15 years ago was largely by rote, that is, by memory without thought of the meaning of the text. That kind of learning, rote learning, was the only kind offered to most of today's adults, and to many of today's parents. They, the children of yesterday, were molded to the faith by the pre-digested questions and answers of the Baltimore Catechism, or imprimated facsimiles thereof. Conditioned by a rote type of religious education is it any wonder that many of today's parents think there can be no other type of learning for their children?

Or is it any wonder that school psychologists and superior teachers have been attacking and deploring "rote" learning? Human beings learn through trial and error. But how can they learn from their mistakes if all their questions and answers are ready-made? Isn't the student who employs his full intelligence to find the correct answer better off than the one who is handed the answer?

I am sure that the late Father Gustave Weigel, SJ, was attacking the use of "rote" learning in yesterday's religious education when he wrote: "(Frequently) in Catholic teaching circles there is a strong urge to make questions timeless with timeless answers. New questions are preferably reduced to old ones and hence they need not be answered anew, because the old answers are already there. This deep freeze technique gives the student the impression that there are really no new questions. Contemporary men only rediscover in their time the eternal questions already answered in the past."

"Catholic teachers ... wish to prevent their students from meeting thought which has not yet been apologetically sterilized."

The training of not a few young Catholics makes them believe that there is no mystery. It is all objectively clear and the category schemes of the past can make it manifest. If that is so, there is nothing more to be done. It has been done already and why waste time doing it over again?" (Fr. Gustave Weigel, SJ, "American Catholic Intellectualism" in "Review of Politics", July 1957).

**COURIER-JOURNAL**

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Vol. 88 No. 34 December 19, 1973  
Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 15c; 1 year subscription in U.S. \$6.00; Canada and South America, \$8.50; other foreign countries, \$9.50. Offices, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. (716) 454-9050. Second class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal



"DECK THE HALLS... SAME SOFA THEY HAD LAST YEAR... BOUGHS OF HOLLY... DRAPEES ARE FILTHY... FA LA LA LA... NEED A NEW HOUSEKEEPER... 'TIS THE SEASON TO BE..."

Learning thrives best when the teacher accustoms the student to cultivate a rational connection of ideas so that the subject matter is understood rather than just memorized. If today's parents are to learn the faith in order to share it convincingly with their children, they must be encouraged and aided by time-tested methods of adult education. Otherwise today's parents will have to be "the blind leading the blind."

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## Thanksgiving Mass Inspirational

Editor:

I want to take this opportunity to thank Msgr. Joseph Cefell, Father Palumbos and Sister Catherine Ann of St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn for inviting me to participate in a true spiritual "happening."

The Thanksgiving Day Mass at St. Alphonsus, which emphasized the triple themes of "He is a giver of gifts; A giver of hope," and "We Shall Live" made this Thanksgiving the most inspirational one I have spent in many years.

The banners and music were exceptionally beautiful along with the readings. The service covering the anointing of the sick and elderly of the parish and the blessing of the food for the needy of the parish made this Thanksgiving a very memorable day.

"A very special "thank you" and "well done" to all those who worked on this event."

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## 'Let's Reread Fr. O'Malley'

Editor:

It has been two months since Father O'Malley's three part series, The Mass and Teenagers, was printed in the Courier-Journal (9/19; 9/26; 10/3).

Have we benefited from it? We, who have so much to learn from Father O'Malley, who praised the articles, who saw the depth of perception and the rightness of his constructive suggestions.

Have those of us who are parents let our children know that our Church means more to us than a Kiwanis Club, that our lives have been changed because we know Christ?

Have those of us who are clergy, who have a responsibility of creating a welcoming community for our teenagers, have we

tried enough to make the Mass a reality for our young?

We, who are on liturgy committees, do we care enough to work harder and bring greater depth to the liturgy?

Recently Father O'Malley said a closing night Mass, as he always does, for the cast of another of his successful plays, and many, many more parents heard their young people say, "That was the greatest spiritual experience of my life." Father O'Malley, like his Model, "has come to bring life and to bring it more abundantly."

Let us re-read his articles and all work harder. And for further help, read the textbook he wrote, "Meet the Living God."

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## Church Should Educate Members

Editor:

The crucial and basic need for all Church members to know and understand our faith and theology is a paramount requirement for the Church-Christianity to progress and it requires significant attention by the clergy, religious and lay leaders.

The diocesan survey has shown that within the Church membership there are opposing views on basic issues of faith, morals and their consequent applications. I'm sure our personal experiences coincide generally with the survey.

The only realistic approach is to educate all at the parish level through a formidable program of Christian faith and theology. Currently our approach of providing religious education for children has proven increasingly inadequate and in many instances amplifies a gap between the age groups and within families.

The laity have the responsibility to demand adequate Christian development opportunities and an education for all. Do the Church leaders plan to develop and implement adequate opportunities for us? When?

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Opinions to the editor should be addressed; Letter to the Editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.