

Christmas and Salvation

By Msgr. William H. Shannon

"The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all."

These words from the second reading of the midnight Mass express the glorious message of Christmas. Written about the turn of the first century, these words from the Epistle to Titus echo the earliest Christmas proclamation: "I come to proclaim good news to you, tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people; this day in David's city a Savior has been born to you." (Gospel of the midnight Mass) This same message has echoed through the centuries of Christian faith and has become a part of the tradition and culture we have inherited from the past.

It is so easy in the warmth of this traditional feast to hail Jesus as our Savior without really reflecting on what these words mean or why we men and women of the 20th Century need a Savior. But perhaps it is not so easy today as a few years ago. The world situation in which we live today

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

makes it increasingly difficult for us to act religiously without adequate reflection. For at the very heart of the Christian renewal that is happening in the Christian world today is a rigorous effort to replace cultural conformity with personal commitment. We are witnessing a transition from an inherited faith to an intentional faith, from faith as a cultural possession to faith as a personal decision.

When the ground of faith shifts from a cultural atmosphere to a personal decision and commitment, we suddenly realize that we have to know what it is we are doing, what it is we are saying, and what these things mean to us.

All of this can be quite un-

too soon. Growth takes time. You cannot make a tulip grow faster by tugging at the stem. You destroy it. Youth is the time of building character. That takes time, and time demands patience.

As for parents, what they need most to do for youth is create a climate of love for them at home.

A child needs love even more than food. Frederick II of the 13th century brought together a number of abandoned children and put them in the care of nurses. He instructed the nurses never to speak a word to the children, nor show any facial emotions or gestures of love. Frederick wanted to find out what language they would speak. The experiment failed. All the children died, and they died for want of love.

Love means to believe in. When children reach the teen years, they begin to feel independent. They are stronger, they stay up later, they choose their own friends. They begin to feel "grewed up." So what do they do but try out their new-found powers. And, you know, the first ones who get it are the parents. It was Ogden Nash who wrote:

Youth won't be happy
With nothing to ignore;
So that's what parents
Were created for.

If youth needs patience, parents need more patience. Parents are the bow; children, the arrows. The target is heaven. Sometimes children are sent to school when it is too late to have them taught. The real training begins in the home.

May I offer four hints to form a Christian family:

1. Every evening gather together, read some verses from one of the Gospels, then allow a few minutes time for silence and prayer.
2. Say grace before and after meals.
3. Parents must be in their hearts what they want their children to be in life.
4. Each day, let each member of the family make an act of self-denial. A holy family will be a happy family!

comfortable and can create a whole new set of problems. In the past our relationship to Jesus did not have to be defined too clearly because pretty much everyone we knew — our families, the community we belonged to — were related to Him in the same way we were. So, we prayed, worshipped, received the sacraments, participated in the whole Christian thing — because this was expected of us. This was what most people did.

But now, in 1975, we have awakened and found that the world in which we live is a pluralistic world. This pluralism has even entered the life of the Church. Now things that were formerly expected of us are not necessarily expected. Things that everyone once did, now not everyone is doing. We are no longer swept along faith-wise by the cultural milieu in which we live and by the traditional ways of acting in the Church. Meanings that I once accepted because everyone did, I now have to make my own. More than ever before, I have to listen to the Gospel and answer it with a response that is as personal as the call that initiates this response.

So, on this Christmas of 1975, it is not a chilling of Christmas joy but an enhancing of that joy to ask the question: What does it mean to hail Jesus as Savior? What is the meaning of the salvation that He brought?

These are large questions, yet our effort to reflect on them is a

step toward a new dynamism transforming us from a Church of conformity to a Church of decision.

What does salvation mean? It means more than a guarantee of entry into heavenly bliss. It means more than a reward for good behavior. The reality of salvation needs to be located at those points of deepest human sensitivity, where we confront the certainty of death, the consciousness of sin and guilt, the experience of loneliness and estrangement. Death, sin and alienation touch the meaning of life at a depth where we need salvation and where, in spite of our scientific know-how and our technological progress, we cannot achieve it for ourselves.

Jesus is proclaimed as Savior because He alone offers us enduring life in spite of the certainty of death, loving acceptance in spite of the reality of sin, real unity in spite of the fact of our separateness. Because of the mystery of the Incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas, enduring life, reconciliation and communion are more than wistful human desires. They are realities placed within our grasp by the Savior who is born for us. This the good news to be shared by the whole people. This is the grace of God that has appeared, offering salvation to all.

LABELS AND STAMPS

Ithaca — St. Catherine of Siena Parish is collecting labels from Campbell products, trading stamps, bonus coupons and Co-op Food Stores sales slips. They may be dropped off at the parish center.

"Service befitting an Aristocrat"

LAS DIRECT FROM ROCHESTER VIA JET UNITED OR AMERICAN 5 Days/4Nites

V E A FLIGHT EVERY SUNDAY FROM 2/1 thru 5/23 For as low as

G \$249.00 PP
based on dbl. occ.

A ALL TRIPS INCLUDE:
• Jet Air Rd. Trip
• Accommodations
• Bonus Vouchers
• Escorted

S SPECIAL 3 FLIGHTS

2/16-20
3/8-12
4/19-23
\$239 PP
based on dbl. occ.

Aristocrat TRAVEL SERVICE

1600 LYELL AVE.
254-5020
ROCHESTER

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 2: 22-40. (R1) Sir. 3: 2-6, 12-14. (R2) Col. 3: 12-21.

On the feast of the Holy Family, we might well ponder what youth needs most and what parents most need to do.

Youth's great need today is for patience! Youth wants instant change, instant solutions. Yet good things take time. One of the most consoling and oft-repeated expressions about God in the Old Testament is that He is "slow to anger." God always takes His time. He can make a mushroom overnight; but when He wants to make an oak, He takes a lifetime.

When God sent his Son into the world he could have sent him as a full grown man. Adam was. Infancy, childhood, adolescence are very humbling conditions — they take so long! Yet Jesus went through them to teach that the great virtues of life need the slow years of childhood.

So Christ spent 30 years in Nazareth — 30 years! He must have dreamed of leaving home before that. When he was twelve, the incident in the Temple betrays a certain restiveness. Yet he waited it out — 30 years! He settled down to the relationships of home and of village — for 30 years! His home wasn't the richest of homes — it wasn't even rich. So he pitched in and learned the carpenter's trade. It all helped him. For He grew; He didn't stand still.

There is no such thing as prematurity. Youth can not jump the gun; he can drop out of school, marry too soon, give up Sunday Mass or get involved in politics when he should be learning. But all that can spell failure. The prodigal son became prodigal because he left home

A BOILED DINNER
EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT!

Corned Beef & Cabbage
EVERY SATURDAY 5 P.M. to 10 P.M.

BUS HORIGAN'S TAVERN
DAVIS at SECOND ST.
ELMIRA, N. Y. 732-9381

FORGET ABOUT THE TOYS SANTA!



WE KNOW THAT YOU WANT CHILDREN ALL OVER TO BE HAPPY THIS CHRISTMAS. WE WANT TO BE HAPPY TOO. SO INSTEAD OF TOYS, COULD YOU BRING US SOME FOOD AND LOVE?

Play Santa for the mission-poor this Christmas ... send a gift of love.

CJ 12/24/75

HELP US...
... to fill their needs of body and spirit. May the Society for the Propagation of the Faith be your principal charity for sharing in the greatest and holiest work of the Church — missionary activity.

HELP THEM...
... because we are one in the faith, because I want to share my blessings with my brothers and sisters in need in mission lands, I am pleased to send my gift of \$_____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

Send your gift to:

Most Rev. Edward T. O'Meara
National Director
Dept. C, 366 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10001

OR:

Rev. Joseph F. Reinhart
Diocesan Director
123 East Avenue
Rochester, New York 14604
716-454-2926