

Books for Christmas Stress Religious Theme

By BARBARA KOSINSKY
(RNS Correspondent)

Christmas is a time of excitement and wonder for children. But with all the advertising and Santa displays everywhere it is easy to forget the meaning of the day.

Let some of the newest Christmas books for children help keep the real meaning of Christmas alive — the birth of Christ in Bethlehem.

Daily family devotions during Advent offer a way to take time for reflecting and teaching in the midst of busy preparations. In "Getting Ready for Christmas" (Doubleday, \$2.95), Mary Ann Bohrs divides the three weeks before Christmas into seasons of Hope, Promise and Fulfillment. A Bible reading, a short meditation suitable even for young children, prayer, thought and words with music for a time are given for each day. An extra bonus is the full text and color manger scene the children can assemble as a focus for the devotions.

Those having older children can incorporate in their devotions or family readings Margaret Talbot's "The Real Reason for Christmas" (Doubleday, \$5.95). The twelve hand-scripted letters are illustrated with simple, often humorous, drawings. Each letter discusses a topic such as why Jesus came to

earth. Mary's willingness to be "different" — the reason behind presents and celebrating and the special present Jesus wants from us. Mrs. Talbot has a knack for explaining complicated ideas in simple, inspiring ways.

The Nativity story is the theme of several inexpensive, easy-reading titles new this season. Full-color art work by Stefan Lemke and Marie-Luise Lemke-Prieken illustrates the latest Sunshine Book called "The Christmas Story" (Fortress Press, paper, \$1). The animals have their own personalities and the lush green scenes with flowers and palms will appeal to young children. A simple telling of Luke begins with the arrival in Bethlehem and ends with the shepherds spreading the good news.

"Jesus Is Born" (Augsburg, paper, \$1.25) is one of four titles illustrated by Kees de Kort in Augsburg's "What the Bible Tells Us" series for young readers. A simplified text from the Today's English Version and brilliant illustrations portraying the characters as Middle Easterners tell the story from the arrival in Bethlehem to the visit of the wise men.

Mary is the subject of a book for six-to-twelve-year-olds by Barbara Hinze called "Mary, Mother of Jesus" (Broadman, \$3.95). The author and illustrator have reconstructed the life of the mother of God based

on events related in the Bible.

Barbara Robinson's "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" (Avon, paper, \$1.25) moves into its sixth printing since 1973. This year everyone came to see the annual Christmas pageant that year to see what the Herdmans would do. The six were the terror of the public school and the neighborhood. They lied and stole and smoked cigars, even the girls, and talked dirty and hit little kids and cursed their teachers and took the name of the Lord in vain and set fire to Fred Shoemaker's old broken-down toolhouse among other things. On their first day in Sunday School, lured by a story that refreshments were served, they managed to get all the acting parts in the Christmas pageant. But by doing what comes naturally, they turned a ho-hum annual ritual into a moving experience. Once begun, it's hard to put this hilarious and inspiring story aside.

Corrie ten Boom, survivor of Ravensbrück and author of "The Hiding Place," retells her Holland Christmas feast messages in "Corrie's Christmas Memories" (Revell, \$3.95). She and her sister Betsie alternated telling the Christmas story from the Gospel according to St. Luke interwoven with a story about Father Martin who waited all day to see the promised Savior. Also included is a brief memory of a sad Christmas in Ravensbrück. Her courage and deep faith permeate her stories and leave one wishing for more.

Father Kenneth Ryan has edited a book of Christmas writings which move one from laughter to tears to a feeling of joy and anticipation. "The Catholic Digest Christmas Book" (Carillon Books, \$7.95, paper, \$3.95) is a collection of stories published during the past 25 years. Share the stable-cave of the Christ child, the Christmas funeral of a 13-month-old baby, the joyful complaints of one father about the 12 days of Christmas, a young immigrant's first American Christmas, two weeks of Christmas Masses in India, the legend of the donkey's ears, and Merry Christmas cooking when Christ is in the kitchen and at the table. There are 49 other stories in the volume filled with the spirit of giving and joy. A true Christmas feast — some for quiet, private times and others to be shared aloud with those closest to us.

Two appealing pictorial books also are available now. The Christmas story, the birthplace of blown glass ornaments, folk fancies from around the world and a look at Christmas music stamps are part of the 47th volume of "Christmas: An American Annual of Christmas Literature and Art" (Augsburg, \$3.25) edited by Randolph E. Haugan.

"The Road to Bethlehem" by Tom Harpur is the other pictorial. Published by David Cook, the volume recounts in words and photographs a journey made by the author, the religion editor of the Toronto Star, and his wife, on foot and on donkeyback from Nazareth to Bethlehem.



Anniversary Celebration

Photos by Terrance J. Brennan
The Rochester Cursillo Movement celebrated its 10th anniversary last Sunday. Included in the all-day affair was a chicken dinner and reception (below) and Mass (above) concelebrated by, from left, Fathers Thomas Erdle, Gerald Connor, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, Becket Hall seminarian George Walker, Fathers Michael Conboy and Austin Hanna.



Christmas Alone

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man she overheard saying, "How can people on welfare own a TV set?"

The shows are boring. She turns off the set and sits in the darkened room for a time. She prepares for bed. The thought of sleep is welcome. Soon.

Planned Homilies

New York (RNS) — The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, a Roman Catholic monthly journal for priests published here, has begun a three-year series of programmed homilies to answer the need for the explanation and proclamation of fundamental Catholic beliefs from the pulpit.

Claiming that not only a large segment of Catholic youth, but also many of our mature adults do not know some of the essentials of the Catholic faith, the journal's editor, Father Kenneth Baker SJ, said the programmed homilies will cover the basics of Catholic teaching, the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Sacraments.

The new series will be modeled after a program started in the Lumenek diocese in Ireland, with adaptations to the American scene. The November issue of the journal offered the first full month of homilies based on the new program.

The above story obviously is fictionalized but it could easily be drawn from the real-life existence of many people in our diocese who will be alone and lonely this Christmas. The Courier-Journal Christmas Fund provides the means for the agencies of Catholic Charities to reach just such people with the reassurance that they are not stranded and helpless.

The 100 neediest cases published as part of the drive are all true and all are in the diocese. The people they describe are victimized mostly by poverty but they also suffer from the oppression of joblessness, illness, infirmity and just plain loneliness.

The annual Courier-Journal Christmas Fund is run in conjunction with Catholic Charities and is administered through its agencies, particularly Catholic Family Center. Though 100 cases are published to dramatize the existing need, they are only a portion of those cared for by the agencies under Catholic Charities.

Readers may contribute to individual cases but because some may receive a great deal of attention and others none, the administering agencies must use their expertise and experiences to help as many as possible.

All contributions should go to:

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