'Damien' to Air Jan. 24

New York (RNS) — "Damien," a one-man dramatization of the life of the famed missionary to the lepers of Molokai, will be televised over the Public Broadcast Service network on Tuesday, Jan. 24.

(In Rochester, the program will be broadcast between 8 and 9:30 p.m. by WXXI, Channel 21.)

The original drama, by a Honolulu playwright, has been produced and directed for television by Hawaii Public Television's Nino J Martin.

Written by Aldyth Morris and starring Terence Knapp, the play closely adheres to the documented facts in the life of Father Damien de Veuster, the Flemish priest who came to the Hawaiian Islands in the late 1800s.

He served on Molokai 16 years and died himself a leper. His cause for sainthood is being promoted.

The play is a monologue delivered by Damien, as a spirit reviewing his funeral procession and reminiscing about his life.

Religious costuming and artifacts were loaned for the production by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Honolulu. The martyr's own mission crucifix, prie dieu, and host maker were borrowed for the production from the Archives of the Sacred Heart Fathers in Honolulu, where the Damien museum opened recently.

Knapp as Damien

Embezzler Gets 4 Years

Boston (RNS) — A former bank executive who confessed to embezzling almost $1 million from a fund formed by a Roman Catholic priest to aid a Swedish mission was sentenced to four years in federal prison for what the judge called a "reprehensible violation of trust."

Alfred W. Hall, Jr., 43, of Milton, Mass., was sentenced by federal Judge Joseph L. Tauro after Mr Hall's attorney pleaded for probation so that he could continue to support his wife and family and keep them off welfare. The attorney, Eugene Sullivan, also stressed Hall had returned more than $500,000 of the embezzled funds

A former assistant treasurer at Charlestown Savings Bank, Hall was charged with stealing funds of Msgr. Walter Leach, retired pastor of St Ann's parish, Wollaston, Mass, over a five-year period. He also took more than $440,000 from six wealthy friends.

Asst. U. S. Atty. Wayne Hollingsworth had requested a five-year jail term and a $5,000 fine. He said had it not been for the cooperation of the defendant and his lack of a previous record "the government would be proceeding with a seven-count indictment carrying a maximum sentence of 35 years and a $35,000 fine."

Hall's attorney told the court that his client has lost everything, but said the president of a country club had offered Hall a job as a laborer. He asked that his client be placed on probation

Judge Tauro mandated the four-year sentence, declaring that he had "no sympathy" for the defendant, only for his family. "You will probably serve no more than 37 months in jail under federal parole guidelines. I hope on your return to society you spend your time not making it up to yourself but to your family."

The judge told Hall he could remain at home for the Christmas holidays and surrender to the U S marshall Jan. 3.

Actor Ritchard Dies

Chicago (RNS) — Cyril Ritchard, the Australia-born musical star best remembered for his role as Captain Hook in "Peter Pan," died here Dec 18 at the age of 70

He had been hospitalized since Nov 25 when he suffered a heart attack during a matinee of "Side by Side by Sondeheim" in which he had starred.

Ritchard, a Roman Catholic, made his theater debut in Australia as a 19-year-old chorus boy. In the half century which followed he charmed millions with his comedy performances and has also directed successful Broadway shows and performances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

His best known Broadway roles were the protrayal of Captain Hook in the 1954 musical version of "Peter Pan" and his leading parts in "Visit to a Small Planet" in 1957 and "The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd" in 1965.

In his personal life, he was a devoted husband and a practicing Catholic who attended early Mass daily wherever he was. He was educated by nuns in the elementary grades and studied under Jesuits at Sydney University.

Ritchard was buried in Ridgefield, Conn. beside his late wife, Madge Elliot, a dancer who died in 1955

Catholic Church in El Salvador Accused of Promoting Communism

San Salvador (RNS)— Warning of "Communist infiltration in a big sector of the Catholic Church" in El Salvador, three major business and landholder organizations launched a newpaper advertising campaign here denouncing "crimes committed by Communist groups in evil conspiracies with so-called Christians" in the country.

The business-landholder campaign has followed growing agitation among campesino (poor farmer), worker and student groups for improved conditions and amid charges by Catholic Church leaders and some political organizations that a state of "institutionalized violence" exists in El Salvador, maintained by government-sanctioned oppression of the poor and landless majority.

Several priests and Church lay leaders have been killed over the past year, allegedly by government or paramilitary groups, following efforts to organize farm workers. After the slaying of Father Rutilio Grande, S.J., and two parishioners last March, more than a dozen priests have been expelled from the country, other church and campesino leaders have been killed or beaten, and the entire Jesuit order in El Salvador was threatened with death.

(In October, Amnesty International denounced in a cable to Salvadorean President Carlos Humberto Romero the continuing "cold-blooded killings" and "extra-judicial detentions" by government security forces. The cable specifically denounced the slaying of two lay deacons by government forces last August in the village of El Salitre.)

The current anti-church campaign is being led by the Salvadorean Association of Industrialists (ASI), the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP) and the Eastern Region's Ranchers' and Cattlemen's Front (FARO). They warned against what they called "the Communist danger that lurks in the country."

They have been pressuring President Romero to take strong action against' "terrorist escalation" and claim that there is an organized "Marxist" plan of agitation by labor, campesino, student and other groups which is building toward out-and-out revolution.

The paid advertisements by ASI, ANEP and FARO said the government "must call upon the conscience and moral reserves of the Salvadorean people to unite their forces and spirit against the present tragedy in El Salvador."

In a recent ad by FARO, it was demanded that the "hierarchy of the Catholic Church impose its authority on the leaders and spiritual and intellectual advisers of FECCAS (the Christian Federation of Salvadorean Campesinos) and the UTC (the Rural Workers Union) to stop violence and sever their criminal ties to communism."

The rightist group accused religious organizations of "loading" their spiritual and moral guidance with "purely political content." They said those who speak about "institutionalized violence" are interpreting the Gospel "according to St. Marx..."

Recently, La Opinion, a daily newspaper in San Salvador, published a front-page article declaring Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador responsible for the death of two policemen. It said the archbishop "had changed the temple of God into a sanctuary of terrorism and a refuge for criminals" and charged that the prelate was inciting the campesinos "to commit unlawful acts and disturb the public order."

Meanwhile, a coalition of leftist groups in El Salvador announced that it was established "not to be a rival in the struggle for political supremacy but to join forces" in a "broad democratic front against the fascist dictatorship" of President Romero.

The Christian Democratic Party, on the other hand, has warned that "the depth of the crisis indicates that structural changes can be postponed no longer. Changes must be made which will allow greater political and economic democratization. Recent events have overwhelmingly shown that force is not strong enough to frustrate the people's aspirations."

In El Salvador, as in many Central American nations, the vast majority of property and wealth is owned and controlled by a small group of businessmen, industrialists and landholders. The greater part of the population lives in a low state of poverty. The government of President Romero — whose own election was highly suspect — is a virtual dictatorship.

Atheist Sues Texas Over Manger Scene

Austin, Tex. (RNS) — Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the nation's best known atheist, has begun what she calls a "year of litigation" by filing a federal court suit to force Texas officials to remove a nativity scene from the rotunda of the state capitol building here.

She describes the scene as "sectarian" and claims it violates the separation of church and state. "If they are going to have this, they should have Hanukkah ... and a representation of the birth of Krishna," she declared.

Mrs. O'Hair also asked the court to award her and her son Jon — and the "class they represent" — some $9 million in punitive damages from the defendants, Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe, State Atty. Gen. John Hill and Homer Foerster, director of the State Board of Control.

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SOME THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER
By Ed Sulewski

The funeral is a ceremony during which relatives, friends and associates pay their respects to the deceased and comfort the survivors It usually covers a period of two to four days and takes place in the presence of the body of the one who has died.

There are those who believe that the wake or calling hours is outmoded or unnecessary. They suggest other approaches or even elimination of this custom. But nothing has proven to be as meaningful. In fact, some alternatives are totally lacking in those elements which experience and research have shown to be helpful to normal recovery from the loss a death creates.

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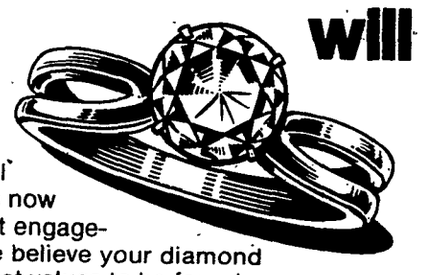

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