



## Annual Ceremony

Photo by Susan McKinney

Msgr. Richard K. Burns takes part in the rededication Dec. 14 of the nativity scene placed by Irondequoit Knights of Columbus at the Lincoln First Bank on Titus Avenue. From left to right are Thomas Grosodonia, project chairman; Jack Moore of the bank, Grand Knight John A. Patynski and Father John Gagnier.



## DeSales Concert

Shown above are John Englert and his Geneva DeSales Chorus. They will be presenting a Christmas Concert, Dec. 22 and a special presentation at WGVA on Dec. 24. Members of the chorus will have a busy year after the holidays; the school musical "Godspell" is scheduled for April 27-28 and a Spring Concert will be performed in June. Members include from left: Holly Cortelyou, Laura Sullivan, Connie Resendes, Mike Smaldone, Alex Fountain, Carter Cortelyou, Chris Weber, Tina Lorson, Mary Combs and Felicia Farr.

## The Church 1978

By Father Andrew Greeley

### A Letter To the New Pope

Dear Jan Pawla II:

Nyeh binje pohvalny Jezus Christus!



People are saying that you're the most gifted pope we've ever had. I've gone through the history books about the last 500 years and I think they're right. Philosophers we've had before, but not philosophers with enough published articles to guarantee a faculty position at almost any university in the world. Poets we've had; your predecessor Leo XIII wrote lovely sonnets (and any number of other things about which the Catholic history books are rather silent). A man of great public presence we've had before, but in the nature of things, never a man who sparred with the press, kissed babies, and spoke on world television in 11 languages. Heroes of the faith we've had before, and those aplenty, but you're the first one who ever literally risked his life to save Jews from anti-Semitic murderers. In your modesty you would doubtless laugh it off but the charge of being the most gifted pope in history seems on the record to be irrefutable.

Nor, since you emerged on the balcony of St. Peter's on that gorgeous moonlight evening in October, have you made any wrong moves. From the first "praised be Jesus Christ" in Italian to a befuddled Roman citizenry, you have with ease and elegance done just exactly the right thing to express in American terms, pleasing the readers of both the "Sunday Visitor" and "Commonweal," the left and the right, almost without exception.

It is the "honeymoon" time, of course, the beginning of a new administration when the

press and public are enthused automatically about everything a new leader does. This time will not last, and you can expect the sniping criticisms to begin soon. No man, however gifted or adroit, can please everyone all the time. You have tough decisions to make in the days ahead about the organization of the Roman Curia, about the acute financial problems the church faces, about the power of the World Synod of Bishops and the various national hierarchies, and about human sexuality. Doubtless you will make these decisions, as you have made all the decisions in your life as a church leader, through consultation, study, prayer and a careful attempt to build broad consensus. It is not, however, about these issues that I am writing.

It is rather about the humanity of the papacy that I am putting these words on paper. Those of us who were annoyed and then angered by the way the bevy of little monsignors hemmed in and harassed your holy predecessor in his public appearances are delighted at the way you brush them off. We were pleased and touched by your reported visit in a black suit to your close friend Bishop Andre Diskur in a Roman hospital. The informality with churchmen, reporters and the ordinary people has captured the imagination of much of the world.

My plea to you in this letter is: Don't let them stop you. I do not think that "they" are ill-intentioned men. They do their job as they see it. They are trying to protect the majesty and the sanctity of the papal office. What they don't understand and what you apparently do understand is that the majesty and the holiness of the office do not depend on the protection of the out-moded Renaissance court ritual, but on the goodness, the openness and the hopefulness of the man who occupies the office. Much of the papal style that has lasted through the years seems calculated to deny the humanity of the pope, but this is surely a counterproductive strate-

gy. As Jesus himself well knew, we cannot be inspired by a man who isn't human like us. Hopefulness, courage, joy are only inspiring when we observe them in somebody in whose rich humanity we see a reflection of our own humanity. Those little monsignors who try to make the pope someone more than human have in fact often made him somewhat less human.

There is the rumor that you were married and your wife was killed by the Nazis. You have denied the rumor (with a smile, I'm told) and I accept your denial, but I cannot understand why an American cardinal characterized the story as scurrilous, of fensive and part of a communist plot. I fail to see how, even if the rumor were true, it would detract in the slightest from your holiness or your dignity as a pope. We know from Scripture that one of your predecessors, a certain Simon Peter, was married (how else could he have had a mother-in-law for the Lord to cure?).

The mentality, Jan Pawla II, that denied on a priori grounds the possibility of a pope who is a widower, is the enemy of a new papacy that you seem to be striving to create.

So my plea, and I'm sure I speak for millions of other Catholics around the world, is don't let them get to you. Keep on climbing the mountains, canoeing the rivers, rushing down the ski slopes, for God made the mountains, and the rivers, and the ski slopes and they are good. The pope's enjoyment of them merely reflects God's goodness and makes the whole papacy more luminous rather than less.

Continue to write your poetry, sing your folk songs, play your guitar and even write your philosophical articles. What a terrible comment on the church it would be if it forced its leader to shed some of his most admirable and appealing characteristics.

Don't let them get to you, Holy Father. Don't let them get to you.

With respect and prayers. Andrew M. Greeley.

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