

Insights in Liturgy

Mary And Advent

By Father Robert J. Kennedy

Advent is peopled with gigantic figures who call us to readiness for the coming of Christ. The Old Testament prophets proclaim anew God's promise of mercy and salvation, and rekindle the fires of hope in our hearts. John the Baptist challenges us to repentance, for God's Chosen One is near at hand.

Unique among these giants of the season is yet another: the pregnant Virgin of Nazareth, faithful to the Word of God that lives within her and joyous sign of hope to a world waiting for the fullness of redemption.

The liturgies of Advent present Mary in a variety of ways.

In the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception just past, the Church celebrates Mary as full of grace, the worthy mother of God's Son. Faithful in every moment of her life to the God who chose her, she says "yes" to Gabriel and begins the accomplishment of God's plan from long ago to make us his adopted children and to be "full of love" (Luke 1:38, Ephesians 1:3-6). She is the new Eve, who by her obedience to God's call, opened the way for the fullness of life to enter the world. And as the mother of Life, she is the mother of all those who share this life in Christ. The feast day Preface (P58) praises Mary as God's "sign of favor to the Church at its beginning, and the promise of its perfection as the bride of Christ, radiant in beauty." God "chose her from all women to be our advocate with (him) and our pattern of holiness."

We ask God on this festival day and always to trace in our actions the lines of her love, in our hearts her readiness of faith. Prepare once again a world for your Son ... (Opening Prayer B).

Mary also dominates the liturgies of the week before Christmas. Here are celebrated her faith and humble obedience to God at the annunciation of the Messiah; her patience when Joseph discovers her pregnant; her generous service to her aging cousin Elizabeth likewise pregnant by the will of God. The Church echoes with her the praises of God for his wonderful works of mercy: "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my saviour ... He who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name." (Luke: (Luke 1: 46-55).

ME Party

Marriage Encounter couples will gather for a Christmas Party at the Mapledale Party House on Friday, Dec. 14. The evening opens with socializing at 6:30, followed by dinner at 8 p.m. Dancing to the music of Stonehenge will follow dinner. Reservations are made by calling Ken or Diane Rabideau (716) 865-4721.

The central position of Mary in these last days of Advent causes us to contemplate the great things he has done for all of us in being born a human person. "He was born of the Virgin Mary and came to live among us." (Opening Prayer, Dec. 23) Such is the simple statement of so wondrous a mystery: the all-powerful God has loved us enough to put aside his divinity and accept through a human mother the condition of our humanity in all its ecstasy and all its agony. The pregnant virgin, heavy with God-child, short on explanation, reminds us of this "great thing" God has done for us.

There is, finally, one more image of Mary the Church gives us this season — at least to the Church of the Americas. She is Our Lady of Guadalupe (celebrated today, Dec. 12). Echoing the voices of the Advent prophets, the peasant Virgin calls us to accept all men and women as our brothers and sisters, to reach out and lift up the lonely, to do all things in justice for the peace of the world. This humble vision of Mary — a gift to the peoples of the Americas — is a powerful reminder that the Son, to whom she once gave human life, will come again in glory, to bring to fulfillment all that he has begun. May her prayers keep us faithful and ready until he comes!

Hicks

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The Copier Is Broken

By John Dash

The sisters who teach at the St. Joseph's Early Childhood Program, an inner-city educational effort in the St. Bridget's Parish complex, have "made do" with an ancient copying machine right up to the point where the machine "just won't."

That is the opinion of an anonymous friend of the school who called the Courier-Journal last week in hopes of getting a lead on a newer copier for the school.

The machine can fairly be called an indispensable tool for the two sisters who run the program.

Sister Kathleen McCusker, who is in partnership with Sister Doreen Wozniak, said that not only is work for the children duplicated on the machine, but frequent communications with the parents and the greater community also are run off.

The rub is that the present copier was old "with lots of hard use behind it" when the sisters inherited it more than five years ago, Sister Kathleen said.

She said that a friend told her it would take at least \$100 to repair the machine to the point where it was serviceable again. At that figure, she said, both sisters said, "Oh, dear."

The sisters don't have that kind of money. Just to keep the program going both have to be "Jacquelyns-of-all-trades," Sister Kathleen said.

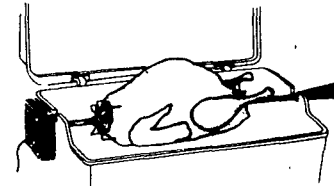
What's needed here, the anonymous friend said, is for someone to donate a good working copier so that the 45 children from 3 to 5 years old can have the benefits of

the sisters' educational program.

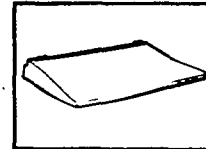
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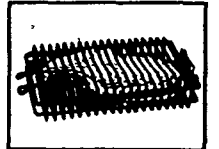
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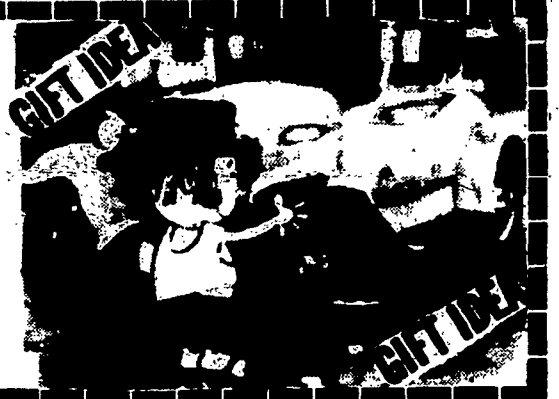
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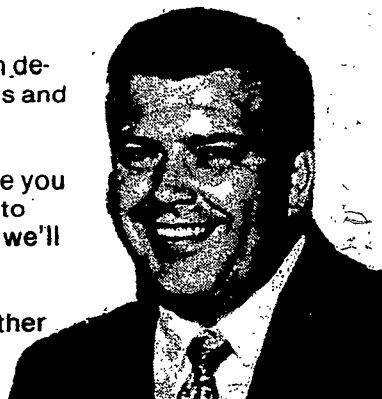


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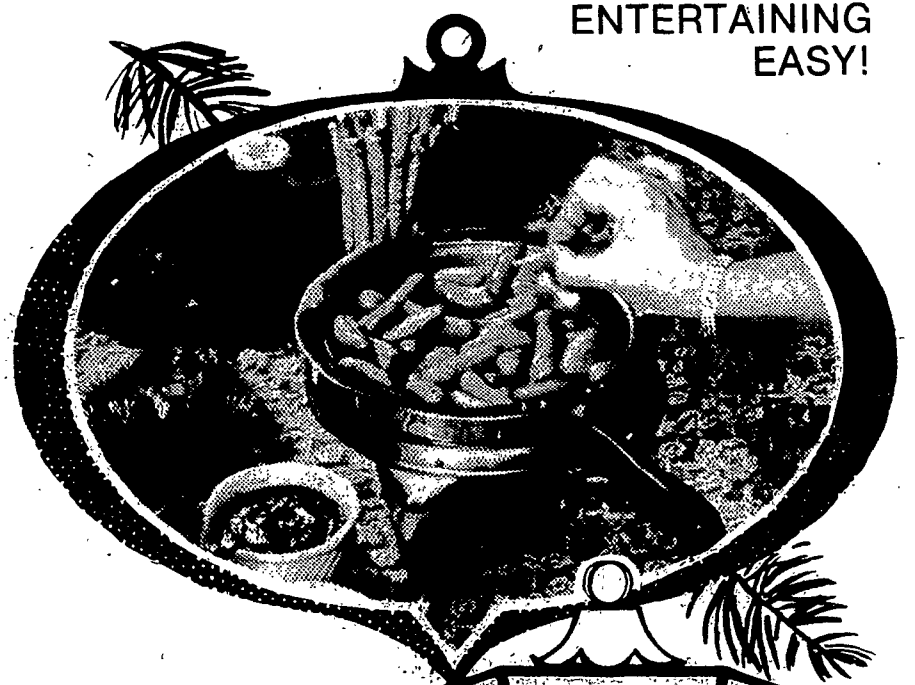
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