

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

**Christmas Stamps**

On Dec. 16, 1970, this column read: "When the first religious stamp came out in 1968 it was a work of art as well as of religious significance. Christians, cultured Jews and humanists were happy with the stamp. However the agitated voices of anti-Christ, anti-Mary, anti-religion people worked so successfully that the following year no religious stamp was printed. This year (1970) a compromise was made. Half the stamps have been printed for religious and cultured people; half the stamps to placate the anti-religious and secular people. May I suggest that when you get your stamps please specify Lotto's Nativity? The reason is obvious."

On Oct. 24, 1980, I was returning from the SVD Fathers at Conesus, and stopped at the Henrietta post office for a book: "Stamps and Stories," \$3.50. From it can be culled some history of the Christmas stamps. In 1787, Congress established the U.S. Post Office and appointed Samuel Osgood as Postmaster General. Since 1787, many

people and events have been commemorated on stamps: e.g. Washington, Garibaldi, Grandma Moses, the Olympic Games, Family Planning, Poland's Millennium. However, not until 1962 was there a commemoration of the greatest event in history, the birth of Christ. The evolution to an actual religious scene was cautious. In 1962, the stamp was a Christmas wreath. In 1973, a tall Christmas tree. In 1964, Christmas decorations: holly and mistletoe. In 1965, a long angel blowing a long horn. Behold, in 1966, Jesus and Mary appear on the tiniest stamp the post office prints. Mary is seated with the Child on her lap. While the stamp was the tiniest, at least the principals of the Nativity event had arrived. It may be significant that the postmaster general from 1965-1968 was Massachusetts' Lawrence O'Brien. In 1969, Jesus, Mary and the angels disappeared entirely to be replaced by a cold New England winter scene.

I phoned Mr. Terry Gnage, our Webster postmaster, and asked how the stamp is chosen each year. He wrote: "A citizen's

Stamp Advisory Committee makes recommendations for the new stamp issues from thousands of requests on file. The Postmaster General makes the final determination based on the committee's recommendation." We can speculate that a great cry of indignation must have come from the shameful ejection of Christ and Mary from Christmas, because each year since the 1969 omission, we have had some Nativity motif. The one exception was in 1977 when George Washington at Valley Forge was substituted for Jesus and Mary. Apparently there followed this 1969 omission a kind of compromise made in the committee, because each year since 1970 there have been offered two stamps: the religious commemorative stamp and a parallel secular stamp of toys, gingerbread Santa, a mailbox or the like.

The 1980 stamp is a beautiful picture of the Virgin with Jesus on her lap, a loving mother gazing at her Son, and with a hand gesture of instructing the Child. It is from a stained glass window in the Episcopal Washington Cathedral, beautiful and appropriate. The parallel secular Christmas stamp is of toys: a drum, bugle and spinning top. The post office has printed 120,000,000 of each stamp: the religious and the secular. It might be good if parish bulletins would print a notice: "Keep Christ in Christmas. Ask for the religious commemorative stamp. Buy only that, to commemorate His birth."



**Fruit Sale**

Students at Christ the King School are preparing for the annual orange and grapefruit sale, designed to raise funds for school projects. The sale will run through November and delivery date is Dec. 19. From left are Ryan White, Heidi White, David DiSalvo, Heidi Slayton, Gregory Urlacher, Daniel Slayton and Eric White.

**Career Expo Scheduled For Nov. 12**

Seventy area businesses, industries, agencies and colleges will participate at the Career Exposition on Wednesday, Nov. 12 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Dome Arena in Henrietta.

Non-traditional careers for men and women will be exhibited and demonstrated for students, parents and the general public. The theme of the exposition which numbers approximately 100 displays is

"Career Choices in a Changing World." Admission is free to the event that is sponsored by the Monroe County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) I, the Sex Desegregation Assistance Center of Columbia University, Monroe Com-

munity College and the Rush Henrietta School District. Anyone interested in more information may call June Hubner at Monroe BOCES 1 at 377-4660, ext. 229.

**Insights In Liturgy**



**Funeral Music**

By Sister Nancy Burkin  
Music for the Rites of Christian Burial, like music for any celebration of

Christian prayer, should speak to the nature of the celebration and of the faith of the assembly in the mysteries being celebrated. The introduction to the revised rites for funerals states: "In the funeral rites,

the Church celebrates the paschal mystery of Christ. Those who in baptism become one with the dead and rise with Christ will pass with him from death to life to be purified and welcomed into the companionship of the saints in heaven."

In a very real sense, the funeral rites are the culmination of our initiation rites. We celebrate the last and the ultimate in a series of dyings and risings that have comprised our lifetime, a lifetime that because of baptism has been a more or less conscious sharing in the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the funeral rites we celebrate that in the darkness there is light, in the sadness, joy, in the death, life. Music planned for such celebrations, then, must express the faith of the assembly in these mysteries of resurrection and baptism.

It is important that music for each celebration of Christian burial be planned. No pre-established set of music used for "almost every" funeral will adequately and authentically express the prayer of every group that assembles for the funeral rites. To facilitate this, planning, which ordinarily cannot be done too far in advance, it is helpful to have one or two members of the parish liturgy committee assist the family. Planning, of necessity, involves the family but often they are unaccustomed to liturgical planning and may be emotionally overcome. Members of the parish liturgy committee with the president can facilitate the planning with the family and see to it that the funeral celebration is meaningful to all concerned.

At the same time, planners must be sensitive to the needs of the mourners.

They must take into consideration the age of the deceased, the circumstances of his/her death, the religious background of the deceased and of the mourners. The degree to which the deceased is known in the community should enter into the planning.

Ordinarily, the assembly should be expected to participate in the sung prayer that is normally within the role of the celebrating community. Since the funeral liturgy itself is first and foremost a celebration of the Eucharist, the acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer and the Gospel Alleluia are sung. Knowing the assembly will be a necessary factor in choosing those acclamations in which they can take part.

Hymns should speak of hope based in the death and resurrection of the Lord, but this does not mean that every Easter hymn is appropriate. Family members may suggest favorite hymns of the deceased which may not be liturgically appropriate for the Eucharistic celebration, but might fit nicely into a planned wake service. Planning funeral rites includes planning prayer outside of the Eucharistic celebration.

Whether a hymn is fitting or not depends on the factors discussed above rather than on a preconceived idea of what "funeral music" ought to be. There is much music published today that may be appropriate for funeral celebration. Planners should be familiar with what is available.

If anything, to be "funeral music" means that a particular work fits the liturgical celebration and expresses the hope of the assembly in "him who rose from the dead."

**Classified**

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