

**Sarah Child**



All in the Family

**Patients And Patience**

Our year of scheduled visits at the psychiatric center are up with this last visit and Debbie, our coordinator, asks if we want to continue.

Each of us hesitates. It is the same with all of us. How much good are we doing?

It has been a question that has plagued us from the start. The patients we visit are all over 60 and female. They range from neatly dressed, soft-spoken women who might have been volunteers instead of patients to dull-eyed souls with too thin bodies and sunken faces.

At least part of the problem for the volunteers seems to be that we were not prepared for the lack of change in most of the women. From visit to visit, the status is quo.

Now, on this Christmas visit we go about getting

ready. Two Judys from St. Joseph's, our parish, have come to play guitars and lead us in music. We have brought bells for the patients and they ring them as the first chorus of Jingle Bells is heard.

We start passing out the treats we have brought. Frosted cut-out Christmas cookies, chocolate kisses in red and green foil, candy canes, pretzels and punch. We have brought too much, like mothers who show their love best through food.

As the music becomes louder and Judy, the leader, becomes more animated, the patients perk up, some of them calling out, clapping their hands, ringing their bells.

Many of the regulars are not there. In occupational therapy, we are told. I look across the room at Emma (not her real name), a tiny creature with a walker. I see her smile. It is only the second time in a year of visits. My

heart lightens. She must be better. Before, she refused all offers of food, conversation and activities we suggested. She takes a cookie, wraps it in a napkin and smiles again shyly.

I have been looking for Ellen. I have missed seeing her the last three times. A frail woman, she told me back in January she wanted to die, that she was sure she was not going to get better.

Over the spring and summer, she seemed to get thinner. Then in September when I asked for her, somebody said she was in the hospital for a mastectomy.

The next visit, she was resting and when I went to the dormitory, I found her sleeping heavily. Nobody seemed to know how she was faring. Her situation did not sound encouraging.

She is in therapy, an aide says when I ask her this time. We go on singing and passing out cookies and when I next look up, Ellen is at the door of the lounge.

Even from halfway across the room, I can detect the improvement. She has on a new pants and shirt outfit and her hair has been "done" al-

though not recently. She has put on, maybe, five pounds.

As I move toward her, she sees me and flashes a smile of recognition and reaches out her hands. As I lean toward her she kisses me on the cheek. I put an arm around her shoulder which is still far too bony.

"You're here today. I didn't know you were coming," she says, apparently happy to see me. "I wish I'd known you were coming. I'd rather be here. They've got me down for crafts." All this in exchange for two cards and a few visits.

"How are you feeling? You look good," I say. She flashes another smile and touches me on the shoulder. "Good." She says nothing about wanting to die, her former constant refrain.

We move to the table and I pass her cookies and juice which she consumes too quickly. Between bites, she smiles, her need to hurry evident.

"I have to go," she says apologetically and starts toward the door. She stops, "I'll see you next time," she says. It is not a question.

I nod. "Next time," the decision made for me.

**Business in the Diocese**

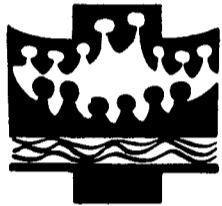


**FRANCIS CELONA**  
Francis M. Celona of St. Helen, Greece, has joined Bonadio, Insero & Co., Certified Public Accountants, as a tax department supervisor. He was graduated cum laude from St. John Fisher College and has received the Wall Street Journal Award for excellence in business management. He is married to the former Theresa Fischette of Penfield and they have a son, Michael, 1

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**Insights In Liturgy**



By John Kubiniec

**Advent Resolve**

By Br. Robert DiManno

"Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever faithful to your promises and ever close to your Church: the earth rejoices in hope of the Savior's coming and looks forward with longing to His return at the end of time. Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope which His presence will bestow, for He is Lord forever and ever. (Sacramentary, Third Sunday of Advent, Alternative Prayer)

The Third Sunday of Advent, like any Sunday's prayers, are rich fields to help us harvest and reap support for our resolve. The Word of the Lord is always alive and doing well in the hearts and minds of many. Let's look at the Third Sunday of Advent.

"Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We address God as Father. We renew our belief that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The First Person of the Trinity. The creator.

"Ever faithful to your promises." What promises were made in scripture by God and carried out?

Leading His people through the Red Sea. The sending of prophets. The promises to Abraham and his descendants. Are we his descendants? What are the promises made to us so far in our lives that have been always fulfilled? The promise of a redeemer, a friend and brother. He is always faithful.

"Ever so close to your

Church." Who is the Church, what are the needs of the Church, does He not meet the needs through His people? Feeding, clothing, sheltering, making the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear...

"The earth rejoices in the hope of the Savior's coming." The hearts of many are joyful at the thought of Christ's coming at Christmas. Little hearts wait in great expectations of the things to be received. Older hearts await the Lord when He will come in a different way with even greater gifts for lives well spent and dedicated. We all somehow look to the day when He will come again in Glory with the Father; when He will come in each own individual life in His own way.

We pray the Almighty Father to remove from our hearts sadness. All the things that burden the heart (anxiety, needless worries, frustrations, sufferings, hardships) so that we may all the better focus the eyes of the heart and the soul on the Lord, the Redeemer, the Messiah. We experience the joy deep down of the Lord's promises and somehow these burdens obscure the vision and so we ask the Father to remove them. We know from the past and we have the hope of the future that the presence of the Lord in our lives here on earth and in the life to come will bestow much peace. We pray for that peace now in our lives and in the lives of those around us. We are convinced that He is Lord forever and lives and in the lives of those around us.

Let us boldly make the

new year resolution (even though a few weeks late if we start with the beginning of the Liturgical Year, or a few weeks early if we think of resolutions beginning with Jan. 1) to try something spiritual and liturgical to add to our lives instead of mundane resolutions that are soon forgotten. Why not try a resolution that calls us to pay more attention, by way of reflection and meditation, to the Word of the Lord in the liturgies or upon the prayers of the liturgy? After all, with the Lord anytime is on time. He is Lord forever and ever. Amen!

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