

Editorials

**A Poor Boy
And Christmas**

He was a poor boy, about seven years old, from a rural town in upstate New York. He was hit and killed by a car while crossing the street in front of his home trying to get to the mailbox on the other side.

It was some time after the immediate shock of the tragedy before anyone noticed that the letter in his hand was addressed to Santa Claus.

Inside in the little boy's scrawling hand the message was: "Please make sure that my little sister gets the doll she wants. It's all right if that means I won't get anything."

The story is true and though it didn't happen this year or in this diocese, it is a reminder that among us there are many who don't have the means to celebrate the anniversary of the birthday of another poor boy from a small rural town.

The capsulized reports which have been running as the 100 neediest cases in the diocese, all of which are true and current, confirm the fact that many are in desperate circumstances; many of them have known nothing but poverty all their lives and some have been victimized by recent joblessness and/or inflationary costs of living.

The cruel summation, and at Christmastime, of a national administration which says that there are no hungry children in this country, is belied by the brief case histories printed in this newspaper, which are only representative of many, many more both here in this diocese and across the nation.

Not all the impoverished are young. The very old are like children in their hearts; they need others to care for them, to hug them, to pamper them a bit, to pay them special attention, especially at this holiday time of the year. Unfortunately, many will be noting their very last Christmas in dire circumstances, impoverished, ill and alone.

Yet what strikes ever harder at the heart is the realization that little children in our own diocese not only will go without the extras of toys and games but will have only the plainest of food, at best, and the skimpiest of shelter. The reasons abound — Father has lost his job; Mom is ill; a mother of nine has multiple sclerosis, her husband has just been hospitalized. And then there are those who have been pushed aside by the very society which celebrates abundantly the birth of Jesus. There just never seems to be room enough for some at the table.

The Courier-Journal Christmas Fund was established 14 years ago to provide a way for generous diocesans to come to the aid of the needy in our own backyard. All the money raised is used for the poor, both rural and urban, of our own diocese through the expertise and warm concern of the folks at Catholic Charities. This year, the lot of the poor is even worse because of a national administration which has deliberately ignored their plight and which is now incredibly beginning to make sounds that the poor do not exist. This is the administration which began by saying the government is not responsible for the poor; an administration that thrust the concern for the needy on the churches and other



"She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged" (Luke 2:7). This rendition for the Nativity is from a 19th Century woodcut by Paul Gustave Dore. (NC)

social agencies. An administration that may be now pretending that the hungry are not among us

More than ever, in the face of such cold indifference, the generosity of individual Americans will be tested. The good people of the Diocese of Rochester have never failed that challenge. This year will be no different. The poor will not be forgotten by their brothers and sisters.

However, with the extra hectic pace of the season, many tend to forget the rapid turnover of days.

Please, anyone willing make that donation today, now, so that it will be more effective this Christmas.

Somewhere, there is undoubtedly some little re-creation of the poor boy of Nazareth, telling somebody, "It's all right if I don't get anything." Obviously, such a child already nurtures the significance of Christmas in his heart. Perhaps through the Christmas Fund, and it is indeed possible, he will know the rewards of a bounteous and joyful Christmas day this year.

and Opinions

**Persecuted
For Christ**

EDITOR:

The freedom to worship God and celebrate the birth of our Savior is one forbidden to many people. Last week's news that Lithuanian priest Father Sigitus Tamkiavicius was sentenced to six years in jail and four years in internal exile for slandering the Soviet state should remind us to pray and offer sacrifices for our persecuted brethren behind the Iron Curtain.

Richard Wurmbbrand, the Lutheran minister ransomed from his imprisonment by the Soviets in Romania, tells us firsthand that the tortures performed on faithful priests and nuns is "unbelievable." He gives witness to the fact that they are literally placed on crosses that are put into the ground upside down

while the tormenters perform atrocities on these victims.

Rev. Wurmbbrand says the loneliness of those in prison is intense because they know that those in the West have forgotten them.

Let us each do something in our own way during this holy season for those who hunger for freedom and suffer persecution for Christ.

**Margaret Finucane
284 Canterbury Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14607**

**Is Abortion
Ignored?**

EDITOR:

As coordinator of the diocesan Human Life Commission, I would like to comment on Mr. and Mrs. Ray Buonemani's letter, Dec. 7, which basically asks the question, is abortion ignored? I would like to mention that the diocese dis-

burses approximately \$23,000 yearly to pastoral care groups. These are volunteer groups offering direct services to women with unplanned pregnancies, which include Melita House, a home for unwed mothers awaiting the birth of their child, to Birthright organizations which give counseling and pregnancy tests to women in need of these services and to Right to Life organizations which are involved in education and social action. The Human Life Commission has consistently worked through the parish contacts who are liaisons to the parishes and with Right to Life groups and the Protestant community in joint efforts to educate and move legislation to end abortion.

I would agree with the Buonemanis that the nuclear arms issue is treated with urgency and importance but I would like to point out that

the abortion issue is a part of "The Challenge of Peace" pastoral, just as the bishop made it part of his message at the Seneca Army Depot. May I also note that Bishop Clark also addressed the New York State Right to Life Convention.

I would also agree with the Buonemanis that the abortion issue could be more pronounced by the schools, by the clergy, by our own personal witness and I would add by the continuance of the excellent coverage provided


by the Courier-Journal. We need to bring about legislative change and to provide education for all those who fail to see the moral evil of abortion and its physical and emotional consequences to the women of our society.

I would like to commend the Buonemanis for their diligence, deep commitment and pursuance of an end to abortion. The 11 years that legal abortion has already been with us is evidence that we need to constantly bring

this before the public and to work even harder to change the laws and the hearts of our country.

**Anita Maruggi
Human Life coordinator
Diocese of Rochester
750 W. Main St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14611**

**More Letters
Page 20**



COURIER-JOURNAL

CHRISTMAS FUND

Give Generously