

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

The crusading letter writer

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

James was very upset with the way some of his fellow Christians were acting. They treated rich people with more care than poor people.

So James decided to write a letter to the Christian communities. He knew they respected him. He hoped his letter would help them change their ways.

"I send you my greetings," James began his letter. Then he got right to the point. "My brothers and sisters, if you really love Jesus Christ, you cannot play favorites."

James stopped to think. He remembered some of the times he saw his friends being nice to rich people and ignoring the poor. He decided to make up a story to help his friends see what they were doing.

"Suppose a well-dressed man comes into your assembly," James wrote. "Suppose his suit is expensive and the latest fashion. He has gold rings on his fingers. At the same time a poor man comes in with torn clothes and shabby shoes."

James put down his pen for a moment. He imagined how the rich man and the poor man looked. He imagined how the Christians might treat the two of them. He wrote what he knew would happen.

"Suppose you notice the rich man and find him a special place. You might say to him, 'Sir, please sit right here.'"

"Then you go over to the poor man and tell him, 'You can stand!' or 'Sit over there where no one will see you!' If you act

like that, are you not showing that you care little for the poor?"

James felt he had made his point. But he was still angry that his Christian brothers and sisters were acting the way they did. So he wrote more.

"Listen, my brothers and sisters. Didn't God choose the poor to be rich in faith? Yet you treat the poor badly. The way you should act is this: Love your neighbor as yourself."

James read over what he had written. He liked what he wrote. But he felt he had one more point that needed saying.

"What good is it to say you have faith in God when you act in a way that is not the way God acts? Suppose you see someone who has no decent clothes and no food. What good is it to wish others well if you do not give them food and clothing? Tell me what good that is?"

James finally felt happy about his letter. He liked what he had written. He knew that some people would not like it, but he felt he had to write what he did.

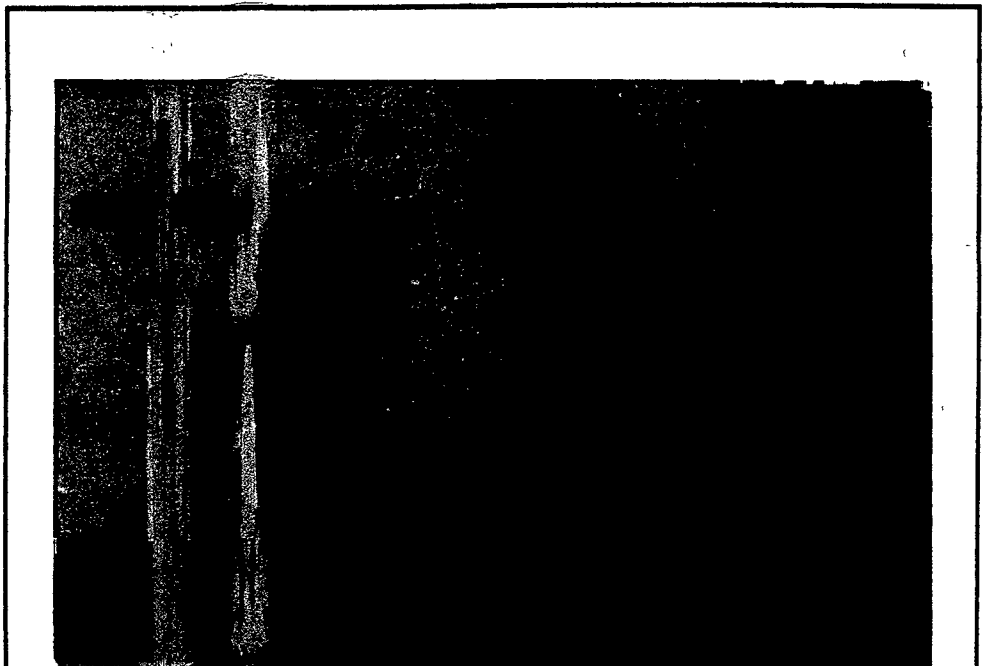
He folded up the letter and prepared it for delivery. He asked God to bless those who would read his letter or hear it.

James could never have guessed that people almost 2,000 years later would still be reading his letter. It speaks to us as strongly now as it spoke to our ancestors long ago.

Story Hour biblical quotes — this week from James 1:27-2:17 — are paraphrased.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of numerous catechetical books and articles for children.)

James didn't like the way his friends were acting. So he decided to write them a letter. He told them to treat the poor with special kindness and pay attention to what they needed.



Forgiveness

The promise of God's forgiveness is fulfilled as Father Robert Whalen, SJ, hears the confession of a prisoner in the Federal Medical Prison in Springfield, Missouri. Father Whalen's message of forgiveness and the love of God help heal the pain of confinement for large numbers of repentant prisoners.

With help from the Catholic Church Extension, Father Whalen introduces prisoners to basic Christianity. It's a tough job in a hostile environment.

Father Whalen is part of a team of home missionaries who, together with Extension, pursue the vital and urgent task of evangelization here in the

United States. But the team is too small to do the job without help. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension Society team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we can bring the Word of Christ to those who don't have it.

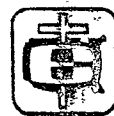
Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

- Put yourself in the shoes of James, the letter writer in our story. Write a short letter to someone in which you tell about one point that you think all Christians should remember.
- James was concerned about poor people who were not being treated well by others. Why do you think James was concerned about this?

Children's Reading Corner

"Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker" is a story by David Collins that children and adults might enjoy reading together. It tells about Miss Day's efforts to help the hungry, the unemployed, the homeless and people in prison. Always she was concerned deeply about the suffering of others. In what ways might Miss Day be an example to follow? (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1615 Republic St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45210. Paperback, \$1.95.)



The Catholic Church
EXTENSION Society
35 East Wacker Drive • Chicago, Illinois 60601