

Editorial

Finding the perfect gift

Christmas is upon us. It seems incredible that only nine days from this writing, we will celebrate the Savior's birth and the light the Christ Child brought into the world.

Busy with shopping, menu selection, travel plans, various errands — and, for those of us in the newspaper world, the pressure of two deadlines in one very hectic week — we may reach Christmas Day without really thinking about the miracle of Jesus' birth. As we rush to conclude our holiday preparations, we may also fail to notice those representatives of Christ who call out to us for aid.

In this edition we conclude the annual Courier-Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal. During these four weeks, we have taken a look at the problems encountered by just a small fraction of the needy people who are served by the various agencies of the Division of Social Ministries of the Diocese of Rochester.

The individuals and families that have been described in these "100 Neediest Cases" are beset by illness, unemployment, family problems and other circumstances that have wiped out their small savings and, in many cases, their emotional strength. They need our help, both financial and psychological, to meet

the extra pressures that the Christmas season brings to those who cannot afford presents under the tree and whose many problems make it difficult to appreciate the joyful Christmas those who are more comfortable may take for granted.

So, we ask you — and ourselves — to stop for a moment and think about the real meaning of Christmas and of those to whom Christmas is a painful, lonely or empty time. Do what you can to aid those needy people on our case list or those whom you encounter in shopping malls, on street corners, in nursing homes, or in your own neighborhoods.

That aid need not be financial; it may merely be inviting a lonely person to spend Christmas Eve or Christmas Day with your happy family. It may be giving an old coat or boots to someone who is not prepared for a white Christmas. It may, indeed, be only the gift of a smile.

However large or small your gift, remember that without individuals there can be no community — remember that every gift counts.

The staff of the Courier-Journal wishes all our readers a calm and peaceful last week of Advent.

Thanks Courier, Avon residents for aid to Patti

To the Editor:

I want to express my appreciation for the Courier-Journal articles that focused on the struggles of my friend, an unwed mother, to obtain housing and a better way of life for her child (re: "With generous support, single mother seeks better life," October 2, and "Single mother approaches holidays with new home, hopes for future" November 29). I must admit, however, that I felt embarrassed that my name was so frequently mentioned. The identification did serve to provide a contact point, and I am happy to be of service in that capacity.

One beautiful family sent me a check to help Patti with her financial crisis of telephone installation. That same family is also providing Christmas gifts for Erica. Many, many others are recognizing and responding to the fact that we in the suburbs

are not exempt from the misery we know is rampant in the cities. They are reaching out not only to Patti, but to others as well!

Teresa Parsons and Patti Johnston have done us a great service. Beautiful examples of Christian love are creating a true aura of the Christmas spirit for me and my neighbors. I am thankful for the opportunity to share, but I want to point out that I am only one insignificant servant. Our community is full of loving, caring people. I thank God for every one of them and thank Him for Teresa and Patti who have been visibly instrumental in drawing us closer together.

The spirit of God is alive in Avon and Livingston County. I fell privileged to be here.

Georgianna Delles
176 Genesee Street
Avon

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And opinions

Diocesan programs aid handicapped

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Mr. Usselman's letter in the December 5 issue of the Courier-Journal (Opinion: "Society, Church continually turn their backs on handicapped"). I thought that he and other readers might be interested in knowing about some of the programs currently sponsored by the Diocese of Rochester to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

In the past, it was regrettably true the Catholic Church did not take a leadership role in acknowledging the needs and talents of persons with disabilities. However, there have been significant changes in the attitudes of clergy and laity, partly in accordance with increased sensitivity to the disabled in society generally, and partly as a result of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Handicapped, published in 1978. The Diocese of Rochester sponsors several programs relevant to persons with disabilities, including the Community Group Homes, the Action Center for the Disabled, the Ministry with the Disabled, and the LILAC Program.

The Community Group Homes are four large houses in which a total of 45 retarded adults reside. There are also four apartments and one home in which 26 chronically mentally ill adults live. The administrators of this program, who work at the Diocesan Pastoral Center and its Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, have been expanding their program by seeking and opening new houses as rapidly as possible in their attempt to meet the needs of retarded and mentally ill adults who wish to live in community residences.

Catholic Charities' Action Center for the Disabled is a recreation center for adults with all types of disabilities who are interested in swimming, physical fitness, music, social activities, arts and crafts, or other recreational pursuits. The program is self-directed, so participants attend only those activities they choose for themselves. Two of the four staff members, as well as many of the program's volunteers, have disabilities. The program is located at the Edgerton Health and Recreation Center in Rochester.

The Ministry with the Disabled was formed in 1983 by a group of Catholics under the sponsorship of Catholic Charities. They wanted to enable persons with disabilities to participate more fully in parish life and to educate the Catholic community about persons with disabilities. The ministry has pursued four goals: accessibility of parish facilities, as exemplified by the accessibility survey (published in the October 24, 1985, Courier-Journal); advocacy, in terms of taking action on issues affecting the disabled; community education to parish and school groups; and program consultation, specifically availability to parish and diocesan organizations to provide assistance on matters related to disabled persons.

After the diocesan reorganization earlier this year, the Ministry with the Disabled was decentralized, so that the original ministry now exists in the Genesee Valley Region where most of its members live, and ministries are in the process of being formed in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier

Regions. The ministries welcome new members. Anyone interested in the Finger Lakes or Southern Tier ministries can contact his local Office of Social Ministry, or Greg Zurowski at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, (716)328-3210. Anyone in Monroe or Livingston Counties who would like to join the ministry can reach me at the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, (716)546-4894.

Catholic Charities also sponsors the LILAC Program, a network of parish volunteers who visit patients at the Rochester Psychiatric and Monroe Developmental centers.

In addition to these Catholic Charities-sponsored programs, DePaul Mental Health Services Inc., St. Joseph's Villa and Kinship Group Homes have a long history of providing services to mentally ill and emotionally disturbed adults and youths, in affiliation with Catholic Charities.

Changes take time, effort and patience. The Diocese of Rochester has begun to make the kinds of changes that will enhance the participation of persons in the Church who have disabilities. With continued cooperation from the laity and the clergy, persons with disabilities will take their places as full members of the Catholic community.

Lucy Dechaize
Coordinator of Services to the Disabled
Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry
50 Chestnut Plaza
Rochester, 14604

Give friends books on organic gardening for Christmas

To the Editor:

Here's a suggestion for your Christmas shopping list. If you have a friend with a green thumb or one who wishes he or she did have one, why not give him or her a book on organic gardening? That would help to keep our environment free of the unneeded use of toxic chemicals and the disastrous results of them.

In a fearful attack on modern man, chemicals in many forms are causing a huge increase in cancer in all groups worldwide.

These chemicals are found in herbicides, weed killers, many deodorizers, pesticides and insecticides. It's the day-to-day exposures to tiny repeated amounts that lead to the final disaster of malignancy. So, there is no such thing as a "safe dose" of contamination at any level of tolerance, even in what scientists measure as in "parts per trillion." The only safe level is no exposure at all.

People are slightly worried about the hazards of nuclear fallout, because among other things, it causes genetic changes. But toxic chemicals imitate the dangers of radiation. They too cause genetic changes. This can lead to birth defects in the future generations or no births at all.

Mary Rita Crowe
2052 E. Main St., Apt. 24
Rochester

Why reinstate old practice

To the Editor:

Unfortunately, your attempt to reply to my letter (Opinion: "More instruction needed on bishop's directive," Nov. 28) resulted in a misinterpretation of the point I wanted to make. However, recollection of Father Cuddy's column stating the reasons for discontinuing the practice of offering the cup boils down to the one main concern of my original letter: Why do some bishops find it so important to mandate a practice which was stopped long ago for three good reasons and yet fail to mandate the official teachings of the Church, upon which rest the salvation of immortal souls?

Mary L. Grienen
6283 Pittsford-Palmyra Road
Fairport

EDITOR'S NOTE: No misinterpretation intended. We just wanted to make sure readers of the letter didn't interpret your reference to "no options" to mean that they were being forced to accept the cup.



Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1½ pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.