

Columnists

Christmas compassion and joy

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 1:6-8, 19-28; (R1) Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

In 1843 Charles Dickens wrote a short story that became probably the world's most popular Christmas tale ever — *A Christmas Carol*.

It tells of the old miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, who has always mistreated his impoverished but cheerful clerk, Bob Cratchit. In a series of dreams, Scrooge learns about the true meaning of Christmas.

When the Ghost of Christmas Present takes him to the Cratchit home, Scrooge sees himself through his employee's eyes and realizes that his miserly, unloving life has been a waste.

A changed man after his terrifying dreams, Scrooge contributes generously to the Cratchits' Christmas dinner and is blessed by the clerk's crippled son, Tiny Tim.

It took the Ghost of Christmas Present to open Scrooge's eyes to the true spirit of Christmas. In Sunday's readings, Isaiah, Paul and the Gospel acclamation speak of the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Ghost? Through this "ghost" we can all discover the true spirit of Christmas.

The Spirit of God can transform selfish, egocentric Scrooges into unselfish, other-centered persons. He can make others glad tidings bringers. The Hebrew word *basar*, translated "to bring glad tidings," means to rub a surface so that it becomes smooth. When we are unhappy, we are rough. Bringing glad tidings means stroking away the hurts, angers, resentments and disappointments so that a personality becomes smooth again — cheerful and friendly.

When a child comes crying to its mother over some hurt, the mother caresses the child, strokes his brow and kisses him till all the hurts are gone. Bringing glad tidings is the same — being compassionate, stroking away another's hurts, feeding his or her hunger for love. This is the first element of the true Christmas spirit — compassion for others.

A case for saving Father Hitchclaw

By Father Richard P. McBrien

Now is the time for all good liberal Catholics to come to aid of Father Hitchclaw — as a matter of principle.

E. Alphonse Hitchclaw, a member of the Little Fathers of St. Pius X, teaches in the philosophy department of St. Michael the Archangel College, and he's in trouble with the Vatican.

The author of many letters-to-the-editor, pamphlets and photocopied handouts, he has established himself as a passionate proponent of the Billings method of birth control, a tenacious critic of Masses for gay Catholics, a leading theoretician on the evils of altar girls, and an indefatigable tracker of satanic phenomena — most of which he has discovered in the Catholic Church.

Although best known for his series of forthright letters exposing the moral weakness of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy, Father Hitchclaw has recently achieved special notoriety for a particularly unsympathetic treatise on Catholic social doctrine, "Rich Catholics Have Souls, Too," published by Loyal and Obedient Catholics for Orthodoxy, Inc. (LOCO, for short).

ny in the Vatican for the last several months, and the situation doesn't look good for its author. Rumors are swirling around Rome that the priest will have his theological mandate revoked, and that he will lose his teaching position at St. Michael the Archangel's.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is particularly irked by Father Hitchclaw's arguments that Church officials have no competence in matters of social justice, human rights and peace, and that in any case Catholics can decide for themselves which teachings they are bound to accept and which teachings they can discount as *obiter dicta*.

If not firmly rebutted, Father Hitchclaw's views could undermine the Vatican's current campaign against liberal dissenters. Pragmatic officials realize that the Vatican would expose itself to charges of inconsistency if it denounced one side for criticizing papal teachings on sex, but ignored the other side's criticisms of papal teachings on social justice and peace.

The Vatican could escape its dilemma, but only by repudiating Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment" approach to Catholic

A Word for Sunday

In the first reading, Isaiah specifies that he is speaking about a particular kind of compassion: social justice. He proclaims that he has been sent to "announce a year of favor from the Lord." Technically, this was the jubilee year.

People are people. Even God's people knew that man would be unjust to man. So every 50th year, a jubilee was proclaimed. In the jubilee year, all social imbalances were rectified: debts were canceled; lands were restored to their original owners; and slaves were freed. Can you not imagine the resultant joy?

The jubilee was only a harbinger of the hope the Messiah was to bring. The Redeemer liberated all, especially those who were economically or spiritually poor. But the glad tidings must not end with Him. Those who kneel at the Bethlehem manger must ever espouse justice for all.

When we do, we experience joy — the other aspect of the true Christmas spirit. This joy does not stem from satiating one's thirst for bodily pleasures, but from satisfying the hunger and thirst of others for social justice.

Compassion is the true spirit of Christmas, and joy is its consequence. When Mary brought the Savior to the household of Elizabeth, she sang: "My soul rejoices in my God." At the close of his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul's first command was "rejoice always."

The key to joy is compassion. Cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient toward all, seek no revenge, but rather seek the good of all. Striving for such compassion cannot but make our Christmas merry.

Essays in Theology

teachings on human life. It has found this impossible to do. The logic of the "seamless garment" or "consistent ethic of life" approach is not easily refuted.

Life before birth is no more sacred than is life after birth. Catholics who defend life before birth, but ignore attacks upon life after birth are no more ethically righteous than are Catholics who defend life after birth, but ignore the destruction of life before birth.

All the same, Father Hitchclaw might have escaped the vigilant eye of Rome had he not also organized a highly publicized lecture series at St. Michael the Archangel's, with a speakers' list dominated by critics of the hierarchy.

Former Treasury Secretary William Simon had ridiculed the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the economy in an article in *National Review* entitled, "The Bishops' Folly." Former White House Communications Director Patrick J. Buchanan had bitterly denounced the bishops' pastoral letter on peace in his syndicated column.

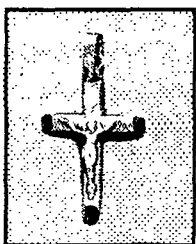
Perhaps the last straw was the invitation to editor-columnist William F. Buckley, Jr., who, in a *New York Times* piece following the pope's September visit to the United States, suggested that Catholics should turn off the switch when the pope speaks on questions that involve economics. Indeed, it was Buckley who used the term *obiter dicta* to characterize the pope's teachings on "this or that aspect of public policy."

Liberal Catholics who came to the defense of Father Curran should be consistent now and come to the aid of Father Hitchclaw. In the meantime, perhaps his conservative friends could persuade him to stop calling the bishops "wimps" — at least until this whole matter is settled.

14 KT. MEDALS, CROSSES & CRUCIFIXES FROM The SOURCE



Miraculous Medals



Crucifixes



St. Christopher Medals

SAINTS MEDALS INCLUDE:

St. Anne	Infant of Prague	Mount Carmel
St. Anthony	St. John The Baptist	Nino De Atocho
Assumption	St. Joseph	St. Patrick
St. Barbara	St. Jude	St. Paul
St. Christopher	La Providencia	St. Peregrine
Mother Cabrini	St. Lazarus	Perpetual Help
Ecce Homo	Loreto	St. Peter
St. Elizabeth Seron	Lourdes	St. Raphael
St. Florian	St. Lucy	St. Roch
St. George	St. Martha	Sacred Heart
St. Gerald	St. Martin	Immaculate Heart of Mary
Guadalupe	Maika Boska	Lady of Sorrows
Guardian Angel	St. Matthew	St. Theresa
Caridad Del Cobre	St. Michael	Holy Trinity
Holy Spirit	Monserrate	
Immaculate Conception		

SPECIAL ORDER NOW FOR CHRISTMAS — LAYAWAY WELCOME

60% OFF 14 KT. ITALIAN GOLD

The SOURCE

EAST ROCHESTER MALL
381-5719
3300 MONROE AVE (LAUREL BLDG.)
586-9145
560 RIDGE RD WEST
621-6280

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 10-9, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-5

Why the Robinsons' home is 15 times less likely to be robbed than yours.



It's protected by ADT. And with this special offer, you can purchase ADT's Safewatch Home Security System for only \$995, or \$29.95 per month*, installed.

Fact: The majority of homes burglarized each year do not have a security system. Fact: With an ADT Security System, the chances of your home being robbed drops dramatically from 1 in 3 to 1 in 50. That's why families like the Robinsons are turning to ADT for reliable, affordable, effective security.

ADT — trusted for over 100 years. Nationwide, ADT has helped protect everything from *Fortune* 500 companies to thousands of American households. And with a network of local offices, our security specialists can install and service an ADT Security System in your neighborhood.

Simple to operate. Your basic ADT Safewatch System includes magnetic contacts to help protect doors, a dual motion detector that can pick up the movement of a potential intruder, and a smoke detection system that can warn of smoke or fire. All are

simply operated from a control panel with built-in siren and emergency call buttons. All can be linked to a nearby ADT Central Monitoring Station, manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (There's a small monthly charge for this service.) ADT Safewatch can even help you qualify for lower rates on your homeowners insurance.

Easy to afford. Now for only \$995, or \$29.95 per month*, installed, with our low-cost monthly purchase plan, it has never been so affordable to protect your family. ADT Safewatch.

*NO DOWN PAYMENT. Based on 47 equal monthly payments at 16.9% annual percentage rate.



ADT SECURITY SYSTEMS
16 Capron St. • 546-6120
Security is ADT.

SPECIAL OFFER

Own an ADT Security System for \$995 or \$29.95 per month*, installed, with our low-cost monthly purchase plan.

Mail this coupon, or call (716) 546-6120 for a free home demonstration.

Name _____
(Please Print)

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Home phone () _____ Business phone () _____

I'd like more information on home security.

Please send me ADT's free booklet, "Safe at Home."

ADT Security Systems
18 Capron Street
Rochester, New York 14607