

Features

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES
CHRISTMAS FUND
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26 J.M., a teen parent of a three-month old baby girl, is trying her best to take care of their needs. As a high school graduate earning minimum wage, the odds are against her meeting even basic needs, but she's firm about being self-reliant and often works long hours to supplement her meager income. J.M. recently moved into an apartment, so she needs furniture, a vacuum cleaner and household items.

27 C.J. is a single parent of two young children, and is expecting another child soon. Due to extraordinary setbacks, this year has been very stressful for her. Being on welfare hasn't been easy either. She strives to better her life and the children's by pursuing her general-equivalency diploma, and plans to enroll in vocational training afterward. C.J. needs clothes (boy's size 8, girl's size 3T), shoes (boy's size 13 or 1, girl's size 6) and toys for her children. She also needs a stroller, swing and crib sheets for the unborn baby.

28 M. is a 22-year-old single mother who has a two-month-old child. She is trying to do the best for her baby. She considered adoption due to the lack of emotional and financial support from the baby's father, whom she had been dating for several years. She went to work shortly after the baby's birth to avoid depending on public assistance. In addition to her regular bills, M. is making car payments, although she has no car. She was in an accident a year ago, and insurance did not cover the full amount of the loan. At this time M. is in need of a crib and clothes, and would like a stroller for the baby.

29 E. is a 14-year-old girl who placed her baby for adoption shortly after his birth. She and her three younger siblings have been taken in by an aunt who is also raising her own children. The aunt works, and is doing her best to provide for the children. The family needs clothes, since they brought only what they were wearing when they moved in with their aunt. They could also use food and toys for the children.

30 Mr. U. and his family — wife, son and Mr. U's mother — have moved here

from New York City where they were victimized by crime. He had great difficulty in finding housing with money from his former job. All this has aggravated his poor health, but things are looking better because he has found an apartment and a job. They would be delighted to have gifts, food or any kind of financial assistance.

31 Ms. L. is in constant need of food and money because neighbors steal her benefits check and her family takes advantage of her. Her checks will now be handled differently, but she could certainly use help to brighten up her Christmas.

32 Mrs. C. has been hospitalized for pernicious anemia and other severe problems. She has no regular income because of health problems, but welfare is refusing to help her because she owns a car. Mrs. C. needs the car to get to medical appointments and to get to work when her employers call her in. She could use food, clothing and money.

33 Mr. C. is in his 40s, disabled and has to use a walker. He has had much trouble in getting his welfare budget straightened out, so he has received transportation, housing, and food assistance with funds from last year's Christmas Fund. However, he still needs some clothing and perhaps something for Christmas such as grooming items or household items — pots and pans, linens, etc.

34 Mrs. S. has been trying to get her nursing degree but cannot afford day care for her daughter, age 4. Because she is on public assistance and is expected to work rather than pursuing her degree, welfare has stopped paying for the child's care. She wants to try to pay for the care out of her welfare allowance, but that means they will have to do without food and clothing. Any help in this regard would make their Christmas brighter.

35 Mrs. L. is the mother of three children. She has been forced to raise them alone since her husband left her a few months ago to face eviction and a shut-off notice from RG&E. Mrs. L. is unable to work due to the ages of her children. She's looking for caring people to lend a hand.

36 Ms. D. is a grandmother of four children whom she must raise alone due

to the death of their mother. Ms. D's son is not able to cope and left the children with his mother. Ms. D. is not physically or financially able to take care of them. But because they are her grandchildren, she doesn't want anyone else to take care of them. She would very much appreciate any help this Christmas for her family.

37 Mrs. M. is a wife and mother of five children. Two of her children are mildly retarded. Mrs. M's husband has been the bread winner for his family. Since the early part of the year, Mr. M. has been ill, but still worked until five months ago when he was told by his doctor he has cancer. Mr. and Mrs. M thought they could hold out until he got better. But the cancer is terminal and Mr. M. has only weeks to live. Mrs. M. is trying to be strong and handle all bills and debts with her husband's small disability check. She has been refused bank loans because she has no income. Mrs. M. told the banks that she could repay the loans once her husband passes away. She does not know what to do.

38 Ms. L. is a single 37-year-old mother of three children; a 13-year-old girl, and two boys, ages 15 and 17. Her oldest son works part-time while he is attending high school in order to make ends meet. Ms. L. is currently on public assistance, but has been attempting to find employment.

39 Ms. P. is a 27-year-old single mother with three small children; two girls, ages 2 and 3, and a boy, 5. Ms. P. has been in and out of the hospital for the past two years due to rapid weight loss and muscle deterioration. This illness has forced her to receive public assistance. Ms. P. can use all the help she can get.

40 Ms. B. is a 30-year-old divorced mother of five children; three boys, ages 11, 9, and 5, and two girls, ages 8 and 5. Ms. B. is currently receiving public assistance, but has been working hard to obtain her general-equivalency diploma, and has enrolled in the Urban League's ACT program.

41 Mrs. C. is a 26-year-old single mother. She has a one-year-old boy. Mrs. C. is a recovering substance abuser who is attempting to straighten her life out. Mrs. C. receives public assistance, but she is seeking employment. The family needs furniture and clothing.

42 Mrs. B. is a 23-year-old single mother with two girls, 6 and 1. Mrs. B. is working full-time to stay off public assistance. It has been very difficult for her to raise a family by herself. The family currently needs winter clothing and shoes.

43 Mrs. B. is the mother of eight children — including two problem children, ages 18 and 20, who can't find work. She also has five grandchildren living with her, ranging in age from 14 to 3. Mrs. B. and her husband have a limited income from welfare. This family is not going to be able to celebrate Christmas without economic help.

44 Ms. C. is the mother of six children, ages 18, 16, 12, 10, 7, and 3. Ms. C. also has two grandchildren in her home, a three-month-old and a one-year-old. A single mother, her income from welfare is barely enough to sustain the family. Something extra at Christmas would really bring them joy.

45 M.R. is a very young mother of six children, the youngest being three months old. She is single and has no one to help her raise her children. The family has been burned out on several occasions, and now lives in a poorly furnished house in downtown Rochester. Sometimes her children cannot go to school because they lack appropriate clothing. M.R. and her family would appreciate gifts of furniture, household items, and clothing.

46 Until illness beset Agnes and Frank, both were active in their parish and at St. Peter's Kitchen. Frank has had a very bad stroke and needs constant help. Agnes is also sick. They and the children run out of food many times. A food cupboard helps them only once every six months. Their home is in poor condition and they really can use extra help to brighten their holiday season.

47 Peter and Mary are an elderly couple with two children, married and living out of town. Peter is diabetic. Mary is extremely arthritic. Both live on a very limited income with major medical expenses, but they are healthy enough not to need nursing care facilities. Because of their limited income and isolation, Christmas is one of several occasions this couple receives help.

Continued on Page 16



Advent Reflections

By Father David J. Faraone
Diocesan Liturgical Commission
Advent is a call and challenge to recognize the ways in which the Incarnation can touch

Christmas message: Straighten life's crooked ways

our lives today. I suspect that during this Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season we go back in time, making believe almost that Jesus is a little baby all over again. While this is both necessary and crucial in our initial understanding of the "Word made Flesh," we must realize that it is only the starting point. Baby Jesus in 1988 is the Risen Lord Jesus, who fills us with the Holy Spirit so that we might discern the means and the methods of allowing God to be born in our hearts. To focus on that miraculous birth in Bethlehem without recognizing the ways that each of us can give birth to the living God today is to miss our role in the plan of salvation.

In other words, during this great season we turn to our cherished past — those men and women who shaped that Bethlehem event so

lovingly. But we don't remain in the past! We move "back into the future" so that Isaiah and Mary, Joseph and John the Baptist, Anna and Simeon, the Magi and Emmanuel/Jesus can be symbols and models for our present world.

Who are the children today born in caves and alleys and back rooms that need my love and affection?

Who are those weary travelers or homeless men and women who need a roof over their heads or a mug of hot cocoa?

Who are those hostages in the Middle East who need my prayer, my remembrance, my letter to our government?

Can I stop talking about my pregnant, unwed neighbor long enough to offer her those baby clothes in my attic?

Can I wrap one present for someone who

can't give me one in return?

Can I, beginning with this new Church year, recognize the role God wants me to have in proclaiming the reality of his unconditional love?

Today, I must let the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season touch my life where it counts. I must let the season shake my strong places and blow wind into my warm hideouts. I must become aware of the ways in which I alienate, hurt, slander, mistreat, lie to, abuse and steal from my brothers and sisters. Every crooked path in me must be straightened out so that I can once again be renewed by the everlasting message of Christmas.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus! Today ... at Christmas ... each day of my life!

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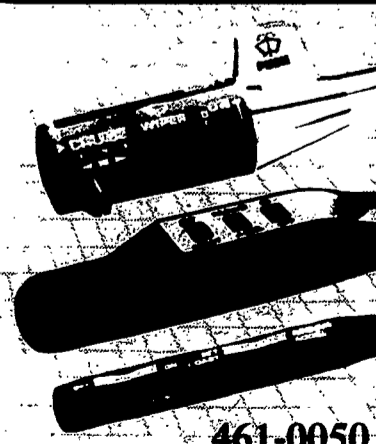
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