

CATHOLIC COURIER SOCIAL MINISTRY Christmas APPEAL

c/o Division of Social Ministry 1150 Buffalo Road Rochester, NY 14624

41 A widow with two grown children works in the office of a state facility. She is leaving her job due to a back injury that occurred outside of work. Her limited income and savings are eroding fast. She is eligible for some public assistance, but is trying to find ways not to become a statistic. She really needs just a special Christmas, following loss of her husband, health and career.

42 Mr. F. is trying to find himself after having lost his job. He is living in back of his car, and depending on friends and part-time jobs to get by. He is separated from his wife. Now that winter is here, his car will not provide much shelter. He also needs money to buy groceries and make his car payment. Mr. F. is an example of the type of person who falls through the cracks of the systems to help the needy.

43 Walter, Denise, and their 3-year-old and 3-month-old daughters live in a trailer in rural Yates County. The trailer has no running water or central heat. The father has difficulty finding and keeping a job because he has no skills and a low IQ.

Walter and Denise tried to make a living by farming, but were forced to eat their livestock. Before the birth of the new baby, Denise worked at a chicken farm, but was severely pecked on the nose and face and had to quit.

44 Mrs. C., a divorced mother of three children, comes from a long history of child physical and sexual abuse. She receives counseling and support services through the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry. Since Mrs. C. hates being dependent on the welfare system, she is continuing her education at the Community College of the Finger Lakes, with the goal of becoming self-supporting. Limited finances have made it necessary for Mrs. C. to seek food and financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance Program. The family is dependent upon the generosity of the community to provide Christmas this year.

45 Susie and John are the parents of two children, ages 1 and 5. Since John loses every job he gets and frequently abandons the family, Susie and the girls are

dependent upon public assistance. Susie suffers from cancer, and is unemployable at this time. The family needs special help this Christmas.

46 Mrs. E. and her two sons were deserted by the boys' father earlier this year. Mrs. E., who works part time, was left as the sole supporter for the family. She is now receiving some public assistance, but finds it extremely hard to "make ends meet." Mrs. E. needs some extra help for Christmas this year.

47 Jane is a 25-year-old single woman of limited intellectual ability. She was receiving public assistance, but recently found a part-time job with a decent wage. She no longer receives assistance but she has to struggle to manage her bills on 40 hours of pay every two weeks.

48 Because she lives in a rural community, only a few services are available to Mrs. B., whose husband walked out on her four years ago. Since her youngest child is under 5, she is unable to work, and is therefore unable to provide for her three children as she would like.

49 Mr. P. has a family with four small children under the age of 8. They have been trying to make ends meet and still stay in their home. They need a new roof, chimney and foundation repairs, and a pump for their well. They need a little help to get back on their feet.

50 Mr. D. and his family of five live in Seneca County. They need a water

heater and a new roof. Leaks from the current roof are causing structural damage to the home.

51 Florence lives in a very small, remote town in Cayuga County. She has no central heating in her home. With funds from the Christmas appeal, a new furnace can be installed.

52 William and his wife are an elderly couple who have been able to remain independent. Their Social Security income allows them to remain in their home, but it not enough to cover such major items as the new furnace this couple needs.

53 Mr. and Mrs. E. are an elderly couple who live in Auburn. Their basement wall needs structural repair to stop further damage to their home. On an income of less than \$10,000 a year, they cannot make these repairs without help.

54 Mrs. G. and her four children live in a mobile home in Livingston County. Recently they learned that their well and septic system were unsafe. While Mrs. G. could take care of her family, she can't manage the large expense of a new well and septic system.

55 Robert and Susan have four children ages 3-15. They need to repair the roof of their home and replace the floor in the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and hall. The floors were damaged as a result of water deterioration. They could use your help.

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Advent recalls promises made and promises fulfilled

By Susanna Weatherholt
Guest contributor

Advent is filled with old-fashioned traditions and customs as well as images and experiences that touch our Christian faith. I have always had a certain affection for Advent. It can be a very special time for us as Christians.

Yet many people look at Advent as a less-important season than Lent, and frequently it is overshadowed — if not consumed by — the consumerism of the pre-Christmas season.

Yes, Advent has a great deal to do with the celebration of Christmas. But we can get so caught up in the buying of Christmas presents, Christmas trees and decorations that we can lose sight of the gift of Advent. Yes, Advent is a time of preparation for Christ's coming, but for Christian believers, Advent is much more than a season of trying to beat the Christmas rush.

Advent begins this Sunday, and with it begins the new church year. The lectionary readings for this year will be from Cycle A, the Gospel of Matthew.

The readings of Advent begin by speaking to us about the end-time, and by calling us to the values and visions of the king-

dom. Advent tells us the kingdom is coming and summons us to prepare. It forces us to ask ourselves, "If Jesus returned today, would I be ready to meet him?" And so we hear John the Baptist say, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

One of the reasons I like Advent so much is that I don't like the winter. It's cold, desolate and dark. Advent, on the other hand, speaks of light, of awakening, of a new world filled with joy and promise. This is what I need to hear when — no matter how bundled up I am — I still feel cold as I rake dead leaves or shovel the snow.

Advent's message is what I need to hear when my heart is cold, or my being desolate, or my soul filled with darkness. I need to know that promises are fulfilled by the Promised One.

Advent means "coming" and "awaiting the arrival." In a world of fast food, express lines and instant cash, Advent teaches us how to wait. But its lesson is not about a passive waiting or one filled with frustration or anxiety. Advent teaches us to "wait in joyful hope for the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ."

Advent invites us to reflect on the experience of waiting in our own lives. What

Advent Reflections



am I waiting for now? What have I waited for in the past? How do I wait — anxiously and filled with frustration, patiently and hopefully?

Advent is also filled with a sense of longing — longing that the waiting end, the promise be fulfilled, the birth be brought to completion. All of our hymns, prayers and readings during this holy time refer to this longing.

Advent is traditionally a season of remembering the Old Testament people's

longing for a new beginning, for a Messiah. It is also a season of learning from them how to live with hope in a cold world.

During Advent we take time to look at our roots as a Christian community, and at the roots of our own faith. We remember promises fulfilled — both to our ancestors long ago and in our own lives. Remembering these promises fulfilled gives us the patience to live in the present and the hope to look into the future.

When I was growing up, an Advent wreath sat on the dining room table throughout Advent. We children would take turns at lighting the candle and saying the prayers. I remember how each of us waited, hoped, longed for and joyfully anticipated Christmas with the lighting of each candle.

Advent invites us to rediscover the inno-
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