

# Christ

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with God, each other and nature.

## The light in our darkness

It has been said that "the birth of a child gives humanity another chance." The birth of this child in Bethlehem is extremely powerful as a source of consolation and hope in an age so concerned with the questions of peace and the future of the human race.

This child is not just any child; in him there comes fully and decisively into history the divine power that forms history. He is indeed the light shining in our darkness; a light over which darkness shall have no more power (John 1:5). Against the threat of armed conflict beyond

our capacity to imagine, the naming of this child as Prince of Peace is also extremely significant for the survival of our whole culture.

During the past months, who among us has not felt deeply the darkness and gloom of our world? These feelings are caused not only by a world on the brink of war and destruction, but also brought by everything in our world that is violence, hatred, domination, monologue, racism, sexism, clericalism, confusion, manipulation of other human beings, meaninglessness, emptiness and self-sufficiency.

Such strong feelings of darkness and gloom usually stem from our attempts to build our lives simply around ourselves and give in to the great temptation to act as isolated beings or islands, instead of as communities of people genuinely concerned about one another and about the suffer-

ing of many people in our world.

The results of this isolated existence are bitterness, desperation, loneliness and emptiness. Our hearts are darkened and our spirits are greatly disturbed. The darkness is therefore not only something surrounding us, but is also within us. As a result, we simply drag ourselves along from day to day — always hoping for something much better, looking for someone much better — and yet the experience and the person never come.

As in Isaiah's day, do we, too, not become enraged and curse our sinful leaders, political rulers and the God whom we may be forsaking, instead of looking deep within ourselves to recognize the powers of darkness and destruction at work in our own hearts? Do we live without hope and consolation?

Just as the darkness and distress were not Isaiah's last words to his people, neither are they the final words to us. A great light has shone upon each of us as well. God acts in the unexpected context, the unexpected place, the unexpected time, the unexpected way and through the most unexpected of persons!

The birth of a Child in Bethlehem reminds us that in spite of everything, in spite of every darkness and fear, we are loved and can therefore be lights for one another. Our existence is an endless Ad-

vent, and we are invited once again to commit our energies to all that the Child of Bethlehem stands for and is.

The coming of such a great light into Israel's darkness was at times too wonderful to grasp! And when such a brilliant light overshadows our own darkness, it is often too wonderful for us to grasp. Isaiah's hope and consolation for those in darkness was no wild fantasy, no pious wish, no crazy dream because the prophet ended his hymn with these reassuring words: "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this" (9:7). The birth of the Child of Bethlehem has shown us that Yahweh God has indeed been faithful to these words.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Father Rosica is member of the Congregation of St. Basil from St. Ambrose Parish, Rochester. He holds a licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and is currently a doctoral candidate in Sacred Scripture at the Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Française de Jérusalem.

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# Families

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abroad, according to Father Richard Mattie, a Rochester native and a Navy chaplain. The priest wrote a special report for the *Catholic Courier*, detailing the gratitude of his spiritual charges for all the support they have received.

"It is almost impossible to acknowledge everyone's letters — so overwhelming has it been. Many packages have arrived addressed to 'any serviceman,'... They arrive in huge numbers every day," Father Mattie wrote.

The chaplain also pointed out that the

people on board his ship are well aware of the U.S. Catholic bishops' statements calling for President Bush to exhaust all means of negotiation before going to war.

"However for many (service men and women) it seems that the only possible way to avoid the conflict now is by prayer," Father Mattie wrote. "Generally I think that the Christian element sees the need for the higher power to intervene."

Similar sentiments are shared by folks back home, like Mary Bond.

"If you didn't have your faith in God — that God's in control of what's happening — what could you do?," she wondered. "You couldn't go from day to day. That's what we've got to hang on to."

Blessed Sacrament and St. Bridget's shelters are slated to close next spring when the Francis Hospitality Center opens, but Rosier is not counting on being permanently out of business.

"We have more homeless than in 1985," she said. "We haven't touched the tip of the iceberg. I believe pretty soon you're going to write about another shelter opening."

Yet, if another shelter is needed, beneficiaries of such openings — such as Albert Bounds — hope that Catholics will continue to help the homeless and adopt his philosophy about the problem.

"These are my people, homeless people," Bounds said. "I'd go through any test for them."

# Volunteers

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the street that Catholic parishes really do care about the poor, he said.

"As more services become available, more people will avail themselves of the services," he said.

Both Rosier and Sadowski look forward to next year's opening of the Francis Hospitality Center — a 24-hour shelter for homeless men that will be operated year-round by the Catholic Family Center. The new shelter will also offer a variety of services designed to help its guests become self-sufficient.

## ANNOUNCING THE WINNER OF THE GIANT CHRISTMAS STOCKING GIVE-AWAY

Two-year-old Ben Woodruff of Hemlock, NY, pictured at right with his father, David, mother Carol, and grandmother, Mary Ann Margiotta, admire the many wonderful gifts in Ben's Giant Christmas Stocking. Ben's grandmother Mary Ann is a parishoner of St. Agnes in Avon and registered Ben in the drawing at Leewards in Henrietta.



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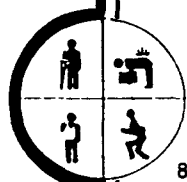
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