

Holiday stamp disappoints again

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Why do Christians put up with the annual peculiarity of a Madonna and Child instead of a Nativity for the annual Christmas stamp.

The following letter is an invitation to readers to note the address, and write in request for a Nativity stamp in the years to come. (United States Postal Service, Philatelic and Retail Service Department, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20260-6700:

Gentlemen:
How can it be? How can it be?
How can it be?

For 15 years I have written an annual protest about the U.S. Postal stamp at Christmas.

Of the 23 or more stamps at Christmas, only three have been really Christmas, i.e. Nativity stamps.

1970 had Lorenzo Lotto's Nativity. 1971 had the Adoration of the Shepherds by Giorgione. 1976 had the beautiful Nativity by Copley.

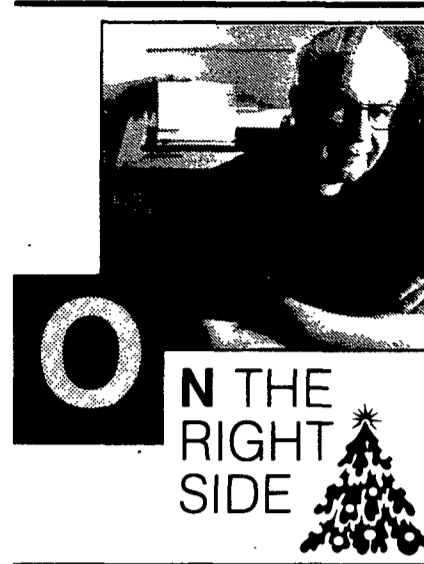
I have studied the stamps at Christmas time from 1962 to 1991. Of these 17 are Madonnas, with chubby, already weaned babies instead of the Infant with Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Three are angels, one blowing a horn. One is of George Washington at prayer at Valley Forge. 1962 had a poinsettia. At that time the stamp was five cents, which price I think had nothing to do with the selection of the picture. For four years the stamp was so dinky as to be almost an insult. Someone in your department wrote to me saying "it was a matter of economy." You can do better than that.

"Doesn't it seem reasonable that if you made a stamp commemorat-

ing Moses or Dante or Molly Pitcher or any historical person we should expect a picture relevant to the occasion depicted?

The Nativity involves several persons, which should not be a problem. The Social Security Act stamp made in 1985 has the figure of seven persons, plus a baby carriage and a wheel chair. Yet is was not crowded, but quite attractive. The Copley Nativity includes some shepherds, and is also attractive. To add to my wonderment I receive letters from many foreign countries, and several of them print genuine and beautiful Nativity stamps.

For years I have done a lot of business with the U.S. Postal Office, and believe we have the most efficient postal system in the world. Now I am enclosing a sample of several of the stamps you have printed at Christmas time, and request,



for the 16th year, that you give us a Nativity stamp of decent size, and at least as equally attractive as the Social Security stamp of 1985.

Family must be 'the domestic Church'

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 2:41-52; (R1) Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; (R2) Colossians 3:12-21.

Sunday is Holy Family Sunday.

One of the great insights of Vatican II was the rediscovery that the Christian family is "the domestic Church" — the church in miniature.

A rabbi once said that the synagogue is a school where "people are taught how to make their homes into sanctuaries ..."

Traditionally, Jews gather at their synagogues to celebrate only two high holy days. All other holy days are celebrated in the home with the family and the father as the celebrant. Judaism has made the home the focal point for its religious celebrations. That fact explains in great part the tenacity and adherence of the Jews for their religious beliefs and practices.

Catholics need to make their homes the focal point of their celebrations as well. Parents and families must start placing renewed emphasis on religion and religious practices in their homes.

By both word and example, parents ought to show their children

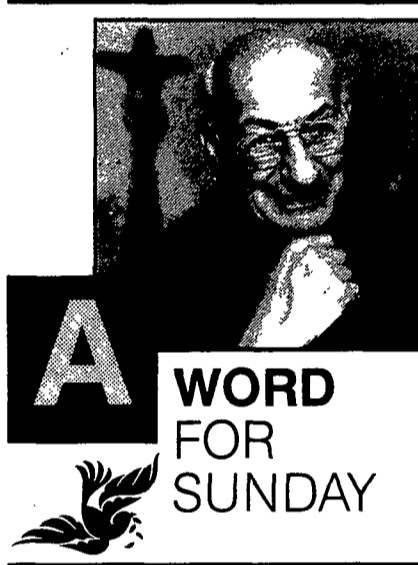
the worth of reading and studying the word of God, the value of frequent confession and Communion. Family prayers — the rosary, grace before and after meals — are a must.

Three sources of religious education are available for children: religious instruction classes, the family and the parish. Of these three, the most important is the family. You can take the child out of the home, but you cannot take the home out of the child. A child is what he lives at home, for a spirit is caught quicker than taught.

Pope John Paul II, in his magnificent apostolic exhortation on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, (issued Dec. 15, 1981) uses this quote from Paul VI in speaking of the Christian family as a community in dialogue with God:

"Mothers, do you teach your children the Christian prayers? Do you prepare them, in conjunction with the priests, for the sacraments that they receive when they are young: confession, communion and confirmation?"

"Do you encourage them when they are sick to think of Christ suffering, to invoke the aid of the Blessed Virgin and the saints?"



"Do you say the family rosary together?"

"And you, fathers, do you pray with your children, with the whole domestic community, at least sometimes? Your example of honesty in thought and action, joined to some common prayer, is a lesson for life, an act of worship of singular value. In this way you bring peace to your homes: *Pax huic domui*. Remember, it is thus that you build up the Church" (#60).

Parents must protect their young from forms of aggression by the mass media and sometimes from the schools — especially in the matter of sex education. Sex education must never be solely clinical or biological or disassociated from moral principles. An education in "safe sex." Nor ought the period of latency be ignored.

Education for chastity is not a rejection of sexuality or lack of esteem for it, but a defense of love against selfishness and blatant immorality.

Jesus was greatly influenced by His home life. The teachers of the temple were astonished at his questions and answers. Where did He get this learning? From His mother Mary. She developed in Him a deep sense of the worth of domestic and social relationships. At Cana her concern became His. He was compassionate to the widow of Naim, for His own mother was a widow. He could move among men: calm, unruffled, unhurried — because of His home training.

Only when families become domestic churches will the church become truly family — a light to the nations (*Lumen Gentium*) and the joy and hope of the world (*Gaudium et Spes*).

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