



# CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 104 No. 8 Thursday, November 19, 1992 75¢ 20 pages

## GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST?



### Food providers see shadows of Depression-era need



any well-intentioned individuals and organizations strive to assist struggling families at holiday

time — as the repentant Ebenezer Scrooge tried to do with his faithful employee, Bob Cratchit, in the Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*.

But for people like Elmira resident Patricia McPherson, even the charitable and government funding she receives is not enough to enable her family to fully enjoy the season's festivities.

A single mother of five children — ranging in age from 1 to 11 — the 26-year-old McPherson works part-time at an Elmira supermarket. At this point, she's not even sure if she'll be able to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for her family.

"I'd like to cook a Thanksgiving turkey, but I don't have a stove. Even if I bought a used stove it would be too much money, because I only work part time," McPherson remarked.

*A merry Christmas, Bob!  
A merrier Christmas,  
Bob, my good fellow,  
than I have given you,  
for many a year! I'll  
raise your salary, and  
endeavor to assist your  
struggling family. ✓*

Although she receives such public assistance as child support, Supplemental Security Income (provided by Social Security for her disabled daughter), food stamps and Medicaid, McPherson still struggles to make ends meet for her family.

She hopes again to receive a Christmas basket as she did last year from the Diocese of Rochester's Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry. But even if the family enjoys a tasty Christmas dinner, it isn't likely that her children's requests for gifts will be met.

"It just hurts me inside that I won't be able to give them what they want,"

she added.

McPherson's predicament is typical of an ever-increasing number of people who are finding it hard to put turkey — or even bread — on the table.

The statistics are chilling. According to the New York State Labor Department, unemployment throughout the state had risen from 6.8 percent in September of 1991 to 8.8 percent for that same month in 1992. The national fig-

Continued on page 18

By Mike Latona, Staff Writer