

Christmas excerpts recall beloved columnist

EDITORS' NOTE: The year 1992 began on a sad note with the news that Father Paul J. Cuddy had died on Jan. 1, while on retreat at a monastery in Worcester, Mass.

Father Cuddy began writing his popular column for the then-Catholic Courier Journal in Oct., 1967. This year would have marked his 25th anniversary as a columnist.

During his 24 years with the Courier, Father Cuddy shared many Christmas meditations and poems; stories about midnight Mass during the World War II Battle of the Bulge and about a Mass for orphans at a U.S. Air Force base in Texas during the 1950s; suggestions for Christmas gifts; and, of course, his crusade for Christmas stamps depicting the Nativity.

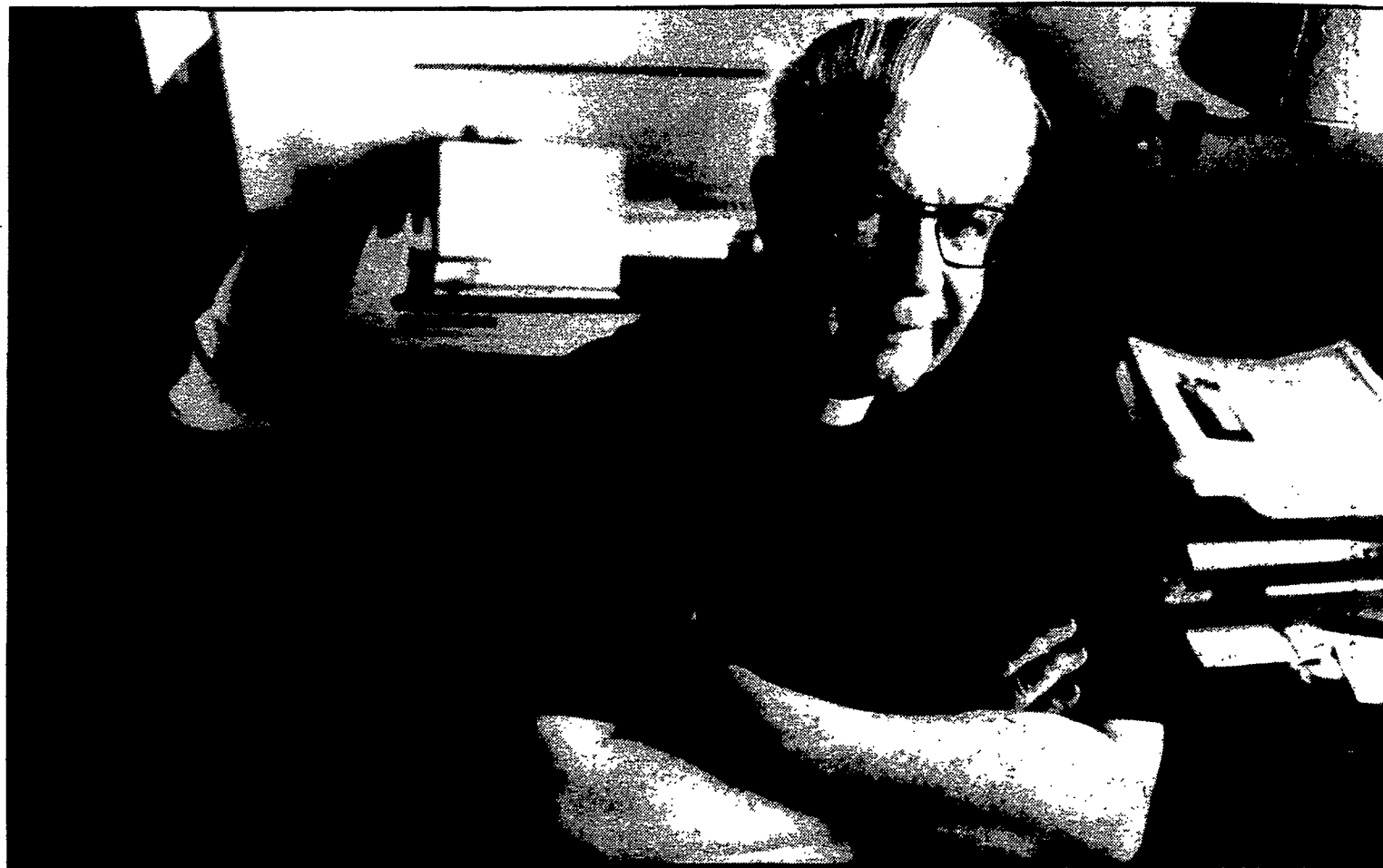
In memory of Father Cuddy, and as a gift to his many former readers, we offer the following excerpts from his past Christmas columns.

The six happiest Christmases I ever spent were in Saint Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, N.Y. They were quiet, peaceful, prayerful. But all that was over 30 years ago. (Dec. 12, 1967)

Any Christmas suggestions?

Extend to others your interest in them. Everyone needs to be loved. It is not possible to visit many people, but telephones can be instruments of kindness if we don't stay on the phone too long. Why not ring a shut-in or a relative or a friend? (Dec. 19, 1973)

The message of Christmas is the message of love, the core of our religion which is often missed. As God sent His Son to manifest Himself in His Image, Jesus Christ, I often think of people who mirror the Savior, with Father Joseph Curtin, my first pastor as the number one model. He would not have discussed "forming community," which simply means for people to live together



The late Father Paul J. Cuddy, who died on Jan. 1, 1992, began writing his column for the then-Catholic Courier Journal in 1967. This year would have marked his 25th anniversary as a columnist. During his 24 years with the Courier, Father Cuddy shared many Christmas meditations and poems as well as stories about midnight Mass during the World War II Battle of the Bulge and about a Mass for orphans at a U.S. Air Force base in Texas during the 1950s.

in love and concern. Rather I think he would have smiled at such a discussion, saying nothing, and just go out walking and talking with the people. He would go shopping and buy for the poor. He would stop into the church and say his beads for the people: for believers and nonbelievers; for the local people, the area people, and for those in China, India and around Cape Horn. And my

observation is that this same spirit abounds in many souls today, but even, more strongly at Christmas time. So let us bless the Lord. (Dec. 24, 1975)

Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine:
As we adore the Divine Presence and receive Him into ourselves may we go forth from Mass not in the smug selfness of fabled Narcissus, but emptying self of self and filled with Him Who by grace makes us a paler incarnation: sensitive to those who need to be remembered: the sick and aged; the people in nursing homes, prisons, hospitals, rooming houses; uneasy sinners; striving saints
Gloria in excelsis Deo
Nos cum prole Pia
Benedicat Virgo Maria!
(Dec. 21, 1977)

Spirit of Christmas: When "God gave His only Begotten Son to us" (John 1), He could not have given a greater Gift. In that spirit may we be sensitive to those who need to be remembered: the sick and aged and bereaved; those in the armed forces; people in nursing homes, prisons, hospitals, rooming houses. (Dec. 7, 1983)

In Christian homes throughout our country, the memory of that stark night is recalled — alas, celebrated strangely by pretty cribs so clean and colorful, so odorless; celebrated by stuff piled high as if love were measured in things material.

In dull incomprehension, these seem to say: expensive toys and costly liquors, sparkling trinkets, exotic smells, laden tables and every flesh-satisfying comfort — these are the Gospel of Bethlehem.

But the Gospel of the cave is otherwise. It is a divine protest against utter poverty and unconcern in the scandal that a Child however loved should be so born in starkness. It is a lesson that even in poverty, happiness abides where

there is love and self-giving.

And by inversion there is a lesson this affluent nation has yet to learn: that material stuff corrodes and rots and dissipates, but the things of the spirit, love and truth and beauty, flow eternally from the Incarnate Christ "from Whom and through Whom and in Whom all good things come." (Dec. 26, 1986)

While many bad things are happening, many good things are visible around us such as: good families; faithful spouses; generous single people; exuberant youngsters; coping bishops; apostolic priests, brothers and sisters; volunteers; and civic workers who keep the wheels of service moving despite our complaints.

We also see groups that strengthen and expand the church: religious schools; Cursillo; charismatic groups; the Legion of Mary; Marriage Encounter; Legionnaires of Christ; prayer groups; and an increasing return to popular devotion as well as an active participation in the liturgy. (Dec. 27, 1990)

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

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 ... (Dec. 26, 1991)

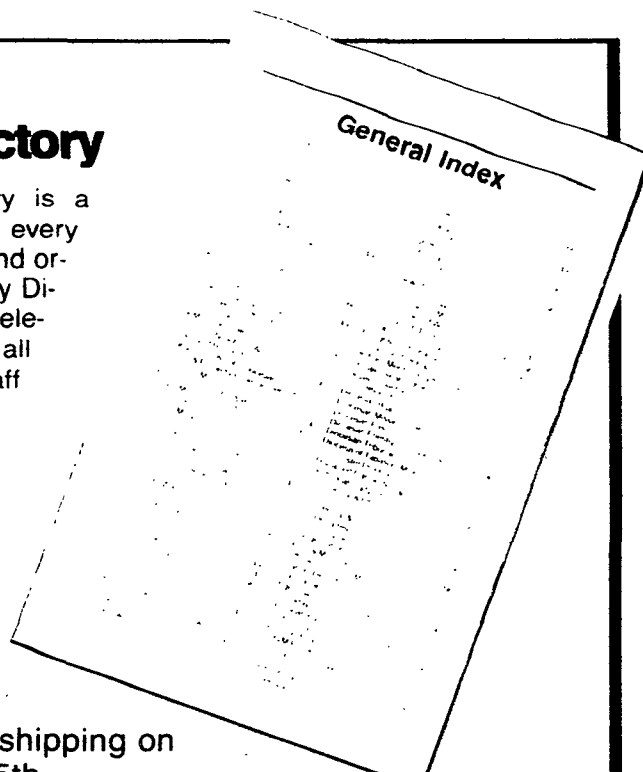
Christmas in Europe or Alabama or Africa or Texas or Sampson or in the Diocese of Rochester is, in its essential, the same: Christ comes to the altar through the powers of the priesthood and renews again that for which He came — to give Himself for you and for me and for all mankind that we may be one in Him and by Him and through Him.

"O come! Let us adore him."
A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR. (Dec. 22, 1967)

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