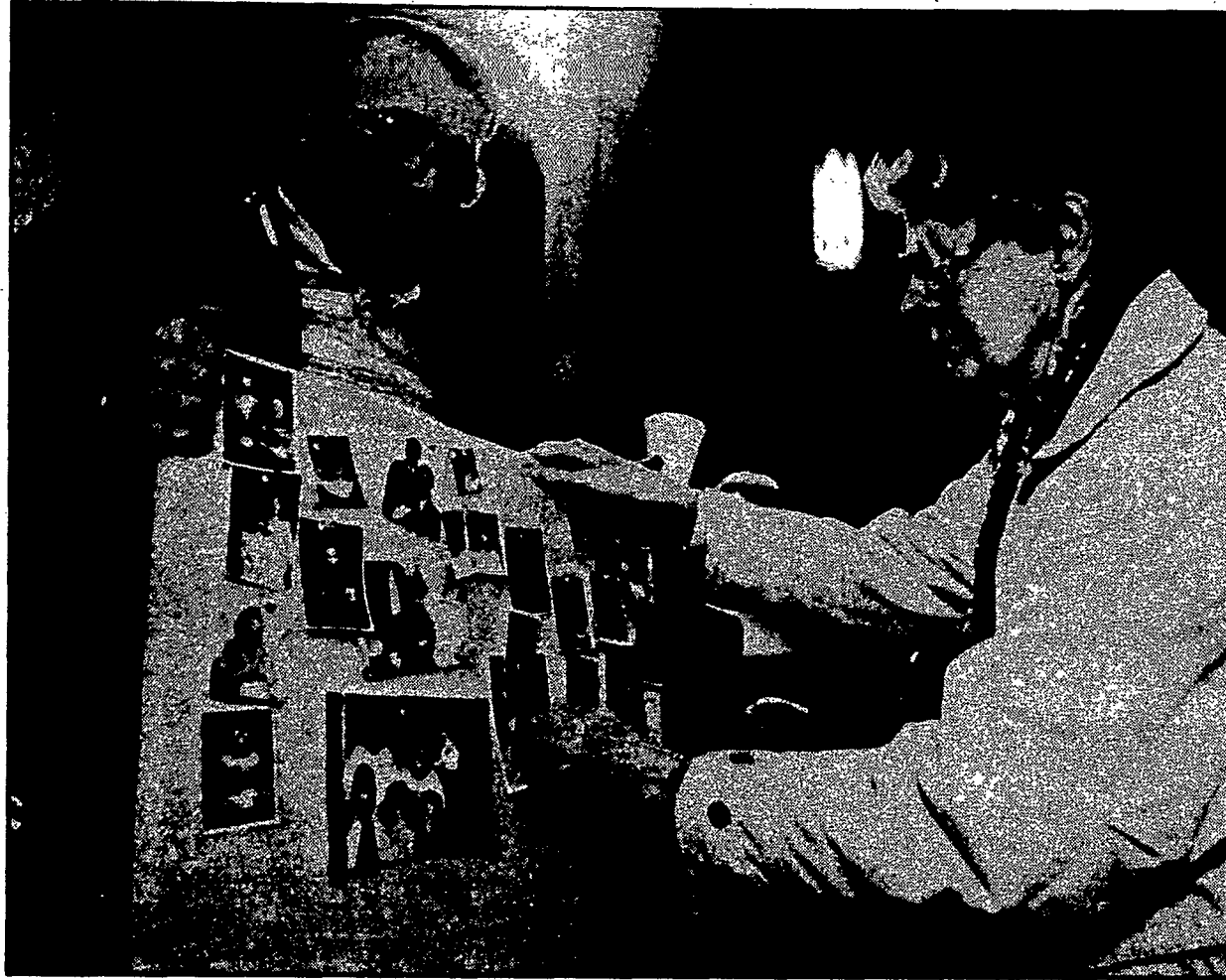


# Mass remembers unborn since *Roe Vs. Wade*



A memorial Mass for aborted children drew several hundred people to Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester, Jan. 13. Above, Eleanor Cook places photos of her grandchildren Madelaine Oliver, 2, Timothy Oliver, 5 months, and Sean Cook, 19, at the altar during the Mass. Art Harris of the Knights of Columbus holds the board for the photos. The pictures were to call to mind children lost to abortion in the 25 years since the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision. Above right, Bishop Matthew H. Clark delivers the homily. Right, Bishop Clark tours Problem Pregnancy Help Center, 3252 Lake Ave., Rochester, with Charlene Halbrook, material aid coordinator, earlier Jan. 13. The center offers free confidential pregnancy tests, counseling and clothing to mothers. The bishop also toured a Rochester Crisis Pregnancy Center.



PHOTOS BY  
GREG FRANCIS

## Storyteller: Sacred tales move listeners into spiritual world

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Almost 300 people listened in Corpus Christi Church Jan. 14, as John Shea, a theologian, author and storyteller, related a tale wrought from Islam's mystical Sufi tradition:

A king once gave an order to two servants. The first obeyed the king's order, and was subsequently promoted to a high-ranking position. The second servant disobeyed the king's order and was turned out of his position.

After a few months passed, curious about his former colleague's condition, the first servant sought him out. He found him living in a hovel on the poor side of town. The man was sitting on a dirt floor, eating thin soup.

"If you had learned to obey the king, you would not have to eat thin soup," the first servant said to the poor man.

But the formerly employed servant did not agree that his position was unfortunate. In fact, he told the first servant: "If you had learned to eat thin soup, you would not have to obey the king."

"The last line of the story makes you wonder who's free and who's not," Shea told his audience.

Every religion and culture has such sto-

ries, said Shea, who has spent several years collecting sacred stories and relating them to audiences throughout the world. Although entertaining and often humorous, sacred stories are primarily designed to move listeners beyond a shallow understanding of life to a deeper understanding of its spiritual foundation, he said.

A research professor at the Institute of Pastoral Studies in Loyola University, Chicago, Shea is the author of several theology books and two volumes of poetry. He also currently works as advocate healthcare senior scholar in residence at the Park Ridge Center for Faith, Health and Ethics.

Shea used Christian, Muslim, Native American, Jewish, Japanese and Ugandan stories in his presentation. He said sacred stories are valuable because they gently introduce people to essential truths, truths that might be hard to take if stated bluntly.

"The point of the narrative is to convince us that we're more than we see," he said, adding that sacred stories almost always end with some brief lesson.

"Everything that goes before in the story is meant to soften you up to hear it," he added.

For example, in order to get listeners to

think about how they often judge people solely on first impressions, he noted many sacred stories deal with the clothes a person wears. He used a Jewish tale about the prophet Elijah to illustrate.

In the story, Elijah is a magician who wanders around town dressed in ratty garments. He hears a wedding party going on in a house, knocks at the door, and asks if he can enter. The host refuses him entrance, so Elijah uses his magic to change his garments into those of a wealthy man.

He then knocks again at the door of the house. This time the owner lets him in, and Elijah moves from table to table, putting food into his pockets and pouring wine all over himself.

When confronted by the host for his seemingly boorish behavior, Elijah points out that he was only doing what he thought the host expected. After all, the host refused him entrance when he was dressed in rags, yet allowed him to come in when dressed in fine garments. This despite the fact that the person wearing each set of clothes was the same, Elijah said.

"I could only surmise that you invited my clothes," the prophet said, "so I began to feed them!"

A tale like that gets the listener to real-

ize how easy it is to overlook the fact that a person's spirit is vastly more important than a person's appearance, Shea noted. Conveying such insights directs the purpose of sacred storytellers.

"They want to get you to discern soul in the midst of flesh," Shea said.

Shea's presentation was sponsored by Corpus Christi's adult education program. In addition, Shea spoke at a diocesan-sponsored retreat for catechetical leaders and youth ministers at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua Jan. 13 and Jan. 14.

He also spoke Jan. 11 at Nazareth College Arts Center in Rochester. Shea was the first of three speakers slated to speak at Nazareth as part of the Sister Mary Lourdes MacCarthy Lecture Series, which is focusing on storytelling.

Theologian and teacher Megan McKenna is slated to speak on "Story as Struggle and Conversion" next in the series on at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 27. On Sunday, April 19, at 7:30 p.m., Msgr. William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of Nazareth College, will speak on "Easter: The Story That Lives On Forever."

The series is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Center in Irondequoit. For information on ticket prices, call the center at 716/336-4370.

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