

Seek consolation in the Christmas story

It is a privilege for me to extend to you and all of your loved ones my very best wishes for the Christmas feast. I hope that it will be a day of peace and renewed hope for all of you.

Among the wonderful blessings of the feast is the privileged occasion it provides to appreciate anew the humanity of Jesus and the powerful implications that reality holds for us. Christmas bespeaks Christ's identification with us, his complete understanding of the joys and sorrows, the trials and tribulations of the human condition, and his deep love for us which perdures even when we offend against or flee from it.

In moments when I grow weary or discouraged or uncertain, I find myself turning to those stories in the Gospels that speak to my heart about the human experience of Jesus. There are healthy reminders and a good deal of consolation in the knowledge that Jesus, sinless though he was, did not enjoy an easy life or ministry and was not free from the hard challenges that crop up in most human experience.

For example, I often spend time with the Gospel of Luke as it speaks of the beginnings of Jesus' public life. That account moves through Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan, his temptation in the desert and his preordination of the prophecy from Isaiah in the synagogue at Capernaum. One finds in that flow of sto-



along
the way

BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



ries Jesus' growing self-awareness as beloved Son of God. It is a difficult period of testing and being tested about how best to respond to God's love in honest and generous ways, and a commitment to do that through self-giving love directed especially to those most heavily burdened.

Those crucial moments experienced by Jesus at the beginning of his public life are certainly consistent with the birth story in the Gospel of Luke. There is nothing of wealth or power or super-humanness here. Rather it is a story marked by poverty, vulnerability and solidarity with the ordinary people of the time.

If we turn to the end of his public life, what do we see? Gethsemane, Calvary, the flight of most of his closest friends, denial three times by one of them, and betrayal by another.

No, there's little room to doubt that Jesus in his humanity had more than a fair share of difficulty and suffering. Or that his response to that suffering was the self-

giving love that characterized all of his words and works.

I wish I understood the humanity of Christ more clearly than I do. But one of the consoling elements I find in prayer time spent with these Gospel stories is the reminder they offer of what his public life was like. He did not choose an easy way. He did not choose the popular way. He did not choose the expected way. Because he made the choices he did, he made many enemies, some of them powerful enough put him to death.

Yet, because of his total, unshakable faith in his Father, he rose from the dead and now shares the gift of his life with us.

When we contemplate the babe of Bethlehem at Christmas, we have a first glimpse of the humanity of Jesus. And in that glimpse, we find elements like vulnerability, simplicity and openness to the ways of God. These elements shine from his humanity and through his life.

I hope that you can find consolation in the beautiful humanity of the Christmas story — no matter what difficulties you or your loved ones may be experiencing. If we follow Jesus through life and all that he went through, it will deepen our realization that Jesus did not promise his followers that they would be exempt from human suffering. Rather, he promised to be with them through anything they were ever asked to endure.

Merry Christmas and peace to all.

Will you pray for a priest each day?

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus! Eternal Priest, Keep these Thy holy ones within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart where none may harm them. Keep unstained their anointed hands which daily touch Thy Sacred Body.

Keep unsullied their lips purple with Thy Precious Blood. Keep pure and unearthly their hearts sealed with the sublime marks of Thy glorious Priesthood. Bless their labors with abundant fruit; and may they to whom they have ministered be here below their joy and consolation, and in Heaven their everlasting crown. Amen.

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

January, 2000

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<i>Look for the February MPRP Calendar in the January 27th Courier.</i>					Revs. Bishop Matthew H. Clark	1	
2 Pope John Paul II	3 Inactive Priests	4 Bruce F Ammeling	5 Robert L Belotti	6 James E. Boyle	7 James C. Burke	8 Lee P. Chase	
9 Daniel J. Condon	10 William G. Darling	11 Peter A. Deckman	12 William Donnelly	13 John Firpo	14 Edward Golden	15 Ronald P. Harley	
16 John H. Hayes	17 Daniel F. Holland	18 Robert J. Kennedy	19 Michael Mayer	20 James F. Lawlor	21 Charles T. Manning	22 Jeremiah P. Moynihan	
23 Timothy L. Niven	24 Adam Ogorzaly	25 John J. Quinn	26 Leo J. Reinhardt	27 James A. Schwartz	28 Thomas R. Statt	29 Louis A. Vasile	
30 Vocations	31 Seminarians						

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COURIER CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL

Announcements

ADOPTIONS The Catholic Courier does not publish adoption advertising. To obtain a list of agencies that serve birth mothers and adoptive parents, call 716-328-4340. Agencies wishing to be included on this list may send information to the Catholic Courier.

General

In loving remembrance of Rev. Paul J. Cuddy, a devoted priest and a dear friend. (R.M. Gartland)

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**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**