

# Selfless gift center of story

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Before the infant Jesus received gold, frankincense and myrrh from the Magi, he received something more practical — a blanket.

At least that's the story according to William A. Guiffre, author of *The First Gift of Christmas*, a hard-bound illustrated children's book released earlier this year by Coastal Publishing Inc. in Summerville, S.C. The book's main character is a boy named David, who Guiffre imagined was the son of the innkeeper who let Joseph and Mary sleep in his stable.

"It certainly is not contrary to the traditions of our church, but it is not based in fact," Guiffre told the *Catholic Courier*.

The story places the origin of Veronica's veil — reputedly used to wipe the bloody face of Jesus as he made his way to Calvary — in a blanket given to him by Veronica's "brother," David, the character invented by Guiffre. The author said the story shows children that the baby Jesus they adore on Christmas grew up to face a painful fate.

"It's awfully easy to worship the Christ-child in the manger," Guiffre

said. "It's awfully difficult to worship Christ on his way to the cross because nobody likes unpleasantness. Yet, without the cross there would be no redemption."

In the book, when Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus leave the stable, Mary gives David back the blanket. David subsequently uses the blanket to wrap his baby sister, Veronica. The girl grows up and keeps the blanket until she meets Jesus carrying his cross. Hence, the book notes that the first gift of Christmas "became the first gift of Easter."

A retired teacher and administrator who worked for several Monroe County school districts, Guiffre is also a former director of religious education at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brighton. He also served St. Patrick's Parish, Victor, in numerous roles, from lector and eucharistic minister to catechist and parish council member. The 69-year-old Guiffre and his wife, Ann, currently split their time living in Fourth Lake in the Adirondacks and on Kiawah Island in South Carolina.

*The First Gift of Christmas* has already received positive reviews from a number of readers, including

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Bishop Robert J. Baker of the Diocese of Charleston, S.C.

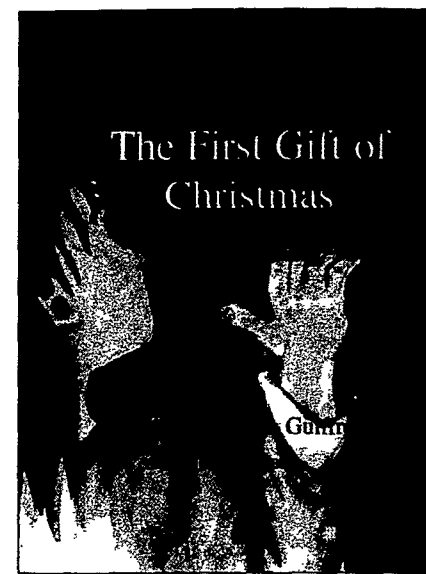
"This book would be suitable for any young child, and it would be most appropriate at Christmastime when wanting and sharing gifts is sometimes difficult for youngsters," Bishop Clark wrote in his review.

"(T)his fictional story conveys a reminder that the life of Jesus impacted many more people and events than were recorded in the Bible or are handed down to us by oral tradition," Bishop Baker wrote.

*The First Gift of Christmas* is Guiffre's third book for children, the other two being *Gramma's Glasses* and *The Wrong Side of the Bed*. Guiffre, a father and grandfather, said he particularly enjoys reading his stories to his grandchildren.

"The thrill of reading to your grandchildren a book that you wrote is just something I can't describe to you," he said.


Children won't be the only beneficiaries of *The First Gift of Christmas*, he said. If the book is ordered through the University of Rochester's Newman Community, which serves Catholic students, the



community will receive a portion of the proceeds from those sales. A university alumnus, Guiffre said he wanted to give back to the community that had sustained his faith.

"My faith has always been an absolutely crucial part of my life," Guiffre said. "(The Newman Community) was a nice support at a secular university."

EDITOR'S NOTE: To order a copy of *The First Gift of Christmas*, call the Newman Community at the University of Rochester at 585/275-8515, or send an e-mail to [urnewman@dor.org](mailto:urnewman@dor.org).



## Merry Christmas

from the People of Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph's Church

### CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE 2003

CONFESSIONS AS USUAL EXCEPT  
Monday, December 15th through Saturday, December 20th, and  
Monday, December 22nd. Starting at 11:00 am - 11:55 am

#### MASSES

##### CHRISTMAS EVE

No Confessions. No 12:10 pm Mass  
4:30 P.M. Anticipated Christmas Mass  
AND MIDNIGHT MASS

##### CHRISTMAS DAY 10:00 am Mass

##### NEW YEAR'S EVE

No Confessions. No 12:10 pm Mass  
4:30 P.M. Anticipated New Year's Eve Mass

##### NEW YEAR'S DAY

No Confessions. 10:00 am Mass

##### EPIPHANY

Sunday, January 4th, 2004 at 3:00 pm  
"FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS"  
featuring CHORUS NOVUS

Light refreshments will be served following the service  
in St. Joseph's Hall until 5:00 pm

**Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph's Church**  
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**MASS SCHEDULE**

Weekend Masses:	Saturday - 4:30 pm Sunday - 10:00 am & 7:30 pm
Weekday Masses:	Monday through Saturday - 12:10 pm (With Novena Devotions for the Day)
Confession:	Before all weekday Masses Monday - Saturday 11:30 am
Baptisms:	Sunday by Appointment
Novena:	Tuesday - St. Anthony 12:00 noon
Devotions:	Wednesday - Perpetual Help 11:50 am Friday - St. Jude - 12:00 noon
Eucharistic Adoration:	First Saturday - 10:20 am - 11:20 am