

Awareness of God's love is cause for celebration



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

MORE LETTERS

Father's recent beautiful letter "Misericordia Dei" (The Mercy of God); also, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) meet regularly "for the common good of the Church." We may even have another plenary council in the near future to help us. Cardinal Avery Dulles has wise advice in his April 2003 Fordham University address on where we need some real change. Two of the important areas were religious illiteracy and religious practice.

Truly, we have unending goodness to be thankful for and to look forward to in our Sacraments "the masterworks of God," Catechism 1116.

Clara Pasto
Columbia Street
Corning

Oppose plan for monthly publication

To the editor:

We strongly object to your plans to become a monthly publication. We need the Catholic perspective on cur-

rent events and it has to be timely, not stale. The sex-abuse scandal is a good example — you did a great job of telling it how it is. My non-Catholic friends were impressed.

Are we going to get only a quarter of Father McBrien's columns in the future?

Are we going to have to wade through pages and pages of advertising to find what we really want?

We like the weekly paper.
Bob and Flo Mooney
Penfield

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our plans address the timeliness of news through the creation of weekly inserts to parish bulletins and the expansion of the *Courier's* Web site. As part of that expansion, we are talking with Father McBrien's representatives about the possibility of making his columns — especially those we cannot carry in the new monthly editions — available online. As is currently the case, advertising will be distributed throughout the monthly news-magazine — rather than clustered in a certain section — and we do not expect it to occupy more than 35 percent of any given issue.

Christ came to gather what is broken and divided. Those who are lost and lonely have every reason to rejoice and celebrate in this new year. Despite all that has happened in the church recently, we know that God exists and that he loves his people.

The real miracle of Christ having come into the world is easy to miss. While Christmas celebrates God's compassion, God reaches out to us all year long because he is madly in love with us.

Some see the church as an obsolete institution, crumbling in disarray. The truth is that the church, in proclaiming the doctrine of the incarnation, is as fresh as ever, a mystery that poses a challenge to every one of us constantly.

God sent his only begotten Son to bring us light and healing. Despite the miseries of life, Jesus tells us to rejoice, to grow in God's love. As we let go of the crass and commercial aspects of celebrating Christ's incarnation, we see the mystery more deeply.

It is not too late to capture its true meaning. Focus on the blessings of peace and joy that surround Jesus Christ. If you do, joy will prevail over sorrow.

May the new year bring



Father John Catoir

Spirituality for Today

you a fresh awareness of God's unchanging love. This love has been compared in Scripture to the intimate love between a young husband and his bride. It implies that God loves each one of us passionately, the way a newly married man loves his bride.

The metaphor may not be perfectly apt because the bride in this case is not an individual but a collective entity, namely, the entire assembly of the struggling people of God. That includes everyone.

Some members of the church are desperately sick. To love the church is to have a sorrowing love for them as well. God brings healing and forgiveness to one and all. We are all under the mantle of his compassion. No one is excluded. Even though no one is entirely innocent, everyone is invited to the banquet.

Many scientists and intellectuals reject the entire mystery of Christ's incarnation because they have no inner disposition to make the leap of faith. They do not have nor do they want the gift of faith.

Those who do believe, but faintly, may have gotten caught up in the commercialism of the recent Christmas celebration and lost some of their fervor.

I repeat: It is not too late to recapture it! Each of us has to find his or her own way. To benefit from God's love, however, one must not only believe in it, but also respond to it with trust.

The doctrine of the incarnation makes us able to proclaim Christ's entry into our world. However improbable this revelation may seem to some, for the believer it is without doubt the greatest event in human history.

Unaided reason cannot come to understand this truth. Only faith can bring the wisdom that leads to exquisite joy, a precious gift that makes all the difference in helping us to cope with life.

In this valley of tears in 2004 and beyond, we need all the help we can get.

Father John Catoir is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

The *Catholic Courier* provides space for readers to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions expressed.

Letters must not exceed 300 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

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Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification.

Letters Policy