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81

**HAPPY CHRISTMAS! FROELICHE WEINACHTEN! BON NOEL!
FELIZ NAVIDAD! BUON NATALE!**

All of these are greetings for the day of December 25, to honor the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The traditions which have grown up around this day could cause one to forget the struggle to have this day given honor by the Church. Until the fourth century, there was no celebration of the Christ Mass, and even at that time there was much controversy about it being included in the liturgical calendar. The calculations were confused due to the changes in secular calendars and would have made our Lord seven years old at the time of his birth!

It may sound iconoclastic to place the truth of the birth alongside some of the traditions which have evolved, but the creche of Saint Francis of Assisi is far from the actual birthplace of our Lord. It is quite obvious from study of the Gospel that Joseph had exhausted all of the possibilities for Mary to have her child in decent surroundings and that when offered the stable, he was somewhat unhappy. Stables of that day were caves, and openings were carved out of the rear walls to provide the mangers. The fact that these stables were infrequently cleaned makes the poverty of the birth of God's Son even more striking.

When this little Jewish child was born, a midwife must have been summoned. It would be her duty to take care of the young one and then the mother, bathing the little boy first and then covering him with salt to prevent disease. The wrapping in swaddling bands of linen prevented the child's extremities from being misshapen. When the child was ready, he was placed in the manger to rest, and Mary was comforted.

The shepherds came to look at the predictions of the angelic visitor dressed in glaring white come true, to see the Word made flesh. As they looked into the cave, they saw the haloes of light, fell to worship and left glorifying God. They must have been astounded at the poverty of the place, but forgot all of the implications of the stable when they were confronted with the mystery of the Holy Birth.

On that night, there were children born to others; some of moderate means and others very wealthy, yet none of these is now known. But the world is fully aware of the birth of God's Son, who through the power of the Holy Spirit and the humility of the Virgin Mary, has become the rock of our faith, and the Kingdom of God is firmly established in the world.

May the gift that we receive from God this Christmas bring joy to us all.
May the Lord Jesus Christ bless and keep all of the brothers and the friends in holy peace.

— John E. Nidecker, BSG
Rockville MD

Br. John, a retired White House aide, is a Life Professed member of the Brotherhood and Provincial of Province III. He has been a Lay Reader over fifty years, an educator and parish administrator. He is a member of the Order of St. Luke, devoted to the healing ministry of the Church.



Hark the herald angels sing -- in October?

As I write this, I am really at a loss as to why we must have the shopping season, with all the glitter, forced upon us in October! It makes me wonder what we can do. I have some thoughts:

One is to really force **our** observances on the world around us. We sometimes take the world at face value and allow it to be a wedge into our faith and practices. We must, at all cost, keep Christ in Christmas. We can do this by several means.

- **Do not** decorate homes and places of work until the week before Christmas.
- **Do not** play or allow to be played, Christmas carols or songs telling of the birth, until the appropriate time.
- **Do not** decorate trees until the week before, or preferably on, Christmas Eve.
- **Do** continue the celebrations until Epiphany -- observe the "twelve days of Christmas"; celebrate, as our Hispanic friends do, Three Kings Day.
- **Do** use an Advent wreath and be "faithful in the prayers."
- **Do** use the Sundays of Advent to lead to Christmas and the Holy Birth and do not let the world of finance and shopping get in the way.

Above all, do not allow Christmas to end with the shopping and the hustle and bustle -- be calm and enjoy the peace of Christmas. God sent his Son to bring peace, not confusion. We, as Christians, owe it to those around us to be examples of what the day really means.

Keep Christ in Christmas

-- he's still there

-- we need to affirm that!

Richard Thomas, BSG
Superior General



COMMUNITY NOTES

Bronx NY: **Br. Leslie Victor** was guest soloist and chorister in Foundation Day Services at St. Peter's Church (Westchester Square), marking the 291st anniversary of the parish, of which Samuel Seabury was fourth rector.

Boston MA: **Brs. Christian, Roy and Laurence Andrew** attended the 200th anniversary celebration of the Diocese of Massachusetts, a birthday party complete with cake and ice cream held on the famous Boston Common.... **Brs. Luke Anthony, Roy, Laurence Andrew and Novice Br. Bernard** attended the opening ceremonies at St. Francis House, a day center where the poor, the de-institutionalized and the oppressed can experience love and support. Begun by Roman Catholic Franciscans, the staff is ecumenical, and many of the volunteer workers are Episcopalians. Among others attending were Governor Dukakis, and the Rev. Brian Kelley of St. Paul's Cathedral (Episcopal), who heads a special ministry to the homeless. The house was blessed by Archbishop Bernard Law.

Manchester NH: **Br. Christian** attended the opening session of the Diocesan Convention and the ecumenical service at St. Anselm's Abbey Church, which included members of various denominations, among them Methodist, Baptist and United Church of Christ. He has been re-instituted as Chairman of Mission and Supply for the Diocesan Altar Guild, and is recovering nicely from his recent surgery.

East Haddam CT: **Brs. James and Tobias Stanislas** were guests at St. Stephen's Church, and assisted in some liturgical design consultations for the layout of the sanctuary. **Br. Tobias Stanislas** preached at the Sunday Eucharist on the subject of the religious life as it relates to the vocation of all Christians, and **Br. James** assisted as lector and with the administration of the sacrament. They were joined by **Novice Br. Joseph Thomas**, who is now a member of the parish, and by the vicar, the Rev. Richard L. Payne, his assistant, the Rev. Charles H. Griswold, and several members of the vestry and congregation, in a discussion after the service, and some very simple, yet striking changes in the arrangement of the sanctuary and choir furnishings were carried out. We are pleased to report that the congregation worshipping on the following Sunday were enthusiastic about the changes, which allow the celebrant to face the people during the Holy Communion.... Yet another new ministry for **Br. Joseph Thomas** is that of rosary-maker. He has begun making Julian Chaplets for the founder of the newly formed Order of Julian of Norwich.

New York NY: **Brs. James, Christian, William Francis, Stephen and Tobias Stanislas** attended an Ecumenical Processional Service at St. Vartan's Armenian Cathedral, commemorating the Armenian Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The service, which included a Blessing of the Four Corners of the Earth, was conducted by His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate of the Armenian Church of America. Also attending were our own Visitor, the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., who as Episcopal representative read the Epistle; the Most Rev. John J. O'Connor, Archbishop of New York (RC); the Most Rev. Giovanni Cheli, Vatican Observer to the United Nations; and representatives of the Orthodox Church in America, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Armenian Evangelical Church. It was a service which we will not soon forget.

Jackson MS: The Superior General, **Br. Richard Thomas**, in his capacity as Advisory Counsel and Secretary, met with the House of Bishops Standing Committee for Religious Communities during the recent interim meeting of the House of

Bishops. The main purpose of this meeting was to begin the process of approval under Title III, Canon 27 as revised by General Convention in 1982, of those communities and orders which have submitted applications and which qualify for recognition. Those granted recognition at this meeting include the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, the Community of St. Mary, the Order of St. Anne (Bethany Convent), the Order of St. Benedict, the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God, the Society of St. John the Evangelist, and the Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit. (Communities and orders previously recognized under the Canon as it stood in 1976 -- the first Canon providing national registration -- include the All Saints Sisters of the Poor, the Community of the Holy Spirit, the Community of St. Francis, the Community of St. John Baptist, the Order of the Holy Cross, the Order of St. Helena, the Society of St. Francis, and the Society of St. Paul.) One of the projected tasks for the Committee is the publication of a complete informational directory, which will list all orders and communities known to exist in the Episcopal Church.

Cincinnati OH: **Br. Thomas Joseph, BSG** and Sister Grace Marie of the Community of the Transfiguration did a joint presentation at Christ Church on the religious life as it is expressed by traditional orders and contemporary communities. Sr. Grace Marie described the daily life of prayer and work in the convent, and **Br. Thomas Joseph** spoke of the religious life as expressed in the work of the Brotherhood in parochial, diocesan and national service to the Church. Following the presentations a lively question-and-answer session ensued. Such presentations are important aspects of the effort to acquaint the members of the Church with alternative forms of ministry and dedication.

Plainfield NJ: **Brs. James and Tobias Stanislas** attended the Friends' Day celebration of the Brothers of Jesus, a Lutheran Christian community based in Germany with branches in Israel, Cameroon and the United States. This community includes both men and women, married and single, and celebrated its 20th anniversary of foundation this year. The focus of the group is ecumenical, and this was reflected in the attendance at the celebration: besides the brothers representing the Episcopal Church, several Roman Catholic Sisters of Charity and the pastors of a number of local churches of various denominations joined in this time of fellowship and prayer.

CULPA NOSTRA

In the last issue of The Servant we erroneously reported in a picture caption that Br. Thomas Joseph was received into the novitiate. We can only plead an attack of nominative metathesis -- it was Br. Joseph Thomas of Niantic CT, who was received as a novice. Br. Thomas Joseph, of Cincinnati OH, has been in annual vows since January 1982. Our apologies to both our brothers.

BY WILL AND DEED

Charlotte B. Morgan, formerly of Rutherford NJ, has named the Brotherhood of St. Gregory as the recipient of a bequest in the amount of \$59,000. Other legatees named under her will include the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief and the Linus Pauling Foundation. This money will be placed in a fund named in her honor, the income from which will be used for the work of the Brotherhood, and as part of a new outreach and grant program previously authorized by the Chapter.

