

Last-Minute suggestion  
for a gift: Give a St.  
Andrew's Missal.

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
December 16, 1957

Evening Mass at 5:10 con-  
tinues through Wednesday in  
Sacred Heart Church.

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The Spirit of Christmas  
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The very word Christmas diffuses a charm which few Christian hearts can resist. Even unbelievers, to whom the old story of the Child of Bethlehem means nothing, prepare for the feast, anxious to kindle a ray of joy here and there among their friends.

Christmas began for each one of us in wonder as a child, with all the marvels of the tree, the toys, the bright ornaments, Santa Claus, and a drab world transformed into beauty. Then came the haunting carols, and the Crib, with the ox and ass, sheep and shepherds, Mother and Child. As we grew older, there was the added wonder of Mid-night Mass, and the Eucharist. And then it dawned upon us that the essence of the Feast was really found in the Crib -- it was God become Man -- and the spirit of Christmas was really something more than tinsel and ornaments: it was peace, and love. And we agreed that the only truly happy Christmas must be a holy Christmas.

Thus, Christmas is no more fantasy; but an astounding fact. Prophets, especially Isaias, had foretold His advent even to intimate detail. And at His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus fulfilled perfectly everything that had been described of the promised Messiah. Here, indeed, was the predicted Saviour. In our day, Bethlehem has gone far beyond Palestine -- now it belongs to the world. And it is found everywhere -- in your home, in the parish church, maybe elaborate cribs in public places all over the city. You'll find replicas, too, in the frozen north missions, and in the tropical heat of the South Pacific, and on lonely ships scattered over the gray face of the ocean. And there is Bethlehem, too, behind the Iron Curtain where the memory of the coming of the Christ Child must be celebrated only in secret by the Saviour's broken, bleeding followers. Yet, the crib is in their hearts; it always has been and always will be.

We show our understanding of the real meaning of Christmas when we make our own Christmas a holy one. In our day, a phrase has become axiomatic among those bent upon a genuine observance of the Feast -- Keep Christ in Christmas! That's the real test. For, if Christ really gave Himself to the world on this day, then the most logical step for us -- especially every Notre Dame Man -- is to receive Him in Holy Communion at Mass on this day, the anniversary of His Birth.

Poor, old skeptic that he was, George Bernard Shaw used to say that Christmas was nothing more than "a conspiracy of shopkeepers." The whole meaning of the blessed occasion escaped his limited vision. He saw only the material surface of the feast, and was suspicious of gift-giving. In mind and heart he never traveled to Bethlehem. He paid no attention to Isaias. He never found the Child and His Mother and St. Joseph; or heard the Angels singing: "Glory to God on high; and on earth peace to men of good will." No, he was something like Scrooge who could only wince and mutter: "Humbug!" when the Joyful Season clashed with his sour disposition.

Without the Bethlehem background, the day can be pretty dismal for anyone. And you won't be much better off unless you spend a little time with the Holy Family in mind, in heart, and in your prayers. And if you can re-capture some of the wonder that belongs to children on this occasion, so much the better for you.

Remember, too, that the Christmas Season is a special time to be home with your own family. Hence, let the family see you. Make sure they enjoy your cheerful company, your kindness, and your laughter. This is the season for rejoicing together. Make the most of it. Spend yourself a little for others. You'll find it very rewarding.

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PRAYERS - Deceased: Thomas McGrath; Patrick Ryan; father of Dennis Ready of Pangborn; mother of William Landon (O-C); uncle of Dave Stuart of B-P; Robert Lowrey (applicant for next Sept.); father of Bob Reilly, '39. 3 special intentions.