

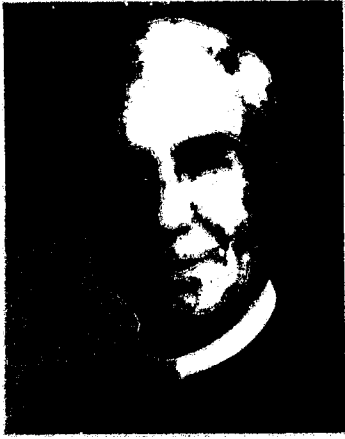
A Blessed Christmas . . .

*O Lord our God,
we ask
that we who rejoice
in celebrating
the birth
of our Lord
Jesus Christ
in mystery
may now
by right living
be made worthy
to share
in the company
of Him Who with You
lives and reigns
forever and ever.*

Amen.



(Postcommunion of the Mass at Midnight on Christmas)



Rev. F. M. Gassensmith
C.S.C.

Last Monday, about 11:15 a.m., Father Fred Gassensmith passed to his eternal reward in the Student Infirmary. He had been confined to bed just one month. He would have been 78 on his next birthday in May, and next June would have observed the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood.

During forty of those almost fifty years as a priest Father Gassensmith taught mathematics at Notre Dame. And during most of those forty years he conscientiously fulfilled the duties of rector or prefect. Reluctantly he retired from teaching only a little more than a year ago.

Engineering students -- among them some of the present juniors and seniors -- have fond and grateful memories of Father Gassensmith as the patient and understanding priest who was never too busy to give them extra help in math. He seemed to have special ability for unfolding the mysteries of mathematics to freshman. Only last June a returning alumnus, seeing Father Gassensmith in his customary chair on Corby Hall porch, remarked to his companion, "There's the most charitable priest I've ever known. He was interested in each student and gave of himself unselfishly." Such a tribute is as much of a canonization as most priests hope for.

Father Gassensmith's funeral was held from Sacred Heart Church at 8:30 on Wednesday, the Mass sung by his nephew, Father Joseph Murphy, pastor of St. Joseph's Church in South Bend. His remains now lie beside those of Father James McElhone in the Community Cemetery.

VACATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be sure to leave the campus with the divine life vigorous within you -- for two practical reasons, if for no higher motive: the confession lines in your home parish are likely to be long before Christmas; and not infrequently someone of the Notre Dame family meets with disaster on the trip home. It could happen to you this year.

Ember days fall on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of next week. Your Notre Dame dispensation does not follow you home. If you are over 21, you must fast on all three days. For all, Wednesday and Saturday are days of partial abstinence (meat permitted only at the principal meal).

CHRISTMAS PARADOX

Christmas 1963: a glittering and ringing display of world-wide celebration, festive spirits and good cheer. The Christmas: simple, unpretentious, commonplace... peace, the very meaningful core or heart of our celebration is the birth of Christ which animates every enormous... this, one of the greatest events of our Redemption in darkness, hidden from curious eyes and formed the stillness of the night beyond the reach of inquisitive ears

Do we know Christmas? Our eyes and ears have seen and heard about the birth of Christ. And the capture more each day. Our scientific quest for historical truth has produced results. In fact, might we not possibly find a better than the small group of men who once called themselves disciples of the Master? Bethlehem now belongs to a different world, a world of great technological and internal development. But we are still touched by the birth of a baby to a young woman in a cold animal shelter. Yes, Christmas takes a new form, a blend of the sentimental and the scientific, a blend of what we think and feel today -- glittering decorations, the tree, the crib lit by a flickering vigil light, singing carols, solemn voices in our churches. The family is together; friends...

It might not be a bad idea to ask ourselves a question. "If for some reason it would not be possible to have all these things, what would Christmas mean to us? If we kept a journal, would we be forced to make the following entry on Christmas: "I remember nothing worth writing today -- how many days are like this!"

This would be true if our blind of Christmas forgets to include Christ. The Christmas liturgy reminds us of Him, telling us to take a good look at the stable and the manger, but to look beyond these, too. We know that it is not necessary to do away with our celebrations, our trees and the other joyful elements of the season. It is necessary, though, to remember the reason for all of this and use it in the spirit for which it is intended: the Christmas spirit. At Christmas time, and every day, God gives the world a gift -- His Son, the Savior. The spirit of Christmas gives us joy because Christmas is the sincere desire of God to save all men in uniting them with the divine. In Christmas Christ makes our material world a useful instrument in our salvation.

In the words of Pierre Ternard de Chardin, "Christ invests Himself organically with the very majesty of His creation." This is Christmas 1963.

--Father Berg

Fresh from the Pad.....

IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS THE LIGHT WAS BORN

The cave of the Nativity, the straw-filled manger, the rugged looking shepherds, the richly dressed Wise Men, the ox and the ass, and the brilliant star are now everyday symbols for us. The refrains of "Silent Night" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem" run through our heads with the ease of any familiar tune. A Madonna from the brush of one of the Italian Masters no longer awakens wonder in our souls. St. Luke's description of the First Christmas has long since taken its place among the memories of our childhood nursery rhymes.

Once familiarity has dulled the awe of mystery and taken the edge off the piercing reality how easily we accept the stupefying mystery of Christmas on the same terms as "Rudolph, The Red-nose Reindeer", "Frosty, The Snowman," and Santa Claus.

Christmas is the Birth of Christ. It's the Infinite binding Himself to the finite. It's the Creator becoming a creature. It's perfection taking on imperfection. It's love breaking through all boundaries of restraint. And yet our thoughts of Christmas flow undisturbed through a mental rut and the words, "God became man", drop so glibly from our lips.

The paralyzing wonder, the profound mystery, and the inexpressible love of the birth of Christ -- what does it mean to you? On Christmas morning as you kneel before the familiar crib, will you be steeped in silent adoration as you contemplate the marvel of unspeakable love? In a world which is constantly erecting altars to false loves, can you allow familiarity to rob you of a deep personal reverence for the world's First and Greatest Love --
THE WORD MADE FLESH?

--Father Baker, C.S.C.

P.S. "May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Phillipians, IV, 7.