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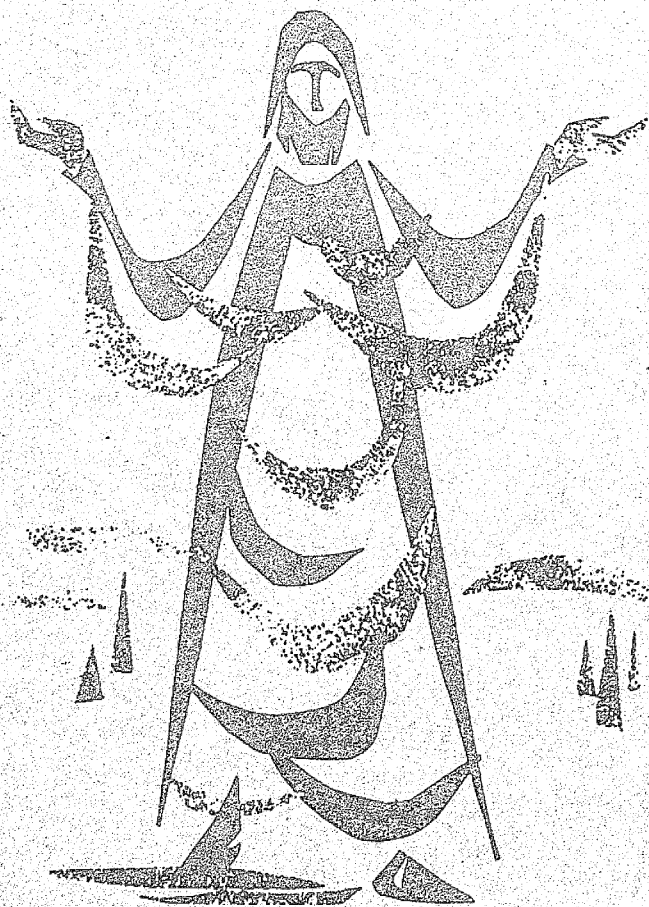
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Volume II Issue 13 December 8, 1985

Office of University Ministry
University of Notre Dame

The Prophets of Advent and Penance

...Father Robert Kennedy



When the sun shines over South Bend, unencumbered by clouds, everyone is brand new, alive with fresh vitality, breathing deeply of a sense of bright and hopeful beginning. Such is the effect of the prophets of Advent: Jeremiah, Baruch, Zephaniah, Micah, and John the Baptist. Their message speaks of God's order of things, and so inspires a rich sense of God's presence, a wholesome understanding of ourselves before God, and a hopeful vision of God's good intentions for us and his saving action on our behalf. The words of Baruch today reverberate with such feeling and vitality:

"Jerusalem...put on the splendor of glory from God forever...God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company."

And nothing stands in his way!

...mercy and justice are God's travelling companions

"For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God."

You would think that, with such hopeful messages, the prophets would have been welcomed with open arms. However, Jeremiah went to his grave thinking that his work on God's behalf had been a failure, most of the others were likewise ignored, and John the Baptist was martyred. Why? Their message of hope and joy contained a zinger that most of their hearers were unwilling to accept. The prophets were speaking of a hope based on God's order of things, not ours; the comfort and joy they came to bring in God's name is the salvation that comes from divine hands, not human.



Thus, if we, God's people, are to be filled with the hope and joy and comfort of God's reign, we will need to reorient ourselves in such a way that we see things the way God sees them, and not the way we think they are or want them to be. We need to take note of the fact that mercy and justice are God's travelling companions, for these are the standards by which God will judge us when he comes. Have we been merciful to those who wrong us? Have we been compassionate with the poor, the hurting, the broken, the rejected,

the oppressed? Have we been agents of just and loving relationships with our roommates, our hall mates, our classmates, members of the University faculty and staff, our students, our family and friends, our neighbors in towns, cities, country and world? Have we respected the order God intends for our world, or have we tried to create an order of things more to our own liking? Have we honored the gifts God has given us by generously sharing them, and have we honored the gifts God has given to others by the respect we show for them?



As bright and hopeful as the words of the Advent prophets might be, they are also sharp and challenging: prepare the way of the Lord today by doing all in your power to realize God's vision for the world.



Advent is not a penitential season the way Lent is; rather, Advent is "a season of joyful and spiritual expectation" of the coming of Christ into our world today of Christ into our world today. Yet part of this expectation is a preparation which clears our vision, mind and heart so that we can see what God intends for us and our world, and how he is already at work accomplishing his will. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving have a place in this kind of preparation. So does the sacrament of Penance.



Penance in Advent takes the form of a response to the prophetic challenge: it is the way of learning to see again with God's eyes, of learning the ways of justice and mercy in our lives at Notre Dame and in the world. In Penance, we can take off our "robe of mourning and misery," all that leads to death in ourselves and others,

and we can wrap ourselves in the "cloak of justice from God," and bear upon our heads "the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name," as Baruch says. Then like the days when the sun shines in South Bend, we will be fresh with a new vitality, bright with a new beginning of hope.



ADVENT

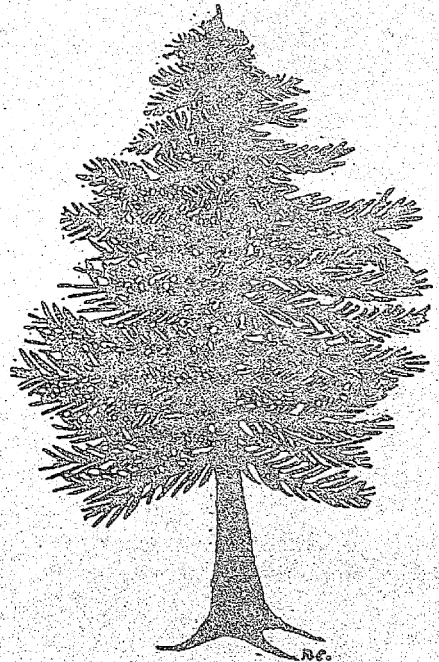
Charm with your stainlessness these winter nights,
Skies, and be perfect!
Fly vivider in the fiery dark, you quiet meteors,
And disappear.
You moon, be slow to go down,
This is your full!

The four white roads make off in silence
Towards the four parts of the starry universe.
Time falls like manna at the corners of the wintry earth.
We have become more humble than the rocks,
More wakeful than the patient hills.

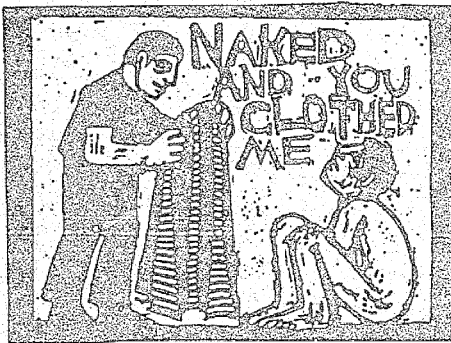
Charm with your stainlessness these nights in Advent,
holy spheres,
While minds, as meek as beasts,
Stay close at home in the sweet hay;
And intellects are quieter than the flocks that feed by starlight.

Oh pour your darkness and your brightness over all our
solemn valleys,
You skies; and travel like the gentle Virgin,
Toward the planets' stately setting,

Oh white full moon as quiet as Bethlehem!



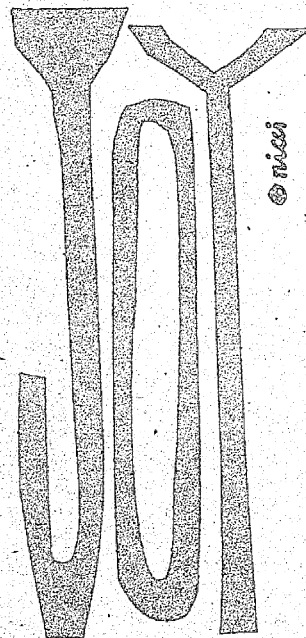
Taken from A Man In the Divided Sea, written by Thomas Merton, 1946.



The Advent Clothing Drive for St. Vincent de Paul will be Monday December 9th till Monday December 16th. The need is great for sweaters, coats, pants, and warm clothing for the poor of South Bend. Boxes for these donations are in dormitories, Sacred Heart Church and the Badin University Ministry Office.



A FILM DEPICTING THE LIFE OF
THOMAS MERTON WILL BE SHOWN AT
THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERNS
DEC. 11th ...4:00p.m.- SPONSORED
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Frs. John Dunne, Andre Leveille,
Dan Jenky, Monk Molloy and Tom
O'Meara will address the topics
of WHAT CATHOLICS SHOULD KNOW...
about Prayer, Sacraments, Scripture,
Morality, and the Church on Sunday
and Tuesday evenings beginning
January 19.

Pre-registration necessary...
deadline December 9.

Contact: Office of University
Ministry, 239-5242.