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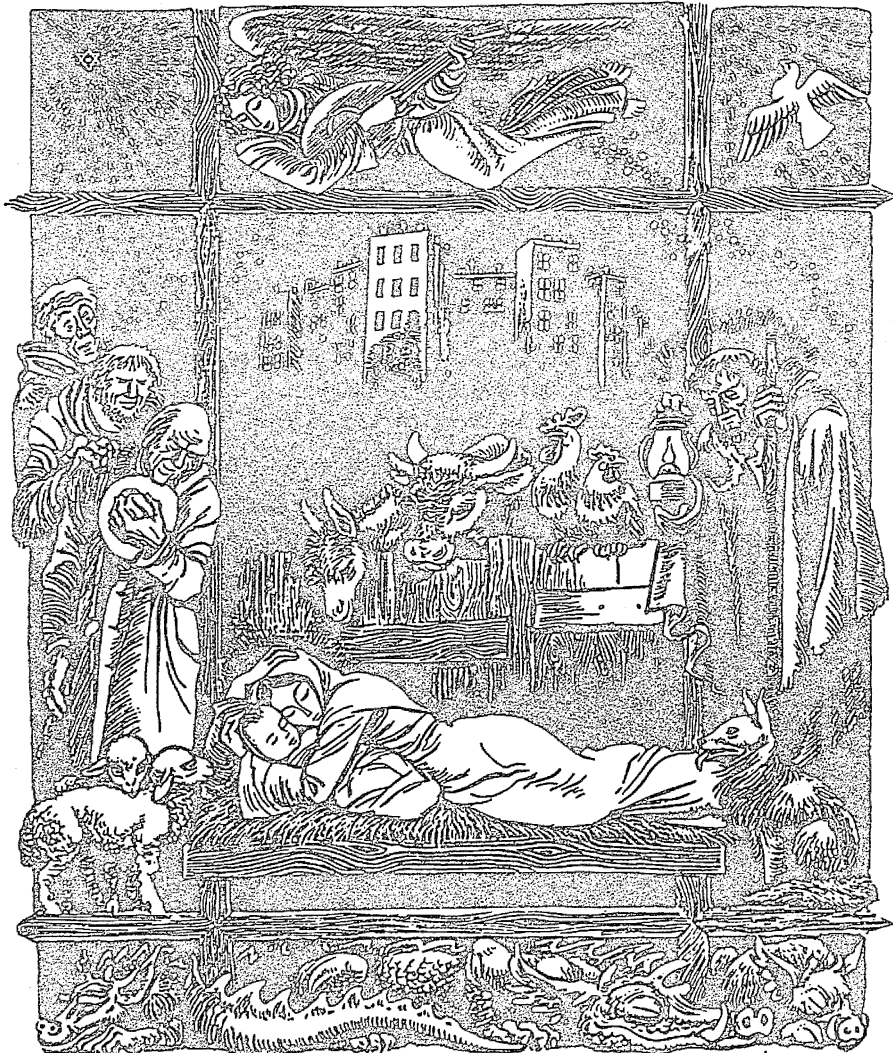
RELIGIOUS BULLETIN



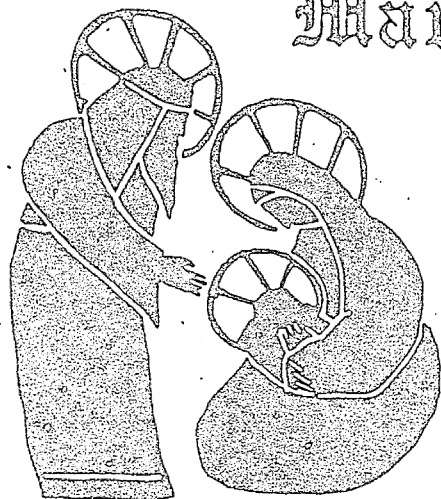
Volume II Issue 14

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Office of University Ministry
University of Notre Dame



Mary Had A Baby Boy

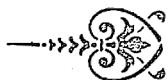


No drugs. No Benetton. No Cybill Shepherd. No caffeine.

Not a promising beginning for a plot these days, but the story of Christmas thrives in spite of the odds against it. A young couple give birth to a baby boy. A family comes into being, angels sing congratulations, and the world hopes for the best from the new generation, the new age of Jesus.

Most of us reconnect with families of our own around Christmas by going home. We hope for the best, too, but the experience of family reunions is often mixed: they are painful, soothing, anticipated, dreaded, frustrating, boring, exhilarating, too brief, interminable, irritating, restful, awkward, tender.

Is there some way to make them better? The Gospel offers some wise guidance.



...Boris Bonnelly

Strategy No.1



Keep expectations realistic. You're going home to a real family, not the Brady Bunch where all problems are solved in a half-hour and never come back again. Your family is not perfect; neither are you. Idealizing the visit or the relationships as one continual high is setting yourself up for disappointment. Even life in Nazareth was routine and uneventful; maybe that's why four evangelists decided not to write about the childhood and adolescence of Jesus. All families, yours included, deal with ordinariness much of the time. Be prepared for the human.

Strategy No. 2



Expect to meet people who have changed. No matter how well you've kept in touch, decisions were made, milestones commemorated, flu conquered, leaves raked. Without you. The same happened with you: you passed tests, ate cold pizza, began new relationships, explored a different world. Without them. Give yourself the gift of time to catch up. One way is by responsive, patient listening. Carve time out of your schedule to hang out at home with your family just to talk. The atmosphere in the Bethlehem stable was gentle and

respectful of where people were. Help to create that climate at home.

Strategy No. 3



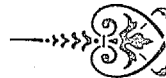
Decide you're going to make it work. All successful relationships are the product of work, negotiation, compromise, honesty, communication, humor, humility, forgiveness. There's no free lunch when it comes to quality relationships in a family. Come with a commitment that you will try to hurdle obstacles. Making a gesture at harmony (going along with someone else's choice over a movie, backing off an argument) goes a long way to making peace on earth, or at least peace in your own home. The peace comes at a price but it is always worth the cost. Always.

Strategy No. 4



Be direct with Mom and Dad. Ask them for what you want. If that means that you've changed and no longer want to be treated like a child, say so. Even Jesus asserted himself when He claimed He was about his Father's business. The opposite indirect style is guarded ("I'm not going to tell you who I am"), confusing and counter-productive. It shuts your family out of your life.

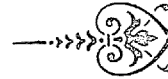
Strategy No. 5



Express gratitude for opportunities created for you. You could begin by saying thank you for your college education. No matter how solvent you regard the family finances, it would be bliss for your mom

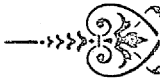
and dad to hear "I appreciate the twelve grand a year you're spending on me. Thanks." The first Christmas was about God's personal gift of a Savior. While you're at it, find a way to be thankful for a Savior, too.

Strategy No 6



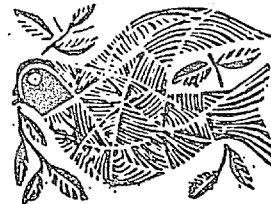
Give your family a gift they will appreciate. Let it show thoughtfulness and care in selection. Consider giving a gift that costs more than money; promise to plant a flower bed in the Spring, blacktop the driveway, cook a gourmet meal. Give them more than money can buy.

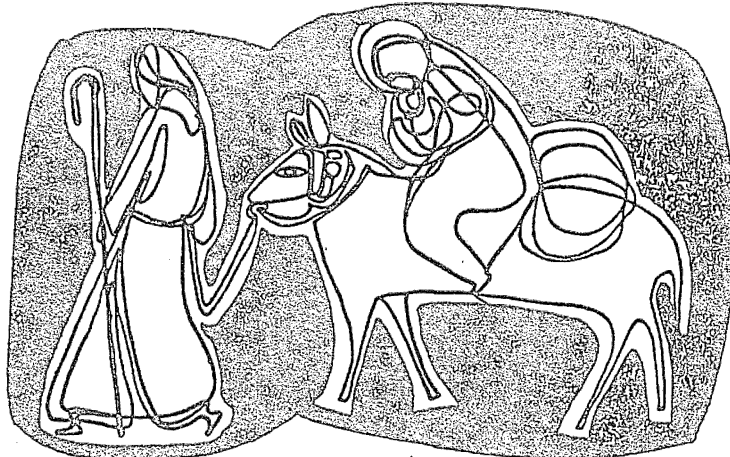
Strategy No. 7



Take an unhurried look at your life. What can you do to improve your relationship with family, friends, roommates? What can you do to nourish the gift of faith in your life? What can you do to improve the most important relationship of all—the one with the unconditional Giver of life itself? Whoever called Christmas a "silent night" had the right idea. The best discoveries (and answers to the hard questions) almost always come when our hearts are quiet, expectant, ready to be surprised. Be open to that possibility.

Dr. Donnelly is co-director of the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College.





"From the beginning, my Church has been what it is today, and will be until the end of time, a scandal to the strong, a disappointment to the weak, the ordeal and the consolation of those interior souls who seek in it nothing but myself. Yes, . . . whoever looks for me there will find me there; but he will have to look, and I am better hidden than people think, or than certain of my priests would have you believe. I am still more difficult to discover than I was in the little stable at Bethlehem for those who will not approach me humbly, in the footsteps of the shepherds and the Magi. It is true that palaces have been built in my honor, with galleries and peristyles without number, magnificently illuminated day and night, populated with guards and sentries. But if you want to find me there, the clever thing is to do as they did on the old road in Judea, buried under the snow, and ask for the only thing you need—a star and a pure heart."

George Bernanos

Freshman Class Mass for Kevin Hurley
Sunday, December 15th at 2:00p.m.
Sacred Heart Church
Fr. Andre Leveille CSC, Celebrant

BLESSINGS TO YOU



FROM ALL OF US
AT UNIVERSITY MINISTRY