

Midwest Bits and Pieces

December 1, 1992

NFs

The Christmas Angels

**Hark the harold angels sing,
glory to the newborn King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.**



SPs

The Christmas Santas

**Ho Ho Ho! Relax, enjoy
Christmas. Don't worry, work
too hard, or take it too ser-
iously.**



SJs

The Christmas Elves

**SJs are the ones who generally
pull the big productions of
Christmas together and get
everything ready on time.**

NTs

The Christmas Scrooges?

**The secret is out. Most NTs
have a hard time with the
holidays in general and
Christmas in particular.**

SLAYING THE CHRISTMAS DRAGON

Brother Remigius Bullinger, c.s.c.

What's more pleasant than waking happy? What's worse than waking depressed?

Jeff is considering this as he wakes from groggy dreams, the sheet and blanket tangled around his leg on the bed, the dog licking the leg stretched out in the air, the green nightshirt pushed into a tire under his arms, his mother calling up the stairs to turn off the alarm before it awakes the baby.

Jeff hobbles over to the desk to punch the alarm quiet, now fully awake and dreary, wondering why he ever tried sleeping in a green nightshirt (yet knowing why too: it had Notre Dame printed large on both front and back.)

Jeff sits on the bed and watches the door slowly open. A baby head, smiling, appears near the floor. Big eyes stare at Jeff but a cloud about to drop tears forms on the face when it sees Jeff's scowl.

Jeff smiles, sings out, "Hi, Carrie! Merry Christmas!"

Carrie's face turns back into sunshine as she creeps rapidly to him, ignoring the dog licking her tousled hair.

Jeff picks her up, she still crib-warm, cuddles her, answers her gurgles, and puzzles over her yet-another escape from the crib.

Jeff now feels happy. "Carrie, you cradle-escapee, I'll bet you don't know that somewhere it says a little child will lead them. Are you mine?" She gurgles yes. "Happy holidays, then."

Jeff soon realizes why he awoke depressed: Carrie, as usual, licks at the red and green dragon spitting golden fire tattooed on his right upper arm, done in such a way that when Jeff makes a muscle the golden fire belches alive. The tattoo that Grandpa knows about, is displeased about, will make a scene about when they go over to his house this Christmas eve for the holiday gift-exchange dinner.

"Yeah, Carrie, ain't it a beaut? Why did I do it, you ask? Listen, kid, when you're seventeen and work at the summer carnival, then you'll know."

Carrie didn't care; she just wanted to taste the bright colors, a warm tongue on his cold arm.

Jeff grinned as he recalled the shock the tattoo caused when he was finally caught without a clean long-sleeve shirt.

Mother asked repeatedly, "Why in heaven's name are you wearing long sleeves in this hot weather?" Skin cancer is one thing, yes, but long sleeves all summer?"

"When they finally caught me uncovered, Carrie, everything hit the fan, if you know what I mean -- and you don't, you innocent crib escapee."

All the cash his summer jobs brought in just paid for the doctors' consultations. Yes, an operation could be done. "Carrie, become a plastic surgeon," Jeff told the happy Christmas child.

Jeff slipped into his robe and slippers and took Carrie down to the kitchen to feed her that gooey food she liked to eat and play with.

Mother worked silently on the latticework for the mince pies, Dad with Janie and Joe was

out for last-minute holiday choirs, as they sheepishly said, all knowing it was last-minute gift-getting time.

"Now, Jeff, when Grandpa starts in on his scolding, please look sorry. He knows of the tattoo and says he has a good mind to pay to have your head examined as his Christmas gift. So be contrite, please."

"Ma, you know I'm sorry this disturbs you and Grandpa. But the dragon's belching fire, and that's that. Yes, I'll be humble; don't worry."

The mailman arrived with a stack of last-minute Christmas cards, Mother saying as usual: "Bet a dollar four of these cards will be from those I crossed off my list." Then she added, "Here's a card from a Doctor Farley for you. Who's he? That plastic surgeon?"

Jeff, puzzled, said, "Don't know." He took the card, sliced it open with a bread knife, spooned another gob into Carrie's mouth as she happily smacked her hands on the highchair tray.

When Jeff let out some wild hoots, Carrie, startled, spat up, wrinkling her face into bawling position, but then smiled when Jeff ripped her out of the highchair and waltzed her around the kitchen, singing Jingle Bells, both now beaming.

Mother cried out, "Jeff, stop it! Honestly, when will you grow up?"

"Ma, I just did. Read this wonderful Christmas card from Doctor Farley."

Ma read: "Dear Jeff. Remember me from the carnival? Tattoo Booth? I put that Christmas red and green dragon belching golden fire on your arm. Like it yet? Parents Like it?" Thought not!

"Not to worry. In about a week now it should start fading away. I know what happens when seventeen-year-olds get tattoos. So I use a special dye that fades away in a few months. Trade secret. Happy New Year."

Carrie was again licking the golden fire from the dragon's jaws. "Poor Carrie, soon you won't have any dragon fire left to lick. But Merry Christmas anyway. And Merry Christmas to you too, Ma."



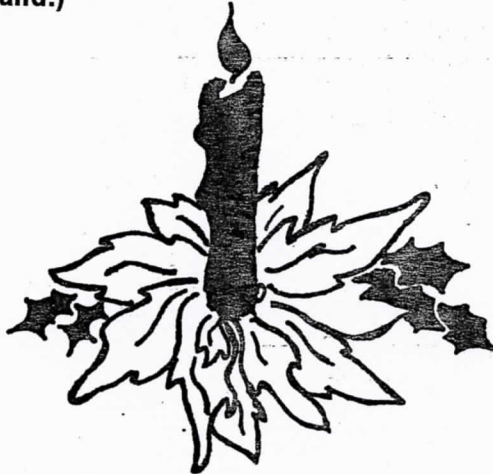
RK

TEACHING IS MY LIFE AND PASSION

Brother Donald Stabrowski, C.S.C.

Teaching is my life and my passion; in fact, I joined the Holy Cross Brothers because I wanted to teach. I'm now in my 30th year of teaching and I can't imagine doing anything else. Nor can I imagine anything more nutritious or more exciting. To me teaching is service of a very subtle, and mutual, sort. On the surface I am providing my students with a grasp of history, with a means of understanding how the past and present mesh. But students call the unexpected forth from their professors, as well. Teaching constantly renews my own pleasure in discovering patterns in time, and it affords me the enormous pleasure of watching shy boys and girls not only grow up but grow into young men and women with ambition and energy and vision.

When I was 14 years old I entered a Holy Cross high school, and I've been involved in Holy Cross schools ever since, as a student, teacher, principal, and dean. I recall, with great affection, all the schools where I've worked—two high schools, a junior college, two universities. At each there was an emphasis, a focus, a commitment to education that is the essence of Holy Cross. Education is the great apostolate of the Congregation, particularly for the Holy Cross Brothers, who don't have the sacramental responsibilities that the priests do. I look at that fact as a boon—we get to spend more time in the classroom with our students. I joined the Holy Cross Brothers in large part because I was deeply impressed by the abilities and character of the brothers who taught me in high school. I wanted to be like them; I wanted to affect people's lives as they did mine. There may be no other field that so directly changes lives for the better as education. That's why being in Holy Cross and devoting a life to education, is a rich thing. (Taken from the PRESIDENT'S REPORT, 1992, of the University of Portland.)



BROTHER THOMAS DILLMAN

The past few weeks have seen the return of Liberia to a place sufficiently newsworthy for mention in the newspapers. The forces of the rebel group which holds most of the country, with the exception of Monrovia, has begun attacking the city of Monrovia. The ECOMOG troops (personnel from other African countries sent to assist in bringing peace to Liberia) are now reduced to defending the city of Monrovia from the rebel troops. Over 100,000 people have fled to Monrovia to get away from the fighting. Many others have gone to neighboring countries for safety. Many groups have recalled personnel working in Liberia because of the danger existing there.

We have not had word from Brother Thomas Dillman since the fighting began. His sister has received a letter dated October 18. And we have been able to ascertain through the SMA Provincial House that as of a few days ago, Brother Thomas was well and still living in the Brothers' house at St. Patrick's. Heavy fighting continues, though the rebel forces have not been able to take the city of Monrovia.

Newspapers here in the States have also, of late, had articles concerning the murder of five Adorer of the Precious Blood Sisters in Liberia. One of those killed was Sister Shirley Kolmer, who had taken over as principal of St. Patrick's when Brother James Newberry left Liberia. She and four other American Sisters were killed and at the time of this writing, their bodies are still lying in enemy territory. Two of the sisters were in a truck which was ambushed by the rebel group as they were on the way to visit a sick family member of a security guard for the sisters. A day or so later, the rebels came to the Sisters' house and demanded the key for their car. When one of the sisters took the key to the gate, she was shot and killed. The leader of the rebel group then forced the remaining two sisters from the convent and shot them. Their bodies were hung on the convent fence.

We have no way of communicating with Liberia. But The SMA Fathers have a radio contact with someone in the Ivory Coast, and receive information as to what is going on in the country. There is no way for them to communicate directly. We are in contact with the SMA Fathers who will share any information they receive with us. Please keep Brother Thomas and all in the country in your prayers.

ST. EDWARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESENTS PLAQUE TO BROTHERS

The plaque was inscribed: "To the Congregation of Holy Cross who have taught in the United States for 150 years and have enriched the lives of 12,500 Saint Edward High School (Lakewood, Ohio) graduates and their families. The Alumni Association offers this tribute to the men of Holy Cross who have served at Saint Edward since 1949, as a small token of their unending gratitude. Presented on October 15, 1992."

Brother Robert Siegel, assistant provincial, accepted the plaque on behalf of the Holy Cross Community. Robert who had served there as principal from 1968 to 1971 was one of almost 200 names which appeared on the plaque. After each name their years of service were listed. The presentation was made at the St. Edward Fifth Annual Alumni Recognition Dinner.

A large number was present to witness the presentation. That same evening two recipients of the Thomas Henning Award were announced. They were Ruth Stopper who has served on the staff at the school for 30 years. The other recipient was Greg Urbas who is in his 15th year at St Edward as teacher and coach. Another presentation was made to Raymond D. Meyo as the 1992 Alumnus of the Year. Mr. Meyo's name is familiar to our province because of his funding for the 150th anniversary medallion and plaques which are being presented to our educational institutions and individuals who are involved in aiding our education ministries.

TOM MADDIX TO SPEAK AT REDEMPTORIST CENTRE FOR GROWTH

The Redemptorist Centre for Growth in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada will hold its sixth annual lecture series at the Grey Nuns Regional Centre in Edmondton on Wednesday, November 18, 1992. The topic for the lecture will be: A Sacred Hunger - Yearning for the Holy. The Redemptorist Centre is a counselling centre which has as its mission the integration of the spiritual and emotional in the overall wellness of an individual. In this light the Centre is pleased to promote an annual lecture series with themes that reflect their purpose. In the flyer announcing the lecture, it noted that "OUR DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER for this evening is Tom Maddix, CSC. Tom a member of the Brothers of Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana holds Master's Degrees in English Literature and Social Ethics as well as a Doctor of Ministry which integrates Christian Spirituality and Organizational Ethics. Presently Tom is Director of Mission Services for the Alberta Catholic Hospitals Foundation and teaches a course in spirituality at St. Stephen's Collelge in Edmonton. Tom has been a frequent workshop presenter and retreat director on issues of spirituality and organizational ethics throughout North America and overseas.

SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRIES IN THE DESERT

Brother Carl Sternberg came to Palm Desert and the Newman Center in 1986. In 1988 he founded "Spiritual Life Ministries in the Desert". The purpose of this ministry is to enhance the spiritual life of those who seek their own growth and wish to discover their own leadership potential in the church and in society. In addition to these special programs, Spiritual Life Ministries offers:

- Personal spiritual counseling facilitating the person's response to God, growth in intimacy and the living out of the consequences of this fellowship.
- Workshops on Ministry, Planning and Leadership which integrate ministerial skills with personal spirituality.
- Group or individually directed retreats.
- Sessions on spirituality and prayer.

Special programs for 1992 - 1993 are divided into three cycles; Cycle A: Discovering the Mental Tools for Spiritual Growth; Cycle B: Understanding the Spiritual Quest for Life's Meaning; and Cycle C: Focusing on Wellness and Healing As Product of A Healthy Spirituality.

Under Cycle A three programs are offered: 1) INNERWORK: USING DREAMS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH; 2) MYERS-BRIGGS PERSONALITY WORKSHOP; and 3) JOURNALING WORKSHOP FOR THE INNER CHILD.

Under Cycle B five programs are offered: 1) JOHN SANFORD; OUR PATH TO WHOLENESS; 2) THE SPIRITUAL QUEST; NAMING WHAT IS AUTHENTICALLY YOU; 3) ASPECTS OF RELATING (A GUIDED IMAGERY RETREAT); 4) MEN'S SPIRITUALITY WORKSHOP; and 5) WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY: A WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS.

Under Cycle C four programs are offered: 1) GERALD JAMPOSLKY, AUTHOR OF "LOVE IS LETTING GO OF FEAR". LECTURES ON LOVE AND THE HEALING PROCESS; 2) WELLNESS SEMINAR; EXPLORING THE BODY/MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION; 3) MOVEMENT FOR HEALING; and 4) THE HEALING TOUCH WORKSHOP.



THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER — ONE IN A MILLION

John J. Nevins, Bishop of Venice, Florida

"And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)

The religious brother plays an important role in today's church. He is a consecrated lay Christian who commits himself to the Lord, and the community of believers. His vocation is also one of the most misunderstood.

The religious brotherhood is a unique calling to a special intimacy with God in a religious family, an intimacy that compels a man to serve the needs of God's family in a non-sacramental way. It is not a stepping-stone to the priesthood, nor is it a vocation for those "not worthy" of ordination. The distinctive character of the religious brotherhood is the role of brothers in the church's mission of social transformation. It is from his religious vows that the brother derives the strength to

minister in whatever area he is called, and the areas are many. As a man whose life is centered on faith and prayer, who vows to live a life of poverty, celibacy, and obedience, and who lives and prays in community with others, a religious brother might be an architect, doctor, historian, journalist, rancher, teacher, missionary, coach, nurse, or retreat director.

In our own Diocese of Venice, religious brothers minister to the elderly, teach high school students, evangelize and teach the migrant community, administer our annual diocesan appeal, care for the homeless and are involved in parish ministry.

How is a young man called to be a religious brother? In the vocation to the religious life, as in the vocation to priesthood, the aspirant has a history upon which Divine Providence prepares the eventual calling. Like all of us, he has been part of various communities in which he has received the values and beliefs that have helped to shape his life, such as family, school, community, parish. Added to this are the gifts and limitations of his own temperament and personality. There will be the moment of grace when the individual is impressed by the charism of a particular religious community which appropriately satisfies emotional, spiritual, and psychological needs. Divine Providence prepares this arrangement of significant events in life which then spurs on the interest of the aspirant to pray intensely and eventually to look more carefully into the meaning of religious life.

Why does a young man answer the call to the brotherhood? What motivates him to say "yes" to a life where he vows not to marry, to own nothing, to go where he is sent, and to do what he is told? Why does he open his life so that his love for God's people permeates the inmost recesses of his being? The answer lies in the mystery of his response to the invitation of Christ calling him to a life based on the Evangelical Counsels (Matt. 19-29ff., Mark 10:17ff).

It is so important that the aspirant to religious life receives the encouragement of parents, family and friends!

And so the young man aspiring to be a religious brother quietly discerns what particular work God may be choosing him to do. Prompted by God's grace, with the guidance of his spiritual director, the aspirant senses the attraction to a specific work which fits his capacity and talents, and which gives fulfillment and hope to him and those whom he will serve. He may discern that his call is to the brotherhood as lived according to the venerable tradition of the monastic life as a Benedictine or Cistercian. He may feel called to the brotherhood as lived by the Mendicant Friars (Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites). Then, too, he may feel called to live the brotherhood according to the more recent institutions, such as the Christian Brothers, the Holy Cross Brothers, the Salesians, and others, with their emphasis on teaching and apostolic activity.

How well I remember the encouragement by Bishop John M. McNamara who ordained me and 43 other priests at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception 33 years ago. He said, "Always thank God daily for the great gift of priesthood which he gave you today. Now, go forward and GIVE, GIVE, GIVE yourselves completely to your people." Yes, the emphasis of "give, give, give" is constantly echoing in my memory. It is the hallmark, the vocation of a priest, religious sister and brother, to give life and hope to the People of God. The eminent John Cardinal Newman would say to us, "I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. God has not created me for nothing. I shall do good; I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth, in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments... God has created me to do Him some definite service: He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission; I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told in the next."

I fondly remember my relationship with the Congregation of Christian Brothers. They influenced my life and helped me get a college education when ordinary families were suffering from unfavorable economic times. I recall the characteristics typical of the community members; their profound love for Christ and his church; the example of Gospel service and commitment; their pride in their vocation; their love and respect for their students or the adults whom they served. They were committed to share fully the varied ministries with the laity and were determined to involve

the laity more and more in those apostolates. I always remember their love for the poor, their zeal and their gifts of mind and heart, that made them both dedicated religious and skilled professionals.

The association with the brothers that I experienced in my early years played, I am sure, a large role in the development of my own spiritual life and the awakening of my own vocation to priesthood. The brothers were indeed brothers to me, and I will always be grateful to them for all that they have done for me.

While the religious brother expresses daily his example of Gospel service to others, he will be the first to admit that he himself is constantly challenged to grow in the love of Christ, to be renewed and evangelized. In other words, the students and the adults he serves are themselves instruments and opportunities God uses to increase his love and fervor for him. We who serve the People of God as priests or religious are drawn closer to Christ Jesus through our service to others, because the Gospel teaches us that to serve them is to serve Christ. As we invite others to know the Lord more profoundly and to love him more deeply, our own spiritual lives are strengthened and are opened to a greater degree of holiness. I am constantly encouraged by the lives of those who are instruments of the Lord's peace and mercy to me. And that is why it is important to recall often the words of Sacred Scripture about the different gifts given by the Spirit: "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts." (1 Cor 12:27-31)

Religious brothers exercise an important ministry in the church today. To live according to the evangelical counsels has always been a sign of contradiction to the world – how much more so today when the pursuits of wealth and pleasure, of self interest and personal ambition have largely replaced traditional Christian values. In such a world, the consecrated life of the religious brother or sister stands as a strong witness to Christ and to the kingdom that he preached and established in his blood. It is this radical and Christ-like spirit of priests, religious brothers and sisters and faith-filled laity which will be a powerful influence for good in the lives of the people in our respective neighborhoods and communities.

To the religious brothers in our Diocese of Venice and throughout our nation, I offer these prayerful words: "God the Holy Spirit is with you, his religious brothers. He has chosen you to bring about the fulfillment of his plan. You belong to Christ, your brother. Reverence Christ your Lord. Radiate this Christ-brother in your daily lives so that, in turn, with a life totally dedicated to the People of God, you will encourage, affirm, and 'lift up' their spirits as renewed and faithful followers of the Lord.

As consecrated religious serving God's people, you cannot help but be reminded that you belong to a large family of believers, the church, which defends the dignity and sacredness of every human person; that it is your duty and happy task to assist in building up the Kingdom of God here on earth with your own gifts as well as with the help of other persons' talents and gifts; that by witnessing to the Gospel you will demonstrate that peace, justice and dignity can be achieved on earth, and that such inspiration will arouse others to respond to that same call; that you will always stand by the poor to whom you must offer special attention so as to give them a 'grace-filled boost' up the ladder of human dignity, holiness, and liberation from poverty, prejudice and racism.

Be religious men who each day pray intensely and develop within yourselves a constant and fervent devotion to the Eucharist so as to assure the presence of Christ in your own lives. In this way, you can confidently accept the words of St. Paul. "I give no thought to what lies behind, but push on to what is ahead. My entire attention is on the finish line as I run toward the prize to which God calls me – life on high in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14)"

Thank you for your fidelity to me and for your service to the People of God of the Diocese of Venice. (Taken from THE FLORIDA CATHOLIC, Diocese of Venice, October 9, 1992)