

The Missionary Catechist

12-43



A scene from the play, "The Babe of Bethlehem," presented by the high school students of Carmel Mission, California, under the direction of the Missionary Catechists.

There are now eighty-two Missionary Catechists laboring in California from eleven mission centers located in the Diocese of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Fresno.

Greetings!



THIS Christmas number of *THE MISSIONARY CATECHIST* comes to you, faithful friends and benefactors, with a greeting which is also a prayer.

WE realize that during these tragic days of war, your hearts are torn by anxiety, grief, separations and perhaps bereavements. And yet, mindful of the true meaning of this holy season, we wish you a happy Christmas, a blessed Christmas.

EVEN in the deepest sorrows and amid the greatest trials of life, Christian hearts find peaceful rest and spiritual joy in Christ Jesus, Our Lord. He, Who is worshipped as a Babe in the manger, is the God of Love and of infinite Compassion. In His Sacred Heart you and your loved ones are united by divine grace, in life and in death. May your happiness this Christmas consist in a strengthening—by fervent prayer and frequent Communion—of those spiritual ties that bind you to Christ and to your loved ones, wherever they may be. May our blessed Mother Mary help you to give her divine Son first place in your hearts and in your daily lives.

*Catechist Catherine Olberding, Superior General,
and
The Missionary Catechists*



Be it in a simple shrine or in a grand Cathedral, Our Lady of Guadalupe attracts Mexican hearts with irresistible charm.

Patroness of Mexicans

by Catechist Elizabeth Turnis

A FEAST dear to the heart of every Mexican is that of Our Lady of Guadalupe observed on December 12. In every church, mission, or wayside chapel this feast is celebrated with pomp and splendor by these devoted people whom Mary seems to have endowed with extraordinary love for her.

NO exception are the Mexicans of Cucamonga, California, one of our teaching centers. Year after year they pay tribute to Our Lady of Guadalupe with a lavish hand. The church is cleaned minutely. New altar linens are procured for the occasion. The altars are gorgeously decorated with California's choicest flowers. Flags of both countries are placed in positions of honor. Yards and yards of green, white and red bunting are draped about the church, giving it a colorful, festive appearance. On the feast day the parish church becomes entirely too small to hold the crowd of worshippers who gather for the High Mass. Among these worshippers are always several prodigals whose wanderings in paths of sin had kept them away from the

Sacraments for many years. At last, on their Queen's great feast, they find their way back to the Son through their love for His Mother.

WITH a very few exceptions, the entire congregation receives Holy Communion.

EACH year in his sermon Father describes the apparitions of our blessed Mother to Juan Diego, and each year young and old listen with radiant face and rapt attention as though they were hearing the story for the first time.

ALTHOUGH the feast of the Virgin de Guadalupe comes only once a year, every true Mexican does homage to her daily in his heart where she is enshrined in regal splendor. Even the most erring among them, we have found, somehow preserves a vestige of love for this holy patroness, and—though he realizes it not—that vestige of love is his key to heaven. It accounts for the happy deaths of so many whose conversion had been despaired of, and whose life—humanly speaking—did not merit a happy ending.

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Our Blessed Lady of Victory Press, Victory-Noll, Huntington, Indiana



Venite, Adoremus

by Reverend Edward F. Geiskopf

Christus natus est nobis: Venite, adoremus. Christ has been born to us: Come, let us adore Him.

THESE majestic words, pregnant with meaning, form the Invitatory of the Divine Office of Christmas. How grand they sound when year after year they are prayed by thousands of priests, and sung in well ordered cadences, by choirs of trained monks beginning Matins of the midnight office. They are words which penetrate the very marrow, the most intimate consciousness of our spiritual beings, because they commemorate the birth to human life of the Divine Word, God made man, Emmanuel, God with us, in the truest sense of the word.

It must have been this fulfillment of God's promise made in Paradise to man which prompted the prophet Isaias to cry out: "Be comforted, be comforted, My people, saith your God." (43, 1) And the prophet's cry is re-echoed in the first lesson of Matins. Isaias looked upon the anticipated birth of the Messiah with consolation. Pope Saint Leo regarded the accomplished fact with joy. His words are quoted in the fourth lesson: "Our Saviour, dearly beloved, was born today, let us rejoice." And well we might rejoice because the birth of Christ marked the beginning of Satan's defeat.

Isaias, possessed of the divine gift of prophecy, seemed more clearly to foresee the events of our Lord's life than did the other prophets. Hear his words as presented in the Introit of the third Mass of Christmas Day:

"For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulders." (9, 6)

Now is born all that the Old Testament had longed for, prayed for. No longer are men to live in anticipation and hope, but in vision and fulfillment. Darkness is changed to light, and confusion to understanding. Here is one instance where an-



Reverend Edward F. Geiskopf

Father Geiskopf, author of this Christmas article, is a brother of Catechist M. Eva Geiskopf. He was ordained on March 20, 1943, and soon after he was appointed curate to Saint Thomas Aquinas parish, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

icipation is not sweeter than realization, because the realization is infinite, the realization is God.

The Child, the Son Who is born to us is to have the government upon His shoulder. It is His prerogative to rule the hearts of men, which means that He is to be our King. As a King He has absolute sway over our beings. This automatically excludes any voice on our part in the laws He makes for us. Even though He is our Monarch He is not a despot because all His dispensations on our behalf are motivated by

love. We need not fear that we are to be oppressed because love never oppresses; it only gives.

Our Lord affirmed without reservation Pilate's inquiry concerning His Kinship, His Kingship of peace. One of the Christmas Vesper antiphons eulogizes Him as the "King of Peace" Who "is magnified above all the kings of the entire world."

The peace for which we long so ardently today can be fulfilled in the world by our love for, and submission to, Him upon Whose shoulders the government rests. This peace cannot ever be attained unless the whole world learns the lesson of love, the love for neighbor in and through the Christ of Peace. The world cannot attain it unless every person first attains it. The leaven cannot permeate the entire mass in one and the same second; it is a gradual and slow process. Man must earnestly dispose his soul to admit the leaven of Christ. If men will not put the principles of Christ into practice in their family and business lives, there is no chance of a real peace permeating and stabilizing our national and international lives. These principles have always been disregarded by some, and hence we have never had a lasting peace. Chesterton somewhere expresses this idea when he says in substance: "Christianity


has not been tried and found wanting; it has never been tried."

The words of Isaias: "A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us" suggest one of the Holy Father's fifteen points for a lasting peace:

"The restoration of the integrity and vitality of the family as the basic unit of Society."

If each family could be imbued with the principles of Christ, these would soon be operative in the lives of nations and thus produce that lasting peace.

The birth of Christ is not an isolated, dead fact of history. It was merely the beginning of His life—that life which did not end with His death on the Cross but was intensified thereby. Christ lives in the Church; in fact, the Church is Christ extended into history, into time. The Church as a society is not a dead organization, but a living organism which grows and develops. It is the Mystical Body of Christ. It becomes all things to all men by receiving its life from its divine Head, so that the life of the members of this Body becomes the life of Christ, that life whose birth the Angels heralded with the words: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among men of good will."



Twentieth Century Christmas



Twentieth Century Christmas
Now for the Angels' song
Silver bells tinkle;
Now for their shining throng
Candle lights twinkle.

Now for the stable bare
Marble Thy palace;
Now for the manger there
Golden Thy chalice.

Sweet little infant King,
Truly we love Thee!
See, we Thy children bring
Hearts breathing of Thee!

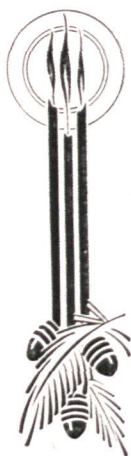
Come, God—and man by birth—
Hidden in Whiteness!
Christmas, this Mass on earth,
Bethlehem's likeness!

Before the Crib

at

Victory-Noll

by Catechist Magdalene Lenges



From my cozy bed—too cozy in comparison with the manger straw—I hear the sounds for which I am waiting. Gentle footsteps, a door knob turns, a board squeaks; then the definite click of the light switch, and glorious melody fills the chapel and overflows into every nook and cranny of Victory-Noll. The rising bell momentarily jars the harmony, rouses the sleepers, and gives the sleepless permission to be up and out. The Community's salutation upon rising, "All for Jesus through Mary," has the rhythm of "Gloria in Excelsis," as curtain hooks tingle, shades slide down and lights flash on. Now the footsteps in the long corridor are many, and their sound adds a soft basso to the organ and violin "Gloria".

MIDNIGHT Mass at Victory-Noll! Hearts swelling with joy! From newest postulant to longest-time professed, all vie to be first at the unveiled crib in the still dim chapel.

NOW the melody lilts in higher key, as though wafted to earth from ethereal heights—or is it from far distant missions in New Mexico, California, Utah, Nevada. Ah, the missions! Before the crib at Victory-Noll, Christmas mission scenes come before me in kaleidoscopic view. It seems to me that I kneel again in the tiny chapel of my first New Mexico mission. No Midnight Mass for us that year. The distance to the parish church made that out of the question. But Christmas-Eve Santa came in the age-old way, and the earliest Mass found us eager to open the door of our hearts to our newborn King.



ANOTHER Christmas found me in Santa Paula where the glorious California sun smiled down upon our festivities. During weeks of late-fall rains the residents rejoiced and greeted us with: "We'll have a lovely green Christmas this year." And I agreed, all the while thinking back wistfully to my very first Midnight Mass. On that memorable night the December air was crisp and snow-filled. Sidewalks crunched with their growing cover as my short steps strained to keep up with the long strides of my tall Dad. The lights of Sacred Heart Church gleamed through falling crystals, while the soft tones of the organ issued through the open door and were lost in the night as worshippers thronged into the small parish church. And after the glorious Mass, home we went to the shining Christmas tree, background for our tiny homemade crib beneath. Quietly we talked lest we awake the smaller members of the family. Yes, my childhood Christmases always had been white ones. Yet I found myself loving California's sunny, green Christmases too.

CHRISTMAS thoughts of my work in our Coachella, California, center always revolve about a sleepy angel and a lovable old blind woman. The little angel feared that she would miss the ceremony if she stayed at her home where no one would awake her; and the blind lady knew that if she could only get to Midnight Mass her son would take her home, so both

sought a refuge in our tiny convent's front-room. To us they were the holy family looking for shelter.

NOW Victory-Noll's melodious choir swings into the familiar strains of "Vamos Todos A Belen", a carol which, perhaps, would not pass a commission on Church music. Yet, whenever I hear it, its three-quarter time melody recalls a vivid picture of our convent parlor in Brawley, hushed with the awe of a sacred place although overflowing with people in strange costumes. The reason for this strange company on the Holy Night was this: Dona Anastasia, a "pillar of the parish" had declared that she would have a pastorela procession even though she were obliged to dress tall Miguel, her husband, in blind Bartolo's part. Much to Miguel's relief, his worthy spouse had no difficulty in assembling her characters from among thirteen-year-old-sters. Miguel had passed his seven-times-seven. The procession was to start at our convent. So there they were, the numerous caste, in gay



Postulants bringing home greens for their Christmas decorations at Victory-Noll.



At the entrance to Victory-Noll chapel stands this beautiful statue of the Infant of Prague. The Infant, always a favorite with the Catechists, receives special marks of affection during the Christmas season.

robes, birdcage, ornamented staves and lanterns. The shepherd with his lamb, however, was relegated to the yard lest the lamb's inconsiderate baa-ing mar the solemnity of the occasion and change sober smiles into rollicking laughter. By dint of much pleading, Dona Anastasia had obtained permission to have the lamb carried through the church, "just in the back door and out the side."

AT five to twelve the procession began. Stalwart Holy Name men and young Crusaders, distinguished by bright shields on their arms, went first. They formed a long guard of honor at the church door. Then marched the girls and the women; and, last, the pastor preceded by a small girl who bore the Infanta on a satin pillow. Four abreast, yet more than a block long, the procession moved to the tune of "Vamos Todos—Come To Bethlehem." And truly, as one verse describes it, "la noche fue dia—night was made day", for the bright desert moon made up for the non-existent street lights in the Mexican side of Brawley.

ALL moved smoothly, impressively. Even the little matter of a fire among the staves and lanterns was taken care of by the majordomos without a pause in the singing of the Gloria.

RECOLLECTIONS of Brawley's pastorela procession bring on thoughts of another Christ-

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"Mr. Surprise"

by Catechist Mary Alice James



Posada had come again! Manuel tried to explain to his wee brother, Jose, just how to hold his candle and how to walk properly in the procession, for this was Jose's first participation in the Posada.

Manuel had been looking forward eagerly to these nine days preceding Christmas during which time the story of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem is re-enacted by the people of the pueblo. The crib, or nacimiento, is prepared in the church. Small figures of Mary and Joseph, preceded by children holding lighted candles, are carried in procession around the church. These holy pilgrims are dressed in Mexican costumes: Joseph with staff in hand and a tiny straw sombrero hanging down his back; Mary in snowy kerchief and with a basket on her arm.

The children who carry the statues on a litter stop at various places to sing beautiful hymns, in the names of Joseph and Mary, begging admittance and lodging. Answering voices, representing those of inn-keepers, sing the refusals. On Christmas Eve the last Posada is held. Amid sweet songs of rejoicing and the bird-like treble of tiny water whistles, the weary travelers are welcomed at last to shelter as the figures are placed in the crib.

How Manuel loved it all! Above the flickering of his candle, Jose's dancing eyes spoke also of keen enjoyment. The singing grew sweeter and more plaintive, but for a time Manuel's thoughts raced on ahead. On Christmas Eve the last Posada is customarily followed by a pinata, a gayly-decorated figure containing goodies for the children. This year, however, there would be no pinata at Manuel's home. Heavy rains had ruined the cotton crop and although the whole family had worked hard in the fields, they had earned scarcely enough for food and clothing. A whispered conversation between Jose and his small partner brought Manuel's attention back to the present. With dexterity born of practice, he twisted the curly head by means of a quick tug at Jose's ear, but not before the word "pinata" had reached his own ears. Something had to be done, the big brother reflected. Jose, Margarita, Carmen and the others must not be disappointed. But pinatas cost money!



On the way home from church, an idea came to Manuel. Perhaps he could make a pinata. The next morning found him busily engaged in an old shed behind the house. A round earthen bowl, called a jarra, rested on the box before him. From newspapers given him by neighbors Manuel's nimble fingers began to fashion a paper body around the jarra. How carefully he had to paste the paper and pad the figure! Suddenly he was distracted from his absorbing occupation by the sound of small fists pounding on the door of the shed. Manuel peeped out. Jose and the others waited impatiently for admittance. A mischievous grin spread over Manuel's boyish face and his black eyes sparkled as he advised the small company in a sepulchral whisper: "Vayanse! Esta es la casa de Senor Sorpresa. Go away! This is the home of Mr. Surprise." The little group outside dispersed quickly, and Manuel, chuckling to himself, returned to his work.



Senior Sorpresa was becoming more gentlemanly looking every minute. A wrinkled old false face grinned impishly above his broomstick neck. One of Manuel's old coats covered the jarra tummy, and a pair of ragged trousers hung from the base of the jarra. Manuel scratched his head at sight of the forlornly dangling trouser legs. Ah, he remembered! On the top of a nearby ash can a pair of work shoes stuck up invitingly. Senor Sorpresa could use them! Soon they were swinging merrily from the legs of the old trousers. Now Senor Sorpresa appeared complete, but he wasn't really. The most important item of all was still missing—goodies to fill the empty jarra which was his body. Christmas was only two days off and there was no money for un-necessaries.

Last minute errands on the afternoon before Christmas brought a small supply of coins to Manuel's pocket but his mother needed flour for tortillas and tortillas are more filling than candy.



After the final Posada, the children hurried home, jabbering excitedly. Manuel could not bear to watch their happy faces. He stole quietly out to the shed where Senor Sorpresa hung dejectedly from a nail in the wall. Just as Manuel reached up to remove him, a familiar auto horn sounded outside. Manuel looked out. The Cate-

chists! And a brightly-decorated Christmas basket! The young man said a quick prayer to the Nino Dios and hurried to the house.

Inside the kitchen he helped his mother and the Catechists unpack the basket. Everything for a simple but wholesome, Christmas family dinner was in it, and at the very bottom was a bag of candy. Yes, and one of peanuts also! A whispered consultation with his mother. A hurried explanation to the Madres. Then Manuel was racing to the shed for Senor Sorpresa.



The Catechists had to stay to see the fun. And what fun it was! Senor Sorpresa dangled from a rope stretched across the poor room, while Jose and the others stood in line. Each was blindfolded and allowed to swing a big stick three times in an attempt to wrest

the goodies from the Senor. How the little ones laughed as the jolly Senor twisted and turned on the shaking rope, but none of them could break the jarra! Now it was Manuel's turn. Carefully Catechist tied the blindfold. Manuel took the stick. One! Two! Crash! The jarra burst spilling peanuts and candies everywhere. In the midst of the ensuing confusion and the little ones' excited scrambling, the Catechists slipped away. A shining-eyed Manuel accompanied them to the door. "Muchas gracias, Madres," he whispered. "I feexed Senor Sorpresa, but you feexed the surprise!"



Before the Crib at Victory-Noll

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mas procession in far colder clime and with fewer taking part. In Cerrillos, New Mexico, our Sodality girls and altar boys formed the Nino's escort and placed Him on His manger throne while a tiny lad carolled Silent Night in English and then in Spanish, and the children repeated it in chorus. Three miles away, the colorful mining town of Madrid, aglow with lighted manger scenes on all its surrounding hills, kept on its power for the two o'clock Mass. That was the nearest Cerrillos could come to having Mid-night Mass, for it has not yet become possible for pastors to bilocate when they have twin parishes.

After Mass the usual charming custom of venerating the Infant took place. Every person in the church went up to the Communion rail where the priest presented the image of the Infant Jesus to be kissed. Naturally, it took rather a long time for the whole congregation to pass through the narrow aisles of the small church—longer, indeed, than the engineer at the power plant estimated. For suddenly, all lights went out. Stark blackness, save for the altar candles, enveloped us. Then, wonder of wonders, in less time than it takes to tell it, someone produced a flashlight for the organist. With hardly a break the choir continued its hymn and the organ caught up and carried on until the last baby in church had expressed its loving devotion to the little Savior.

NEXT to Mass and Holy Communion, nothing so truly expresses the Christmas spirit of "Gloria! Homo factus est. . . pro nobis. . ." as the singing of carols that proclaim Christ's birth. The joyous melody now flooding Victory-Noll chapel brings memories of my one silent Christmas, that Blessed Night when every voice but mine was hymning His praises. I could only praise Him in my heart for an attack of laryngitis made anything else impossible. Mission children in sweeping angel robes of white, and pink and blue, singing, brought Him to His place in the tiny manger. Priestly altar boys at stroke of twelve, told the sweet story in the world-wide Silent Night. The whole congregation echoed the message, and the choir did its best in the festive High Mass. All the while, I was silent! The most I could do was croak a not-too-dismal "Same to you" later in answer to the many cheery "Merry Christmases" that greeted me. Ah, well! Perhaps the Fiat of my voice-less Christmas brought greater joy to the Infant's Heart than all the words of other years.

NOW the High Mass at Victory-Noll begins. Thoughts must be recalled from their distant wanderings. The Mass! This, indeed, is Christmas — perpetual Christmas. Customs, climate, surroundings, may differ. The central unit, the Mass, binds us all together. . . .

Through Him, with Him, in Him, for the glory of the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Keeping Tryst

"And then," I said to the circle of shining eyes about me, "our blessed Mother smiled and said, 'Why, this will be fine, Joseph! See we can put our things right here, and prepare a place to sleep without any trouble. How good God is to send us this place to stay when Bethlehem is so crowded!' And when St. Joseph saw SHE didn't mind, he felt better right away. He hung up his lantern on a nail in the wall and opened the small window so they could have some fresh air; for it was close and smelly in the stable. Our blessed Mother found an old broom and began to sweep down the cobwebs and sweep the dirt off the floor. Then, while St. Joseph found a place for the tired donkey, our blessed Mother spread out some straw and put their blankets on it, and took out the lunch they had left after their long trip . . ."

TRUE, incidentals may vary. Was there a window? Did they have blankets? I don't know. But the point is: Mary and Joseph were making preparations for Christmas. One cannot tell the Christmas story without living it. After telling or reviewing it ten or twelve times before the beautiful day arrived, it isn't surprising that I smiled inwardly at the coincidence: My busy Superior called me on the afternoon of Christmas Eve and said, "You may wax the chapel." Our chapel floor, already shining, could not have much resembled that of the stable. My mop and can of wax and polishing cloth were not much like the ancient broom our blessed Mother found. How little was I like "the lily-white village maid, Mother of God"; And yet, on this afternoon, we WERE alike in a delightful way. We were keeping tryst with Christmas, and a beloved though unseen Presence was there too. What a wonderful job—to wax the chapel floor on Christmas Eve!



Few homes in our missions are without at least a tiny reminder of the true meaning of Christmas during this blessed season. The children, under the direction of the Catechists, make small but beautiful cribs in handwork classes.

Christmas Reverie

The Empty Crib

"And after they ate their supper they were tired"—my little ones were sympathetic—"so they went to bed right away. But first they knelt down and thanked God for sending them a place to stay. They were not angry because it was not a beautiful, warm place. They were happy with whatever God sent them; and that made God happy with them, too. Mary got out the baby blankets and fixed a little box—we call it a manger—with the softest straw she could find, just in case God should send her the Baby Jesus that night . . ."

I KNELT for a moment before I began to wax. The crib in the chapel was up, almost complete, with Christmas trees, paper rocks, straw and statuettes. It awaited only the divine, finishing touch—Baby Jesus. There was something sweetly wistful about the waiting Madonna. Somehow the sight of her, kneeling by the empty crib, went to my heart and came forth rhyming:

How you must have waited, Mary!
How you must have prayed!
How you *must have loved us*, Mary!
Sweetest Mother-Maid!

NEAR the yet unoccupied crib I began to wax, and there came to my mind the thought of another "empty crib" I had known.

IT was connected with my second First Communion Class. My first First Communion Class had disappointed me. The children had learned well enough, had confessed and received Holy Communion understandingly and reverently, so much so as to merit a compliment from their pastor. But in the months that followed I found increasing disappointment. They evinced little interest in receiving Our Lord frequently. I faced the problem, examining, not my conscience, but my pedagogy in relation to the general situation. Here was the situation: Parental indifference, the children sometimes attending Mass better than their parents; Mass at an hour which required fasting until ten or ten-thirty for the reception of Holy Communion; their only chance for confession just before the Mass, as the pastor was not resident in this place and came out for Mass on Sundays; some homes rather far distant from the church.

WITH this survey well in mind, I laid my plans and directed the lessons of my second First Communion Class.

FIRST Communion Day came and went. A few more weeks came and went. "General Communion Sunday", when many families received, came—the first since First Communion Day. Out of a class of fifteen, three children received Holy Communion. A small number, a small percentage, but with what exultation I noted it! Here was the beginning, at least! And when, on the following Sunday, three little ones arose to receive, my delight knew no bounds.

MOMENTARILY distracted by those in front of me, I noticed, when Father was giving Holy Communion, that only two of the children were receiving. One little girl had disappeared from the railing; I could not see her, but I learned afterwards that she was kneeling in front of the first pew. Was she ill? Had she remembered breaking her fast? She came back with the other children, a solemn look on her sweet little face. Her eyes were noticeably reddened; one could see she had been crying. Mass concluded, we sang some hymns together and said goodbye, for it was my last Sunday at this mission. Mary volunteered no information as to her conduct at Communion time, and I said nothing to her about her evident disappointment, though I longed to sympathize. However, her mother was something of a mayordomo and I had to see her in regard to sacristy matters before leaving.

"What happened to Mary?" I inquired during my visit later in the morning. "She seemed so disappointed. Did she break her fast and forget about it?"

"No, oh, no!" her mother assured me. "She didn't eat breakfast, but she forgot to tell me that she was planning to go to Holy Communion this morning. So when I saw her go up, I thought I had better not let her receive, as I did not bring her down in time for Confession. That was why I took her away from the railing. She felt very sad about it. 'But Mama,' she said to me, 'I haven't any sins!'"

COMPREHENSION flooded my mind. "Oh!" I said. "I told the children in class that if they were positively sure they had done no big sin during the week after going to confession and Holy Communion, they could go to Communion again the following Sunday, if they made a good Act of Contrition."



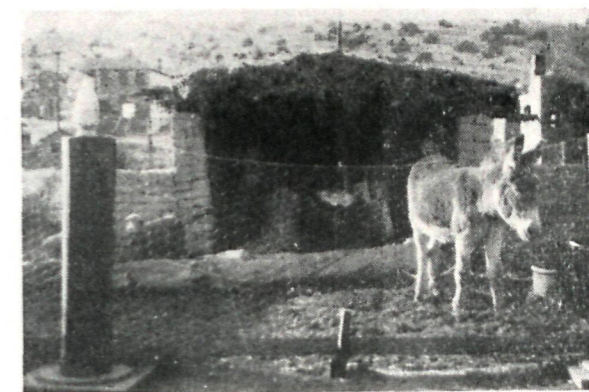
"Yes, I know that," the mother rejoined. "If it were only one week it would have been all right. But it has been two weeks since she went, and I felt that would be too long. But I told her just to tell me whenever she wants to go and I'll see that we get to church in time for confession. . . . She really was crying as she repeated, 'but Mama, I haven't any sins!'" Again the mother quoted the heartfelt words of her child.

I DID NOT contradict the good woman, for I was edified by her solicitude that her little girl receive Our Lord worthily. But I knew then, and a later check-up of dates proved, that the little one was right. It had been only a week since her last confession and Communion. That disappointed cry, "Mamma, I haven't any sins!" told a beautiful story of a whole week's preparation. All was warm with love and bright with purity in the tiny crib of the child's heart. But Christmas was delayed. Baby Jesus did not come on that day, though often since that "empty crib" of her heart has known the Presence of the Eucharistic Babe.

The Little Shepherd

"And the shepherds knelt down and adored Jesus because Jesus was God. Then they told Mary and Joseph all about the Angels who had come, and how they sang . . ." My class is agog with the thrill of it!

(Continued on page 14)



THIS unique Christmas Crib attracts many of our children in Madrid, New Mexico. A large stable shelters life-sized figures of the Holy Family. Living sheep and our pet burro walk in and out and around the stable making this Nativity Scene realistic indeed. The children stop for a short visit to the Crib and then spend considerable time feeding the burro.

—Catechist M. LoRang.



Our Associate

Chicago, Illinois

Dear Catechists,

Enclosed find a money order in the amount of \$75.00. This contribution represents the proceeds of parties held by St. Luke's Band (Mrs. Wm. Maxwell, promoter) of Chicago.

We shall appreciate the prayers of the Catechists for our boys in the Armed Forces.

Sincerely,

Katherine Vaughn

As St. Luke's is one of our faithful bands of many years we are happy to express our deep gratitude and thanks once again.

May our little Infant King bless our "ever-faithful" friends.

Dear Catechist,

We are a group of nine young women, seven married, and two will be very soon. Five of us have babies.

We meet once a month, have a raffle and pay dues. That's about the extent of our activities.

Enclosed is a Money Order for \$11.75.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Kathryn Quinlan, Promoter of

St. Raymond Nonatus Band.

Congratulations, Members of St. Raymond's

Band. What a splendid example you are setting! It shows it can be done—rear a family and at the same time fulfill mission obligations. Looking into the future we can almost see a few new bands—when the babies grow up. How could they help being inspired to follow in their mothers' footsteps!

A.C.M. BAND CONTRIBUTIONS

September 27 to October 31

Archbishop Stritch Band, Chicago, Miss Helen Gaethke	...\$10.00
Charitina Club, Chicago, Miss Katherine Hennigan	..... 7.00
Dolores Band No. 1, Chicago, Mrs. Anna Klingel	..... 9.50
Dolores Band, No. 2, Chicago, Mrs. A. Bechtold	..... 10.00
Florentine Mission Society, St. Louis, Mrs. Katherine Krueger	..... 11.00
Holy Family Band, Chicago, Mrs. Wm. Murphy	..... 26.00
Little Flower Band, Chicago, Mrs. Helen Garrity	..... 25.00
Mission Club, Chicago, Mrs. Anna Klingel	..... 6.50
Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, Mrs. Margaret Sauthier	..... 6.00
Our Lady Queen of Poor Souls, Los Angeles, Mrs. Anna Meng	..... 6.00
Our Lady of Guadalupe Band, Dayton, Miss Rose Marie Heier	..... 5.50
Our Lady of Sorrows Band, Chicago, Miss Marian Dempsey	..... 10.00
Poor Souls Band, Berwyn, Ill.	..... 5.00
Srillians of Our Lady of Sorrows, Cheviot, Ohio, Miss Marie Gadzinski	..... 2.50
St. Anna Band, Fort Wayne, Miss Anna Brink	..... 5.00
St. Anthony Band, Los Angeles, Mrs. Anna Meng	..... 7.00
St. Elizabeth Band, Detroit, Miss Clela Schneider	..... 29.00
St. Helen Band, Dayton, Miss Florence Bucher	..... 4.50
St. Irene Band, Chicago, Miss May Walsh	..... 5.00
St. Justin Martyr Band, Chicago, Mrs. Fred Kiefer	..... 6.00
St. Katherine Band, Chicago, Miss Katherine Hammer	..... 10.00
St. Margaret Mary Band, Omaha, Mrs. M. Shields	..... 15.00

A LEGEND

Many of us have heard the beautiful legend about the poor woman who was visited by an angel, who assured her that Our Lord would pay her a visit that very evening. She set to work to clean her house, and watched all day for His arrival. But she was disappointed. He did not come. It was a wet night, and suddenly she heard a knock. Trembling she opened the door and saw only a little boy



who begged for food and shelter. The house was spotless; she was all ready for the Master's visit; how could she let in a dirty beggar? She contented herself by giving him a trifle and telling him to go elsewhere. The beggar child turned to go—suddenly he seemed to change and stood before her bright and glorious, then vanished; and she heard a voice saying, "As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me."

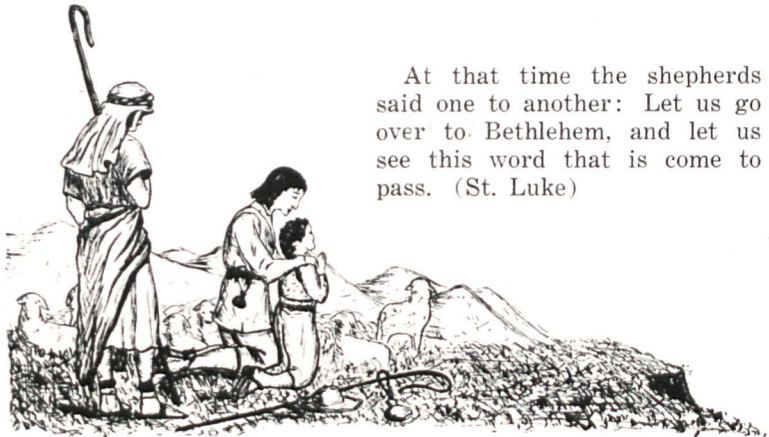
Catechists of Mary



OUR THANKS

Just as regularly as the clock goes round when we peek into our mail we find the usual contribution from Miss Helen Gaethke, promoter of our Archbishop Stritch Band, Chicago.

Many thanks to you, Miss Gaethke, and to all your faithful workers. Doubtless your Christmas will be a joyous one in recompense for all the good you are doing.



At that time the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass. (St. Luke)

Dear Associates,

Christmas is almost at our door again. During the blessed weeks of Advent your hearts have been filled with love and longing for the little Infant King Who lies so sweetly in His manger of straw. As we think of Him Who gave up everything, even His life for us, we also think of you who give of yourselves for us, and with hearts filled with deepest gratitude we ask Him, as our Christmas wish for you, to raise His little Hand in benediction; to bless each and everyone of you, your loved ones, and especially those who are serving their country and who will not be with you on the blessed day.

Happiness we know consists more in giving than in receiving. As I send my Christmas message to you I go back in spirit to the missions at Christmas time. I take you with me; your Christmas will be happier if I show you the joy you have made possible by the blessed gift of "giving."

And so we start. The car is filled and we must be very careful not to crush the gay-colored boxes that are filled with dainty Christmas cookies, candy, nuts and fruits.

At our first stop we find a poor, weary patient, hardly forty years of age, but looking seventy. Huddled in a bare-looking bed she is shivering with cold. Her face, furrowed with pain, lights up with happiness as we hand her an attractive box of Christmas dainties. After a few words of comfort we leave for our next home. This time we visit a widow with her five children. Her pension doesn't permit of many luxuries,

and it isn't long before the children are digging down for hidden treasures in their box. From there we go to our twelve-year old bed-ridden paralytic, and then on to our old Indian grandma.

On and on we make our rounds until there is scarcely time for our last visit—our most important one, which is twenty miles away. This time we are headed for the Old Folks' Home, and our car is loaded with large tarlatan stockings. Arriving, we make our way straight to the old men's quarters. There we find our little old men awaiting us; some in wheel chairs; some too old to get out of bed; some not so old but very lonesome with thoughts of other, happier Christmas Eves; and our "pet" ward—the old Chinese men. Many of these are sightless and most of them friendless. With us your hearts are happy because you, too, have a share in the happiness of these "forgotten" ones—your eyes, too, have tears of gladness as you watch the trembling old fingers eagerly break open the stockings and begin to explore the contents; and as you see the customary method of the Chinamen trying to express their grateful thanks to us by shaking hands with themselves.

Finally, the last stocking is given away, and again we are on our way home. There is much we could say. Yet there is silence in the car. Our hearts are full—full of gratitude. When we reach our convent gate, dusk has fallen. We are a bit weary, but what is that in comparison to the great happiness we—and you—have had

Catechist Viola Wopperer



Christmas Reverie

(Continued from page 11)

A LITTLE shepherd came to me too, one wintry day. He came out of a murky morning, seeking the Baby Jesus. Then he passed on, his search unfulfilled. Sometimes I wonder, has he found Him yet?

SMUDGE is smudgy. Frost warnings had been sent out; smudge pots had been burning all night. When, on this Sunday in January, we left for our out-missions a little after seven, one would have thought it four o'clock in the morning. A thick black pall lay over the land. Knowing the time, we could sense the dawn above us; but that made no difference as our car crept along almost yard by yard. Even the headlights were of no avail. Their brightest rays were beaten back by the night's accumulated smudge. Thus does California conquer the Frost King and save her oranges for the sun! In some of the groves we saw the low smudge pots still burning, vivid glows of red-orange spaced at regular intervals, against the green-blackness of the trees, the oily, smudgy smoke curling forth.

WHEN, two hours later, good friends in one out-mission drove me to the second where I was to be with the children for Mass and class, light was just beginning to strengthen. The atmosphere had the appearance of dawn. But how surprised I was to find the small church deserted. I opened the side door, wondering why there was no Mass. Just as I threw open the front doors, the first worshippers arrived—a mother and her two adolescent daughters. All three wore their mantillas pulled closely about their shoulders and held handkerchiefs to their faces to keep out as many as possible of the sooty particles of smudge.

WITHIN the next hour fifteen or twenty people had trickled into the church and about ten children. It was cold. The building had a cement floor and no heat whatever. With the sun still hidden, there was no way to remove the prevailing chill. I was warmly dressed; not so the children. Manuelito, my little shepherd, was barefoot, though he wore a fairly heavy jacket over a thin shirt. His sisters wore shoes, but their clothing was thin and inadequate. After waiting a short time, I took the children into the sacristy—it had a wooden floor, at least—for their class. That was when I heard of

Manuelito's search. His big sister wanted him to make his First Communion. Isobel, already eleven, had made hers only the year before. Manuelito had always shirked Catechism but his sister had won him over. Now he wanted to make his First Communion. He would study hard. Already he knew the Our Father and the Hail Mary. . . .

AT this point my class was interrupted. A woman came to ask what I knew about the Mass schedule. It was almost 10:30; surely Father must not be coming, yet no one wished to go home until there was certainty. There was no telephone in any of their homes in this village. "What about the hospital?" I inquired. "Oh, THEY have one," was the answer. "Would you go there?" "Surely, if there is nothing else to do. I'm sure they'll let us use their telephone."

SO class was discontinued and Isobel and I travelled through the chilly morning up the rocky road to a sectarian hospital, a quarter of a mile distant. We entered a waiting room that was warm, blissfully warm, and comfortable with rugs and upholstered furniture. Adjoining was a smaller office, business-like with desk, swivel-chair, filing cases and typing table. Every courtesy was shown us by the attendants. We explained our need and were at once shown the telephone in the smaller office. With what relief I put through the call, thinking of the good, patient souls waiting in the cold mission chapel.

PREOCCUPIED by my errand, taking for granted surroundings generally familiar to me, I had paid little attention to exterior details. Suddenly I noticed Isobel. Seated on the very edge of her chair, leaning forward, eyes like stars and face aglow, she was looking from comfortable furniture to interesting office appliances. Had she been in a fairyland she could not have been more thrilled, more absorbed. Watching her, I realized that these ordinary surroundings were, to the child something palatial and magnificent. Her home was a three-room shack, cheaply boarded together, dirty most of the time, for the weary mother left her brood of six too much to themselves. Yet, how Isobel was responding to beauty and cleanliness! I was deliberate about my call; let her enjoy this palace of pleasantness and luxurious warmth while she could.

THE call completed, we faced the chilly morning once more and brought word to the waiting congregation: Father was not coming. Unforeseen difficulties prevented his making the twenty-mile trip to that out-mission. He had had no way of sending word. The people finished their prayers and quietly left the church. I sent my little ones home too. Only Isobel and Manuelito and Eulalia stayed. They weren't cold, they said. Their brother was to come for them. Besides, didn't Manuelito have to study for his First Communion?

THEY stayed and "studied", but not until I had draped my heavy mantle around Isobel, and my sweater about Eulalia, and had wrapped some clean dustcloths about Manuelito's bare feet. He resented the attention, evidently thinking it was effeminate to be cold. Little by little bare toes wriggled free again!

MANUELITO recited the prayers and while I listened I realized that my shepherd would have a rocky road to climb in reaching the Baby



Catechist Mercedes Gutierrez, one of our Spanish American Catechists from New Mexico, compares her height to that of a poinsettia in San Pedro, California.

Jesus. We drilled prayers for a few minutes and then we went over together the first beautiful stories of the Faith. We had not yet finished when their elder brother arrived and I saw the children off, relieved that soon they would be warmed, and hoping too that some day I should see Manuelito's search fulfilled in the joy of finding Jesus at the Communion table.

BUT it was not to be. Manuelito came to class perhaps twice after that; then the family moved away. I had not heard about them, now, for over a year. But still I cannot forget my little shepherd of that cold, dark morning.

Baby Jesus in the Tabernacle, has he found You yet? I prayed without interrupting my waxing.

Madrecita

" . . . Now the Kings had seen many queens and princesses, but when they saw our blessed Mother Mary, they knew they had never, never seen any lady so very beautiful. My they were thrilled! And Joseph looked like such a good, kind man. Then they told Mary and Joseph why they had come, and Mary showed them Baby Jesus. The Kings knelt and adored Jesus because Jesus is God. And when Mary told Him to, Jesus gave His little Hand to the Kings, and said all the words He knew, for them. Of course He couldn't say very many yet. He was such a little Baby. But he could probably say 'Madrecita' or 'Mama' or 'Padre' and tell His Name, too. And the Kings gave to Mary the lovely presents they had brought for Jesus, just as we do when we say 'All for Jesus through Mary.' . . . "

THERE is a beautiful word in Spanish, "Madrecita". Perhaps the closest English equivalent would be "Motherkin", if we ever used such a word; for it is a loving diminutive of the word "Madre" or "Mother".

HOWEVER, with their aptness for doing away with distinctions between secular and religious life, these good people have another use for the word. It is given as a title to religious, and when so used, combines a reverential respect with a beautiful acknowledgment of the work of a religious: the work of tenderly loving and caring for souls as a mother in a family tenderly loves and cares for her children.

I HAD been in our mission three months before my first Christmas. It had been interesting during that time, getting acquainted with the people and the children, getting settled in the work, all the novelty of living, in a sense, in an entirely different world—for mission life is like that, even here in our own America.

(Continued on page 18)



CHRISTMAS blessings to you,
Loyal Helpers. May the Christ
Child love you and reward you
for your loyalty.

★ ★ ★

MARY AND JOSEPH

Mary lived up in the mountains and one day she was going to meet Joseph and Joseph was riding a donkey and they were going to see if they could find a home. They went to every house but there was no room and then they walked and walked and at last they came to a cave and then they went to bed. At the middle of the night Mary got up and said her prayers and then she saw a light and then the light was in Mary's arms and then Joseph woke up and it was Jesus and there was a manger of hay and Joseph took the hay out of the manger and put straw in it. Then they went to find the shepherds and the shepherds saw the lights and then all the angels said that Jesus was in a cave near by and then all the shepherds went to see if they could find Jesus. At last all of the shepherds found Jesus.

One of our little tots in the missions wrote the above story of Mary and Joseph after hearing it in class. It shows how attentive he must have been, for he seems to have grasped the beautiful story of Christmas.



Mary's

A CHRISTMAS DIFFERENT

Christmas in our missions is always an exciting time. There are parties to be prepared for all the children, boxes to be covered and filled with sweets for the old folks; and of course, Christmas plays to be rehearsed over and over again—this is all part of Christmas.

This year, however, we have learned of a "Christmas Different." From El Paso came an interesting account of the affair, and I think you will enjoy hearing it just as the Catechists have told it.

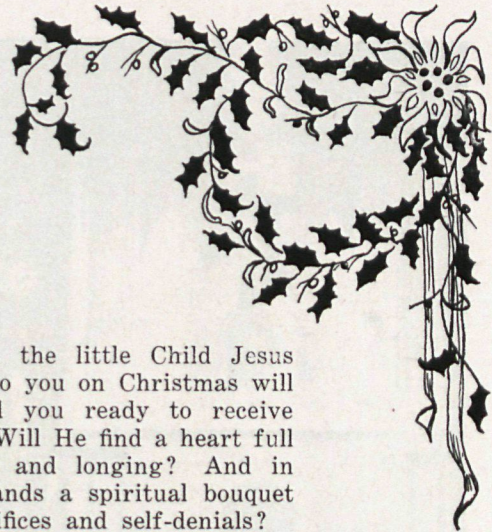
"Living near Fort Bliss it seemed fitting that we should help to provide Christmas cheer for our soldier boys.

"We were as happy and excited as our little black folk as we climbed into the cars which were taking us to the USO Christmas party. Figtails bobbed expectantly and white teeth flashed radiantly at the prospect of 'Actin' foah de soldahs.' All during the year the children had prayed faithfully whenever an airplane soared overhead—'Jesus, help de soldahs!' and now as John, Jr., a roly-poly of four announced to the crowd, 'We's gwine to the Army, too.'

"Little black faces and bright smiles greeted the audience as the little ones helped Santa draw a large pack of goodies to the stage. Quickly Santa filled their hands and gave a whisper of explanation. Then oranges, apples, bags of popcorn and Christmas candies went sailing through the air to the persons seated in the big hall.

"Refreshments and toys for the small entertainers and the large group of orphans who made up a part of the audience

Loyal Helpers



were the soldier boys' part of the program, and all enjoyed the delighted comments of the children.

"Christmas Day was almost over as we helped tired little folk into coats and hats. Soldier boys came up to pat the children's heads and say a sincere 'Thank you, Sister.' The children made it seem more like Christmas back home."

"As the last of our little black folk climbed into the car, with a salute from the boys as a parting send-off, we looked at the happy faces of the soldiers and the children, and agreed that it had been a 'back-home-kind of Christmas' and yet a 'Christmas Different'."

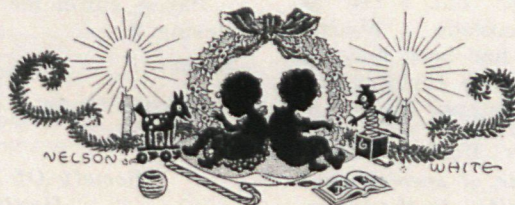


OUR CHRISTMAS WISH

Little Heart of Our Infant King
In His baby way
Bless you and caress you
On this Christmas Day!
Eyes of His holy Mother
Making heaven's blue
Smile upon your gladness.
Be your gift come true!
Little Heart of Our Infant King
Be your own at last
Christmas Day in Heaven
When earth's days are past.



Come, little Son of God, behold my open door. Enter in this Christmas night—Thou shalt be my Love—my Light.



When the little Child Jesus comes to you on Christmas will He find you ready to receive Him? Will He find a heart full of love and longing? And in your hands a spiritual bouquet of sacrifices and self-denials?

Buffalo, New York

Sunshine Secretary
Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
Dear Catechist,

Enclosed you will find a check for five dollars. We have raised this by little personal sacrifices. It isn't much but we worked hard to raise it.

Sincerely yours,
Seventh Grade Girls
Joan Patton (Missionary)

Detroit, Michigan

Dear Catechist,

Here is my donation, \$2.00, for Mary's Loyal Helpers. I may be a little late, but I have to save up all my pennies and buy Defense Stamps too, so I share them with your mission work and Uncle Sam.

I remain a Loyal Helper.

Cecilia Marie Amer.

"Here comes the Sunshine Bag filled with "Sunshine of Gods love from the boys and girls of the third and fourth grades of Saint Henry School, Watertown, Wisconsin.

"May God bless you and bring many a Carlos nearer to our Divine Saviour.

School Sisters of Notre Dame"

O Little Guest Divine rest in my waiting heart, and nevermore do Thou depart, Little Son of God.



The Catechists in Winnemucca, Nevada, sent us this picture of their convent chapel. It is a gem—small but lovely. The Catechists write, "It is just big enough for the Lord and us." There are four Catechists at Winnemucca.

Christmas Reverie

(Continued from page 15)

AFTER the early Masses and breakfast, we returned to church for the third Christmas Mass. It was a pleasant day; the sun was warm, the sky bright blue, though far off we could see against it the mountain tops with their coverlet of snow glistening in the morning light.

AN old lady, looking weary but peaceful, was coming along the street. She came to us and greeted us, each in turn. To me she said, "Buenos dias, Madrecita." Only the simplest of greetings, "Good morning," but I felt as though I had received an accolade. "Madrecita." It was the first time I had been honored by this title, and I felt a strange thrilling joy that it should happen on Christmas Day.

WHAT DID You call Your Mother, Jesus?
Was it some sweet name of special love?
Did you ever call her "Madrecita" in the langu-

age that You spoke? Oh, that statuettes could speak! Oh, that You would break Your tabernacled silence and tell me about the visit of the three Kings! Help me to teach Your little ones aright when I teach them about You, when I try to be a true "Madrecita" to their precious souls.

NOW the waxing is done. The floor is shining. Again I kneel for a moment by the waiting Madonna and the empty crib. Yes, it has been a wonderful job—waxing the Chapel on Christmas Eve—keeping tryst with Mary, keeping tryst with Christmas!

by a Missionary Catechist
—California.

WHY

I WISH TO JOIN THE 2500 CLUB

Many demands are made on my charity. In a world in which it is all but impossible to distinguish between worthy and unworthy causes, I want to be sure that I am helping a cause dear to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

I choose to join the 2500 CLUB
BECAUSE

THE 2500 CLUB enables me to fulfil my obligation in charity to do something definite for the benefit of God's neglected poor.

THE 2500 CLUB unites the dollars I have to give with hundreds of other dollars which together accomplish what to me alone is IMPOSSIBLE.

THE 2500 CLUB offers me the privilege of working for the salvation of immortal souls, greater than which there is no work on earth.

THE 2500 CLUB assures me rich spiritual benefits and blessings.

THE 2500 CLUB is an association of persons who contribute \$1.00 a month or \$12.00 a year toward the support of the Missionary Catechists who are laboring in vast mission districts of our country.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Dear Catechists:

Date.....

Please enroll me in the 2500 Club. I am enclosing \$..... dues for months.

Name

Address

Society Of Missionary Catechists
Huntington, Indiana

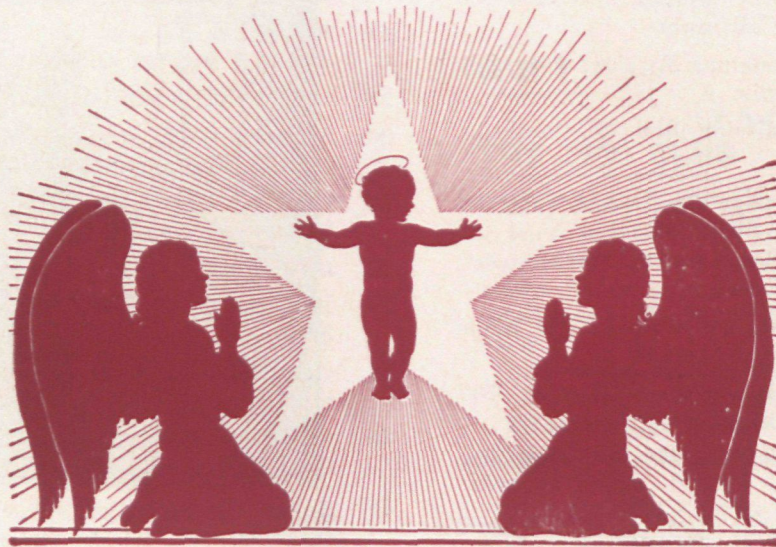
Addresses of our Mission Centers

Please send your mission boxes directly to the Catechists in the mission centers. Address THE MISSIONARY CATECHISTS and add one of the addresses listed below:

1. Refuge of Sinners Mission, 512 Soldono Avenue, Azusa, California.
2. Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission, Box 1356, Brawley, California.
3. Good Shepherd Mission, Box 336, Coachella, California.
4. Infant of Prague Mission, 2321 Opal Street, Los Angeles 23, California.
5. Little Flower Mission, 1143 Fifth Street, Los Banos, California.
6. Mary Star of the Sea Mission, 598 Laine Street, Monterey, California.
7. Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission, 537 East G Street, Ontario, California.
8. Queen of the Missions, Box 46, Redlands, California.
9. St. Peter the Apostle Mission, 563 O'Farrell Street, San Pedro, California.
10. Precious Blood Mission, 222 South Eighth Street, Santa Paula, California.
11. St. Joseph Mission, 120 South F Street, Tulare, California.
12. Mount Carmel Mission, 3868 Block Avenue, East Chicago, Indiana.
13. Sacred Heart Mission, 4860 Olcott Avenue, East Chicago, Indiana.
14. St. John the Baptist Mission, 1401 W. Washington Blvd., Fort Wayne, Indiana.
15. Holy Ghost Mission, 416 S. Third Street, Goshen, Indiana.
16. All Saints Mission, San Pierre, Indiana.
17. St. Anne Mission, 1009 Dayton Street, South Bend, 14 Indiana.
18. Visitation Mission, 403 North Williams Street, Paulding, Ohio.
19. Holy Trinity Mission, Ida, Michigan.
20. St. John Bosco Mission, 903 Atkinson, Detroit 2, Michigan.
21. Our Lady of Lourdes Mission, Box 671, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
22. St. Coletta's Mission, Grants, New Mexico.
23. Blessed De Montfort Mission, 514 Valencia Street, Las Vegas, New Mexico.
24. Our Lady of Victory Mission, 435 Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
25. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission, 704 Court Street, Elko, Nevada.
26. Ave Maria Mission, 551 Murray Street, Ely, Nevada.
27. Our Lady of the Snows Mission, 338½ Melarkey Street, Winnemucca, Nevada.
28. Immaculate Conception Mission, 1001 East San Antonio Street, El Paso, Texas.
29. Holy Family Mission, Box 1317, Lubbock, Texas.
30. Queen of Angels Mission, 27 West Avenue N, P. O. Box 1125, San Angelo, Texas.
31. Mary, Queen of Peace, Mission, 1206 West 2nd South, Salt Lake City, Utah.

From these thirty-one mission centers, the Missionary Catechists reach approximately 400 out-missions. Over 28,000 public school children have enrolled in the Catechists' catechism classes this year.

 A Merry Christmas 



O God, Who dost gladden us with the yearly expectation of our Redemption, grant that we, who joyfully receive Thine only-begotten Son as our Redeemer, may also, without fear, behold Him coming as our Judge, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

—From the Missal