



# The Crusader

*Bulletin of the Eucharistic Crusade for Children in Australia & New Zealand*



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**December 2023/**

**January 2024**

**ADVENT & CHRISTMAS**

*For All Our Benefactors &*

*For the Future of the*

*Society of St. Pius X*

## FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Dear Crusaders & Friends,

This edition of the *Crusader* is the summer holiday edition for both December and January. I am sure that you are all looking forward to the end of the school year and a rest from your studies. Perhaps you are excited that you may be going away for a family holiday. Perhaps you are already counting the days till Christmas Day. We do need a rest from our work—not because we want to avoid work, but we want to come back to it with a new energy of mind and body. We do look forward to going away with family and friends—not because we only want to have a fun time, but because we know it pleases Our Lord to spend time together with our family. We are excited to count down to Christmas—but not because of what we will receive, but what we hope to give to Our Lord on *His* birthday.

Yet with all the excitement it can be easy for us to lose what we gained by our efforts to please Jesus during the year. The true Crusader of the Eucharist remembers that he is always a soldier of Christ, *especially during his holidays*. The year has been the training for the battle; the holiday is the test of our efforts to see if we will persevere in our good resolutions. Perhaps during the term we have been very regular: rising promptly with our alarm, saying our prayers, and filling out our treasure chart. During the holidays, however, things are not always so easy. So much of our daily routine is upside down when we are on holidays that we really have to remember not to take a holiday from God!

That is why you must set a routine for you to follow during the holidays. By all means sleep in a little—but *do not lose the whole morning in bed*. Set a time at which you will get up, say your morning offering and spend five or ten minutes talking to Our Blessed Lord. Set another time to go to bed, leaving enough time for ten minutes of spiritual reading and

filling out your treasure chart before lights out. Do not forget the Holy Rosary—maybe take upon yourself the responsibility to remind Mum and Dad when it is time to say the Rosary (it is a work of the apostolate to help others come to Jesus by prayer). Use your time during the day well. Perhaps there are some books you having been looking to find time to read, or perhaps you have some hobby you want to begin. Spend plenty of time outside, for God gives us the beautiful summer days to enjoy His Creation and be reminded of Him.

We also have to pay careful attention to the reception of the sacraments during the holidays. At school, for example, we usually have a time provided in which we can go to confession regularly. However, while on holidays, we often go a long time without even thinking of confession. So be sure to make that extra effort to find a day to go to confession. You may have to ask Mum and Dad to get you to Mass a little early during the week. You can even ask a priest to hear your confession anytime you see him at the Church. He will be happy to do that.

You may have less opportunities to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to receive Him in Holy Communion. That is why you must make a special effort to keep the love of Our Lord burning in your hearts by often thinking of Him and making a spiritual communion by asking Him to come into your heart.

My dear Crusaders, if you follow this advice faithfully, the summer holidays will not be a time of falling away from Our Lord! Rather, it will be a time of real rest and restoration of your strength to continue the apostolic work of a Crusader. Remember that our special intention in December is *for all our benefactors*; for January it will be *for the future of the Society of St Pius X*. Do remember to be generous in completing and returning your treasure charts!

Blessed Mother with your Loving Son, bless us each and everyone!

Fr Joseph Ockerse





Place  
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The Crusader  
61 Koplick Road  
Park Ridge, QLD 4125

*Use tape to seal this edge*

## *The Sisters' Corner*

*A Word of Encouragement from the SSPX Sisters in Sydney*



Dear Crusaders,

Soon it will be Christmas, which we intend to celebrate, of course, the way a true Crusader should! How will we do that? Well, firstly, by preparing well. Then, on the long-awaited day, and on all the days that follow it, by giving joy to the Infant Jesus and to our dear families by ever being a more fervent Crusader!

In order to encourage you, here is a true story that took place in Hungary in the 1950's. A priest was imprisoned in a concentration camp, where the Communists punished and often killed, all who did not agree with them, especially priests. The priest himself will tell you the story.

"After three years in prison, I was interrogated once more by the secret police. As I still refused to collaborate with the Communists, he savagely kicked me and had me thrown into a large room full of lay people. I won their confidence by rendering them every possible service and by praying for them. Yet, as Christmas drew near, the prisoners grew more disheartened. They had had no news from their families, parents, and children. Hunger and the cold made them suffer so bitterly that there was nothing I could do to raise their morale.

"I tried hard to think of some way of celebrating the great feast of Christmas with the joy that it deserves. I looked around the prison room. Our miserable cell with its grey walls certainly resembled the poor stable. All we needed was a Christ Child. Then I had an idea. I asked one of the prisoners, a sculptor, if he could make a 40 cm Christ Child out of bread. 'Yes, I could,' he responded eagerly, 'if you can get me a kilo of bread!' A kilo of bread! That was a fortune in prison, where our only meal was a light soup and a hunk of bread, of which each man carefully ate the very last crumb! I did not hesitate. If I gave up bread for Advent, I would better be able to celebrate Christmas!

"Every day when I recited my breviary, I could see my friend, his fingers blue from the cold, deftly shaping the bread. Gradually, a smiling Christ Child was formed.

"Christmas Eve arrived, a sombre, sad night, brining no Mass and no Christmas feast. The prisoners were more depressed than ever. I took the little bread Baby and laid Him on a little straw. Beside him, I lit a candle stub. The flame flickered across the whole room. Each man, heart-sore and despairing, came to look at the modest manger and to kneel before it. More than one pair of eyes began to fill with tears.

*(continued p. 21)*

## A Little Heart to Heart Talk

*By Fr. Mark Staffki*

### #17: The Kyrie (12-5-2023)

My dear children,

“The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Ghost. And the Word was made flesh.” These words of our thrice-daily Angelus remind us of the first joyful mystery of the rosary. Remember what we learned last week? The Introit is the first joyful mystery of the Mass, the Annunciation. Is there a second joyful mystery of the Mass? Yes, there is. Where do we find it? Well, I will give you a hint. The Gloria of the Mass will be the third joyful mystery, Christmas. The second joyful mystery will be somewhere between the Introit and the Gloria. What happens between the Introit and the Gloria? The Kyrie. The Kyrie is the second joyful mystery of the Mass, the Visitation.

The Gospel tells us that after the “Word was made flesh” in the womb of Mary the angel departed from Mary (the poor angel!). “And Mary rising up... went into the hill country, with haste into a city of Juda.” This means that she carried Jesus with her, in her, on that journey; He rested just beneath her heart every step of the way. The priest is another Jesus. Watch Jesus as he leaves the missal after the Introit. He goes in haste with Mary to the hill country, to the centre of the altar. It does not seem like a very hasty walk, you say? Well, it is. Let me tell you why. When Mary went from Nazareth to visit her cousin Elizabeth, she walked 128 kilometres; that is a long distance to cover on foot. Let’s say from Rockdale to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, a little further in fact. She had to walk from Nazareth out of Galilee, then through Samaria, down into the Jordan Valley and finally up into the hills of Judea. The priest covers that distance with Mary at the altar in about three seconds; that is a pretty hasty pace, if you ask me.

Mary’s travels were a work of mercy, to care for her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, who was expecting the birth of her son John. What did Mary do when she reached her journey’s end? She began her work of mercy by

greeting Elizabeth. What did Jesus do? He began his mission of mercy with His cousin, John. He washed his soul clean from original sin. He baptized John the Baptist, so to speak; and John-the-future-Baptist was so happy that he leaped with joy in the womb of his mother. Christ had mercy on John the Baptist. Mary had mercy on Elizabeth. During this part of the Mass, let us cry out for mercy too. We cry out to God the Father three times: "Lord, have mercy on us." Then to the Second Person of the Trinity: "Christ, have mercy on us." And finally to the Holy Ghost: "Lord, have mercy on us!" In Greek that is: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

You notice that today we are wearing black vestments, for today is the day that the grandfather of some of our dear students is being buried in a land far away. Let us remember that when we pray that God "have mercy on us" at every Mass, we include all of our loved ones who may be in Purgatory. Our deceased loved ones are "part of us." Lord, please have mercy on my grandfather, grandmother, all the souls in Purgatory. Mary, please greet them, draw them all close to your heart, so that Jesus may wash them clean. Make haste to carry them to heaven as soon as possible, where they will leap for joy and sing their Gloria in Excelsis Deo forever and ever!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

## #18: The Gloria (26-5-2023)

Dear Children,

Welcome to Bethlehem and Merry Christmas! Today we come to the Gloria of the Mass. "Glory to God in the highest and, and earth peace to men of good will." Who sang the Gloria for the first time? The angels did. They sang it in the hearing of the shepherds, who had been keeping the night watches over their flock. How I wish I could have been there for that! It must have been so beautiful, so regal. Don't you wish that we could fly in this angelic choir for every Mass? Ah! To have the same angels sing the Gloria with all their hearts today at our altar! Well, they do. They come and adore God-made-man at every Mass. We may not hear them, but they sing their Gloria for the Christ-child all the same, and He hears it.<sup>2</sup> "Fear not," the angels whisper to us. "For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to *all the people.*" All the people...you and I are part of "all the people." What are these good tidings, this good news that is meant for our ears? "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."

*(continued on p. 18)*

# **ON SILENCE & MEDITATION**

## *For Knights & Handmaids*

*Taken & edited from "The Crusader" #72, Dec 1995*

But Father, ...

I still find it hard to meditate! There are many ways to meditate. As I have told you before, the main aim of meditation is to unite oneself with God. There are however some ways which will particularly help some of us.

You will notice that I have tried to give you a little image to think about at the start of the meditation. This helps very much because it captures your mind and heart. No, do not try to keep this image in your mind all the way through your meditation. You will find that impossible. It serves only to give you an aim and general impression, or as I said above, to capture your mind. When, unfortunately, you do find yourself drifting away into some other thoughts, this image can once again be used to bring your mind and heart on track.

Often, during your meditation, lift up your heart to Jesus. For example, if Jesus has helped me understand something a bit better, I lift up my heart; "Oh Jesus, thank you, Thou art so good!"

The more you love God, the more you will love to meditate. The more you meditate, the more you will love God!

### **First Meditation:**

#### ***The Immaculate Conception***

Image: The very pure heart of Mary.

Grace to ask for: Holy purity.

(1) God so love the world as to give us His only Son. Upon the cross, this same Son, Jesus, gave us His most pure mother. Among the many gifts He gave us, this was one of the greatest. But, He knows not how to give an impure gift, one sullied with sin. Oh Jesus, how good thou art, Oh help me to give Thee in return a pure and holy heart.

(2) Mary is our Mother. She calls us; "come to me, take your refuge in me and I will show you the way to my Son's heart. As Rebecca in the Old Testament prepared Jacob's gift to his father, so Mary will take ours and make it perfect.

Resolution: To love Mary very, very much.







**Third Meditation:**  
***Mary and Joseph Journey to Bethlehem***

Image: Mary, seated on the donkey, St. Joseph leading the way.

Grace to ask for: To open my heart to Jesus.

(1) It was a long journey, perhaps 4 or 5 days travel. It was hard and very tiring, yet neither so much as complained one word.

(2) God wanted His Son to be born poor and of no esteem. To all appearances, God's Son was compelled to go to Bethlehem, yet, in all of this we learn to see His humility, patience and willingness to suffer. Do I act like this? Oh my Jesus, how many times have I complained about some trifle, how many times have shown my unwillingness to suffer for Thee.

Resolution: Let me learn from this to be humble patient and intent upon suffering in silence.

**Fourth Meditation:**  
***The Shepherds Come and the Angels Sing***

Image: The shepherds before the crib of Jesus.

Grace to ask for: The true joy of Christmas Day.

(1) "And this shall be a sign to you. You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." Christ was not to be born in a palace? No, the sign shall be one of lowliness, of poverty, of humility and in contempt for worldly riches and comforts.

(2) "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God." Because the Son of God emptied himself of all glory, God, His Father, proclaimed His honour through the angels. Therefore the more we empty ourselves of worldly honour, the more God fills us with His honour.

Resolution: Let me trust not in the world, nor in myself, but in God alone.

# Story Hour



## NOEL

### A Christmas Story



*By Benjamin Tardiff, Illustrated by Mary Ann Tardiff  
Taken & abridged from "Crusade" Vol. VI, #6, Dec/Jan 1988-1989*

A number of years ago I knew an old priest by the name of Fr. John McFadden, who has since gone to his eternal reward. Fr. John lived his last days at Notre Dame Academy, Our Lady of the Prairies Shrine, in North Dakota. I was living there too, and found out quite by accident that Fr. John could tell the most wonderful stories. He had written three books of poetry, and once while he was showing me a poem he was working on, he told me a remarkable story that he called "Heaven's Back Door." It set me to wondering how many more stories he might have in that imaginative mind of his.

I was collecting stories myself, and I would invite my friends to come with me up to Fr. John's room and ask him to tell us a story. My friends wondered what made me decide to collect stories! Well, it was because I just didn't like television. I had already made up my mind that someday when I was married and had children of my own I didn't want them watching television. There is just too much evil programming to risk the harm it might do to my children, to have TV undo the good morals and values I would be trying to teach them.

So, I wanted to collect as many stories as I could, so that someday I could entertain my children in the way families used to do-by telling them good stories of any kind, but especially Catholic stories.

To go up to Fr. John's room on a cold North Dakota winter's night and listen to a story is a memory I will always cherish. Fr. John had a room of his own in the old folks' home, taken care of by the Sisters. After stopping for a short visit in the Sisters' chapel, we would walk upstairs to see old Fr. John...

His door was open. We knocked anyway and walked in. We found him sitting on his bed with a bottle of Elmer's glue in his lap and a pair of scissors in his hand. He was cutting up old Christmas cards which he then glued back-to-back to make holy cards. A retired missionary from South America, old Father John never wasted anything.

"Well, hello there!" he said in a surprised and rather shaky voice. "Would you like a holy card?" His hand shook more than his voice as he handed us both a card and offered us a seat on the edge of his bed. "And what can I do for the two of you?" he asked, as he reached for his purple stole.

“We would like you to tell us a story,” I said. There was a long pause as Father put the stole around his neck.

“Oh!” he said. Another moment of silence. “A story!” Father mused a minute more. “Well, that’s just fine. A Christmas story. It’s Christmas time.”

Fr. John was an Irishman, of course. But with his snow-white hair and stooped shoulders he always reminded me of something between a St. John Marie Vianney and a St. Alphonsus Marie de Liguori. He started to remove his purple stole, but then forgot about it and left it on. “Most people don’t come up here unless they need to go to Confession,” I whispered to my friend, who nodded as old Fr. John began a most unusual story...

“It happened around the turn of the century somewhere in France.” Father mused a moment. “I think it was in Paris. The girl’s name was Nicole, Nicole Pelletier, I believe, but her friends called her Noel because her birthday was in December.

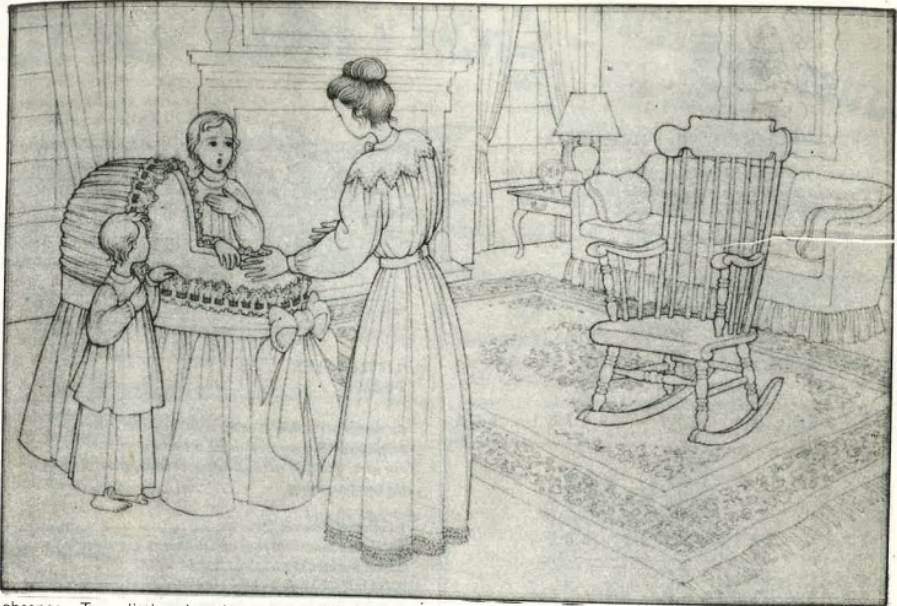
“Noel was only sixteen years old, yet already she would make her debut on the stage of Paris. She was in the French ballet. The newspapers had something to say about Noel, that she was very young to be in the ballet. Although she did not have the lead role, she had an important part.

“Noel danced on two nights and a little later on a third night. By the time of the third performance people were coming from miles around just to see Noel. The papers had said she was very good. But suddenly, Noel quit the ballet never to perform again. She walked off stage in tears that night. She would not even go back for a second bow. All of Paris seemed to wonder why. Why would she give up so promising a career so suddenly, so unexpectedly? It was a career that any young girl would dream of. But Noel would not say. Soon the papers had nothing more to write of her and she was forgotten.

“Years later a strange incident occurred in the life of Noel that prompted her to tell a young couple, her closest friends, the reason why she quit. ‘The costumes we wore for the ballet were really quite immodest. I knew it, but I kept telling myself that it was all right. This was just art. But my conscience bothered me. I kept reassuring myself, it is the grace of movement that makes ballet beautiful. No one will look at me the wrong way. It is only art.

“ ‘But the sensation of guilt overwhelmed me and I had all I could do to finish my third performance. My costume was really quite immodest—and me, a Catholic girl. I went immediately to confession.

“ ‘Father was very kind, but he said I was right in coming, that art does not excuse, and girls are at fault if they dress immodestly. He expressed his regret that the ballet was immodest because he said there was nothing wrong with grace of movement which is artistic and beautiful when modestly done. But he doubted if the ballet would ever become a modest performance because it required a certain freedom of movement that would always tend to be immodest. He told me that God asked the martyrs to give up their lives for Him, but only asks me to give up the ballet. Before giving me absolution, he



left me with these final words: ‘Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.’

“Now, Noel was a good Catholic girl. She went often to daily Mass, but she was not without her faults. In particular, she was very prideful. Her brief career with the ballet company had had its effect on her. She was often short-tempered and rude. She had a hard time saying ‘thank you’ whenever anyone did her a kind deed. Noel knew of her fault and often asked God to help her overcome it, but she didn’t try very hard. She thought it would take a lifetime of effort. On account of her arrogant personality, she had very few friends. But one young couple had become friends with her. They understood Noel and were willing to put up with her faults.

“On one Christmas Eve, they invited her to go with them to Midnight Mass. Noel, who was twenty-three years old at the time, arrived at their apartment early because she wanted to visit awhile. But when she knocked on their door, she heard no answer.

“ ‘It’s ten p.m.,’ Noel looked at her watch. ‘I’m an hour early. I wonder where they’ve gone?’ She tried the door and it was open. ‘I’ll await them inside,’ she thought as she walked in and took a quick glance around. ‘They must have stepped out for only a moment,’ she said to herself. Noel sat down comfortably in a large French rocker in the middle of the room.

“It was some time before she noticed the beautiful bassinet under the window on the other side of the room. When she saw it she exclaimed in surprise, “I didn’t know they were expecting a baby!’ She hurried over and ran her hand along the top edge of the French bassinet. It was covered in satin

and trimmed in lace. The bassinet was so new and fresh that a soft glow seemed to emanate from it.

“Suddenly, Noel was startled to notice a baby sleeping in the bassinet, a beautiful boy of a few months old. He looked as comfortable as though his mother had just put him down for the night. Two little boys stood facing Noel on either side of the bassinet. Suddenly, Noel noticed them as well. They too, seemed to have been there all along. One was about three years old and the other about five. They just stood there looking in at the baby with one hand on their hearts and the other hand resting gently on the edge of the bassinet. The little boys were beautiful. Noel was puzzled.

“The soft glow then turned to a dazzling brightness and the whole startling scene became clear to Noel. These were not children. They were Angels, and the Baby was the Christ Child. Overcome with surprise and emotion, and hardly aware of what she was saying, Noel asked the older Angel, ‘Oh! May I hold Him?’

“You must think of course that the Angel would say ‘yes,’ but that is not what he said. The beautiful little Angel looked sternly at Noel as if he was startled that she would dare ask such a question, and very firmly said, ‘No!’

“Noel burst into tears. She stood there a moment with her face in her hands, crying. Then, through her sobs, she managed to say, ‘But I love Him.’

“Without taking his eyes off the Christ Child, the littler Angel said, ‘If you truly love Him, Noel, then you may hold Him.’

“Noel lifted the Christ Child into her arms and rested His head on her shoulder. In spite of her uncontrolled sobbing, He did not awaken, but He stirred in His sleep, and put His tiny arm around her neck.

“A few blocks away, the church bells tolled the midnight hour, and Noel's friends—who had expected her to meet them at the church—wondered at her absence. Two little altar boys took hold of the priest's alb and lifted it as he ascended the altar steps to begin Mass. In much the same way the two little Angels took hold of the edge of Noel's skirt and lifted it slightly as they escorted her to the rocking chair in the centre of the room. After seating Noel, they turned and faced her, never taking their eyes off the Christ Child. They stood by with one hand on their hearts, and the other resting gently on each arm of the rocker.

“Poor Noel! She could not control her sobbing. The ‘No’ of the Angel had broken her heart. The tears streamed from her eyes long into the night as she rocked the Infant, asleep under her chin.

“Suddenly, morning bells from the church tolled the six o'clock hour. Noel woke up with a start. Her arms were empty! The Christ Child was gone! The Angels were gone too! Noel leaned back in her rocker and lifted her tired head. ‘I've slept here all night,’ she thought to herself. ‘Was it only a dream? My friends, they never returned!’ She remembered then that they had all planned to go on to her friends' relatives' house for a feast after Midnight Mass.

“Then she caught sight of the bassinet in the faint morning light. Hurrying over, she ran her hand along its top edge. There was no satin. No lace. It was just plain white wicker. ‘It must have been only a dream,’ she sighed out loud. ‘Only a dream.’”

“The church bells tolled again, calling all to the first Mass of Christmas Day. ‘Oh, what does it matter,’ Noel thought as she hurried out the door and down the stairs. ‘I can hold Him again. I can hold Him in my heart in Holy Communion.’”

“As Noel said this, she put her hand over her heart and stopped suddenly at the foot of the stairs. Her blouse was damp! She reached the door and caught sight of her reflection in the glass. Her face was streaked, her blouse damp from the tears she had shed that night.”

After a moment of silence, Father John said, “When you go to Communion you are actually closer to God than if you could hold Him in your arms as Noel did. It is no different.”

“Father, why did the Angel say ‘No’ to Noel?” I asked after another moment of silence.

“Noel gave up her career for the sake of modesty,” Father answered, “and God wanted to show her how very pleased He was, but He wanted to correct her pride as well. A pride that might have taken a lifetime to correct was repaired in a single moment, by a simple ‘No,’ by the pain of a broken heart.”



# All Through

# the Night

by Rachael Field  
Taken from “Crusade” Vol. III, #6,  
Dec/Jan 1985-1986



*Christmas Eve, with all its joy and beauty, carried with it a vision of things to come to the little dog who watched the Christ Child.*

ALL THAT DAY the inn yard had been thronged with people coming to pay their taxes in the town of Bethlehem. The small sturdy watchdog, who slept in the stable and picked up what food he could find, had never before seen such a crowd of travellers.

When night fell, he was tired from barking at so many strangers and their beasts, and with scurrying out of the way of feet and hoofs. But, for all the barking and running about, it had been a good day. The inn had overflowed into the yard. There had been a fire there with meat roasting over it and pots



that sent out clouds of savory steam. Many a rich morsel had fallen his way, so he felt well content as he crept into his corner of the stable near the oxen's stall.

Night was coming fast and all the birds and beasts and insects of the stable knew that it belonged to them. The world was theirs as the world of day could never be. When the sun rose, man would be their master again. They would carry his burdens or feed or serve him according to their different gifts. But night was their own. It was good that this should be so, the little dog thought as he burrowed deeper into the straw.

His sworn enemy, the cat, slid by. She moved like a shadow with fiery-green eyes ready to pounce upon the mice who were already squeaking and scampering at their play. But the dog was too tired and comfortable to give chase, so for once he let her pass. All about him crickets chirped in rusty chorus, and sometimes a bat swooped so low he could feel the stir of its wings. The darkness was warm and alive with the familiar accents of fur and feathers and grain and straw.

"Rest well. Rest well. Rest well." The doves cooed sleepily, making a soft sound in their throats that was like the bubbling of a well-filled pot over a fire.

Night had come to Bethlehem. The inn had been full hours ago. The dog could hear late travellers being turned away. The stable door was bolted against intruders, and the wind was rising, frosty and keen. Through an opening in the roof a star shone bright as purest silver.

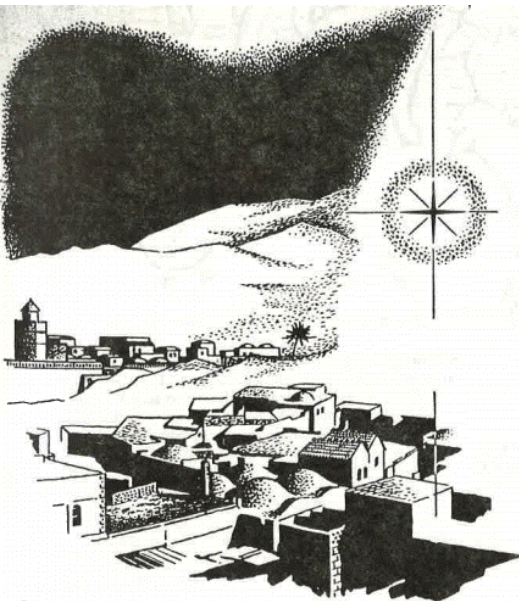
"I never saw a star look so large or so near," the cock observed as he moved about with his spurred, high-stepping walk. "Somehow it makes me very

restless, and there is something strange in the air. Perhaps you have felt it, too?"

But the dog made no answer. He yawned and laid his pointed muzzle on his paws and prepared himself for sleep.

He woke at the sound of voices outside and roused himself to bark. But though the hair rose along his back, no sound came rumbling from his throat. The bolt was drawn and the stable door opened to lantern light and the dim shapes of two men and a donkey on whose back a woman sat, wrapped in a heavy cloak.

"Well"—the voice of the



innkeeper sounded short and impatient—"if you cannot go on, there is only the stable to offer. Coming as you have at such an hour, you are fortunate to have this shelter till morning."

"The roads were crowded," the man answered him, "and our pace was slow because of my wife. You can see that she is nearly spent."

"Yes. Yes." The innkeeper was already shutting the door. "I am sorry for your plight, but I tell you there is no room." The dog was on his feet. He could hear the other animals rising about him, yet not one of them uttered a sound. Their throats were as silent as his own.

In the flickering lantern light he watched the man lift the woman from the donkey's back and set her upon her feet. She was so weary she would have fallen, but for the man's arms.

"Joseph," she said, "you must not be troubled for me." She rested her head on the man's shoulder and sighed so softly it might have been one of the doves in the rafters.

"But, Mary," the man went on, "it is not right and fitting that you should be here—not in a stable among the beasts."

"Who knows," she comforted him, "what is to be? These beasts are more kind than men who kill and hurt one another. I am glad to be here. Their warm breath comforts me. Their straw is clean and soft to rest upon."

Everywhere beyond the ring of light that the lantern made, bright eyes were upon the strangers. Furry ears and quivering noses pointed, alert and watchful.

The strange donkey, freed of his load, found a place beside the ass. He sank down, too tired to drink water or reach for a mouthful of hay.

A hush was on the stable. Not only were all throats silent, but no wings stirred; no claws scratched and not a hoof pounded. And in that hour nothing died. The young swallows and mice were safe from their enemies, for a mystery greater than death held them all in its power.

The lantern flickered and went out.

"Our light is gone!" the man cried out in distress.

"There will be light enough." The woman spoke in a faint voice, and as if in answer the star in the roof gap shone brighter than before.

How long it was after that the little dog could not tell. Morning was still far off, yet the cock suddenly lifted up his voice, so shrill and clear it seemed he would split himself in two. It was not like any other cockcrow since the world began, and it rose higher than the rafters and mounted to heaven





itself.

At the same instant each creature found voice and joined with him. Every living thing in the stable had a part in that swelling chorus of praise. Even the bees hummed till their hive throbbled with music, sweeter than all its store of honey.

"What manner of place is this?" the man cried out in wonder. "What beasts are these who have the tongues of angels?"

But the woman answered him softly out of the shadows. "It was they who gave us shelter this night. Let them draw near and be the first to worship."

She drew aside the folds of her cloak, and light filled the stable even to the farthest corners. The dog cowered before such strange brightness. When he dared to look more closely, he saw that it encircled the head of an infant, new born.

"There is no bed for Him to lie upon," the man sighed. "Only this"—and he pointed to the manger.

"My heart tells me there will be nights when He will have no place at all to rest His head," the mother said.

So the Child lay quiet in the straw-filled wooden manger, and all the animals came to view Him there—the oxen, the cow, the ass and the donkey, the ewe and her lambs, the grey goat, the dog, the hens, and the proud cock ruffling his feathers. The cat left off her prowling to join them, and the mice ran beside her without fear. The crickets came, too, drawn from the comfort of their warm straw; the bees, from their snug hive. The tireless ants and spiders left their toil to draw near. The swallows in the eaves flew down; the bats bent low on their dark wings, and the doves come closest of all with their soft murmurs above the manger. When they had all seen the Wonder they returned to their places and were quiet.

All but the dog. He could not rest as he had before. He stretched himself beside the manger and lay with his head on his folded paws, his eyes wide and watchful as the hours passed.

Long before sunrise the door opened without sound of bolt being drawn and a band of shepherds came in. They bore a strange tale on their lips, and they also worshipped on bended knees. One carried a lamb in his arms and the Child answered its bleating with a smile.

"Behold the Lamb of God," they said to one another as they turned to go back to their flocks on the hills.

The star grew pale and through the gap in the stable roof; morning showed rosy in the east. Even before the cock hailed it, the dog knew that the sun was up. But he did not move lest he rouse the three in his care. It was then that he saw a strange thing.

The rafters high above cast their shadows as the rising sun struck through. Two of the beams crossed in sharp black bars that fell directly across the sleeping Child.

It was a shadow of the Cross.



## A Little Heart to Heart Talk

*(continued)*

The city of David is Bethlehem. As I said, welcome to Bethlehem. “And this shall be a sign unto you...” A sign! A clue! We love clues. They remind us of a treasure hunt, and the Mass is the greatest of all treasure hunts. “You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.” Let us think about this sign for a moment. Think of it like the riddle of the Mass. Swaddling clothes...a poor, white covering wrapped by Mary round and round the Christ-child’s sacred Body. A simple white covering for God-made-man. Round, simple, covering... The host! Yes, the host at Mass looks like simple white bread, but these appearances cover God-made-man. These appearances have become His swaddling clothes.

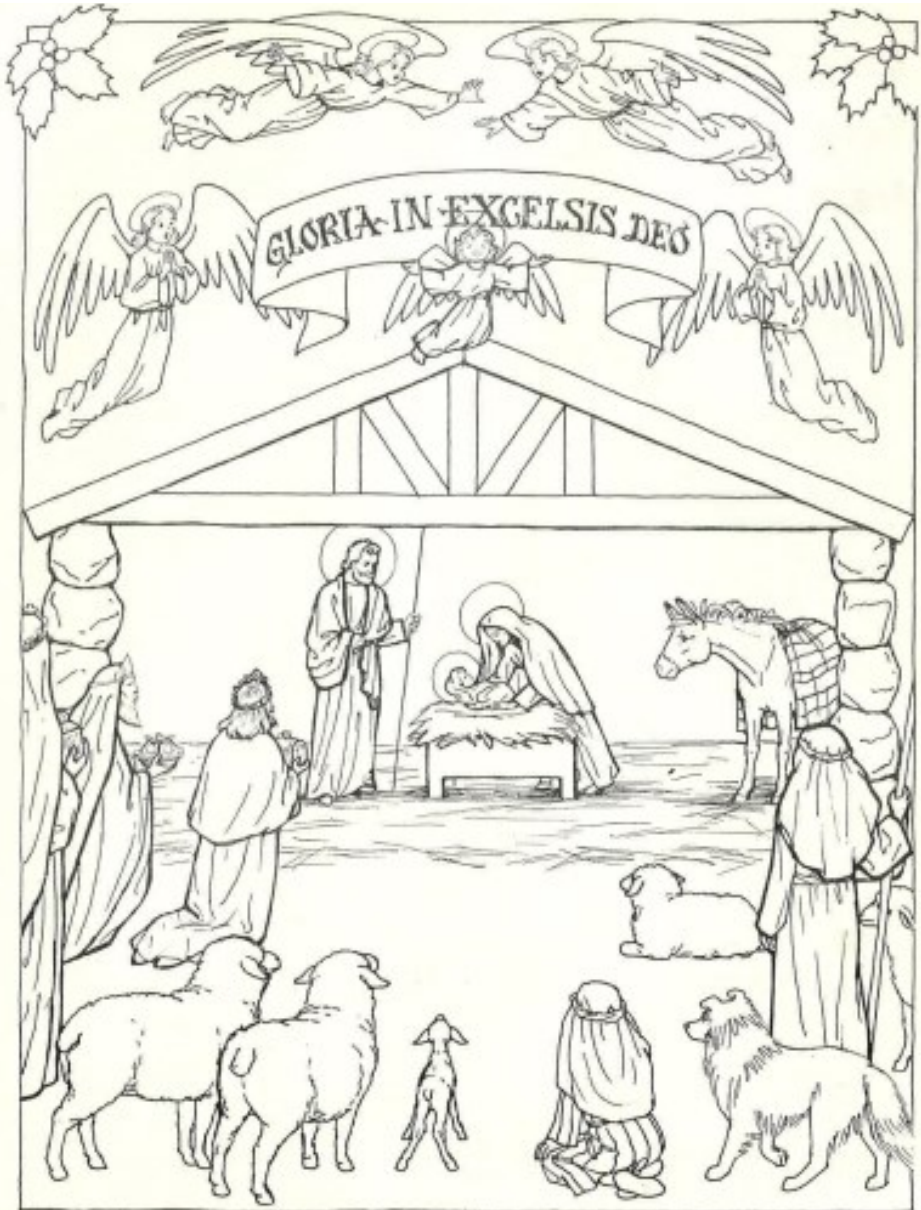
But wait: there is a second part to this sign. You shall find Him “laid in a manger.” What is a manger? It is the place where the sheep (and other animals) come to eat straw. We are the lambs and sheep. The angels sing of how Jesus came to be our food: Holy Communion. Every Mass is, in a way, like Christmas, like Christ-Mass. Let us sing the Gloria in our hearts with the angels at every Mass! At sung Masses, let us sing it even with our voices. The choir sings the angel’s part and we respond like the shepherds and flock. Let us lovingly gather around the crib of Jesus with the Mary and Joseph, with the shepherds and sheep.

When it is time to wake up for Sunday Mass, be the first one out of bed, like on Christmas morn. Do not moan and groan and complain, like a stubborn, selfish donkey. If you have been such a donkey before, or a bit of a black sheep, it is time to change. Come to the stable in Bethlehem. Come as close to the crib as you can; do not choose a place way in the back of the church unless all the front pews are already full. Pay attention to what is going on during Mass. Do not just dream like the ox about what’s for breakfast after Mass. Sing to Jesus! He is the Lamb of God. Of all the flock, of all mankind, He is God’s Lamb. *Agnus Dei*, we call Him in the Gloria. He is the Lamb of God, and soon He will be slain for us. Soon He will offer His sacrifice, while we watch and weep; but for now, let us rejoice with the angels at His birth. Offer Him gold. Offer Him frankincense. Offer Him myrrh, for He alone, of all mankind, is holy, is Lord, is God Most High, Jesus Christ. Thank Him for coming to us. Thank Him for being Him. Love Him for Who He is.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> *It is interesting that there is a special rubric for the votive Mass of the Angels. Not every votive Mass has a Gloria, but the Mass of the Angels always has. It is almost as if the angels cannot help singing!*

# Colouring Page



# Crusader Games

*Taken from "Crusade" Vol. V, #6, Dec 1986/Jan 1987*

## Centennial Dice Game

Here's a game you can play almost anywhere on your summer holidays, with your friends or your brothers and sisters! All you need are three dice and a unique token for each player to move up and down the board (see below). It is best played with 2-6 people. The tokens can be from another board game, or be coins, etc...use whatever you've got. This game has several other names, such as Martinetti, Round Dozen or Ohio, and apparently it was even played by Roman soldiers centuries ago...perhaps it was this game that St. Longinus and the other soldiers played beneath the Cross of Our Lord.

The rules are these: Place all the tokens by the number 1. Use an initial roll of one die to see who goes first (highest roll wins). Play then goes clockwise. The first player rolls all three dice. If at least one of the dice is a 1, he can move his token onto that square. If he also rolled a 2, he can immediately go to the 2 square. Also he can add any of the three dice together, such as  $1+2=3$ , meaning he can advance to the 3 square. Then perhaps his third dice might be a 4, which means he finishes his round at the 4 square. Once he can no longer use his dice singly or added together to move consecutively in this fashion, his turn is over. For example, if he rolls 1, 2, and 5, he must stop at the 3 square, because he can't skip over the 4 square to use the 5. If he rolls 1, 2, and 3, however, he can add  $1+3=4$ ,  $2+3=5$ ,  $1+2+3=6$ , and end on the 6 square. If you cannot use your die at all, for example, if you don't roll a 1 on the first roll, you must skip your turn. The first one to make it all the way around the board, starting at 1 and going to 12 and then from 12 back to 1 in the second row, wins the game. Feel free to copy the template below to make a bigger board, if needed. And enjoy!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

# Riddles & Brain Teasers

1. What's the difference between a thief and a church bell?
2. What time is it when the clock strikes 13 times?
3. When was beef the highest?
4. What three words did Adam use when he introduced himself to Eve, which are the same said backwards or forwards?



I often murmur, but never weep,  
 Lie in a bed, but never sleep;  
 My mouth is larger than my head,  
 In spite of the fact I'm never fed;  
 I have no feet, but swiftly run,  
 The more falls I get, move faster on.  
 What am I?

(Taken from "Crusader", Vol. V, #6, Dec1986/Jan 1987)



## The Sisters' Corner

(continued)

"Then one prisoner, an Austrian gifted with a beautiful voice, intoned *Silent Night*. One by one, most of the prisoners joined in. We went on to sing every Christmas carol we knew...The prison walls seemed to melt away. It was Christmas, and the Christ Child had come down from heaven to be among us, bringing His peace, joy and friendship. The atmosphere was so marvellous and so comforting that all my life, I shall ever remember that serenade we sang to the Infant Jesus."

You see then, dear Crusaders, how this good priest prepared himself for Christmas. You cannot give up eating bread—you need to eat so that you will grow—but there are other sacrifices you can make for the Infant Jesus. Try to imitate this generous priest by radiating the light of the Child Jesus on those around you by your creative and joyful charity...the charity of a true Crusader!

Have a good Advent and a very blessed Christmas!

*The Sisters*

1) One steals from the people and the other peals from the steeple.  
 2) Time to get the clock fixed. 3) When the cow jumped over the moon.  
 4) "Madam, I'm Adam."  
 Poem riddle answer: A river.

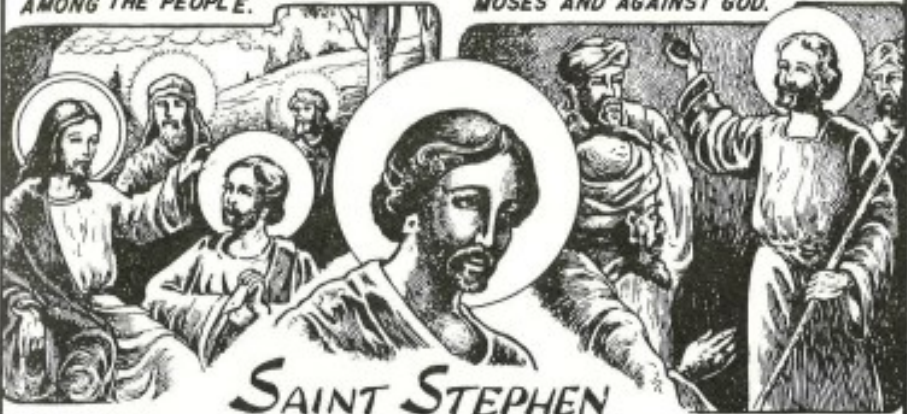




# SAINT SPOTLIGHT: ST. STEPHEN, PROTOMARTYR

ST. STEPHEN WAS ONE OF THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES OF OUR BLESSED LORD. AFTER THE ASCENSION HE WAS CHOSEN ONE OF THE SEVEN DEACONS. AMONG THE SEVEN, STEPHEN ESPECIALLY, "FULL OF GRACE AND FORTITUDE, DID GREAT WONDERS AND SIGNS AMONG THE PEOPLE."

A GREAT MANY ADVERSARIES ROSE UP TO DISPUTE WITH HIM, BUT "THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE WISDOM AND THE SPIRIT THAT SPOKE." AT LENGTH HE WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN, CHARGED, LIKE HIS DIVINE MASTER, WITH BLASPHEMY AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST GOD.



## SAINT STEPHEN

LOVE JUSTICE, YOU THAT ARE THE JUDGES OF THE EARTH. THINK OF THE LORD IN GOODNESS, AND SEEK HIM IN SIMPLICITY OF HEART.



HE BOLDLY UPBRAIDED THE CHIEF PRIESTS WITH THEIR HARD-HEARTED RESISTANCE TO THE HOLY GHOST AND WITH THE MURDER OF THE "JUST ONE." THEY WERE STUNG WITH ANGER, AND GNASHED THEIR TEETH AGAINST HIM.



BUT WHEN, " FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST AND LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN HE CRIED OUT, 'BEHOLD I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,' THEY RUSHED UPON HIM AND DRAGGING HIM FORTH WITHOUT THE CITY, THEY STONED HIM TO DEATH."

