

Dear Fathers, Mothers

by Alfredo, G. Parpan, S.J.



Christmas is the story of how heaven and earth were reconciled through the birth of a Child, a beautiful Child who grew to a strong and vigorous manhood, climbed a hill and died on a cross and rose again from the dead to show men the way to heaven where they may forever be happy in an eternal Christmas with Him.

And so, every year we celebrate the wondrous birth of that wondrous Child who came to earth that men may have life and have it more abundantly, that men may have the love and peace and hope they had hungered and craved for through the centuries. Christmas is the birthday of the God-made-man—that is why it should mean so much for every man. Christmas itself is the greatest, Christmas gift God ever gave to men. Is it a wonder, then, that every child, that every man should have for Christmas the brightest twinkle in his eyes, the softest spot in his hearts, the sunniest smile?

There is no mother and father on earth who do not desire, who will not spend as much as—and even more than—their pocket books will allow to make of Christmas the happiest of days for their children. For dear mothers and fathers, nothing is more pleasant to your ears than the sound of your children's laughter; nothing more heartwarming to your hearts than the warmth of your children's pleased smiles. You re-live once more, you recapture, you experience anew that incomparable thrill of waking on a Christmas morning and finding — ah! bliss of all bliss! — your heart's desire—perhaps a toy gun and a holster, a toy train or a rag doll! And to those of you who missed that thrill in your own childhood and woke up many a Christmas morning never to find even the least semblance to what you had long wished for and desired, you are the ones who are fiercely determined now that your children will enjoy and get what you never enjoyed and got!

For even a child may, early in life, learn to hide beneath his silence and laughter his own little broken heart.

Christmas is just a matter of weeks in coming. I'm sure you will do everything within your means to make this Christmas a really happy and memorable one for your little ones. Candies and toys, books and extra clothes, shining gewgaws and fascinating little knick knacks so dear and precious to the hearts of children will not be wanting to them. Truly blessed are your children to have such parents as you. And thrice blessed—really and truly happy will their waking be on Christmas morning.

But I would like to write to you also of other children, children who do not have parents such as you. They are the children of those who do not have the means that you have. They are the children of those who live in the quarters of our city that social workers call the slums. They are the children of the workingmen, the "have-nots," the poor whom you see everywhere around you. These are the children I want you to remember. They live and sleep where you would not wish your own children to live and sleep—in dark and dingy *acesories* or flimsy, makeshift *barong-barongs* by foul smelling *esteros*. They do not eat what your children eat and take for granted—their daily bread and butter, eggs, oatmeal and milk. They are not clothed as your children are

clothed. What your children wear to school, they would consider their holiday best. They are the children of the poor.

They have discovered early that Santa Claus was but a myth indulged in only by the children of the rich. They know what poverty is—cold, harsh, ugly, hungry, naked poverty. They live it. They also know what wealth is—gaudy and glittering. They have seen it displayed, paraded and flaunted before their eyes. Have you not seen these children of the slums, these children of the poor? They also have their own childhood to enjoy as much as your little ones. And yet they have to be bootblacks, newsboys, peddlers and hawkers at an age that calls for play and study. Perhaps you have seen a group of them, their faces pressed against a department store window — a sight indeed far more eloquent than words. Perhaps you were a bit annoyed, and I do not blame you. For ill-blad, undernourished bodies, pinched cheeks and scrawny arms do not make these little ragamuffins of the streets very lovable creatures. But have you ever stopped to talk to one of them? Have you ever looked down on lusterless eyes? They speak a message of hunger and want. They are eyes that plead more eloquently than pleading words or pleading hands.

These are the children I want you to remember. They also have a Christmas to celebrate. They have also longed for Christmas. They will

also wake on Christmas morning. Christmas was also meant for them. Christ, in fact, was born as one of them. Christmas must never be "just another ordinary day" for them. The Christmas message of love, its hymn of peace, its note of hope must

reach their young hearts and warm their elders' hearts on Christmas. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" was the injunction of Christ. Suffer the children of the poor to learn also the message of the Crib!



A certain holy bishop once preached a sermon on the text that Christ will reward charity a hundredfold. There was a man named Evagrius in the congregation, and after the sermon he went to the bishop and gave him a large sum of money to be distributed to the poor.

The bishop then gave him in return a letter in which he had written down the text containing Christ's promise to the charitable.

The man died suddenly not long after, with the letter in his hand.

Three days later he appeared in a dream to the bishop, and said: "Come and take back the letter; my reward is already received."

The bishop and his clergy proceeded to the tomb, opened it, and took the letter, and they found written in place of the bishop's words the following:

"Evagrius to the bishop: I do not wish you to remain ignorant of what has happened to me. God has indeed already given me a reward one hundred fold for all the money I gave you. You owe me nothing now."



A graphic lesson in the folly of pride is contained in the following little incident. When the Italian statesman, Cavour, visited the emperor Napoleon III in 1859, he is said to have remarked:

"Do you know that there are only three men in Europe? We two and Bismarck."

Before many years elapsed, Napoleon had died in exile.

The life work of Cavour, the creation of the kingdom of Savoy, crashed into ruins with the death in exile of Victor Emmanuel III.

Bismarck created the Hohenzollern ascendancy; today it is only a memory.



An Irishman was planting trees in his yard when a lady passing asked: "You're digging out the holes, are you, Mr. Haggerty?"

"No, Mum, I'm diggin out the dirt an' lavin' the holes."