



Sharings

USA Newsletter

Volume 33

Number 1

January 2003



The Word was made Flesh

And

Dwelt Among Us

Editor's Notes

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. He is Emmanuel- God with us.

We are still in the Christmas season and at the beginning of the New Year of 2003. We are aware more keenly than ever of our schizophrenic world. We are more aware of the dichotomies of light and darkness, good and evil, war and peace, life and death to name a few. Is there anything new in this under the sun?

We call to mind Moses challenge to his people in Deuteronomy, 31:19: "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life..."

That same choice is ours today with all of its ramifications as set before us by all of the teachings of the Old Testament as well as those of Jesus who came that we may have life and life abundantly.

We were astonished to hear in recent news that only 40 % of the people in England believe in God whereas in the USA 90% believe in God. The commentator wryly said that one reason given for this difference was that the Puritans were thrown out of England because of their religious beliefs and went to America where some of the rigidity of religious beliefs remains to this day. What!

Also in the news with regard to the use of stem cells from embryos, in Great Britain this is accepted, as the English are scientifically pragmatic. In the USA our leadership objects to this use of stem cells from embryos because of a strong pro-life stance. What! Is this the same leader who is beating the war drums for war against Iraq?

What outrage can we express about the first cloned human with a promise of more to come?

We were astonished to read in America Magazine, "Living Stones of the Holy Land", the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah say; "Today there are no Christian powers to protect us as in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are Christian people in the West, of course, but **no Christian nations.**" What! Have we as a nation not written in our Declaration

of Independence "one nation under God?" "In God we trust" is stamped on all of our coins and bills.

And what shall we say about our embattled Church in the USA? More widely published disclosures elicit feelings of dismay, disillusionment, depression, humiliation, anger, fury and on and on as we run the gamut of emotions. Is there anything new in the Church? Oh yes, we can go back in the history of the Church as far back as the time John wrote about the antichrists who abandoned them. (1 Jn.2: 18-21). We have read of various scandals down through the centuries. But this is **Our Church in Our time.** How could this have happened? How do we restore faith and trust? How can our Bishops restore their moral authority, which enabled them to speak out so forcefully and effectively on behalf of peace and justice?

We the faithful, the People of God, need to truly believe that God is with us. Now is the time for us to choose LIFE. So let us raise our drooping spirits and heavy hearts, sursum cordum and greet the New Year of 2003 with a resounding voice "to LIFE!"

Rosemarie Higgins, fmm

To seek for nothing, to love nothing apart from Jesus, this is justice. I want my God, He is all; therefore all the rest is nothing and should not make me lose my peace. To please you and possess you, O love! This indeed is the thirst of my soul. Your grace and the Eucharist; behold my treasures on earth...Years ago, God spoke these words to me: "Begin on earth the life of your eternity." That is why, O Jesus my food, I will live by you and I will live for you.

(Blessed Mary of the Passion, He Speaks to Me in the Heart of His Church, 137)

Please remember in your prayers

Our sick relatives and friends

Cathy Boudreau who is scheduled to have heart surgery;

Carol Flaherty who broke her wrist when she fell on the ice near her work;

Jimmy Duchaney, Emily's brother, who will undergo an operation for cancer of the kidney;

Margaret Gargan's nephew, Michael who was operated on for cancer;

Agnes Begley's niece Ann Brady who had emergency heart surgery;

Joan Higgins, critically ill, sister-in-law of Rosemarie;

Lois Houlihan's cousin Rosemary Finney who will undergo hip replacement surgery.

Corinne Powers, Jackie LaVie's niece is in the last stages of cancer.

Liliane Alam's sister, Norma, is struggling with a recurrence of cancer.

Cristina Sanchez's nephew, 12 yrs. is back in hospital with a possible brain tumor.

Our deceased relatives and friends

Cecilia Castrillon, fmm's brother Dario who died;
Mary Bayer's cousin Catherine Schneider;
Jeanne Letendre's cousin Alice;
Germaine Lambert's niece's son Don Dozois (37) who was killed in a car accident in Canada.

.Emilie Duchaney's grand niece Elizabeth, 18 yrs old, was killed in a car accident the last day of 2002

Sending

Sr. Theresa Gier has been sent to Ein Karim Community at St. Antoine's. She moved there Thursday December 26th after a missioning prayer in Queen of Peace Community Room.

O.L. Lourdes Community

Maria Lee, who has been studying English here, departs for Rome Jan. 19th to continue other studies.



New Year Greetings from Abroad

Bien chères soeurs: Un tout petit "bonjour" pour vous dire toute mon affection et remerciements pour me faire participer à la vie de la Province à travers l'envoi du SHARINGS, que je reçois régulièrement. Que le Seigneur vous bénisse et vous accorde une année 2003 de paix, de joie, de bonheur, et de riches expériences spirituelles.

Je vous reste bien unie et vous embrasse affectueusement

Maria Guadalupe fmm

Dear Rosemary and all,

Thank you very much for the most beautiful electronic card. It was amazing, and such a lovely message which you took the trouble to do.

May the New Year of 2003 bring you much peace and may God give wisdom to Bush and his cronies as they plan to make war on Iraq. God help us all!
With love and blessings,

Madonna Purcell, fmm

Thanks

Dear Sisters,

Thank you so much for your loving support and encouragement and your prayers for me during these years of my initial formation and especially of my Final Vows. Thank you very much for your thoughtful wishes and gifts, Mass cards and being with me and praying for me at my Vows ceremony. Thanks also to you who were not able to be but were present with me in prayers and spirit. I can't express enough how grateful I am.

May our loving God bless you and reward abundantly what you have done for me. Please continue to pray for me as I begin my new mission.

With love and gratitude,
Nga Le, fmm

Fruit Hill Franciscan Youth

On Friday, December 28 in Lourdes Hall at Fruit Hill the Franciscan Youth gathered with the sisters for a caroling party. Joining the Youth in direction, accompaniment and voice were guitarist To Anh, and Hoa (novices) Hae-ja, fmm (Korea), Tresi fmm, Janice Teto and her two daughters.

Frances Milano set decorations in place and of course we were under Alma's capable direction. Songs of the season were sung in English, Vietnamese, Spanish and sign language accompanied "Silent Night". Maria Cambio accompanied one of the songs on the keyboard and To Anh played her guitar for most of the carols.

To Anh, Hoa and Mi Pham (who was visiting) sang a joyful Christmas song in Vietnamese. Three members of the Youth who are sisters entertained our Sisters with one of their favorite songs. The Hispanic young women sang a lovely song in Spanish.

After the entertainment the Group joined the sisters at their tables and served them cookies and punch. Janice had brought along cookies and wandis (an Italian pastry) that easily melted in our mouths.

The Group then went to the chapel and sang a song in front of the manger. They admired the lovely infant that had been brought from Rome. Alma then thanked them for coming and sent them on their way with left over cookies.

Nancy Cabral, fmm

Roslyn, NY

St. Francis Community

(Letter received by a former patient)

Dear all the nuns and chaplains at St. Francis,

I hope this Advent letter finds you in good stead. I am writing to you to finally express my gratitude for your kindness and thoughtful presence during my stays in St. Francis Hospital 7/96 & 4/2000.

You have not only been a comfort for me during my stays, but also an inspiration in my faith development. When I was at St. Francis Hospital, I didn't have a faith that I believed in. This past Easter, however, I became a Catholic, and took the name Francis as my Confirmation name, in honor of St. Francis and the hospital that I stayed in.

In my struggles through RCIA classes, I remembered the kindness shown to me by you and it inspired me to trust in Jesus Christ and the Church he founded.

I had moved away to Atlanta, Georgia, but now will be moving back in the area.

I hope to be able to thank you in person. Your humble and gentle presence stirs my heart and inspires me to imitate Christ just as you do.

Yours in Christ,
Matthew Rand.

Her quest is faraway, and noble

By David Wecker, [The Cincinnati Post](#), 10-24-02

Since her retirement from the mission office at the Cincinnati Archdiocese, the enterprising Ruth Holtel has been filling her time supporting a drug rehabilitation program on the other side of the world.

To that end, Ruth has taken on two jobs. She provides home care for an elderly couple in one of the eastside suburbs—which in itself is noteworthy, considering Ruth just celebrated her 73rd birthday. She also cooks three nights a week for the priests at St. Vivian's parish on Winton Road.

The two jobs pay \$1,200 each month, which Ruth forwards straightaway to something called the Marie Adelaide House of Hope Rehabilitation Farm, 100 acres of desert a few hours drive northeast of Karachi, Pakistan.

The Marie Adelaide Rehabilitation Farm is not a high-dollar operation. Until the mid-'90s, the farm's director, owner and originator, a DeLaSalle brother named Norman Wray, was funding it with his \$500 monthly Social Security check.

That was back when Brother Norman was working with 20 men to help them kick their habits. Today, the farm is home to 140 addicts. Ruth is among the farm's chief benefactors, along with three of her friends who are also Brother Norman's friends.

"We put out a newsletter called 'A Ray of Hope' to about 60 people—but of course, only a few of those ever send any money," Ruth says. She is a lean, sprightly woman with sparkly eyes, lively and energetic. Once upon a time, she was a Franciscan sister.

"In two and a half years, we've raised \$87,000. Still, the poor people keep coming. That's why I'm writing to people with big bucks. I'd like to get a hold of Bill Gates."

Ruth comes by her concern for Pakistani drug addicts honestly. As a young Franciscan Sister of Mary in 1954, she was assigned to teach children in Pakistan.

At the time, most of the western world had no idea where Pakistan was or what it was, Ruth included. The young, struggling nation had gained its independence from India only eight years earlier.

She was assigned to teach English, mostly to Moslem children at boarding schools. On her own, she established a small home for eight of the most neglected children and teens she could find.

In the mid-'60s, an era marked by major shifts in the Catholic Church brought about by the Second Vatican Council, Ruth says she began to develop new ideas about what she wanted to do. At the same time, her work with the children was evoking what she calls her motherly instincts.

In 1972, she made the decision to leave the convent and returned to the United States. She brought one of the girls from her home with her.

Her name was Margaret and she was a drug addict.

"I was naïve, idealistic," Ruth says.

"Margaret was 23 when I brought her to the States. My hope was to give her a new life. But she continued with drugs her, then went to alcohol. It

was as if there were too many social freedoms here for her to handle.

"I used to come home and find her in all kinds of situations. I threatened to send her back to Pakistan several times and, that next summer, I did send her back. In fact, I sent her to Brother Norman.

Four years later, Margaret took an intentional overdose of heroin. Ruth has been back to Pakistan twice, once in 1995 and again this summer. On both occasions, she made a point of visiting Margaret's grave.

Ruth says she was impressed at how Brother Norman's farm has progressed. The men who live there cultivate cotton. They've planted 1,000 mango trees in the desert. There is a new dormitory and a small building for prayer.

"My big problem now is, this farm is being run by recovering addicts," Ruth says. "And Norman will be 80 years old in February. There is no one to replace him."

When she brought this up with Brother Norman on her visit to Pakistan in August, he shrugged. He told her that when he's gone, the farm would continue if it is supposed to continue. If not, the farm would have served its purpose.

Ruth doesn't see it that way:

"Shouldn't we do as much as we possibly can? That's why I'm writing to people with big bucks. So these guys in Pakistan who have been addicts for 10, 15, 20 years can have a chance to understand that they're human beings."

(Ruth was a former Franciscan Missionary of Mary)

Letters from prison

Dear Maryann,

Many blessings of hope and reflection throughout this Advent/Christmas season. I was just rereading your good letters and Christmas card. Thanks so much for all the solidarity and support you've given me through these months—and especially for taking part in the resistance-speaking truth to power at Ft.

Benning. In different ways then on the outside things keep changing here as well-some of it very slowly. Outside my narrow slit of a window I'm noticing the leaves just beginning to change color, although it has been quite cold-as I know you must have experienced in Columbus. Someone sent me a pair of long johns that I received yesterday-feels good not to shiver for a change. Yet, when I read Joyce Ellwangers report (she was one of the 85 arrested) about those traumatic days in confinement it makes me wonder how far the authorities are going these days-bordering on methods of torture-especially for the elderly and sick inmates-which is true here as well, particularly if someone has a life threatening illness. But for all of you-it must have been a mixed experience-some of it exhilarating, to be part of the Beloved Community-where all boundaries of age, background, religion, race, etc are erased-all becoming one in efforts of non-violent change-and, on the other side-the harassment (e.g. metal detectors) and many inconveniences with space, hours of patient waiting, etc. You should be getting my Christmas form letter within a week or two. God fill our lives and world with understanding that we are one. No room for war-ever.

Jerry OFM

PS Roy leaves for Iraq this Sunday-December 8 with at least 9 others-a critical time-Advent takes on new meaning this year as we pray for Peace and Reconciliation.

A True Story of a Miracle

Tess went to her bedroom and pulled a glass jelly jar from its hiding place in the closet. She poured all the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times, even. perfect. No chance here for mistakes. Carefully placing the coins back in the box twisting on the cap, she slipped out the back door and made her way blocks to Rexall's Drug Store with the big red Indian Chief sign above the door. She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her some attention but he was too busy at this moment.

Tess twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. Nothing. She cleared her throat with the most disgusting sound she could muster. No good.

Finally she took a quarter from her jar and banged it on the glass counter. That did it!

"And what do you want?" the pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. "I'm talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven't seen in ages," he said without waiting for a reply to his question.

"Well, I want to talk to you about my brother," Tess answered back in the same annoyed tone. "He's really, really sick... and I want to buy a miracle." "I beg your pardon?" said the pharmacist.

"His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my Daddy says only a miracle can save him now. So how much does a miracle cost?"

"We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I'm sorry but I can't help you," the pharmacist said, softening a little.

"Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs."

The pharmacist's brother was a well-dressed man. He stooped down and asked the little girl, "What kind of a miracle does your brother need?"

"I don't know," Tess replied with her eyes welling up. "I just know he's really sick and Mommy says he needs an operation. But my Daddy can't pay for it, so I want to use my money".

"How much do you have?" asked the man from Chicago.

One dollar and eleven cents," Tess answered barely audibly. "And it's all the money I have, but I can get some more if I need to.

"Well, what a coincidence," smiled the man. "A dollar and eleven cents-the exact price of a miracle for little brothers." He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said "Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents. Let's see if I have the kind of miracle you need."

That well dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specializing in neuro-surgery. The operation was completed without charge and it wasn't long until Andrew was home again and doing well. Mom and Dad were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place. "That surgery," her Mom whispered. "was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?"

Tess smiled. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost...one dollar and eleven cents plus the faith of little child.

A miracle is not the suspension of natural law, but the operation of a higher law.

Some references to God in Our Nation's Documents

Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, **one nation under God**, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their **Creator** with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Thrice more in The Declaration God is referenced! It says in the first paragraph, "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God." Then God is called "the Supreme Judge of the world. Finally, in the closing sentence it says, "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." Our Rights/Freedoms do come from God

A Penny

Several years ago, a friend of her husband and mine were invited to spend the weekend at the husband's employer's home. My friend, Arlene, was nervous about the weekend. The boss was very wealthy, with a fine home on the waterway, and cars costing more than her house. The first day and evening went well, and Arlene was delighted to have this rare glimpse into how the very wealthy live.

The husband's employer was quite generous as a host, and took them to the finest restaurants. Arlene knew she would never have the opportunity to indulge in this kind of extravagance again, so was enjoying herself immensely. As the three of them were about to enter an exclusive restaurant that evening, the boss was walking slightly ahead of Arlene and her husband. He stopped suddenly, looking down on the pavement for a long, silent moment. Arlene wondered if she was supposed to pass him. There was nothing on the ground except a single darkened penny that someone had dropped, and a few cigarette butts. Still silent, the man reached down and picked up the penny. He held it up and smiled, then put it in his pocket as if he had found a great treasure.

How absurd! What need did this man have for a single penny? Why would he even take the time to stop and pick it up? Throughout dinner, the entire scene nagged at her. Finally, she could stand it no longer.

She casually mentioned that her daughter once had a coin collection, and asked if the penny he had found had been of some value. A smile crept across the man's face as he reached into his pocket for the penny and held it out for her to see. She had seen many pennies before! What was the point of this? "Look at it." He said. "Read what it says." She read the words "United States of America." "No, not that; read further." "One cent?" "No, keep reading." "In God we Trust?" "Yes!" And?" "And if I trust in God, the name of God is holy, even on a coin.

Whenever I find a coin I see that inscription. It is written on every single United States coin, but we never seem to notice it! God drops a message right in front of me telling me to trust Him? Who am I to pass it by? When I see a coin, I pray, I stop to see if my trust IS in God at that moment. I pick the coin up as a response to God; that I do trust in Him. For a short time, at least, I cherish it as if it were gold. I think it is God's way of starting a conversation with me. Lucky for me, God is patient and pennies are plentiful!

When I was out shopping today, I found a penny on the sidewalk. I stopped and picked it up, and realized that I had been worrying and fretting in my mind about things I can not change. I read the words, "In God We Trust," and had to smile. Yes, God, I get the message. It seems that I have been finding an inordinate number of pennies in the last few months, but then, pennies are plentiful! And God is patient...



In God We Trust