



ST GABRIEL'S Message

St. Gabriel's Church

Prairie du Chien, WI

December, 1983 Vol. II No. 3

Dear Family of St. Gabriel's,

As you read this, Christmas 1983 will just about be upon us. It is the wish of all the staff here at the parish that each and everyone of you will be able to observe this season of Christmas in the spirit of peace and joy which the Christ Child came to bring us by becoming God made man. During the preparatory season of Advent, we saw again and again that these gifts from the viewpoint of God are not just for this season, nor do they flow by our entering into a world of make-believe. Rather, God's word during Advent reminded us over and over that the peace and joy of God is experienced permanently by those who are vigilant and ready to turn back to Him.

In the light of the conversion we are constantly called to, we were reminded that some effort is necessary on our part. God's love and mercy as reflected in the Babe of Bethlehem is steadily outpoured but for it to change us, there must needs be a willingness on our part to accept and respond to it. During the past church year, two instances of conversion were presented to us in the Bishops' pastoral letter on peace and in the Church's revised code of church law. At this point both of these instruments are still unfamiliar to us but it is hoped that in the course of the coming year they will become more familiar and enable each one of us to better reflect our willingness to change necessary attitudes and practices. To a lesser degree perhaps, other opportunities for change occurring in the parish during the past year included the sign up sheets for talents and service, the growing participation in the weekend liturgies, both actively (in song and prayer) and passively (by remaining for the entire liturgy), the observance of the Jubilee Year of Redemption in our communal anointing Mass in early October and in the deanery communal Penance service in early December, the involvement of some new volunteers in various parish projects, and the splendid work of the various parish committees and boards. May God continue to bless each and all of you for any effort already put forth and may He inspire you to continue in greater effort even throughout the new year. Season's Greetings!

Sincerely,

Fr. Boschart, M.

P. S. Unaccustomed as I am to speak to you of finances, because so many of you have done so beautifully over the years with regard to your contributions to the parish, I now ask your leave to just say a word. Just recently, perhaps primarily

due to the drought of this past summer, it has been noticed in the office that the weekly collection was beginning to decline just a bit in comparison to a year ago. This past Sunday, the first Sunday of December, we wound up about \$2,000.00 short of the extremely generous collection of last year for the first Sunday. What makes this doubly troubling is that both Christmas and New Year's fall on a Sunday this year. In 1982 Christmas fell on a Saturday and the collection amounted to \$5,538.24; the next day, a Sunday, another \$4,040.00 was contributed: the total for the two separate collections was almost \$10,000.00. This year I must really encourage you to be extremely responsible with regard to your Christmas contribution since there will be only one collection rather than the usual two. Each year since I'm here we have managed to finish off the financial year in the black but with only one or two thousand dollars to spare. As you can see, even the shortfall of this past weekend wipes out that extra and could spell the difference between black and red ink. Thank you for your attention to this.

MUSIC AS MINISTRY

"A man is a Christian because through the Christian community he has met Jesus Christ, heard his word in invitation, and responded to him in faith. Christians gather at Mass that they may hear and express their faith again in this assembly and, by expressing it, renew and deepen it."

"Music in Catholic Worship"

Bishops' Comm. on the Liturgy

Since 1967, the American Bishops have made a concentrated effort to help us understand the centrality of the Eucharistic Liturgy in our lives as Christians. There is a rather sobering remark which follows a few paragraphs after the words quoted above. Read them carefully:

"Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations weaken and destroy faith."

Music is, admittedly, only one part of the Mass. However, the role of the president (the priest) is also only one part of the Mass. We would never consider starting Mass without a Presider. We are convinced of the importance of the ministry of the priest. We need to develop an appreciation for the other ministries as well. Music is a starting point because, to again quote the bishops, "among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance." It goes on to say that "the quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way."

It is important that we are committed to our ministry in music in much the same way as the Presider is committed in his. Our involvement can never be half-hearted or come-as-you-are.



CHRISTMAS IS

by Frances Dobbs

The joyful celebration of our saviour's birth,
A beautiful, inspiring Christmas Mass,
Singing and listening to familiar Christmas carols,
The glittering, shimmering lights of the Christmas tree,
The arrival of greeting cards from friends and relatives,
Gaily lighted candles and wreaths in our window,
The chiming of bells in the cold frosty air,
Waiting, expectant children with a sparkle in their eyes,
Remembering and sharing with those less fortunate,
Spending and enjoying the day with those we love,
Your smile as you say Merry Christmas,
A hope that peace on earth, good will toward men will someday become a reality.

CHILDREN'S THINKING...

WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

Misty Bedward: What Christmas means to me is it is a time when everyone gets together. It's Jesus's birthday too and that's the best part of Christmas. After we open our presents we go to Mass and then to Grandma's for lunch.

Natalie Anne Kozelka: I think it is a gift of joy, love and laughter. Jesus's birthday is especially nice because we give gifts to each other. The snow is fun, too, but I like to stick to Jesus.

Adam Kratochvill: Christmas is very good to me. Why is it good to me? Because you get some presents and you give presents to people. It is Jesus's birthday.

Lyn Dickman: Christmas means loving, sharing and giving. It is a very fun and happy time of the year. It is a very special time too. It's especially fun to decorate the tree. It is also Jesus's birthday. That was the day that he was born.

Brian Esser: Christmas at Our House
This year we will go to church and come home and open presents from Santa. Christmas night we will go to Aunt Kay's for supper. Then we will come home and thank God for a special Christmas.

C is for Christ whose birthday is here.
H is for help that he came to bring.
R is for rose that he likes.
I is for ice which glows in the dark.
S is for a star which shone.
T is for trail which is seen in the snow.
M is for Mary, the mother of God.
A is for angel who sang.
S is for Santa who brings presents.

Tom Cooley: Merry Christmas
Christmas is a time for snow. Christmas is also a time for presents and lots of toys and goodies. Christmas is a time to celebrate and have lots of joy.

GRADE ONE

S - Stocking	L - Love
N - Noel	O - Open
O - Open	V - Vote
W - Winter	E - Ever
S - Snow	S - Song
O - Open	A - Angel
N - Noel	N - Noel
G - Grow	T - Twinkle
	A - Angel

CHRISTMAS AT OUR HOUSE

Kraig McCoy: At our house we put up a tree. We set up a nativity set. We decorate the house. We buy other people gifts. We bake cookies and candy. We visit our friends and relatives.

Kevin Neisius: At Christmas time we buy a Christmas tree and take it home to trim it. We trim it with colorful lights, balls, ornaments and an angel and a star on top. We make popcorn and cranberry strings for the tree. We make Christmas candy, cookies and sing Christmas songs as we wait for Baby Jesus and Santa to bring us presents under our tree. Christmas Day is Jesus's birthday.

Charlotte Konichek: At Christmas we have our house decorated with a tree, crib and other things. We go to Mass on Christmas Eve and also on Christmas Day. We give presents to each other and have the whole family home for the day and dinner or supper - whenever.

Jesse Myers: Santa Claus, Santa Claus, don't you take a pause? You've got to take the toys to all the girls and boys. The elves are about dead from helping load the sled. Some toys for Suzy, some pompons, and a bike for Mike.



LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH
AND LET IT BEGIN WITH ME!
International Affairs Commission
Submitted by Carol Feyen

During a recent class I attended on the subject of World Peace, I was asked why I was willing to take the time to work for Peace with Justice. My impromptu reply was short for it lacked adequate words for the feelings I had. Since that episode I have spent time reflecting on just what it is which motivates me to the long haul of peacemaking.

From my perspective there is no more compelling reason to engage in peacemaking than the violence which is daily inflicted on the human dignity of massive numbers of people throughout the world. Worldwide starvation, poverty, injustice are all part and parcel of the system which condones and promote the nuclear arms race. This reality is what drives me to oppose the arms race which, Vatican II called "one of the greatest curses on the human race and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured."

To get a sense of this unjust system allow me to quote from World Military and Social Expenditures, 1981:

- *15 children die every minute of every day of the year from hunger;
- *Of 120 million babies born worldwide in 1981, 12 million died before their first birthday;
- *2 billion people do not have safe drinking water;
- *Subsidized dining by top military officials and civilians at the pentagon cost the U.S. taxpayer \$14 per meal. The school lunch program for poor children costs \$1.20 per meal;
- *The cost of the planned Trident submarines could keep all the day-care centers in the U.S. running for the next 200 years.
- *World military expenditures equal the annual income of the poorest half of the world's population, and the world spends 2,300 times more money and resources on military activities than on peacemaking.

It is not easy to keep from becoming depressed and immobilized by the awful reality and magnitude of the world crisis we face. But every little step you are willing to take, is one step on the path to creating the Kingdom of God. As Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee said, and I quote the Times Review, "The great dynamic lesson of Vatican II is that the world is important. It is the seed of the Kingdom. And the Kingdom has begun in us." "It means if you want to be church, then as part of church you help in creating a just society."

One of the steps I have chosen is to volunteer to be on the diocesan task force on the U.S. Bishops' pastoral "The Challenge of Peace: Gods Promise, Our Response". This task force is designed to facilitate the use of the pastoral as a teaching tool and starting point for parishes' adult education classes as well as for schools.

In closing, I would like to share with you this prayer I found in a newsletter of the Jesuit Volunteer Corp.:

I was hungry and you fed the arms race to protect my freedom.
I was thirsty and you built armoured tanks instead of clean water tanks.
I was homeless and you built fall-out shelters in your back garden.
I was naked and you clothed and trained the armed forces.
I was sick but scientists were too busy perfecting new weapons systems.
I was a prisoner of poverty and you argued that it was because of laziness or a necessary atonement for the sins of man...
Then it will be the turn of the President, and the Generals, and all their supporters and all those who were indifferent to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, homeless or naked, sick or in prison and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to Me."

A PEACE THAT WAS MEANT TO BE.

GIFTS OF HEALING

The gifts of power are healing, miracles and faith. The gift of healing is the most widely accepted of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus's first instruction to His disciples was: "Heal the sick!" The gifts of healing are for the supernatural curing of injuries, handicaps, and diseases without the aid of natural means or human skills. They are manifestations of the Holy Spirit working through compassionate human channels to the person in need. Jesus said: "These signs shall follow them that believe .. they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." God's healing can come by a touch, a word, or any other action of faith. Faith is the most important of the gifts for the healing ministry.

The "laying on of hands" usually means touching the sick person's head with one or both hands as you pray. This is scriptural, and provides a "point of contact" for the sick person to "release their faith." It can be a channel for real Spiritual power. Praying in the language the Holy Spirit gives (speaking in tongues) can also bring healing. Read the Gospels and notice the great variety of ways in which Jesus prayed for the sick.

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE WHOLE. Three types of healing can take place in one person: SPIRITUAL HEALING, PHYSICAL HEALING and INNER HEALING.

The greatest healing is SPIRITUAL HEALING. It can be described in one word - FORGIVENESS. This involves receiving God's forgiveness for our sins, and then forgiving those who have sinned against us. PHYSICAL HEALING is glorious; but we can be Christians, in good physical condition and still be miserable and be an emotional cripple. It is through INNER HEALING, through healing of memories that divine healing is made complete. Without inner peace, we cannot be in perfect harmony with our Lord.

God works through us by His Word through our lips. Jesus said, "Go teach." Signs don't follow an individual, they follow the WORD. God has certain laws He works by, and even those to whom He gives the healing ministry don't force healing on anyone. There must be cooperation. Many have thought that if somebody prayed the prayer of faith

for them, they would be healed whether they believed or not. While healing is a privilege provided for all, not all are healed as was indicated in Jesus ministry. (Matt. 13:58)

When I pray for the sick, the first step is to be sure they have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then share the Scriptures and some personal testimonies to get them on HEALING GROUND or to the point where they can reach out in FAITH to receive healing from GOD. The Bible declares that with Christ's stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

I have seen some healings instantaneous, or within a few days, some take longer. A few years ago my mother had a touch of arthritis. It got so bad she could hardly walk. I took her to the doctor as she wanted. He gave her a prescription for pain pills, told her to put hot packs on her knee four times a day, stay off her feet, and come back in two weeks. On the way home about 5 p.m. I had the prescription filled and got a new heating pad. That night she had one heat treatment and one pill. After putting her to bed I prayed. "Dear God, WHY can't she receive healing? I pray for others and they receive, WHAT is this going to do to my reputation if my mother ends up in a wheel chair?" The next morning she got up without a limp or any sign of arthritis. PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS HEALING TOUCH. Another day I was called to pray for a man who had been in the hospital two weeks with back pain. Getting no relief he went home, still having pain and still in bed. We prayed about 10:30 a.m. Saturday and by 3 a.m. NEXT morning he got his wife up to play cards. He felt so good he could not stay in bed any longer. (Luke 1:37)

Jean Hamann



IT'S TIME TO UNPLUG THE CHRISTMAS MACHINE

by Rita Hamann

Christmas is almost here. Does knowing that make you want to hide? Has Christmas become more trouble than it's worth? Do you wish that today was the day AFTER Christmas?

According to Jo Robinson and Jean Staeheli, authors of the book, "unplug the Christmas Machine," the holiday has changed from a delightful folk festival and religious celebration to a twenty-billion dollar commercial venture.

Each December, millions of Americans spend more money than they can really afford, take on more responsibilities than they can comfortably handle, and spend less relaxed time with their families than at any other time of the year.

How can someone break out of this cycle?

One important area has to do with children. Following are some specific tips based on what children really want and need for Christmas.

(1.) Relaxed and loving time with the family.

Parents are often away from their children more in December than in any other month of the year, as their lives become more crowded with Church rehearsals, shopping trips and parties.

(2.) Realistic expectations about gifts.

There may be some people who think that their child will be satisfied with nothing less than twenty packages to open on Christmas morning.

This isn't true. Being realistic about gift expectations must be instilled in children. One way is to teach children to be skeptical about TV commercials.

Another is to discuss with the older school-age children the financial situation of the family, perhaps pointing out that the budget doesn't allow for extreme expenditures towards gifts, decorations, etc.

Also, all children, pre-school to teens, often need to be gently reminded that to give is equally or more satisfying than to receive.

(3.) An evenly paced holiday season.

All parents have to do is hold off on their important family traditions until a week or so before Christmas and then reserve a few favorite activities for after the 25th. This could include visiting relatives, giving parties, etc.

(4.) Strong family traditions.

Traditions give children great comfort and security. The holiday food they eat every year, the visits to family and friends, the familiar decorations - all of these things enrich the children's celebration.

Establishing traditions may not be easy for a young family that is struggling to find its own identity and heritage. It may also be difficult for an older established family to add, subtract or change traditions.

Here are some interesting traditions that may be worth making part of your Christmas.

(A.) Sing Christmas carols. Gather the whole family around the tree, turn out all lights except the Christmas ones, and take turns choosing favorite songs to sing until everyone is satisfied.

(B.) Make a tradition out of opening Christmas cards. The cards arriving each day can be placed in the center of an Advent wreath or some other designated spot. After dinner the family opens the cards together and talks about the people who sent them, showing photos if available. It teaches children about the special people in their parents' lives.

(C.) How about a family calendar for the month of December? Mark the day the family will go to get the tree, the day grandparents are expected to arrive, the day of the school program, the day when, as family, we celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, etc.

(D.) Play family games, honoring requests from different members of the family. Put together a big puzzle the day after Christmas.

(E.) Give each child an ornament every Christmas and collect them all in a special box for them to use on their first tree in their first home.

(F.) The tradition of Kris Kindl, meaning Christ Child - as Christ made present God, in visible form, so we by our good deeds to one another, make God visible once again. Children in the family draw names in the weeks preceding Christmas and do special services for the name drawn. On Christmas eve a written letter with a small gift, reveals identities.

(G.) How about an Advent calendar or an Advent wreath?

(H.) On Christmas eve gather near the manger and have a family member read the story of Jesus' birth, establishing a quiet and reverent atmosphere and reaffirming the true meaning of Christmas.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A PARISH KINDERGARTEN?

It has been under consideration for some time and it is now time to decide whether the parish is in favor of this program. If so, we wish to initiate a kindergarten in August of 1984. We are asking for both financial support and student enrollment in this program. We are interested in your comments concerning this venture. Questions or comments can be mailed to St. Gabriel Board of Education or you can call any of the Board Members or the Principal or just drop a note in the question box in the back of Church. We would like to have your comments by January 5 on which day a Board Meeting will be held.

Some of the Parish Education Board's considerations have been the following and we invite you to do your further reflecting in the light of them:

Pros:

Provides a Catholic environment during the transition from home to school.
Fosters spiritual growth.
Smaller classes than has been the case in the public kindergarten the last several years.
Students in the same school as older members of the family.
Students wish to stay with same friends made in kindergarten.
Increase enrollment throughout the school.
Catholic teacher important.
These are most formative years according to many educators.
We have the facilities for a kindergarten room in the present school building.
We are possibly losing our strong pre-school CCD program unless we get volunteers to replace retiring teachers.

Cons:

Higher expenses.
1/2 Day teacher may be hard to find.
(if only 16 were to enroll).
Bus transportation to be worked out.
Do not have specialists to help students with learning difficulties.

Sometime during January, parents of students in this age bracket will be receiving a letter requesting a commitment in support of the new kindergarten if the parish takes to the idea.

ST. GABRIEL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Brad Steiner, pres.	326-4138
Norma Bloyer	326-8217
Mark DuCharme	326-8910
Tom Hemmer	326-6613
Joe Lehnen	326-8923
Nancy Matousek, sec.	326-2757
Father Boschert	326-2404
Brother Richard	326-4166
Sister Maxine	326-4166
(school 326-8624)	

NOTES FROM THE SISTERS' CHRONICLE

(On the occasion of the Sisters' 150th anniversary, they were asked to share some of their history here in Prairie du Chien.)

On February 23, 1872 the School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived to take over the house and school vacated by the LaCrosse Franciscan Sisters. This residence was on Bluff Street, our present Blackhawk Avenue.

In September of the same year Mother Caroline reopened the school for French children in Rev. Galthier's building which had been vacated by the Dominican Sisters in the 1860's. Seven pupils registered the first year. This mission was dedicated to St. Louis, complimentary to King Louis of Bavaria, one of Mother Caroline's greatest benefactors.

In November, 1872, on the feast of Mary Presentation in the Temple, a new and spacious building, St. Mary's Academy, was ready for occupancy.

In 1873 the parish school opened with an excellent attendance, showing thereby how deeply the people appreciated the Sisters' work. The climate must have been hard on the sisters for each of the following years one or other succumbed and had to retreat to St. Mary's Academy or the motherhouse to recuperate.

In October of 1880 Mother Caroline visited the mission and advised Sr. Amata to take, educate and provide for a few poor children, remarking at the same time, "This great act of charity and love towards the poor will be most pleasing to God and cannot fail to bring blessing upon the mission."

Accordingly, on the 26th of November, 1880, a little girl named Marie Bowser, age 3 1/2 years, was received by the Sisters. She was baptized on December 8th and given the name Mary Caroline, after Mother Caroline. A few months later two other poor children were received and provided for by the Sisters.

In December of 1881 another poor child was brought to the Sisters by Rev. Jno Jutz S.J. This child was nine years old and the daughter of Edward Wall of Wauzeka, whose wife was baptized on her death bed. The father, himself, was far gone in consumption. This child was baptized February 2, 1882 and given the name Mary Patricia.

A new school building was constructed during the summer of 1892, completed in late fall and was ready for occupancy only in the middle of October. As the dedication ceremonies took place on the fourth centenary of the discovery of America, the building was named St. Gabriel's Columbian High School. The work of the Sisters and the good Fathers was blessed, by 1894 the school enrollment was 210. The next year four pupils completed the four year "Course of Studies" satisfactorily, passed the prescribed final examination and received diplomas as graduates from St. Gabriel's Columbian High School. The following September, 1895, the enrollment peaked at 255.

In August of 1899 the Sisters received a gift that had been their desire for a long time, a community chapel for their exclusive use within their own convent house. The little chapel was solemnly dedicated to St.

Joseph on August 19th and Holy Mass offered there for the first time. "Now their Spouse, their Lord and Savior, was under the same roof with them, to remain with them, we trust, till time be no more."

December 31, 1907 one class room in the grade school was closed, owing to a decrease of pupils. At the end of the scholastic year, 1908, the Columbian High School was closed. Now in the future full attention would be given to the grades.

By 1910 the enrollment was down to 180 pupils. "Owing to the prevalence of scarlet fever and whooping cough and the extreme severity of the winter the attendance at school was unusually poor and class work greatly retarded."

In January of 1913 "a meeting of the congregation was held at which it was unanimously decided to remodel and enlarge the Sisters' residence. This work was begun on April 15th and from that time till the close of school year the Sisters were obliged to board at St. Mary's Academy." Work on the convent was completed by August 13th.

In 1916 the Sisters and people rejoiced at the return of the Jesuit Fathers as they once again received charge of St. Gabriel's Parish.

In 1916, "owing to an epidemic of scarlet fever in the city, the school had to be closed from November 14th to 24th. Some time before this, medals of the Immaculate Conception had been distributed to the children to obtain the Blessed Virgin's

protection against sickness of soul and body. Thanks to her intercession, not one of the pupils of St. Gabriel's took scarlet fever during the epidemic."

During the school year of 1916-1917 "considerable attention was given to the various war-time activities recommended to schools by the governor. St. Gabriel's had the honor of being the first school in the county to enroll as a School Auxiliary of the Red Cross." "One period a week was devoted to Red Cross work under the direction of Mrs. M. Doran. Military training was given to the boys during the same period each week." The scholastic studies and religious elements, along with patriotic services, were also stimulated by public prayers and self-denial.

In October of 1918, during an outbreak of influenza in the city all schools were closed by order of the health office from October 13th to November 11th. During this month of enforced vacation the Sisters were permitted to go out into the homes of the poor to do what they could for the influenza patients. Thanks be to God, none of the Sisters got the disease.

Submitted by researcher, Sr. Mary Ernest



"LIVING THE GOSPELS ENHANCES ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES"

The days of the Catholic "answer man" are gone forever. Vatican II put him to rest with these words in its "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World": "Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a crete solution, or even that such is their mission."

We Catholics no longer imagine revelation to be a collection of precisely formulated truths handed down to be memorized by generation after generation. Revelation is a living, ongoing experience of God. As the council's "Constitution on Revelation" explains it: "through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God, out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself." Hence belief on the act of faith, would seem to be not merely the accepting as true what God teaches through

the pastors of the Church, but the loving submission and listening to the Living God personally revealing Himself to the individual through these teachings. Because it is loving, this submission must include a response, which is nothing else than a striving to understand and to carry out in life what was heard. It is this response of all believers which increases and advances the Church's knowledge of revelation and how it applies to right living. ("The Meaning of the Bible" McKenzie)

The Gospels are a way of life not a set of dogmatic beliefs or a strictly historical record. The Word of God is living and true and not just an interesting artifact. It is a two-edged sword that still slices through pretense, cruelty and other deception through which we keep ourselves from growing up.

If the Gospels open to us a way of life, then this world, in your life and mine, is the immediate setting in which we can know it. The life of the Gospels cannot be separate from our most significant human experiences -- from the living and hoping, the loving and longing that mark our efforts to reach each other and also, the special quiet moments we set aside to become ourself.

All the Gospels tell us that God lives closely with man, and that true religion challenges man to find and fulfill himself as completely as possible.

If we live in the mystery of Jesus, then we should be able to recognize the life experience in which this is revealed to us. Otherwise, religion is only wishful thinking, the psychological projection of our infantile needs across the skies, and all our talk about the living experience of Christianity is more a strenuous exercise of the imagination than anything in which we can really believe.

What do we do about this reality of the Gospel life? Are our experiences with each other substantial enough to bear the weight of the redemptive significance they possess if the Gospels are good news? We can find out only by testing this experience, sounding the depths of our struggles to grow and to love one another by living intensely in this world instead of waiting for another one. I hope that these reflections will help people who take this life seriously to enter it more deeply and to know, in the heart of their deepest human searches, that they do live, suffer, and find new life in and through Jesus.

The more we grow into adult Christians who are sure of the center of gravity of our faith in our own human experience, the more the structures of the Church themselves will change. The truth lies in a corrected perception of the contemporary resurrection experience, the surge of vitality unshackled by the passing away of certain religious forms of expression. It is this coming to life that is the sign of our hope for a renewed and more humanly responsive Church. The new Church will take its shape from the Christians who believe in life, from the Christians who keep working at building a better servant community on the basis of the Gospels.

Brother Richard Dahman

May the Lord,
born in a stable
lit by a star,
sung by the angels,
give you
at this special time
and all the year
simplicity of heart
to hear His word,
and peace of soul
to accept His love

