

# Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the Kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more to become *children of God* we must be *born from above* or *born of God*. Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christ be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #526.*

Next to the yearly celebration of the Easter triduum the Church holds sacred the commemoration of Christ's birth and first manifestations. The Christmas season celebrates the appearance of God among us, the beginning of our salvation in Christ. Regardless of tendencies to focus on the child Jesus at Christmas and despite societal

which *is* but is *not yet*. Christmas is not a feast about a child primarily for children. It is the feast of the child "destined for the rise and fall of many" (Luke 2:34), the redemption of Israel.

Christmas is more than an event. Jesus was born in Bethlehem once and for all time but Christ is still with us and will remain with us. It is a mystery! But it is not a separate mystery, distinct and independent of the paschal mystery. Christmas is the beginning of the paschal mystery and draws its true meaning from Easter. The Gospel infancy narratives are more than stories about the birth of a child. They are "infused with a post-resurrection insight into his divinity."<sup>1</sup> The infancy writings "are anticipations of the acceptance and rejection that Jesus would meet unto death. Therefore, Christmas is as integral to an adult understanding of faith as is Easter" (*Lectionary for Masses with Children* [LMC], #44).

The dominant image of the Christmas season is clearly the creche or manger scene which has as its origins liturgical plays performed in abbeys and cathedrals. The image of the

limiting and often do not take us beyond pretending that we are in Bethlehem.

The focus on the creche image was slow to find its way into the church's official liturgical celebration. In the development of the Masses for the celebration of Christmas, the first to develop was the Mass for the day itself. The present lectionary retains the fifth century custom of reading Hebrews 1:1-6 and the Gospel of John 1:1-18. These readings do not relate the expected Christmas story but they concentrate on Jesus being the incarnate Word in our midst. This is key to understanding Christmas. "In the Incarnation Jesus definitively and irrevocably took on our humanity; the destiny of the believers on earth is now to share in his divinity."<sup>3</sup> However, our tendency in liturgical preparation is to replace the Prologue of John with the Bethlehem story. This can be both symptomatic and reinforcing of an understanding of Christmas as being one moment in time rather than an ongoing reality.

This reduction of the Christmas reality to merely a story about the *Babe of Bethlehem* has led to interpreting Christmas as a feast for children. Stories about children are usually for children but this child image is *Emmanuel, God with us*, Jesus himself, the servant of all, the one who washes feet, the one who waits on sinners, the one who sets off to seek the lost and carry them back, the one who suffered, died and rose from the dead. This is the image of the child into which we are formed by the grace of the Incarnation. This is the image of the child *to which the kingdom of heaven belongs*.<sup>4</sup>

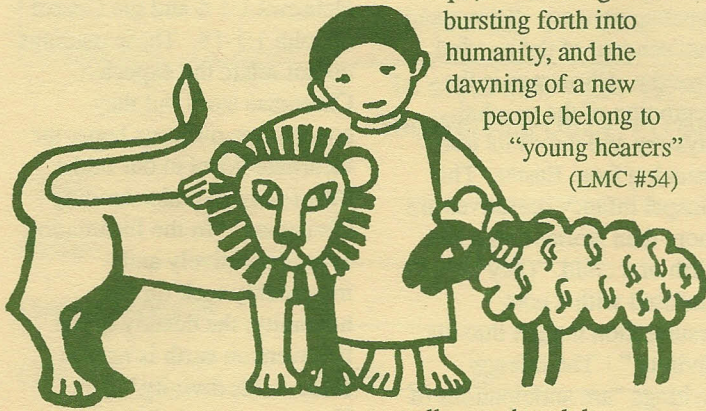
This is not to say that

## CHRISTMAS BEYOND CHILDREN

trends to center Christmas celebrations around childish sentimentality, this season is not primarily a celebration of Jesus' birth. Christmas has a deeper meaning: Jesus inaugurated the reign of God in our midst! To focus the season fundamentally on the birth of the Christ child is to stifle the ancient Messianic longings and our deepest Advent longings for the fullness of God's reign

creche or manger has visually evoked a type of historicism that can fragment the reality and mystery that is Christmas. While the mystery of redemption is always alive and present in our midst, historicism tends to isolate and decompose it into individual commemorations of past events, not a present reality.<sup>2</sup> This often finds expression in dramatic reenactments that are

Christmas should not be celebrated with children. The thrust simply should not be that it is a celebration primarily for children. "Christmas should not be presented as a birthday party for Jesus, nor should secular notions of Santa Claus be introduced into the Christmas liturgy" (LMC #52). The proclamation of the Advent/Christmas scriptures voicing the ancient Messianic hope, announcing God's bursting forth into humanity, and the dawning of a new people belong to "young hearers" (LMC #54)



as well as to the adults. "Children's openness to the power of stories make them ready listeners" (LMC #48). The prophetic imagery coupled with the gospels, proclaimed well can stir a much needed religious imagination in our children. This can be accomplished in the liturgical setting of children's liturgy of the word planned and celebrated well. Homilists both at children's liturgy of the word and in the Sunday assembly need to take Christmas beyond the stable of Bethlehem to a way of life.

There is also a need for good family catechesis supporting the celebrations during the Advent/Christmas cycle. "Catechesis should include breaking open the symbols and the Word of Advent and Christmas so that the faithful can more fully appreciate their biblical, ecclesial, and liturgical meaning in their lives."<sup>5</sup> Afternoon sessions of Christmas storytelling can be effective catechesis for

families with children. Families need to be provided with prayer services such as the blessing of the Advent wreath, the placing of the Nativity scene in the home, the blessing of the Christmas tree and the blessing of the home on Epiphany. *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers (USCC)* is an excellent resource not only for the variety of prayer services but also because it follows the ritual patterns, prayers, gestures and symbols that express the liturgical life of the Church. Through the use of this resource in the household, the faithful are led to a deeper participation in Sunday.<sup>6</sup>

The Christmas pageants and plays that invade our liturgy at Christmas Eve Masses have more of a place and would be more effective and less distracting in a catechetical setting. "Mass is not an historical reenactment of the events of salvation history and care should be taken not to give the impression that the liturgy of the word is a play.... Care should be taken especially at Christmas... not to stage the various liturgies as plays..." (LMC #52). In a catechetical session, pageants and reenactments well planned, rich in scripture, clothed in prayer and celebrated in song could raise pageants above the performance level and thus foster understanding and receptivity to the workings of the Holy Spirit. These catechetical sessions, pageants, reenactments, storytelling no matter how effective or well attended should never be a replacement for the liturgy of the Church nor should they be attached to the liturgy of the Church.

In our liturgical planning of the Advent/Christmas cycle there is no need to "add to" the liturgy of the Church. It is in the liturgy of the Church celebrated well, in the prayers, symbols, proclamations, songs and gestures that we discover the mystery of the Incarnation and are transformed into the likeness of the risen Christ.<sup>7</sup> It is in the liturgy that earth is united to heaven<sup>8</sup> and the "marvelous exchange"<sup>9</sup> of God bursting forth into humanity and humanity being transformed into God's image is made real. It is in the liturgy that the gathered people of God stand and proclaim our waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>+

Sr. Sandra DeMasi, SSJ  
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Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Raymond Brown, *An Adult Christ at Christmas* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 2.
- <sup>2</sup> For a more in depth discussion on "historicism" see Robert Taft, "Historicism Revisited" in *Beyond East and West Problems in Liturgical Understandings* (Washington: Pastoral Press, 1984), 15-30.
- <sup>3</sup> Kevin Irwin, *Sunday Worship* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1983), 40.
- <sup>4</sup> See "Unless You Become Like a Little Child" in Megan McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children* (New York: Orbis, 1994), 61-88.
- <sup>5</sup> Linda Gaupin, "Advent and Christmas: A Time to Celebrate Liturgy and Life" in *AIM* (Fall, 1993):10.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10. See for more information on the relationship between liturgy and catechesis and suggestions on how catechesis can support liturgy specifically during Advent and Christmas.
- <sup>7</sup> Preface for "Holy Eucharist II," *Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1985), 469.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #526. This divine and human exchange in the incarnation of the Word is expressed in the preface for "Christmas II" in *Sacramentary*, 383.
- <sup>10</sup> From the embolism, "Deliver us," *Sacramentary*, 562.

Other Sources Consulted:

- Dalmais, Iréné Henri, Jounel, Pierre, Marimort, Aimé George. "Liturgy and Time" in *The Church at Prayer*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1986.
- Mick, Lawrence. *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publication, 1995.

There is a song with a verse that goes something like this *ease on down, ease on down the road...* Perhaps these words should become the motto of parishes as they begin to plan the Advent/Christmas cycle this year. As liturgy committees gather to plan for these seasons the secular calendar will present two major considerations. First, the Advent/Christmas cycle this year is very short. Advent this year is three full weeks and four Sundays. The feast of the Baptism of the Lord (January 8) is celebrated the day after the Epiphany; the entire time from Advent to Epiphany is five weeks. Without careful discussion for *keeping* Advent, this season can be lost. The second major consideration for planning the Advent/Christmas cycle is that the Fourth Sunday of Advent and the Vigil of Christmas are on the same day. Only careful planning and preparation will prevent the worshipping community from arriving for Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Advent and experiencing a *Christmas Wonderland*.

The following are some pastoral suggestions concerning the preparation for the Advent/Christmas Cycle:

1. The short Advent/Christmas cycle can facilitate a respect for the season. Less days in Advent will pose a problem in calendaring the usual number of Christmas parties, concerts and pageants. This is an opportunity to center the scheduling of parish activities in their appropriate season. Christmas parties during Christmas will help preserve the Christmas spirit for the entire season. This will also help the community develop a greater respect for the season of Advent as a distinct time of preparation.

2. Advent preparations should be made well in

advance of the season. The First Sunday of Advent does not have to come in like a bolt of lightning. The parish needs to get parishioners' attention early. Maybe we should post the number of shopping days remaining until Advent and thus encourage Advent as a time of spiritual preparation.

3. Parishes need to give attention to countering the voices of secularism and consumerism that define Christmas in our culture and blur Advent. Schedule Advent activities that will lead the community to stop and examine our deepest longing: Come, Lord Jesus. We need to plan Advent prayer and scripture study along with strong Advent homilies that will lead the community to name the ways we are seeking God in our lives.

4. The Fourth Sunday of Advent and the Vigil of Christmas being on the same day can tempt us to short change or even eliminate our Advent stance at the morning Masses on December 24. Christmas songs should not enter this liturgy. A full complement of ministries should be present at this Sunday Mass as well as at the Christmas Vigil and the Masses for Christmas Day.

Scheduling is important. There will also be the temptation at the last Mass in the morning to omit and eliminate, in an effort to move things along and to get the people out. Sunday is the first of all holydays and all the elements and ministries vital to this celebration should always be present.

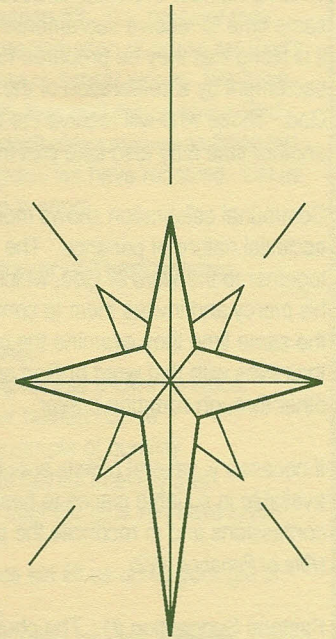
5. Maintaining the Advent environment in the

worship space and providing the Christmas environment in that space on the same day is a challenge for the liturgy committee. The change of environment has to be well planned and well staffed because of the time factor. Liturgy committees might see this as an impossible task. Perhaps this becomes the opportunity to discuss and refocus on what are the essentials that need to be decorated and what our task of preparing the environment is about. The time crunch also gives us the opportunity to decorate Christmas as a season rather than one day.

6. Lastly, there is a concern that the increasing number of Christmas Eve Masses will diminish the importance of December 25 as the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord. The concern deepens with the proliferation of "Children's Liturgies" and "Family Masses" on the eve of Christmas. This pastoral practice is forming a generation that does not have an experience of Mass on Christmas day. Celebrating the Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent in the morning and celebrating the Vigil of Christmas in the evening pastorally necessitates the scheduling of the Vigil Masses

later in the evening. Perhaps families with children could be encouraged to attend Mass on Christmas day. This is especially important this year when families with children will be attending Mass in the morning and returning a few short hours later to celebrate Christmas Eve.+

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## ONLY HOURS 'TILL CHRISTMAS

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# PLANNING RITE

## Advent Communal Penance Service

When a number of penitents assemble at the same time to receive sacramental absolution, it is fitting that they be prepared for the sacrament by a celebration of the word of God. Those who will receive the sacrament at another time may also take part in the service.

Communal celebration shows more clearly the ecclesial nature of penance. The faithful listen together to the word of God, which proclaims his mercy and invites them to conversion; at the same time they examine the conformity of their lives with that word of God and help each other through common prayer.

If necessary, several priests should be available in suitable places to hear individual confessions and to reconcile the penitents. (*Rite of Penance*, #22)

Pastoral Suggestion #1: The church may be divided into two sections. The people may assemble in the front pews of the church leaving the back pews available for confessors to position themselves in various places of the area to maintain privacy. At the time when individual confessions are to be heard, the assembly is seated. Ushers may direct the people to the confessors, one pew at a time, so as to avoid congestion in the aisles. The people may be advised beforehand to: 1) go to next open confessor so as to avoid undue delay; 2) remain for the conclusion of the service. The above directions may be included in a printed program.

### Introductory Rites

#### Gathering Hymn

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" or other Advent Song.

#### Greeting

After the opening song the presider greets the people. The meaning of the celebration is explained in these or similar words:

My brothers and sisters, now is the time to wake from sleep, for our salvation is nearer to us than it was when we first believed. The night is ending, the day draws near. Let us,

then, cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ and give no thought to sin.

(Romans 13:11-12)

### Opening Prayer

#### Presider:

We look forward to celebrating the mystery of Christ's coming on the feast of Christmas.

Let us pray that when he comes he may find us awake and ready to receive him.

All pray in silence for a brief period.

Lord our God,  
maker of the heavens,  
as we look forward to the coming of our redeemer  
grant us the forgiveness of our sins.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### The Liturgy of the Word

The readings should be seasonal as well as reflective of the sacrament being celebrated. For example, the readings for the Mass of the day may be appropriate.

**First Reading:** Malachi 3: 1-7a  
*The Lord whom you seek will come to his temple.*

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 85  
(The responsorial psalm should be sung.)

Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

### Gospel Acclamation

(If the acclamation is not sung, it is not used.)

**Gospel:** Matthew 3:1-12  
*Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand.*

### Homily

### Examination of Conscience

(The Examination of Conscience is adapted from Appendix III of the *Rite of Penance*.)

A. *The Lord says, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart."*

1. Is my heart set on God, so that I really love

him above all things and am faithful to his commandments? Or am I more concerned about the things of this world?

2. God spoke to us in his Son. Is my faith in God firm and secure? Have I been careful to grow in my understanding of the faith, to hear God's word?

3. Do I pray regularly? Do I offer God my difficulties, my joys and my sorrows?

4. Have I love and reverence for God's name? Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?

5. Do I keep Sundays and feast days holy by taking a full part, with attention and devotion, in the liturgy, and especially in the Mass?

6. Are there false gods that I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper trust than I give to God: money, superstition, astrology?

B. *The Lord says, "Love one another as I have loved you."*

1. Have I a genuine love for my neighbors? Or do I use them for my own ends, or do to them what I would not want done to myself?

2. In my family life, have I shown proper respect toward my parents? Have I been careful to give a Christian upbringing to my children? Have I been faithful to my spouse?

3. Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate? Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune and poverty?

4. Does my life reflect the mission I received at confirmation? Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the church and in the life of my parish?

5. Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community in which I live, or do I spend my life caring only for myself? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality, harmony and love in human relations?

C. *Christ our Lord says, "Be perfect as your Father is perfect."*

1. Where is my life really leading me? Is the hope of eternal life my inspiration? Have I tried to grow in the life of the Spirit through prayer, reading the word of God, receiving the

sacraments? Have I imposed my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights?

2. What use have I made of time, of health and strength, of the gifts God has given me? Do I use them to become more perfect each day?

3. Have I been patient in accepting the sorrows and disappointments of life?

4. Have I kept my whole body pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit? Have I dishonored my body physically or through unworthy conversation or thoughts? Have I indulged in activities which offend Christian or human decency?

5. Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?

A period of silence should always be included so that each person may personally examine his or her conscience. (*Rite of Penance*, Appendix II, #59)

#### Rite of Reconciliation

#### General Confession of Sins

**Presider:** (Please kneel)

Christ our Lord came to call sinners into his Father's kingdom. Let us now make an act of sorrow in our hearts and resolve to avoid sin in the future.

After a brief period of silence, all say together:

I confess to almighty God...

**Presider:** (Please stand)

Lord our God, you know all things.

You know that we want to be more generous in serving you and our neighbor.

Look on us with love and hear our prayer.

**Reader:**

Our response is, "Hear our prayer."

Give us the strength to turn away from sin. We pray...

Help us to be sorry for our sins and to keep our resolutions. We pray...

Forgive our sins and have pity on our weakness. We pray...

Give us trust in your goodness and make us generous in serving you. We pray...

Help us to be true followers of your Son and living members of the Church. We pray...

**Presider:**

God does not want the sinner to die, but to turn to him and live.

May God be pleased that we have confessed our sinfulness, and may God show us mercy as we pray in the words our Savior gave us...

All say together:

Our Father...

**Presider:**

Lord our God,  
on the first day of creation  
you made the light that scatters the darkness.  
Let Christ, the light of lights,  
hidden from all eternity,  
shine at last on your people  
and free us from the darkness of sin.  
Fill our lives with good works  
as we go out to meet your Son,  
so that we may give him a fitting welcome.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### Individual Confession and Absolution

Then the penitents go to the priests designated for individual confession and confess their sins. Each one receives and accepts a fitting act of satisfaction and is absolved. After hearing the confession and offering suitable counsel, the priest extends his hands over the penitent's head and gives absolution. Everything else which is customary in individual confession is omitted. (*Rite of Penance*, #55).

Pastoral suggestion #2: The presider may remain at the presidential chair during individual confession and absolution. As a sign of reconciliation with the community the penitents, after receiving absolution, may exchange a sign of peace with the presider at the presidential chair. (cf. Pastoral Suggestion #1)

#### Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy

When the individual confessions have been completed... the presider invites all present to offer thanks and encourages them to do good works which will proclaim the grace of repentance in the life of the entire community. It is fitting for all to sing a psalm or hymn or to

say a litany in acknowledgment of God's power and mercy, for example, the Cantic of Mary. (*Rite of Penance*, #56)

Other suitable hymns for the season such as "On Jordan's Bank" would also be appropriate.

Pastoral suggestion #3: The presider may introduce the proclamation of praise for God's mercy with these or similar words: We have experienced the love and mercy of our God. Now we must dedicate ourselves to living lives worthy of the grace we have received. Let us praise the Lord in song.

#### Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving

**Presider:**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your loving forgiveness knows no limits.  
You took on our human nature  
to give us an example of humility  
and to make us faithful in every trial.  
May we never lose the gifts you have given  
us,  
but if we fall into sin lift us up by your gift of  
repentance,  
for you live and reign for ever and ever.  
Amen.

#### Concluding Rite

**Presider:**

The Lord be with you. R: And also with you.

**Deacon or presider:**

Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.

**Presider:**

May the Lord guide your hearts in the way of his love and fill you with Christ-like patience.  
R: Amen.

May God give you strength to walk in newness of life and to please him in all things.

R: Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit.

R: Amen.

**Deacon or presider:**

The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.

R: Thanks be to God.+

Rev. Thomas A Dente  
Parochial Vicar  
St. Elizabeth, Wyckoff

Even though Christmas is still some months away, now is the time to consider how you will decorate your environment for the coming season. The following DO'S and DON'TS offer some things to consider as you plan for Christmas 1995.

- Do read the appropriate documents of the Church before deciding how you will

sanctuary or altar area. "The whole space is to be considered the arena of decoration, not merely the sanctuary." (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, #102)

- Do remember that the *Book of Blessings* directs that the Christmas manger or nativity scene should not be placed in the sanctuary. (#1544) "A place should be chosen that

- Do give priority to the central symbols, such as bread and wine, ambo, altar and chair.

- Do make sure the books used in the liturgy, e.g. the Lectionary for Mass, the Sacramentary, and the Book of Gospels, are in good condition and beautiful to behold.

- Do have special vestments and altar cloths that are reserved for the Christmas season.

- Do ask creative people for their suggestions. Such people may see possibilities that you have not considered.

- Do remember a parish must be concerned both about good environment for worship, and about caring for the needs of the hungry and poor.

- Do keep a record of what you do each Christmas season and what you spend. At an appropriate time outside of the liturgy take pictures of your decorations and worship space.
- Do evaluate the Christmas look of your environment. Ask the opinion of those outside the liturgy committee.

- Do step back and consider what your environment says you believe about the season of Christmas. Do your decorations lead the assembly to deeper appreciation of the God who has come among us or do your decorations lead people to think of a winter wonderland?

- Do respect local fire codes.

## CHRISTMAS DECORATING...

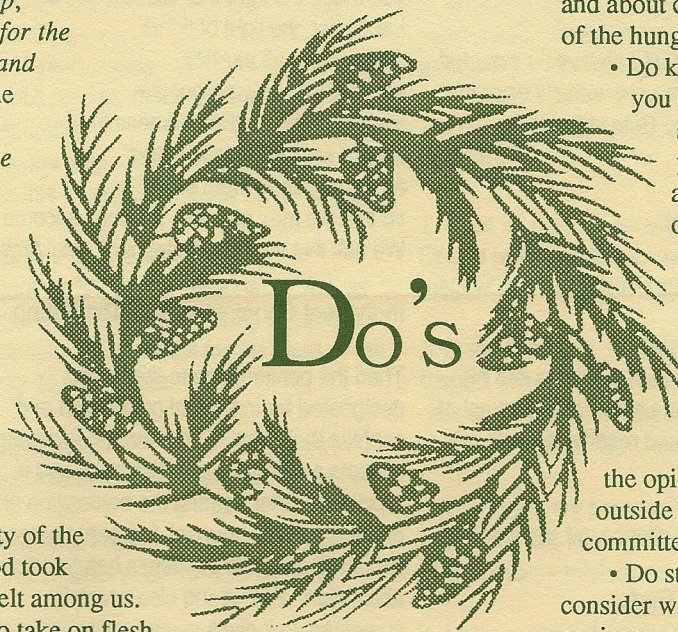
decorate the environment for Christmas. Such documents as: *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (especially #253-312), need to be read by those responsible for church decoration.

- Do remember that Christmas celebrates the continuing reality of the Incarnation. God took on flesh and dwelt among us. God continues to take on flesh and to dwell among us. Christmas is not an historical re-enactment of the birth of Jesus Christ. The Christmas season celebrates the first manifestations of Christ and his continuing manifestations today.

- Do remember Christmas begins on December 25. It does not end on December 25. The Christmas season continues until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The environment should show the unity of the Christmas season.

- Do decorate the area of the assembly, and not only the

is suitable for prayer and devotion and easily accessible by the faithful." Consider



placing the Christmas manger in the gathering area, or in a place outside the church where it will be visible to many people.

- Do remember that Christmas trees in church should not be decorated in the same way as they are at home. As the *Book of Blessings* says, "the decoration of trees should be appropriate to their use in the church." (#1571)

- Do use flowers, trees and greens that are indigenous to the area.

- Don't make your Christmas decorations the highlight of the year. Remember that the Easter Triduum, and the Lent/Easter cycle hold a greater importance in the Church's liturgical calendar.

- Don't anticipate the Christmas season. Don't imitate the shopping malls that are decked with Christmas decorations from the beginning of November. Respect the season of Advent. Christmas decorations belong in the Christmas season.

- Don't limit your decorations to the interior of the church. Both the inside and outside of the church building should give witness to the feast we are celebrating.

- Don't place the Christmas manger or nativity scene near the altar, ambo or presidential chair. "If the manger is set up in the church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium [sanctuary]. A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible by the faithful." (*Book of Blessings*, #1544)

- Don't add figures to the Christmas scene little by little. All figures should be present from the start. We are not involved in an historical recreation.

- Don't obscure the altar, ambo or presidential chair with banks of poinsettia or evergreen trees. The central furnishings in the church should look central no matter what the season.

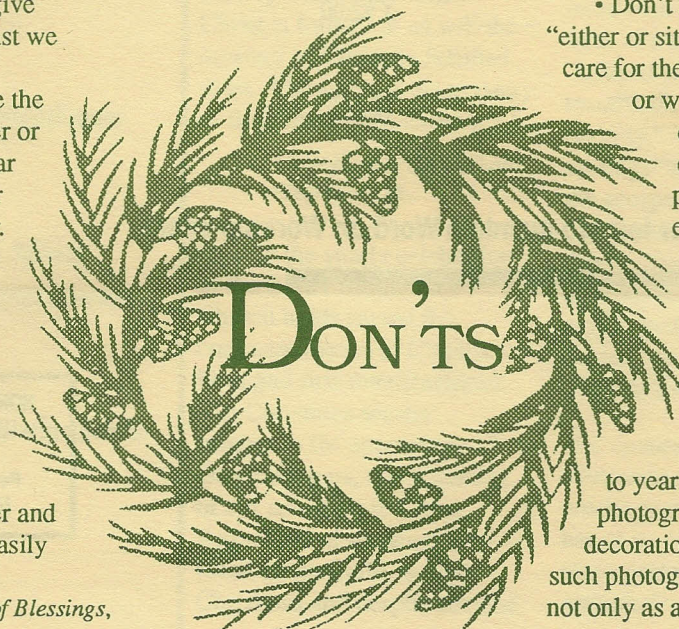
- Don't hide the baptismal font, tabernacle, or other shrine areas behind flowers or Christmas trees.

- Don't turn the sanctuary

into a forest of Christmas trees. The *Book of Blessings* speaks of the primary place for the tree as the home. Although "at times one or more trees may also be placed in the church ...care should be taken they do not interfere with the requirements of the liturgical space." (#1571)

- Don't so crowd the sanctuary and assembly area with decorations that processions and movement become difficult.

- Don't let your Christmas decorations obstruct the sight lines of people. People need to see what is taking place in the liturgy, they need to see the presider, they need to see the



assembled Body of Christ.

- Don't spend your whole Christmas decorating budget just for flowers or greens. Use part of it for needed ritual books, vessels, vesture, or perhaps to supplement the music budget for the season. Environment for worship is more than flowers and greens.

- Don't use your whole decorating budget just for Christmas Day. Consider the entire Christmas season.

- Don't use your entire decorating budget just for the Christmas season. Budget for the entire liturgical year.

- Don't use red or green altar cloths or vestments. White or gold are the liturgical colors for the Christmas season.

- Don't use artificial flowers, wreaths and trees. "Flowers, plants and trees - genuine, of course - are particularly apt decoration of liturgical space, since they are of nature, always discreet in their message, never cheap or tawdry or ill-made." (*Environment & Art in Catholic Worship*, #102)

- Don't forget that often "less is more."

- Don't simply repeat the same decorations from year to year. Don't say, "We've always done it this way before."

- Don't set up and an "either or situation." We either care for the needs of the poor or we spend money on decorating the church and preparing the environment for worship. In most cases we can do both.

- Don't think you will remember what you did from year to year. Take and keep photographs of your decorations. An album of such photographs will serve not only as a reminder of past years, but will help those joining the liturgy or decorating committee to learn what has happened in the past.

- Don't forget that environment and decoration by themselves do not make good liturgy.

- Don't remove the Christmas decorations until you have celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

- Don't try to do everything in one year. Make a long range plan and stick to it.†

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