

# in focus

708 West Main Street

Urbana, Illinois 61801

Vol. 5, No. 2

*The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty savior;  
He will rejoice over you with gladness  
and renew you in his love.  
He will sing joyfully because of you,  
as one sings at festivals.*

Zeph 3:18



## WRITING IN THE MID-SEVENTH CENTURY

B.C., the prophet Zephaniah envisions a coming Day of the Lord, a time of refinement and purification, which will be followed by the Lord's renewal of his people in steadfast love, a message of encouragement, consolation, and hope. This reading from Zephaniah is proclaimed on the third Sunday of Advent.

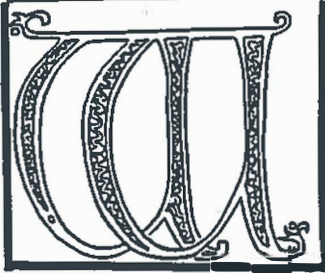
During this season of hope and promise, as we joyfully anticipate the celebration of our Lord's birth, all adults (aged 16 and older) are invited to participate in reflection on the beautiful and challenging Advent Sunday readings.

On the first two Sundays of Advent, sessions will be held in the lounge at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. On those Sunday

evenings, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., participants will focus on the prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, whose words form such an important part of the Advent liturgies.

On the third Sunday of Advent, both morning and evening sessions will dwell on the Infancy Narratives as related in Luke and in Matthew.

These sessions present an opportunity for all to steep themselves in the message of promise and hope in the coming of our savior, to share insights and reflections for a greater appreciation of the mystery and the meaning of these days of preparation for his coming.



## HAT TIME IS MIDNIGHT MASS?

At St. Patrick's the Masses on the eve of Christmas have traditionally been celebrated at 8:00 p.m. and at midnight. This year both Masses will be celebrated earlier, at 6:30 p.m. and at 10:30 p.m. This change has been made to alleviate unsafe and uncomfortable overcrowding at the earlier Mass. It is hoped that the later Mass will be more accessible to more of our parishioners and the earlier Mass a little more convenient for families with young children.

Caroling by choir and assembly will begin a half hour before each Mass. The folk choir will provide music for the 6:30 p.m. Mass, and the traditional choir will sing at the 10:30 p.m. Mass. Recruits for both choirs are needed, because many of the regular members leave the area for the holidays. Parishioners who have helped in past Christmas choirs have found that it really made the season special for them. Anyone interested should attend December choir rehearsals; watch the bulletin for dates and times. Extra woodwind, string, and brass musicians and bell players are also needed. Call Doug Salokar, Music Director, at the parish office (367-2665) if interested.



## HILE ROMAN

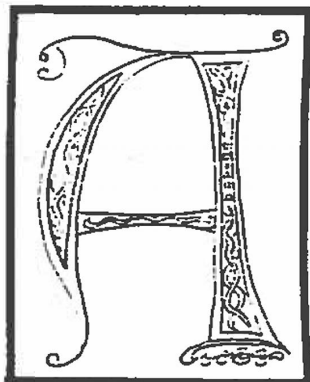
Roman Catholics observe Advent and celebrate Christmas, our neighbors who belong to other religious denominations celebrate their own winter-season events. Some of the common winter celebrations of others are Hanukkah, the feast of St. Lucia, and the feast of St. Nicholas.

*Hanukkah* is the Jewish Feast of Dedication. The Hanukkah holiday, usually falling in the month of December, begins on the eve of the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev and lasts eight days. On each evening during Hanukkah one more of the eight candles on the menorah, or candelabrum, is lighted, until on the last evening all eight lighted candles

stand together. During Hanukkah gifts are exchanged and contributions are made to the poor.

December 13 marks *St. Lucia Day*, the Festival of Light celebrated in Sweden. Before dawn young girls dressed in white and wearing crowns of evergreen leaves awaken their families with a traditional song and serve them hot coffee and buns.

One of the most popular saints of the Christian churches, *St. Nicholas* is the patron saint of sailors, travelers, bakers, merchants, and (especially) children. Much of Europe still observes the date of his death, December 6, as a special holiday. In Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium, men wearing robes pose as St. Nicholas and visit children, examining them on their prayers, urging them to be good, and giving them gifts. The Dutch brought to America the "visit of St. Nicholas," which gave rise to the visit of Santa Claus-- whose very name comes from "Sinterklaas," Dutch for "St. Nicholas."



## ANCIENT CHRISTIAN PRACTICE, FAMILIAR

Catholic habit, and post-Vatican II liturgical renewal come together in the communal reconciliation services of the Advent season.

The time before Christmas is traditionally a time when many Catholics "go to confession." This reflects sound Christian instincts as well as early training. We sense a need to prepare well for the celebration of the Savior's birth. A critical part of the preparation is an inventory of our lives, a humble acknowledgment of our failings, and a renewed commitment to amend our lives where we have sinned.

In the renewal of the practice of confession in the light of Vatican II, a new name is the first thing we notice. "Reconciliation" emphasizes God's activity, the heart of the matter. The manner of individual celebrations of the sacrament has become much more personal and prayerful. And the renewal has added forms of communal celebration of the sacrament.

In recent years Holy Cross, St. Matthew's, and St. Patrick's parishes have pooled resources to provide communal celebrations of the sacrament of reconciliation during Advent. In these celebrations we gather to hear the Word of God and allow it to challenge and measure our lives. We share prayer in word and song. We acknowledge to each

other by our very presence that we are indeed sinners--yet sinners saved by the healing grace of God. Every person who wishes to receive the sacrament is then invited to approach one of several priests (positioned throughout the church) to confess one sin--preferably the one that is most in need of changing in his or her life--and to receive absolution individually.

These celebrations have their origin in the early practice of the Church, which understood that sin always had communal effects. Thus the reconciliation of sinners was also a celebration of the entire community, a community that had supported the entire process of conversion.

Restored in our day, these communal celebrations of the sacrament of reconciliation help us recover the awareness of how deeply our sin and our salvation involve others. They also provide those who feel some need of the sacrament--yet not in a more extended and individual form--with a personal, joyful, and satisfying celebration of the sacrament.

This year the three parishes will again offer communal celebrations of the sacrament of reconciliation during Advent. The tentative schedule:

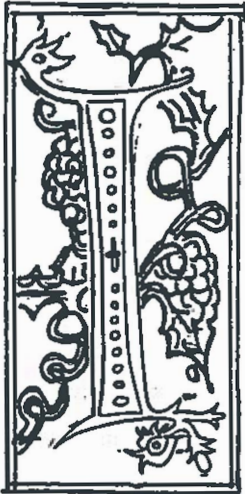
Monday, Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m., at St. Matthew's Church

Tuesday, Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m., at St. Patrick's Church

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m., at Holy Cross Church



DVENT CELEBRATIONS IN THE HOME BRING



T IS NEVER TOO

late to start a family custom or tradition for Advent. After all, there is a first occasion for every tradition. Here are a few suggestions your family may want to use in beginning a tradition of your very own.

#### *Straw for the Crib*

The custom of preparing a "bed" for the Christ Child helps children see the fruits of their efforts as they prepare for the coming of Jesus with acts of kindness. An empty crib is given a place of honor in the home, and each member of the family is encouraged to place a straw (yellow yarn may be substituted) in the crib each night for each kind act of the day. The figure of the Christ Child is placed in the crib, filled with straw or yellow yarn, on Christmas eve.

#### *Advent Wreath*

An Advent wreath gives visible expression to the meaning of the Advent season. Children and parents together can make the wreath, using evergreens cut from bushes or trees in the yard, straw, greenery from a shop, felt, or other suitable materials, with holders for the four candles. The book *Advent Begins at Home*, which is available in our parish library, contains daily prayers that speak to all ages. Parents and children might take turns in lighting the wreath candles for the prayer times.

the family together in preparing for the Christ Child. In a home with young children up to 10 years of age, plan several short projects rather than one large project. For example, an Advent calendar, a wreath, and prayer lend themselves to short daily involvement of young children with Advent.

In a home with teens, plan simple prayer activities and other kinds of Advent celebrations at a non-rushed time. Teens might be encouraged to help with the planning itself. Emphasize giving and sharing beyond the immediate family --sharing with one's peers, for example, or with neighbors.

In an adult-centered home, Advent might serve as a time for a mini-retreat with increased time for prayer and reflection. Emphasize service in contrast to self-interest.

St. Patrick's parish library includes books and pamphlets on Advent themes for adults, children, and families, a wealth of Christmas (religious) books for young children, books on Bible themes, and reference books for meditation.

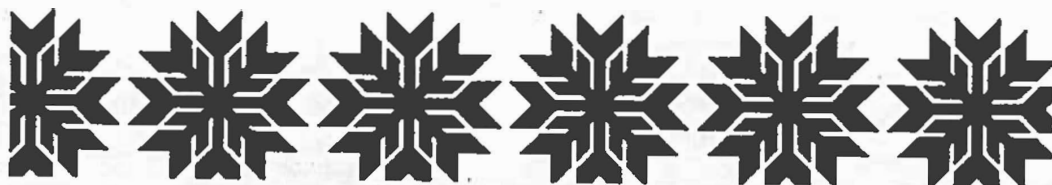
Low-cost pamphlets and booklets that present ideas and resources for Advent will be made available for purchase at cost, beginning November 24.

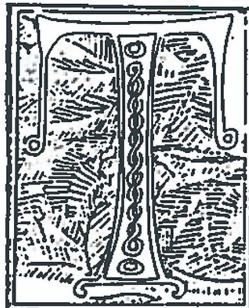
### *Jesse Tree*

The Jesse Tree is a seasonal tradition that recalls the family tree of Christ. The tree can be made from the branch of a tree or bush in your yard, construction paper, or felt on a backing of burlap. Symbols representing people or events connected with Christ during his life or before his birth are hung on the tree. Such symbols can include the following: crown (David), apple (Adam), ark (Noah), ladder (Jacob), coat of many colors (Joseph), wheat or corn (Ruth), dove (Holy Spirit), star. Figures of the Christ Child, Mary, Joseph, and figures or symbols representing your own family members are also appropriate. As each symbol is placed on the tree, the story of that symbol can be told or read aloud to the children, finishing with the story of the birth of Christ on Christmas eve or Christmas day.

### *Nativity Scene*

The Nativity scene can be used in several ways as a focus during Advent. One such way is to place the stable in a special location, with the figures of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds (and perhaps their sheep) at some distance from the stable. Each day the figures are moved closer to the stable, arriving there on Christmas eve. The Christ Child is placed in the manger on Christmas morning--or on Christmas eve with a candlelit procession that includes all the members of the family. The youngest child might be selected to place the figure of the Christ Child in the stable. Figures of the three kings, of course, arrive on the scene several days later after their own journey across the room.





## THE SOLEMNITY OF

the Immaculate Conception is a holy day honoring Mary, by the grace of God conceived free of sin. Catholics ordinarily observe this special holy day by gathering to celebrate Mass on December 8. When this feastday coincides with the second Sunday of Advent, however, as it does this year, the Sunday of Advent takes precedence and observance of the feastday is moved to the preceding Saturday.

It is hoped that, although not required to participate in Mass because of the juxtaposition of this feast with Sunday, Catholics will nevertheless gather to celebrate the singular honor accorded to Mary, the mother of Jesus. At St. Patrick's, the Mass marking the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (patronal feast of our nation) will be celebrated at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 7.



## ADVENT IS A BUSY TIME

filled with preparations for Christmas celebrations. Yet Advent is also a time for reflection in quiet expectation of the Christmas mysteries.

To give such reflection time and space in the midst of the season's bustle, a simple Evening Prayer service will be offered on the first three Wednesdays of Advent.

Come, step aside for a few moments into a time and space for prayer that expresses the hope of a promise fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled, the coming of the Lord. Wednesdays (December 4, 11, 18) at 7:00 p.m. in the multipurpose room.



*in focus* is a publication of St. Patrick's Parish, 708 West Main Street, Urbana, Illinois.

Editorial Board: Communications Committee



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## YOUR CALENDARS

- Nov. 23 Fr. John Walsh, M.M., on evangelization and social justice; workshop, 9:30-2:30 p.m.
- Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Day, Mass at 9:00 a.m. followed by holiday coffee, Parish Center
- Dec. 1 First Sunday of Advent  
Pancake breakfast following Sunday Masses, main hall
- Dec. 4 First of the Advent Evening Prayer services, 7:00 p.m. multipurpose room
- Dec. 8 Family Advent Celebration
- Dec. 16 Communal Reconciliation, 7:30 p.m., St. Matthew's
- Dec. 17 Communal Reconciliation, 7:30 p.m., St. Patrick's
- Dec. 18 Communal Reconciliation, 7:30 p.m., Holy Cross
- Jan. 25-26 Christ Renews His Parish weekend retreat for men of the parish
- Feb. 12 Ash Wednesday

*Watch the Sunday bulletin for more information as dates of special events approach.*



## THE LORD CALLS EACH OF US, AND EACH

of us responds in some way. Here are two responses to his call, one to serve the Lord's people in need in distant lands and one to community in service of the young nearer at hand.

Sr. Julia

*An open letter to the parish*

As many of you already know, I entered the convent in August 1980. As I begin my sixth year as a Springfield Dominican, I am aware of the great things God has been doing in my life. I feel very much a part of St. Patrick's Parish, still. My parents, Bob and Elaine Theobald, and two of my sisters, Sarah and Nancy, live in Urbana, and I come home fairly often to visit them. I believe very strongly that it was the atmosphere of St. Pat's that nurtured and brought to fruition my religious vocation.



I am in my third year of teaching at Rosary High School, Aurora. Every year I have a different schedule. I have rotated from teaching Latin to English and back to Latin. (I now have three classes in this time-honored subject!) I also teach three classes of freshman religion. ("Out of the mouths of babes," they say--and believe me, God has spoken more than once through their questions and insights!) This year I am again moderator of the Student Council, freshman class moderator, and moderator of Latin Club.



Dr. Susan Nagele

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Dr. Susan Nagele was born in Champaign-Urbana on Christmas eve 30 years ago. She attended St. Mary Grade School, Urbana High School, the University of Illinois, and Southern Illinois University's medical school in Springfield. In 1981, medical degree in hand, she completed a 3-year internship in family practice in Carbonale, Illinois.

In August 1984 Dr. Susan Nagele began a 4-month training program for lay missionaries in Maryknoll, New York, after which she left for the Maryknoll Language School in Musoma, Tanzania. In June 1985 she arrived at the village of Kowak, Tanzania, where she will spend the next 3 years.

I have also become involved in helping to organize the library at one of the parish schools in town. It is a poor parish, and I find it extremely rewarding to help in the education of the children in this very small way.

This year is very special for me; it is the year in which I will renew my vows. This will happen sometime during the summer of 1986. After this renewal there will be two more years before I make my final vows. That ceremony will take place on August 8, 1988--I hope many of you will join me on that very special day. (Even though it's three years away, it's not too early to mark your calendars!)

God bless all of you!

In a typical day, Susan begins with Mass at 7:00 a.m., followed by breakfast. At 8:00 a.m. two medical assistants start rounds and Susan attends to some minor surgeries, not infrequently retrieving seeds, beads, and bugs from ears and noses. Keeping track of and organizing drugs, which must be locked away at all times, consumes much of her time--she says it is very frustrating to make a diagnosis and not be able to treat it for lack of proper medicines.

Susan says she can use small pieces of soap, especially the small soaps placed in motel rooms. She can also use outdated drugs; anyone connected with hospitals or physicians disposing of drug supplies is asked to call Susan's parents (384-1125), who will be glad to pick them up and send them on to her.

Susan writes frequently; her letters are posted on the staff bulletin board, in the hall where the staff offices are located. Please keep her--and all the other missionaries who give so generously of their time and talents--in your prayers. Prayer is a valued gift from those of us who cannot do what they do.