



He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms . . . and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

Is. 40:11

Christmas 1981

No. 61

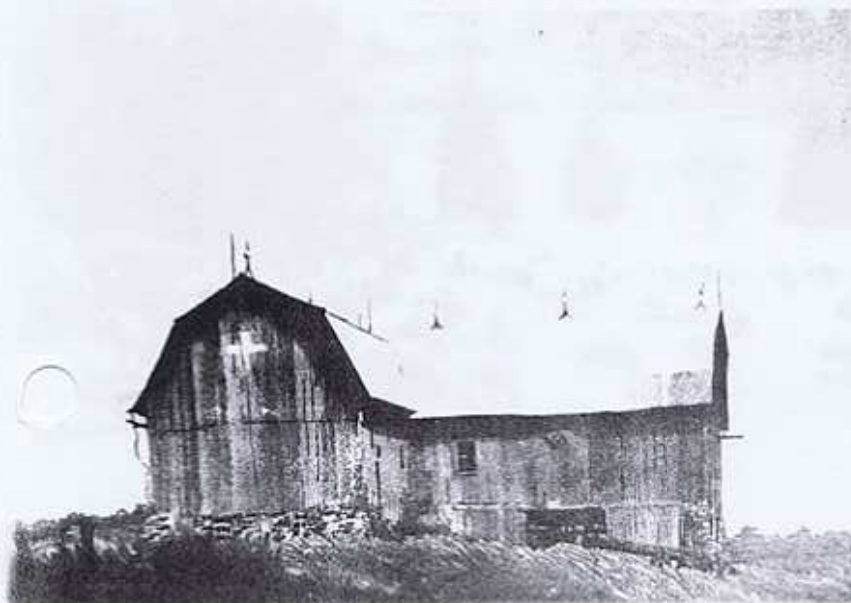
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Chronicle



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If one were to say that the Infancy Narratives of Sts. Matthew and Luke were an account of the Paschal Mystery, most of us would have to respond that it was certainly an unexpected perspective. The infant Jesus doesn't seem to die and rise again or send his Spirit. But it is precisely this unexpected perspective that a closer examination of these parts of Scripture and a little pondering on their content will make available to us in December of 1981.

Pope John Paul II, in the final section of his recent Encyclical *On Human Work*, has a very important sentence. "In a sense, the final word of the Gospel on this matter as on others is found in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ." Stated simply so that its starkness can penetrate our consciousness: For human beings, the final word on all matters is to be found in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ! The Pontif goes on to say: "the paschal mystery contains the cross of Christ and his obedience unto death, which the apostle contrasts with the disobedience which from the beginning has burdened man's history on earth. It also contains the elevation of Christ, who by means of death on a cross returns to his disciples in the resurrection with the power of the Holy Spirit".

Jesus doesn't die in the Infancy narratives. But he does become mortal. He takes the first step on the way to death, resurrection, and return. The Holy Innocents die. And they still do. Right away we see the lives of others are in closer relationship with scripture and the advent of Christ than we suspected. Rejection of the one whom God anoints is in the Infancy Narratives. This too is still on the world scene. It applies not only to Bishops or priests now being martyred, but to any Christian, anointed at Baptism, who suffers the same fate as Bishops and priests in the cause of Christ. The final success of God's wisdom, power, and love, and effective influence of the Spirit is accomplished in that the Child eventually enters the Temple to receive his blessing and recognition. At Easter Jesus will manifest God's wisdom, power, and love and the effectiveness of the Spirit by *being* the Temple. His Body as God's Temple is precisely what receives recognition and blessing in the mystery of his dying and rising. The pattern is clearer at Easter, but present at Christmas, i.e. his coming among



us, his being rejected, his death, the victory of God. The same mystery we recognize and proclaim in Easter-Pentecost is already present in his hidden life in Nazareth, in ours in Elmira and yours wherever you may be. This is precisely the point of Pope John Paul II and that is why that sentence we are commenting on is so important. The dying and rising of Jesus Christ and his sending his Holy Spirit is the central reality of our human existence. The Holy Innocents today are on welfare, or in need of it. They are in war and strife-torn cities around the globe. Or they are being gotten out of the way, by whatever means, because they are a threat to somebody's kingship — a modern day Herod, frightened by what they might mean for the future!

As we allow ourselves to be influenced by the Gospel, that is to say as we become evangelized, the paschal mystery becomes both central and all-pervasive in our lives. Not death and defeat or paralyzing fear, but God's own life being given to us here and now through the risen humanity of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. After all, what does it mean to be influenced by the Gospel — to be evangelized. The formulation of Rev. Robert J. Hater expresses exactly what Pope John Paul wrote in the encyclical. "Evangelization is the ongoing process within the Christian community that seeks to initiate people ever more deeply into the mystery of God's love as it is manifested most fully in the dying and rising of Jesus." Jesus shared our humanity that we might share his divinity. That is the good news God has for us mortals, Innocent or Not! You and I who are living today are that Gospel even as Jesus was (and is) in his time. Let us ponder these things in our hearts as Mary did. Let us say "Yes" to being evangelized by God as she did. We will find in our world the wisdom, the power, the love, the Spirit creating, reconciling, healing, building, blessing the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

In Xto,
fr Martin
Fr. Martin

A group of oblates at the Monastery, on October 1981



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