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# Ñ Contra Mundum Ñ

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Volume II, Issue 6

January 2000

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The Congregation of St. Athanasius - Roman Catholic, Anglican Use

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## Notes from the Chaplain

**W**HAT a magical number 2000 is, with all those zeros! There hasn't been anything like it for a thousand years. In the course of world history, very few people will have lived to see such a day. But from a practical point of view, writing those zeros will take no more getting used to when you go to date a letter or write a check, than any other new year. We'll see!

The last time the world had all those zeros, civilization was quite a different place. None of those ancient and venerable universities, banking houses, guilds, and royal houses yet existed. Living as we do in the New World, we are impressed when any of our establishments go back even 250-300 years.

But one thousand years ago there was the Catholic Church, preaching and teaching, saying Mass, baptizing, blessing marriages and burying the dead. There were bishops, priests, deacons, religious men and women, devoted lay people. And there was a Holy Father as successor of Peter and holding together in the Church people of many kindreds and tongues. Many of our prayers, and certainly ALL of our scripture readings, go back much further in time. Even some of our musical chant was already "old" by the year one thousand. The Church is the oldest institution by far in the world today.

Think for a moment of how easily that continuity might have been broken. The world's museums are

full of the relics of religions past, and their storerooms contain books on cults and sects which have died out long since and about which curators haven't a clue to their meaning. It would have taken no more than a wholesale apostasy of one or two generations of Christians for the New Testament to be relegated to those dusty shelves.

The very opposite, of course, is what happens. In each generation **THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US**. How does this happen? The Psalmist said of Almighty God, "with thee is the well of life, and in thy light shall we see light." In each generation, men and women have been admitted to the contemplation of that light. The coming of Christ was the greatest way this happens "because in the Mystery of the Word Made Flesh, thou has caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of thy glory."

God's holiness is so great a light that the human soul cannot take it in directly. Part of the reason is our sinful condition. But there is more to it than that. A soul is much like the physical eye in its inability to look directly at the blaze of the summer sun. You and I cannot directly take in God's majesty. But our Creator knows all this, and so He "manifests" His glory in ways from which we can deduce His existence and gain hints of His attributes. Shepherds made the connection at Bethlehem and a Roman centurion did it on an execution hill.

Although the Divine Light shone out from among the Chosen People, the gentiles were also invited to the cradle of the Lord, and it is there that

they received the vocation to faith and salvation.

Almighty God so loves each soul that the possibility of salvation does not diminish over the course of time, as the years pile up between the first century and today. Rather, the Light which calls men and women to the knowledge of Christ still shines. Its intensity varies according to the promptings of God's love and His justice. But His Light is always sufficient for men of good will to recognize it.

Saint Paul once gave the example of a footrace as analogous of the Christian endeavor. It is not enough simply to show up at the starting line and get a number! You have to run the race, striving to win. Epiphany too reminds us that it is not enough to see the star where it shines. With the Magi we must follow it day after day, and persevere, even when the journey incidentally takes us to King Herod! But if we do not act upon this beckoning of the star, it will, after a while, disappear. On the other hand, if we follow it, sincerely, with determination, and with generosity, the star will lead us, as it did the Magi, past all the Herods, to the Christ Child.

That is the story. It is an old story. It was an old story even the last time we had all those zeros on the calendar. So much has come and gone even in the past century let alone in the past one thousand years. But the Gospel is fresh, good, and news. It is **GOOD NEWS** for the year 2000. Men and women of good will still respond to the age-old call of the prophets to ancient Israel: "Arise, shine, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Father Bradford

## Around the Parish

Our condolences and prayers of Christian sympathy go to Winsome Perry on the death of her father, Beresford Whitelocke, in Jamaica in mid-November. Winsome had just visited her father, and returned again for the funeral. May he rest in peace.

Philip Lawler is running for the United States Senate next year against incumbent Ted Kennedy. The Lawler family recently moved to Lancaster, Massachusetts and regularly go to Mass at Saint Benedict Abbey, Still River. Phil is editor of *Catholic World Report*. He was interviewed in the December, 1999 issue of *The Massachusetts News*.

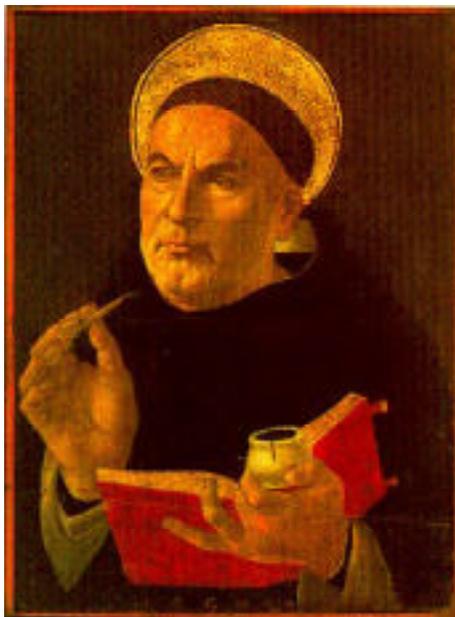
Hugh O'Beirne and Addie Hill were united in Holy Matrimony on December 18 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Hugh's mother, Rita Strow, flew down for the ceremony. Best wishes to this young couple.

Judy Echaniz has sent some wonderful photographs she took during our fall parish retreat at St. Benedict Abbey. She managed to get all eighteen retreatants in at least one of her photos! We showed these at coffee hour after Mass recently.

Father Bradford was one of the preachers during a Novena to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception held at St. Brendan Church in Bellingham.

Many thanks to all those parishioners who remembered the Bradfords with cards and gifts during the holiday season. Your personal kindnesses and generous support of the congregation are both very much appreciated.

## Saint of the Month



### St. Thomas Aquinas

Feast Day 28 January

**S**AINT Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor of the Church, patron of all universities and of students, was born toward the end of the year 1226. When five years old he was placed under the care of the Benedictines of Monte Casino, where his teachers quickly discerned that he was intellectually gifted, and an unusually good boy.

Though his family objected, Thomas decided to enter the Dominican order when he was 17. For the next two years some of his family continued to persuade him to change his mind, and even sent a prostitute to lure him away, according to the legend. Thomas wasn't to be deflected from his plan, however, and persevered in his vocation. He is said to have had the gift of perfect chastity, from which state he has come to be known as the "angelic doctor."

After making his profession at Naples, he studied at Cologne under the celebrated St. Albert the Great. Here he was nicknamed the "dumb ox" because of his silent ways and huge size, (drawings make it appear that he suffered from gluttony) but he was a brilliant student. At the age of twenty-two, he was appointed to teach in the same city. At the same time, he also began to publish his first works. After four years he was sent to Paris. The saint was then a priest. At the age of thirty-one, he received his doctorate.

In Paris he was introduced to the King who befriended him and often entertained him to dinner. In 1261, Urban IV called him to Rome where he was appointed to teach, but he positively declined to accept any ecclesiastical dignity. He wrote prolifically and distinguished himself as a preacher. Clement IV offered him the archbishopric of Naples which he also refused. He left the great monument of his learning, the "Summa Theologica", unfinished, for on his way to the second Council of Lyons, ordered there by Gregory X, he fell sick and died at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova in 1274.

St. Thomas was one of the greatest and most influential theologians of all time. He was canonized in 1323 and declared Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V.

[excerpted from *Catholic Online*]

## Unwanted?

IT was Ash Wednesday, and the sacristy of the Midtown Manhattan parish, where I was serving, was as hectic as it always was before a holiday service.

In the midst of our preparations, with about “fifteen minutes to go,” one of the ushers came into the sacristy to tell me that a young woman was at the entrance of the church and had asked to see me.

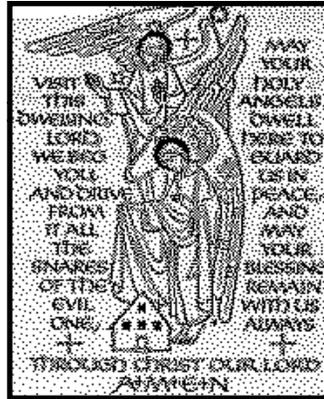
My reaction was one of irritation—“Can’t it wait?” I asked. The usher replied that the woman was obviously distressed and he felt I ought to go to the door at once. I did.

At the door was an attractive woman in her early thirties, whom I recognized as a sporadic member of the congregation. She was, indeed, distressed.

Taking her aside, I asked her to tell me about her problem. She had just visited her doctor and had confirmed that she was pregnant. She was not married, but had been involved in a “loving relationship” with a man for some time, and said the man was the father.

She asked me, “What is the Church’s teaching on abortion?” I cringed as she asked that inevitable question, I cringed at the implication, and I cringed because I knew that my traditional and conservative responses could be easily overturned by the priest at our neighboring parish down the street.

I gave my response, adding that I was in no position to tell her what to do, and admitting the possibility



Houseblessings are especially appropriate during Epiphanytide but may be given at any time convenient to the parish priest

of contrary statements from my Episcopal colleagues. I asked her to respond honestly to the questions, “What is it you now have inside of you? Where did the child come from? What will be his or her purpose?”

She turned and went out into the street, I turned and reached the sacristy just in time to enter the sanctuary. She and the child within her were at the heart of my prayers that Ash Wednesday evening.

But the sporadic church attendance by that woman became non-attendance. I feared the worst.

It was about a year later that, as I went into the service one Sunday, my heart leaped. There was the long lost woman, and more significantly, she was with a little baby.

I couldn’t wait to see her and have the opportunity to confirm my hopes. The rest of the congregation could not understand my excited and enthusiastic reception of this little boy, and they said so in the next week.

The child was beautiful, the mother was radiant. There was no

chance to talk; in a way there was also no need. She simply said, “Thank you,” and we both knew.

I looked at the little boy and I saw myself. I had been adopted. Perhaps my natural mother had been in the same situation as this young woman.

Unwanted? No doubt at some time during those pregnancies. But not disposed of. I have been given the gift of living, for 36 years thus far.

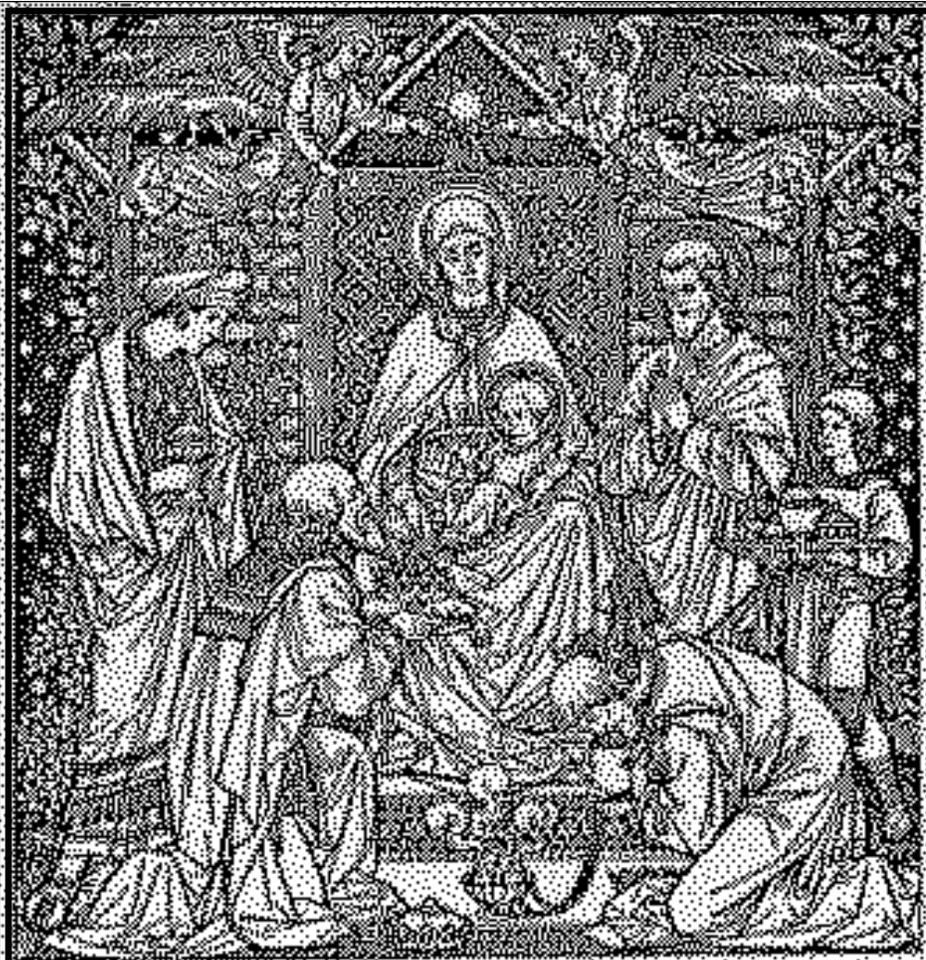
The little boy at the back of the chapel on that Sunday evening became a special symbol, especially for me

FATHER ANDREW SLOANE

*Father Sloane was on the staff of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, NYC and is now Rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, K Street, Washington D.C.*



Jesus being baptized by St. John the Baptist in the river Jordan. The First Sunday after the Epiphany commemorates the Baptism of Our Lord.

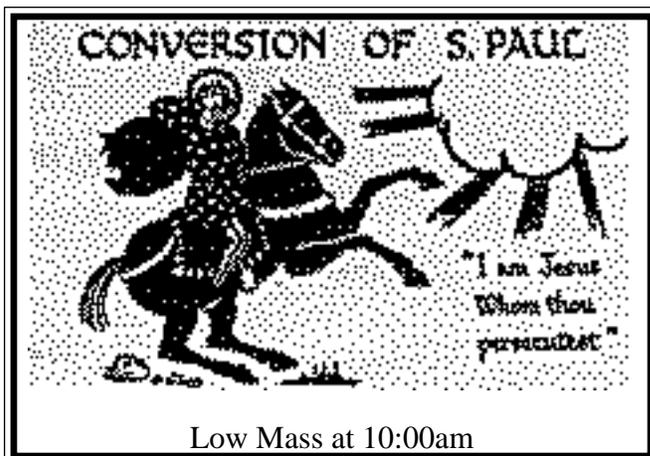


**THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY**

January 6, 2000

Procession, Solemn Mass & Sermon  
7:30pm

A Reception will follow the service



Low Mass at 10:00am

**The Congregation of  
Saint Athanasius,**

worshiping at

**Saint Aidan's Church**  
158 Pleasant Street  
Brookline, Mass. 02446-3149

Rectory: 192 Foster Street  
Brighton, MA 02135-4620

Tel/Fax: (617) 787-0553

Web: <http://www.locutor.net>

**Sundays** 11:00am. Sung Mass, followed by coffee and fellowship in the sacristy.

**Saturdays** 11:30 - 1:30 Confessions in the chapel, Fr. Raphael Caamano. No appointment necessary.

**Future Dates**

**Jan. 1, Sat.:** Mary, Mother of God, Octave of Christmas, Solemn Mass at 9:30am. *(This day is a Holy Day of Obligation for the Archdiocese of Boston by decree of Bernard Cardinal Law.)*

**Jan. 6, Thurs.:** The Feast of the Epiphany, Procession, Solemn Mass & Sermon, 7:30pm. *(A reception will follow the service.)*

**Jan. 25, Tues.:** Conversion of St. Paul, Low Mass at 10:00am.

**Feb. 2, Weds.:** Candlemas (Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple), Blessing of Candles, Procession, and Solemn Mass.

Here's where we are...



### Contra Mundum

The Congregation of St. Athanasius  
158 Pleasant Street  
Brookline, MA 02446

#### **Saint Aidan's Church, 158 Pleasant Street in Brookline. Parking Available.**

**Commonwealth Avenue:** From east or west, turn onto Pleasant Street south to the church at the corner of Freeman Street.

**Boylston Street:** From east, turn onto Harvard Street, veer right onto Sewall Avenue and left on St. Paul Street. At the corner of Freeman, turn left to the Church. From west, you cannot make a left turn onto Harvard Street. Turn right around the fire station, cross Boylston Street and proceed northbound on Harvard Street. Follow directions above.

**Beacon Street:** From east or west, turn onto James Street and right onto Pleasant Street and proceed to church.

**Mass Pike:** Exit at Allston-Brighton tolls, take ramp for Cambridge Street-Allston to Harvard Street, Left on Harvard and left on Brighton Ave. which merges into Commonwealth Avenue. See directions for Commonwealth Avenue above.

**MBTA Green Line B car,** stop request at Pleasant Street. Walk four blocks south on Pleasant Street.

