This Christmas And Our Regard For Man

do we regard our fellow man as importantly as did God nearly two thousand years ago?

This thoughtful Christmas presentation has been prepared for use during the Christmas Season when all the world is acutely and painfully conscious of the problems that beset all of humanity. It has been particularly designed for those Presiding Officers who wish to give only one holiday presentation since it incorporates elements of both New Year's and Christmas.

OFFICIALLY, THE BEGINNING of one year and the end of another is signaled by the critical midnight hour in the no-man's land between December 31 and January 1. However, for many Christians the world over, no year is complete without Christmas. Somehow, Christmas is the heart and soul of the whole year. The pine scented holiday season is somehow the sum and substance of all that has been cherished through the year.

While there are those who criticize the present century's gift giving extravaganza, there is, I think, not too much basis for such a point of view. The American people live in an age which is characterized by a great abundance of things. We express ourselves through the medium of things. For example, the housewife who loves her home often expresses her devotion through the arrangement of the furnishings, through recovering and redecorating or through the addition of some attractive arrangement of flowers or seasonal centerpiece.

There was an era, it is true, when homes were bare and the only media through which a homemaker could express herself was through a smile, a gesture, or a gently spoken word. Today, the average American has at his disposal a great number of "things" by which and through which he expresses himself.

Earlier Christmases With Limited Materials Were Different

Long ago, holidays such as Christmas were given a gala air through the manipulation of whatever materials were available. The addition of a few fruits or nuts to an ordinary pound cake was the height of party foods for the simple reason that it represented a feeling, a desire to express something very special and particular within an individual.

As the years have rolled by, the materials which are available have greatly increased. Today's celebration of the Yule-tide is an extravaganza only by contrast. Today, the age-old feelings of wonder, awe and reverence have welled up within individuals surrounded by a great wealth of materials. These upsurging emotions are expressed in a great number of ways and in many, many variations.

If you have been overwhelmed with love and devotion, if you have ever felt something so deeply and keenly that your throat ached from emotion, then perhaps you realize what has happened at the Christmas Season. Having much at their disposal, the American people have sought means to express their emotions through giving, decorating and enjoying.
There are always those who would suggest that we go back to the good old days when Christmas meant another log in the fire and a stocking doll. For my part, I would not go back for anything. To suggest such a course of action seems to me to indicate that there is a shocking shallowness behind the proposal. It indicates that the would-be "old-timer" is unable to see behind things to people.

Contrasts of Different Problems

Every age has its problems. During our early colonial period, the settlers must have struggled to keep the spirit of Christmas alive while defending their lives from a shower of arrows sent on their deadly flight by savages. Today, we struggle to keep the spirit of Christmas alive amid a shower of invisible radio-active particles sent into flight by savage spirits in modern dress.

In earlier days, men wrestled with the problem of seeing beyond the struggle for subsistence to the people who made their efforts necessary. The conditions have changed, it is true. But the central problem of making the importance of people paramount in our thinking and doing remains. This seeing behind things and events to people is one of the cardinal features of the Christmas Season. The very birth of the Christ Child was the means by which God demonstrated His love and concern for people. God sent His only begotten Son so that people might share in Everlasting Life.

Challenge to Regard Our Fellow Man as Important

People are important and the Christmas Season challenges us to regard our fellow man as importantly as did God nearly two thousand years ago.

As God gave of Himself through the embodiment of His Spirit in His Son, so each of us seeks at Christmas time to give of himself through the giving of gifts. At this season, the giving of gifts is a symbolic act. We can never approach the magnificence of His gift but we can give expression to our deep regard for people through the things which now comprise our world.

For family and friends we give gifts which symbolize our love. But, this year, as never before, mankind has been brought into an increasingly close relationship. What we do as members of the total human family is more important than ever. Some way to show all of the people with whom we share this world that we do have a deep regard for them is extremely important.

As the Christmas gift has come to symbolize the spirit of love and regard we have for family and friends, so we desperately need some way to symbolize our love of humankind to the members of the world family of nations.

Take a Lesson From a Little Child

A little child will ask God to answer his prayers. He will unashamedly pour out his most heart-felt longings whether this be for a shiny toy, a new brother or sister, or for forgiveness.

At this Christmas Season, perhaps, as mature adults, we might pour out our hearts to God in prayer. Through His Help, we may yet find the way to symbolize our love for our fellow man so that new progress towards Peace on Earth may become a reality among men of growing good will.
Star Points stand, in succession, and remain standing.

ADAH

I pray to God that all of the world's people may be united in living and doing those things which reflect that deep regard for humanity that God demonstrated through the Gift of His Son. May we find ourselves increasingly loyal and obedient to His Will.

RUTH

I pray to God that as we go about our labors in homes, farms and businesses that we may find new ways to befriend our fellow man wherever we may encounter him. May we be sensitive to not only the needs for physical sustenance but to needs for spiritual support and friendship in personal, community and national relationships.

ESTHER

I pray God to guide and counsel those individuals who now sit in positions of great power and authority. As the very fact of survival has been concentrated in the hands of a few, may God guide their actions so that they may act with wisdom and justice for all of humanity.

MARTHA

I pray God that we may use the Christian heritage that is ours to help us understand the meaning of the complex world in which we live. May we use our belief in Christ as the Son of God as the very cornerstone of our lives here on earth and as the guiding light which leads to That Life which is complete and eternal.

ELECTA

I pray God that we may realize that true love often demands self-sacrifice. Help us to be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to make Peace on Earth a living reality in our own lifetimes.

WORTHY MATRON

In this holy season during humanity's most hazardous hour, let us contemplate the wonderful gift of God to man. Let us stand and unite in a moment of silent prayer of gratitude and supplication for the strength and wisdom which we need.

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Worthy Matron raps up the membership for a moment of silent prayer. At the conclusion of one minute, a soloist sings the second verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" which begins, "How silently, how silently ..." The Worthy Matron then seats membership.
PATRIOTISM

survival of religious values aided by our
democracy's guarantee of freedom

This brief presentation is designed for use during the holiday season. It may be used either before or after a longer presentation or a holiday program.

FEBRUARY is USUALLY REGARDED as the patriotic month of our calendar year. However, for me, there is no season of the year which makes me feel a deep sense of patriotism more than this Yuletide Season. You might think that this is strange but when I consider what has happened to religion and to groups which have a religious purpose as the core of their endeavors in other political systems, I am just very glad that I am an American.

At this holiday season, I realize that without the protection of our democratic form of government all of us might be deprived of the things which we cherish most in our lives including the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child.

The values which we hold are in a large measure the consequence of our belief in God and Christ the Son. There is no doubt in my mind that the very emergence of the democratic form of government that we know today would have been impossible without men and women who were committed to these values which we derive from our common beliefs.

It is also very clear to me that the survival of our religious values today in this country is largely attributable to the fact that the government we support is vigilant in guaranteeing the freedom to pursue the religious activities of our choice.

For these reasons, it seems highly appropriate to me that we spend a few minutes collectively recognizing the importance of patriotism at this most holy time of year. Will you join with me in the singing of the beloved American song, "My Country Tis of Thee"?

It makes a nice introduction to this presentation to have the organist play "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies" very softly.
This address has been prepared for use during the holiday season. While Christmas is a time of joy and giving, it is also a time when thoughtful Christians need to critically evaluate their religious heritage in light of the twentieth century crisis.

Presiding Officers who are looking for a thoughtful approach, will enjoy this new look at the challenge to Christianity.

AT NO TIME IN THE YEAR is it more important to seriously assess the position of Christian people all over the world than at Christmas time. During the holiday season, it is only natural that we become engrossed in worship and in the delightful process of participating in this annual religious festival.

However, it is, perhaps, even essential to the survival of our Christian way of life, that we clarify our own understanding of what the nativity and subsequent development of the Christian philosophy mean. Further, it is no less important that having reassessed the meaning of the Christian dedication that we deliberately, consciously, and consistently seek to check our actions in light of Christian thought.

"What Is Right and Good" Was Concern of Early Men

From the dawn of civilization men have been concerned with the question, "How do we know what is right and good?" In very early times, even great thinkers living in an era of abysmal ignorance, struggled with this problem. In the light of their limited perception, these individuals were bound to conclude that the human mind could not comprehend "trueness" or "goodness" and that this must surely be the exclusive province of mystical, supernatural forces.

As time went by, as the gradual civilizing forces affected the insight and understanding of humanity, the idea that supernatural forces accidentally determined values, gave way to the embodiment of these forces in many different god-like creatures. Consequently, man's understanding of "goodness" and "rightness" was seen to depend upon the appeasement or pleasing of these god-like creatures for the purpose of trying to guarantee a favorable regard of human action.

By the time of the great golden age of Greek thought, the high regard for the gods and goddesses was largely disappearing from the thinking element of society. At this time, men tried to find the answer to the perplexity of goodness and rightness by disregarding the element of religion.

This is not to infer that there was an anti-religion element here. Rather, it was that the period just preceding the birth of Christ was largely a period in which men ignored religion in trying to answer the ever-constant question of goodness and rightness.
Forces Which Ignore Religion Prevalent Today

It is absolutely essential that, as Christians, we understand exactly what this meant. Today, forces bearing a marked similarity to those extant in the Greek period are at work for the purpose of undermining the Christian way of life.

Let us briefly review what this meant to humankind. Such thinkers felt that a knowledge of goodness and Tightness did not depend upon a knowledge of God. They held that this ultimate knowledge could be obtained by men independent of divine assistance. But, and this is a tremendously important "but," such knowledge, it was asserted, could only be obtained by a few. This meant that some human beings had been endowed more generously than others and that this exclusive nucleus of individuals would find out what was "good" and "right" and would direct the affairs of others as this understanding they had achieved directed.

Here we have a complete absence of the equality of men both in the eyes of God and man. It is no wonder that such a belief eventually proved inadequate for the needs of humanity and one of the world's great civilizations crumbled and disappeared.

At this time the Hebrews were clinging to the belief in one God. While the Graeco-Roman world tried to recoup its losses through the glory-worship of its Caesars, the Hebrews rejected this notion. They were sure that faith in God would ultimately provide them with the answer to the question which had perplexed mankind in all the previous ages of man. "How do we know?"

It is against this background that the long awaited Messiah of the Hebraic tradition was gradually assuming a position of paramount significance in the thoughts of men.

Birth of Christ Marked the Turning Point

When the wise men, the sages of the known world, heralded the advent of the Star in the East as the divine announcement that the anticipated Messiah was to become a reality, attention was focused on the means by which men would gain the knowledge they had sought throughout the preceding years. The miracle of the divine birth, the embodiment of God in His Son, the reality, the comprehensible being of Christ, changed the thought, the understanding, the direction of the world of man from this time forward.

Let us, at this celebrated time of year, take a few moments to reacquaint ourselves with these new and revolutionary elements which were inherent in the emerging Christian religion.

First, the final source of authority for values, the "goodness" or "rightness," was and is God. But, notice, here in the Christian concept, God does not jealously guard this knowledge with shrouds of mystery and occultism. Rather, the God of the Christian tradition places at the disposal of humankind the means whereby understanding can be achieved. The Son of God walks among mortal men to give credence and knowledge to man.
Knowledge of Goodness and Rightness
Now Belongs to All

Next, we must specifically take note of another most singular, unique aspect of the Christian belief. Knowledge of goodness and rightness are not the exclusive perogative of a few generously endowed special persons. Such understanding is the inherent right of all mankind and it is the basic notion of the equality of man before God. This irrefutable, world-shaking, assertion gradually has replaced early conceptions until the Christian way of life has become the most dominant element in the western world.

It is doubtful whether the American democratic life could ever have developed independent of the Christian tradition. While there are some who disparage the interdependence of the two, it is important to note that this can hardly be indicative of the American people as a whole. In recent years, our very Pledge of Allegiance has been altered to reaffirm the belief that it is "one nation, under God." Here, it is the Christian God concept of which we are speaking. It is the knowledgeable God. the accessible-to-man God, the God most understood through a faith and belief in Christ the Son.

We Depend Upon This Christian Philosophy for Survival

At Christmas time, not only do we reaffirm our faith in God through Christ, but we are brought sharply to the realization of our dependence of this Christian philosophy for the survival of this way of life in the mid-twentieth century period. The thoughtful individual enters the holiday season, not only with deep religious feeling which finds expression in the giving and receiving of gifts, which are symbolic of the giving and receiving of the human-divine relationship, but with a serious and profound realization that the birth of Christ so long ago is indeed the cornerstone of the structure of the democratic way of life.
PLASTIC PACKAGES

A holiday packaging idea which can double as a table decoration or a "collection" device is suggested in this article.

OF COURSE IT'S DIFFICULT to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but it's not very difficult at all to make charming packages from plastic throw-away containers.

Many detergents and bleaches now come in plastic containers of various sizes. Get your neighbors and friends to save them for you. Rinse the containers thoroughly and then you are ready to begin your creative efforts. One novel way to use these containers is to slice off the top with a sharp knife or single edged razor. Next, cut out a pair of large, floppy ears from felt or construction paper. Cut eyes, nose and mouth shapes from paper or felt and paste on front of container. Add whiskers. These make attractive, sad-eyed spaniels that double as packages for little remembrances.

These plastic packages may also be used for "collection" purposes. If your lodge contributes to the maintenance of a home or an orphanage, these containers can be distributed for filling with face cloths, hand towels, or stocking toys for filling Christmas stockings which Santa might otherwise pass by.

Table decorations of a limitless variety can be made. Use white containers and cut red Santa beards, eyebrows and caps for a clever reversal of colors and a "different" Saint Nick. Use the containers which are narrowed at the mid-section for figures such as angels.

Get out your scrap box and turn these discarded scraps into box office attractions!
NEW CHALLENGE

new term—new year—thought
provoking address pointing in a new direction

This address-ceremony may be effectively used at the first regular meeting after installation or throughout the year when the membership is ready for a new sense of direction.

A few preliminary remarks by the Presiding Officer may adapt this address for dedication to an individual.

It may also be used to honor the Star Point of Adah if desired.

PROBABLY OUR TWENTIETH CENTURY gives greater emphasis to the role of childhood and youth in human affairs than any other era of man. This, I think may very well be a very good thing. It is interesting to note that during the last two thousand years, roughly from the time of the birth of the Christ Child, what is commonly regarded as the period of childhood and youth is a much longer period than it formerly was.

For centuries, the onset of adolescence was taken to be an indication that the individual was now ready to assume his social, civil, and religious responsibilities. Young men were expected to don the cloak of family responsibility and young women were expected to become wives and mothers. These young people were individuals who would, today, be called teen-agers. For example, Adah, at best an early teenager, played a most significant role in the historical tradition which is ours.

Increased Length of Life Brings New Conditions

Today, for example, the world engages in a controversy wondering whether statesmen of thirty to forty years are sufficiently mature to serve as leading statesmen of their respective nations. Christ, who only lived until his early thirties, has served, unsurpassed, as the moral and spiritual leader of the western world for nearly twenty centuries!

The increased length of life which has gradually come about, has brought in its wake a number of conditions which somehow weigh against our expecting as much from childhood and youth as we might.

Of course, no one is suggesting early marriage nor the return of children to factories and mines, but there is room, I think, to consider the potential contribution of the young to our society and to our world. Some argue that we may expect great things only from the exceptional or genius-type young person. Some feel that greatness is somehow likened with some scientific discovery, creative literary genius, or unusual business acumen.

If such are the standards by which we are going to judge an individual great, then many of the great names of all time will disappear into the vast reservoir of the world’s forgotten personalities.

Jesus’ Contribution Is His Magnificent Humanness

Let us consider the humble young Jesus of Nazareth. As far as we can tell, He never wrote an immortal sonnet nor conducted any experiments designed to
translate the natural sciences of the world into understanding language. He never amassed a great personal fortune. The great contribution of this remarkable young man was somehow intimately bound up with his uniquely magnificent humanness. His deeply compassionate self was as much outside of himself as inside himself. He was a Master of Relatedness if we may create an expression to identify this particularly unique quality of the world's greatest personality.

This is Indeed a most unique quality. For instance, you and I, today, across the endless succession of days that intervene between our own lives and the lives of Christ, can and do feel a deeply warm and alive sense of relatedness to Christ. His capacity to relate to other human beings is timeless, enduring and infinite.

What we are really observing here is that those things which seem to be most vital and sustaining to humankind are somehow within the reach of all of us.

True, we do need our literary great. We are desperately in need of technological contributions. We do need financial wizards to help us solve the fiscal problems of a vastly complex civilization. But more than this, infinitely more than this, we need individuals who are Paragons of Humanness and Masters of Relatedness.

How Do We Prepare Individuals to Become Increasingly Human?

When it comes to providing our civilization and our world with the technologically competent whether this be in the area of science, economics or politics, we are well aware that many years of preparation are needed to accomplish this objective. However, when it comes to the all important consideration of preparing individuals to become increasingly adequate human beings, we feel somehow at a loss. Nobody is precisely sure how one should go about an undertaking such as this. It is almost as if we expected the young to mature and suddenly "act human."

The very presence of the Story of Adah as part of our ritual work is indicative of the fact that as an organization we have a deep and abiding respect for the capacities and potentialities of the young. Further, our organization has been instrumental in providing organizations for the young women of the "teen age" to cultivate and nurture the qualities of humanness that we revere. We have been doing this for many years. The question is, it seems to me, is "Can we, as members of the Eastern Star, offer any new dimension to the youth of our nation whereby they may more deliberately cultivate these qualities?"

Should we, for example, begin our efforts with the young at the time when their potentiality should begin to flower? Or, should we extend our interest in children to the earlier, formative years? At the middle of the twentieth century, are we, as an organization, prepared to make an increasingly meaningful participation in the affairs of our civilization through deliberately involving ourselves with the training of the young?

Include Greater Emphasis on Youth and Childhood

Some may raise an eyebrow or cast a disapproving look. For my part, I feel that our organization, even at the local Chapter level can enhance its reputation as an order of substance and respect by moving into an
increasingly wider sphere of influence. This can be done by including the greater emphasis on youth and childhood among our preoccupations.

What can be done to make the Eastern Star way of life a matter of importance and reverence to the young? Let me ask, first of all, if there is room, somewhere on your busy calendar, for an affair designed primarily for the purpose of providing a worthwhile and valued experience for the children of your members?

Now, we are not talking about an ice cream social nor a bazaar or some such activity which is traditional with your group, but some event, some absorbing activity through which your children and your fellow member's children can enjoy the fellowship experience with each other.

Too often it seems that there has been some misunderstanding about the fact that it is necessary to the preservation of our tradition that we conduct our regular meetings in retirement from the affairs of life. We retreat to our deliberations, not to avoid the problems and issues of our world, but to become heartened and strengthened so that we may meet the challenges of our day-to-day world with increased vigor and wisdom.

We Want the World a Better Place

We must be really and truly honest with ourselves. We say that our purpose in coming together is to increase our individual and collective goodness. We seek to more ably reflect the Light of His Star wherever we may go. What we really want is not only to be better individuals but we want the world to be a better place because of it.

Each must answer for himself whether he has succeeded in understanding more clearly the lessons of our Order and has, indeed, become a finer individual. But, together, as members of an organization, we must not shun the task of asking ourselves how humanity, how the world in which we live, is better and finer because of our joint efforts.

If we have not done one small thing, then, as an organization, we are failing to function as a group in effecting a worthwhile contribution to the world in which we live. It seems to me that it is not enough that we do only as much as those before us. It seems to me that the challenge of our times is not merely to keep the Star glowing but to keep it glowing and penetrating farther and more radiantly than it ever has in years gone by.

(Note to Presiding Officer.*)

This challenge cannot be met by one individual. Indeed, it cannot be done with only a few. But the job can be done by a membership which is willing to deliberate together on ways of making the work of our Order increasingly important in the world in which we live.

While a greater concern with the young was cited as an instance of a new dimension for effectively translating the work of our Order into new and larger channels, there are countless other avenues which might be pursued. Truly effective leadership combined with a dedicated membership will result in the involvement of your Chapter in increasingly meaningful participation.

*If desired, a table on which the Sword and Veil have been effectively arranged against an appropriate draping may be placed in a prominent
position. A five tiered candle holder, or an arrangement of five individual holders may be placed on the table for lighting by the Star Point Officers. Ceremony should then proceed as indicated.

ADAH:

I light a candle in memory of the Maiden of Mizpeh.

W.M.

The Maiden of Mizpeh, so young and so sweet,
Clung to her Father and then gently smiled.
A few moments of anguish, and then she led
Her friends to the mountains untouched and wild.
There amid the sunshot meadows and hills
She wandered at peace seeking God and hope
And there she found comfort and courage
On every flower strewn cranny and slope.

RUTH:

I light a candle in recognition of a magnificent retreat to prayer.

W. M.

A retreat to the hills, time for God and prayer
And new courage surged through her being.
She braved the long trek to her home
Confident in the Tightness of sacrificing
Her life to keep her father's vow
And deeply reconciled to His Great Plan
And the role she was to play in making
The Grand Design a reality for man.

ESTHER:

I light a candle in admiration of great courage.

W.M.

Adah gave to the world a new courage,
A loyalty unsurpassed the centuries through
And the memory of those honest young eyes
Shining from a face framed in the blue.
The lifted veil lives on in our hearts.
Each year the maidens of Mizpeh retrace
The journey up the mountains to pray
And return all solemn of heart and face.

MARTHA:

I light a candle in recognition of the immortality of a noble act.

W.M.

For one brief moment of time they shared
Part of the life of a magnificent child.
They walked, as we in fancy's flight,
   Walk again the mountainside so wild.
And time and again we relive those moments
   In memory so frightening and full of dread
That we shudder to imagine the fatal stroke
   That left her so lifeless and dead.

**ELECTA:**

*I light a candle in recognition of the full measure of love and devotion.*

**W.M.**

Here in the retreat of our own Chapter
   We consider an act with nobility filled
And the thoughtless vanity that led
   To a child's life being forever stilled
We pause and wonder if along our way
   We have rashly acted or brought distress
And if we have unknowingly brought sorrow
   We most humbly seek His Divine Forgiveness.

☆

*Organist plays softly as an officer advances to remove paraphernalia.*
TWO FLAGS FOR YOU

FEBRUARY CAN HARDLY COME AND GO without stirring in our hearts an intense, surging patriotism. It is a time of year when one's sense of being an American is heightened and intensified.

Particularly after a national election we are conscious of one of the aspects of our democratic system which is of immeasurable importance. We might, for the lack of a more concise term at our disposal, denote this aspect of democracy as the "affirmation of diversity."

We Also Champion the Rights of Others

For example, during a period of election the difference of opinion which finds its expression in party loyalties reaches a fevered pitch. In the heat of the campaigns, emotional flare-ups and sometimes ill-conceived accusations are a part of the political scene. However devotedly one champions a party, personality or cause, he simultaneously champions the right, the inalienable right of others, to champion an opposing loyalty. The public sanction of diversity is a most basic and important aspect of our democracy.

Cherry-pies, hatchets, and log cabins are symbols of our national heritage. While the commitments denoted by our national symbols are often not explicitly stated, they are implicit in our cherished American symbolism.

Consider, if you will, the placement of the Christian flag and the American flag upon the lodge floor. The American flag, not only preserves the political freedom of Americans and the right to perpetuate this political freedom through the majority party system, but it preserves and protects the right to differ religiously. It is of tremendous import that there is but one American flag; not an American flag for Democrats, an American flag for Republicans, nor an American flag for Independents. It is one flag, symbolizing a willing unity of different party loyalties by common assent.

This concept, alone, makes it possible for the Christian flag to take its position as it does on the lodge room floor. It must be immediately apparent that this Christian flag also symbolizes the room for difference which is so inherently a part of a democratic way of life. There is not a Christian flag for Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians nor any of the numerous sects. It is an expression of the right to religious diversity, recognizing the unifying concept of God as a commonality of the American tradition.

Democracy Grows With Application

It is with justifiable patriotism that we so proudly hail the American flag. This institutionalization of diversity makes it possible for succeeding generations of Americans to proudly affirm a faith in democracy. This public sanction of difference makes it possible for American democracy to be a dynamic, growing system of government.

This room for difference makes it possible for democracy to be uniquely adoptive to the changing cultural complexities with which it is confronted. Thus it is that the democracy, by definition a complex of timeless constants, provides a way of life, while different from generation to generation in its scope, is ever an extension of these constants into widening spheres of applicability.
This dynamic concept of democracy is therefore to be understood as a
growing, developing way of life. The giant melting pot which represents the
cultural phenomena of the American people is spread across a large portion of
a giant continent.

The rate of growth is not everywhere the same. Some sections of our land
are enjoying various levels of democratic understandings. This really means
that the democratic way of life is constantly confronted with an emerging new
frontier.

The drama, the compelling excitement of being an American and part of this
uniquely dynamic way of life as it faces the challenges brought by the new
frontiers of time, is the priceless birthright of being an American.
FLOOR SCENE

This article contains suggestions for a floor scene for social events, and table decorations which would be suitable to use with the floor scene.

FOR YOUR WINTER SOCIAL EVENT, why not try a floor scene. These are attractive, set the tone well, and are very easy to assemble. Figures for this scene can be made by stuffing children's clothes with crumpled newspapers. Various sizes of snow suits are ideal. Make life size heads with stuffed nylon hose. Add yarn hair. Arrange a gaily dressed girl and boy about a sled in the center of the floor.

String holiday colored streamers from the ceiling at a point above the center and tack the ends to points on a circle drawn with chalk on the floor. Here and there from the streamers, string snow white popcorn pieces to resemble falling snow. Use black thread so that the thread is scarcely visible. Spray with artificial snow.

For center pieces on your tables, make popcorn snow men. (If you are not a whiz at making popcorn balls, these can be purchased by the dozen for a nominal sum at super markets.) Stick faces on popcorn snow men with straight pins. Add a ribbon scarf and a saucy paper hat. (To stick balls together easily, slice a flat place on each ball with a sharp knife. Cement flat places together with syrup if you plan to eat them. If they are decorations only, good glue is much easier.)

(If your community supports a Tots and Toddlers Shop, they may lend you window models for the occasion. Credits are usually given on the program or a lettered credit placed with the display.)
This "first of the year" presentation is complete with an optional dedication to a Past-Presiding Officer, Outstanding Member, or Visiting Dignitary. The presentation may be used without the dedication without further adaptation of the material.

TONIGHT IT GIVES ME great pleasure to dedicate our presentation to Sister (Brother) ————. Nobody knows better than those of us who have served as presiding officers just how important ———— is to the continuing success of our Lodge. Last year, as in many years preceding, ———— has not only served as a source of information and encouragement for the officers of our Lodge, but she (he) has worked diligently with the membership at large to facilitate the realization of the goals that were important to us as individuals and as a group.

Sister (Brother) ————, it is because of your constant support in the past and because we know that your faithful and loyal participation in our work will be an important factor in the days ahead that we dedicate this presentation in a spirit of commendation and appreciation.

NOBODY KNOWS what the future brings. Yet, it is characteristic of human beings to believe in the promise of the future. Each year as New Year's Day comes around, people the world over affirm their belief in a brighter tomorrow.

Sometimes it is worth our while to examine things which we cherish. This belief in the promise of the future is no exception. Why is it that in mankind's darkest hours there is hope welling up even from the depths of despair? Why do people believe that somehow, tomorrow, we will find a solution for the problems that beset us?

**Increased Knowledge Has Changed Our Lives**

I think that, perhaps, man's faith in the existence of God plays an immensely important role in shaping this belief. Today, we are surrounded by a vast body of new knowledge. We know more about people, our earth and the universe of which we are a part than men once dared to dream was possible. We have pushed back the darkness of ignorance and now stand on the threshold of promising new discoveries. Indeed, we have become aware that our increased knowledge in this century alone has made our lives appear to be very dissimilar to all previous ages.

Today, our scientists and our most advanced thinkers admit that in spite of all our knowledge, in spite of all of our achievements, that men of every age come to a limit of their knowing. They come to a point where they, like our early ancestors, have ultimately only their faith in God on which to lean.

They come to a point where they realize that man, in spite of his growing understanding is ultimately dependent upon the Almighty God whose All-Knowingness created the world and everything in it. They affirm their belief in a God whose Purposes hold for all of humanity an ultimate good which is, somehow, always beyond our comprehension.
Today, as ever before, men tremble in fear of each other. At the same time, man places his faith in God, in His Love for man, and faces the future with a faith and trust which have survived long ages of tribulation.

This belief in God, this faith that there is Divine purpose in living and being is one of our most treasured possessions. It is the great stabilizer of humanity and the mainstay of mankind. It is this faith and trust that brings us to another new year with confidence that the days which lie ahead will contain the elements by which we may resolve our difficulties and eliminate man's inhumanity to man.

The work of our Order nurtures this faith. Its lessons help us to understand our situation and our relation to God. And, this is a most vital and important undertaking. This deep, abiding faith can be lost and the loss of faith is one of the most destructive tragedies known. A man without faith in the promise of tomorrow seeks to destroy himself, others or the world in which he lives. An individual without faith is somehow something less than human.

One cannot read of a suicide, a murder or the mass destruction planned by political madmen without a sense of shock. The loss of faith has turned such individuals against themselves, their fellow men or to a course of action designed to bring about world destruction.

*Let Us Reaffirm Our Dedicated Aims*

At this New Year's time, let us all resolve to nurture our faith and belief. Let us reaffirm our support for an organization such as ours which is dedicated to carrying out the building and strengthening man's trust in God and his faith in the promise of tomorrow. I challenge you to a full realization that we are engaged in a most vital and urgent undertaking.

It is true that nobody knows what tomorrow brings, but we do know that we can bring to the coming year a growing faith and an increased desire to be willing instruments in the hand of the Almighty God who created all of the universe with all of its complexities. It is with sustained serenity that we come to a New Year, confident that through our common effort in the cause of all humanity that we shall effect a tomorrow that is brighter for all.

Nobody knows what the new day may bring,  
Although we know that summer follows spring.  
Nobody knows where mankind will seek to go  
Though we may chart the way the high winds blow.  
We may not peek beyond this moment on this day  
Though we may be sure God listens as we pray.  
We may count God's love with serene heart and mind  
But men are uncertain, their open eyes are blind.  
Nobody knows, and this is forever certain and true  
But great men have believed the long years through.  
They have faced adversity with quiet faith and trust  
Knowing tomorrow would be both brighter and just.  
In these days when men tremble in anxious fear  
Will tomorrow bring a smile or an anguished tear?  
Will men come together in great good will  
And calm the waters that are so troubled still?  
But we do know that God in His Heaven above  
Looks on His troubled children with changeless love.
We know, we believe, and we seek a brighter day
When all men live together in the Christian way.
This is our faith, our bulwark and our guide
We live in trust knowing God is on our side.
There is much uncertain and much we do not know
But confident we are God will guide as we go.
A CARTON COMMUNITY

FOR A HOLIDAY SCENE the cardboard waxed containers in which milk and other products are packaged can be used as bases for houses and other buildings. The pint and half-pint cartons make excellent little houses. Cover the outside of the carton with construction paper of desired color. Cut roof piece and fold in half and place on top of container fold. A dab of liquid cement will hold it in place. Chimneys can be made quickly and notched to fit on top of fold.

(Your wallpaper dealer may have a part-roll of "brick" paper which you might use to good effect.)

Use quart-size containers and cut the bottom off to the desired height for churches and other buildings. A steeple may be placed on top of the fold just as the chimneys were placed.

Miniature cities can be built rather quickly this way. You may even like to scale your houses down by using the small safety match boxes as a base. Once you have decided on the sizes desired, the pattern consists of the proper length of paper folded at the proper intervals. A small amount of paper should be allowed for overlap and gluing.

Place buildings on a snowy carpet of white cotton. Little evergreen trees may be purchased at a variety store for a very nominal price. If desired, toy cars may be placed on the snow covered highways. Saint Nick and his eight reindeer may be part of the scene. Sprinkle all with artificial snow (soap flakes do nicely).

If you know an interested handy-man, perhaps he will drill holes in a plywood base and you can fasten a string of Christmas lights beneath it and "light" your church and homes.