

ONCE more it is the time of Christmas; the time of rejoicing, and shared friendliness, and lightly exchanged best wishes of the season. It is the Yuletide, when there are rare moments of universal fraternity among all of humankind; and the clanging bell of the shabby street corner Santa Claus mingles somehow in fleeting harmony with the proudest cathedral chime. It is the time of Noel . . . holly-decked halls . . . and for many of us who knew hopeless holidays this is now a time to be glad that a tinsel-hung tree at home is lit, and daddy isn't.

And a time for more serious joy that we in AA face the New Year in growing fellowship . . . 120,000 strong, in this wide continent and in full forty lands beyond the seas.

Let us mark Christ's holy birth with humble gratitude that we now walk in light, and that we have received the gift of recovery and personal rebirth. Verily, let us mark the Christmas by counting most precious this one gift . . . the gift of giving, by which we and AA live.

EDITORIAL

Every Day Is Christmas



THE seventeenth Christmas for Alcoholics Anonymous is here. Considering all that has happened since AA's first Christmas in 1935, no words can portray the meaning of Christmas 1952. The only thing of which we're really sure is that we have given of ourselves, and have received gifts that no imagination can fully describe. Guided, we are sure, by an all generous and wise Providence, AA's message of hope has been carried into nearly every corner of the earth. The Christmas drama of giving and receiving has been re-enacted everywhere and still goes on.

Many of us in AA are of the Christian faith, though not all. We have Jews who look to Jehovah; agnostics who hopefully look to the AA group as their Higher Power; and there are Indians upon our Western plains who regard the Great Spirit as their guide. Now that we have opened tiny beachheads on the shores of Asia, we have no doubt that some of our brothers and sisters there reverence Buddha and others Allah. It is a comforting fact of our life together that none of these differences has ever disturbed us. Indeed, it can be said that they have, in some subtle and mysterious way, bound us even more firmly together. The insurance of that bond is our common kinship in suffering, and our universal release from it by the kind of giving that demands no reward.

So, by whatever name we may call it, the spirit of Christmas is in us all. How best to give and how to receive with ever more gratitude is our common aim. We'd like to practice the spirit of Christmas the year around. Therefore, we shall especially ask ourselves at this season: "What more can we *find* in order that we shall have more to *give*?" Since personal example is one of the great energies by which AA spreads, let's have a quick look at the life of a man who became able to practice the spirit of Christmas every day in the year.

He was born in Italy centuries ago. The age in which he lived was almost as confused and baffling as our own. His first attempt at living was just

like ours. He ran away from life as fast as he could, and by nearly the same means. Few, it was said, could romance more gaily than he, shake the dice with Dame Fortune with more abandon, nor clatter his wine flagon on the table more loudly. He probably had a pretty good time doing it, too, at least for a while. Bit by bit, though, he got fed up. During a long siege of illness he hit bottom, even as we alcoholics do.

One day he said to himself, "Suppose that in all things I try henceforth to do exactly as my Master would have done." This was the vision that gripped him, and he set foot on the new highroad. Some of his friends were amused, and others were deeply concerned. Some said it wasn't practical; others thought he had gone out of his mind. But by living one day at a time, teaching and sharing as he went, with no thought of reward for himself, he started a movement that deeply affected the whole world of his day; it reached into every level of society. He gave all he had, and that inspired others to do likewise. He brought true comfort where there had been none.

And how did he do this? The prayer he so often spoke tells us. Here it is:

*"Lord make me a channel of Thy peace
That where there is hatred . . . I may bring love
That where there is wrong . . . I may bring the spirit of forgiveness*

*That where there is discord . . . I may bring harmony
That where there is error . . . I may bring truth
That where there is doubt . . . I may bring faith
That where there is despair . . . I may bring hope
That where there are shadows . . . I may bring light
That where there is sadness . . . I may bring joy.*

*Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort . . . than to be comforted
To understand . . . than to be understood*

*To love . . . than to be loved
For . . . it is by self-forgetting . . . that one finds
It is by forgiving . . . that one is forgiven
It is by dying . . . that one awakens to Eternal Life."*

The lesson that Francis leaves us is clear and no example could be brighter. "Freely ye have received; freely give" and . . . a Merry Christmas!

Bill



GREETINGS FROM YOUR GRAPEVINE

THROUGH this spent year of 1952 your AA magazine has tried to bring into being each month a meeting in print.

And, as we close this last meeting of the year and prepare for the twelve meetings of 1953, the Editors and the Office of the Grapevine thank each and every contributor who helped to fill our pages.

And each and every subscriber and reader for making it possible for those pages to carry the message.

We hope we will all see each other a lot in 1953 . . . and we want our final words of this December to be this heartfelt greeting:

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!