



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

A Wartime Christmas

by Val J. Peter

(NAPSA)—In the human heart there is a terrible longing for the love and warmth Christmas brings—a longing felt even more intensely when Christmas is celebrated during war.



Father Val Peter

In recent years, the entertainment industry met Christmas with the same approach as most everything—with irony. Nothing was sacred. Fun was poked at everything in the holiday season.

Cynicism prevailed over the pathos, poignancy, depth and the urgency of the holiday. Americans fell into the mockery, ignoring the urgings of preachers to “Place Christmas in your hearts, because you will never find it under a tree.”

Suddenly, since September 11, everything is changing. A war is emerging in the midst of the holiday season. Much like after Pearl Harbor, the mood of the nation is somber and fearful. Americans are uncertain, knowing people will die, but not who—a loved one or a friend. They do not know whether our country “so conceived...in liberty...can long endure.”

However, the true irony is now emerging in its most positive sense. Amidst the tragedy and fear left in the wake of September 11, a new realization is emerging. Americans are realizing family is important. They realize they need to join

together and care for others.

Comedians Jay Leno and David Letterman stopped poking fun at the things most Americans hold dear. To their credit, these comics are realizing their duty is not to make fun of everything, but to make people feel good about helping others.

This Christmas, as we enter a new war on the homefront, there is no place for the comedic ironies of the past. Americans see the need to honor the holy and sacred longings in our hearts and celebrate them. We understand laughter and joy do not come from irony and mockery.

Let the warmth of this Christmas season give us courage in this war. As Americans, let's give and not count the cost. Otherwise, the world in which we live will grow very cold.

So celebrate this Christmas with the deepest yearning of your heart. Sing carols with joy, not just with song. Give gifts with depth of feeling and seek the simplicity and longing of Christmases past that held a nation together.

“I'll be home for Christmas

You can count on me

If only in my dreams.”

Father Val Peter is executive director of Girls and Boys Town, the original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home in Boys Town, Neb., and in California, New York, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Nevada, Rhode Island, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Washington, D.C.