



THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

A project to collect new clothes for flood victims in Tamneyville is presently going on in Lancaster. Although all the requested items have been received, people may still donate. If you would like to purchase an article of clothing for a Christmas present to a flood victim, please contact John C. Binkley or call him at 299-4063 for details. John will be delivering the clothes in Tamneyville on December 23.

Giving is needed by more than our friends.

CONTINUING WITH IAN: PART II

Now we know that Boccacio told this story in a somewhat cynical vein, but I like this story. It says something to me about the church that I constantly find I have to put up with. And it says something to me about the nature of the ministry. One finds the ministerial image something that is so constantly disappointing, that one wonders just how it can be really effective. One sees it in a poor light so often and when we see, we usually say to ourselves, well if we are being truthful this is not a caricature, but a portrait! And just as the church has to be constantly looking at itself and its style and wondering what it ought to be doing, so the ministry has to think of itself. And so the church and the ministry are things that are constantly under reformation. "Semper reformanda" is the slogan by which the church really works. It is necessary for it to be constantly under reform. Protestantism seems to have recovered its sense of the church as the divine community and even though it hasn't been able to work this out in very practical and always very effective ways, it has been able to see the church as the bearer of the word. But, it has retained a sense of uneasiness about the ordination as a priestly ministry of word and sacrament. And there is reason for that, for before the reformation there was only one way by which by which you could determine the membership of Christ's flock. Really you had to be a priest to be effectively within the church. And so Luther wrote in his tract, "The Liberty of the Christian Man", these words which I want to read to you. They are words that had to be written then. "You were asked if all who are in the church are priests? How do these whom we now call priests differ from laymen? I answer injustice is done to those words priest, cleric, spiritual, ecclesiastic when they are transferred from all Christians to those few who are now by a mischievous usage called ecclesiastics. Holy scripture makes no distinction between them, although it gives the name ministers, servants, stewards to those who are now proudly called popes, bishops, and who should, according to the ministry of the word, serve others and teach them the faith of Chris-

and the freedom of believers." Surely those words needed to be written then. But, I'm quite sure if I understand Luther properly - and I hope I do understand a bit about him - I hope that I understand this, that Luther would today be nauseated by the opposite of the clericalism against which he inveighed and that modern style or heresy or whatever you like to call it which I want to call laicism. I think it is equally necessary for us to be delivered from laicism as from clericalism, i.e. that the church is all laity. We need to affirm this for the church's sake, that there is a sense of a mystery in a call to a divine leadership within the special community of God's own choosing. His own election, and His own promise to those whom He has called. And I'm sure that though Luther wanted to say a lot of important things and did say a lot of important things about the vocation of all Christian men and women, that he did not want to diminish the special, prophetic, and indeed priestly vocation - the prophetic and apostolic ministry of the church. And I misunderstand him wholly if what I say is not true. But more importantly, if what I say is not true, then I misunderstand scripture totally.

(Part III next week)

Submitted by David Turner by
permission of Ian Dixon

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