

At Irish Couple's Home

Somebody Decorated Tree For St. Pat's Day

The Rev. and Mrs. John Douglas Mark of Raeford are natives of Ireland, and when they looked out a window of their home after getting up the morning of March 17, they found one of their trees decorated specially for that day, St. Patrick's Day.

Mrs. Mark said they didn't know who did it but they were very pleased.

The tree was decorated with homemade signs in the shapes of the traditional Irish shamrock, colored green, Erin's traditional color. One read, "Happy St. Patrick's Day."

The Marks and their four children arrived in Raeford last October after Mark was appointed associate minister of Raeford Pres-

byterian Church. They are living at 436 College Dr. Mark jokingly refers to their home as "the Irish consulate" and will issue "immigration papers to Ireland" to people who apply "before 5:30."

Mark was pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Killyleagh, County Down, Ireland, when he accepted the appointment to the Raeford ministry. He had been

pastor of the Killyleagh church for 3 1/2 years.

Mrs. Mark is a speech therapist by profession. She is a native of Lisburn, near Belfast, and her husband is a native of Keady, County Armagh, on the border with southern Ireland.

The Mark children are Andrew, 18 months old, Olwyn, 3, Catherine, 4, and Jonathan, going on 7.

Sunday School Lesson

Background Scripture:
Mark 6: 30-44.
Devotional Reading:
2 Corinthians 9: 6-15.

First Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas has a unique ministry. One of Dallas' oldest congrega-

tions, it cannot boast the excellent music programs produced annually by one of its affluent cousins. Nor does it sprawl over several city blocks, as does one of its closest neighbors. This is not to diminish one bit First Presbyterian's music program or its physical plant, but it does not compete on those terms in a city where there are probably more affluent, powerful, fashionable churches with congregations that number in the thousands than anywhere else.

What makes First Presbyterian so admired in a city of giant congregations is a program called "Operation Breadbasket." Every day the people and staff of this downtown congregation produce a minor miracle of their own, providing food for hundreds of the city's down-and-outers.

Feeding the hungry people of downtown Dallas is the largest single item in the church's program and budget.

Unfortunately, few of us belong to churches that could claim that. Feeding the hungry doesn't have the appeal that putting up a new educational building or chapel has. It doesn't make us feel quite the same as renovating the organ, buying new robes for the choir, or redecorating the church parlor. It doesn't stir us like an appeal for funds to buy television time or put cushions on the pews. It may elicit feelings of guilt, but seldom enthusiasm.

I have heard some people rationalize our usual lack of response to this kind of ministry by saying that "The church ministers to a person's soul; the social agencies and the government minister to his physical body." Obviously, Jesus did not understand that, for he spent a considerable amount of his time ministering to the physical needs of people. When he saw them in need, his heart went out to them—and his hand. Seeing the hungry, leaderless mass of people before him by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus "had compassion on them."

Faced with this great multitude, Jesus looked at the resources. Lots of us would have stopped right there, for the report was dismal: five loaves and two fish! Impossible! But Jesus knew that often great things could be accomplished with meager resources. Taking what he was given, "he blessed and broke the loaves" and "divided the two fish among them all."

It accomplishes nothing to argue about what Jesus actually did that day or how he did it. The important thing is that he took the meager resources given to him, blessed and shared them, and somehow by the grace of God "they all ate and were satisfied."

When people are forced to go hungry, ill-clothed and ill-housed, often it is not because there is too little to go around, but too few who will offer and bless what they have to share with others.



Thursday, March 25, 1982
Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Solomon asked of God, "Give me an understanding mind."
—1 Kings 3:9 (TLB)

Love gives us insight -- understanding minds. Love is a cleansing wave which can clear the debris of personal opinion and selfish desire.

It is easier for us to have compassion and understanding for others when we have experienced what they are going through. But what about those persons I want to comfort whose troubles I have never experienced?

I try to imagine the person in need saying to me, "Do not come to me witnessing without love -- the true Christlike love which opens the channel for me to return love as I understand it. Do not come to me with doctrines without putting your arms around me. Do not come to me with judgmental attitudes without an understanding mind."

I can refrain from judging by appearances only when I rightfully echo Solomon's prayer, "God, give me an understanding mind."

PRAYER: Dear God, we are thankful that we can have the mind of Christ. We pray as He taught us, "Our Father in heaven, thy name be revered, thy Reign begin, thy will be done on earth as in heaven! give us today our bread for the morrow, and forgive us our debts as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Understanding is made richer by love.

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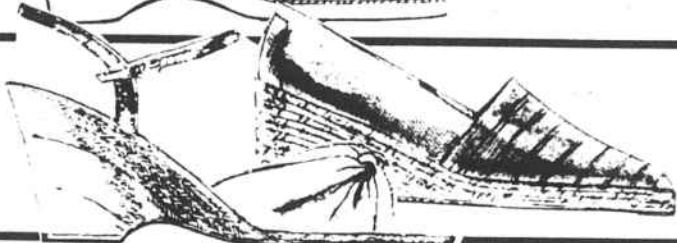
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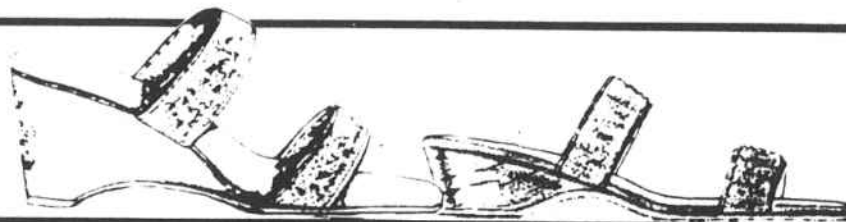


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