

Each time Christmas rolls around, the collective wish list cries for an *outside messiah* to come on the clouds of heaven, sit on angels' wings, fix the world, cast out Herods and Romans, and make it all better. Messiah mania is alive and well. Ask Colin Powell.

Well, folks, guess what. It ain't goin' to happen like that, at least not in the recent future. The Jews of old waited for some fiery, cosmic charioteer to turn their enemies into footstools, and many missed the real message of the Kid from Nazareth. *We knew him when*, they said. *He doesn't **look** like a messiah. Who does he think he is? Stone him.*

That message was a real surprise. *Go messiah-fy yourselves!* he said. Forgive one another. Love one another as I have loved you. Tolerate. Tell it on the mountain. Why are you standing around? Go to town and spread the word. Touch the beggar, the lame, the tax man, the drunk, the leper, Mary the Mag and her friends. They've *all* got dignity. Sure. Touch the *Pope*, but how about the *person with AIDS?*

They were so intolerant then. We're so intolerant now, and getting better at it. Witness the "initiatives" against the poor, the homeless, the homosexuals, the immigrants, the imprisoned. Witness the soaring corporate profits built on cut workers and cut wages.

I wish my words this season could ring soft as a Christmas crêche. No. The old glow is gone. The fate of Bosnia and Rwanda is being played in *our* cards, too. Can't you hear it? *Do unto others before they do unto you.*

Hear me. Today calls for a new and hard version of the Christmas message. Now.

Christ didn't say it was easy. He just said it **works**. *I bring good tidings of great joy.*

PRAYERS & Season's Blessings!  
FR. Tom, John & Debbie - 1995-

*Neighborhood Center*

*St. Francis*

*The News*

*From*

*Holiday Greetings*



**St. Francis Update:**

We were unable to send a Fall Brochure this year because of work on the new place. So here are some updates:

\* On July 14th, Dad joined Mom on that eternal dance floor. He'd been waiting a long time.

\* We are working hard and with really stretched funds to turn the old Victorian house into a place worthy of a Church and of the neighborhood in which it sits. If you win the lottery, remember us. There is an incredible amount of work yet to go into the place

\* Vandals are keeping their eyes on us also. No fun here.

\* We're able to do as much as we do because of the kindness of contractors and suppliers whom we've known over the years and who offer a lot of time and supplies.

\* We've sent a letter out to the larger neighborhood, inviting the residents to get involved with us to take back our streets from the dealers, shooters and other

hoodlums. We want to show the rest of the City what neighbors can do if they get together.

\* Notice the sketch on our cover-plate. Sarah, John's & Jean's daughter, drew this for our 1995 Christmas card. She's fourteen this year; Rachel is twelve and Andy is ten.

\* Debbie and Denise are planning future programs for the young people. Continuing education after school sessions and hands-on computer training are in the offing.

\* Our new address is 2405 Linden Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217. Because we're between houses, mail comes to both addresses. Worry not. We'll tell you when.