



# OPINION

## A Christmas Meditation

About 18 years ago my wife Hannah and I received a special message — a picture and letter from an adoption agency introducing the person who would become our daughter. The letter said, "As we have prayed, we believe God wants you to be parents of this seven-year-old child." Our hearts melted.

In the Gospel according to Matthew (1:18-25) Joseph, a righteous man, discovered his fiancée to be pregnant. Disappointed, he planned to quietly dissolve the contract for marriage. But Joseph received a message — a letter, so to speak — saying, "Forget the tradition, be your own person, do not be afraid to be a husband and father; Mary's son will save his people from their sins." The message melted Joseph's heart.

There are situations when the word of an expected birth causes anxiety and panic. Joseph experienced a gamut of emotions when he discovered Mary was pregnant.

Hannah and I were seeking a child, but there remained some trepidation, as is the case whenever parenthood is anticipated. What kind of child will be born to us or will be received through adoption? Are we truly ready to be parents?

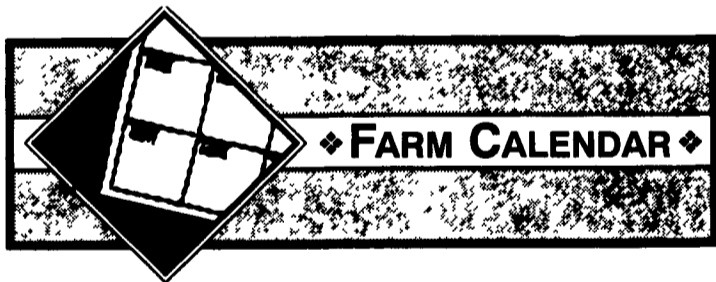
Joseph received an heavenly message saying, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived from her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." That was all Joseph needed. He took Mary as his wife, she bore a son and they named him Jesus. The message of godly people to Hannah and me was, "We have prayed, and we believe God wants you to be parents of this seven-year-old child." That's all we needed to accept.

Joseph really had no idea of the journey that would begin with Mary's son, Jesus. He trusted the messenger and the message, "Do not be afraid ... "As a righteous man, Joseph was willing to set aside the potential disgrace to himself by his community. He willingly became the adoptive father to a son born from above in response to the assuring message from the angel.

The gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus the Christ contain themes of hope, celebration and peace. The central ideas are there if we but listen to the messengers, whether they be angels or our brothers and sisters who care about us.

Will you listen and respond to the message and the messengers this season?—Joseph L. Lapp.

*Pennsylvania native Joseph L. Lapp is president of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.*



- Saturday, December 28
- Sunday, December 29
- Monday, December 30  
Family Farm Survival to the Next Century, Holiday Inn, Fogelsville, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 31
- 1997
- Wednesday, January 1  
Happy New Year!  
Lancaster Farming office closed.
- Thursday, January 2  
Becoming More Effective in Business, Augusta House Restaurant, Sunbury.  
Vegetable Study Circle, Plastic Mulches, Using Most Effectively, Kutztown Produce Auction, 6:30 p.m.
- Leola Produce Auction and Vegetable Meeting, Bareville Fire Hall, Bareville, 12:30 p.m.
- Friday, January 3
- Saturday, January 4
- Sunday, January 5
- Monday, January 6  
Regional tomato growers' meet-

- ing, Thompson's Dairy Bar, Lackawanna County, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Tulpehocken Adult Young Farmer business letter writing meeting, Tulpehocken High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, January 7  
Penn State Dairy Days, Bucks/Montgomery County, Family Heritage Restaurant, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Franklin County Extension Dairy Day, Kauffman's Community Center, Chambersburg, 9 a.m.
- Tri-County Council For Southern Maryland and Southern Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting, Southern Maryland Regional Library, Charlotte Hall, Md., 7 p.m.
- Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center, 9:30 a.m.
- Solanco Young Farmers Association meeting, Dairy Feeding Economics, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.
- Eastern Pa. Turf Conference and Trade Show, Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, thru Jan. 9.
- Wednesday, January 8  
Chester County Dairy Days, East



## Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County  
Agricultural Agent

### To Look At Feedbunk

Chester Hughes, extension livestock agent, reminds us that attentive feedbunk management is always important. However, when feed prices are high it is a good idea for cattle feeders to revisit feedbunk basics.

Good feedbunk management may be worth \$10 to \$20 per head more than average management. Cattle are self-propelled fermentation vats. The biggest enemy of fermentation is variation. Because cattle are not able to monitor their own feed intake, farmers must do it for them.

Consistent intake in cattle is based on them having a consistent diet of consistent amounts at consistent times. The use of ionophores may be a good management tool. Minimizing feed intake variability is important in maximizing feedlot performance.

It has been documented in the scientific literature that ionophores may aid in minimizing feed intake variability in cattle fed high grain diets. When the price of feed is high, ionophores add considerable value.

If you look at the ingredients in a ration, ionophores are a lower percentage cost of the total ration. If you receive a 7 percent improvement in feed efficiency, your savings are greater than what you may be paying for corn.

### To Score Feedbunks

The accuracy of scales and feed trucks, as well as the quality of feed ingredients, may make or break good feedbunk management, according to Chester Hughes, extension livestock agent.

Having records of what cattle are eating day to day does not do much good unless the information is used and analyzed. It is important to use feedbunk scores in combination with records of the amount being fed in order to have a firm handle on where cattle have been in terms of consumption and

- Brandywine Fire Hall, Guthriesville.
- Vegetable Technology Conference, Mt. Airy Fire Hall, Maryland, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Frederick County Walk-A-Bout, Larry and Judy Riggs, hosts, 10 a.m.-noon.
- 1997 Horticultural Show, Rochester, N.Y., thru Jan. 9.
- Thursday, January 9  
Berks County Dairy Day, Berks County Agricultural Center, Leesport, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Stepping Ahead With Hoof Health, Yoder's Family Restaurant, Hartleton.
- Schuylkill County Dairy Day, Penn State Schuylkill Campus, Pottsville, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

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where they need to go.

You will be able to determine if intakes are going up, coming down, or holding steady. The following is a feedbunk scoring system you may find useful:

- 0 — No feed remaining in the feedbunk.
  - ½ — Scattered feed present. Most of the bottom of the feedbunk is exposed.
  - 1 — Thin, uniform layer of feed across bottom of the bunk. Typically about one kernel deep.
  - 2 — 25 to 50 percent of previous feed remaining.
  - 3 — Crown of feed is thoroughly disturbed. Greater than 50 percent of feed remaining.
  - 4 — Feed is virtually untouched. Crown of feed still noticeable.
- Remember, good feedbunk management costs nothing more than a few minutes each day.

### To Control Rodents

Robert Anderson, extension agronomy agent, reminds us that

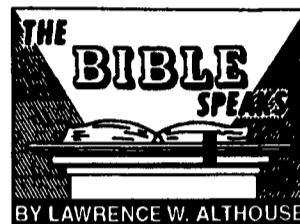
mice and other rodents take a heavy toll on ear corn stored in wooden and metal corn cribs.

The corn crib provides an ideal habitat for rodents. It provides sheltered nesting areas out of the cold winter weather along with what seems like an endless supply of food.

The control of mice and rats under these conditions is very difficult. However, several things may be done to help keep rodent populations down.

First, traps may be used to monitor the extent of the problem. Trapping alone will do little to eliminate the problem. Second, screening wherever possible to exclude rodents will also help to keep numbers in control. However, when a severe problem exists, commercial rodent control measures must be used including tracking powder and baits.

*Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "Yesterday is but a dream. Tomorrow is a vision of hope. Look to this day for its life."*



BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE  
NOW I CAN GO!  
December 29, 1996

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### Background Scripture:

Luke 2:21-40

### Devotional Reading:

Psalms 42:1-13

When I read the first two chapters of Luke, I am often struck with the recollection of all the great music that has been inspired by these words: the Annunciation (1:32-35), the Magnificat (1:46-55), Handel's Messiah, and a great wealth of Christmas carols (both chapters 1 & 2). In these two chapters we find a number of people who are lifted above their normal lives by the presence of the Holy Spirit: Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon and Anna. God's Spirit inspires them and their words, in turn, inspire us.

There is another text from Luke 2 that became an important part of the Christian liturgy in the fifth century A.D. It is known to us by its Latin name, *Nunc Dimittis*, taken from the opening words of Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel" (2:29-32).

Who is this man Simeon? We really don't know anything about him except that he was righteous, devout and had received a revelation from God promising that he would not see death before he had seen "the Lord's Christ." His words lead us to believe that he was advanced in years and some scholars have deduced that he was a rabbi — the blessing he gives is that of a rabbi — and one scholar has even speculated that Simeon was the son and father of two of Judaism's greatest rabbis, Hillel and Gamaliel. But there is little evidence and no proof.

### LOOKING & PRAYING

We also know that he was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (2:25). "Looking" suggests that he was also praying for the consolation for Israel — the unfolding of God's promise to his people. This pious man has been praying for the fulfillment of the

most stupendous promise ever made and, when he takes the baby Jesus into his arms, he realizes that that awesome reality is fulfilled in this tiny infant. It is this realization that leads him to bless God.

So what is the importance of his *Nunc Dimittis*? Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ... It means that he has now experienced that for which he has been living. It means that his life has been fulfilled, his prayers answered, and he is ready to go for nothing could equal or excel what he has just experienced.

We need to try to put ourselves in Simeon's place. What would it take for us to say *Nunc Dimittis*? What would bring us the fulfillment that would make life completely worthwhile? At what point could you say, I'm ready to go?

### NOW I CAN GO

On a purely personal level I might say that I'd like to live long enough to see my grandchildren grown up, maybe graduated from college and married. Someone else might just want to be able to live to the year 2000. Some people feel their lives fulfilled by writing a fulfilling book, painting a picture, or composing a piece of music that says what they want it to say. But there can be no higher aspiration than that of Simeon: "mine eyes have seen thy salvation ..." All other goals and promises pale next to the assurance that in Christ I — and everyone else — can face eternity unafraid.

Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* also is inspired because he suddenly realizes that, what he has sought for Israel, is actually being given to the whole world. "... thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel" (2:30-32).

There can be no *Nunc Dimittis* that is purely personal and parochial. The only one that fits a promise and fulfillment so great and glorious is the one that takes the rest of the world with us.

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