

Statue

(continued from page 1)

"She has been a special blessing to us; it has been especially peaceful since she came." The peace is appreciated in the Murray household, which includes five children under the age of 10 and two working parents.

The three-foot statue arrived from Fatima in the early 1950's, brought over by Gus Mazzacarro of St John the Baptist Church in Pittston. It was a dream of a priest, Father Bednarczyk also from Pittston, who as a young seminarian in Europe saw these devotional statues go from home to home and hoped to establish the same custom in his parish if he became pastor.

The statue first circulated only among the homes of his parishioners, but in 1955 Bishop Hannon permitted it to be circulated to homes throughout the Diocese of Scranton provided no money was ever accepted or involved, that people were obedient to the pastors, and that it was used for private devotionals only.

Peeking around the back of the statue, lifting the glowing brocade robes at the bottom, you can see the statue was made by Jose Ferrara of Fatima. The statue comes to a home on a Wednesday night and remains there until Saturday, each night being the inspiration for a prayer group.

Ten-year-old Antonella Recchia, a neighborhood friend of the Murrys, was chosen this night to crown the beautiful statue, its porcelain face aglow with sparkling deep human-like eyes ready to tear. "I came over to pray," says Antonella. Many people have come to see the statue and pray this night in Dallas. Wilma Gifford and her husband came to pray so that things in her home will be resolved. She prays for conversion of non-believers, and the return to the faith of her children. She also comes with special intentions for friends unmentioned. Says Wilma, "Over the years some prayers have been answered, some still need to be resolved in time."

While the Fatima devotion allows time for special personal prayer intentions, it is still as originally intended a devotion of prayer for people who cannot or will not pray for themselves and an adoration to Mary and Jesus. A spokesman for this Diocesan Pilgrim Virgin Statue, as it is called, noted "we pray for an end to abortion, teenage conversions, people involved in catastrophes, an increase in callings to the religious life, a return to religious obedience, the lonely, the sick, and the aged.

Beside predicting the end of World War I, the beginning of the second World War, the deaths of two of the Fatima children, and the rise of Communism in Russia the vision at Fatima called for

prayer for condemned souls who have no one to pray for them. And have prayers been answered? Have there been miracles? At Fatima yes, in Northeast Pa. "Well let's just say that things have happened," said one devotee.

Relics of the saints are included in the statue's visit. Bones of saints and popes, pieces of robes, and garments encased in brass and glass crosses are displayed. People may be blessed with these. The prayer service is organized around the saying of the rosary, the Hail Marys, the Our Fathers, interspersed with meditation on various mysteries in the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Irene Whittock, of Dallas, notes, "This is very comforting. John and Diane have taken me in." Her family is in King of Prussia.

During the statue's visit the home is open to the public, usually around the 6.30 p.m. devotional time.

The pilgrim statue's visits are already scheduled through the year 2002. Persons interested in arranging for a visit, interested in being a prayer leader for the rosary devotional, having the statue at their home, or any other information should call the Diocesan office in Scranton and ask for information regarding the Diocesan Pilgrim Virgin Statue.



The Pilgrim Virgin Statue was brought to the U.S. from Portugal in the 1950's. It has gone from home to home since.



POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK

Open for business

Luzerne National Bank opened its newest branch, at the intersection of Main St. and Rt. 309 in Dallas Borough, on Monday. Carolyn Byron of Dallas did some business with teller Lorraine Ulichney, Shavertown, that morning.

Pension

(continued from page 1)

But he likened himself to a custodian or superintendent, arguing that they are evaluated by the final result of their work, as is a tax collector.

Finkelstein disagreed, finding there was "virtually no control whatsoever asserted over the Claimant by the School District." He cited as an example Reese's decision to reduce his office hours without consulting the district. "The Hearing Examiner can only imagine what the School District would do if the superintendent or a custodian told them he was going to work less hours," he wrote.

Reese and two other tax collectors recently lost a suit against the district, filed when their payment plan was changed from commission to a flat \$4 per bill collected. That the district was able to dictate its payment terms was another factor in the examiner's decision, along with the fact that tax collector is an elected position for which Reese has voluntarily campaigned through several elec-

tions. "A person is not normally 'elected' to an employment position," Finkelstein wrote.

To be considered an employee, the employer must supply the principal tools for the occupation. Finkelstein argued that was not the case with an elected tax collector. While the district does supply the tax bills, envelopes and record-keeping books, Reese supplies the office, telephone service and all other office equipment and supplies.

The retirement system appeals board agreed that the tax collector's job required unique skills, but Finkelstein did not support that argument. "The manner in which the Claimant described his job function leads to a conclusion that no skills whatsoever are required for this position," he wrote, since the tax bills are printed for Reese, postage is applied by the district and all that he must do is record payments and deposit them in the bank.

"There is no unique skill involved in any of these activities such as a teacher who teaches or

"A person is not normally 'elected' to an employment position."

Edward S. Finkelstein
Hearing Examiner

even a custodian who cleans and sweeps," Finkelstein found.

Reese, represented by John E. Beekman, Esq., counsel to the state association of tax collectors, also argued that his work was part of the regular business of the employer. But Finkelstein also turned away that reasoning, offering the example of a fuel oil supplier whose activity is necessary to the district, but who could never be considered an employee.

The crux of his argument, Reese said Monday, is that the federal government requires that taxes and Social Security contributions be withheld from his payments, indicating that he is an employee.

SENIOR MENUS

Senior Citizen Centers sponsored by the Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Bureau for the Aging offer hot noon meals Monday through Friday to people 60 years of age or older. Donations from participants are gratefully accepted and needed in order to expand this program. The Back Mountain Center is located at 22 Rice Street, Dallas. Call 675-2179 for information.

The following is the menu for the week of January 11. All lunches include margarine, milk and coffee.

MONDAY - Ham steak w/raisin sauce, sweet potatoes, wax beans, whole wheat bread, chocolate cupcake.

TUESDAY - Manicotti w/meatballs and tomato sauce, sliced zucchini, orange juice, Italian bread, gelatin w/whipped topping.

WEDNESDAY - Knockwurst w/sauerkraut, parsley boiled potatoes, mixed vegetables, whole wheat bread, pineapple w/coconut.

THURSDAY - Italian roasted chicken, Italian roasted potatoes, Roman vegetable medley, cranberry juice, dinner roll, fruited yogurt.

FRIDAY - Tuna hoagie, tomato-lettuce, cole slaw, minestrone soup, hoagie roll, oatmeal cookie, mayonnaise.

not an independent contractor. Finkelstein said that factor alone does not determine employment status.

Two cases that Reese presented as precedents weren't similar, Finkelstein said, because in both of them the tax collectors worked in offices supplied by their employer, kept regular hours and were subject to substantial control.

Reese said he would appeal the decision, one that affects 300-400 tax collectors throughout the state. "I presume the association will see this as a test case," he said. But whether it is pursued by the association or not, Reese said he would continue to seek status as an employee.

Atty. Ben Jones III, the school district solicitor, said it has taken at least 50 hours of his time to defend the matter. "It's taken a great deal of attention," he said, including at least two trips to Harrisburg. He also feels this has become a test case for the tax collectors group, and has been assisted by lawyers who work for the retirement system.

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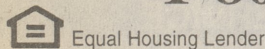
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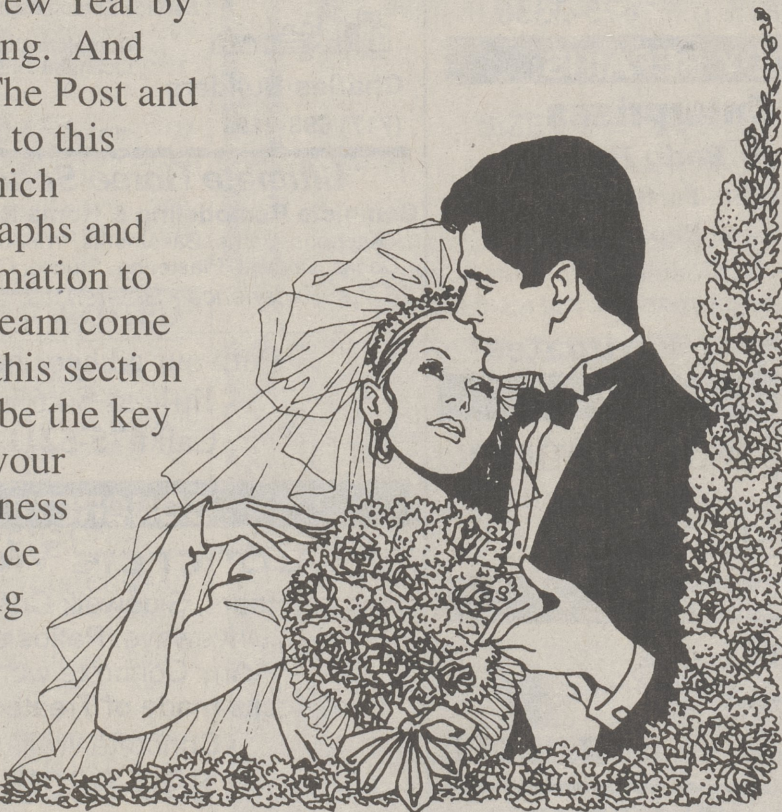
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