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THE CELEBRATION GOES ON

by
PH. NICOLE

Shining through the haze of a raw, windy night, London's illuminated decorations swing slowly above the heads of the passers-by and of the crowds gazing at the brightly-lit shop windows, enthralled at the vision of what might be theirs, or carefully calculating which of the countless attractive articles they could afford as presents for some loved one. The Christmas season is here, bright with lights and full of exciting expectations and of feverish preparation.

But afterwards the Christmas tree will lose its needles; coloured balls and tinsel will return to their boxes; the mantelpiece, stripped of its festive row of cards, will regain its functional look; life will be back to normal as if nothing had happened.

Yet the celebration goes on! Our Lord is not confined to the last days of our calendar. God has no diary on which he starts a new year on a new page. Beyond our short-lived human festivities there is this great reality of His eternal present, from which we derive light and truth, hope and joy. Today as yesterday, tomorrow as today, it remains God's pleasure to link His fate to that of men, in spite of their guilt and their faults, indeed *because* of their guilt and faults! He calls the unbelievers and the indifferent in order to give them life, the true life full of peace and joy. God's programme overrides our seasons and generations. Today He continues among us, within and through us, the long story which started with Abraham, continued with the Jews, with their kings and prophets, later with the apostles, the disciples close to Jesus and all the witnesses both obscure and well-known, who, across the centuries, in all walks of life, in all parts of the world, have had their share in building up the Church: those who preached; those who prayed; those who testified to their devotion to Christ and dedicated themselves to the cause of the under-privileged, without counting the cost, undertook to forgive and pray for their enemies, offered their sufferings and their joys, just as the shepherds once brought to Bethlehem their buckets of milk and wool from their sheep.

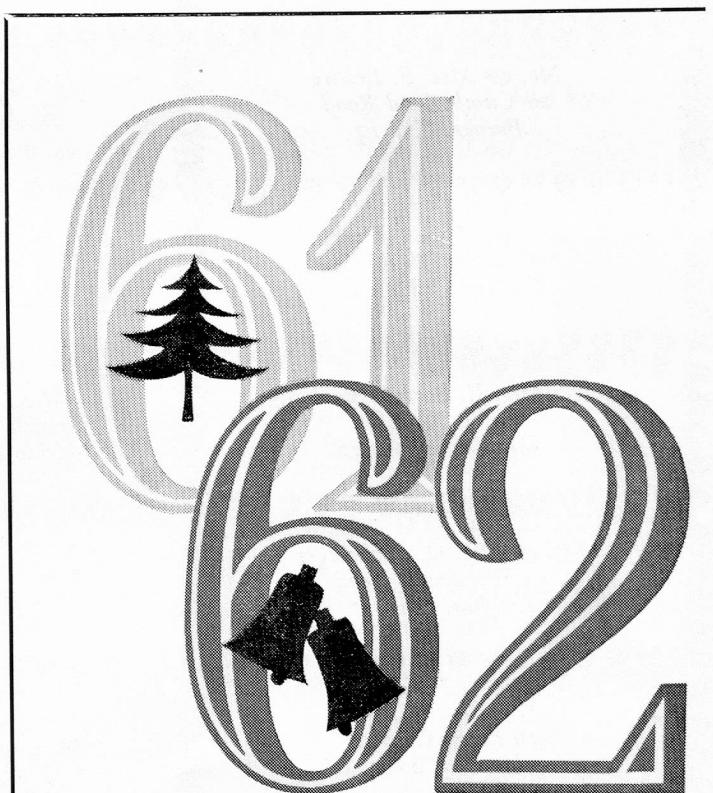
Christmas will soon be over; a new year will soon have started for us. But celebration of Christ's birth goes on, and we are called upon, all of us, to join in and rejoice.

Let us be clear! This is not a call to become "good" or to practise Christian rites for their own sake. Nor is it an invitation to join in a nice cup of tea and a pleasant chit-chat on pious subjects. God is not just like our good friend round the corner, ready to admire our piety, willing to listen to our little complaints about our neighbours or the church and the hardness of life.

What God wants is to turn us into people who are fit to share in the building of His Kingdom. He calls men and women, young and old, rich and poor, to join in that

long line of builders among whom we see Abraham, the giant of the faith, along with Jacob the liar, David the adulterer, Peter the coward. And we, you and I, are also called — whatever our failings — to become God's builders in a spirit of brotherhood, truth and unselfishness. In this world where evil is constantly bringing division and destruction, tears and frustration, there is a clear need for this service of drawing together that which has been scattered, rebuilding what has been ruined, testifying to the greater reality, joyful and exhilarating, of God's care for men.

Amidst the noisy events which are splashed across the headlines and resound on the air, the Lord's work goes on whoever undertakes to share in it, in his humble daily life, for him, too, the celebration of Christ's birth will never cease.



Best wishes for a
Merry Christmas in 1961 . . .
Look forward to a prosperous 1962

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