

Christians in India show Christmas spirit

By JOAN MAYO

India may be the last place one would expect to find so many Christians showing the rest of the world the true meaning of Christmas. As Jesus taught us, "in as much as you do unto the least of these you do also unto me"

Mother Theresa, the most beautiful of all Christians bases her whole foundation on that parable. She beseeches her workers to look for the image of Jesus in the faces of the poor and suffering millions they administer to each day.

If the true spirit of Christmas is love and compassion for those less fortunate than yourself, then India is the place to find it. Although Christians are a minority their numbers are growing rapidly and

the evidence of brother helping brother is everywhere.

There are many Christian missions in India teaching as well as helping. The Carmel School for girls was on my regular route for pleasant walks in New Delhi and one day I ventured inside to talk to the girls and their teachers. Most of the teachers were Christian nuns and all were Indian. The girls too were all Indians as the foreign embassies have their own schools.

The little Sikh boy, from the house where I lived, attended a Catholic school for boys, along with his boy cousins as did their fathers before them. The Pope paid a visit to their school while I was there as it is considered one of the best schools for boys in India. There was co-ed college near by

called The Jesus and Mary College.

The Delhi Bible Society has grown so big they have embarked on a building program and should soon have their own church building. There were very few Europeans in that congregation. It was filled to capacity with Indians from all walks of life. This is only one of many Christians churches in Delhi.

The English influence is still very evident in India and although not many homes even acknowledge Christmas I saw small artificial trees in some of the homes I visited and the parents told me they always buy something for each of their children at Christmas.

There are approximately 55 embassies in New Delhi representing

almost every country in Europe as well as Canada, the United States and Great Britain. Most of their youngsters attend the American school but children and adults alike mingle with their Indian neighbors and have formed help groups such as the American Woman's Outreach Program. What a wonderful legacy to leave behind. To have reached out and touched someone in need.

The state of Goa in South West India was for 451 years part of Portuguese India reverting back to India in 1961. The Catholic influence

is everywhere and it was here I learned the story of St. Thomas one of the 12 Disciples of Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead and met his Disciples on the sea shore he told them to travel to the far corners of the earth and spread the Christian message.

It is believed that Thomas sailed down through the Arabian Sea landing on the West Coast of India where he built his first church. Although it was destroyed by fire he built another and it stands today bearing his name near the beautiful

city of Madras. The Tomb of St. Francis Xavier who died in 1552 is in the city of Goa near Panjim.

Another story is that is believed by many in India is that Jesus came to India to study and meditate and there are those who believe this accounts for the lost years of Jesus when he was a very young man.

Whatever one believes, Christianity blooms in India and the spirit of Christmas can be seen on the faces of all those who place a small coin in the outstretched hand of those beautiful needy children.