



January 24, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### Readings:

1: Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

Psalm 19:8-10, 15

2: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Gospel: Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

By Jean Denton

Catholic News Service

For the third time in a year, a small group of medical students from Vanderbilt University held a public meeting in a remote, impoverished Appalachian coal mining town to explain the services they could provide, free of charge, if invited to run a weeklong health fair in the

community.

For the third time, the university program director asked if the local residents were interested. Everyone had listened intently, but, for the third time, they responded with silence.

In two previous meetings they had also remained silent when asked about their health care situation, but the persistent director asked one more time: Could the medical students provide some needed services here in Lee County, Virginia?

Silence again. Then one woman, a mother and wife who had lived there her whole life, stood and said in a soft, steady voice, "I think if we'd had just one doctor here in town it would've saved a lot of lives in the accident at the mine (that happened a few years earlier)." One could've heard a pin drop as she sat down.

"Then it was like a flood as one by one people began telling their personal stories

about the lack of health care," explained the religious sister who was at those meetings nearly 40 years ago and later told me the story.

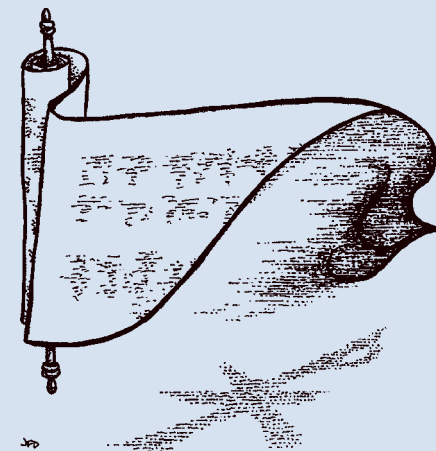
So they held a health fair. Soon the community formed a health council, eventually establishing a network of clinics that today serves low-income people of the entire region.

This week's Scriptures show how powerfully God's word enlivens his spirit in the hearts of his people. As Israel began returning from captivity, Ezra was sent to teach the new generation. He rose to proclaim God's covenant and laws, and the power of his words brought all present to their knees.

The Gospel reveals the covenant fulfilled in Jesus:

good news for the poor, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed. Jesus stood, proclaimed the truth and his spirit transformed those to whom he came.

Centuries later in Appalachia, when one woman finally spoke, everyone in the room knew the truth was out. A spirit of courage was unleashed as they gave it voice and were emboldened to act on it for the sake of their entire community. The truth again set the captives free.



"He stood up to read ... and found the passage where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.'"

— Luke 4:16b, 18a

## QUESTIONS:

When was a time recently when the word of God inspired the Spirit in you? How can you act this week to help free someone who is oppressed?

## EYES

► From PAGE 12

think we are worse than we are. We foolishly seek human praise, acceptance and esteem. How many wonderful things are left undone because of the fear of what others may say or think. How many foolish things are done to win the praise of others.

"Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" – and not on the cross we have to bear. The cross is an inevitable fact of human life. We enter the world in the pain of another and leave the world in our own. Between the entrance and the exit there is more of the same – the cross can make us or break us. No one can escape it. Each one has to solve the

problem the cross for himself. There are three possible solutions. The first is to deny the inevitability of the cross and to set out in pursuit of all the pleasure we can find and ward off all pain, sorrow and disappointment. This is really no solution at all. How can you avoid the inevitable? The second possible solution is to admit that the cross is inevitable and to make the best of a bad bargain. That commits us to a dull, dreary, monoto-

nous, passive existence. The third possible solution is to accept the invitation of Jesus to pick up our cross daily and follow him. That's an opportunity to prove our love for him. Then life becomes a great adventure. We find that his yoke is sweet and his burden is light. We realize that it costs to be a lover, and the language of love is sacrifice.

"Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" – and not on the work we do for him. Jesus does not

want our work. He wants our love, our heart. He judges us not by the amount of work we do but by the intensity of our love.

"Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" – so that we might know him more intimately, love him more ardently and follow him more closely. That's the secret of Christianity, the secret of being contemplative in action, the secret of happiness.

Jesuit Father Rodney Kissinger lives at Ignatius Residence.

## Christophers issue brochure on abortion

NEW YORK (CNS) – A new brochure distributed by the Christophers addresses abortion not as a religious issue but as one of human rights. The Christopher News Note – titled "Abortion: Stand Up for Life!" – says euphemisms have masked abortion's reality, but "it is truly life itself that is at issue when a child is waiting to be born."

Public opinion on the issue, which once showed a majority in favor of keeping abortion legal, has now changed so that most voice support for a pro-life position, the brochure says. "That means a total pro-life effort that's more than preventing abortion," it

adds. "It's about our responsibility as individuals and as a community to nurture and support all human life – the unborn and newborn child, the mother and the family."

The Christophers, founded in 1945 by Maryknoll Father James Keller, has been publishing popular pamphlet-style News Notes since its earliest days to address timely topics in a way that reflects hope, encouragement and responsibility. Issued 10 times a year, Christopher News Notes have a circulation of approximately 100,000, with copies distributed to individuals as well as groups and made available to other institutions.