

BELIEFS Values

New holiday stamp honors message of Hanukkah

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Taking its place among this year's holiday celebration stamps is a Hanukkah menorah with nine colorful candles commemorating the Jewish Festival of Lights.

Sold beside stamps depicting the Madonna and Child and seasonal scenes with ice skaters, Christmas trees and Santa Claus, the Hanukkah stamp is the first of its kind in the holiday collection and the first to be issued jointly by the U.S. Postal Service and the Israel Postal Authority.

"In past years, we've gotten comments about why we don't have a Hanukkah stamp," said Bob Wynne, retail supervisor at the Birmingham Post Office. "I'm sure this stamp was in response to that."

The eight-day Hanukkah celebration begins at sundown on the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kislev, which falls on Thursday, Dec. 5, this holiday season.

"I'm so glad that Hanukkah this year comes nearer to Thanksgiving than to Christmas because the holiday has more to do with thanksgiving," said Rabbi Leonard Bitran, of Shaarey Zedek, B'Nai Israel Center in West Bloomfield. "Hanukkah is not the Jewish Christmas. The Maccabees were a group of people who fought for religious freedom like the pilgrims on the Mayflower fought for religious freedom."

The story of Hanukkah, which means dedication, is set in an era when the Hellenistic influence in Jerusalem caused the desecration of the temple and forced Jews to choose between Greek idol worship or death.

"Jews were living outside of Jerusalem and were completely unable to practice the Judaism they knew from their parents,"

said Bitran. "The desecration of the temple also included an invasion from within."

Led by Judah Maccabee, a small band of Jewish resistors proved victorious over the armies of Syria and reclaimed the temple in 165 B.C.E.

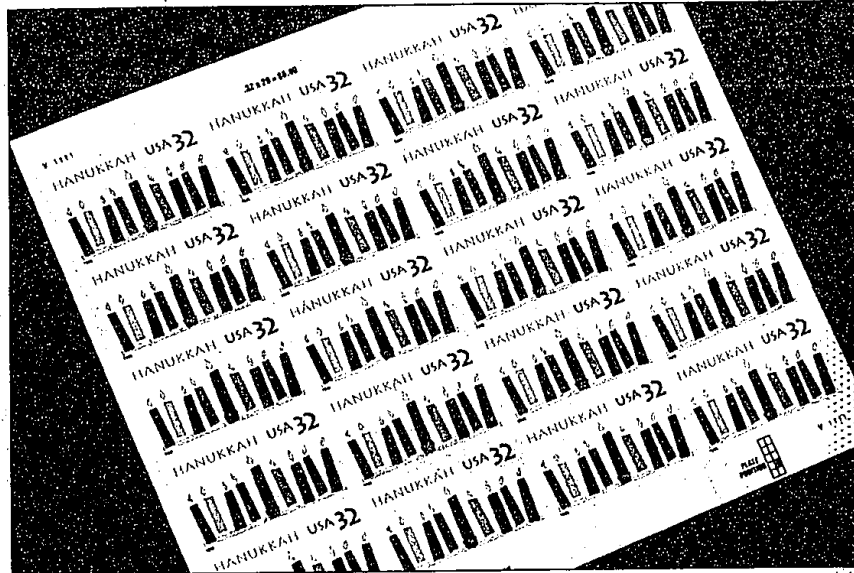
"The first thing they did was try to rekindle the lights in the temple in a way to continue the traditions of prayer and sacrifice," said Bitran. "Only a single cruse of oil could be found to re-light the 'ner tamid,' or Eternal Light suspended above the holy ark containing the Torah scrolls. The oil was only enough for a single day. Yet, it burned miraculously for eight days until more oil could be obtained."

Jewish families in Oakland County and around the world celebrate the historic event gathered around the Hanukkah menorah, a nine-branched candelabra that evolved specifically for the holiday from the original seven-branched menorah described in Exodus 25.

On the first night of the holiday, a small candle is placed in the menorah, lit and allowed to burn down completely. The ritual is repeated each successive night with the adding of a candle, until all eight lights are aglow on the last night. The ninth branch of the menorah holds the "Shamash" or worker candle used to light the other candles each night.

The Hanukkah stamp, which reaches out to millions of people, is one way of publicizing the miracle of the oil and the first recorded fight for religious freedom that has become the center of the holiday tradition.

"I think it's a great way to support an idea that I think should prevail all over the world. The idea of religious freedom... that you are entitled to profess and practice the religion you want," said Bitran, who leads the 200



Sign of the season: As part of its holiday collection, the U.S. Postal Service has issued this Hanukkah stamp.

congregants who merged with the 1,900-member congregation of Shaarey Zedek in Southfield. "There's a message there for those who try to force others to follow their religion. The more you oppress people, the more they get to a crisis to defend their own roots."

The story of Hanukkah is not told in the Torah, Prophets or Writings, but in the two books of Maccabees contained in the

Apocrypha. A Hebrew word meaning "hidden writing," the Apocrypha is a collection of writings published after the Bible was issued in final form.

"Essentially, Hanukkah is the only holiday within Judaism that celebrates a military victory. That's why it's not included in the Bible," said Rabbi Daniel Syme, of Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Township.

The two books of Maccabees, however, are included in the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible.

Syme, who heads a Reform congregation of 1,500 households, feels that the colorful, fully lit Hanukkah menorah depicted on the 32-cent commemorative stamp captures the spirit and joy of the holiday.

"In Judaism, we light the Hanukkah candles in the dark of night," said Syme. "The

Hanukkah menorah really represents, in many ways, the gradual continuation and celebration and creation of light in a world of darkness. It symbolizes light at a time when our world needs light."

A minor holiday on the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah is also characterized by the reciting of blessings and the eating of

See STAMPS, B13

Oakland couple sings out with carols to promote life

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Through the joyful sounds of 21 Christmas carols from nine countries, Oakland County residents Larry and Penni LaButo have intensified their efforts to promote human dignity.

Their "Christmas Around the World" recording will do more than brighten the holidays for listeners. Proceeds will benefit pro-life organizations throughout Michigan.

"Since this is our first recording and since conception is the beginning of life, we've dedicated this one to the unborn," said Larry, who owns Hydro Designs, an environmental consulting firm in Sylvan Lake. "But we're not married to the issue. We are adamant on any issue that degrades or damages the human person."

Long-time supporters of the right-to-life movement, the LaButos formed Trinity Productions from their Bloomfield Hills home last spring for the sole purpose of generating money to promote respect for human life.

The couple's next recording, "Christmas Around the World II," will be released next year and dedicated to the poor and homeless.

A benefit concert for life featuring carols from both the current and upcoming releases will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 7, at St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church, 1400 Inglewood, Rochester.

Free will offerings and proceeds from the evening's sale of cassette tapes and CDs are earmarked for crisis pregnancy centers in Livonia, New Balti-

"Since this is our first recording and since conception is the beginning of life, we've dedicated this one to the unborn. But we're not married to the issue. We are adamant on any issue that degrades or damages the human person."

Larry LaButo
Carol singer, activist

more, Oxford/Orient and Rochester.

"Christmas Around the World" is a collection of traditional holiday carols that merges Larry and Penni's respective talents for producing and singing with gifted singers and musicians from Oakland and Wayne counties. Half of the selections are comprised of solos by Penni and Auburn Hills resident Edmund Guay, both cantors at St. Hugo of the Hills Roman Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills.

The recording also features an instrumental, an 18-member ecumenical choir and the St. Andrew children's choir. Selections were recorded either live at St. Hugo's or at Stony Creek Studios in Rochester.

Many of the melodies in the holiday collection are multi-lingual, with selected verses sung in the language of the carol's origin.

"Life transcends denominations and race, national origin, everything," said Penni, who

vocalizes in English, French, German, Italian, Latin and Polish. "That's what we were after."

The LaButos, who have two children, Natalie and Kaydee, have been members of St. Hugo's for 16 years. After serving the church in nearly every capacity as a lay person, Larry is currently pursuing a master's of divinity degree at St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, and is in the diocesan formation program for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit. Penni, who began humming and singing as a toddler, is a nine-year member of the liturgical choir and has been a cantor for six years. She is also a member of the altar guild and chairwoman of the parish's pre-marriage program.

The LaButos' strong devotion to their faith and societal issues led to the personal and financial commitment that birthed Trinity Productions.

"My wife and I feel exceptionally blessed with our talents and abilities to provide for ourselves and others," said Larry, a Dearborn native. "We wanted to give something back to God and the community."

"Christmas Around the World" has caught the attention of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, which is using the recording as a fundraiser for "Project Life."

The musical collection also evoked a letter from Mother Theresa of Calcutta shortly after the well-known nun received a copy of the cassette. Locally, the carols can be heard

See CAROLS, B13

Holy Redeemer building to be consecrated

If you hear the church bell ringing this Sunday morning in the Crooks-Auburn area, you might notice a new joy and energy in the sound.

This is an exciting season for the members of Church of the Holy Redeemer. After meeting for over two years in a rented space in schools, the church has found and purchased a permanent facility at 3050 Grant,

Rochester Hills. The church building, built in the 1920s as Elmwood Methodist Church, has been occupied by various congregations throughout the years.

As finishing touches are being added, the consecration of this building, which also serves as the site for the Great Lakes Diocese of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC), is planned for 10 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 8. Arch-

bishop A. Randolph Adler, primate of the International Communion of the CEC, will be the celebrant, assisted by Father Fick, who is not only pastor and priest to Holy Redeemer, but also recently ordained as bishop of the Great Lakes Diocese of the CEC, comprised of churches and missions in Michigan, Ohio and

See REDEEMER, B13

DOWNTOWN BIRMINGHAM'S 6TH ANNUAL

MIDNIGHT SHOPPING SPREE

Over 125 Downtown Birmingham Merchants and Restaurants will be open 'til Midnight for an evening of great values, relaxed shopping and live outdoor entertainment
FREE PARKING IN ALL CITY DECKS AFTER 6 PM

Friday December 13th 6 pm - Midnight

SHOPPING • MUSIC • CAROLERS • CARRIAGE RIDES • SANTA