

## **Memories for a Lifetime**

**by Kathryn Minton a resident at St. Vincent's**

Christmases spent at St. Vincent's Orphanage gave the children memories to last a lifetime. This was a ministry of the Sisters and holds many dear memories for them and for the children who were there.

The other day I was telling a friend about our Christmases at St. Vincent's orphanage in Vincennes with Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg. Remembering the beauty and magical mystery brought tears to my eyes.

Every year was the same, yet all of us were filled with excitement as the festivities began about 10:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Except for the very small children, each child carried a candle as we walked the entire building – all three floors – in single file. Nothing could be heard except for our singing while we carried our glowing candles in the dark.

The procession ended in the main corridor of the orphanage at the manger scene. There, surrounded by what seemed like mountains of angel hair glistening in the dark, lay the Christ Child. What beauty! It was now close to midnight.

Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve always began in the dark. In the left corner of the altar was another beautiful sight. The stable was surrounded by Christmas trees with Christmas lights all aglow. There were shepherds, sheep, cattle, and the Three Wise Men, all coming to visit the King.

We had observed the scene for all of Advent. Yet tonight was special. Tonight was different. For right there in the middle, the manger was no longer empty. The Christ child was born and he was laying in the manger. It was Christmas.

I have many memories of Christmas at St. Vincent's Orphanage. Every year, Vincennes University sponsored a Christmas dinner in their cafeteria for the children with a visit from Santa. We had Christmas plays for our families and the townspeople. Every child had a part in the play. Right down to the smallest 2year-old. There were many hours of practice with musical instruments and rehearsals for the children who would sing or dance.

We always had contests among the different dormitories to see which group could build the largest snowman. The older boys in D-1 would win because they were the tallest! But they deserved it.

How did the boys ever get that big head on the top of their giant snowman in front of the school?

And how did the nuns wrap all those presents for the children?

Thank you Sister Sharon, Sister Jean, Sister Clarissa, Sister Euphrasia, Sister Francis Xavier, Sister Johannes, Father Schroeder, and many others whose names I cannot remember today. You gave us the best Christmases ever with memories to last a lifetime.

Kathryn Minton