

*bargain with Sister Ellen Fitzgerald.
For more photos: [Click here for auction.](#)*

by Sister Ellen Fitzgerald

When we in Burlingame heard about the 11/11/11 Cup of Tea commemoration and the fund-raising for Mercy International Centre, Baggot Street, Sister Patricia Ryan (who was the first director there) thought we could do better than just donating \$5 apiece. She figured we could raise more, and have a lot more fun besides, if we held an auction that day. And so it was. Assisted by Sisters Ellen FitzGerald and Charleen Koenig, Pat Ryan organized the first "White Elephant Silent Auction" in the history of Burlingame!

Sisters and associates in the San Francisco Bay Area were invited to bring brand-new White Elephants of any kind--art pieces, clothing, household goods, food, books, toiletries, cards, anything--and attach a sheet with a minimum opening bid and room for more. The participants walked around the tables looking for things they liked, placing or raising bids in writing on each item's sheet. Lively bidding wars ensued as people vied for certain treasures.

Strategies included bargaining: "I won't raise you again on that journal if you don't raise me on this bottle of wine!" Another ploy was to stand guard over one's hoped-for acquisition, pleading with other bidders to pass it by (and shooing them off if they seemed too interested). Then there was the Annunciation painting that two sisters particularly admired; its bid sheet had a long list of offers, each raised a dollar or two over the previous bid, as the two hoping-to-be owners tried to outbid each other before time ran out. We won't tell you who went home with the picture, but you'll see it on the wall when you visit her.

Catherine McAuley's "cup of tea" and other refreshments were available throughout. There was plenty of laughter as one person's unwanted White Elephant became another's new purse, much-needed PJs, or great Christmas gift. And in the end, we were able to send off \$530 to be included in the WMW donation to Mercy International Centre.

Not bad for a bunch of White Elephants.

Silent) Auction Raises Money and Fun



Sister Celeste Marie Nuttman tries to bargain with Sister Ellen Fitzgerald. For more photos: [Click here for auction.](#)

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