



THE STAR

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EDITORIAL

Rejoice in the Lord, always! Again I say, Rejoice! With these and similar rousing phrases the Church in her liturgy strives to lift our souls in the celebration of Advent and Christmas. Carols too help us to identify with the mystery of God-being-with-us. Likewise the exchange of Christmas cards in which friendships are expressed and sustained with colourful scenes of Mother-and-Child, Magi on camels, the star over Bethlehem, crib and animals, angels and shepherds, and that great guardian-shepherd Joseph. And there are other scenes and themes, some traditional and some distinctively native with bushland, flora and fauna and indigenous art. All portray the Christchild mystery. Living rooms sparkle with seasonal colour.

This Christmas we need to think of God and nature and climate too. There is widespread hardship with parched soil, no crops, starved stock, and now widespread ferocious bushfires. We remember all who have lost homes, possessions and livelihood. We remember firefighters and all support people and volunteers. This Christmas there is a special call for togetherness and endurance.

Can the example of Mary and Joseph help? I think so. They had hardship as well as joy. You could say that for Mary and Joseph, joy and hardship took it in turns throughout the birth and beginning of Jesus. There was that long journey to Bethlehem, then having to seek and find makeshift accommodation, The Birth, hospitality, protecting the baby Jesus from the deadly threat of Herod, exile. They survived. And their joy could not be extinguished by their hardships.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph with the Shepherds and the Wise Men, be with all who are suffering hardship this Christmas and bless them with your joy.

Fr Benedict Hensley OP

Rorate caeli desuper

Drop down dew ye heavens from above and let the clouds rain the Just One

“O God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.

For you love is better than life, my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life, in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet, my mouth shall praise you with joy.” (Psalm 63)

The severe drought in Australia at this time features prominently in our media. There is cause for concern. Water is a precious commodity.

How do we come to that joyous banquet? The liturgical year ends with Christ the King. Advent prepares us for Christmas. It begins with John the Baptist to prepare the way. We are called to rejoice in the Lord always and to wake from sleep. The light of Christ is coming into the world. Then we can sing to him with all sorts of music. The “O” antiphons give us the perspective, the attributes of Christ, telling us who he is. These attributes of the antiphons are contained in the Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”. Emmanuel means “God-with-us”.

We come to worship God in prayer and praise, and very much in the liturgy of the Mass which gives us the fullness of our Catholic life as we come into his presence receiving his Body and Blood in that peace and unity with God and one another. We are then meant to take him out to the rest of the world.

One way of meditating on all the lovely things that are happening in the weeks of Advent and beyond is the Rosary.

And so we come to Christmas itself. We think of the birth of the Christchild in a stable at Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph have travelled, because Caesar Augustus in Rome has ordered a census, and Joseph, who is of David’s line had to go to the city of David which is Bethlehem for this. Rome was the political power operating in Judea. It was not a free society. There was no room at the inn. The Child is born and wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, as Scripture tells us. Angels give good tidings to the shepherds who then go to see the Christ child. And then the wise men bring their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, bowing down before him in homage. They go home another way to avoid the tyrant Herod, saving the life of Jesus.

Joseph is very responsible here too, as Mary and he with Christ go into exile in Egypt. St Joseph is there at every juncture in the important stages through the childhood of Jesus. Although Jesus' foster father, he is still most faithful, so that Mary is not left alone – he is there at every event in the early life of the Christ child. He and Mary learn together from others, as we find in the joyful mysteries. We know that after the Finding in the Temple Jesus goes home with them to Nazareth.

While there is hardship in their life, there is fullness of the things of God and so, in the sense of the psalm, there was no drought. But as Jesus knew, there is a drought in people, and in his public ministry he came to address that. After his resurrection he commissioned them to go out to the whole world. The important way of combating such drought is by preaching. “Although there are many who would hear the good news, no one is there to tell it to them.” (St Gregory the Great).

The other feasts close to Christmas are those of St Stephen and St John the Evangelist. Historically, St Stephen comes after the time of the resurrection. He is the first martyr, killed for his faith. His death was not in vain; St Paul is converted. It says in the Acts of the Apostles that the faith was scattered and spread because of the persecution. Paul and Barnabas went out to preach the gospel and to teach the people. We learn from St Gregory the Great on St Luke's feast (he wrote the Acts of the Apostles) that Our Lord sent the disciples out two by two.

The other feast is that of St John the Evangelist. His gospel tells the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, where he offered her living water welling up to eternal life, ending her drought.

In a more personal sense, my grandmother was born at a settlement on the Darling river in the nineteenth century. There was a big drought at that time followed by a great flood. Their lives were in danger, but help came from an unexpected quarter. The local aboriginal people saved their lives, because they knew their environment. They tied my grandmother (about seven years old) up a tree.

And she grew up able to relate to people of very different cultures, born of this remembrance of her childhood rescue. She passed this on to her descendants, teaching a two-way relationship of help.

Mary Gill CPL

SIENA COLLEGE: AN INTERVIEW WITH ANN RENNIE

Siena is a medium sized secondary girls' college with an enrolment of over 700. It is set in the Canterbury-Camberwell district in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

Fr Ben (Editor) Thank you Ann for agreeing to an interview to be published in our Rosary Newsletter. We print 2,400 and copies go out all over Australia and a few go to NZ and the Solomon Is. Mostly they go to private addresses, but we also send packages to each of our six Dominican parishes in Australia. I thought it would be of interest to our readers to catch a glimpse of life in today's Catholic Girls' School. Granted that the future rests in large measure with youth, what are the modern teenage Catholic schoolgirls like? What are their hopes, their problems, their ambitions?

Ed. First, then, how long have you been at Siena, and what is your role?

A.R. I have been on the staff here for six years. I am what is called a "Home Room Teacher" and Middle School Coordinator. That involves me with 120 girls and working with four other home room teachers. I have a Master's degree in Religious Education from Australian Catholic University.

Ed. Your time at Siena means you have been able to follow the progress of groups of girls through their Middle School Years 7 to 9.

A.R. Yes, and that has been a real joy.

Ed. To what extent is it a local area school? Are most of the girls from this locality?

A.R. They come from far and near. I have heard that next year we will be taking girls from 53 different primary schools! That will include girls from State primary schools as well as from many different Catholic parish schools.

Ed. Does being coordinator in the Middle School mean that you have to concentrate on, say the girls in years 9 and 10, rather than the younger and older ones?

A.R. In pastoral terms, I have the care of those in Years 7 to 9. But I also have dealings with the seniors, especially with religion lessons and the teaching of English.

Ed. Siena has been going for some 60 years, and up until the 1990's it was under the care (or at least principalship) of the Dominican Sisters. Is there still a sense of that Dominican tradition to be found in the school, do you think? Does Catherine of Siena feature as a model for them?

A.R. They do have their heroines and heroes, people they look up to. The Dominican Sister Nancy Murray who put on a one woman show depicting the life of St Catherine certainly made a big impression on the girls. She portrayed the strength and courage of St Catherine; how she as a woman was not afraid of doing things differently, making her voice heard.

Another way in which the Dominican ethos is kept in the school is the annual introduction provided by our Principal for the parents of their new Year 7 daughters. They are made aware of the Dominican family, in the sense that this is not only a Catholic school but one in the Dominican family tradition.

Ed. Do the girls come from a variety of very different backgrounds?

A.R. The majority seem to be really Australian, even those from families of European origin. Of these most would be of Italian background. They don't seem to be deeply into a knowledge of their culture beyond perhaps a reference to grandpa as Nonno in the Italian way, and there may be incidentals stemming from their heritage like recipes and the importance of the saint's day from their parents' region of Italy. But no, the majority seem to be very much in the Australian Anglo-Irish tradition. We have some girls of Asian background, but not many.

Ed. Tell me about those religion lessons. Are they hard going? Would you say that the girls you have taught over the six years are religious? Are they interested in their Catholic teachings and way of life?

A.R. Well, to start with, I use an invitational approach. I invite them to learn about Christianity and our Catholic teachings. In our dialogue style we emphasise issues of fact. I would call it a more cognitive approach, aiming at their gaining religious literacy; that they know and grasp what the teachings are.

Of course in those adolescent years from around 12 to 18 they undergo lots of changes as they try to work out who they are and where they fit in the Church. Often the Church is put on the back-burner, so to speak. I would say that they are much more alive to religion and spirituality than to identifying with the institutional Church. They are looking out for the world, for the environment and issues of social justice.

I find in our small Year 11 class that there is an incredible honesty and openness. The girls trust each other as they express their inmost views and worries and hopes. They feel that they can voice their doubts. All this helps us reach a consensus through dialogue. In general the girls are optimistic, but without too many concrete ideas for their future.

Ed. You have mentioned the cognitive or knowledge side of the religion lessons, what about the practical side?

A.R. Values education is important and is part of our programme. So there is guidance offered to senior girls in Years 10 to 12 about such things as conduct at parties and celebrations, and driving, for example. We have a drug education programme to which parents too may sometimes be invited. With the younger ones there can be troubles with friendships (forming and excluding and terminating) and also bullying. We have weekly pastoral care programmes with home room teachers to offer guidance and to deal with such practical issues. Relationships are just so important among the girls. Being always welcoming and respectful are qualities we try and help our girls to develop.

And I should mention involvement in social justice issues, particularly through our St Vincent de Paul group. They have fundraising activities for that, organising cake stalls and the like.

Ed. How do they go with prayer?

A.R. We pray every day in each of our home room groups. My group like to bring into the public arena the things that have been happening in their lives which they want to share. That takes a few minutes at the beginning. After that we have one minute of quiet time "with God".

Ed. Silent?

A.R. Absolutely. And in addition we do have a prayer roster for the girls in each Religious Education class. And there are times of prolonged prayer in the College chapel.

Ed. Do they like to pray with set prayers, or do they make up their own?

A.R. They make up their own.

Ed. Do you become aware of parents' influence with their girls regarding attitudes and beliefs ?

A.R. It may happen, but only incidentally, say, in a parent-teacher interview. Sometimes when meeting a parent we can understand the child. We don't have difficulties with parents wanting to interfere with our teaching and the running of the school. There is usually a good rapport between the home room teacher and parents should any particular issue arise that concerns parents. We try to encourage parents to join the School Board, thus seeing themselves more in partnership with us.

Ed. Am I right in thinking that your closest work with the girls you teach occurs in the home room environment? Does classroom teaching mean something rather different?

A.R. The home room environment is pastoral. We are dealing with social and emotional and family issues. We don't have the sorts of curriculum-directed outcomes that absorb you in the classroom. Proportionally much more time is devoted to classroom teaching. Our effective home room time is about 20 minutes each day.

Ed. Are the senior girls much pre-occupied with careers? Would that be something they would want to talk about with you, their teacher?

A.R. Some girls have no idea of what they want to do, while others are very clear. Home room teachers are available to dialogue with girls and their parents about career choices. The subject teachers know well whether a particular girl is aiming too high, or could aim higher or differently with her gifts. We have a very good career counsellor too who is available to help with knowledge of a wide range of choices and pathways.

In Year 9 our girls are presented with electives; a variety of different subjects from which to choose. That helps when interest and motivation may be waning. Then in Year 10 there is a funnelling process directing them into science areas, or humanities, or music...As it turns out, most of them will go to university.

Ed. Do they have much contact with other schools?

A.R. Yes. In sport our girls compete with the nearby Baptist Girls' College. Exercise and health are an important part of our curriculum with athletics and swimming carnivals. We are involved with half a dozen other Catholic schools. Healthy competition is encouraged, with the accent on teamwork and participation.

And in drama they combine with Whitefriars Boys' College in putting on musicals. West Side Story is one we have done together and something like that is done each year.

Ed. Thank you Ann, this has been a real eye-opener for me, and I wish you, your colleagues and the girls you teach God's blessing. It seems to me that Siena is a very homely school with everyone working well together.

A.R. Yes it is a happy school. It runs on professionalism and goodwill. Faith and Gospel values underpin all our endeavours.

OUR LADY AND THE BEATITUDES (Concluded)

Classical Christian thinkers from the Fathers through to the scholastics in the Middle Ages have found great value from discovery of an *order* in the list of the Beatitudes, especially numbers one to seven. We have patterned our meditation on their discovery, bringing it into the arena of the third luminous mystery of the Rosary, The Proclamation of the Kingdom and the Call to Repentance. Pope John Paul encouraged us to enter into the Luminous Mysteries with special help from Our Lady of the Rosary as our teacher.

And so in these final Beatitudes we are encouraged to rise higher in our meditation. All the Beatitudes of course direct the Christian mind and heart to God. They tell of the qualities essential to life in the Kingdom of heaven. In the Beatitudes we walk the heavenly pilgrimage to the temple of God. Life is a journey into the beyond. Our day by day trudging demands all sorts of concentration and effort to shape and to endure the here and now, but not to see it all as ending there.

Beatitudes six and seven –purity of heart and peace-making-- lift our pilgrim gaze to horizons beyond the initial “preventive” virtues that protect us from wayward desires and emotions as in Beatitudes one to three. Likewise purity of heart and peace-making signal a higher stage than the “doing” virtues of justice and mercy in Beatitudes four and five. These last two Beatitudes that we shall look at in Our Lady's company offer the finishing touches in our immediate preparation for eternal life. (The eighth Beatitude reminds us that while heaven's bliss is our goal, the pilgrimage itself is not without suffering).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God”. In his Sermon on the Mount Our Lord takes his hearers beyond what they had been used to. Attention to outward behaviour no longer suffices. He invites them into consideration of the inner sanctum and source of good behaviour as well as public demeanour. The Old Testament background to this Beatitude is found in Ps. 24.

“Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart”

Our Lord on the mountain of the Beatitudes, however, while not denying the need of a pure heart in temple worship expressed by the psalmist, affirms it in *all* phases and choices of life. His New Law fulfills the Law expressed in the ten commandments given to Moses many generations earlier on another mountain. For the do's and don'ts, punishments and blessings from Mt Sinai were incomplete in themselves because they did not sanctify the heart. And the Promised Land at the end of the journey of the Chosen People was a far cry from the ultimate destiny proclaimed by Our Lord in the Beatitudes; the Kingdom of Heaven. So what does purity of heart mean?

Simplicity is the key to purity of heart. The prophet Jeremiah noted that “the heart is more devious than any other thing”. It allows a duplicity, a double-mindedness in human conduct, exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount. “Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them.” St. Augustine wrote of our Beatitude six and its reward with great clarity: “They are foolish who seek to see with the bodily eye, since He is seen only by the heart. ‘Seek him in simplicity of heart’, says the Book of Wisdom. The single heart is the same as is here called the pure heart.” Purity of heart is to will one thing, wrote Soeren Kierkegaard in his *Edifying Discourses*, harmonising with St Augustine and the theological tradition. Doubleness in desire occurs when a person does something intentionally that is genuinely good, but out of a desire also for worldly acclaim. Whereas the pure heart becomes a holy temple of God in which He is to be “seen” not with bodily eyes, but contemplated with the divinely enlightened eye of the mind.

William Barclay’s words lead us into Our Lady’s school. “This Beatitude describes the bliss of the heart whose thoughts, motives, desires are completely unmixed, genuine, sincere...Only the Christ who spoke this Beatitude can enable anyone to enter into the bliss which this Beatitude promises.” It was Jesus, the Word made flesh, who did his Father’s will with all his being, not only in the Garden of Gethsemane but through his life from beginning to end. The heart of the boy Jesus that was obedient in the temple, the heart of the Shepherd that was compassionate with sufferers, the heart of the Son that was gentle and lowly towards the over-burdened, of the Friend that wept at Lazarus’ death, and the heart of the Lamb that was pierced. THAT heart was purity itself. Our Lady who knew that heart in its purity more intimately than any other human being, reflected all its simplicity, compassion and single-minded devotedness in her own life. She treasured the mysteries of her Son, storing them up and pondering them in her heart. Mary of Nazareth, Mother of our Redeemer is unrivalled in the purity of her heart and body. Assumed into heaven and Crowned Queen, she is elevated into the perfect expression of this Beatitude.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”

We have arrived at the summit of the Beatitudes. The notion of single and simple mindedness lying at the heart of the previous blessedness carries over into peace and peacemaking. Unity is an essential feature of peace. Genuinely peaceful people are at one in themselves. But just as purity of heart is to will the one thing that is good *in truth* (Kierkegaard), so too the oneness of Beatitude's peace must be about the truly good. Why does it seem so elusive? There are many dimensions to us and levels within us. In the action, reaction and interaction of our human dimensions and levels we are called to find a harmony. Lower powers are called to chime in with the higher ones, and the highest spiritual powers of mind and will are called to be in harmony with God. All of which is first personal and then communal. And it is the communal note that is struck in this Beatitude. But without personal peace, how can there be communal peacemaking? Peace as "the tranquillity of order" (St Augustine) crosses boundaries.

Even so, it must be seen as a gift; God's gift. Peace is the child of the theological virtue of charity expressed in the Great Commandment of love of God and of neighbour(s) as oneself. Perhaps for this reason the peacemaking Beatitude identifies us as God's children together. We are to be His, becoming more like Him, secure and established, adopted into the likeness of Jesus the peacemaker who is one with his Father.

Our Lady can teach us about this peace. More profoundly, she can teach us about the blessedness of peacemaking, since not all is sweetness and light. Zachary knew that there were enemies and "those who hate us" to be delivered from. Our Lady knew from Simeon that a sword would pierce her soul. She knew of Herod's intention to kill the child Jesus and of his slaughter of the Innocents. Jesus' peacemaking presupposes some absence of peace. The peace he makes is the transformation of hatred, enmity and strife into the tranquillity of order.

Our Lord's supreme peacemaking is wrought through his own body on the Cross. "For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one entity...This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God."(Eph. 2:14-16). Throughout this act of peacemaking Our Lady is with him, united heart and soul. Their agony together—he in his whole humanity and she in her soul's love—is but the transforming phase of peacemaking. "Peace be with you" is his greeting as the Risen Lord. And this is the peace of irreversible Beatitude.

B.H.

A WHOLE BIBLE CATECHISM (continued)

From St Thomas' Summa Theologica

The Extrinsic Principles of Human Acts - Law

On the Ceremonial Precepts of the Old Law - Question 101

Article 2 Whether the Ceremonial Precepts are figurative?

“Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a festival day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths, which are a shadow of the things to come” (Col. 2:16,17)

Article 3 **Whether there should have been many Ceremonial Precepts?**

“I shall write to them (Vulg. him) my manifold laws (Hos. 8:12)
and

“That he might show you the secrets of his wisdom and that his law is manifold” (Job 11:6)

Article 4 Whether the ceremonies of the Old Law are suitably divided into sacrifices, sacred things, sacraments, and observances?

In the Old Law each of the above is called a ceremony. For the sacrifices are called ceremonies:

“They shall offer a calf...and the sacrifices and libations thereof, as the ceremonies require.” (Num. 15:24)

Of the sacrament of Order it is written:

“This is the anointing of Aaron and his sons in the ceremonies”
(Lev. 7:35)

Of sacred things also it is written

“These are the instruments of the tabernacle of the testimony...in the ceremonies of the Levites” (Exod. 38:21)

And again of the observances it is written:

“If you...shall turn away from following me, and will not observe my ceremonies which I have set before you.”(1 Kgs. 9:6)

On the Causes of the Ceremonial Precepts - Question 102

Article 1 Whether there was any cause for the ceremonial precepts?

“The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 18:9)

Article 2 Whether the ceremonial precepts have a literal cause or merely a figurative cause?

Just as the ceremonial precepts foreshadowed Christ, so did the stories of the

Old Testament –

“All (these things) happened to them in figure” (1Cor. 10:11)

Now in the stories of the Old Testament, besides the mystical or

- figurative, there is the literal sense. Therefore the ceremonial precepts had also literal, besides their figurative causes.
- Article 4 Whether sufficient reason can be assigned for the ceremonies pertaining to holy things?
(those who) **“offer gifts according to the law...serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. As it was answered to Moses, when he was to finish the tabernacle: ‘See’, He said, ‘that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mount’”** (Heb. 8: 4,5)
- Article 5 Whether there can be any suitable cause for the sacraments of the Old Law?
“I am the Lord who sanctifies you” (Lev. 20:8)
and
“You have made all things in wisdom” (Ps. 103:24)

Mother Janet Erskine Stuart was a truly remarkable woman. She became the Superior General of the Sacre Coeur nuns early in the twentieth century and died in middle life in 1914 just after the outbreak of the Great War. Maud Monahan wrote an excellent book entitled, “The Life and Letters of Janet Erskine Stuart”, allowing Janet to be portrayed largely through her own words. Among other things she wrote some poetry. Here is an excerpt from a Christmas poem for 1897 courtesy of Maud Monahan’s book (p. 317).

“So they prayed, and through the ages so the faithful singers sang,
Sighing for the great appearing, sighs that like their harp-strings rang.
Dreaming that they heard the music of the High Priest's bells of gold
Ring among his silken fringes in the glory known of old.
Dreaming that they felt Him coming, that the blessed time was near...”

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Editor: Fr. Ben Hensley OP, S.T.D.

Censor deputatus: Fr. A.Z. Fazokas OP, S.T.D.

Imprimi potest: Fr. Tom Cassidy OP, S.T.D., Provincial

All enquiries & correspondence:

The Promoter,
Dominican Fathers Rosary Centre,
PO Box 305,
CARINA QLD 4152