



# THE STAR

## ROSARY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 13 No. 2 July 2007

PRINT POST APPROVED NO. PP 328567/00120

### EDITORIAL

Dear Rosarians,

Once again we are at the time of the feast of our holy Father St Dominic and I would like to ponder upon his links with the Rosary, not with the findings of history but with the expressions of art. This takes us into meanings and applications of a different kind. There are many representations associating Dominic with the Rosary in art, statues, poetry, hymns and music, offering avenues for meditation. Some of the older cathedrals and churches in our part of the world have fine stained glass windows, paintings and mosaics showing Dominic receiving the Rosary from our Lady. The source of the belief that St Dominic received the Rosary from Our Lady is due in large measure to a vision of Bl. Alan de la Roche (or de Rupe) around 1460, some 240 years after Dominic's death. Certainly the daughters and sons of Dominic have been the ones most associated officially with the guardianship and promotion of the prayer, with Pope St Pius V (1566-72) the outstanding example. With this in mind I like to think of Our Lady giving the Rosary to the Dominican Order. In this way seeing the various works of art and literature and the papal documents focussing on St Dominic not so much in terms of his actual experience *but of the meaning and mission of the Preaching Order centred in him*. Two further points in this line of thought occur. So many of the pictorial images show Our Lady elevated, with St Dominic lowly and kneeling and receptive as he looks up to her. Often, if not invariably, she is holding the Christchild. This suggests to me not only the heavenly origin of the Rosary, its "descent" if you like, but also the significance of the Incarnation and childhood of the Messiah pondered in the Annunciation. This of course is the foundation mystery of the Rosary and the theme running through all the others, including the Mysteries of Light. But the physical, human reality of the Incarnation and its consequences was in St Dominic's mind his Preaching Order's very reason for being. Another encouragement for regarding St Dominic's link with the Rosary more in terms of his Order than with his person historically is found in the well known Rosary picture of Our Lady of Pompeii. It shows her with St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena. Although there was a heavenly bond between them stemming from her childhood, their lives were separated historically by 150 years. St Dominic, pray for us Rosarians!

Fr Benedict Hensley OP  
Promoter of the Rosary Confraternity

## ON WIDOWHOOD

In the months of August, September and October we have some of the feast days that relate to the Rosary mysteries. The Transfiguration, the Assumption and Our Lady of Sorrows, as well as many saints associated with the Rosary, especially St Dominic.

In the Transfiguration we have Moses and Elijah there with Jesus, and Peter, James and John as witnesses. Not long after that we have the feast of Our Lady Assumed into heaven. Although assumed into heaven she will always retain ties with Bethlehem where she was taken by Joseph because of the census ordered by Caesar Augustus, with Joseph and therefore Jesus being of David's line. Here we find widowhood featuring.

Going back centuries before, we come to the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. Ruth and Naomi were widows. Instead of Ruth going away, she said to Naomi: "Entreat me not to leave you. Where you go I will go. Your God will be my God." So she stayed there and married a man called Boaz and she worked very hard in the fields. She and Boaz were the forebears of David, the royal house of which David was made king.

Looking into the Transfiguration and remembering particularly Elijah and the famine. There was no rain. There was a widow appointed by God to minister to Elijah and look after him as he requested a little water and something to eat. Though she had nothing but a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug she was assured by Elijah that the meal would not be spent nor the jug be emptied.

"The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord God had foretold through Elijah".  
(1Kgs. 17:15,16)

In the New Testament there is the story of the widow of Naim whose son had died and whom Jesus had restored to life. And in St Paul's letter to Timothy he teaches the role of widows. This has been happening from this time onwards; the care of widows and orphans to see that they are not left destitute.

Our Lady of Sorrows: we think of her at the foot of the Cross. What comes to

mind is the Stabat Mater. Jesus in his agony did not abandon her but gave her to St John. And so she was present at Pentecost. St Dominic himself prayed much at the foot of the Cross and those who come after him have done the same by proclaiming and teaching these and the other truths of our faith. It happens then that out of sorrow joy comes in this life as well as looking forward to the joys of heaven.

Even now, apart from experiencing the losses among my own forebears, and most recently, my own husband of nearly fifty three years, I take comfort from the examples of so many among friends and neighbours at church and in the wider community. One experiences the blessings of those who mourn in the ways of Christian comfort revealed in the gospels, the New Testament letters and in Christian history.

*Mary Gill OPL*



**A WHOLE BIBLE CATECHISM:  
From St Thomas' *Summa Theologica* (continued)**

Why have we chosen this as a title? After all, the biblical texts appearing are often so brief, mere snippets. This becomes even more striking when you see the size of the whole *Summa* and the volume of St Thomas' own words. The short texts presented under the heading of this Catechism all come from what is called "On the contrary" (Sed contra) in St Thomas' work. We take such texts as quoted by him to be **authoritative** in any particular matter under discussion. It may be useful, therefore, in this issue of our newsletter to indicate how the Scripture phrases in a couple of the sed contras of just two articles of the *Summa* relate to their wider contexts in the Scripture from which they are selected by St Thomas. As background it may be of interest to learn that Thomas, more commonly known as "The Angelic Doctor", was also known as "Master of the Sacred Page". So much of his actual lecturing in theology was devoted to commenting on books of the Bible. And just as he had learned how the great philosophers based all their reasonings on the bedrock of philosophical principles (non contradiction, etc.), so he learned and taught and wrote all his theology as ultimately the expression of the articles of faith divinely revealed in the Bible. Three features stand out in St Thomas' great teaching work in the service of the Church. First, the systematic way he proceeds. This is well known. There is always an order to be found both within each of his tracts and among the various tracts. Secondly, and less often analysed and evaluated, are the objections he places. Thirdly, his use of Scripture in many of the "On the contrary" sections of his articles. These quotations are not just counterpunches to the objections but are crucial to establishing the factual answer to the question. And often they guide St Thomas in his presentation of the appropriateness (convenientia) of the teaching. Let us see how Thomas' *Summa* can take us deeply into the Bible as a whole. (It will help to have your Bible handy). In our Easter issue we began with his study of Faith. In this issue we look into the matter of those who have faith.

**The Theological Virtue of Faith**

**On those having faith - Question 5**

Article 1 Whether in their original state angels or humans had faith?

**"The one that comes to God must believe" (Hebrews, 11:6)**

He himself adds a step to this authoritative text to make the point:

"Now the original state of angels and humans was one of coming to God.

Therefore they had need of faith."

Our first task is to clarify the topic in which our Hebrews text becomes authoritative, then to assess the meaning found in it, and finally to see that this is supported by the wider context of chapter 11.

### **1. *Looking at the topic***

Having treated of (a) faith in itself, (b) the inward and outward acts of faith, and (c) how it is a virtue, St Thomas now explores the more subject-side issues, surrounding those actually having faith. What conditions are needed before it can be had? What would make faith impossible? Or unnecessary? Having looked at faith itself in a more abstract way - what kind of divine gift it is - here he touches upon salvation history as he looks into the faith had by both angels and humans. When did the gift arrive in human history; before or after sin? For St Thomas, following St Augustine, *God graced angels and humans at their origin.*

Did the intimacy of angels and human with their Creator prior to sin therefore make the possession of faith unnecessary? In the sinlessness of their initial graced creaturehood, fresh and strong and pure from the Creator's hand there occurs a yearning in both angel and human born of the very closeness of God, yet for whom face to face vision remains a promise. It is grace's inner directedness to complete face to face union with God, while still not offering open revelation, that explains the "coming to" in Heb. 11:6. And this means there must be faith. Only absolute ignorance of God, or the beatific vision itself would render faith pointless, and each of these is ruled out both for angels and for Adam and Eve in their original state. They therefore had the gift of faith.

### **2. *Exploring the meaning***

This brings to mind the faith which Our Lady possessed. Like angels and Adam and Eve she was sinless in her original state and she too, drawing near to God (Magnifying!), had to await the vision God, but unlike them she remained sinless. Her faith was life-long. "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" cried Elizabeth, signalling not only God's grace as given but also its heavenward orientation. For the blessedness spoken by Elizabeth was that of beatitude. God's gift of grace and faith goes then with the angelic and human creation, at the foundation of creaturely decision-making by mind and will, and in harmony with recognition of creaturely limitations. ("He looks on his servant in her lowliness" – *Magnificat*). It was intended to be part of sinless life. The limitations entailed in it are akin to the limitations of creaturehood. "Every creature is darkness in comparison with the immensity of the Divine light."  
(ad 2m)

The question of this article thus takes us into considerations of the dignity of faith in the divine plan, encouraging us to treasure the deep level at which it is possessed.

### **3. *The Context***

How then does Heb. 11:6 as used here in St Thomas' *Summa* catechism relate to its context? The whole of ch. 11 is centred on faith. It begins with the famous definition of faith and then goes from verse 4 on to list many examples of those who had faith throughout the centuries of the Old Testament, "a great cloud of witnesses". The examination of the *general* question, Who can have faith? thus fits in well with the context of ch. 11., giving us an abundance of faith-filled personal examples. There is a difficulty however, when we come to the *specifics*. The list given by the inspired author of Heb. 11 takes us necessarily into human history. But the question asked takes us to an "era" before history really gets going; to the original state of both angel and human. How can we discover the existence of "faith-at-origin" from the faith of persons who lived a generation or more after the original state? The answer must lie in the **nature** of faith as a divine gift that can be defined as empowering intelligent beings *both* immediately upon their creation-with-grace *and* throughout the ups and downs of history. The fact that St Thomas includes the original state of the angels with the human seems to support the commonness of faith, taking us back to its definition and its universality as studied in earlier *Summa* Questions which focussed on the first three verses of the Letter to the Hebrews.

And so Heb. 11:3 reveals the Creator-creature relationship, already mentioned, as "what is seen being made out of things which do not appear". The first example of one having this faith is Abel. His "coming to" God was verified in his sacrifice, inasmuch as it was pleasing to God. That his offering of sacrifice was an act of the faith he possessed was confirmed by his receiving divine approval as righteous, a faith that still speaks after his death. (11:4). The relationship between the visible and invisible touching both creation and faith run throughout chapter 11. The invisible Creator had Abel draw near to him in faith.

The next example listed in ch. 11 is Enoch. He is most important because he provides the immediate context for St Thomas' text which is used as the *On the Contrary* (Sed contra) authority. Like Abel he too is presented as a post sin and pre Law character with faith from the time of the Patriarchs. Like Abel he too "pleased God", but unlike Abel he is not recorded as having offered sacrifice and he was spared death, having been taken by God. Most importantly, pleasing God meant he was a man of faith. This is explained in the next verse, the one from which St Thomas takes his short phrase to affirm authoritatively that the

angels as did Adam and Eve have faith before they had sinned. “And without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Heb. 11:6). If you cannot please God while lacking faith, (and that faith is essential) it means that anyone who pleases God has faith. Enoch pleased God therefore he had faith. How do we know that he pleased God? That is explained in the next sentence of the same verse: because he drew near to God. **“For whoever would draw near to God must believe...”** So the key is found in the expression, “come to” or “draw near to” (RSV translation). The Old Testament reference to Enoch in Genesis 5:22-24 speaks of him “walking with God”. We are told there he lived for 365 years! Whether or not he offered a pleasing sacrifice, the main thing according to our Hebrews text was that he did not waver in his long walk with the Lord God. Reading our verse 6 now in the light of the opening verses of the chapter, we understand that Enoch came to God, believing that He exists as the unseen Maker of all that is seen, and that he rewards those coming to him. And so the timeless and universal principle that there exists an invisible Creator who rewards those who seek Him is verified and made manifest in the personal faith of Enoch. The action of “seeking” is here identified with the “coming to” of our text. Enoch’s action of coming to God in a way that verified the existence of faith in him verifies also the existence of faith at the very beginning in angels and humans. Because of his faith he was taken by God to Himself without having to die. “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death,” we read in verse 5.

We conclude therefore that the small portion of verse 6 from Hebrews ch. 11 appearing here in the Summa as the ultimate reference point in establishing the fact that faith was given to angels and humans in their original state is truly representative of its context.

Article 2 Whether the devils have faith?

**“The devils...believe and tremble” (James, 2:19)**

Can one still have faith after sinning? What sort of faith would it be? Here we move very definitely in our Whole Bible catechism from faith in the state of original innocence to the post sin condition. Treating the question with regard to the devils is radical. Their sin is irreversible. There can therefore be no coming to God. Beatitude is out of the question. But they can appreciate the fact and authorship of supernatural signs. They can know that a sign pointing to a holy mystery of faith has to be from God. They do not through that come to know the divine mystery in the way a holy angel would or a believer in a state of grace would do. The devils’ act of faith lacks all grace. Their will inclines their superior natural intelligence to affirm e.g. that a certain teaching of the Church is in fact from God. But their will in doing so is not fulfilling a desire for good. That they believe at all is intriguing. It means they have had the experience of a radical change in faith. At first their faith looked heavenward, but then in the rebellion, no more. It would seem that the material for the faith they have comes largely if not entirely from Divine revelation

through the Church. Instead of gaining “assurance of things hoped for”, their response to any such truth is to shudder. Their created spiritual powers of Intellect and will combine together to achieve only fearful disturbance and trembling. Their faith in that sense is real, but not the faith exhorted so strenuously by St James in his letter.

Coming now to the context of the Jas. 2:19 quotation in our Summa article, we find that it is given there as a radical example of faith without good works. The faith of the demons here has them assenting to the great Old Testament truth that God is the one Lord (Cf Mark 12:29), but the immediate impact of that truth, instead of breathing forth love, has them shuddering and trembling. James has been instructing his hearers about true faith being that which issues in good works. Good works reveal the real orientation of the will to God (“coming to Him” as the last article showed) in moving the believer to assent. In this part of his letter (or sermon) James highlights the magnitude of an error about Christian faith—that it could be devoid of good works—by appealing to the most strikingly negative example: the devils whose “work” is to tremble. Their faith-assent to the truth of the one God and any other divine teachings is barren.

Perhaps St Thomas as the “Angelic Doctor”, so often showing positively the influence of the angels in the Christian life, is concerned here to show how in ways to be avoided the fallen angels’ tragedy also can instruct us. But in lifting out James’ fleeting reference to the devils into this section of his Summa, does he abandon its context in the letter for his own catechetical purposes? Not at all! Rather, Thomas’ careful study of the kind of faith that remains in the angelic mind and will after their fall from grace helps us to read the letter with even greater appreciation of its depth.

**B.H.**

## BLESSED MARY MACKILLOP

All this is not to say that Sister Mary's spirit was drawn from nothing more than a natural source, the fundamental equality of all mankind. If this had been so, it would not have carried her far. The well-spring of her inspiration was God contemplated not only as the Creator who gave to all human beings equally their natural dignity and supernatural destiny, but also as the Heavenly Father who so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son to redeem and save it. What animated Sister Mary from first to last was quite marvellous charity towards her neighbour for God's sake. In comparison with this charity of hers, all her other virtues seem dwarfed. It was only on closer acquaintance with her that these also were seen to be shining in surpassing splendour.

No one, of course, had such a close acquaintance with Sister Mary as Father Woods. He knew better than anyone what great progress she had made in holiness. It is not surprising then that after she had been a month or so in Adelaide he decided to choose her as the first to dedicated herself to God in the new Institute by the taking of public vows of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty.

The day chosen for this great event was August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The ceremony was of Father Woods' devising and was reminiscent of his own profession as a Passionist. It took place in the oratory of the cottage in Grote Street. In the Passionist ceremony the novice lies prostrate before the altar while the Passion according to St John is read. Afterwards he pronounces his vows and then a cross is ritually placed on his shoulders and a crown of thorns on his head. At Sister Mary's profession an extract from the Passion according to St Luke was read. Then, kneeling before Father Woods and with hands joined between his, she took the three vows that made her a religious, and another suggested by Father Woods who as a Passionist had been bound by a fourth vow to promote devotion to the Passion of Christ. By her fourth vow Sister Mary obliged herself to promote to the utmost of her power the love of Jesus Christ in the hearts of little children.

Finally, Sister Mary having retired and laid aside the wreath of flowers she was wearing, returned to the oratory with a crown of thorns on her head and a cross on her shoulders. These were then ritually taken off by Father Woods. Putting the cross into her hands he said: "Let the crosses following thy consecration to Jesus Crucified be taken up by thee cheerfully, and remember that thou art thus helping Christ to bear His. Love to be unknown, to be poor and despised, for thou art now bound by thy profession to the service of God in the Sisterhood of St Joseph, which must ever consider itself among the poorest and least in the household of the Church."

If Sister Mary had never known what it was to suffer, she might well have been appalled at the prospect thus opened before her eyes by the symbolism of the profession ceremony and the words of Father Woods. Actually, as has been said, she

If Sister Mary had never known what it was to suffer, she might well have been appalled at the prospect thus opened before her eyes by the symbolism of the profession ceremony and the words of Father Woods. Actually, as has been said, she had always been a very assiduous learner in the school of Jesus crucified and had acquired the art of suffering silently. For her, the taking of vows in the Sisterhood of St Joseph was but a public manifestation of what had been in her heart for years. It underlined the fact that like St Paul the Apostle she gloried in the Cross of Christ. Henceforth her only signature would be: Sister Mary of the Cross.

Taken from Fr Osmund Thorpe C.P.  
**Mary MacKillop**, 1994 Revised Edition

#### **BLESSED BARTOLO LONGO 1841 – 1926**

This little known Blessed is mentioned five times by John Paul II in his letter on the Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, in which he introduces five new Mysteries of Light into the ancient prayer. Our late Pope and lover of the Rosary brings him out of relative obscurity into the limelight. There don't seem to be many books written about him, at least in English in our part of the world. What did the Pope find so attractive about him for our time? That is to say, What was the importance of Blessed Bartolo for the Rosary in general and for the themes of the Pope's letter in particular?

1. Referring to the saints who discovered in the Rosary a genuine path to growth in holiness, he described Bl Bartolo as a true apostle of the Rosary, with a special charism. "His path to holiness rested on an inspiration heard in the depths of his heart: 'Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!' (n.8). As a result he felt called to build a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Pompeii, against the background of the ruins of the ancient city, which scarcely heard the proclamation of Christ before being buried in 79 A.D. during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, only to emerge centuries later from its ashes as a witness to the lights and shadows of classical civilisation. By his whole life's work and especially by the practice of the 'Fifteen Saturdays', Bartolo Longo promoted the Christocentric and contemplative heart of the Rosary..." (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n.8)

2. Next, referring to the influence of the Rosary in fostering a growing assimilation to Christ as a journey of friendship John Paul quotes Bl Bartolo: "Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection." (n.15).

3. In his third reference John Paul notes that “The Rosary is both meditation and supplication”. Having emphasised with Bl. Bartolo the need to see and foster the contemplative heart of Mary’s Rosary, he turns to her interceding side. Here too Bartolo is an ally. “Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. She is ‘all-powerful by grace’, to use the bold expression, which needs to be properly understood, of Blessed Bartolo Longo in his *Supplication to Our Lady*.(n.16).

4. It is possible to discern a symbolism even in the beads themselves that points to the contemplative character of the Rosary. As well as being a counting mechanism to mark the succession of the Hail Marys, “the beads evoke the unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection. Blessed Bartolo Longo also saw them as a ‘chain’ which links us to God.” The Pope goes on to explain that it is a sweet chain; “for sweet indeed is the bond to God who is also our Father. A ‘filial’ chain which puts us in tune with Mary, the ‘handmaid of the Lord’, and, most of all, with Christ himself...”(n.36).

5. The significance of this less known Blessed apostle of the Rosary for Pope John Paul is highlighted finally at the very end of the Apostolic Letter: “At the start of the twentyfifth year of my Pontificate, I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, *prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the splendid Shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary.* (n.43).

Bartolo was born into a good family not far from Brindisi in southern Italy in 1841. His mother died when he was only 10. As a teenager he began to drift into dangerous waters spiritually, consulting a medium whilst at college. Then at Naples University as a law student his involvement in the occult led to his becoming a Satanist priest in his early twenties. Extreme asceticism, diabolical visions, depression and nervous illness all began to destroy his health. A kindly professor from his university befriended him, warning that he was “heading for the madhouse.” He was instrumental in getting Bartolo to break with Satanism, eventually introducing him to a Dominican priest who in the course of a month’s counselling brought him to the point of the sacrament of reconciliation on the feast of the Sacred Heart, 1865. He gave himself to working with the poor and destitute and in 1871 at the age of 30 he became a lay Dominican (Third Order or Tertiary) taking the name Rosario. In 1872 he went to Pompeii to help a wealthy widow in working for the poor. Still worrying about having been a Satanist priest, he found consolation in the message referred to by Pope John Paul that those who spread the Rosary will be saved. This was for him a divine blessing. He married, worked for the poor and the poorly instructed in the parish of Pompeii. He had the delapidated church restored and with some difficulty procured a Rosary picture for it. The poor condition and poor quality of this picture was remedied over time by a good artist and has become well known. Later a basilica was built which houses the picture of St Dominic and St Catherine with Our Lady of the Rosary. Some miracles associated with it have led to the church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Pompeii becoming an important Shrine. What a remarkable story!

### **CHILDREN'S CORNER**

Last week Fr Mark suggested I go with him into the church to see a wonderful picture of the Last Supper. Having seen many pictures of the Last Supper and knowing that beauty is in the eye of the beholder I wondered just how wonderful this picture would be! But I went along anyway and was pleased I did. When I looked at the picture I saw that the disciples all had Down syndrome. It was this that struck me. After I picked Josh up from school I took him in to show him the picture. I wanted to get his reaction so I asked him what he saw in their faces thinking that he would say they had Down syndrome like him. After he had studied it for a while he said, "I see Jesus Christ". To make it clearer to him I then said, "No Josh not the communion, what do you see in their faces? Again he said, "I see Jesus Christ". Then I responded, "Look at their faces Josh, they have Down syndrome", and he said, "Oh yeah, but I see Jesus Christ."

Sharon Cooke

(From *Northern Approaches*, the parish bulletin for a cluster of 4 parishes on the north side of Dunedin, NZ)

*The Star* is the official newsletter of the Rosary Confraternity in the Dominican Province of the Assumption - Australia, New Zealand, and the missions in the W. Solomon Islands and PNG. .

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