



# THE STAR

## ROSARY NEWSLETTER

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### EDITORIAL

What is a carol? What is it that makes “O Come all ye Faithful” and “Silent Night” such special kinds of music at Christmas time called carol singing? There is a French connection with the word itself, because *carol* comes from a French word (“caroler”) meaning a circle dance with singing. Our carols tell something of the Christmas story in a way that is simple and joyous, encouraging us to celebrate and ponder the mystery of God-with-us in Our Lady and then in a manger.

When and how did Christianity begin to have carols? They seem to have grown out of the hymns and antiphons of the Church’s official worship. St Ambrose (d.397) is credited with introducing hymns. By the middle ages there were many Latin hymns in the official prayer of the Church, and from these there grew up less formal songs still linked to the big Christian mysteries but developed in less biblical language, poetic in style and set to the music of the people. This happened throughout Catholic Europe as hymns used for the Christmas office and related feasts began to be translated into the various native tongues. These carols were not the preserve of clergy or choirs alone but were sung by the people. We could think of them as a kind of Christian folk music. The love of singing and the experience of the vernacular in Germany meant that carols survived the Reformation better there than in England where there was some reservation about making Christmas a grand celebration. Many French “noels”, as their carols were called, date from the 18th century.

In the second half of the 19th century carol singing revived in England. Traditional favourites were improved and came to be sung in cathedrals and churches, culminating in the now well known “Lessons and Carols”.

Whatever our differences among various denominations, we Christians together herald the momentous event of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King!**

Fr Ben Hensley OP

## ***CONTEMPLATING THE FACE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE ROSARY***

On the shelves of my room there are things that tell the story of my life. The earliest one is a teapot shaped like a house and given to me when I was three. Then there is a painting of me aged ten by an eighteen year old arts student, a photo of my father and China plates that belonged to my mother. There is a wedding photo of my husband and me. A crucifix given to me by my godmother when I was twelve. Then there is a painting of the Mystical Rose hanging on a wall. It was painted by one of my children. She also painted a golden rose. Finally there is a painting of the harbour at Rio de Janeiro with the mountain in the background done by my grandfather whilst en route from England to New Zealand in the late 1870's. Such mementos provide a historical sketch of my life even for those who don't know me well.

In the mystery of Christ we have signs and symbols pointing to him and indicating his life. The most widely known is the Cross, even among those who are not Christian. Then there are other things familiar to us like the star, the manger, angels, the shepherds' staff carried by bishops. Later on there will be symbols of his Passion. In the glorious mysteries there is the light...

Looking at the Person of Christ we see the Image of God, the Word who was made flesh in the womb of Mary. The angel told Mary about the Child, his name and what he would be. He comes from a royal line and yet he was born in a stable, isolated from others. God sent them shepherds and wise men as friends. The whole mystery is God's doing, God the Father with the Holy Spirit. It is God's doing that Joseph takes Mary to Egypt because of Herod and his fear of a rival coming to take over his power. Herod doesn't know which child it is. He had to kill the baby boys because Jesus would look just like any of the baby boys of the time and the region. A precedent was there with Pharaoh killing the baby boys in Egypt through his command to the midwives. But they disobeyed him and so Moses was spared by them and by Pharaoh's daughter. He would lead the people out of slavery to the Promised Land, foreshadowing Christ as the New Moses.

Christ our Lord is the New Creation. He is recognised by those whom God has chosen. Even before his birth Elizabeth and Zachary recognise him as Lord. And then it is given to Simeon and Anna to know him at his Presentation in the temple as a forty day old baby. Finally Mary and Joseph, when they find him in the temple, do not understand his actions, so he explains, teaching them also who he is: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49). And yet he goes home to Nazareth, obedient to their wishes.

Next we see him at his baptism, making his public appearance. Very early there are problems with those who find him a threat to their power or position. John, conversely, recognises who he is in a very profound way. At Cana Mary knows him and tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you". So he has the power to show his divinity. Then, proclaiming the kingdom, doing things like healing the sick, raising the dead, forming the Apostles and teaching about the kingdom of God. With that there are miracles like the feeding of the multitudes.

At the Transfiguration he selects three as witnesses; Peter, James and John. Again here we have the Voice, giving his identity; who he is. (At the crucifixion others will say who he is: "The Son of God").

At the mystery of the institution of the Eucharist he is there with his Apostles around the table. He prophesies that one will betray him.

And so he comes to the Passion, beginning with the Agony in the Garden. Peter denies him. Tortured and tormented all the way to the Cross, his identity is concealed beneath the blood and the disfigurement of his Passion. One thing he keeps is his mind, being able throughout to think and speak naturally. He asks the Father to forgive them. He entrusts his Mother Mary to John's care, not leaving her abandoned. The other women who loved him cared for him there too. He looks like any man.

And at his resurrection he has to reveal who he is on each occasion in which he appears as the risen Lord.

At Pentecost it is Peter who preaches to the crowds the identity of Jesus, and at the Assumption and Coronation it is the Church who recognises who he is and who she is.

Throughout human history then, the face of Christ is shown in the Church through the many symbols like the crucifix, the altar, stained glass and statues. Through the great sacrament of the liturgy with the very body and blood of Christ couched in Bible readings. Other details are brought in such as music, incense, candles, vestments and the like. At the sign of peace we who are made in God's image greet each other in *our* Christ-given identity; the neighbourly love of our identity in Christ. This identification with Christ is to be carried beyond the confines of our presence together at Mass into our daily life.

*"Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine,  
you did it to me".*

*Mary Gill OPL*

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*In case you were wondering...*

I am based in Adelaide (since Easter) at St Laurence's, Nth Adelaide.

Final publication formatting of The Star is done in Brisbane, where the mailing list is kept up to date, and correspondence recorded before being sent on to me. And the printing is done (cheaply) in Melbourne!

Christmas blessing to all, wherever you are in Australasia.

Fr Ben

## 1 CORINTHIANS - St Thomas' Divisions

### Chapter 4

*Having remonstrated with the Corinthians for boasting of their own baptizers, St Paul now takes them to task for looking down on (judging) other apostles (ministers)*

First he shows their fault 4:1-13

He rebukes them for their rashness in judging ill of those ministers 1-5

First, what should be kept firmly in mind concerning us as Christ's ministers 1

Ours is a mediating ministry for Christ whom we serve.

The office of Church leadership: for love of Christ,  
governing and feeding his sheep

Secondly they (Corinthians) should not rashly judge Christ's ministers 2-5

He shows what suffices in making a judgement upon ministers' faithfulness 2

He does not busy himself with this judgement, but leaves it to God 3-4

About judgement of him by others 3a

Does not presume to judge himself 3b

Shows to whom the judgement is reserved 4

Concludes his prohibition against rash judgement 5

Prohibits the anticipation of God's judgement 5a

Describes the perfection of the future judgement by God 5b

States its fruit which the good ones will announce 5c

He censures them for being puffed up and disparaging Christ's ministry 6-

States his intention 6

Gives a reason: stated 7a – excludes false thinking 7b

Dismisses with irony their pride in disparaging Christ's apostles 8

First, in a general way 8-9

Treats their extreme presumption as a joke 8

Scoffs at their baseless self-aggrandisement 8a

Scoffs at their claim in particular 8b

Derides them for belittling Christ's apostles: derision 9a - cause 9b

Next, his irony becomes more specific 10-13

Their own prowess, while the apostles are belittled

Intellect 10a

Power 10b

Cause of their contempt 11-13

Lack of temporal goods:

food & clothing – respect 11– assistance 12a

Harassment: verbal 12a – deeds 12b – cause 13a

Conclusion 13b

***The bishops also have been designated by the Holy Spirit to take the place of the apostles as pastors of souls and, together with the Supreme Pontiff...they are commissioned to perpetuate the work of Christ..***  
**Vatican II**

## **ON WIDOWERHOOD**

**Editor:** Widows, it would seem, receive a more ample press than widowers. After all there are more of them! Furthermore, at least until the modern epoch, the womanly role was much more that of home-maker and nurturer than bread-winner, helpmate and protector. Care of widows –bereft of dependable male companionship and support- thus looms large in both Testaments of the Bible. But what about care of *widowers*? Don't we need to attend to the other half of the God-given human equation? "So God created man in his own image...male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27,28).

It seems useful then, to explore a little the experiences of loss and adjustment on the part of husbands who no longer have the loving companionship of their helpmate. And what connections might we find here with regard to the Rosary? The whole prayer in all its richness expresses in various ways the relationship between male and female. Both the vocal prayers and the mysteries show this. In particular the second luminous mystery takes us explicitly into the celebration of the wedded bond of male and female. Eyes of faith, however, enable us to see beyond that earthly bond of the Cana bridegroom and bride to Christ the universal Bridegroom and Church his Bride. This becomes a key New Testament image to express the perfect, unending love of Jesus for humanity and the responding, returning graced love offered back to him. Christian life is a "marriage union". The nuptial character of Christian life becomes effective in a quite specific way in the bond of Christian marriage. It takes its place among the sacraments as one of the sacred seven. Like all of them it too is a sign and cause of grace. Spouses draw sustenance from the irrevocable bond between Bridegroom and Bride and reflect it in their own way throughout the trials and joys of their years together until death.

And so Denis, I beg leave to tiptoe sensitively over some aspects of your experience of widowerhood in the wake of your treasured wife Joan's death. You may find being interviewed on widowerhood for a Rosary Newsletter a little strange, even though I imagine you would have grown up with the Rosary in church and at home.

**Denis:** Thank you Fr Ben for introducing me to the Rosary Newsletter some years ago. My parents had a son born on the feast of the Holy Rosary, and from an early age my siblings and I were conditioned to the routine of the Rosary after the evening meal. Later, in my early teenage years I became aware that the same routine existed in most of the families who lived near us in our S.A. country town. I recall saying the Rosary after our evening meal, and then visiting the home of friends who would often be saying the Rosary when I arrived. It was not uncommon to say 5 decades at home followed by 3 or 4 decades at the house of a friend. The accumulation of "frequent flyer points" could never be associated with the routine of the evening rosary. Nevertheless such points could have proved useful a few years later, when our evening rosary had to

compete in prime time with the routines of 5 young children plus the advent of television, and I must admit that I failed the Rosary.

**Ed:** Father Patrick Peyton's Rosary catch-phrase, "The family that prays together stays together" was a good one. Even though your Rosary routine of earlier years could not be easily maintained, you stayed together as a close-knit family with the growing up towards independence of your five children. Joan's illness must have cast a shadow over your life. I suppose you had some warning, and I wonder whether you found ways to talk about it with each other.

**Denis:** Although Joan had been diagnosed with a serious illness at the age of 55, during the next 18 years she faced many health crises with consequent long periods of hospitalisation. The end never really became inevitable until two mini-strokes followed by a major one, with complete loss of consciousness for only the last 12 hours before death. She had been kept regularly informed, but there was never a lot of negative talk.

**Ed:** Would you like to say something about prayer at this time?

**Denis:** Yes, of course. Over a long period there were the formal aspects as, for example, when Joan was anointed by priests (Parish priests or hospital chaplains) on several appropriate occasions. In addition to Holy Communion services conducted by a Dominican Sister from the hospital chaplaincy team and Communion from parish Eucharistic ministers, there were the private daily prayers of family, our children and grandchildren, plus extended family and friends.

**Ed:** I suppose her illness was a many-sided challenge; Joan-and-yourself, yourself-and-family, Joan-and-family.

**Denis:** No doubt Joan faced the major challenges, such as uncertainty, pain-relief, daily injections, medication, and lack of mobility for most of her last 18 years. It was also a Joan-and-family challenge, plus excellent team support from Kerry her doctor, other medical specialists, the nursing staffs at several hospitals, plus the magnificent Royal District Nursing Service with its home visitation while Joan was not hospitalised.

**Ed:** What role did the wider family and friends play in her approaching death?

**Denis:** Extended family and friends provided active and prayerful support and visitation for many years, although her approaching death was not generally regarded as imminent until approximately the last 12 hours of her life.

**Ed:** What was the greatest help in it all?

**Denis:** People, the support of people, plus the realisation that Joan's life had not been hoarded for herself. It had been shared with others, and death had not been her failure to hold onto life, but the real purpose of life itself. In those circumstances we were able to

recognise her peaceful departure as a release from suffering, about which she had never complained.

**Ed:** Is there anything you would like to add about her death itself? About the requiem?

**Denis:** The children and I were present when she actually died. One son had to rely on air travel from Sydney and arrived 15 minutes after her death. Some friends, including Dr Kerry, were there too.

The Requiem Mass was celebrated by Frs. Ed and Rob whom we knew. One of our sons, our daughters and grandchildren were involved. Sister Janet's group provided the beautiful singing and music. The many kind and supportive people who attended were much appreciated.

**Ed:** Have your experiences of widowhood involved new challenges? Has there been a feeling of isolation, with the need to find new activities?

**Denis:** Initially there were some feelings of isolation after 47 years as a husband and a father of five children who are all now established elsewhere. From one in a team of seven I had become one in a family on my own. As your question implies, finding new activities was both urgent and important. It seems that there is never any shortage of work for volunteers. So within a couple of weeks I became involved with two volunteer organisations. One of them was "Meals on Wheels", which helps aged people to remain in their homes. I think I was inspired to join by a 93 year old grandmother of one of my son's friends. That elderly lady's family were considering ways to make life easier for her, such as receiving a hot meal each day, so they asked the question, "What about Meals-on-Wheels, Gran?" To which Gran responded, "Yes, I'll give them a hand". Obviously that elderly lady had thoughts only for giving; not receiving. Her words inspired me, and ever since two weeks after Joan's death I have been a volunteer deliverer for Meals-on-Wheels.

**Ed:** Do memories fade? Or do they come flooding back?

**Denis:** We were fortunate to be left with many happy memories, which seem not to fade and which keep flooding back. And that helps as, for example, with a family story when our children were young, and my clumsiness caused me to fall over a wheel-barrow. That story was recently told by one of our sons as follows: "When that happened mum laughed continuously, with tears in her eyes, for the next thirty minutes, and then she laughed intermittently for the next thirty years". And we all laughed again.

**Ed:** Would you say that your life is basically still the same with modifications, or is it quite different?

**Denis:** Life changes; it is never the same. When the children come home I expect they notice differences, for example the standard of catering from the kitchen has deteriorated.

**Ed:** Has becoming a widower given you a new or different appreciation of wifeliness and womanly roles?

**Denis:** Absolutely. I have a different appreciation, and not only in relation to domestic matters. Perhaps I should mention how one of my grandsons (Tom) recently made it abundantly clear that he had some doubts about my performing in “womanly roles”. A couple of months ago I met Tom and his dad (my son Steve) at Adelaide airport. Tom who is now three and a half years old had breakfasted in Sydney and it was then nearly lunch time in Adelaide, so I questioned him regarding what he might like me to make for his lunch. He agreed that I might make him a chicken sandwich, but apparently Tom rates mothers as his preferred makers of sandwiches. An interesting exchange of ideas followed.

Tom “Poppa, haven’t you got a mother?” (I realised that ‘mother’ was intended to include ‘wife’)

Me “No, Tom”

Tom “Why?”

Me “Your Nanna Joan has gone to heaven”

Tom “Is she going to stay there?”

Me “Yes, she will”

Tom “I haven’t seen your mother for a...(pause) for a while”

Me “No! But she knew you when you were a small baby and she loved you. She thought you were a beaut boy.”

Tom “That’s nice - now can you take me for a walk.”

I retreated quietly from that little encounter, none too confident about how I might handle more in-depth questions regarding life after death from some of my older grandchildren.

**Ed:** Having cared for Joan for so long –especially the last 10 years- has your bond with your children and grandchildren taken any new and interesting turns?

**Denis:** The bonds with my sons and daughters remain the same, but Joan would have strengthened the bonds between grandparents and our 11 grandchildren. For instance, I now have to rely on my daughters and daughter-in-law to shop for my birthday and Christmas gifts for our grandchildren. Joan would have ensured that our gift-giving would be personal and appropriate, without overloading our over-worked young mothers.

**Ed:** And practice of the Faith and prayer now: business as usual?

**Denis:** Yes, pretty much business as usual, although I admitted earlier to having failed the evening Rosary.

**Ed:** With the wisdom of hindsight, could you point to any pitfalls to be avoided, or things to be done differently?

**Denis:** It would be nice to have a second run at things which I should have done better. Many of the pitfalls in family life could be avoided, in my opinion, by good communication. A breakdown in communication is usually the cause of friction or the result of it. I first became a parent without any formal training, without even a “Pre-Cana” course for example, and I lacked parenting skills. Some knowledge of child psychology would have been helpful. I also lacked basic nursing skills. It was difficult but necessary for me to inject prescribed medication in emergency situations.

**Ed:** Has Joan’s death made a difference in your thinking about heaven? Or about any other areas of faith?

**Denis:** Well yes, recently when Pope Benedict announced a complete reversal of the Limbo theory in relation to deceased unbaptised infants, I was reminded of some of my perceptions in early years at a little one-teacher bush primary school with an overall total of 11 students. There in my childlike way, it seemed to me that if I considerably improved my behaviour, I might even have a slim chance of passing the “entrance exam of St Peter at the pearly gates”. I believed that my sister had an excellent chance, but the other nine kids (because none of them were baptised) had no chance, and I was sad for them. Now, after the recent Papal announcement, it occurs to me that there must have been millions of parents and grandparents down through the ages, who agonised over that Limbo theory. The risk of delaying baptism for a new baby was too great.

I thought of Joan’s own birth and baptism in the hospital of a small country town in western Victoria in 1931. She was small and delicate. The nearest priest was over an hour away, if he had a car. If he had a horse and buggy as many priests did in rural Australia in that era, it would have been three hours. So in 1931, the proprietor of that town’s butcher shop was summoned to the hospital and he baptised Joan. The risk of Limbo, through waiting for a priestly baptism on the next available Mass Sunday was far too great. People accepted what the Church said, but that Limbo theory was difficult to reconcile with the teaching of Jesus. It still hurts some grandparents who are unable to come to terms with their unbaptised children.

**Ed:** Thank you Denis for memorable thoughts and experiences. The meaning and importance of baptism is an area calling for widespread instruction in our time. I feel sure the Pope’s word on Limbo is not in any way intended to lessen the stress on the importance of infant baptism.

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***Today the Virgin gives birth to Him who is above all being, and the earth offers a cave to Him whom no man can approach. Angels with shepherds give glory, and Magi journey with a star. For unto us is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God.***

(Kontakion from Vespers of the Feast of the Nativity:  
Byzantine Rite)

## **A WHOLE BIBLE CATECHISM** (Continued)

From St Thomas' Summa Theologica

### **On Those having Faith** - II/II Question 5 (continued)

Article 4 Whether faith can be greater in one person than another?

Wherever there is the great and the little, there is also the greater and the less.  
Now in the matter of faith we find the great and the little (St Thomas). For Our Lord says to Peter:

*"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* (Mt. 14:31)

And to the Canaanite woman:

*"O woman, great is your faith!"* (Mt. 15:8)

Therefore faith can be greater in one person than in another (St Thomas)

### **On the Cause of Faith** - Question 6

Article 1 Whether faith is infused into us by God?

*"By grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves, that no one may glory, for it is the gift of God."* (Eph. 2:8)

Article 2 Whether unformed faith is God's gift?

A gloss on 1Cor. 13:2 (*"And if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing"*) runs, "faith that exists without charity is a gift of God".

Now this is unformed faith (St Thomas). Therefore unformed faith is a gift of God.

### **On the Effects of Faith** - Question 7

Article 1 Whether fear is an effect of faith?

*"The devils believe and tremble"* (Jas. 2:19)

Article 2 Whether purification of the heart is an effect of faith?

*"...but purifying their hearts by faith."* (Acts 15:9)

### **On the Gift of Understanding** - Question 8

Article 1 Whether Understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit?

*"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding"* (Is. 11:2)

Article 2 Whether the gift of Understanding is compatible with faith?

Gregory says that "the understanding of things heard enlightens the mind"

But anyone having faith is able to be enlightened in mind about things heard, as St Luke wrote:

*"Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures"* (Lk. 24:45)

Article 3 Whether the gift of Understanding is speculative only, or also practical?

*"A good understanding have all those who carry it out"* (Ps. 110 =111:10)

Article 4 Whether the gift of Understanding is present in all who have God's grace?

*"They have not known or understood, they walk in darkness"* (Ps. 81 =82:5)

But no one who is in a state of grace walks in darkness, according to St John:

*"He who follows me does not walk in darkness"* (Jn. 8:12).

Therefore no one having grace lacks the gift of Understanding (St Thomas).

Article 5 Whether the gift of Understanding is found also in those not having sanctifying grace?

“To hear the teaching of the Father and to learn from it is to come to me”  
(Jn. 6:45)

Now it is by understanding, as Gregory makes clear, that we learn and understand what we hear. Therefore whoever has the gift of Understanding comes to Christ, which cannot be without sanctifying grace. (St Thomas).

## **CHILDRENS CORNER**

*Back in 1848 Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander wrote the Christmas carol, "Once in Royal David's City". It was one of several pieces she wrote that were collected under the title, **Hymns for Little Children**. She was concerned that some of her godchi ildren were finding the catechism a touch dreary. She wrote this thoughtful dedication:*

*"To my little godsons I inscribe these simple lines, hoping that the language of verse, which children love, may help to impress on their minds what they are, what I have promised for them (at their baptism), and what they must seek to be."*

***Once in Royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed  
Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed  
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her only child***

***He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all  
And his shelter was a stable and his cradle was a stall;  
With the poor and mean and lowly lived on earth our Saviour lowly***

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