

CHILDREN'S CORNER

One of our missionaries who has worked for many years in the Solomon Is, was "down south" on holidays recently. He celebrated a home Mass for a family with an Aussie dad and a Solomon Is. mum and a family of five daughters. The girls range in age from baby to secondary school. At sermon time, thinking particularly of the daughter coming up to secondary school, he said: Jesus gave us the Church, and the Mass as his gift. We give the bread and wine at the Offertory as a symbol of ourselves and that bread and wine becomes Jesus himself and God in the Mass. And then he gives himself to us in Communion. Never forget that *that* is the essence of the Mass. If you don't like the sermon, or the singing is dumb-boy singing, that doesn't matter. Jesus is one with us and that is as cool as you can get.



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THE STAR

ROSARY NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Dear Rosarians,

It has been a hectic few months. Our Christmas Greeting Newsletter comes a little late, but I assure you it is no less warmly meant, even though delayed. May the Divine Infant of the Joyful Mysteries who "emptied himself to take the form of a servant" enrich every one of you mightily with his grace.

There was a line in the film "Bridge over the River Kwai" about being prepared for the unexpected. The unexpected happened in September when my Rosary promotion colleague of some twenty four years, Mrs Mary Gill of the Dominican Laity, suffered a substantial stroke. She is recovering steadily, although it is a slow journey. Her article for this issue was dictated to me from the nursing home where she was sent to recover after several weeks in hospital. Please pray that her recovery may continue, and that our joint work in Rosary research and preaching may continue its development. Right from our first major Mission in St Francis' church in Melbourne we called our work: *THE ROSARY AFRESH*. That mission in 1981 concentrated on the Joyful Mysteries and we gave it the subtitle, The New Creation. Our work has been marked by a much more wide-ranging use of the Bible in our study of the Mysteries than is usually found in devotional aids to the praying of the Rosary. While keeping abreast of the more important technical advances in today's Scripture studies, our main biblical focus has remained always theological.

Preaching and the salvation of souls was the purpose for which the Dominican Order was founded all those centuries ago. The Rosary remains even today one of the greatest graces in the pursuit of this hard and holy work.

Fr Benedict Hensley OP
Promoter of the Rosary Confraternity

BETHLEHEM - HOUSE OF BREAD

I was on my hospital bed and I found long periods of time for contemplation on the Rosary Mysteries.

On one of these occasions it was as if I were looking down a road between fields - a rural scene. At the end of the road was a stable at Bethlehem with the star shining brightly above it. Through the doors of the stable, I could see all the characters mentioned in the Scriptures. The angels present, Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds, the Wise Men, and, of course, the Infant Child Jesus in his swaddling bands, lying in the manger.

Outside were the Roman soldiers representing Caesar's authority for the calling of the census, through which Joseph had brought Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David. There was outside also the innkeeper who had denied them a place at the inn. There too there was Herod, also on the outside. The scribes mentioned as being consulted as to the place of the Messiah's birth were there, as were the innocent children martyred for Jesus. They were there with their mothers.

And so those within the walls of the stable were the ones chosen and called by God to be there in the stable and to be witnesses of his presence and life. And the others outside, like the innkeeper and Herod, are not left out; they had the choice, but chose against him. The Romans did not do any harm then; that lay in the future. As for the innocents, they are not left out but are called to the higher life of heaven with God and of course with Jesus himself. His love is not confined.

In Bethlehem we have all things representing God and his creation. That house of love is a place for all, rich and poor: lowly Shepherds from the fields and Wise Men with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Jesus himself is more lowly than any of them.

Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and the Wise Men are alert to God making himself known to them, and they are obedient to what he wants. And so Joseph is obedient to both the Law of Moses and overall to God. Therefore in the dream he does what is commanded immediately, just as he does in obeying the civil authorities over the census. This latter obedience is not bad but good. It is a proper ordering of government and community. Joseph shows protection of the home, hospitality and love.

Here at Bethlehem is the House of God on earth, a house built by God with the cooperation of these people, a house built for his name. What is his name? "Emmanuel", God-With-Us: here for us now in our contemplation, our liturgy, and in our life -in the works of charity and mercy towards those who are homeless. In Bethlehem we will find the love, joy and peace which is God's gift to us - the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

A MEDITATION ON THE THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY

O Come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Mary and Joseph have to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census required by Caesar. There, in a stable, the birth of Jesus occurs. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. An angel announces the fact to shepherds keeping watch, who come to see their Saviour, and a star guides wise men from the east to the newborn King of the Jews...

The secular ruler of the great empire does a stocktake of his human resources. Cities were an important part of that process. Each person in the empire had a city to which they belonged. Caesar's exercise of secular authority therefore becomes the way in which the ancient Jewish prophecy is fulfilled. Because Joseph belongs to the House of David he has to obey the emperor and travel to Bethlehem, David's city. Mary and Joseph have each received and obeyed a separate heavenly revelation of her heavenly conception of the Saviour. They do not see themselves thereby exempted from obedience to the legitimate exercise of secular authority. The High King of heaven governs -in his way- even a secular authority that may be quite oblivious to Him. Life has certainly become interesting for the holy couple, governed both by angelic light and imperial decree.

When they arrive at Bethlehem they are told that there is no room at the inn and so they have to search for somewhere else to lodge. They find a temporary home in a stable or cave used for animals. It is here that Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race is born. Already there is a sense of what is to come: there will be no universal, spontaneous welcome for the Messiah.

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not." (John 1: 10)

Animals and angels are part of the world that was made through him and they are present at his birth. It is the *human* world of the city of David that is the problem. "Jesus Christ the Son of David, son of Abraham"... could find no home at the city of David. "He came to his own home and his own people received him not", writes St John. But his angels did receive him, as the Jesuit martyr poet St Robert Southwell wrote,

*"Come to your heaven, you heavenly choirs!
Earth hath the heaven of your desires;
Remove your dwelling to your God,
A stall is now his best abode;
Since men their homage do deny,
Come, angels all their fault supply".*

It was an angel of the Lord who revealed their Saviour's birth to shepherds tending their flocks by night in the fields. This wondrous revelation was followed almost immediately by heavenly anthems of praise and peace: *Glory to God and peace to humanity.*

(Enter St Matthew....He will provide new vistas of contemplation of this mystery.)

St Matthew's Gospel begins, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham." It lists in all forty two generations, ending with, "and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born." This was to show how Christ entered into the world as human in a **general** way, at the end of a succession of "Fathers" or generators spanning the life and history of the Chosen People. In the Old Testament style the generations are presented through male generators, although four of the mothers are also mentioned, not counting Our Lady. Apart from Christ, every one of those generations required male and female –under God- for the transmission of human life, beginning with Abraham and Sarah. The list highlights the community of Israel as Jesus' people, with Abraham as the founding father. He had faith in God's creative power to supersede the limits of nature both in himself and in Sarah because of their ages.

"He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead, because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb." (Rm. 4:19)

This gives the genealogy an altogether special foundation. Faith such as that shown by Abraham is the key to the ups and downs of Israel's tumultuous history and its less than exemplary behaviour. The promise made to David needed faith like Abraham's when Jerusalem was ravaged and the Chosen People sent into exile in Babylon. (Mt. 1:6,11)

If Abraham's fathering of Isaac gives a special witness to God's creative power at the beginning of the genealogy, its conclusion with "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born," is still far more wonderful. It exceeds by far any previous display of God's loving creative power, or of human faith. The Father generating the Son in the womb of the Virgin is not named in the list, for Jesus is not male-generated. And the Father's Son is not born to continue the generation of offspring like his forbears, but to be the Prince of Life.

The old order ceases and the new order of grace begins. The "time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Here is the New Creation. Christ is the "New Adam" and Mary is the "New Eve" and mother of all the living, in the order of grace.

Theology finds an intriguing analogy here. Just as there is divine procession within God, so too there is procession into creaturely time and history "outside" God. As the Only- Begotten of the Father, the Son *proceeds* by generation in a manner that is timeless, bodyless, and independent of the universe of creation. The wonder of this divine procession exceeds the reach of human thought and human words. St Matthew's genealogy shows that with regard to the Christ born of Mary on the other hand, there is also a procession, but one that is human, physical and ordered in succession through the passage of time with names named and histories recorded in the Old Testament.

Christ's Entry in Particular

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way" (Mt. 1:18)

The Evangelist attends now to the mystery of Christ's generation in particular, going back to the time of Mary's betrothal to Joseph, before they became husband and wife. (Remember, this is a meditation on the Rosary Mystery of the Nativity with some extra considerations from St Matthew's gospel, as divided by St Thomas in his commentary).

The conception has already occurred. At the Annunciation (in St Luke) too, Mary was already betrothed to Joseph but not yet his wife. "I have no husband", she tells the Angel. So here in St Matthew, it is through St Joseph that the matrimonial bond is brought into question. New life is found in Mary, and Joseph is not the father. The issue to be resolved concerning Joseph's marriage to Mary will itself lead to the revelation of the immense truth of Jesus' generation. It will prove that the generation and birth of Jesus -his entry into the world- is a divine act and achievement infinitely beyond anything in the generations listed in the Evangelist's genealogy of Jesus' forbears.

In St Luke, the Archangel Gabriel had promised Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you". But here the conception has occurred; the Saviour is already entering "his own home" (Jn 1:11). The Angel reveals to Joseph both the fact of the Incarnation and the divine fatherhood behind the fact: "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus". This echoes the message given to Mary at the Annunciation, but for Joseph the Angel has added significantly, "*for he will save his people from their sins.*" The procession of Fathers (and Mothers) that ushers in the human entry of the Saviour is a procession of sinners as well as saints, and is meant to bring home to us that the immense joy of the advent of the Christchild is the joy of reconciliation from sin. Scripture had already revealed such a conception and birth to come, in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, a name which means, God with us".

The angelic revelation in Joseph's dream and the prophetic revelation centuries before in Isaiah culminate in Joseph's faith as he consciously acts in obedience to God's angel and God's prophet. He took Mary home as his wife, and when she had borne her son, he named him Jesus.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

The Magi

The Manifestation of Christ's birth also belongs to this third Joyful Mystery. Our Lord's wondrous entry into the human history -by generation- is important, and we have been meditating especially on the way it was revealed to Joseph as husband of Mary. St. Matthew's gospel (thanks to St Thomas) helps us to contemplate aspects of this mystery in the light of the generations of the "Fathers". Joseph too must be included as one of the "Fathers", but not a "generator"; that dignity is reserved to "the Most High" in the case of Jesus. Joseph's fatherhood will feature the loving, caring, protection of and provision for Mother and Child.

In the development from the initial revelations of His generation to Joseph and Mary, to the wider manifestation of the Saviour's birth, Joseph will have a vital role. The Messiah's presence must be made known, widely, and in its origin. All is not sweetness and light. Or rather, hard things are deemed necessary in God's providence in order to bring home the enormity of what occurs in the achievement of human salvation. "He came to his own and his own received him not", says St John.

In God's providence the Saviour's actual birth was to be announced to the people of Jerusalem neither by angel nor by secular or religious leadership, but by gentile Magi from the East, through the agency of Herod. The momentous event anticipated throughout the long and tumultuous history of Israel was made known to the holy city by a question from men of a foreign culture: they had seen his special star in the East.

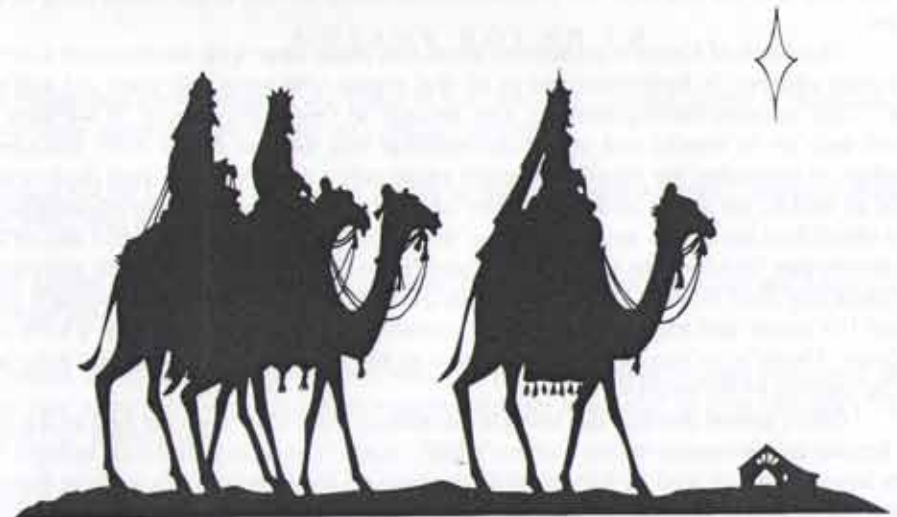
The Magi from the Gentile East, although not Israelites, although without that sonship or glory or the covenants or the giving of the Law or the worship or the promises or the patriarchs or the race of Christ according to the flesh (Rm. 9: 4-5) are included among "those who received him" (Jn. 1:12). The Lord of sea and sky and of all nature includes them through his special star. They too belong to "the world that was made through him" (Jn.1:10). And they "their homage do (not) deny" as they bring their hearts and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant King of the Jews.

They arrive at the Temple city of the Chosen People with a question: "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?" The information behind the question disturbed not only Herod the king but all the citizens of Jerusalem. The question of the Wise Men thus became a question for Herod.

The knowledge given to the men of the East was joyous knowledge, drawing them ever closer through the nights of their journey in search of Him who was to receive the throne of his father David. That same knowledge became for Herod a threat. But not knowing precisely where the infant king was to be born, their knowledge was incomplete, and could only be completed by experts in the revealed word of the Scriptures. The question the Wise Men raised had become as urgent for Herod as it was for them. Herod knew whom to ask, summoning the chief priests and the scribes. They it was, who found the answer: **Bethlehem!**

We see a little into the mystery of the Lord's providence. He provides a special star revealing to wise Gentiles the fact of Christ's birth among his Jewish people, without disclosing the infant king's whereabouts. The wise Gentiles consult the non-believing secular ruler of the Jewish capital city to find this out. He now eagerly joins their quest, (but with the opposite motive). This ruler knows to consult the Jewish authorities learned in the revelation of Scripture. Their answer is true and enables the wise men to complete their noble quest. They find the right road. Herod's quest, on the other hand, would be completed, he thought, with the help of the wise men returning with specific information as to the Saviour's whereabouts. Such dreadful danger is well foreseen and forestalled from above.

Homage was the motivation of the wise men, whereas the destruction of Jesus' newborn life was Herod's aim. We see the interaction of good and evil in God's providence. Just as Herod helped the good wise men in their good motive while having an evil motive himself, the further pursuit of this evil motive, when frustrated by others, will play its part in manifesting for ever the truth of the Infant King's birth in Bethlehem.





The Holy Innocents

The wise men did not know the heart of Herod as God knew it. They therefore had to be warned by God providentially in a dream to have nothing further to do with Herod who had asked them to report back to him.

Joseph too, had to be providentially warned, on account of the murderous intent of Herod, to escape with Mother and Child to Egypt. He obeyed, as did the wise men, and in that way they all shared in the providence that saved the life of the infant King of the Jews.

The depth of Herod's destructive intent was made clear with the decree to kill "all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old and under." That never-to-be-forgotten act also belongs to God's providence. If we were to dwell only on its cruelty and on the inconsolable loss suffered by the Holy Innocents' mothers in particular, our meditation might cause only a great sadness. That there is sadness as well as joy in the Joyful mysteries cannot be denied, but here our contemplation can also lift us again into an awareness of the magnitude of human salvation and of the divine-human Saviour. The darkness of Herod's conviction that it was worth sacrificing all those tiny lives in order to destroy the life of the infant King of the Jews actually confirms His power and majesty. The Holy Innocents actually witness to Christ's birth and infancy. Theirs is an inextinguishable witness to the birth of the Messiah as a baby and to the majesty of his infancy.

God's joyous guiding star brought the mature Wise Men from the East to the crib as heralds and witnesses to the Saviour's birth. Herod's merciless jealousy brought the tiny boys to heaven also as heralds and witnesses of the Christ-child's birth in Bethlehem. The men paid homage in heart and body and gifts; the boys paid homage with their lives.

The Rosary

The wise men together with the shepherds and Mary and Joseph contemplate the Saviour's face as it is first revealed in the crib. The Holy Innocents contemplate his face in heaven. Encouraged by our Holy Father Pope John Paul II, we contemplate his face with our beads and adore him in our liturgy.

Fr Benedict Hensley OP



A SUGGESTION

ROSARY ROUND UP

This suggestion comes from an old friend in S.A. who has traveled widely in Australia and found some interesting out-of-the-way country churches.

Devotion to Our Lady and the Rosary is very strong all around Australia, Aotearoa-New Zealand, PNG, and the Solomon Islands.

Small groups, families, communities and individuals meet regularly to say the Rosary and/or celebrate special feast days.

We would like to hear from our readers how they participate in the Rosary devotions. Why not share your experience with other Rosarians through our newsletter or even through a "Rosary Round Up" publication.

Please write to- Dominican Rosary Centre
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THE SUMMA THEOLOGICA OF ST THOMAS AS A BIBLE-ONLY CATECHISM
(Continuing Part I of the Second Part)

ABOUT PASSIONS & ACTS COMMON TO HUMAN & ANIMALS

Concerning the Effects of Pain or Sadness - Question 37

- Article 4 Whether sadness harms the body more than the other passions?
"A joyful mind makes age flourishing: a sorrowful spirit dries up the bones" (Prov. 17:22)
"As a moth does to a garment and a worm to the wood, so the sadness of a man consumes the heart" (Prov. 25:20)

Concerning the Goodness and Evil of Sadness or Pain - Question 39

- Article 1 Whether all sadness is evil?
"They are glad when they have done evil" (Prov. 2:14)
[St Thomas uses this text as a reverse guide: gladness about evil is evil, therefore sadness about evil is good. - Ed.]
- Article 2 Whether sadness can be a genuine good?
"Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Mt. 5:5)
- Article 3 Whether sadness can be a useful good?
"The heart of the wise is where there is mourning; and the heart of fools where there is mirth" (Eccles. 7:5)

Concerning the Irascible Passions, and first, on Hope and Despair - Question 40

- Article 8 Whether hope is a help or a hindrance to action?
"He who ploughs should plough in hope...to receive fruit" (1Cor. 9:10)

TREATISE ON HABITS IN GENERAL

On the Cause of Habits, as to their Formation - Question 51

- Article 4 Whether any habits are infused in man by God?
"God filled him with a spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Eccles. 15:5)

Concerning the Increase of Habits - Question 52

- Article 1 Whether habits increase?
"Lord, increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5)

ON HABITS SPECIFICALLY: VIRTUES

Concerning the Intellectual Virtues - Question 57

- Article 5 Whether prudence is a virtue necessary to man?
"She (wisdom) teaches temperance and prudence and justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life" (Wis. 8:7)

Concerning Moral Virtue in Relation to the Passions - Question 59

- Article 3 Whether sadness is compatible with moral virtue?
"My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Mt. 26:38)

Concerning the Theological Virtues - Question 61

- Article 1 Whether there are any theological virtues?
"You that fear the Lord believe Him...hope in Him...love Him" (Ecclus. 2:8)
- Article 3 Whether faith, hope and charity are fittingly reckoned as theological virtues?
"Now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three" (1Cor. 13:3)
- Article 4 Whether faith precedes hope and hope charity?
"Now there remain faith, hope, charity" (1Cor. 13:3)

Concerning the Cause of Virtues - Question 63

- Article 3 Whether any moral virtues are in us by infusion?
"She teaches temperance and prudence and justice and fortitude"
(Wis. 8:7)

Concerning the Mean of Virtue - Question 64

- Article 4 Whether the theological virtues observe the mean?
"Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can: for He is above all praise" (Ecclus. 43:33)

Concerning the Connection of Virtues - Question 65

- Article 2 Whether the moral virtues can be without charity?
"He that loves not abides in death" (1Jn. 3:14)

THEOTOKOS

"When the time had fully come, God sent forth his son, born of woman". (Gal. 4:4)...Thus the "fullness of time" manifests the extraordinary dignity of the "woman". On the one hand, this dignity consists in the supernatural elevation to union with God in Jesus Christ, which determines the ultimate finality of the existence of every person both on earth and in eternity. From this point of view, the "woman" is the representative and archetype of the whole human race: she represents the humanity which belongs to all human beings, both men and women. On the other hand, however, the event at Nazareth highlights a form of union with the living God which can only belong to the "woman", Mary: the union between mother and son. The Virgin of Nazareth truly becomes the Mother of God.

Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 4)