

AUSVANGELIST

NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE

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From the Director



Matthew's gospel tells us that the star that rose in the sky drew the wise men from the east to the place where Jesus lay. "Where is the infant king of the Jews?" they asked. "We saw

his star as it rose and have come to do him homage." (Mt 2:2)

The importance of Christian signs that draws our attention to Christmas are all but lacking in our modern secular world. But there is hope...

The Knights of the Southern Cross, long time supporters of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, have an annual campaign to "Keep Christ in Christmas". This led Greg Briscoe-Hough of the Archdiocese of Sydney branch to approach a local printer to see if Nativity-themed Advent calendars could be produced. Two years on these are now available, and are being promoted for Christian families wanting to prepare faithfully for the lead up to Christmas and as a useful resource for scripture students at local public schools. For more information see *The Catholic Weekly* (6 November 2011) or contact the Knights on festival@ksc.asn.au.

Our Inspiration this edition addresses the question of where the Nativity comes from. St Francis of Assisi introduced it as a way of communicating the true meaning of Christmas. More information is overleaf.

In 2005 Cardinal Pell commissioned a large Nativity to be constructed for the forecourt in front of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, saying at the time of its launch "I would invite all people of good will to come and spend some time reflecting on the central role of Jesus in Christmas, to take time out from Christmas parties, end of school activities and present buying to prepare their hearts for Christmas and the coming again of the Son of God as man."

There are many people who do take time out of their celebrations to attend Mass. They are often dubbed "Christmas and Easter

Catholics." Parishes might choose to see these major feasts as an opportunity to evangelise and reach out to people...

For parishes considering an outreach over Christmas to those within their parish boundaries, the Catholic Enquiry Centre provides a template of a Christmas brochure which can be used without charge. Local Mass times, contact details and a message from the Parish Priest can be inserted. The size is A4 double sided 3 fold.

The Brochure can be viewed and downloaded from <http://www.catholicenquiry.com/products/> then scroll down to the heading "Christmas - Celebrating the Birth of Jesus Christ."

We wish each one of you, donors and supporters of the Catholic Enquiry Centre and all our readers, a happy and holy Christmas. May the Christ-child bring you great comfort and joy as you ponder his Incarnation. This Christmas let us also pray for those who do not yet know Jesus Christ, and those whose circumstances make it difficult to find joy in this season.

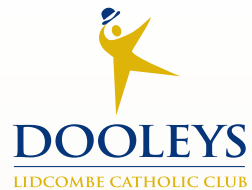
Marita Winters
Director
Catholic Enquiry Centre



Catholic Enquiry Centre

Reaching out in faith
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



YOUR WILL

The Catholic Enquiry Centre has received some significant bequests in its fifty-three year history, enabling us to support non-Catholics in a number of ways, including a 1300 number so enquirers can telephone from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call, offering a variety of publications and information resources introducing the Catholic faith, and an attractive and informative website.

After meeting all ordinary obligations in your Will, you may consider a bequest supporting the Catholic evangelisation of our nation. The Catholic Enquiry Centre can supply a form of words for such an intention to your legal advisors.

CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE

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Projects Desk



A woman reported a conversation she overheard.

The sign read:
PUT CHRIST
INTO CHRISTMAS
THISYEAR.

A young man glanced at it momentarily then, turned to his friend and said:

“Hmm! Now the Church is trying to poke her nose into Christmas.”

Recently I was searching the internet for some images for a Christmas brochure. Typing the word ‘Christmas’ into Google images I was overwhelmed with Santas, pixies, trees, presents, holly and snow. Not one nativity

scene, no shepherds, no magi on camels journeying to pay homage.

It is sad, but it may be true that Christ and the Church has all but been erased from what is now called the festive season.

Pope Benedict XVI is asking all Catholics to be engaged in re evangelising our world. Christmas provides an opportunity for all to participate in this task.

The image of a vulnerable baby born in stable at the back of an overcrowded inn is one we should treasure. Cared for by Mary and protected by Joseph, the image of baby Jesus reminds us that the precious Christian message needs to be nurtured and protected from those who want to crowd it out with other messages and other stories.

This year as we write our Christmas cards and remember those who perhaps we only see occasionally let us encourage each other and all members of Christ’s body, the Church, to poke our nose into Christmas and reclaim it as a Christian feast.

Thank you for all of your support throughout this year, both in prayer and donations. It is only through your generosity that we can continue to send out books free of charge to those who enquire about our precious faith.

Have a very happy and Christ filled Christmas.

John Francis Collins
Catholic Enquiry Centre

Resources

FOR PARISHES

Making non-Catholics feel welcome at Christmas. Persons who are not Catholic, as well as persons who are not regular participants in the life of the Church, will find themselves visiting parishes for Christmas Masses. How might they be made to feel welcome this Christmas?

- Invite people to introduce themselves to those around them at the beginning of Mass, and in particular to meet someone new.
- Explain that this year parishes are using a new translation of the Roman Missal, that the responses are different to past years and how visitors will be helped to use the right responses at the right times.
- Promote at the collection time the services both in the parishes and across the wider Church that are supported by monies raised.
- Encourage all people to find support and comfort in the child Jesus whose birth is the reason for Christmas.

FOR SCHOOLS

Ever tried Googling ‘Catholic faith’? One of the first Australian entries to come up is the Catholic Enquiry Centre. We can help answer your personal questions about the Catholic faith, as well as direct your research for school assignments into matters about the faith.

Bookmark www.catholicenquiry.com and visit us often.

For young people wanting to strengthen their faith in God, consider ordering a copy of *Call and Response* via our website, www.catholicenquiry.com or call 1300 4 FAITH (1300 432 484).

FOR OUR SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

After a bumper 2010, thanks in large part to the “MacKillop effect”, we have received enquiries from more than 450 people to 3 November 2011. This shows there is still a significant interest in the Catholic faith. We thank you, our donors and supporters, for your ongoing support of the important work of the Catholic Enquiry Centre. Your donation helps to provide a copy of *Call and Response: An Introduction to the Catholic Faith* for someone who has indicated that they want to know more about Jesus Christ and his Church. We pray that this many more hearts and minds will be converted in our time.

Inspiration

Where does the Nativity scene come from?

The first live reproduction of the outdoor Christmas nativity was made by St. Francis of Assisi for the event he staged in Greccio, Italy, in 1223. It was a way of communicating the true meaning of Christmas. The idea proved so popular that it soon spread throughout the Christian world.

The story of the nativity comes from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Luke’s account describes the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where they must go to be counted in the census ordered by Caesar Augustus. Unable to find any room at the inn, they

take refuge in a stable used to shelter animals. Here Jesus is born and laid in a manger filled with hay. In the hills overlooking Bethlehem an angel tells the shepherds of Jesus’ birth. Matthew’s account tells of a brilliant star that appears, marking the birthplace of Jesus, and of the three kings that follow its light to find the Christ child.

The traditional grouping of wise men and farm folk is symbolic of the universal nature of Christianity and emphasises God’s desire to embrace all people. The shepherds carry the richness of the Earth’s harvest, and the first to arrive carries a dove, the symbol of peace. The angel, in bringing the message of the birth to the shepherds, is symbolic of the way God reaches out to all mankind with a message of peace. The wise men are traditionally kings with

gifts of riches who symbolise how wealth and wisdom come to kneel before a greater King. Baby Jesus in a humble crib is at the very centre.

Since the time of St Francis, the practice has spread around the world in pageants, church reproductions, neighbourhood rituals, professionally staged plays where huge casts including live animals are utilized, and of course the school plays where sometimes the imaginative interpretation of the script provides highly original versions of the events.

(This question appears on the Catholic Enquiry Centre website under FAQ’s. Some of this information was provided by artist Tony Johansen who painted the backdrop to the Nativity Scene at St Mary’s Cathedral Sydney – visit www.christmas.blogs.com).

Orders

BOOKS

| | PRICE (\$) |
|---|-------------------|
| Response to Call and Response: An Introduction to the Catholic Faith | 16.50 |
| Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church | 17.95 |
| Divorce in the Catholic Church FAQ's (No GST) | 2.00 |
| "Food for Life" Catholic Mission Cook Book | 25.00 |
| Marriage in the Catholic Church FAQ's (No GST) | 2.00 |

MULTIMEDIA

| | |
|---|-------|
| Amazing Gift <i>Featuring Fr Stan Fortuna CFR</i> (DVD) | 99.00 |
| Christ Bearers - Understanding Baptism (DVD) | 32.95 |
| Pope Benedict's Encyclical - God Is Love <i>Deus Caritas Est</i> (CD) | 24.20 |
| The Mass - Images of Catholic Life (CD) | 32.95 |
| Hearing God's Call An Audio Introduction to the Catholic Faith 1 - 4 disk set with 30 sessions of 10 minute duration (CD) | 44.00 |

PAMPHLETS

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| About the Catholic Faith | 0.25 ea |
| How to Pray the Rosary | 0.45 ea |
| The Sacrament of Baptism | 0.25 ea |
| The Sacrament of Marriage | 0.25 ea |
| Understanding the Mass | 0.45 ea |

To place your order, call 1300 4 FAITH (1300 432 484) or visit www.catholicenquiry.com to download an order form.

Cover image: Angel from St Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne Christmas Crib.
Carved in limewood, Austrian Tyrol, about 1930.
Photograph by Ramesh Weereratne

Your Support

Your generosity is helping to make Jesus Christ better known and loved by the people of our nation. Our work, in all its dimension, is directly dependent upon the financial support we receive. Thank you for your generosity. May you be blessed.

TO AID THE CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE IN ITS MISSION IN AUSTRALIA

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POST THIS COUPON TO: Catholic Enquiry Centre
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NSW 1585 Australia



Catholic Enquiry Centre

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Australian Catholic Bishops Conference