

The Saint Raphael Link

Some Periodic Ramblings of the Prior

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Dear Members,
“Those Who Walk in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light.”

Can you recall times when you have “walked in darkness”? What was it like? What helped you to keep going? Was there a turning point, when darkness turned to light?

The words from the prophet Isaiah tell of the coming Prince of Peace, and of the light and life He would bring. Christians celebrate Christmas because the light did dawn. This is the very essence of Christmas: The birth of the Saviour.

In one sense, darkness points to the simple fact of human ignorance. Those who are “in the dark” are those who lack knowledge. In a second sense, darkness refers to evil and wilful blindness. This points beyond the mere fact of simple ignorance. In this sense, darkness refers to the fact that many will reject the light.

This is hard to believe— the Son of God took on human flesh and came to live among sinful humanity, but the vast majority did not recognize Him for who He was.

Christ’s birth is the central event of human history—the dividing line between the age of darkness and the age of light. This is reason enough to celebrate Christmas, for our response to this gift of light must be a celebration, thanksgiving, and rejoicing.

Once a man went to see his Doctor and said: Doctor, I get a blinding pain in my eye whenever I drink coffee - what can the problem be?" The doctor said to him, "Take the spoon out of the mug when you've finished stirring!"

The Son of God is the light of the world, but He always works through His own to tell others of that Light. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, we should be reflecting the Light of the Son of God.

Unfortunately, darkness is filling our land like a cancer eating away on a sick body and some Christians are not growing towards the light due to simple spiritual laziness.

A simpleton once bought a lottery ticket worth £1. Lady luck must have been shining on him because he won the 10 million jackpot! Graciously, he presented his winning ticket to the lottery office and in his best English uttered his request “Me come for me money”. After reviewing and checking the ticket with his manager, the clerk returned and requested how he would like his payments. The man replied, "Me want all my money now." "Unfortunately, Sir" the nervous clerk responded, "The procedures are that we can only give you one million now and the balance equally over the next 20 years". Furious and agitated, the simpleton asked for the manager, who reiterated "Sir, my assistant is correct, it is the

regulation of the corporation that we initially pay you one million now with the balance paid to you equally over the next 20 years". Outraged, he slammed his hand on the desk and shouted in anger, "Gimme my money now or me wants a refund for the ticket!".

A perfect example of ignorance, or if you like - darkness.

So, perhaps this Christmas, we should all reflect on the words from the Prophet Isaiah when he said: "Those who walk in darkness, have seen a great light".

Unfortunately, we live in a country where there is more darkness than light. More ignorance of God, than knowledge of Him and, more apathy than religious fervour.

Unless Christians begin to take their faith seriously our skylines will be filled with Minarets, without a trace whatsoever of spires and church towers!

Keep Christ in Christmas for if Christ has no place in our lives, we are in the darkness. Amen.

++Geoffrey – GRAND PRIOR



PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Beryl Anderton / Paul Shaw / Sheila Hogarth / Ruth Barr / Kathleen Roberts / Lesley Fudge / Thelma Thompson / Marlene

Addy / Tania Walker / Lidia Flemming / Paul Sheridan / Roy Howard / Albert Jones / Charlotte Park / Nicole Vendettuoli / Ivor MacFarlane / Shaun Humphries / Lucy Riding / Veronica Hawcroft / Amelia Radomski / Mary Flannigan / John & Mary Howard / Ida Simpson / Clarice Shaw / Tony Kirby / Sally Hayes / Nick Brooks / Bishop Gerard & Pam Crane / Ruth Moody & family / Brigitte Duffett / Archbishop Norman & Dorothy Dutton / Keith & Joan Warren / Eileen Duffy / John Langham / Marjorie Hooley / Harry Shaw / Derrick Hawkins / Doreen Morgan / Ian Weatherall / Lilian King / Benedicta Bocaoco / Magdi Abdel Sayed / Luish Sao / Rodrigo Miranda / Anne Stephen / William (Bill) Collier / Geoff

Lamb / Bev & Barrie Chester / Roy Taylor / Chris McKenna / Barbara Lee / Hazel Smith / Dave Johnson / Johnny & Pat Williamson / Betty Edgecombe / Margaret Waterhouse / Richard Bentley / Brian Warner / Mukhtar Begum / Bob Lee / Lesley & Mick / Sandra Mass – (wife of +Klaus) / Alice Beer / John Acaster / David Howe / Mary Ayrton / Alison Marshall / Patrick McConnell / Janet Illingworth / Alex Hamilton / Joan Crawford.

GUESS THE LOCATIONS

1. Lancaster Castle
2. Hastings Pier



THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS



It's that time of year again. December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the

living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For many people, Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmastime when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before.

The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

Luke 2:4-19 says: "So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (NIV)

Why did He come? Why did God send His son to this sometimes cruel and hard world? He sent Jesus to us so that one day, He would grow up to become a very important part of history. His story (history) is one of truth, love, and hope. It brought salvation to all of us. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We are all born with a sin nature. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have that removed. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can know that heaven is a place where we can go to when this life is over.

"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."
1 John 1:9 (NLT)

We can truly be happy at Christmas! No matter what may be happening, we can

know that we are His children. We then become sons and daughters of God. Heaven will be our home one day.

Look at Christmas in a new way this year. This is the year to invite Jesus into your heart. You will then have a "Merry Christmas." The joy and peace you will receive will last all year as you look to God for all your needs to be met.

**Jesus Is The Reason For The Season!
Rejoice!**



GUESS THE LOCATIONS:



THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

The word epiphany comes from a Greek word *epiphainein*, which means "reveal." There are three meanings or usages of the word. The first is the name of a Christian feast, Epiphany, which occurs in early January. The exact day depends upon the location and the culture of the church celebrating Epiphany, but most of the time, it occurs on January 6th, which is also referred to as Twelfth Night. The Epiphany feast celebrates the revelation of God Incarnate and the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus.



When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.



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& Chivalric Order of
St Raphael

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