

# The Saint Raphael Link

Some Periodic Ramblings of the Prior

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*Dear Friends,*

Some people claim that the Birth of Jesus just happened at an opportune moment in history rather than the time that God chose. The Roman Empire, they would say, had brought peace and stability to the world, so giving an opportunity for people to travel more widely than before. It would follow that, as this had not only encouraged the intermingling of cultures, it had also created openness in the minds of many people to new ideas in which the Christian Gospel could then quickly spread.

We may think that to be a beguiling argument, but it doesn't really work; for there are numerous other times in history for which an equally strong case could be made. Just think for example, of the impact which our modern day technology could make if Jesus had come today. So instead of preaching to comparatively small crowds on barren hillsides, he could have relayed his message by satellite to all the nations of the world in seconds.

Yet despite twenty-first century advantages in communication, God didn't choose it to be the era for the label '*in the fullness of time*'. No, he chose that day in the reign of the Emperor of Augustus when Mary and Joseph had gone to Bethlehem to be taxed. Of course we do not know the working of God's mind and therefore cannot say why this was.

Perhaps somewhere in all this there is a lesson for each one of us concerning not just the Birth of Christ, but for the whole of our earthly lives. Sometimes we may wonder why our prayers are not answered as quickly as we

would like. Equally, we may find that we have to make some very difficult decisions at times when we least expect it; on other occasions, our domestic or financial situations are placed under severe strain or threat without any warning. Whatever the particular problems are which we may have to face, as Christians we are called to be faithful and put our trust in God. Very often we can feel very alone and vulnerable to the point when it seems as though we are wandering through a barren wilderness with no one there who cares or is willing to help.

We'll take heart, for God is very near to each one of us and wants us to involve Him in whatever might be happening in our individual lives. So as we move towards Christmas, let us not forget those four Advent themes of 'Hope', 'Peace', 'Joy' and 'Love'. Who knows, they may even remind us that God's timetable and ours are not always the same, but nonetheless, He will never forsake us.

So despite the trials and tribulations which we often have to endure in this life; if we persevere, trust God and are prepared to put His timings first, we may even re-discover the real meaning of our lives. Then, when we do eventually come to Christmas and gaze on the face of the Christ-child, we should experience something of the eagerness of the shepherds, the joy of the angels, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the Peace which He came to bring to our world.

With every good wishes for a Holy and Blessed Christmas.

*+ Geoffrey*



The Annual Investiture of the Order takes place on  
Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at the

Masonic Centre Elindon Peterborough.

Full details available from:

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## Christmas is a Time for Sharing

by Barbara Laughlin



Old stories passed down through the years  
"what grandpa did one Christmas eve"  
Had you laughing through your tears

Christmas is a time - for caring  
About your family, neighbours and friends  
Lending a hand to others in need  
before the season ends

Christmas is a time - for giving  
Presents that came from your heart  
Watching the children, hearing their laughter  
As the packages are torn apart

Christmas is a time - for peace  
When soldiers lay aside their guns  
And raise a glass to peace and good will  
To every father and every son

Christmas is a time - for remembering  
Family not with us on Christmas morn  
And why people everywhere celebrate  
The night our saviour was born



### Cook's Corner:

#### CHRISTMAS TRIFLE

##### Ingredients:

6-8 sponge cakes /  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 pint of vanilla custard sauce / a handful of ratafias (liqueur or cordial flavoured with lemon peel) / 6 macaroon biscuits (crumbled) / seedless raspberry jam / apricot jam / glace cherries and angelica / sherry / cream / vanilla essence.

##### Method:

Slit the sponges lengthwise, then sandwich together again with seedless raspberry jam. Cut into four crosswise and spread the cut sides with apricot jam. Pack into a fruit salad bowl. Sprinkle with enough medium sherry to moisten and stand for thirty minutes to let it all be absorbed. Then cover with the custard sauce. Sprinkle ratafias and crumbled macaroon biscuits over the custard. Chill. Top with whipped cream sweetened with vanilla sugar and flavoured lightly with vanilla essence. Pile the cream on and then fluff it over the custard with the spoon. Decorate with glace cherries and angelica.

## Bells Across the Snow

Francis Ridley Havergal



O Christmas, merry Christmas!  
Is it really come again,  
With its memories and greetings,  
With its joy and with its pain?  
There's a minor in the carol,  
And a shadow in the light,  
And a spray of cypress twining  
With the holly wreath to-night.  
And the hush is never broken  
By laughter light and low,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the "bells across the snow."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!  
'Tis not so very long  
Since other voices blended  
With the carol and the song!  
If we could but hear them singing  
As they are singing now,  
If we could but see the radiance  
Of the crown on each dear brow;  
There would be no sigh to smother,  
No hidden tear to flow,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the "bells across the snow."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!  
This never more can be;  
We cannot bring again the days  
Of our unshadowed glee.  
But Christmas, happy Christmas,  
Sweet herald of good-will,  
With holy songs of glory  
Brings holy gladness still.  
For peace and hope may brighten,  
And patient love may glow,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the "bells across the snow."

### For your Prayers:

#### Baby Isobel:

*(In hospital with heart related problems)*

#### Reece Ryan aged 4:

*(Recovering at home after 'Proton' treatment in America for a brain tumour)*

#### Jane & Family:

*(After giving birth to a still-born child)*

#### The Walsh Family:

*(Ian's death occurred in his 'forties' following a motor cycle accident)*

## Calendar of Saints:

### EDMUND JENINGS (BI) M.

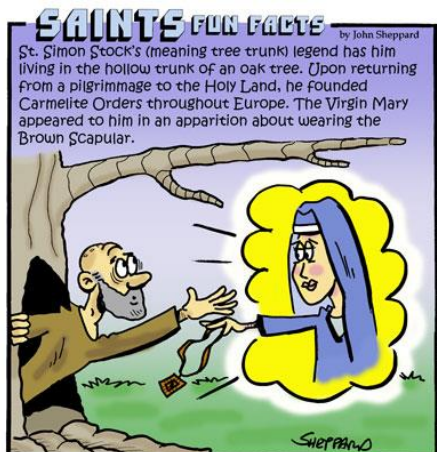
Born at Lichfield, and a convert from Protestantism, he studied and was ordained priest at Reims (1590). He passed on to the English mission and was condemned to death for his priesthood the following year. He was hanged, drawn and quartered at Gray's Inn Fields, London in 1591. He was later beatified in 1929.

His Feast Day is 10<sup>th</sup> December

### EDWARD COLEMAN (BI) M.

He was a gentleman of Suffolk, educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and a convert to the Catholic Faith. He was secretary to the Duchess of York, and was executed at Tyburn on a false charge of conspiring with a foreign power to restore the Catholic Church in England. He was the first victim of the 'Titus Oates Plot'. He died in 1678 and was later beatified in 1929.

His Feast Day is 3<sup>rd</sup> December.



### Did You Know?

+Socrates has become known the whole world over as a philosopher and a wise man, but according to French Renaissance writer Michel de Montaigne his real claim to fame should perhaps have been something altogether different. 'There is nothing more notable in Socrates,' he wrote, 'than that he found time when he was an old man to learn music and dancing – and thought it time well spent'.

So the next time someone tells us to act our age, let's act Socrates' age instead!

+Mother Teresa was once asked if what she was doing for the poor wasn't just a drop in the ocean. 'Yes,' she agreed, 'but it takes many drops to make the ocean.'

+Robert Stevenson, the grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson, made his reputation building

lighthouses on the most treacherous parts of the Scottish coastline, often living in the same accommodation and facing the same hardships as his men.

On the centenary of his birth a parade was arranged to celebrate his life. One of the banners bore the simple epitaph, One Of Us. It was a heartfelt message of acceptance and love.

When God wanted to touch the hearts of ordinary men and women he sent His Son to become one of us:

'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

### A Great Miracle:

In December 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright sent a telegram to their sister, Katharine. Greatly excited, she ran straight to the local newspaper and showed it to the editor. It read, 'We have actually flown one hundred and twenty feet! Will be home for Christmas.'

The editor, who knew the Wrights, replied, 'How nice, the boys will be home for Christmas.' Manned flight had just become a reality, but the editor looked at the message and failed to see its true importance.

As Christmas approaches let's enjoy the glitter and tinsel and parties, but let's not lose sight if the message behind it all – A miracle much greater than Orville and Wilbur's first flight!

### And finally, something to think about!

John Bunyan once said, 'You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.'

As members of the Order of St Raphael perhaps we should heed those words of his and see if we can lend a helping hand to someone in need!

*From time-to-time I hope to be able to feature an article on the differing roles within our Order of Saint Raphael. Recently, Pamela and I visited Helen for a chat and a cup of tea at her home. The following article then, sprang from that visit which I hope you enjoy reading. (Editor)*

### The role of 'ALMONER'





An '**almoner**' is a chaplain or church officer who originally was in charge of distributing cash to the deserving poor.

Historically, almoners were Christian religious functionaries whose duty was to distribute alms to the poor.

Monasteries were required to spend one tenth of their income in charity to the poor (a *tithe*). Bishops kept their own almoners and almoners were attached to the courts of the Kings of France. Charles VIII of France had a Grand Almoner in his employ.

In the United Kingdom, the Marquis of Exeter also holds the title of hereditary Grand Almoner. Today, however, one of the most prominent such offices is that of the Anglican *Lord High Almoner*. The High Almoner (currently Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester) is responsible for organising the Queen's annual distribution of Maundy money on Maundy Thursday.

The title "almoner" has fallen out of use in English, but its equivalents in other languages are often used for many pastoral functions covered by chaplains or pastors.

The Almoner remains an active and important office in the Livery Companies of the City of London and Masonic Lodges in England, Ireland and other Masonic Constitutions. His duty is to oversee the needs of the Brethren within his Lodge. He is the contact for Charity and looks after the welfare of the members, including visits to the sick, aged and infirm.

As a child, to me Almoner was a strange word, I thought it meant someone who looked after a jar of ALMONDS!!!.

I have vivid memories of my mother talking in hushed tones, about the Almoner of The Northern Hospital Manchester (now long gone). The Almoner would visit the sick on the wards daily and was on hand with compassion, advice and financial help and would even organise the family unit, if a mother was in hospital any length of time. Anyone who rose to the position of almoner was to be looked up to as a very special person, selected for their compassion and caring nature.

When I eventually became a member of the "caring profession" and worked in the NHS, Almoners were long gone and did not appear to have any replacement, until I realised that you could apply for financial assistance providing you filled in "form HC1 " and handed it in at the "office" which only opened at certain times on certain days . Only then and if you were in receipt of government benefits, you may be entitled to receive financial help. (Compassion was not included)

I am glad that the role still exists within St Raphael, (if not in the NHS!) and I would like to extend my

compassion to you all and do my best to look after the welfare of the members of the order.

I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year and I look forward to meeting up at Peterborough in January 2013

Best wishes

*Helen* - Grand Almoner

## The Purpose of the Order

### HEALING

The main purpose of the Order has always been to aid the cure of those who are sick in mind and body. We do this by way of prayer. It is our belief, in common with many other bodies, that the greater the volume of prayer towards a specific and worthy end, the more it is likely that the wishes will be granted.

Some members have a belief in, and practice, both Spiritual Healing and Faith Healing. In welcoming such members we stress that this is a matter for the individual and that it is not essential that it be acknowledged in order to be a member. We welcome any members who will join us in our efforts to increase the volume of prayer to affect a reduction in the suffering throughout the world today.

### TEACHING

The second purpose of our Order is to preserve knowledge and to pass on such knowledge to others. We are especially concerned with the wisdom of philosophers and men and women of learning.

Throughout the year we organise meetings that any member may attend to hear speakers on various subjects. At local level conclaves arrange their own programme to suit the requirements of their members.

### CHIVALRIC

As an Order of Chivalry there is an Annual Investiture when the Grand Master confers the honour of Knighthood on new aspirants and also creates new Dames of the Order. Promotions are also conferred including merit awards within the Order of St. Mark and the whole ceremony is conducted with dignity and purpose.

Local conclaves may raise funds amongst themselves and support whichever local charity they wish. The Order of St. Raphael also contributes to charity on a national basis from time to time.



The Healing Teaching &  
Chivalric Order of St Raphael