



Keeping in Touch

A quarterly newsletter for Catholic homeschooling families

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PUBLICATION

KEEPING IN TOUCH is published about the end of the fifth week of each term. Contributions are invited from Catholic homeschooling families and from priests, religious and laity supporting them. Children's poems, stories and book reviews are very welcome.

Please send contributions on A4 paper, or (preferably) via e-mail where possible.

MATERIAL DEADLINE

Please note that the deadline for contributions from readers is the **end of the second week of each term.**

CATECHETICAL NEWS

TERM FOUR 2005

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JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Bishop Kevin Manning will celebrate Holy Mass for

Sister Maur Woodbury SM

Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession
and

Sister Bede Hintz RSJ

Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession

Saturday, 19th November 2005

2.00pm—5.30pm

ST MARGARET MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Merrylands Road, Merrylands

Please join all the grateful Catholics of Sydney and beyond in honouring and thanking these two fine nuns. After Mass you are warmly invited to join the Sisters for afternoon tea and entertainment in the parish hall.

Please bring a plate—savory or sweet

Hall will be open before Mass

Extracts From My World Youth Day Journal

by Felicity Elvis

I am on the aeroplane going to France! ...I am so excited about this trip!...Dad, you're right, aeroplane meals are all put through an atomic shrinking machine...Mum, Dad, Duncan, Callum, Imogen, Charlotte, Sophie and Gemma-Rose, I love you all. I am saying a prayer for you right now. Please excuse my messy room and I'll be home soon.

...I thought I'd reflect on my three days in Paris. Paris is beautiful. Everywhere you look there are carvings or a picture or a quaint shop or cobblestones. It is just packed with history too: everything has a story, a history to it. Paris is dangerous. There are peddlers everywhere trying to rip you off. On the second day we saw some bag-snatchers...Paris is surprising. The French culture takes some getting used to: the Metro system, paying for toilets, the food and the traffic. Paris drivers are insane...Paris is spiritual. The highlight of Paris for me was going to the Daughters of Charity and seeing Catherine Laboure. She is so beautiful. The churches have all been gorgeous in their unique ways and God seems very near to you there...I love you, Mum, Dad...I lit a candle for you in Notre Dame...keeping you in my prayers always.

Lourdes is amazing! I was told Lourdes is commercial. It is, but I don't think it makes any difference...In the evening we went to the Torchlight Procession. We had our flag up...There were lots of other flags and standards. We said the Rosary in different languages: one language each decade...The procession is huge – maybe 7 to 10 thousand people...Every time the name of Mary is sung, everyone lifts their candles up. In the dark it looks like a million glowing flowers...I went to the baths. We waited for 3 ½ hours! It didn't feel like that though, because we prayed the Rosary the whole time. It was worth it.

Lourdes is wonderful. It is truly a miraculous place...people seemed happy to see and welcome us. Lourdes is a hopeful place. Even the sick are not sad and depressed but hopeful that they will receive comfort. Lourdes is indescribable. I have had so many awe-inspiring experiences at once. My only regret was that we couldn't stay longer...I miss you and wish you could have come with me to Lourdes.

La Salette is beautiful. It is easily the loveliest place, landscape-wise, that I have visited so far. It is cool and quiet, it smells of dandelions

and fresh water from the springs. The overall feeling of peace is amazing...

Today we arrived in Cologne. The day began well with us all meeting...for the Australian Gathering...The Gathering was a strange mixture of music, speeches, acts and a short period of adoration...I have developed a strange and unusual affection for Sydney City Rail...We took the Metro. It was 6 kms. It took us over 2 hours. The Pope arrived in Cologne. He had a trip down the Rhine River...We got there really early...When the Pope did come, there were several hundred thousand pilgrims watching for him...It was hot and the Pope was late but we finally got a glimpse of him on the boat...The trains broke down again...We got up at 5.30 am this morning!...It was still dark when we got on the train to Marienfeld. Once we were in (Marienfeld) and settled, we simply had to wait until the Pope arrived for the vigil. The vigil began at 9.30 pm...the music was...unusual...After the vigil we settled down for the night. A heavy dew was falling and everything was getting damp. It was also very cold...It was a long night. I froze...the next morning we extracted ourselves from our assorted sleeping bags, tarpaulins and emergency blankets to a scene that uncannily resembled a refugee camp...The Pope arrived for Mass...During the homily he switched between several languages...the Pope formally announced the next WYD country... Fr David wanted to leave immediately after Mass. Unfortunately so did 1.2 million other people! We got stuck in an enormous traffic jam...we couldn't get to Brussels for our scheduled flight (to Rome).

We arrived in Rome. It was hot! We visited one of Rome's four major basilicas, Santa Maria Maggiore. I saw my first glimpse of Italy's 'dress police' They stand...scanning ...people for immodesty. Rome's third basilica, St Paul's ...is all white marble and gold gilding..the marble was 'recycled' from ancient Roman buildings. Around the top of the walls are portraits of all the Popes...There are 28 spaces left...we went to Tre Fontane...where St Paul was beheaded..According to tradition, St Paul's head bounced three times when it was struck off, so the Christians built a church on the spots where the head hit. Therefore, there are three churches there...We went to the catacombs...Most of the tombs are empty now because the barbarians looted them when Rome fell, in search of gold...I was disappointed by the Sistine Chapel..It's just a large rectangular room with a high ceiling, a plain crucifix and a wooden altar..There is no tabernacle which is sad. This is meant to be a chapel, yet God is not there...Last of

all, we went into St Peter's...Some...went underneath to see Pope John Paul II's tomb but I was too exhausted. I spent 40 minutes in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel instead...

Our last full day in Europe...we entered Assisi. Our first stop was the Portiuncula, which is the church St Francis built by himself. The original church which is as tiny as some of the shrines at Penrose Park is now inside a large basilica: a church-within-a-church! There is a strange contrast between the simplicity of the little church and the elegance and grandeur of the basilica surrounding it...We visited St Clare's Basilica which holds the incorrupt body of St Clare and also her original habit. While St Francis' is gorgeously painted all over, St Clare's is extremely plain. Apparently, it had once been similarly decorated but had been white-washed to serve as a hospital during a plague...

It seems amazing to think that I have been away for three weeks. I have seen so much! I have really enjoyed myself. There have been some hard days and I have missed you all, but it has been worth it. I am looking forward to seeing you all again. I love you... Only hours left until I see you again! Until then, may God bless you and keep you, Love Felicity.

No, Not Me, I Can't Be a Nun

By Felicity Elvis

I didn't want to be a nun. I was convinced that, though nuns were nice people, I wasn't meant to be one of them. I felt no "calling" as I grew up from a child into a teenager. I wasn't the most pious of my friends, and I definitely wasn't supernaturally good!

When I was seventeen, I was going to be a musician. I had talent and very little fear of performing for audiences. I could play several instruments, I could sing, and I practised regularly. I worked hard, and I was determined that when I was good enough, I was going to go to a conservatorium and study until I could play in an orchestra.

In September 2004, I went to a camp at Fitzroy Falls with my family. This camp combined daily Mass with religious instruction and drama for Catholic homeschooling families. The Conventual Sisters of St Dominic taught the older children drama and religion throughout the week. At the end of the week, Sister Mary Augustine gave her final lesson. It was on vocations. The lesson contained nothing that I hadn't heard before. It went over the basics of vocations. But I remember especially Sister Augustine's insistence that a life spent in

doing whatever one wants, even if it doesn't hurt anyone else, is not a vocation.

I came back from the camp, and a thought came into my head. Could I be a nun? It frightened me. I couldn't be a nun! I asked my parents what they would think if I did end up being a nun. They were encouraging, but I decided that I couldn't do it. I was going to be musician. I tried to get on with my life. I was busy preparing for two music exams. I also had a job in a supermarket. I was finishing year 12. I tried to forget the thought.

Things started to go wrong in my life. I sat a terrible clarinet exam. Halfway through, I discovered that I hadn't prepared all the necessary music! I also had a piano exam due, but I panicked the day before, believing I hadn't prepared well enough. I refused to sit the exam. I began to prepare again, but practising became harder and harder, and I lost confidence in my musical ability. I eventually abandoned my music.

With my music career in ruins, I had to find something else to study, only to find that I couldn't settle down to studying anything. The only thing I could do well was my job – which was not a surprise, as flicking milk bottles through a checkout is hardly a job that exercises the brain.

My attitude towards life became aggressive and self-pitying. I was so absorbed in my own problems I couldn't see how worried and saddened my parents were over me. It must have seemed to them that I was too lazy to make the effort to study properly. They tried to help me, but every time I interpreted it as interference or criticism, and I would angrily reject their help before running to my room and crying.

I isolated myself from my family and friends. I prayed far less than I had before. I was lonely and self-absorbed. I ate too much junk food and put on weight. And all the time that little thought never went away, asking me if I should become a nun. It scared me. How could I be a nun?

The year ended and a new one began. Mum finally got me to study journalism through external university. I contacted my friends again. But THE THOUGHT didn't go away, and I couldn't forget about it. When I looked at myself, however, I couldn't see a nun. Nuns were self-disciplined, peaceful, prayerful, loving and ascetic. Everything I was not.

In April, my family and I went to another camp at Fitzroy Falls. Very few people my age were there. I spent a lot of time in the chapel. I was turning 18 on the Thursday of the camp, and I was lonely and confused. In the chapel, I tried to pray – and found THE THOUGHT coming back again. I

decided I was ready to do anything, even become a nun, if that would stop me being so miserable. "Please show me my vocation," I prayed. "And, Lord, just a hint, but it would be nice if I knew before my 18th birthday."

I don't know how other people have found their vocations, but when I woke the next morning, THE THOUGHT wasn't frightening any more. In fact, it looked quite exciting and interesting! I promised God right then to follow a religious vocation as far as I could.

I had very little idea of where to start following. I had a leaflet to a "Religious Life Conference" which was being held at Taralga. Apparently, it was bringing together monks and nuns from several different orders for a weekend, and young people could stay with them and learn about the different orders, their apostolates and charisms. I decided to go.

At the weekend, I sat and listened as Pauline Fathers, a Benedictine monk, Little Sisters of the Poor, St Paul de Chartres Sisters, and the sisters who had begun it all for me, the Conventual Dominicans, spoke about their orders and lives. They had all brought leaflets further explaining religious life and vocations. I read these in my room at night. During the weekend, I decided that I had to visit some nuns to really understand their life. I wanted to ask Sister Augustine if I could visit them. I was so scared of asking, I wished I didn't have to. But I had promised to follow my vocation. On Sunday morning, I asked Sister Augustine if I could come to visit. She was wonderful and understanding, telling me that she would love to have me to live-in with them.

In June, Sister Augustine wrote, asking if I wanted to visit during July. I agreed at once, and spent a week with them. Everything was different, from prayers to mealtimes, strange, but also exciting. At the end of the week, I was certain I had to become a nun. But I wanted to visit some other orders. I loved and felt very comfortable with the Dominicans, but I wasn't sure if I liked them because they were my friends or because I was called to be one of them. I arranged to visit the Tyburn nuns, a contemplative order.

I went to the Tyburn nuns on the 1st of October. I wasn't sure if I would be able to stand the enclosed life, but from the beginning I felt at home with them. They were like a family, and I picked up their ways quickly – so much so that the nuns remarked after two days that I was fitting in like I had been there for a much longer time! I loved their balance of work and prayer and I almost didn't want to return home at the end of the week.

I went home with two things – a determination to become a Tyburn nun and the application form so I could. I was happy, but also aware that life would not be easy. I was not always going to be happy or excited. And how would my family cope with me leaving home to an enclosed order?

I asked my parents the day I got back. They both agreed I could go. I wanted to return as quickly as possible. Not only was I scared of more obstacles coming up, Mother Cyril, the prioress, was encouraging me to come back quickly. My news was sad for my family, especially my mum, but they did not try to discourage me. They have always encouraged me to do what God wants, not what I want.

Since then, I have been preparing to leave home. I have cleaned and cleared my room. I have resigned from work and finished studying. I have said my goodbyes. I have had every reaction to my news, from calm congratulations to shocked questions. I have had many obstacles and problems come up, including concerned non-Catholic relatives questioning me. But I know that I am doing the right thing. I am keeping my promise. Even if the Tyburn nuns are not the right order for me, it can do no harm for me to detach myself from the world for some time, to pray for hours each day and to spend time in the company of such wonderful people.

I know that God will always look after me. Whatever I do, so long as I honestly try to do God's Will, He will help me and show me the way to go. I know that if I am called to be a contemplative nun, I will never be happy anywhere else. Only doing what God wants can make me happy. It doesn't matter if what He asks you to do is hard, unusual or terrifying. If it seems too hard to do, it could be that you're trying to do it on your own. Nothing is too hard if you do it with God.

On vocation

By Gai Smith

After Felicity had publicly announced her intention to join the Benedictine nuns at Tyburn ???, Riverstone, I took time to ponder the story of Maria Augusta Trapp. The all-important words of her Reverend Mother that should be uppermost in our minds throughout our lives rang out in mine: "The only important thing on earth for us is to find out what is the Will of God and to do it." "Even if it is not pleasant, or it is hard, perhaps very hard?"

“Yes, ... , even then, and whole heartedly, too.”

For most of us discerning our vocation is the hard part but once we reach an understanding of God’s Will there is a great deal of joy to be found in living out his Will wholeheartedly.

So many young people these days find it difficult to hear God’s call. There are so many distractions and so much to give up that a decision to enter a convent is blurred by the false call of the material world. Girls today want university degrees and elaborate careers before they want children even when they are married. These types of decisions never lead to happiness unless they are God’s Will.

It is with a great feeling of joy that we congratulate Felicity on what can only be described as a wonderful and rewarding decision. Our prayers and encouragement go with her to help her fulfill her life. We thank God that he gave her this call and hope that she remembers all her homeschooling friends and families in her prayers.

The Light of “Blind” Faith

By Anthony English

Our minds are made for truth. We all want to know the truth. If we do turn a blind eye on so-called white lies, it’s only because we’re not ourselves the victims of such falsehoods. Even if we are happy to be ignorant about certain things, none of us wants to be deliberately cheated or deceived. Why? Because we are made for truth. It is truth which perfects our intellects.

There are only two ways for our intellect to grasp a thing as true. The first is seen evidence, seeing it for ourselves. The very word *evidence* comes from the Latin *videre*, to see. Of course, not everything which is said to be evident really is so. Nevertheless, there are some things which we clearly see must be so and can’t be otherwise. I can’t help but affirm that two plus two is four. I see it for myself. In the same way, I can’t deny that nothing is its own opposite, or that a whole is greater than its own part, or that you can’t get more from less.

There is a second way of knowing a thing is true, and that is believing someone else. I don’t see the evidence of many truths but someone else does, and I believe him. It would, in fact, be impossible to live without some faith in others. We would simply not survive if no one could be trusted, or if we had to be certain for ourselves before taking any action. We could never buy food, for example, without having to prove for ourselves it

wasn’t poisoned. Nor could we trust the equipment to test the food. Faith is a practical necessity of life.

If faith is necessary, we might well ask what sort of faith. We may well be cautious about somebody’s blind faith in a political leader, or in the leaders of a movement. So, is blind faith ever a good thing? Obviously, the answer depends on whom we have faith in. Aristotle wisely observed “wherever you have a man, there you have a potential liar.” (Ladies, and children, the philosopher was using the term “man” to apply to all human persons, not just adult males). That statement seems to argue against blind faith. We ought to have a prudent reserve about whom we trust our deepest secrets to and we do well to follow the advice of Tobias to his son: “Ask advice of every wise person.” He didn’t say “Ask advice of everyone.”

St. Paul tells us that the just man lives by faith. Is that a blind faith? In a certain sense it is, because we believe what God said simply because His Word is true. He can neither deceive us nor be deceived Himself. Since that is so, we ought to have a blind faith in God. We hold unfailingly to what He has revealed, simply because He who is Truth has revealed it.

Although we have spoken of blind faith, supernatural faith – faith in God – is not entirely blind. In fact, faith is a certain light. Although we can’t see the why of revealed mysteries, we can be completely certain that they are true. We can be more sure that there are three Persons in God than any truth known by reason alone. Human reason can fail, but God’s authority is infallible.

Supernatural faith tells us certain truths and for that reason it isn’t blind at all. On the contrary, the truths of faith give us great certitude – great lights – in a world which oftentimes seems dark.

Faith is a certain light, a supernaturally infused light, which makes us hold unfailingly to what God has revealed.

St. Paul says that faith comes through hearing. Supernatural faith isn’t deaf. Scripture speaks of the obedience of faith. The word *obedience* comes originally from the Latin *ob-audire*, which means to hear. Those who refuse to give God the obedience of faith are, in fact blinding themselves to truths which would enlighten their intellect. They sometimes justify this by scoffing at what they call “blind faith” but they fail to recognise two truths: that Christ is the Way the Truth and the Life, and that it is the Truth which sets us free.

Mathematical Induction

by David Obeid

Imagine that there was an infinitely long line of crows, flying one behind the other. Even with the best set of binoculars we own we have no hope of seeing any further than the first few thousand crows. How can we prove that all of the crows are black?

One way is to prove that the first crow is black and that he carries a sign reading "If I am black then the crow behind me is black and has a sign just like this one".

If the first crow is black and carries such a sign, then the second crow is black, and hence so is the third, and hence so is the fourth and so on. We have brought forth (induced!) a condition that proves that all of the crows (even the ones we can't see) are in fact black.

If you understand this then you should be able to understand the principle of mathematical induction (and the manner in which we prove a statement using induction).

There are four major areas where proofs using mathematical induction are helpful:

1. Series
2. Divisibility
3. Inequalities
4. Geometry.

Students can expect to come across the first three in exams for HSC Extension I mathematics courses (or their equivalent), and nasty examiners may propose problems that utilise the fourth in Extension II courses. Our job is to get our heads around the basics, so we will begin by looking at what is probably the simplest application – series. Divisibility and inequality problems work in the same way, but the algebra is a little subtler. The algebra that is required for a series proof is not much more complicated than the sort of factorising required of a good year 10 student.

Let's see if we can take our crow example from above and apply it to an algebraic problem. Say you have an urgent need to add up the first 20 odd numbers and you find the nearest mathematician you dare to engage in a conversation and ask him what the sum of the first 20 odd numbers is and he says, "Well, 20 squared is 400." Then he sits and waits for your thanks. You are tempted to point out that you didn't ask what twenty squared was, you asked for the sum of the first 20 odd numbers. Suddenly you get a strange feeling that maybe the sum of a given number of odd numbers is that given number squared.

[Required reading before the next paragraph: there is a rule for generating odd numbers. The rule is "double a number then take away one". If we start at the number 1 and apply this rule, we end up generating a continuous sequence of odd numbers. For example, if we take 1, double it and then subtract 1, we get $2 \times 1 - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1$. Doing the same with 2 we have $2 \times 2 - 1 = 4 - 1 = 3$. Once more time with 3 we have $2 \times 3 - 1 = 6 - 1 = 5$. If we keep going we get the odd numbers 7, 9, 11 etc. We can write this rule as a formula: $2n - 1$]

Getting back to that strange feeling that the sum of a given number of odd numbers is that given number squared, you now aim to prove your hypothesis. In other words, you aim to prove that $1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2n - 1) = n^2$. For convenience I will refer to " $1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2n - 1) = n^2$ " as "the statement".

Remember the method of proof we are going to pursue will work like the crow example above. We start by proving the first crow is black. In other words, we test the statement for $n = 1$:

When $n = 1$ we see that the left hand side (LHS) of the statement $= (2 \times 1 - 1) = 1$ and the right hand side (RHS) of the statement $= 1^2 = 1$. Hence LHS = RHS for $n = 1$. In other words, the statement is true for $n = 1$ – our first crow is black!

We can now say that there is at least one value for which the statement is true. Let's generalise and say that the value for which it is true is for $n = k$. (So far, we know that k exists for at least one value, namely 1, but we will work with our generalisation, k , instead of 1).

Now, if the statement is true for $n = k$, then what we are saying is that $1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) = k^2$. We will use this equation below in a most convenient if not surprising way. At this stage we are starting to make the sign that will be held by our crow. Go slow and pay attention to the next few steps.

If, as we are claiming, the statement is true for $n = k$, then what if anything can we say about the truth of the statement for $n = k + 1$? Can we say that the statement is true for $n = k + 1$? In other words, can we say that

$$1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) + (2(k + 1) - 1) = (k + 1)^2$$

$$\text{ie. } 1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) + (2k + 2 - 1) = (k + 1)^2$$

$$\text{ie. } 1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) + (2k + 1) = (k + 1)^2 ?$$

Let's see if we can prove this. That is, we now aim to prove that $1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) + (2k + 1) = (k + 1)^2$.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{LHS} &= 1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) + (2k + 1) \\ &= k^2 + (2k + 1) \end{aligned}$$

[We know this is true because above we said that $1 + 3 + 5 + \dots + (2k - 1) = k^2$. (I told you it would be surprising!)] Continuing, we see that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{LHS} &= k^2 + (2k + 1) \\ &= k^2 + 2k + 1 \\ &= (k + 1)^2 \\ &= \text{RHS as required.} \end{aligned}$$

What we have done here is prove that if the statement is true for $n = k$, then it is also true for $n = k + 1$. In our crow example above, what we have done is show that the crow behind the front crow is black (and that he holds a sign like our first crow).

We started off by demonstrating that the statement is true for $n = 1$. But we just showed that if the statement is true for one value (" k ") it is true for the value after it (" $k + 1$ "), so that means that the statement is true for $n = 2$. Now, by the same reasoning, if it is true for $n = 2$ then it is true for $n = 3$, and so on and so forth. Hence, by induction, we can say that the statement is true for all values of n .

Read this explanation through a few times and take a few risks in attempting a few mathematical induction questions from your preferred senior mathematics text books. You'll soon get the hang of it and you can then crow about it to folks you meet.

As usual, David Obeid can be contacted on 02 48292233 or via e-mail at dobeid@lumenverum.org if you need any help with mathematics problems.

Book Review: A Mother's Rule of Life

reviewed by Gai Smith

"A Mother's Rule of Life" by Holly Pierlot is aptly subtitled "How to Bring Order to Your Home and Peace to Your Soul". On January 1st, 2000, Holly Pierlot pounded her fist on the kitchen table and yelled at her husband, "I can't take it any more!" To most homeschooling mothers there is a familiar ring in these words. Many mothers but more so those of us who homeschool have these feelings of frustration, discouragement and loneliness at least some, if not all the time. In her book, Holly talks about how she overcame many of her problems. She wrote the book to help others who felt as she did.

Many people start homeschooling with great idealistic enthusiasm but as time goes on the novelty wears thin as things go wrong, almost daily. Holly viewed her home as untidy, unclean and she had no time for prayer or her husband. Today there is "less stress, less strife and less housework." She explains how she combined "the spiritual wisdom of the monastery with the practical wisdom of motherhood."

The start to these changes began immediately after a homeschooling conference where Holly heard a woman bubbling with enthusiasm based on the "Managers of their Homes MOTH programme". Most of the mothers' jaws dropped. Holly found every excuse to discredit this woman but at the end of the day she found no real excuses and reluctantly listened as Alice talked about scheduling every part of her life and each person in her life. Holly was so discouraged that she dismissed it all until a week later. She had previously decided to pray but could find no answers from God or so she thought. Her thoughts ran along the lines of schedules simply don't work so why try and then fail to become even more discouraged. Then she looked at the surroundings in her untidy, dirty, disorganised home, her children constantly whingeing for attention and decided that failure was better than what she was now dealing with. She realised that scheduling might limit her freedom but chaos was even more limiting.

Reasoning that since nuns had a rule of life she too could have a rule or schedule though not based on a secular time management scheme. She would start with what God wanted of her and the duties and expectations that went with the married state.

She began to seek out what she described as her mission statement realising that Mother Teresa's Missionaries had principals and spiritual

goals that suited their way of fulfilling their vocation and that mothers could have one to suit them. Throughout her research she could find no Rule of Life written by a lay person let alone one specific for a Catholic, wife and mother. Deciding that Christian marriage had five priorities based on what an old priest termed the "5P's" or Priorities of the Married State, she began. These 5P's in order were Prayer, Person, Partner, Parent and Provider. They were true duties that could not be ignored or neglected.

The very first priority had to be real time for prayer and plenty of it spread throughout the day. This meant time had to be specifically set aside for God several times so that real communication and reliance on God was truly established. The next P made her realise it was a necessary duty and a part of God's will to ensure that she functioned properly for her own health and sanity, and, thus, could function properly for her family. This area included basic hygiene, exercise, a decent healthy diet, enough sleep and a some quiet time whether in front of the Blessed Sacrament or just by herself.

Since her married state was linked so closely to her husband she had to make time to spend with her husband in the evenings before any other activities and this formed the basis of the third P. After her husband came the welfare of the children or her parenting role, the fourth P. She had to be not only physically available to her children but mentally. They depended on her for their spiritual and physical health and so she had to focus her love for them in a conscious, consistent way. Her own projects had to be toned down to have more time to talk and laugh with them. It was not a case of quality time but quantity time that her children needed. She had to be their loving mother as well as their disciplinarian. Being a homeschooling Mum was even more demanding because she was their teacher as well. She soon realised that the development of their spiritual life was even more important than a daily Maths lesson so that the very centre of their lives had to be directed to God. Good stories of saints, faith discussions, Mass attendance as much as possible, prayer and the Sacraments became a priority. Whilst one has to be careful not to be the children's very best friend and confidante as this could cloud the role of parental authority and guidance she still had to balance her nurturing, loving role with that of a parent.

The last or fifth P was that of provider. Whilst some mothers do and have to work for an assortment of reasons, the husband's principal role is to go out to work and bring home the money to

provide the basic necessities, food, clothing, shelter, etc. A mother's main role is to care for the children and provide a happy, safe, healthy environment by putting the home in order with routines for housework, meals, gardening and with looking after each child's needs.

Throughout the book Holly shares her amazing insights about life through her own personal experiences. Whilst these are not the same for every person or every family her writings are very interesting. Each family is unique and whilst the examples of her own scheduling routine are excellent, they are not for every family. However, they do form a basis on which all of us could write our own. Time, of course, to do this is limited.

This book is thoroughly recommended for all homeschooling families, most especially because it is truly Catholic which gives it an added dimension. It is as though you are given a way, or at least a framework, within which to rule or model your life as a Catholic homeschooling mother. It is easy to read and one should take note of the 5 Priorities of the Married State. Scheduling your home life should not be with done with a secular outlook, one should feel compelled to do so with a sense of obedience to the Will of God. It works much better. There is little to criticise in the book though one does feel that with only five children to organise and not eleven Holly has it easy. As children get older in terms of late teens and their own timetables of outside lessons, part time work and external courses e.g. University, TAFE and trades taking up so much of their lives it is harder to pull things together really cohesively. However, having started I am impressed with my somewhat slow progress and have seen some small improvements in my home already. I do find however that it is basically impossible to have the same amount of free time she scheduled for herself and hope that it is not as necessary for me as it was for her.

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

By Jacinta Smith

Over the last 4 months, my brother Stephen and I have had the great pleasure of being in the chorus of a stage show, the well-loved musical "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers". We are in an amateur group called the Blue Mountains Musical Society. I'm sure many homeschoolers are familiar with the movie and the magnificent voices of the famous Howard Keel and the lovely Jane Powell in the main roles. The show is full of memorable songs, a

classic dance scene and a happy ending. It leaves anyone who watches it in a good mood for the rest of the day. Even though the songs in the stage show are surprisingly different from those in the movie, the different songs are just as enjoyable as those in the film.

Rehearsals started on the 7th July. It was then we began working on chorus songs such as "Wonderful Wonderful Day" and "Goin Courtin" (including a version for the women to sing). After we had those songs under our belt, we worked on the most important scene: the barn dance. The scene starts off with all the townspeople dancing away, in the aisles and on the stage. Then the townspeople (the chorus) sit down to watch the "war" as the brothers and the suitors both try to get the girls to dance with them. After we had rehearsals for that scene well under way, I received a pleasant surprise of being chosen to be "Dorcas' Little Sister" which involved two lines. This was exciting for me as there was only a small amount for the chorus women to do otherwise. I played this part in the memorable scene where the brothers all decide to go down to town to kidnap the girls with whom they are in love.

By this time, it was about five weeks before our first performance on the 21st of October. We had to get the finale worked out. Our choreographer Clarinda and her assistant Kailah painstakingly went through the dance steps with us whilst Catherine the musical director ran us over the words of "Sobbin Women", our finale song. We all trooped onto the stage and the steps in front and went over and over the spectacular finale.

Well, two weeks before our first performance, the whole show was together!! The main cast had their lines and songs learnt (well, almost!), everyone had their costumes, the props and sets were all up. Lisa the director told us the show looked fantastic. We were rolling! We felt quite proud of ourselves having accomplished so much. Our dress rehearsals with orchestra, lights and sounds went spectacularly well. On Friday 21st October, we performed the preview. We were told by one and all that it was truly wonderful, which was lovely to hear since we had put in so much work. Opening night on 22nd went like clockwork.

Our show stars Jeff Cefai as Adam and Bec Wallace as Milly. They are both magnificent in their roles. The brothers and brides are also very well cast, all of them have lovely voices and are fantastic dancers and singers.

Our success was measured by the enthusiastic response of one of Mum's friends: Oh weren't they wonderful, wonderful. It was even

more enjoyable than the movie. I've been a Howard Keel and Jane Powell fan for years but the lead roles in this production gave them a real run for their money. And the rest of the cast were better than the movie. That stage show had more of everything, not just more and better songs, but a more personal atmosphere. I'm really glad I came.

The show was such a pleasure to work on and even better to perform in. It will be very sad when it's all over, but Stephen and I will both have this experience as a wonderful memory for our whole life.

Q. What Shall We Study Next?

A. Bush Boys!

By Sue Elvis

It is the last week of term. The children are arranging the pages of their notebooks: the fruits of the last month's work. With a smile of satisfaction, Imogen clips her title page to the front and eagerly hands the book to me for inspection.

"What are we going to learn about next term, Mum?" she asks.

"What do you want to learn?"

Her eyes light up as she replies, "Bush Boys!"

"Oh yes", joins in Callum. "Let's try out your Bush Boys unit study".

Unit studies are such an enjoyable way to learn. We love spending time together, all learning about and discussing the same subject. If you are familiar with this method of homeschooling, you will understand the enthusiasm and anticipation we all have, as we begin to explore a new topic. We are off on a new learning adventure! So how do we begin a unit study? After some discussion, we decide on a topic we'd like to learn about. I then go looking for some living books related to the topic that I can read aloud to the children. Maybe I will find some titles that the older children can read alone too. I will visit the library and search our own book shelves looking for any books related to our topic. I then make a list of activities that the children can complete, making sure that there are some to suit the younger members of the family and more challenging tasks for the older ones. Usually, as we are reading, new ideas are generated and our list of things to do, gets longer or modified. I try to incorporate as many of the Key Learning Areas as possible, into my topic activities plan.

So for a study of Victorian Times, our activities list might include such things as biographies of Queen Victoria, composers, artists, saints and scientists of the 19th century; the making

of a timeline; collection of photographs (downloaded from the internet) of saints, Victorian homes, families, and paintings; essays on such topics as the effect of industrialisation on Victorian society, construction of Queen Victoria's family tree and our own family tree; stories inspired by Victorian music or paintings; downloading Victorian paper dolls from the internet and making clothes for them after researching Victorian fashions; writing out favourite quotes from *Oliver Twist*, looking up new vocabulary words from the novel; etc. etc. Our children record all they find out, on loose-leaf pages. As a topic draws to a close after a few weeks study, the last task is to make a title page and then to arrange the pages attractively in a folder. It is with a sense of achievement that the books are eagerly presented to me for comment.

Do you remember the article I wrote for last term's *Keeping in Touch*? It was entitled *Playing, Learning and Living Books* and in it, I suggested that we could incorporate Father James Tierney's Bush Boys books into the educational curriculum of our children. It occurred to me that the Bush Boys books could be used as a unit study and I set about writing one based on *Bush Boys*, the first book in this living book series. I read the book slowly, making note of all the subjects mentioned that could be explored further. My list included wattle, gum trees, kangaroos, ants, snake bite, pulleys, tea, Morse code, landforms, accident prevention, prayers and many, many others. Once I had constructed a basic list, I tried to think of ways of exploring each subject further. One idea often led to another. We might already know many facts about the kangaroo but do we know how it came to be on one of our coins? Do we know how our coins are made? Is the kangaroo a state emblem? We are all very familiar with tea but how does tea get from the plantation to our cups? And what are the tea drinking customs of different countries? Have we ever gone to the trouble of making a billy can support and brewing our own billy tea over a fire? Many of us love a couple of ANZAC biscuits with our tea but do you know the origin of these favourite Australian biscuits? Can we identify the stars in the night sky and how did the stars actually get their names?

I spent a lot of time on the Internet researching, and discovered lots of interesting and useful information relating to the items on my original list. My next step was to arrange these areas for investigation by theme. After much discussion with Fr Tierney, we decided upon seven themes:

1. Appreciating the Beauty of the Bush

2. The Flora and Fauna of the Australian Bush
3. Bush Craft
4. Character Study
5. Safety First and First-Aid
6. Bush Lore or Caring for the Bush Environment
7. Christianity

For each of the themes I added, where appropriate, quotes and comments from *Bush Boys* or Fr Tierney. I also added recommended literature and poetry, useful websites and books.

Finally, I sent the unit study to Fr Tierney for his official approval. The document was then put onto the Cardinal Newman website in the Bush Boys Children's Activities section.

Before I had even completed the Bush Boys unit study, I thought of another idea: a Bush Boys magazine. I thought that I could explore similar topics to those in the unit study, choosing subjects from each of the themes and present them in a magazine format. My husband, Andy, designed me a magazine layout and using this, very kindly arranged my short articles on flora, fauna, beauty, bush cooking, puzzles, campcraft, religion etc. For each topic, I tried to suggest a further activity or additional research. We called the magazine *Bush Boys Explorers* and Fr Tierney let us add the words "The Official Magazine of Father James Tierney's Bush Boys Books"! The first Spring Edition was available online on September 1st, Wattle Day. (For the significance of Wattle Day, see the magazine!) We are hoping to publish the magazine four times a year.

My children are anxious to try out my unit study. Next term's work is all set out. I will have a copy of the unit study in a folder. The children will be able to choose the activities that appeal to them. Hopefully, everyone will investigate different areas so that we can learn from each other. We will read a Bush Boys book together and perhaps a couple of other living bush adventures. By mid term, I hope each child will have their own Bush Boys book bulging with facts, drawings, dried leaves, stories, poems, biographies, photographs, postcards, maps, and pictures. I hope there will be some examples of excellent handwriting used to copy out passages of lyrical beauty from *Bush Boys*, lists of bush vocabulary and spelling words and dictation passages of the highest quality! Maybe we will all have learnt to tie a few knots, done some experiments with pulleys, enjoyed a few bush walks, learnt to identify some bird calls, sent a few

messages by Morse code or gazed at the night sky. It promises to be an enjoyable fourth term!

Perhaps you'd like to join us and have a Bush Boys learning adventure too. You might already be familiar with unit studies or you might like to do one as a change. You can download the unit from www.cardinalnewman.com.au Don't be limited by my ideas. I am sure you will have ideas of your own. If you do, share them with me! If the size of the unit study seems overwhelming, perhaps you could do a mini unit based on the *Bush Boys Explorers* magazine. Once you have made your Bush Boys theme book show it to Fr Tierney next time you see him, or write and tell him about it. I am sure he would enjoy hearing from you.

And what will we do when our Bush Boys books are completed? I will have to get to work and complete my proposed unit study extensions based on the other three books in the Bush Boys series. Next year, my children could be saying, "Let's do your *Cuthbert Joins the Bush Boys* unit study, Mum"!

Synod Encourages Catholic Families

Submitted by Anthony English

The Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, which concluded on 22 October 2005, issued a special message for Catholic couples and families:

22. Dear Christian married couples and your families, your vocation to holiness begins as the domestic Church, is nourished at the Holy Table of the Eucharist. Your faith in the Sacrament of Marriage transforms your nuptial union into a Temple of the Holy Spirit, into a rich source of new life, generating children, the fruit of your love. We have often spoken of you at the Synod because we are conscious of the fragility and the uncertainties of the world today. Remain strong in your struggle to educate your children in the faith. You are the source where vocations to the priesthood and the religious life are born. Do not forget that Christ dwells in your union; he blesses it with all the graces you need to live your vocation in a saintly way. We encourage you to maintain the practice of participating as a family in the Sunday Eucharist. In this way, you bring joy to the heart of Jesus, who has said: «Let the little children come to me» (Mk 10:14).

Cantabile Singers – A Heritage of Traditional Catholic Hymns

By Mrs Dolores Lightbody

Catholics now have means to hear and sing some of the beautiful hymns which have been sung around Australia for decades through a collection of 132 hymns which were recently released under the title of “A Heritage of Traditional Catholic Hymns”.

The collection is made up of six albums each containing 22 hymns which can be obtained separately or in a boxed set of CDs or audio cassettes tapes. Gathered together are selections of hymns sung in the Liturgy of the Mass, hymns for the various seasons of the Church, a wide variety of hymns for devotions and feast days (including Latin hymns with translations) and those to popular saints such as St Joseph, St Anne, St Anthony, St Therese and the angels. All the hymns will not be known to all – some have been used in one or more states but not in others so that the collection is a means by which they can be shared across Australia. Most of the above recordings are in a congregational style so that they are easy to sing along with.

Each album is accompanied by a 32 page CD-size full colour booklet containing all the words of the hymns and the birth and death dates of the composers and lyricists to help identify the period from which the hymn comes. Decorating the booklets are over 100 photos with notes which include reproductions of old masters as well as an impressive number of photos of people, places and events from Catholic history in Australia and include examples of artwork and architecture – every state is represented.

St Augustine said “This also is our daily bread: the readings you hear each day in church and the hymns you hear and sing. All these are necessities for our pilgrimage”. Hymn singing has never been limited to the time we participate at Mass or devotions in church. Early Christians could be heard singing hymns from their prison cells and hymns have been sung in homes in the prayer life of the family or during prayer group meetings.

For a free catalogue write to:

The Cantabile Singers Inc

P.O. Box 3162

Loganholme QLD 4129

Phone: (07) 3807 1310 or (07) 3287 5320

Editor's note: for a full review see *AD2000* Vol 14 No 6 (July 2001), p. 17 which is also available at http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2001/jul2001p17_505.html

A CATHOLIC FOCUS IN A SECULAR CITY

(reproduced from www.christifideleslaici.org with permission)

Carrying a monstrance bearing Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop Julian Porteous, Auxiliary bishop of Sydney, led a procession of other Australian bishops, priests, religious, and more than 15,000 lay people through the streets of Sydney to St Mary's Cathedral on Sunday last, the 23rd October.

To the accompaniment of hymns interspersed with the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, the procession moved from St Patrick's, Church Hill, down George Street and up Hunter and Macquarie Streets to the first shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians in Australia.

Our Blessed Lord was accompanied in the procession by the relics of the saint to whom He revealed the secrets of His Sacred Heart, St Margaret Mary Alacoque, brought from Paray-le-Monial in France.

At the Cathedral there was solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop Porteous carrying the monstrance the length of the Cathedral to bless the huge crowd in the open concourse to the south of the main entrance

While there were many who came in from country New South Wales, the number that attended could have been much greater. The cause undoubtedly lay with the paucity of advertising for the event. In many Catholic schools and Catholic parishes throughout the Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay Dioceses, for instance, the procession received no mention.

The Cardinal, George Pell, was in Rome for the conclusion of the Synod on the Eucharist and, regrettably, could not be present. Let us hope and pray that this procession will become an annual event and that he will lead it next year.

Fitzroy Falls Camp 2006
Mon 24th – Fri 28th April 2006
Contact Michael and Helen Brearley on
(02) 48844326

Another September Camp

By Brigid Vieira

Well, another September has come and gone, and with it another "home schooling school camp". For those of you who didn't manage to get there, I pity you! But there's always next year! On behalf of those of us who did get there, thank you very much to the Ganmain Sisters, to Father Mattie, to Mr Lyons, and to all the organisers and parents who gave talks and led activities!

Father Mattie opened each day with Mass. Each day we dragged ourselves out of bed, unimpressed by our early start, but the Blessed Sacrament and Father Mattie's inspiring sermons were enough to cheer up the most night-iest of night owls, and after starting the day with God, everything turned out brilliantly. While the children's religion and drama classes went on every day with the Sisters (and Father Mattie helping with religion); the adults were given talks by the homeschooling mothers on various tricks of the trade, by Fr Mattie on education from the Church's perspective, and afterwards Mr Lyons gave a series of talks about Fatima's relevance to today. The afternoon was a time for sport, or more correctly, the appearance of it. The pool was heated so well this year that it was crowded every afternoon, but who said you need to do laps to have fun! And of course we had indoor soccer, outdoor soccer, footy, and the Giant Swing to keep us occupied. This year we forced several of the adults to go on the Swing too, and boy! That was fun! We expect to see ALL the adults next year! On the first night we had our trivia game, which was wonderful - especially since my team won! Mr Lyons played the Mafia game on Tuesday night and Mr English also hosted a cheese-eating session every night, which was a welcome inclusion to the camp! Another new feature of this year's camp was a night of Eucharistic Adoration, which was beautiful.

But for almost the entire week, the nuns and we, their pupils, were waiting impatiently for Thursday night and the chance to dress up in melodramatic costumes and entertain our parents.

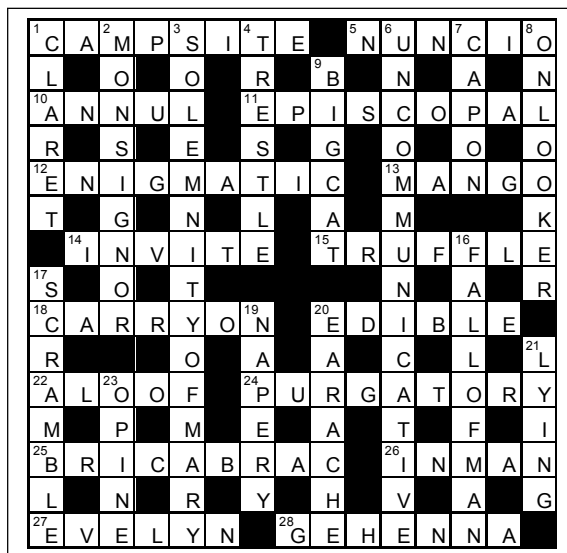
The play that we older kids performed this year was Gilbert and Sullivan's "Gondoliers" and although we may not boast the most faithful repetition of dear old Gilly's script, we're definitely in the running for the cast who had the most fun performing the play! Felicity Elvis' gorgeous soprano saw her falling for yet another love-stricken boy, but the rest of us got to do something new this year! There were lots of parts to go around, and when we weren't flirting

with Gondoliers or Italian girls respectively, (note to parents: all an act!) we were carefully trying not to laugh at the superb acting of our Duke Duncan and Father Mattie's skilful use of a handkerchief to remind himself of his lines! I still can't believe how Sr Augustine and Sr Martin managed to drum most of the lines and actions into our heads in just four days!

The younger children acted Peter and the Wolf, and they were so adorable! Sr Thomas and Sr Clare should be congratulated on their skill in directing - everyone had a special part to play, whether it was dancing, acting, or being in a red-hatted percussion band. The brilliant and enthusiastic acting of the older children in Sr Thomas and Sr Clare's class was all that kept the audience from running on to the stage to hug the littlies, who were in the percussion group or the dancers. The Sisters and the children should be very proud of their production, which also boasted an extra this year of "Macavity the Mystery cat".

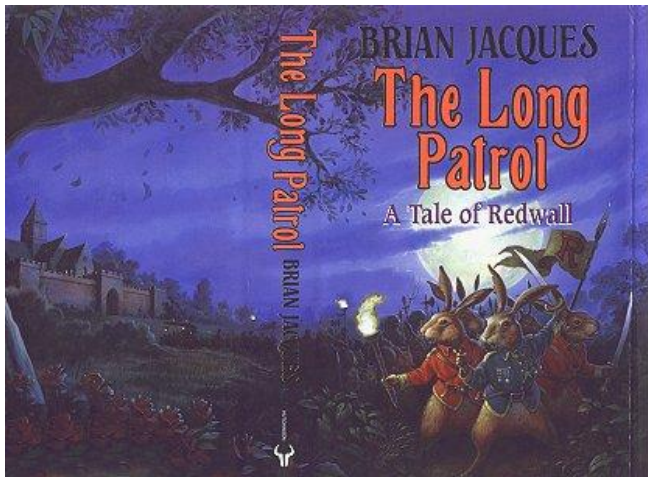
Late Thursday night we came to the conclusion that we'd have to go home the next day..not a very welcome intrusion. So we banished this horrid thought by having a bush dance and postponing all thought of goodbyes until we'd had one last party! But that saying about all good things coming to an end is lamentably true, and as the camp did, so is my report, and if my literary brilliance hasn't already rendered you miserably lamenting having missed September camp, there is truly no hope for you! See you all there next year!

Solution to the crossword on the last page



A Review Of The Redwall Series¹

By Brendan Smith



The Redwall series by Brian Jacques consists of eighteen separate books, and though sometimes containing characters of the previous book the goals are always different.

The books inspire courage, nobility and unselfishness. In order they are

1. Redwall.
2. Mossflower.
3. Mattimeo.
4. Mariel of Redwall.
5. Salamadastron.
6. Martin the Warrior.
7. The Bellmaker.
8. Outcast of Redwall.
9. The Pearls of Lutra.
10. The Long Patrol.
11. Marfox.
12. The Legend of Luke.
13. Lord Brocktree .
14. The Taggerung.
15. Triss.
16. Loamhedge.
17. Rakkety Tam.
18. High Rhulain.

When my sister first told me about them, I was inclined to laugh (after all - a mouse abbey!). I confess I was forced to eat my words because the Redwall series are some of the best books that I have ever read.

¹ For more information, including detailed descriptions of each of the books in the Redwall series, go to the official website at <http://www.redwall.org/dave/library.html> .

Note that this site has not been vetted in detail by Mum and Dad

Though they make long reading the books are as pleasant to read as those of Roald Dahl. I have read all except the eighteenth book and intend to borrow it as soon as our local library has it. My favourite one is the tenth book, *The Long Patrol*. Though the part of the warrior who owns the sword many generations after Martin the Warrior is surprisingly small, I have always enjoyed this epic tale of the hares of Salamadastron. I suppose there is a sad side to most books and the Redwall series is not excepted. I always have a small feeling of dread that another brave creature will die for the greater good of the others of Mossflower and the countries to the North and South of Redwall Abbey.

It is hard to tell which is the best, the Redwall series, the Bush Boys series or the Lord of the Rings. Throughout the series, the spirit of Martin the Warrior appears in visions whether in *Rakkety Tam* to a Brother or Sister of Redwall, or in *The Long Patrol* to a warrior; this spirit of Martin the Warrior continues to guide them to victory.

My favourite book, *The Long Patrol*, opens up at Camp Tussock, a fort belonging to a variety of good creatures with a young hare protagonist called Tammelo De Fformelo Tussock, youngest son of the strict forbidding Colonel Cornspurrey De Fformelo Tussock, an old Long Patrol hare. The Colonel does not want his son Tammo to join the Long Patrol, because he is too young and impatient. However his mother, Mem Divinia, encourages her son to follow his wishes. Girding him with her old Long Patrol dirk, and bribing Russa Nodrey (a squirrel friend of the family) to take him along with her, Mem Divinia hustles the duo out into the night to find the Long Patrol.

Gormad Tunn, the RapsCALLION army leader, died after a skirmish with Lady Cregga Rose Eyes and the Long Patrol hares. His sons Damug and Byral prepare to fight for leadership of the RapsCALLION horde of over one thousand vermin.

Meanwhile at Redwall Abbey something has happened that neither Abess Tansy nor Arven the Warrior had ever anticipated. To find out read the books.

Those who are ten years of age and older and who thrive on adventure, admire bravery, nobility and selflessness will not be able to put these books down. Though you can read the books separately I advise you to read them in order so that you become familiar with all the characters.

Mt Sinai

by Angela Smith

“hi from the top of mt sinai” So read the SMS from our daughter Angela on 15 April this year. This was her second ascent of Mt Sinai, timed to witness the sunset. In this article, she recounts her earlier trip to Mt Sinai which she climbed for the first time in February 2005 to see the sunrise but it was bitterly cold - snow is visible in the photos - and she missed it.

When I bought a ticket to Egypt, I had the same mindset a lot of tourists have when they buy a ticket to Australia. Egypt’s hot, right? Mostly desert, little vegetation and full of camels. But, like Australia, in winter Egypt is also cold. This would have been fine, except that the only shoes I’d brought were a pair of sandals – and the only long pants were my pyjamas. Luckily, when we got to Sinai, and prepared for our hike up the Mount, someone loaned me some jeans and a pair of socks. They might not have been fashionable but they beat the pyjamas!

We arrived in St Katherine’s, the small township at the bottom, well after dark. The tradition is that everyone walks up the hill around 2am, in time to see sunrise at about 5. We’d been warned – there was still ice at the top. It would be cold. Knowing my penchant for constant sleep, I wondered if I’d be able to do it. Could I drag myself out of bed, cold, tired, and trudge this rugged path in socks and sandals? It was the opportunity of a lifetime, but I didn’t like my chances. As I considered this awful possibility, I had a brain wave! What if we walked up at 10pm when it would be a bit warmer?



The Greek Orthodox Monastery of St Catherine, located at the foot of Mt Sinai

Then we could snuggle down into our sleeping bags for the night, get some sleep and be toasty warm when we stuck our heads out in the morning to see the sunrise! Brilliant! I conferred with my fellow pilgrims. They agreed that this was a great plan, and so we prepared for the hike ahead.

I realised I had made a mistake inside the first kilometre. I had a heavy cold (from sleeping in the open air on a sailing boat on the Nile) and needed to rest and cough my guts up every 50 metres or so. And if 10pm is any warmer than 2am – well, it’s only just! However, even at this point, I knew the truth. If I turned back now, there would be no moving me at 2am. I had set myself on a course from which I could not leave. The only way forward was up.

The first part of the walk is like the track from Charlotte’s Pass to Mt Kosciusko: a reasonable climb but nothing that’s going to kill you unless you are very unfit. It takes about 2-3 hours and covers 4-5 kilometres. Occasionally you pass a little stone hut, from which local Bedouins sell various refreshments, but only at the busy times: those hours before and after sunrise and sunset. 10pm wasn’t exactly peak hour and we were a very lonesome rag tag group, with some solid front runners, and myself limping along at the end.



One of the ‘coffee houses’ (stone huts) run by the Bedouins who live in the Sinai area

I’m one of these people who have trouble matching guide book instructions against my geographical location, but I think the last section is known as the “Steps of Repentance”. They run for about three quarters of a kilometre and look like Cirith Ungol, the steps that Sam and Frodo have to clamber over to get to Mount Doom in the Lord of

the Rings. It was here, around 12:30am, that my steely resolve left me. I had perhaps climbed about six of these steps before lowering myself to the ground. I knew I could go no further, that I was sick and tired and cold and wanted to die. I sat there and glanced back at the most recent hut we had passed, just before the bottom of the steps.

And I saw a flicker of human life! For a moment, someone or something had definitely been at the door! Hope warmed me enough to advise my companion that I would not be continuing any further for that night. I intended to throw myself on the mercy of whatever creature was now inside that last hut and she should let the others know if she ever caught up with them. I leapt down the steps, confident that both sleep and warmth were only moments away.

At the door, I tapped very discreetly. There was noise inside, as someone started to boil a huge pot of water to make coffee and tea and hot chocolate in a few hours time. I tapped again, my hope faltering a fraction. I was sure I would die of cold and exhaustion if I was not admitted shortly. I knocked louder again. Finally, I considered the biblical significance of my surroundings and raised my eyes to Heaven. "God," I prayed, "it says in the Bible 'knock and the door shall be opened to you' and THIS DOOR HAS JUST GOT TO OPEN!!!" One final attempt on the door achieved the desired result. In front of me stood a bemused Bedouin man. "Drink?" he asked me uncertainly, but I had already bounded past him and was unpacking my sleeping bag. "Sleep now, drink later" was my response and the last thing I thought of I drifted off were the words of our tour leader when we started, "Make sure you stay together".

I enjoyed my rest and relative warmth for the next few hours until the morning rush started to catch up with us. Woken, I clambered outside for a look around. It was still dark but there was no way I was joining this enthusiastic throng. I remained tired and cold. It was time to quit. Fleeting, I thought I should have quit in my bed at 2am as originally planned but ignored this thought and returned indoors. My rescuer from the night before had gathered my things and placed them behind his counter and he hustled me in to sit beside the small little burner he had going. I gradually defrosted over about the next two hours and revived by the hot chocolate, bread roll and orange he shared with me, I started to despise my weakness.

I had missed sunrise. But worse, I had failed the Mountain. Missing sunrise was one thing. The sun rises most days in most parts of the world.

But this was the only place I would ever get to see Mt Sinai. I should at least admire the view. I gritted my teeth. It was time to keep going. My Bedouin protector was rather concerned: "you can see sun!" It was impossible to explain why I had to keep going, but in the end, he bundled me up in his ex-Israeli Army jacket and I left the rest of my cargo behind to try and find my friends and make it to the top.



It was cold! One of Angela's travelling companions stands by snow and ice at the summit of Mt Sinai



Views from the summit of Mt Sinai

The Steps of Repentance lived up to their name. I made the summit, was reunited with my friends, admired the view and caused a sensation amongst locals and tourists alike with the jacket. I dutifully returned this and collected my own belongings on the way back, and lurched my way to the bottom, taking up my traditional position of last on our expedition.

I was too hazy to really appreciate my visit to the Greek Orthodox Monastery at the bottom, but I returned to Mt Sinai another time. I caught up with an Australian friend I'd met earlier in my trip and we climbed to see sunset. It was beautiful and after a warm, decent nights sleep we returned to the monastery the next day. The second time I had a better appreciation of how interesting this site is. Not only does it remain an active monastery, but contains the relics of St Catherine of Alexandria, a bush descended from *the* Burning Bush, the well where Moses met his wife, plus a mosque! The mosque means that the Monastery is a sacred place to both Christians and Muslims and gives it some protection from an attack.



The sunrise captured by one of those who made it



Another view of the monastery

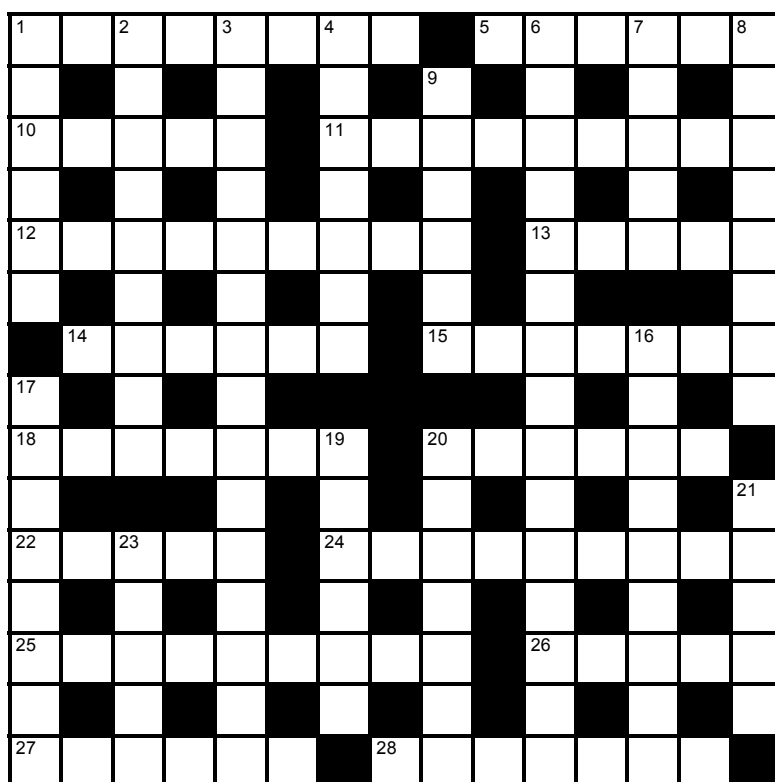


Angela standing in front of The Burning Bush (see Exodus 3), located in the township of St Katherine's



Mosaic above the tabernacle in St Catherine's

So my advice in summary: don't climb at night during winter, don't climb in sandals and socks, plan a return visit if possible, and most importantly, have an open mind about the exact nature of any religious experience you may or may not have. After all, the door did open!



Across

- 1 Place to pitch a tent and light a campfire (8)
- 5 Pope's representative in each country (6)
- 10 Cancel a law or contract (5)
- 11 Of a bishop or bishops (9)
- 12 Mysterious and puzzling (9)
- 13 Tropical fruit with yellow pulp (5)
- 14 Ask someone to come or do something (6)
- 15 A soft sweet made with chocolate (7)
- 18 Continue, behave excitedly (5-2)
- 20 Suitable for eating, not poisonous (6)
- 22 Apart, not taking part, appearing disinterested (5)
- 24 The Souls of the Church Suffering are here (9)
- 25 Old curiosities, knick-knacks (4-1-4)
- 26 Where do we find a body and a soul? (2-3)
- 27 The Christian name of the author of *Brideshead Revisited* (6)
- 28 Another name for hell (7)

Down

- 1 St Anthony Mary (6)
- 2 A title of distinction granted by the Pope (9)
- 3 Highest liturgical rank of a feast to Mary (9,2,4)
- 4 Set of supports on which a board is rested to form a table (7)
- 6 unwilling to talk (15)
- 7 "And then the justice, In fair round belly with good lined" (from Jaques speech on the seven ages of man in *As You Like It*) (5)
- 8 Observer, spectator (8)
- 9 Large feline (3,3)
- 16 Original Sin caused this (4,2,3)
- 17 Clamber across difficult ground (8)
- 19 Household linen especially table linen (6)
- 20 Pain in the ear (7)
- 21 The baby Jesus found in a manger (5)
- 23 To express an opinion (5)

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