

The Carmelite News

AUGUST 1994



THIS YEAR'S WINNERS

Once again the grand draw has come and gone. All winners are listed in this letter. Perhaps your name is there? If so, congratulations; if not, thank you for having a go and supporting our work through the draw. Without your generosity we would be in a poorly way to help the Church's mission to bring the Good News to his people. And thanks also if you are one of the very helpful people who puts a stamp in with your letters to cover the reply. Every little helps.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

You will find a nice little poem about the secret working of prayer in the frame this issue. And of course there is another working of prayer we do not see the results of because they are effective in the next world. I mean our prayers for the dead. Once again November is on the horizon as I write, and that is the time we remember those gone before us to the Father's House. Let us speed them on their journey with our prayers. You will find the form for the **Dead List** of the Carmelite Holy Souls Society with the **My Intentions** leaflet, in with this letter, so that they will be remembered at the Altar.

LOOKING UP

Events have conspired to draw my attention to the sky recently. Actually, that doesn't take a lot of doing because star gazing has always been one of my interests since it was stimulated by a teacher at Primary School: he had a great influence on my life, pointing me into Science, which was my first career before I entered religion. Let me name him, since he was so important, and

the Good Book says we should praise famous men in our past. (*Let us next praise illustrious men, our ancestors in their successive generations.* Sir. 44.1) He was Mr Baker, without whom I would not be here writing to you today. So you can bless or curse Mr Baker as you think fit!

Of course, my stargazing has been mostly with the naked eye, occasionally with binoculars. Professional astronomers use very big instruments today, and these allied with colour photography enable the likes of you and me to see wonders that beggar our human powers of imagination. The picture on the front of this letter shows a galaxy, made up of millions of stars, in the Southern sky. (The picture was taken in Australia.) I chose it because this galaxy is very similar to the one we are part of, like a flat disc swirling round like a whirlpool. It is 60,000 light years (that is about 5,900,000,000,000 miles) across!! The heavens truly are telling the glory of the Lord.

One thing I'd better mention in connection with the stars is that we have celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Moon Landing. At the time, looking back, it generated enormous interest. I was still teaching Biology then, and was in fact leading a field trip from West Bromwich, where I worked, to Plas Gwynant - at the bottom of Snowdon - on the night of the landing itself. Everybody else intended to stay up half the night to hear it live on the radio. But as a fan of Dan Dare for many years (before *Star Trek* was invented!) landing on the moon was old hat and I went to bed. And in fact it did not prove to be the start of a new era of space exploration that some people predicted. The race for the moon had been fuelled and driven by fear in the Cold War, and had taken risks that were concealed at the time, but are

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Growing old isn't so bad - when
you consider the alternative.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The day was long,
the burden I had borne
seemed heavier
than I could longer bear,
and then it lifted.
But I did not know
someone had knelt in prayer,
had taken me to God that very hour,
and asked the easing of the load,
and He, in infinite compassion,
had stooped down and taken it from me.

We cannot tell how often, as we pray
for some bewildered one,
hurt and distressed,
the answer comes:
but many times those hearts
find sudden peace and rest.

Someone had prayed,
and Faith, a reaching hand,
took hold of God
and brought Him down that day.
So many, many hearts
have need of prayer . . .
O, LET US PRAY.

And how vast and mysterious has been revealed recently by the events on Jupiter, the giant planet over 500,000,000 miles away. An innocent comet, a chunk of ice and rock, hurtling on its elongated trip around the sun passed perilously close to Jupiter two years ago and the power of the gravity of that giant planet pulled the comet apart into 21 pieces, which continued on their way like, as one observer put it, a string of pearls. And as they swung round the sun again, they were on a collision course with Jupiter. It is difficult to imagine it, but try: 21 chunks of rubble, some two miles across,

now being revealed as secret film footage is being released on this anniversary. We had bitten off more than we could chew and the reality has proved a great disappointment for the prophets of the new age of space travel. A far cry from Dan Dare and Star Trek.

When I was young and Dan Dare was my friend as we voyaged to Venus each Friday morning as the issues of *Eagle* came out, we thought we had the world of space in the bag. We thought we knew how it was made and how it worked. Astronomy had little left to do but cross the T's and dot the I's. But in recent years that has proved a big mistake, and we now know that we are, as Isaac Newton said, just children picking up pebbles on the edge of the ocean of knowledge which lies before us vast and mysterious.

travelling at **35 miles per second** plunged into the atmosphere of the planet. The fragments heated up and exploded, throwing plumes of debris **1500 miles** into space. Alas, the impact sites were all on the side of Jupiter facing away from the Earth, so no-one actually saw the impacts but as the planet spun round, a few minutes later the sites came into view. Some of the impacts had caused marks on Jupiter bigger than the size of the Earth! Over the next few months scientists will be analysing all the images to learn more about how the universe is made and how it works.

SEEING STARS

All this study of the sky and things in it began when Galileo turned his new

telescope to the heavens. He did not, as many books still say, invent the telescope. In 1608, Hans Lipershey of Middelburg in the Netherlands applied for a patent on a telescope, but his application was rejected because even then "many other persons had a knowledge of the invention". In 1609 Galileo constructed one that magnified 30 times, and on January 7th 1610 he pointed it into the night sky. And what he saw brought an era to an end and began the modern study of the sky that lead to Neil Armstrong walking on the moon and the interest of the crash of the comet fragments into Jupiter, which was indeed the first heavenly body that Galileo looked at. In a heaven where nothing was supposed to change he discovered four tiny moons going round Jupiter; he saw (and was completely baffled by) the rings round Saturn; and found the pale wash of the Milky Way across the sky was in fact made up of an incredible number of tiny separate stars. A few more nights' observations revealed that Venus showed "phases" very like the more obvious phases of the moon. In great excitement he published these

and other observations in a series of newsletters that made him famous throughout Europe. (They also put him on a collision course with the church which held at that time (but not now) that the Bible could be used as a textbook of physics, geography, biology astronomy and history.) Before Galileo looked through his telescope at the heavens people thought that the sky was like a bowl over the Earth, and the stars were points of light on the lining of the bowl.

Some of them moved slowly and regularly and predictably (we call them planets), and others moved much faster and less predictably (we call them meteors and comets) but essentially they were all thought of as "stars", totally different from the stuff of Earth. Thinking about this as I watched the programmes about the Moon Landing and the Jupiter collisions, I wondered what the Good Book had to say about stars.

THE STARS OF GLORY

It turns out that it has quite a lot to say about stars (by which it means anything

GRAND DRAW WINNERS

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£100 each goes to

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in the sky except the sun and the moon), but nothing that is astronomy, nor that is astrology. And the reason for this is not far to seek. The two great civilisations which flanked Israel (Egypt and Babylonia) were keen stargazers, and were able to make quite accurate predictions of some events in the sky, like eclipses. But their close study of the heavens was part of their religion. For them the sun, the moon, the stars and the

planets were Gods, and their slow movement across the sky were signs from which the future might be predicted if you studied them hard enough. Naturally all this was rejected by the Israelites, for whom the one true God had total control of the whole world, and whose mind no-one could read. So the whole business of astrology and the 'scientific' study of the stars that underlay it was rejected lock, stock and barrel. The Old Testament is emphatic in asserting that the LORD created the stars simply as lights and for the reckoning of time, and as his creatures he numbers them, calls them by name, and invites them to praise him, just as they, the sons of the morning, joined in song on the day of creation (Gen. 1:16, Ps. 8:4, 136:9,

AT THE NAME OF JESUS

Jesus is the BLAZING STAR

I see him - but not in this time,
I perceive him - but not close at hand:
a star rising out of Jacob,

a staff springing from Israel's root,
one who will strike the brow of Moab,
bring devastation on the sons of tumult.

(Numbers 24:17)

Jesus is that rising star.

He is a shining Prince
who rules over the nations;

He gives that
authority to those who overcome.

JESUS SAYS:

I am the root and the offspring
of David, the bright morning star.
And the Spirit and the bride say,
"Come."

And let anyone who is thirsty come;
let the one who wishes take the water
of life without cost come
to my brightness.

Jer. 31:35,
Ps. 147:4,
148:3, Jb. 38:7.)

About the stars
as Gods, and
predicting the
future, it say this:
When you raise
your eyes to
heaven, when
you see the sun,
the moon, the
stars - the entire
array of heaven
- do not be
tempted to
worship them
and serve them.
(Deut. 4:19).
You have had
many tiring
consultations:
let the
astrologers
come forward
now and save
you, the
stargazers who
announce

month by month what will happen to
you next . . . none of them can save
you. (Isa. 47:13-15) Hands up if you
read your horoscope in the paper this
morning!

The stars are the highest things in the
sky - but well below God. The height of
human ambition, infringing upon the
prerogatives of deity, is to strive to
reach the stars. (Isa. 14:13) and:
*Though you soar like an eagle, though
you set your nest among the stars, I
shall bring you down from there! -
declares THE LORD.* (Obadiah v.4)
Astronauts beware!

The stars are also used as symbols in
the Bible. The darkening of the stars is
used as a metaphor for old age (Ez.
12:2). God's glory makes the brilliant
stars seem dim and impure (Job 25:5)

yet the righteous will shine like stars (Dan. 12:3). Perhaps with this passage in mind St Paul compares the differences in the glory of the elect to the degrees of brightness of the stars (1Cor. 15:41). The wicked, on the other hand, are stars which have wandered from their courses (Jude v.13b). When the world ends and judgement comes, the stars are darkened or fall from their places in the sky. And at the very end of the Good Book, on the

very last page, Jesus who will come to save his people calls himself the Morning Star signalling the new NEW day dawning on a new NEW world.

And I suppose I cannot finish dealing with stars in the Good Book without some mention of the star of Bethlehem. The possible astronomical explanations do not work (despite being rehashed every Christmas in the popular press): no comet is known that fits the date of the birth; any conjunction of stars and planets would not have lasted long enough, would not have moved in the sky and would not have been called a 'star' in Greek; and although there may have been a sudden flaring up of a star as a nova, it would not have moved in the sky. So it seems more likely that St Matthew's verses are a "midrash" on Num. 24:17 which speaks of a star rising from Jacob when the promised saviour appears, to be discerned by those to whom God reveals it.

AN APPEAL

This time for information, not money! With an eye to something I think I might write about in the next issue, or the one after that. I am appealing for

copies of the words of a song. It is usually called **Green Grow the Rushes, O!** What I am looking for are different versions, and some sort of explanation of what the various things like the Lily-White Boys, the Proud Walkers and so on that appear in the verses. If you can help with any of the words or any explanation do please write to me about it. Also a copy of

the music would be appreciated, even on loan for me to copy myself.

FORTHCOMING NOVENAS

Little Flower	23rd Sept - 1st Oct
Holy Rosary	7th - 15th Oct
St. Jude	20th-28th Oct

TIME TO SMILE

And not before time, you may say! Did you hear about the man who went to the cinema and bought a ticket for himself and his dog? One of the ushers watched in astonishment as the dog laughed and laughed all through the film. As the man and the dog were leaving the usher was unable to resist commenting. "I must say," he said to the man, "that I was absolutely amazed to see your dog laughing at the film." "Well, to be honest," said the man, "so was I, because he hated the book."

May you live all the days of your life in Mary's care so that you may come one day rejoicing into the presence of her Son. Till next time, God bless.

David J. Fox
O. Carm.

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