



# IACAC NEWSLETTER

International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains

December 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
We are in that special time of the year when families all gather together to celebrate, for Christians it is the birth of Jesus, for others it is a celebration of the winter solstice that in time gone by was immensely important because communities were not certain of living through the winter, and had to be prepared during the previous nine months. It was also the last feast celebration before deep winter began. Another aspect of the event is seen as the reversal of the Sun's ebbing presence in the sky and the year is seen as being reborn, the days get longer and nights shorter.

As we gather and celebrate, we start to recall times gone by and tell stories such as remember when each of us gave the same present and our son also gave us a similar one, or do you remember the time uncle Bob done so and so. A great time and something we should hold onto. This is also the time when the ancient stories of the birth of Jesus is recounted in word, song and theatre whether that be a large production, or the children's nativity play in the church, school or the community. The main characters in the story are Jesus and Mary his mother, in the Bible we hear a great deal about Mary, but I am sure that a great many of us do not know or realise that Mary is highly thought of, revered and mentioned frequently in the Quran, her narrative occurs in the earliest chapters, revealed in Mecca, to the latest verses, revealed in Medina. She is seen as one of the most righteous women who have lived, and Muslim women look upon her as an example and are known to visit both Muslim and Christian shrines.

And so it must have been traumatic for Mary and Joseph when they had to up sticks and flee to Egypt after have travelled to Bethlehem to fulfil the Roman Census orders, looking forward to returning to their village and families to show off their new son.

They travelled to Beni Suef, a place that I stayed at during the 2003 conference of the Diakonia where we lived in a Coptic Christian Convent that was reputed to be the place where they stayed during their time there. As I looked out of my

room there I was certain that the landscape had not changed since the time that the Holy Family who were refugees or even Asylum seekers. Today it is no different for many people living in that part of the world and across the world as we see on our television screens and so as we celebrate with our friends and families let us remember all those who are seeking refuge and are 'Strangers in a Strange land' which we ourselves are a various times in our lives.

One of my abiding memories of beginning being a stranger in a strange land at Beni Suef but ending up as someone who felt accepted was the last night of our time there as we were celebrating our farewell Eucharist on the roof of the Convent and singing our final hymn 'The day you gave us, Lord has ended' across the plain from the Mosque the Muezzin was putting up the evening prayer. As these two calls went up into the heavens what was said to me, there is only one God and so my and so my friends I wish you and your friends and families all my best wishes for the season in his name.

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## **A REFLECTION-**

### The Touch of the Master's Hand

It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on an old violin, but held it up with a smile. 'What am I bid, good folks,' he cried. 'Who will start the bidding for me?' 'A dollar, a dollar'; then 'Two! Only two? Two dollars. And who will make it three- but no'. From the room, far back, a grey

haired man came forward and picked up the bow; then wiping the dust from the old violin. Tightenin the loose strings, he played a melody pure and sweet as a carolling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said "What am I bid for the old violin?" and he held it up with the bow. "A thousand dollars, and who will make it two? Two thousand! And who will make it three? Three thousand once, three thousand, twice, and going, going, gone." he said.

The people cheered, but some of them cried, 'We do not understand what changed its worth' Swift came the reply, "The Touch of a Master's Hand" And many a person with life out of tune, battered and scarred wirth sin, is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin. A 'mess of pottage', a glass of wine, a game- and they travel on. They are 'going' once, and 'going' twice, they are 'going' and almost 'gone'. But the master comes, and the foolish crowd never can understand the worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

### **NEWS FROM OUR CHAPLAINCIES**

It was with great sadness we learned of the death on Christmas Day of the mother of our friend and colleague Andreas Sembdner at Dresden Airport. Her funeral will be held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January and the IACAC will be represented by Fr Chris Piasta from JFK. Our thoughts and prayers are with Andreas and his family at this time and may God give them comfort.

At London Heathrow, Major Fred Thompson has received farewell orders to proceed to a new Corps appointment in February. At this time there is no news of anyone being appointed to succeed him.

Congratulations to Arlanda Stockholm on celebrating their twenty year anniversary. It was good to see the photographs on our website of some of the past chaplains at Arlanda joining in the celebrations.

Christmas celebrations were held in many airports all round the world. Carol singing echoed from

Melbourne to Glasgow and all places in between and beyond.

Bishop Athenagoras, chaplain at Brussels Airport, was enthroned as the new Metropolitan of Belgium and Exarch of the Netherlands. Archbishop Athenagoras is fluent in a number of languages and has represented the Orthodox Church at many theological conferences and is a regular attender at our own annual conference.

At the entrance to the International Airport of Rome, Fiumicino, stands the statue of Our Lady of Loretto. A new cloak has been designed for the statue, more similar to the original one and was dedicated on the eve of the solemn feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Special beacons light up the image by night creating a striking effect of invitation to prayer and veneration.



HAPPY NEW YEAR  
AND  
GREETINGS OF THE SEASON TO  
EVERYBODY.

MANY BEST WISHES FOR 2014

### **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.

James D Miles