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Cousins in Christ, O Night Divine

By Lisa M. Hendey

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Music Spotlight Interview

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Christmas is a time of celebration, rich spiritual tradition, and family. With the release of their new CD O Night Divine the Catholic music group Cousins in Christ combines these three elements, creating a masterpiece your family will treasure for years to come. These talented young singers, ages fourteen through nineteen, are actually "double cousins" sharing the same two sets of grandparents. John Paul Rudolph(19), Rebecca Meyer (18), Matthew Rudolph (17), Katie Meyer (16), David Rudolph (15), and Stephenie Meyer (14) now perform together combining their love of song and their strong Catholic faith formation.

O Night Divine includes twelve timeless performances of traditional Christmas carols, blending a myriad of styles and featured solos and spiritual narratives by each of the Cousins. Cousins in Christ recently completed several days of filming accompanying music videos for the CDs. These captivating videos will be featured in two EWTN Christmas specials during December. Fr. Mitch Pacwa will spotlight the Cousins in Christ and their music in his Christmas special, to be aired on Wednesday December 15th at 7:00 pm and midnight and again on Thursday December 16th at 8:00 am.

The music of O Night Divine will be performed during the Cousins in Christ Christmas Special, to be aired on EWTN on Wednesday, December 22 at 7:00 pm and midnight and again on Thursday, December 23rd at 8:00 am.

John Paul Rudolph of Cousins in Christ recently spoke with Register correspondent Lisa Hendey on the experience of performing as a young Catholic musician.

Q: How did the Cousins in Christ get started singing together and can you tell us about some of your earlier projects?

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A: The Cousins in Christ are actually double cousins since they share the same two sets of grandparents. Steve Rudolph married Rose Marie Meyer. Then Bob Meyer (brother of Rose) married Carol Rudolph (sister of Steve).

Rose Marie has been a singer and performer since she was a small child. In 1997, she was preparing to record a country album when her son Kevin suffered a ruptured appendix and was hospitalized as his five year old body was stricken with infection. After a successful surgery, Rose Marie prayed in the hospital chapel in thanksgiving. It was there that she felt God's calling to promote belief of the True Presence in the Eucharist. Within a few months, she produced our first CD, Bread of Life, Bread of Heaven – The Story of the Eucharist for Children.

At the time, the Cousins ranged in age from newborn to 11. Two vanloads of 10 children traveled 400

miles roundtrip to Chicago for recording sessions. Our parents were impressed by our good behavior, never complaining about the long recording sessions, meals on the go, and having to keep quiet in the studio. We discovered that while each of us was individually talented, the blend of our voices was even more beautiful.

Both the Rudolph and Meyer families now have six children each - with the oldest 3 Rudolph boys and 3 Meyer girls as the primary performers under the direction of Rose Marie Rudolph.

Q: How does your Catholic faith impact the music you record?

A: Our Catholic faith provides the foundation and core of our music for we began first and foremost as a music ministry to bring souls to Christ. Our hope is to respond to the call of Pope John Paul II to evangelize through the media and use our talents for God.

We generally record one or more original songs for each CD - ranging from honor of Our Blessed Mother to pro-life, pro-child themes and even one ambitious attempt to incorporate Familias Consortio and Humanae Vitae into song!

Q: What is it like to be a teenager or young adult involved in the Music industry?

A: It is very exciting. We are fortunate to have this experience at such a young age. However, being involved in this ever-changing industry has challenges in itself. To an extent, we have become role models for our peers, and have to act accordingly. We find that trying to mix school, work, family obligations and social time while practicing for performances and planning for future CDs is sometimes overwhelming! We've learned quickly that responding to God's call requires maturity and sacrifice. And God has provided the graces for us to grow spiritually and artistically. John Paul and Rebecca have both been awarded college scholarships for vocal performance and the younger Cousins will hopefully follow in their footsteps.

This ministry has been a blessing in ways we are just beginning to realize. We have been very blessed to be able to spread the faith in countries including Canada, Singapore, Australia, many Africa countries, and recently in Iraq. We just received a thank you note from a soldier in Iraq who says he

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regularly listens to Bread of Life Bread of Heaven. We are thankful to have been able to use our talents to serve God, promoting the Catholic faith and good wholesome music.

Q: How can Catholic parents help their teenagers make good choices when it comes to the music they listen to?

A: Music is just another personal choice in life that all people make. This is similar to other choices like drugs, alcohol, choosing friends, or even cleaning up a room. If children have been raised to realize what is good and what is offensive to God, they will have the ability to make good choices. Of course parents can influence their children in the area of music. If the children learn to appreciate music (many different genres) and are pointed, but not forced towards appropriate music, most children will be drawn to good music.

Children must be taught (in words and example) to love what is good and wholesome and develop their consciences to be uncomfortable with that which offends God. Fill your house with joyful music and your children will develop proper musical taste. Be sure to have a healthy mix of secular and sacred music, so that your children are exposed to a wide variety of musical styles. You should also

network with other parents about what their family has enjoyed.

A: Who are some of the Cousins influences and favorite recording artists?

One of our favorite artists is John Groban. We are all Grobanites and just recently went to his concert in Chicago. He is an amazing vocalist and performer. Cecilia Bartoli, an opera mezzo-soprano is a favorite of the girls, while the guys like Celine Dion—along with many other artists. We've also performed in many musicals and have a great appreciation of Broadway and the Big Band Era. We've been greatly influenced by our good friend and fellow Catholic artist Mary Anne LaHood. We like to sing and perform numerous oldies, especially music from the 50's. Other favorites include many Catholic and Christian artists.

We've also been greatly influenced by the wonderful voice teachers we've learned from over the years.

Q: O Night Divine is such a beautiful Christmas gift! How did you decide to record a Christmas CD and how did you select the songs for the CD?

A: There are so many beautiful and joyful Christmas songs that we couldn't resist!

Christmas has become secularized over the years, yet the airwaves are still filled with the joyful news of the birth of the Savior - in song! We saw an opportunity to expand our music ministry to a wider audience and to attract more teens and young adults to the good news of Christ!

Each of the Cousins picked personal favorites for solos that showcased his or her voice. As a group we selected some longtime family favorites, and some traditional Latin tunes. We had a lot of fun composing harmonies, resulting in fresh new renditions of old time carols. O Little Town of Bethlehem has a jazzy/pop element; Joy to the World is a bold, upbeat, and driving rendition, while the Acapella

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Dona Nobis Pacem reminds us of how the angels must have sung of Peace on Earth at Jesus' birth.

O Night Divine was a completely different experience compared to the other albums. First of all, this is the only CD that we, the Cousins, co-produced. We were involved in every step of its creation, while on the other albums we merely sang. Just the recording experience itself was incredible. It had been years since the last album we had recorded together and we had a totally different mentality. We wanted to create something different and something that expressed how we had matured from the last album. We tried multiple new ideas, like the idea of a pop version of O Little Town of Bethlehem. After multiple attempts, we were ready to drop the idea. At this time, is where our amazing friend and producer Gary Loizzo came into play. Gary is the sound producer for the group "Styx" and is incredibly talented with music. He saw something in this song that we had missed. We should have known that this is what decades of recording experience will get you. Despite Rose's requests to just can the idea, Gary insisted that we continue, promising that the song would be great. He really is responsible for the outcome of that song. Just the experience of this song alone was worth the recording session. Each of the other songs has their story, and while it might not have been as significant an event as O Little Town, each of us really enjoyed and grew not only as performers, but also as persons from this wonderful experience.

Reflecting on this album has led us to realize that with three other CDs behind us, O Night Divine might be seen as the perfect ending point. But we all see it as the beginning of a new twist to the Cousins in Christ music collection. We had so many other songs we would have liked to have recorded. We'll have to save those for the next Christmas CD!

Q: Do you have any future projects in the works?

A: The future includes many live performances both individually and as a group. We're often asked to sing at conferences, conventions, fundraisers, weddings and special Diocesan occasions. We feel more and more called to produce secular music, in addition to religious, to influence the general public as good role models. We believe the Christmas CD will reach a wider audience as we are working with major distributors and nationwide chain stores for the first time. We believe a Broadway CD is in the future, but have not set a timeframe for it yet.

For more information on Cousins in Christ visit them at www.roseofsharonmedia.com

Lisa M. Hendey, webmaster of CatholicMom.com, writes from Fresno, California.

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Christ and Covenant

By Aleck Cartwright

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The Covenant and Christ

All are under sin, whether under the law or barbarians, and apart from the Law we are all in need of righteousness. Not one of us can stand before God righteous apart from Christ in us as our righteousness. God does have a covenant with Israel as His chosen race and we as believers are grafted onto the chosen race by grace. This is where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free for we are all in Christ, and there is a level playing field for all mankind who are made partakers of divine nature.

We as Gentiles never become Jews, except in the spiritual sense we become circumcised in our hearts having the law of God written on our hearts and in our minds. In Christ we realise the fulfillment of the law in our lives. We cannot attain to it and neither can the Jew, so whether we are under the law or not, we are all facing the wrath of God towards sin. Where God will judge us for what we have done according to Paul's gospel, which is Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

We as gentiles do by nature that which is required by the law because we have Christ the fulfillment of the Law at work within us. What a wonderful position to be in before God. Israel is still God's chosen people and as such they have the protection and covenant of God.

Sin is what all men have and righteousness is what all men need.

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Aleck is a missionary and author, to learn more go to www.god-life.com.



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