

# *THE THIRD ORDER*

## *Australian Province Newsletter,*

### *PNG & East Asia*

*E a s t e r*

*E d i t i o n*

### **From the Provincial**

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is my hope, as we step out in faith that for each of us will be given grace, in the year ahead, to fulfil all that God has called us to do. My greatest joy is the knowledge that I am fully connected to each of you through prayer and our community obedience. In the past two years



as Provincial, I have had the joy of meeting many members of our family as I have travelled or have attended Provincial's meetings, Convocations and General Chapter.

As a member of our Order for many years, I have been fortunate to have been able to meet so many of our brothers and sisters, some of whom are now resting in God's presence. In each case, as I am sure you will acknowledge, I have found in our meeting, a bond of strength and fellowship.

For the past year I was fortunate to spend time with our dear brother Rob DeCaen. Rob came to Adelaide to be near his family, and joined our Parish and our Franciscan community. Despite infirmity and age, Rob witnessed to me and our family his great love of Jesus expressed by an irrepressible joy of life and faith. Many of you will remember his piano talent! Rob, ready to meet his Lord, left us on the 6th of January aged 89.

How blessed we are to have met God's messengers during our lifetime, people who in the most simplest way have changed our lives and given us a direction to step out in faith. In Rob's communion set [left to our parish], I found a small service booklet used by the Ballarat Community. The introduction strengthens our sense of togetherness and common purpose:

'Let us welcome each other, recalling that we do so, not as ordinary people but as those who have responded to the call of Francis and Clare within our Third Order and the Anglican family...yet being always open to all families of believers, who come seeking to know Lord Jesus, through the little humble one.'

In our journey we are continually challenged to discern God's will, not our own. Our brother Francis exemplified his faith and trust in his prayer, 'My God, my all' and in his prayer for the day: Lord, help us to live this day quietly, easily; to lean upon your great strength trustfully, restfully; to wait for the unfolding of your will patiently, serenely; to meet others peacefully, joyously; to face tomorrow confidently, courageously.'

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song; this Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease! My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand. [excerpt]

The lyrics written in this beautiful song are inspirational in praising God's unconditional love for each of us, day by day, 'Till He returns or calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.' Stuart Townend & Keith Getty Copyright © 2001 Thank you Music.

In the coming months, please pray for me and members of Provincial Chapter as we prepare for our meeting in Melbourne on May 2nd- 4th. Pray also within your regions for those who have begun their noviciate and for those who will be elected to profession.

May your journey during Lent and the dawning of Easter 2014 be one of blessing for each of you.

Peace, joy and love,  
Colin tssf



### **Preparing for the Journey of Lent**

By: Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M.Cap.  
Via Catholic Philly

Every year God offers us this great season of humility as a chance to remember who we are as believers, reflect soberly on our actions and refocus ourselves on the source of our hope, the only real hope of a bloody and despairing world: Jesus Christ. We do this through prayer, silence, the sacrament of penance, seeking out and reconciling with those whom we've hurt, forgiving those who've hurt us, generosity to the poor, and fasting, not just from food, but from all those many things that distract us from the God who made and loves us.

Visit us on the web at [www.tssf.org.au](http://www.tssf.org.au)

## FROM THE FRANCISCAN READINGS

**Maundy Thursday**      **9th April 2009**

The ancient tradition of the Church established this day as the beginning of the Triduum where many things were celebrated on that day: the blessing of oil, the commemoration of the institution of the Eucharist, the pedilavium (washing of feet), and of reconciliation. Later, the solemn stripping of altars and reposing the sacrament until Saturday night was included. Originally, all of this happened during the day in a continual feast. The evening liturgy has been hijacked by a misunderstanding of the role of the priesthood – it is a strengthening of the community.

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### On The Mystery Of His Passion Fifth Fruit: His Confidence In Trials

Excerpt from: "The Tree of Life"

Page 140-141

By: St. Bonaventure

The first thing that occurs to one who wishes to contemplate devoutly the passion of Jesus Christ is the perfidy of the traitor. So filled with the poison of deceit that he betrayed his Teacher and Lord; so on fire with the flame of greed that he sold the all-good God for money and weighed the most precious blood of Christ against the price of a cheap reward. So ungrateful was he that he pursued to death the one who had entrusted everything to him and had elevated him to the height of apostolic dignity. So hardened was he that he could not be called back for the evil he had conceived by the intimacy of the banquet, the humility of Christ's deference or the sweetness of his words.

O marvelous kindness of the Master  
toward this hardened disciple,  
toward this wicked servant of the loving Lord!  
*Certainly it were better for that man  
if he had not been born.*

But although the traitor's impiety was inexplicable,  
the most sweet meekness of the Lamb of God  
surpassed it beyond measure.

This meekness was given  
as an example to mortal men, so that  
when exasperated by a friend,  
our human weakness would no longer say:  
*If my enemy had reviled me,  
I could have borne it,*  
because there was a man, another self,  
*who seemed to be a companion and friend,  
who ate the bread of Christ  
and at that sacred supper  
partook sweet food with him –  
he it was  
who raised his heel against him!*

And nevertheless in the very hour of  
his betrayal  
this most mild Lamb did not refuse to  
apply with a sweet kiss  
his mouth *in which no guile was found*  
to the mouth which abounded in iniquity  
in order to give the traitor every opportunity  
to soften the obstinacy of his perverse heart.



### The Franciscan Collect

O God, who opened the eyes of our holy Father St. Francis to the vocation of service to you in this world; grant grace to the members of the Third Order that being crucified with Christ, may show forth among men the radiance of his risen life, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God, world without end. Amen.

From: Franciscan Order of the Divine Compassion  
[www.fodc.net/Collects.html](http://www.fodc.net/Collects.html)

“Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! And transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.”

By: St Clare of Assisi

### Third Order Provincial Chapter

Being held in Melbourne

On May 2nd – May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Please pray for members of Provincial Chapter

## Tribute to Robert deCaan

By: Norma Jean & Malcolm Willsher

John Robert de la Bruyere de Caan, tssf  
R.I.P. 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

Robert was professed in the Third Order of St Francis in May 1982. He was born in London to a French Roman Catholic mother and an English Methodist father. He was brought up with religious tolerance, practical Christianity, love, respect for all mankind and all God's creations. He was a very happy and lively person, and he welcomed the hearts and minds of all people.

He was ordained an Anglican Priest in 1952. He had a love for learning. He studied many subjects and attained 14 degrees in his academic learning career. Among his ministry years he was in Docklands of London; in 1955-58 he was the YMCA chaplain; and in 1957 he represented the German Boys Scouts at World Jamboree.

He started teaching, and in 1963 he came to Victoria and took up teaching at Trinity Grammar. He also founded the International Marian Movement; and was very talented in music - playing instruments, composing music and was a fine artist. As well, he was on the Victorian Olympic Council. He lived a life of great wisdom and hope.

He is the most Christian and compassionate man one is ever likely to meet.

Robert was our dear friend of 30 years of hospitality and we traveled together around western Victoria for The Order Gatherings.

Rob always said,

"I believe we are sent to each other – I really do"  
and this applied to all he met.

## But few who bear His Cross

By: ~Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ,  
Book II, Chapter XI.

Jesus has always many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who bear His cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who care for trial. He finds many to share His table, but few to take part in His fasting. All desire to be happy with Him; few wish to suffer anything for Him. Many follow Him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion. Many revere His miracles; few approach the shame of the cross. Many love Him as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless Him as long as they receive some comfort from Him. But if Jesus hides Himself and leaves them for a while, they fall either into complaints or into deep dejection. Those, on the contrary, who love Him for His own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless Him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. Even if He should never give them consolation, yet they would continue to praise Him and wish always to give Him thanks. What power there is in pure love for Jesus—love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!

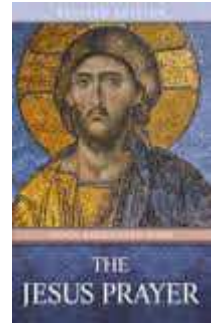


## Prayer of the Heart – The Jesus Prayer

Excerpts from "The Ladder of the Beatitudes"

By: Jim Frost

Pages 96-97



Purification of the heart is the endless struggle of seeking a more God-centered life. It is the minute-to-minute discipline of trying to be so aware of God's presence that the heart has no space for our own worries, ambitions, or attention to appearances. Prayer is essential to this endeavor, whether reciting prayers we know by heart or spontaneous prayer or reading or music or using any of the senses with a heightened awareness of the sacred. Prayer refers to all we do in order to turn our attention toward God.

As with many saints, an indispensable element in Seraphim's life was the Jesus Prayer, also known as the Prayer of the Heart. Seraphim taught novices in his care, "Coming or going, sitting or standing, working or in church, let this prayer always be on your lips: '**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**' The whole art (of prayer) is there. With this prayer in your heart you will find inward peace and sobriety of body and soul."

The Prayer of the Heart has variations. Sometimes the words "a sinner" are dropped. At times it has even shorter forms: "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me," or even just these two words. "Jesus, mercy." Whatever the form, the prayer helps draw those who use it more and more deeply into the mercy of Christ. I sometimes say it in behalf of others: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us (*or a person or group that is named*)."

Monastic literature and practice refer to the prayer's full form as being "the whole gospel in one sentence."

There are those who recite the prayer so steadily that it becomes as integrated into life as breathing and the beating of the heart. Learning its use seems to have been a fundamental element in monastic life since the age of the Desert Fathers in the fourth century. A classic of the nineteenth century, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, describes how one wandering Russian, with the encouragement and guidance of a monk, learned to pray without ceasing using the Jesus Prayer.

**The Jesus Prayer** has a biblical foundation. It is based on the combination of two prayers in the Gospel: that of the blind man in Jericho, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:38), and that of the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13).

## CALLED TO BECOME

By Edwina Gateley V.M.M

Sent to me from Jane Hughes (WA)

You are called to become  
A perfect creation,  
No one is called to become  
Who you are called to be.  
It does not matter  
How short or tall  
Or thick-set or slow  
You may be.

It does not matter  
Whether you sparkle with life  
Or are silent as a still pool,  
Whether you sing your song aloud  
Or weep alone in darkness.  
It does not matter  
Whether you feel loved and admired  
Or unloved and alone  
For you are called to become  
A perfect creation.

No one's shadow  
Should cloud your becoming,  
No one's light  
Should dispel your spark.  
For the Lord delights in you,  
Jealously looks upon you  
And encourages with gentle joy  
Every movement of the Spirit  
Within you.

Unique and loved you stand,  
Beautiful or stunted in your growth  
But never without hope and life,  
For you are called to become  
A perfect creation.

This becoming may be  
Gentle or harsh,  
Subtle or violent,  
But it never ceases,  
Never pauses or hesitates,  
Only is -  
Creative force -  
Calling you  
Calling you to become  
A perfect creation.

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### *International Theological Conference Interfaith Dialogue*

Catholic University in Melbourne  
When: 26 (Mon) – 29 (Thurs) May, 2014  
**Paths To Dialogue In Our Age**  
Venue: Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue  
Australian Catholic University  
115 Victoria Parade,  
Fitzroy, Vic. 3065, Aust.  
Contact: - 61(0)399533432  
Email: [edmund.chia@acu.au](mailto:edmund.chia@acu.au)

## Prayer Cycle and Address Book Format

By: David White

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am aware that the format of the prayer cycle and address book last year was quite a change from previous years. The change was made to align it with the electronic form of the prayer cycle that some of us are now using on our smart phones, and also to enable us to share the prayer cycle with First, Second and Third Order members around the world without releasing your personal contact details.

Consequently, the Address Book and Prayer Cycle now need to be separate documents. I tried to do this by having the Address Book as an insert in the middle of the booklet. This could be pulled out, if you wish, leaving just the Daily Obedience and Prayer Cycle in the main cover.

I would be interested in your thoughts and comments on the future structure of these two documents. Some ideas are

1. Keep it as last year, with the Address List as a centre pull-out.
2. Reverse the order, so the Prayer Cycle is the pull-out.
3. Place them sequentially in the booklet (won't be able to be separated)
4. Publish as separate booklets (probably with ordinary paper cover, rather than heavier card, due to cost).

Please email me at [comms@tssf.org.au](mailto:comms@tssf.org.au), or write to me at 5 Mandora Way, Riverton, WA, 6148, before 1st May.

Thank you,

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## A Reading from "The Assisi Compilation"

(II : 174) in 'A Sense of the Divine'

Once **Blesséd Francis** was travelling with a spiritual Brother from Assisi, who came from a great and powerful family. Because he was weak and ill, **blesséd Francis** rode on a donkey. Feeling tired from walking, that brother began to think to himself : ' His parents were never at the same level as mine, and here he is riding, while I am worn out, walking behind him, prodding the beast.'



While he was thinking this, **blesséd Francis** got off the donkey and said to him (the brother) : ' No, brother, it is not right or proper for me to ride while you go on foot, for in the world you were nobler and more influential than I.' The brother, stunned and ashamed, fell down at his feet and, in tears, confessed his thought; and then said his Penance. He was greatly amazed at his (St Francis') holiness, for he immediately knew his thought. It is the truly disciplined and holy, who (like St Francis) can fathom the mind of a Spiritual Companion, and deal with it graciously to their advantage. He was so close to Jesus that he was as aware of people and their needs for a present Saviour. Does not our Liturgy start with those really challenging words, before the Risen Lord : " Almighty God, to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify your Holy Name. "Like Brother Lawrence, we must **practise the presence of our Risen Lord**, and rejoice in His most wonderful insight, succour and continuing help, without which we stray and become lost. The Risen Jesus said:

**" Lo, I am with you always, till the end of the Age. "** (S. Matth. 28 : 20). And we respond, each day of our own history :  
**" Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come."**



## National Lament

*We are a society which has forgotten how to weep -  
Pope Francis*

Many people throughout Australia are disturbed by the punitive and harsh policies and conditions to which people seeking asylum in Australia are being subjected. The recent incident on Manus Island and the death of one person and the injury of many highlights the lack of care and dignity in the policies of both the Government and the Opposition and the absence of awareness of their legal and moral responsibilities.

In response to the desire for prayer and action, Catholic Religious Australia is launching a "National Lament". We are taking our inspiration from the words of Pope Francis when he visited Lampedusa. The National Lament is a campaign of prayer, penance and action for people seeking asylum in Australia. We are seeking to make a Christian response to these people, rather than treating them as a "problem" to be solved.

The National Lament will have 2 parts:

### Part 1 Engaging in prayer, penance and action for people seeking asylum in Australia

- Making Friday in Lent a day of prayer and penance for people seeking asylum
- Continuing this practice after Lent through to the Ascension
- Writing to one's local Federal member and to the Minister, Scott Morrison, expressing our lament for people seeking asylum in Australia

### Part 2 Engaging in a Week of Prayer and Prophetic Presence

Ascension to Pentecost, 1 to 8 June 2014

Included with this letter is the National Lament Prayer sheet. Could you please distribute this to your members, associates and colleagues and invite them to participate in the National Lament by using this sheet each Friday.

Ideas for the letter and updates will be available on the CRA website:

[www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org](http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org)

For more information, email:  
[justice@catholicreligiousaustralia.com.au](mailto:justice@catholicreligiousaustralia.com.au)

The National Lament will be launched with a Media Release early March 2014.

Yours in Christ

Annette Cunliffe rsc  
CRA President

## Associates Of The Third Order

By: John Gibson.

This is a new initiative whereby people can become Associates. It is for those who want to explore the Franciscan way but in a less formal manner. They do not become Members of the Third Order but rather Associates.

There is a simple service of Admission for Associates. They agree to (1) Pray regularly for the Third Order. (2) Explore more deeply the spirit of St Francis of Assisi. (3) To grow in their prayer life and their love of other people and of all creatures.

Associates are invited to Third Order gatherings that are relevant for them. At their Admission Service they receive a card with their name and date of admission signed by the Regional Minister with the three aims printed on it and are given a Tau Cross. We have a Guardian for the Associates in Bathurst/surrounds and Canberra/surrounds.

It is possible that an Associate may at some point in time feel called to test their vocation to the Third Order. Normal procedures are followed should this occur.

The development of Associates of the Third Order opens up another opportunity to "celebrate with us a life of following Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis in all its colour, variety and richness".

(John Gibson TSSF is the Regional Minister for NSW B region.)

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## Third Order SSF NSW B Regional Report.

(Report by John Gibson, Regional Minister NSW B)

**Wagga Wagga:** It was a great encouragement that some of our Wagga and Canberra based brothers and sisters were able to meet at Gundagai in January to celebrate together the Eucharist, enjoy fellowship and share some of our stories. We reflected on The First Franciscan Martyrs. This coming together was appreciated by all and we plan to repeat it at a mutually agreed time.

**Bathurst/Region:** We were greatly saddened to hear and some of us see, St Barnabas Church, South Bathurst which was destroyed by a devastating fire in the early morning of Sunday 23rd February. Some parishioners arrived for worship unaware of what had taken place and you can imagine their shock. St Barnabas has been the spiritual home for the Bathurst and district Franciscans for over ten years. Our thanks to David White our Provincial Communications Officer who sent the news out to everyone, calling for our prayers. The Rector of St Barnabas', Fr James Hodson notified us that they would be taking up residence in the parish hall "and we trust in the love of our Lord and have hope for a new and exciting future for St Barnabas' parish". Amen to that! For details of the Bathurst/Region yearly programme contact the Area Fellowship Convenor, Lorraine Clarkson.

**Canberra/Region:** We are putting the finishing touches to our programme for the year. Visits to our St Saviour's Cathedral at Goulburn for diocesan events; completing our study of the DVD "History of Christianity"; talks on Elizabeth of Hungary and Maximillian Kolbe; a tentative plan for a workshop on refugees and asylum seekers; our annual retreat. All of these in the context of worship, fellowship and sharing makes indeed for a varied and colourful tapestry of experiences.

**Goulburn:** Beginning on the 8th March and then every second Saturday of the month, a Franciscan Eucharist will be celebrated in Goulburn at 5pm. Several venues will be used. If you are in Goulburn you will be made most welcome. For details contact The Reverend Theresa Angert-Quilter.

## Here's a snapshot in words, of local suburban Brisbane

By: Mac Campbell.

It's hard to get close to my friends because it's so hard to imagine what it's like to have a mental illness or epilepsy, limited coping skills or memory. Hard to get close; and most you couldn't invite home; there are good reasons why their families have given up, most live in hostels or Housing Commission units. I don't much like one or two. It's hard to like blokes whose inappropriate sexual impulses to strangers or family or friends have put them in jail or court and scare and embarrass other blokes and women; you feel a bit guilty when you're glad this time they didn't show up. You wouldn't want them to know where you live...but still they deserve some caring...otherwise we diminish ourselves. A free friendship community breakfast in a local park every Wednesday, they pretty much run it themselves; some can't read, most can't remember things, some spent years in lock-up wards. Voices and people stepping out of photographs, how do they handle that? Sometimes a sudden blow-up; it's hard to have to knock a man to the ground and sit on him when he's a lovely fella.

I took to the dump a full trailer load of 7 mattresses, all heavy with old urine. For some friends who aren't organised; you know, memory problems, they weren't embarrassed. They trusted me.

The blessing wasn't there in the disgusting task. Seeking the unpleasant for its own sake is a game for young unformed players who don't last. The birth of Jesus means we look for misunderstanding, uncertainty and dread, because that's where He lives. When we embrace misunderstanding, uncertainty and dread, we give birth to Jesus. Leonard Cohen sings, "There's a crack, a crack, in everything... that's how the light gets in."

## Franciscans International celebrating 25 years (1989 - 2014)

Web link: [www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)

**2014 is a very special year for Franciscans International.**

This year marks the 25th anniversary of our official accreditation as an NGO with the United Nations. This was the culmination of the efforts of the Franciscan Family to establish a Franciscan voice at the UN, and the true beginning of FI's advocacy work

Web link: [www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)

Lumen Fidei: The wisdom of two popes

Published: 05 February 2014

Franciscan University Presents: 'Lumen Fidei and the Life of Faith'

Lumen Fidei begins with the words: 'The light of Faith - this is how the Church's tradition speaks of the great gift brought by Jesus.'



This video from the Franciscan University of Steubenville provides an in depth and wide-ranging analysis of Lumen Fidei, the first encyclical of Pope Francis' pontificate. The 2013

letter is doubly interesting for having been released by Pope Francis, but drafted in large part by his predecessor, the Pope Emeritus Benedict.

Join Host Michael Herson, with theologian panelists Dr Regis Martin and Dr Scott Hahn, and special guest Fr Sean O. Sheridan, TOR, President of Franciscan University of Steubenville, as they discuss the first encyclical published by Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, and its impact on our daily lives.

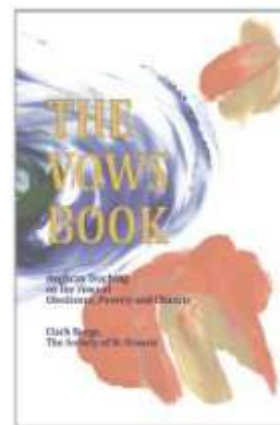
The video can be viewed on YouTube [HERE](#).

## Brother Clark Berge SSF, The Vows Book: Anglican Teaching on the Vows of Obedience, Poverty and Chastity,

CreateSpace 2014, 142 pages.

(from \$AUD 18.20 online)

Reviewed by Ted Witham tssf



Brother Clark Berge, currently Minister General of the Society of Saint Francis, explores what it means to be a vowed person. All of us are vowed persons, as promises were made in our baptisms, and The Vows Book speaks to all Christians about the discipline and constraints inherent in following Christ. 'The vows protect in us deep down the courage and strength to live for God, to help God create a world we want to live in, a world of love.'

Vowed persons are counter-cultural. We have promised to make the world a different place than it is now. For those called to 'give their lives to God in a special way' as brothers and sisters in religious orders, the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity structure their lives to have the freedom to tell out the Good News.

Obedience means listening – listening to the Scriptures, to the Founders, to each other, to one's inner voice and to nature. It means living as a responsible adult. Poverty is a free choice to follow Christ in a sharing lifestyle clarifying one's social vision and helping those who are poor not through choice.

For members of religious orders like SSF chastity implies celibacy, which sets brothers and sisters free to love in new ways without the ties of family. Brother Clark is brutally honest about the difficulties of celibacy and gives practical advice on what to do with 'sexy thoughts'.

Br Clark's ideas are also profitable for Tertiaries, as we too are vowed people, promising obedience, poverty and chastity as appropriate for our life-situation. He challenges us to use our promises as a framework to follow Jesus more closely, to find more joy in our life in Christ and to find more freedom in telling the Good News. These Franciscan values are ours too, and while our life-situations are not the same as the brothers and sisters of the First Order, our call to be Christ-like is.

It is challenging to be reminded to be responsible adults in listening to the wisdom of those around us and so learning to be more mature in our obedience. When we have so much materially our vow of poverty should cause us difficulty, and Br Clark asks us to re-consider if we are serious about sharing our resources with the whole community. Do I have the purity of heart I promised in my vow of chastity and what impact does that purity have on my ability to love as Christ would have me love?

Br Clark's teaching about the vows may have started from his life-situation as a brother, but his wisdom, simplicity and depth is for all of us.

The Vows Book has a Foreword by Archbishop Roger Herft, SSF's Bishop Protector-General and the cover is graced by one of Br Clark's own paintings, a reflection inspired by the words of Ephrem the Syrian on baptism.

## Companions on the way

### Reflections on spiritual direction

By: Dilys Griffiths

As spending time with a spiritual director on a regular basis is a requirement when you take your vows as a tertiary in the Third Order of St Francis, I would like to offer you some reflections on the ministry of spiritual direction.

I have the privilege to act as spiritual director to some of the tertiaries in my local area, it is a blessing to me and I hope a support to them.

As I sit with and listen to the tertiaries who come for spiritual direction I am filled with admiration for their courage and commitment to this path of prayer, learning and service.

Because of these experiences I would like to offer the following reflections on how meeting regularly with your spiritual director may be a source of encouragement, revelation and nourishment.

The vows you take are your response to a deep call from within.

This call to follow the example of St Francis, to live in deeper communion with God through that following can be challenging, it is only to be undertaken with courage and openness to what that call may bring.

Richard Rohr said recently in an article for Presence Journal, that St Francis “lived on the edge of organised religion, a lover of nature, a lover of animals, a lover of freedom, a lover of joy.....”. I find this little picture of St Francis relevant to the concepts of spiritual direction in several ways.

Firstly, spiritual direction does not fall within the ‘restrictions’ of organised religion, it encompasses all and seeks to encourage a personal relationship with whatever form the ‘sacred’ takes for a particular person. Most spiritual directors have an ecumenical ethic, some work as inter-faith companions, the particular belief system of a directee (this is the usual term for those who come for spiritual direction) or director is not a factor here. All are welcome.

Secondly, the positive concept of a ‘lover’ of the natural world and life itself is most important in helping directees to realise how infinitely loved they are as children of their creator (whatever that may mean for them). To truly feel loved enables us to love outside ourselves, we can then join the bigger picture of love in service.

Thirdly, spiritual direction is so much to do with freeing ourselves from that which restricts the flow of our life and our ability to stand upright before God and others. Gradually the grip of these restrictions can be eased, we find we can let go of the things which do not serve us now, we become more spacious.

There are some misapprehensions as to what exactly spiritual direction is, therefore I would like to say firstly, perhaps, what spiritual direction is not!

Gone are the days when a person seeking guidance would expect to be told what they should or should not do, or how they should or should not pray based on a strict regime of examining the inner self for faults and shortcomings and ‘doing penance’ for what was found lurking in the depths!

Yes, I have heard of these conversations and seen the pain they can bring when the person concerned is struggling to find their personal place of reconciliation within the uniqueness of their life with Christ and amongst their community.

That is not to say that recognising how we fall short or our negative habits is to be ignored or that recognition, confession and regret for what has happened is not an important part of our undertaking to follow the way of Christ. It is a part of that undertaking.

So how does a spiritual director act as a “companion on the way”?

Companion (coming from the Latin *com panis*) literally means ‘with bread’. The sharing of the ‘bread’ of life with another. The sharing of our joint humanity and all that that entails, all its joys, sorrows, beauty and pain.

True companionship consists of deep, focussed listening to the other. It means putting yourself aside to be totally present to the other. It means non-judgement and complete acceptance. It means resisting the temptation to fix or teach or give advice. Suggestions are sometimes made which may or may not be acted upon, they are offered unconditionally for consideration by the other.

In true companionship absolute confidentiality is practised, here we are trusted with the most sacred areas of the life of the ‘other’. When two people meet together in this way they take time out of their lives to enter a special place. Here the directee can reflect on and unravel the story of their life. This process is enabled by the director who listens deeply and contemplatively to the story. They are searching together for where God is active, present and invitational within the context of everyday experiences. Sometimes, on reflection, they also find where God has been ever-present throughout their life’s journey but not fully recognised or acknowledged.

This seeking is undertaken as part of their commitment to their spiritual journey, it is a response to their desire to deepen their relationship with what they experience as “holy”, the call to enter that deep place.

This journey into the inner place is exciting but can be challenging. It can be confusing and sometimes lonely, it is not always easy to find others who will listen, without judgement or interference, to the deepest thoughts and feelings of our spiritual lives. We all fear being thought ‘weird’ or ‘strange’ because of what we experience and deeply know to be important and holy for us.

Everything that is in our heart, mind, spirit or body sensations can be brought to the spiritual direction meeting, for whatever is uppermost in all these facets of our being is where God is active and waiting to show His Grace.

The director seeks to enable a sacred space for this meeting by their own constant contemplative way of life. They offer their directees hospitality as a means of offering God’s hospitality.

Spiritual directors will have experienced a time of formation for their ministry. This will be supported by their personal commitment to their own spiritual journey, regular supervision and spiritual direction. It is not a case of the director having all knowledge or answers, it is an open, spacious place between two people where God may enter into the place of seeking.

It is a place where all are welcome, where all are honoured and listened to – it is holy listening.

In this sacred place the presence of God is acknowledged as the true “director” and a third chair is usually placed in the room as a reminder of this holy presence.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” Matthew 18: 20

Each occasion for meeting has its own way of unfolding. You may come with a specific idea or feeling which you want to explore but even if this is not the case you may find that by the end of the time your deepest needs have been met and you are ready to take the next step of your journey.

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The keynotes of the Third Order are all so important to the way we live our lives with awareness and gratitude for life itself. If you truly wish to live fully and freely you can visit all of these areas of your inner and outer life to seek for how you are experiencing them with respect to your commitment to your personal Rule of Life and to the bigger picture of Community.

In spiritual direction you have a safe place to express any resistance or struggling you have in any of these endeavours. You also have the opportunity to celebrate your joys and fulfilment as you enter more deeply into your personal journey of revelation. There is no 'good' or 'bad', no 'should' or 'ought to', only what is for you at that moment and the freeing of yourself to move beyond.

If you do not already meet with a spiritual director as part of your Rule I hope you will now be encouraged to find someone you trust and are comfortable with so that you can experience this companionship on your journey.

Do not be afraid to find out about a director, ask questions, see if it "fits" for you, they will not mind!

May your journey unfold in peace and joy.

## Franciscan "Perfection",

From: Clare's Second Letter to Agnes

The Book "Clare of Assisi"

By: Joan Mueller

It is this intimacy with God that Clare refers to as 'perfection.' This perfection, however, is not some sort of bland spiritual ideal. Rather, this notion of perfection comes from the Gospel itself: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Matt 19:21).



This perfection is the first step of the Franciscan vocation. Reading the stories of early Franciscans, one finds people joining the order who give their possessions away and then embrace the poverty of the Franciscan family. Agnes has done this by giving away her royal dowry. She has established a hospital for the poor and the sick. She has sold her possessions and has literally given the money to the poor. Now she is free to follow the Lord in order to find her treasure.

It is not surprising, then, to have Clare immediately jump to the glories of Agnes's treasure: "This is that perfection with which the King will unite you to himself in marriage in heaven's bridal chamber where he sits in glory upon his starry throne." The line is reminiscent of an antiphon read in the Divine Office for the feast of the Assumption. Agnes's choice to sell everything and give it to the poor has given her the intimacy that Mary has with Christ. She will be intimately united to the one to whom she has given her heart.

We seldom think about marriage as being an economic deal, but in fact, it usually is. One of the first steps in marriage is the combination of the economic resources of two people. While certainly some economic independence between two people is healthy and good, ordinarily most of the couple's resources are combined and used for both the raising of children and the keeping of the household. The union of hearts, minds, and bodies is also the union of checkbooks.

## Franciscan & Holy Days

### To Note

#### 2014

April	11	Brother Geoffrey SSF
April	18	Good Friday
April	20	Easter Sunday
May	16	Margaret of Cortona
May	20	Bernardine of Sienna
June	13	Anthony of Padua
July	15	Bonaventure
August	4	John Vianney, Cure D'Ars
August	10	The Transitus of St. Clare
August	11	Clare of Assisi

**'Readings and other material for worship and devotion are in the Manual - Section F'**

### EASTER PRAYER

By: Michael J. Darby 2009

Sent to me by Sandra Beck

Dear Lord, we are praying at Easter  
We pray for the homeless and poor  
We pray for all who are sick at heart  
And for those harassed by the law.

We pray for each shattered family  
We pray for each lonely child  
We pray for each hapless victim  
Who's battered or cruelly defiled.

We pray for Indigenous Aussies  
We pray for the sad and forlorn  
We give thanks for the blessings of Jesus  
For the 'weak' and the 'meek' he was born.

We pray for the courage of Jesus  
Who selected the ultimate loss  
Of His life for the saving of sinners  
In the pain and the shame of the cross.

We pray for a happier future  
Where each has a blessed reward  
From the joy of the resurrection  
And the grace of the Christ Risen Lord.

## Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Lent prepares us for the observance of Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection for us. It is a time for self-examination, repentance, prayers, quiet time with the Lord, penance, almsgiving, deepening our faith journey with God and devoting disciplined study of the Scripture. It is also a time to accompany Jesus in the desert for 40 days. Most of all, it is a time of renewal and new beginnings through our baptism.

**The deadline for the Pentecost Newsletter is the 15th May.**

You are most welcomed and encouraged to submit articles for possible inclusion.

Easter Blessings to you all.

Pax et Bonum,

Gloria