

Knit Together

in community and prayer

Newsletter for the Province of Asia-Pacific

Third Order, Society of Saint Francis

www.tssf.org.au

Francistide 2024

Inertia and 'beginner's mind'

Mandy Wheatley, Provincial Minister

We in the Third Order have vowed to be transformed by following the spiritual path of St Francis. Like me, do you sometimes feel caught in a 'Slough of Despond' or a spiritual 'inertia'?¹

Newton's First Law of Motion states that *'every object will remain at rest or in uniform motion in a straight line unless compelled to change its state by the action of an external force'*. If we can apply the laws of physics to our spiritual nature, we could say that when we become spiritually inactive or complacent, either remaining stationary or unthinkingly pursuing the same direction as we have always done, we are caught in a habitual rut, and have spiritual inertia. It is then that we need to be transformed by a force greater than our inertia.² What can we do?

Francis said, as he neared the end of his life; *'Let us begin again, for until now we have done nothing.'* Francis' words sound similar to 'Shoshin', a Japanese term meaning *'having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions. Also known as 'Beginner's Mind', it is a way of looking at the world free of prejudice, as if it were seen for the first time.'*

From this 'beginner's mind' we can better understand Francis' attitude on poverty and penitence. He understood that conversion is never a single moment, but a lifelong journey, constantly drawing closer to God by renewing our commitment to Christ and following his instructions.

The period from Francistide to Advent, when the new liturgical year begins, is a perfect time to begin again, to refresh our vision and let God help us get moving or change course.

Martin Luther put it this way in his last words; *'We are beggars! This is true'* and *'Repentance is to be a Christian's continual posture.'*

Francis said; *'Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and*



Photo by NEOM on Unsplash



despicable; for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more.'

Francis lived and preached goodness and penitence. He insisted on living in poverty, which kept him balanced and grounded, maintaining a focus on Christ living and crucified, appreciating beauty, love, humour and gratitude.

He was enthusiastic, and expressed his emotions honestly. When connecting with the 'little things' in nature and with people, he would support and care for them.

I pray that we may continually allow God's 'force' in our lives to overcome our resistance to humility and change us to be more like Francis; that God will make known to us his ways and teach us to follow with our lives. May we prepare well to welcome once again the Redeemer, the One who always hears the prayers of the broken in heart.

I wish you all a blessed and fulfilling Francistide, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany in Jesus' mighty name. *Mandy*

¹ 'Pilgrim's Progress: The Slough of Despond by Jim Ehrhard', Teaching Resources International: <https://tinyurl.com/55v5f8vn>

² 'Newton's Laws of Motion', Glenn Research Center, NASA: <https://tinyurl.com/mryjt7nh>

News and reminders:

TSSF Provincial Conference in Adelaide SA, August 21-26, 2025: 'Deep listening' (see page 5)

Prayer for Peace, Francistide to Christmas

As Franciscans we desire to promote peace and justice in the world.

With the escalation of conflict in the Middle East, Europe and Africa, we are planning a St Francis Advent Prayer for Peace vigil.

Similarly to last year's PRAYERS FOR PEACE we are hoping to release a booklet with prayer suggestions for a minute's silence each night.

Please contact Mandy if you would like to help coordinate this project.

New Addresses:

Godfrey Fryar: gcfNaBa50@gmail.com

Bronwyn Fryar: bronwynfryar1@gmail.com

Sandra Jackson: sandra_c_jackson@icloud.com

Still seeking a Provincial Secretary

Please pray about this important position being filled and speak to Mandy Wheatley if you are interested.

Welcome those to be newly Professed:

In Korea, Miran Regina Hyun and Sun Jin Ezekiel Park

In WA, Cheryl Absalom

Rest in Peace:

John Clarkson (NSWB/ACT) – 09/04/24

Mac Campbell (QLD B/N NSW) – 14/06/24

Winifred Talanoa (PNG) – 17/06/24 (Professed 17/03/24)

Asia-Pacific Facebook page:

<https://tinyurl.com/bdfhm5xc>

Evening Prayer with Community Obedience (30 minutes)

Contact Jeannie Minnis if you would like to join on Zoom: jminnis4@gmail.com

Mondays – 6.30pm EST, 6.00pm SA, 4.30pm WA

Wednesdays – 8.00pm EST, 7.30pm SA, 6.00pm WA

Thursdays – 6.00pm EST, 5.30pm SA, 4.00pm WA



Charles Ringma AM

John Sandeman*

Charles Ringma, a contender for the most prolific Australian Christian Author, has been made a member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the King's Birthday Awards.

His citation reads, 'The Reverend Dr Charles Richard Ringma. For significant service to theology, to the community, and to youth.' Ringma has had over 30 books published – the most recent on missional spirituality published by Langham Global called *In the Midst of Much Doing*.

Born in the Netherlands in 1942, he migrated to Meanjin/Brisbane with his parents when he was ten years old. His BD came from the Reformed Theological College – unsurprising for someone of Dutch descent – and he founded Teen Challenge in Australia.

In 1991, he was appointed as a lecturer at the Asian Theological Seminary (ATS), Metro Manila, Philippines and was also involved in work with the urban poor. In 1995 he was appointed Professor of Theology and Mission at ATS. In 1997, he was appointed as Professor of Missions and Evangelism to the faculty of Regent College, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, while continuing to teach part-time in various Asian countries. In August 2005 he retired as Emeritus Professor from Regent College.

His published works include *The Seeking Heart: A Journey with Henri Nouwen*, a guide to the well-known spiritual writer, and *Resist the Powers*, which takes the reader through Jacques Ellul's thinking that links social responsibility and personal faith.

In warmly commending *In the Midst of Much Doing*, Melbourne-based theologian Gordon Preece writes, 'Charles Ringma brings his astute theological mind, big heart for the lost, vast missional experience, and the quest for a sustainable missional spirituality together in this brilliant book. He writes with a hard-earned sense of realism about individual sin and structural evil, balanced passion for evangelism and social transformation, contemplation and action, mysticism and prophesy.'

Ringma has been translated into Chinese, French, Swedish, Norwegian, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean.

* This is an excerpt from an article by John Sandeman at theothercheek.com.au/author-charles-ringma-gains-am-honour/ Reprinted with kind permission.

See Charles' own website: www.charlesringma.com/. See also his article on 20 years of tree planting to restore a nature corridor, on page 8 of *Knit Together* #3, Francistide 2022: tssf.org.au/Newsletter/NL2022-3.pdf



Charles Ringma tssf AM

How to pay for retreats and conferences

Jane Noller & Glenys McCarrick

Now that there are no regional bank accounts, we need to notify you of the methods of payment to the Provincial account for Regional Retreats / Convocation / Conference, etc.

(Payments for books, clothing and online purchases remain the same as David White has set-up online.)

Methods of Payment to the Provincial account:

A. Direct Debit

Account Name: Third Order Society of St Francis (Aust Prov)

BSB Number: 704 901

Account Number: 00007790

Reference*: Your name and Region – e.g. J Smithy Vic/Tas

**NB: This allows us to record your payment to the correct activity.*

B. Online payment via debit / credit card

Please complete the online form on the TSSF website: tssf.org.au/. Go to the Payments tab on the home page. On the drop-down menu you will see a list to choose from. Click on your event and the form will appear.

Complete the form and click on the Order and Pay Now button at the end.

C. Cheque / money order

Please make cheque payable to 'Third Order Society of St Francis'. Please include a note with your name, region and the event you are paying for*, and post to:

Third Order Society of St Francis
Assistant Provincial Treasurer
Glenys McCarrick tssf
PO Box 161 LAWNTON QLD 4501

**NB: This allows us to record your payment to the correct activity.*

If, after reading these instructions, you are still not sure how to make your payment please contact Glenys McCarrick: 0438 821 684.



'By patience and perseverance, and a bottle of sweet oil, the snail eventually reaches Jerusalem.'

Provincial Conference 2025

One Province, Many Voices: Deep Listening

Thursday 21st – Sunday 24th
August 2025

Sevenhill Jesuit Retreat Centre,
Clare, South Australia

*Situated in the beautiful
Barossa Valley, a wine-growing
region in South Australia*

One Province, Many Voices



Deep Listening

Artwork by Ian Randall tssf

Keynote speakers:

Bishop Chris McLeod – Listening to our First Peoples

Bishop Chris McLeod is an Assistant Bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, with special responsibilities for Aboriginal Ministry and National Aboriginal Bishops. He is of Gurindji descent and his mother was a member of the Stolen Generations. In this context he has special concerns to focus on reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Bishop McLeod is also a PhD candidate at Flinders University (ACD) exploring further the practical application of Trinitarian theology on the praxis of Anglican ministry (walking the Trinitarian talk).

Dr Cath Connolly – Listening to the music of our heart

Cath Connolly is Director at The Abbey, a Christian Centre for Spirituality and the Environment on Raymond Island, and Co-director of the Living Well Centre for Christian Spirituality. She is a spiritual director, retreat facilitator and pilgrimage leader. Cath travels the globe performing on the Celtic harp and leading pilgrimages and retreats.

Workshop leaders:

Brother Christopher John SSF and Jan Down will each lead workshops on Listening to our Sister, Mother Earth.

Sisters Sue and Sandra Sears of the Community of St Barnabas and St Cecilia will be leading some creative workshops.

Provincial Minister, the Rev'd Mandy Wheatley and the Rev'd Dr Wayne Philp will lead sessions on Prayer beads – Listening to the Spirit.

More information about the workshops will be available closer to the time of the conference.

‘Being knit together...’

Hayden McKellar tssf

Often after praying the Community Obedience, I find the words of our Community Collect echoing through my mind – especially the phrase ‘being knit together in community and prayer’. How can we be a community when we are so dispersed?

No matter how we feel, we are connected to each other and Creation – and have been, since long before the internet was a spark in someone’s mind. Connected because we are a part of G-d’s creative power.

Some of us acknowledge this reality, some seem to think some humans (including themselves) are the ‘boss of everything’, while some find it essential to go bush and ‘hug a tree’. For us, our connection goes beyond that of Creation; it is through our conscious engagement in prayer. I believe in reality we are connected like the stitches in a knitted jumper.

Every stitch in a knitted jumper is connected to every other stitch in the garment. They are connected by the one piece of yarn. Yes there are breaks in the yarn where one ball ends and another begins – they are tied together to keep the thread flowing though the jumper. The yarn for me symbolises the love of G-d; the stitches are each one of us.



*The Rev'd Hayden
McKellar tssf*



*Vic/Tas tertiary
at lunch with
Archbishop Philip
and Joy Freier at
Bishops Court,
Melbourne, June
2024. Photo by
Joy Frier*



*Qld B / NNSW:
Novicing of the
Rev'd Jonathan
Kemp at St Francis
College Chapel,
Brisbane,
July 2024*

Quiet acts of witness can draw attention to the climate crisis

Judith Russenberger explains why she kneels outside Shell's offices for an hour each week.

With persistence a drop of water hollows out the stone.
– attributed to Choerilus of Samos, fifth-century poet

Belvedere Road, on the South Bank, is one of the windier spots in London. Its orientation between office buildings and the Thames channels the wind, no matter which way it is ostensibly blowing. I can confirm this, having knelt on the pavement there for an hour each Wednesday of the past year.

Apart from observing the weather, why do this? To draw attention to the environmentally destructive business practices of Shell, whose headquarters stand opposite Jubilee Gardens. Before the site was redeveloped, the Shell building stood out as an iconic landmark. Now, it rather coyly blends into the background, with barely a name board or a logo in sight.

Shell is one of the world's big fossil-fuel companies, which resolutely refuses to curb its oil and gas production in favour of a transition to renewable energy. It continues to expand its business in this way because current markets and government subsidies make it highly profitable — highly profitable, that is, for the shareholders. For the environment, for the climate, indeed, even for oil-users, it is a very costly business model.

Extracting fossil fuels rather than producing renewable energy is driving the climate crisis, putting people's homes and livelihoods at risk, and making parts of the world uninhabitable. Fuel extraction and production pollute the environment with leaks into soil and water, and the air. In use — and its uses are varied and numerous — oil and gas release climate-destroying carbon emissions.

Rather than facilitating a transition to greener — and cheaper — alternatives, Shell fosters a dependency on fossil fuels; indeed, it promotes such dependency through advertising and product development.

Climate activism takes many forms, as it tries to raise the alarm about the climate crisis, as it demands action from those in power, whether in government or on company boards, as it highlights the deceit and corruption of the fossil-fuel industry, and as it tries to raise public awareness and public opposition to the continued explosion of greenhouses gases.

From marches and petitions, festivals and pilgrimages, legal challenges and demonstrations, the occupation of offices and oil depots, blocking roads and the disrupting of sporting events, singing at AGMs, and the breaking of windows, the climate crisis has been pushed up the agenda of public awareness. But it seems that it is a crisis that many still ignore, that many sideline as unimportant — not yet a real threat. It becomes a topic



Judith Russenberger
outside Shell HQ in
London

of news for a day, but is quickly supplanted by the next sensational story.

So, as a representative of Christian Climate Action (CCA), I kneel each week outside Shell, with a topical placard, as an ongoing reminder to all who pass by that the climate crisis is a real and present danger, and that Shell is one of the chief perpetrators.

In this, I am usually joined by my CCA colleague, Martin. We are a silent, prayerful presence.

Over time, we have developed a friendly relationship with Shell's security staff, who monitor access to the building, and with the South Bank security guards who patrol the area. A few of Shell's employees give us a friendly wave or greeting. Most don't, and I wonder what they are thinking as they read our placards.

The wider public are more vocal. There are regulars who always gives us a thumbs up or shout "Thanks!" Others stop for a chat: What are we doing? Why? Do we need a hot/cold drink? There are others who chose to hurl insults as they pass, most commonly "Get a job!"

On a couple of occasions, I have been questioned by the police, around the time when Just Stop Oil (JSO) was slow marching in London. They confirmed that kneeling on the pavement was not illegal, and nor would it be, even if we were wearing JSO T-shirts. Good to know.

Why do we do carry on kneeling outside Shell, come sunshine or rain, throughout the freezing cold dark months of winter, and the more hospitable summer months?

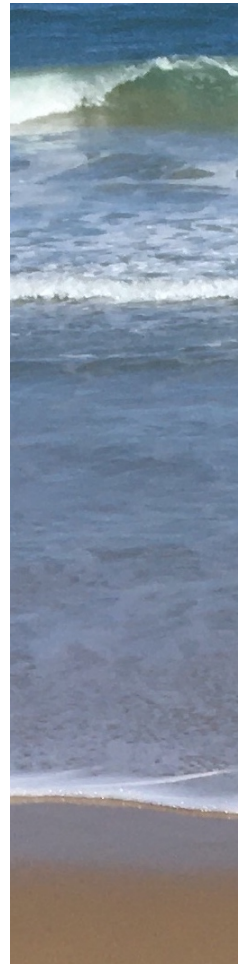
Because, like everyone in CCA, we believe in the power of prayer — and, even if it does not radically change Shell, it certainly strengthens the cause of climate activism. Because to do nothing is not an adequate solution. Because it is a constant reminder — a nudge in the right direction — to the staff at Shell and their business thinking.

And it is a constant reminder to the wider public. The more people are aware of and engaged with the challenge of the climate crisis, the more readily the Government and companies such as Shell will make the changes that are needed. The one disappointment is that, while one-off actions — be they slow marching, hanging a banner off a gantry, or throwing paint over a picture — are deemed newsworthy, regular, repeated actions that cause no disruption are not.

But, wait, maybe the regular, repeated action is effective. Maybe it is quietly disruptive, creating change. Maybe, like the slow drip, drip of water, the action does chip away at resistance and apathy, and does reshape the conscience of each employee, each observer, each person who passes by.

Judith Russenberger is a member of Christian Climate Action. christianclimateaction.org/.

This article was first published on 13 June 2024 in *Church Times*: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/> and is republished with permission, including that of the author, who is also a Franciscan tertiary.



Editor: What is your story? Could you write for this page on care for creation in crisis? I suggest about 350 words plus a photo if possible (at least 1MB please). Thank you!
Due-date for next issue: 29th October (earlier if possible)
Please send contributions to: jeidown@protonmail.com

Saint Francis and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

From Man of War to Patron of Peace

Louise Townend tssf

Why I wanted to explore this subject

While one cannot diagnose someone with an illness 800 years after they've died, it is possible to examine what we know of those aspects of their life which fall into what we, in the light of modern medicine, might call 'symptoms'.

Some of Francis' behaviours look odd or extreme to us simply because we live in 21st Century Australia – science-based, secular, democratic – and he lived in 13th Century Italy, not only with its physical precariousness (poverty, disease, brutality and war), but its medieval values, order and consciousness.

Some of Francis' practices of faith, such as scourging and extreme fasting, would not have seemed so odd to his contemporaries. But some of his behaviours were probably viewed as extreme by his peers as they are reported to us – someone thought they were remarkable enough that they wrote them down – such as his building a snow family, rolling naked in rose briars and snow, kissing lepers, and befriending wild and dangerous animals.

In suggesting this subject, my initial purpose was simply to try to gain a better understanding of our beloved saint and founder – to tune in to his pain and to foster my own compassion – but a more profound purpose revealed itself as my research deepened. We are all familiar with Francis's reception of the stigmata – the physical signs of Christ's crucifixion; when people have asked me why I am inspired by Francis and his way of following Jesus (which was essentially a literal application of the Gospel), I often say that Francis was literally stamped with God's sign of approval – no grey areas! THIS is surely the way to salvation! [*Haec est porta vitae aeternae* ('This is the gate to eternal life') written over the door of the Porziuncola].

But I came to realise that by framing some of Francis' experiences as resulting directly from his military service, Francis' life – his JOY!!, his sense of fun, his love for all creatures and creation, his evident salvation, and his beatification by the Church and belovedness by people – the ultimate triumph of his faith and God's grace – a path to redemption for his modern day fellow veterans and fellow survivors of trauma might be made clear.

Could this be a way back home, drawing modern day veterans back into health and wholeness: if Francis, a man of war (who had likely been the perpetrator of violence as well as the recipient of it) could be beloved of God, perhaps there is hope for me too?

To be continued in the next edition of Knit Together



The Return of St Francis
by Norberto Proietti at the
Basilica of Saint Francis
in Assisi
Photo by Louise Townend

Grounded in love

Ancient wisdom, modern practices

Experiencing God's love in nature

Paul Hawker tssf reflects on two retreats at Stroud, led by Dr Rachel Davies (ACU Melbourne)

Fourteen people attended the full weekend retreat, (including our five SSF resident brothers) and on Sunday we were joined by another eight retreatants for a slightly damp, but nevertheless inspiring, Forest Therapy/Walking with The Mystics exercise.

From Friday evening to Sunday, Rachel used the thoughts of Catherine of Siena, Bonaventure, and other mystics (Teresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart) to explore our physical and spiritual landscapes and journeys. Through warm, user-friendly, everyday language (and handout notes) Rachel brought these mystics' works and thoughts to life, especially Catherine of Siena.

Saturday afternoon was spent exploring through writing, drawing or thinking, our responses to Catherine which we shared that evening. Insights were gained from Rachel and participants who openly contributed to the discussions.

Brother Christopher John, with help from the other brothers, prepared and led the services and prayer times in the chapel. The combined singing was divine, helping underpin what we'd gained with liturgy and prayer.

Forest Therapy/Walking with The Mystics

On Sunday morning our number swelled to twenty-two when another eight retreatants joined us for the Walking with the Mystics/Forest Therapy walk.

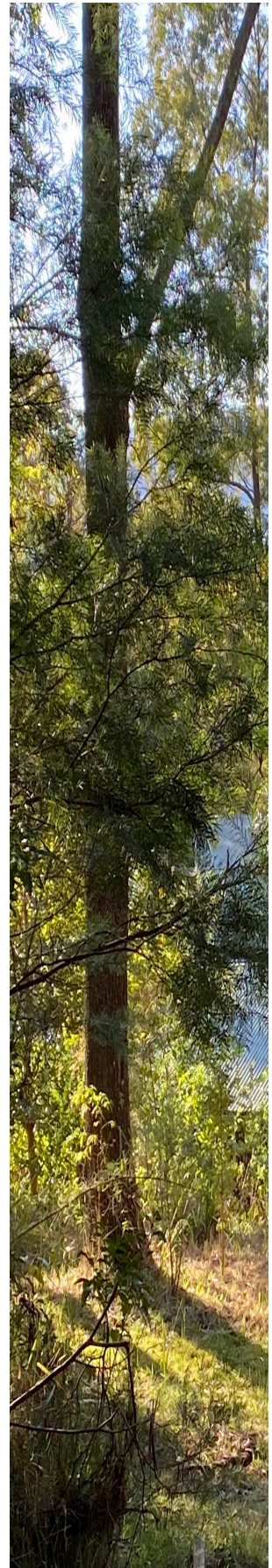
Continuing with Catherine of Siena's metaphor of trees, Rachel encouraged us to slow down, notice, be present and arrive so that we could see, really see, what was in front of us in God's wonderful natural world. In two groups, we took a wander and a wonder and then together in silence we sat separately in God's Garden. We ended with a tea ceremony – an exquisite conclusion to the WWTM exercise.

Most participants commented on the warm and relaxed way Rachel conducted the weekend and how peaceful they felt afterwards. They had become more appreciative of the smaller things in life. Rachel had helped them realise the importance of nature in their walk with God, enabling them to appreciate God's presence.

Some observed that it helped them reconnect their mind and body, allowing them to become especially aware of the colours, sights and sounds and how to respond, both emotionally and spiritually.

Staying on after the retreat, Rachel filmed a 4-minute video meditation on Catherine of Siena, one of her Youtube: Walking With the mystics series which can be seen here: <https://tinyurl.com/yudyw2sw/>.

See if you can identify the location near the monastery where the main tree was filmed!



St Francis Day Sermon, Part Two

John Davison tssf

St. John's Cathedral, Hong Kong, 1984

(continued from *Knit Together* #2 2024)

Later I went back to my home town and started a course for confirmation. I learned that the Anglican Church had a Franciscan religious order, the Society of St Francis, and that they had recently set up a house in Brisbane. Immediately after I was confirmed I went to Brisbane to spend a few days at the Franciscan house and in the years following I spent a lot of time with the brothers, including some weeks of my holidays each year.

They were an extraordinary group of men. The Guardian was a Brother Simon, an ex-guards officer with a plummy English accent. His favourite phrase was 'we are very human beings' and that's what he was. He held the group together by sheer love and being the servant of all. He exerted little discipline as such; it was his love that brought people together to be reconciled.

There was William, a skilled potter, from one of England's wealthiest families. One of his songs was in the local hit parade. There was Illyd the fiery Welshman who used to march in anti-Vietnam war demonstrations while Norman, an Australian brother who ardently supported the war, stayed at home and raged about what his brother was doing. They cared for a group of boys and men who had been in trouble and who needed a half-way house.

There were the cows, for they had a dairy, and some crops, and the pottery. It was a frugal life, one of great simplicity. Only God knows where the money came from but there always seemed to be food on the table. And there was an indescribable joy and gaiety as if they had found a secret for living that the rest of us didn't know.

The centre of their lives was prayer and the Eucharist. From the time one of the brothers woke you up in the morning with the cry 'The Lord Jesus Christ be praised!' until Compline at night ended with the traditional prayer looking forward to the Eucharist of the next day, everything that happened flowed out from prayer and came back to it.

This was made even more clear by the chapel at that time actually being in the main house. In the morning, the brothers would come in to the Eucharist from the dairy in their rubber boots and overalls and you could smell breakfast being cooked as you knelt.

At midday, they came in from the fields and other tasks to pray. In the early evening it was Evensong and the intercessions would range from the problems of one of the boys in the house or a sick cow to a little old lady one of the brothers had met on a bus in town. At dinner there was prayer and a Bible reading and all the men and boys who had lived with them were prayed for.

Finally, at night was Compline followed by the silence, and a deep peace seemed to settle on the old house. Even late at night as you crept across the darkened chapel to your room there might one or two brothers there praying.

I sat at their feet and absorbed it all. They taught me by example how to pray, how to worship, how to serve one another humbly, with a love that did



John Davison, photo by Mandy Wheatley, taken early in 2024.

not draw attention to itself. They pointed me to the weak, the helpless, the poor people in our societies whom we usually don't want to know about.

They taught me the practical business of being a Christian. It probably sounds very romantic. I suppose it was. I was looking at it from the outside. I did not see the suffering and pain behind the joy. I did not see their cost. But I did see a vision of living the life the brothers lived – a family life based on the same principles of prayer, simplicity, service and hospitality to all – and doing it in the ordinary, every-day life of the world. This is what members of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis and the Companions of St Francis try to do.

There are many books about the spirituality of St Francis and his followers. They all talk about the Eucharist and prayer being the centre and they often speak of humanity, simplicity, poverty and prayer as the four foundation stones. There is always reference to obedience and joy. You will find these very words over and over again. To me at first he was Christ's splendour, a powerful, romantic figure, a Zorba the Greek of the spirit.

As I said, I did not see the cost. I passed over that extraordinary phenomenon, the Stigmata of St. Francis, rather uneasily, with some embarrassment, as anyone brought up a good Protestant might. I don't see him now in such romantic terms. When I read the Little Flowers of St. Francis now I see more of his austerity, more of his impossible dreams (like those of Christ), more of the cost.

Bishop John Moorman, the great Anglican authority on St Francis, said: 'St Francis was a much-loved figure; but he was in fact, a very terrifying person. This is due to the fact that he set himself up to achieve an ideal which demanded immense courage and determination; and he could be severe with anyone who tried to persuade him to take a rather smoother path. His ideal was to be 'confirmed in every act with that of our Blessed Lord', which meant that he took every recorded work of Christ's at its face value, and set himself to obey every command, however great the cost.'

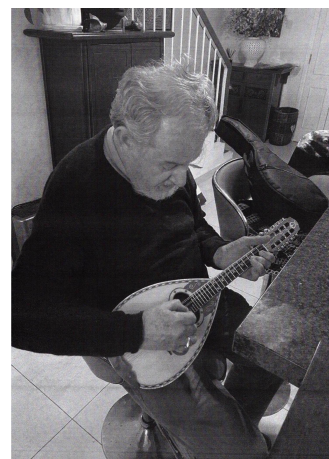
Let me finish with two or three thoughts:

First, like Zorba the Greek, St Francis still had for me the touch of madness. He is not for safety or security. He is for launching out and taking risks. He allows the unexpected and the absurd into his life and sees the commonplace as alight with the joy of God. When we feel comfortable and secure and satisfied in our Christian life St Francis can wake us up to renewal and continual conversion.

Second, in St Francis there is no dichotomy or contradiction between thought (and belief) and action. He is all of a piece and his action flows directly from his thought. Simplicity, for Franciscans, is not just a simple life-style, but the choosing of one aim in life and allowing everything, including our life-style and possessions, to contribute to the fulfilling of that aim.

Zorba the Greek said in the film of that name: 'Clever people and grocers, you think too much.' There is nothing wrong with thinking. But often we use thought and more thought as a defence against acting and taking risks.

Finally, the way of St Francis leads to Christ and is a way of following Christ. St Francis points to Christ. He would have us not only to encounter the poverty in other people but also, what is much more difficult and frightening to experience, the poverty in our own hearts which only Christ can meet.



*John Davison on
the mandolin*