

Knit Together

in community and prayer

Newsletter for the Province of Asia-Pacific

Third Order, Society of Saint Francis

www.tssf.org.au

Pentecost 2025

Joy in God's goodness

Mandy Wheatley
Provincial Minister

Dear sisters and brothers,

Francis praised God in every work of creation he encountered, and found God's goodness infinitely joyful. How are we journeying through the season of Pentecost?

Are we showing and telling others of God's goodness in the gift of creation around us, in Christ's incarnation, compassion, death and resurrection? Are we living in the power of his Holy Spirit?

I have so much to tell you in this edition of Knit Together, that I feel I may burst with joy! First, thank you to our new Regional Ministers elect who take up their office on 1st August, ready for Chapter in South Australia from 24-26 August:

QLD B/N NSW – Nicholas Whereat;

NSW A – David Masters;

NSW B/ACT – Jason Wright assisted by Kay Pendlebury;

WA – Lyn Lord;

VIC-TAS – Regional Ministry Team – Pirriall Clift, Colin Valentine, Sandra Jackson, Cecilia Francis, Hayden McKellar.

I offer a huge thank you for the hard work and steadfast encouragement of those Regional Ministers who are completing their term of office: QLD B/NNSW – Carolyn Smith; QLD B/NNSW – Godfrey Fryar (also Minister of Regions in Formation); NSW A – Janet Long; NSW B/ACT – Fran Hansen; WA – Anne Wilson.

We welcome our new Provincial Secretary, Selina McMahon (QLD B/NNSW) who helped with the election process and will be at Conference.

We will also be welcoming our overseas guests. From South Africa, Michael Twum-Darko, Minister General of TSSF and his wife, Mary Anne. From New



*In the garden of the Old
Monastery, Stroud NSW*

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Volume 26 #2

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Zealand, Peter Bargh, Provincial Minister of the Pacific. From Sri Lanka, TSSF Colombo – ‘Bala’ Selladuri Balasundaram, and from Kandy, Rachel Selveraj. Please pray for their safe travel and arrival.

I am hoping that by now you will have received the Zoom program giving the times of video coverage for sessions at the Conference. To join the Zoom Meeting, use the link:

<https://tinyurl.com/5c5tynkx> Meeting ID: 867 4738 5748, Passcode: 760383

YouTube recordings will be available on our website www.tssf.org.au after Conference finishes.

Before Chapter, please remember to share with your Regional Ministers any concerns or ideas you have so that your voice will be heard as Chapter meets straight after Conference.

Three more exciting developments – to add to your prayers

1. A Poultry and Pigs Project is growing in Goroka, PNG, managed by Andrew McIntyre and Gabriel Wauwe with generous funding from Franciscan Aid to support mission and charity. <https://franciscanaid.org/>
2. Rachel Selvaraj and Saroja Namadevan (Kandy Sri Lanka) are continuing to support two girls as hostel students in years 11 and 12 at Mowbray College. We also support a day student. All are keen to study and are doing well in their subjects. <https://mowbraycollege.lk/>
3. Rachel Selvaraj has undertaken to ask for support to buy an industrial sewing machine for Dayalan Saminathan’s widow, Roga, to begin a small business making clothes and so support her family in the Tamil tea plantation village in which they live. It is soon to arrive at her home.
4. A kind, keen gardener donated and sent four hand-held hoes to Rita Simeni when I explained the difficulties faced by women cultivating home gardens for subsistence food production.

Our Franciscans International Promoter, Glenys McCarrick will share and promote any relevant news from FI, translating this as necessary for the languages of that province or region. She will liaise and communicate to the FI Board any substantial matters in their provinces they think could be related to FI’s work to advocate at the United Nations for human dignity and environmental justice, using a rights-based approach. <https://franciscansinternational.org/about/>

A final thought and prayer. ‘Francis embraced all things with an unheard-of love and devotion, speaking to them of the Lord and exhorting them to praise Him.’ (Thomas of Celano, Second Life of St. Francis) So;

‘Let us bless the living God: born of the Virgin Mary, revealed in his glory, worshipped by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in throughout the world, exalted to the highest heavens. Blessèd be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever. Amen. Thanks be to God.’

Mandy tssf
Provincial Minister Asia-Pacific



*Mandy’s new address:
U3/53 Forsters Bay Rd,
Narooma NSW 2546*

Finding Francis in service: a Military Chaplain's journey

Jason Wright tssf
Principal Chaplain; Director General
Chaplaincy – Navy

My journey as a Franciscan began during my time as a curate in the parish of Applecross, Western Australia, just before transitioning to full-time service as a Navy Chaplain.

Throughout my entire career in defence chaplaincy, St Francis and the Third Order Franciscan community have been my steadfast companions. Defence chaplaincy – like ministry in schools, rural parishes (to name just a couple) – often brings with it profound isolation. Much of our Christian journey is marked by such periods of solitude, when in the quiet contemplation we get a sense God's presence as our ultimate companion.

Our relationship with God remains foundational. As St John of the Cross wisely observed,

The virtuous soul that is alone and without a master is like a lone burning coal; it will grow colder rather than hotter. Those who fall alone remain alone in their fall, and they value their souls little, since they entrust it to themselves alone.'

This truth resonates deeply within me. As Franciscans seeking to make our Lord known and loved; to spread the spirit of love and harmony; and to live simply, our community provides an essential counterbalance to isolation.

It was precisely this sense of community – the fellowship of believers journeying alongside St Francis and St Clare – that first drew me to the Third Order. I still remember when Ted Witham shared this vision after I noticed an advertisement in the parish hall at Applecross. He spoke passionately about mutual prayer, support, and embodying the Franciscan charism as a community. This has remained central to my Franciscan life ever since, a blessing for which I remain profoundly grateful.

As my military career progressed, different aspects of Francis' life increasingly shaped and sustained my ministry within the Australian Defence Force. His humility, simplicity, and reverence for all creation continue to inspire me daily. Yet some aspects of his witness can feel almost unreachable – particularly his radical acts of renunciation. I am not



The Rev'd Jason Wright

sure how my bishop or service chiefs would react if I ripped off my uniform and stood naked before them, renouncing all my service in the military and announcing I have but one father and he is God. Although I think there have been times I have wanted to do that – maybe not literally.

My service as a Navy Chaplain has taken me through numerous deployments and operational postings: INTERFET, Operations Warden, Victorian Bushfire Assist, Operations Slipper, Manitou, Accordion, Highroad, and Okra. I've served throughout Australia aboard naval vessels, in various establishments, and later at Joint Operations Command, Fleet Headquarters, and Navy Headquarters.

While I carry no visible scars, I recognise how my faith, daily prayer discipline, community obedience, and the support of my Franciscan community have protected me from deeper internal wounds. After particularly challenging deployments, I've often found myself drawn to the early stages of St Francis' conversion narrative as a wellspring of strength and perspective.

Thomas of Celano's account of Francis following the war between Assisi and Perugia portrays a man wrestling with collapsed identity. After captivity, Francis returned physically weakened and spiritually disoriented. Once captivated by dreams of knightly glory, he discovered the hollowness behind those ambitions. Celano describes how Francis began recognising worldly vanity and questioning everything he had previously desired. This crisis initiated his profound transformation – turning from ego and ambition toward something transcendent.

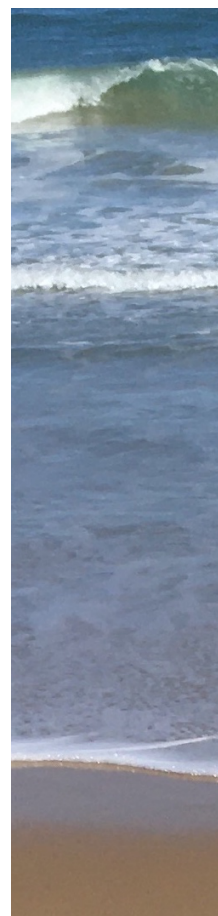
Rather than resuming a comfortable life or chasing faded dreams, Francis withdrew into contemplative solitude. Through silence, prayer, and spiritual encounters – particularly Christ's voice at San Damiano – he discovered clarity, purpose, and connection. These moments weren't merely revelations but invitations to a new way of being. His journey became one of radical simplicity and love, rooted in service and communion with God and creation. What began as crisis culminated in calling; his search for meaning became a life surrendered to the sacred, transforming both himself and the world around him.

As both minister and veteran caring for fellow veterans, I've found that Francis models a pathway through service-related darkness. He offers ways to discover hope when prospects seem bleak, to find meaning when purpose shatters, and to connect with something greater that ensures we emerge transformed rather than lost.

The lives of Francis and Clare testify to the power of surrendering to a deeper calling that transcends worldly achievement and comfort. Their example invites all who struggle under the weight of difficult experiences to find healing not through escape but by embracing vulnerability. Darkness becomes not an endpoint but a passage – a doorway to renewed purpose and strength.

Like Francis, we can navigate hardship not by retreating but by entering it with faith, compassion, and openness to transformation. In doing so, we reclaim our essential humanity: living fully, loving deeply, and serving with humility.

Pax et bonum.



Graduation joy

Jeni Nix tssf

In 2020 I hit a T-junction of ‘call’ – to continue my long attempt into Priesthood Formation, or to train as a Spiritual Director. For me there was no ‘both/and’, but a clear ‘either/or’. Since discovering Francis’ Prayer in 1977 I had spent my life seeking to console, listen and understand, over dumping my stuff on others, failing miserably at times.

When I tested turning towards each option – which meant away from the other – it became obvious that following Francis’ footsteps of serving individuals felt more life-giving, liberating and joyous.

Totally unlike the academia and faith wrestling of a Bachelor of Theology, Spiritual Direction Formation was all about facing our past wounds, our perceived demons, and mostly our self-misconceptions of identity. This was so we would no longer react deeply from our own woundings and impose them on others when listening to their stories.

Each semester’s assessments involved reading a textbook, writing a 1000 word reflection on how we *felt* about its content, attending a four-day Intensive (either online or at St Francis College in Brisbane), writing a 1000 word reflection on its teaching content/modality, then another 1000 word paper on various topics. Whilst seeming deceptively simple compared to a BTh, this Formation took us beyond everything we thought we knew about ourselves, our histories and where God was (or didn’t seem to be) in devastating times in our lives.

All of this was interspersed with triad training and supervision alongside our own personal spiritual direction sessions and written reflections. Years three and four required us to practise on volunteer guinea pigs, and we learnt much about how poor we were at listening before training!

The tears, frustrations and angst of the first three years were nothing compared to the deep wrestling of writing our Integration Papers. 10,000 words on a chosen topic relevant to our past three years’ work saw deep traumas of old being bravely processed and exposed to written word. We each began this course knowing God’s presence in our life journeys, but this Formation, especially the IP, brought us to understand and recognize an intimacy with God that we never imagined possible.

Writing my paper has changed my life forever, and has been an unexpectedly crucial foundation for how life has been since completing it. My cohort have bonded as lifelong friends through bravely sharing sacred fragile truths about ourselves. And I am deeply grateful for the support of my dear local Franciscans, who have picked me up and dusted me off countless times in the past eighteen months. Thank you, beloved friends.



Above: Jeni and other graduands

Below: Jeni and TSSF friends



‘Finding God in the Trauma – Healing Through Creative Expression in Spiritual Direction’ is available to read on-campus in St Francis College Library Brisbane, or Jeni is happy to email on request.

Regional Gatherings –

Queensland B/NNSW



Our recent Qld/NNSW regional gathering was a wonderful time of long-awaited fellowship (thanks Tropical Cyclone Alfred!). Bronwyn Fryar inspired us with St Clare's life and service. Small group discussions over questions led to full group deep sharing. Our first attempt at including Zoom participants from a distance/interstate was a resounding success.

Victoria/Tasmania



Vic/Tas had a rather amazing Zoom gathering, with people from as far away as Brisbane (Barbara Axten recently moved to Qld); Wangaratta and Bendigo to the north; Geelong, Balnarring, Ocean Grove and Tasmania to the south; Warrnambool to the West; and Kinglake and South Gippsland to the east. Only three of us were from Melbourne!

Another Christ

Rediscovering Jesus, Francis, and Discipleship Today

Andrew D Mayes
(Wipf and Stock, AU\$38)

Reviewed by Sally Buckley tssf

I was totally drawn into this book, as I was encouraged to look at Christ in another way, ways in which I hadn't necessarily associated with the Jesus I thought I knew. Such as Hermit, Dancer, or Jester – to name just three of the eleven roles explored by Andrew Mayes, an Area Formation Guardian in the UK, and former course director at St George's College Jerusalem.

Alongside this other Christ, the author places Francis of Assisi, who humbly modelled his life, in his attempt to live the Gospel, as 'another Christ'. The reader is then challenged to see where their understanding, their spiritual journey, may fit in or grow through this deeper exploration.

My recent work within the Third Order was in the area of Lifelong Formation, and I found the questions for reflection at the end of each chapter useful for exploring our own journey and understanding of both the Christ we follow and Francis who is our guide.

I think that this book will be a great resource, both for an individual or for group study.

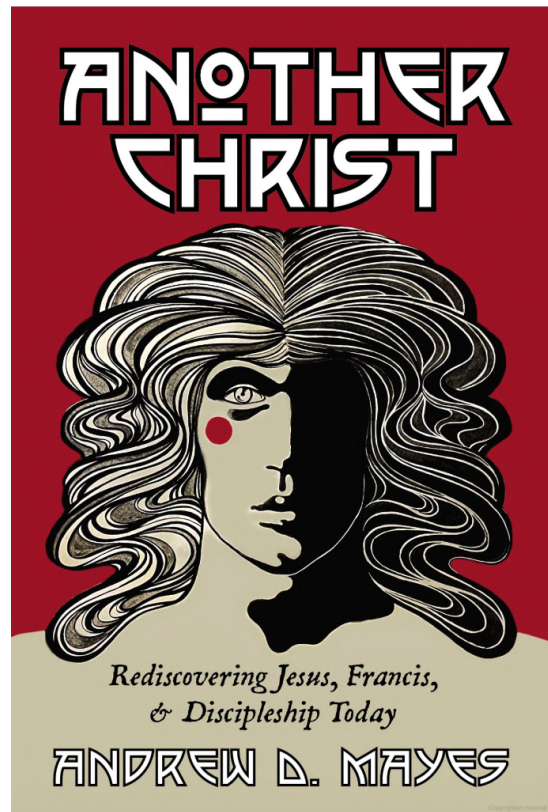
Andrew Mayes is an Area Formation Guardian in the UK; formerly Spirituality Adviser to the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf and also Course Director, St George's College Jerusalem.

Andrew was a keynote speaker for the Annual Conference of Australian Spiritual Directors (in 2014). His books are used by the Living Well Centre for Spiritual Direction near Melbourne.

Proceeds will go to Franciscan Aid.

Publishing details and an interesting description can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/4v622vxz>



How *Laudato Si* helps us to live the Canticle of Creation

Pirrial Clift tssf
Assistant Provincial Minister

A video of Br Keith Warner OFM's presentation on 'How Laudato Si helps us live the Canticle of Creation' was the focus at a recent Victoria/Tasmania Regional meeting in Geelong. Mother Jennifer, the parish priest, presided at the Eucharist, and joined us for lunch and our discussion.

Laudato Si is an encyclical written by Pope Francis ten years ago. Br Keith shared key points from the encyclical which relate to the Canticle, and encouraged those present to pray with it – to meditate upon it.

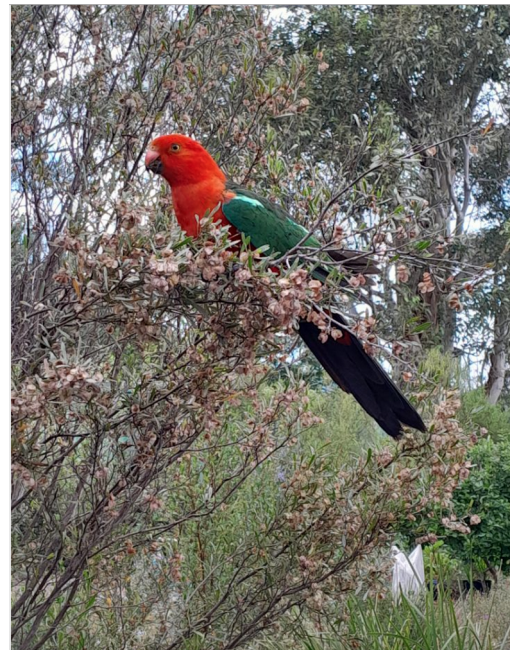
For instance we learned that the Canticle is in two parts; first praise, secondly pardon and reconciliation. He also explained that one small Italian word *per* can be translated three ways, leading to different interpretations of the Canticle. Inspired by new understandings and insights from both Pope Francis and Br Keith, we had a lively discussion and spent fifteen minutes writing our own songs of praise.

If you would like to see this fascinating video, just copy and paste this link into your browser, and enjoy! It plays for nearly an hour, and is worth every minute: <https://youtu.be/l62fKnsx91o>

Some people agreed to send their songs to *Knit Together*. Here is one by Sandra Jackson:

Praised be God for the glory of the Yellow Box Gum
illuminated by the setting sun.
Praised be God for the glory of Autumn's vibrant colours
against a blue, blue sky.
Praised be God for drenching rain falling on parched, drought-cracked earth.
Praised be God for the joy of sister magpie's song as I hang out my washing
and brother kookaburra's laugh that lifts my spirits as the light fades.
Praised be God for green shoots of bulbs breaking through the earth with
promise of new life out of the death of winter.

More songs follow in the online pages.



*King parrot feasting on
Dodonea seeds in a
garden in Euroa, Victoria*

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: 2nd September 2025

Please send to: jeidown@protonmail.com

O most high all powerful God
Praise you God our Creator
Praise you God our Maker
Praise you God our Saviour
Praise you God our Forgiver – Everlasting Arms, my Rest in Eternity. Amen.

Patti Singleton



*A white winter rose from
Sandra Jackson's garden*

Praise the Lord, who is light.
Praise the Lord all eyes which see.
Praise the Lord who is sound.
Praise the Lord all ears which hear.
Praise the Lord all voices which sound.
Praise the Lord who touches gently.
Praise the Lord all creatures which feel.
Praise the Lord who is all fragrances
Praise the Lord all creatures who smell the Lord.
Praise the Lord who provides all flavour.
Praise the Lord all who taste that the Lord is good.

Jennifer Furphy

When I sit in my favourite place
thinking longingly of your face
I see trees moving gently in the breeze
I hear the singing of birds
I feel the sun kissing my skin
and somewhere from within rises a song of praise.

Your voice spoke a Word and all was created.
Through you we have breath
a heart to love with
eyes to weep with...
Your touch gives us Life. Alleluia!

Pirrial Clift



A well camouflaged Boobook owl

A spark!

A Pentecost reflection Hayden McKellar tssf

It all started with a spark! Today we cannot imagine a world without WiFi, Bluetooth, any wireless communications for that matter.

Just over a century ago, radio was voiceless. It was only short and long buzzes that needed translation for people to understand. Here and now the use of radio is so closely tied into voice that we find it difficult to even live without our mobile phones, television, and computers – as they all use radio waves.

On the day of Pentecost, the spark became a flame that, through the ever present Holy Spirit, made the whole world aware of God's love. It is the Triune G-d through the Holy Spirit who inspired people like Francis and Clare to change their self-focused, earthly way of life to a selfless, Christ-focused way of life, proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's compassionate love.



The Rev'd Hayden McKellar



We are living in a world that twists words to mislead and justify its ways. A world that wants to edit Scripture because it does not fit with its view of the world. We need to rediscover the gift of the Holy Spirit we received at our Baptism, and fan that spark into a wildfire to speak out against the injustices around us.

Just as the flames of the first Pentecost inspired into action those who heard Peter's words in their own language, we need to find that same inspiration of the wildfire of the Holy Spirit to guide us, to act with compassion to all, regardless of their faith, and to live the Gospel for all to see.

Franciscans International

franciscansinternational.org

Franciscans visit Geneva ahead of three Universal Periodic Reviews

28/11/2024 | FRANCISCANS AT THE UN

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In November, Franciscans International welcomed a Friar Minor from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Franciscan Missionary Sister of Assisi, and two Secular young Franciscans from Madagascar to take part in the pre-sessions for their countries' Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Their visits to Geneva offered the chance to highlight the urgent human rights issues identified by Franciscans in a series of local workshops throughout 2024 and make specific recommendations at the UN to address these.

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You can also follow FI's work on social media via the links on their website toolbar.

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Join in FI climate webinars



Franciscans on the road to the UN Climate Conference in Brazil

In 2024, the global average temperature surpassed the symbolic 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels – the threshold set in the Paris Agreement to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change – for the first time. This figure is yet another reminder that we are quickly running out of time to avert a climate breakdown. Against this backdrop, the upcoming UN Climate Conference (COP30) in Belém will be a critical moment for the preservation of our Common Home.

In the year that we're celebrating both the 800th anniversary of the Canticum of Creatures and the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, a large Franciscan delegation will be present in Belém. Leading up to COP30, we will offer a series of one-hour webinars that explore the foundations of our work.

We hope you will join us on this journey! You can register for the first webinar here: <https://tinyurl.com/2n6mkcke>

1. The History of Global Climate Efforts: From Stockholm to COP30

19 August 2025:

11:00 New York

1700 Geneva

23:00 Manila

20 August:

01:00 Melbourne, Australia

2. Our Prophetic Mission: Franciscans International as the Franciscan Voice at the United Nations – 16 September 2025

3. The Document of the Episcopal Conferences of the Global South: A Franciscan Perspective – 7 October 2025