

# Knit Together

*in community and prayer*

Newsletter for the Province of Asia-Pacific

Third Order, Society of Saint Francis

[www.tssf.org.au](http://www.tssf.org.au)

**Lent / Easter**

## Francis' Easter transformation

**Mandy Wheatley**  
**Provincial Minister**

This Lent I was struck by these words: 'For St. Francis, the spiritual Easter was not a one-time event, but a life journey, a process.'\* As a young man, Francis repeatedly encountered Christ's transformative power through his life experiences.

During the first years of his conversion, in war and confusion; in facing the suffering of lepers and poverty; disillusionment with the status-quo of his times; and in the beauty of nature, he received God's instruction: 'Rebuild my house!'. He became transformed into a reflection of Christ's obedience to the goodness and grace of God. He gave himself to God because he understood so perfectly that God, through Christ, gave himself to Francis, and will always give Himself to all those who seek forgiveness.

In the mysteries of poverty and humility, contemplation and imitation of Jesus, Francis was transformed.

He was given the love that urged Christ to die for sinners and felt in his body the pain of the passion. In it all he received great joy! He was led to a profound understanding of the resurrection and what happens when the grace of Easter becomes effective in a Christian's life and we move from death to life. He teaches us that every earthly suffering holds the seed of resurrection.

With blessings of peace and goodwill,  
Mandy

\* Francis of Assisi – the Easter Saint: <https://tinyurl.com/ptskhyp3>



*Easter colour for  
a broken world –  
Sri Lanka after the  
cyclone and  
landslides*

## Matters of note from Chapter by Zoom, held 17, 19, 21 February 2026

**Thank you to those who sent your Reports to Regional Ministers.** This is part of our Community Obedience, TSSF vows and Rule of life. They are due each year on 11 November.

**Payment of Subs** is made in March each year. Please keep a copy of payment details handy for your Report and speak to your Regional Minister if this is difficult. A review of the timing of Reports and Subs payments will be done in 2026 to assist Chapter to decide if, in future these dates should coincide in November.



*Mandy Wheatley,  
Provincial Minister*

### Change of Office bearers:

**Assistant Provincial Minister** – Janet Long (NSW A)

**Provincial Secretary** – with thanks to Selina McMahon (Qld B-N NSW)

**Regional Minister for Regions in formation** (Korea, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong) – with thanks to +Philip Freier who has accepted the appointment.

**Area Convenors** –

Richard Brown resigned as Area Convenor N NSW (Qld B-N NSW); Alison Howell appointed

### Professed:

John Noller (NSW A) professed 07.02.26

Sally Jeffrey (NSW A) professed 05.10.25

Jack Lambert (WA) professed 01.11.25

Ginny Handmer (NSW B-ACT) professed 11.10.25

Jurinesz Shadrack (Sri Lanka) professed 22.10.25

Yae In (Lynn) Kim (Korea) professed 03.10.24

and transferred from Pacific to Asia-Pacific

### Elected to Profession:

Suresh Paul, India (Sri Lanka)

Elizabeth Albiston (Vic-Tas)

Nick Price (NSW A)

Peter Sanders (NSW A)

Barry Kursten (SA)

Francis Imran Hwang (Korea)

### Novices:

Ben Renfrey (SA) 04.10.25

Sylvie Cleret (SA) 14.02.26

Mark Flippance (SA)

re-admitted to Noviciate 14.02.26

Jennifer Wu (SA) 28.03.26

Olly Ponsonbury (SA) 04.10.25

Julia Drought (SA) 08.02.25

Beck Newell (SA) 02.02.25

Moira Hawker (NSW A) 07.02.26

John Stead (NSW B-ACT) 11.10.25

Eosu Anselm Kim (Korea) 12.10.25

Yewon Maria Lee (Korea) 12.10.25

Gihong Martin Yi (Korea) 12.10.25

May Won (Hong Kong) 23.08.24

Max Wu (Hong Kong) 23.10.24

Samson Fan (Hong Kong) 19.02.25

Washington Samba (Dogura)



*For those released from the Order, and those who have died, see page 17.*

# Extreme hardship after cyclone and landslides

**Saroja Namadevan tssf reports on the Franciscan relief work in Sri Lanka.**



Due to Cyclone Ditwah, extreme weather conditions were experienced across the island in late November last year. The entire Kandy region was heavily affected and our relief work focused on the estates of Delta, Stellenberg, New Peacock, Kitulgala and Delthota as well as the areas of Pussellawa, Wariyagala, Pupuressa and Galaha where the impact was most pronounced. While the cyclone caused significant adverse effects, the landslides that followed resulted in the greatest damage.

Most affected families in the estates (tea plantations) were living in line homes, and in other affected areas families were residing in small basic houses. Line homes are not individually owned and serve as the only permanent accommodation available to estate workers and their families. Several line homes and small houses were destroyed due to landslides, leaving families without shelter. Evacuations occurred with little warning, causing households to lose most of their belongings, including clothing and essential items. In some instances, loss of life was reported.

The disaster also had a significant economic impact as workers were unable to report to work for several days due to destroyed roads, lost homes and displacement to temporary refugee camps, resulting in lost income for daily wage earners.

## **Present Condition**

At the time of writing, the affected areas have been identified as unsafe and classified as high-risk landslide zones, preventing immediate settlement.

Many families remain displaced and are staying with relatives, acquaintances or in temporary relief camps. These camps are now being asked to close, despite the absence of permanent housing solutions. While some monetary assistance has been discussed by the government, it has not yet been received and no confirmed resettlement or housing plan has been announced.

Housing remains the most urgent concern. With no permanent homes and no clear pathway forward, families continue to face uncertainty regarding their safety and living conditions.



Estate management has asked families to move into older line homes that were condemned and evacuated many years ago. While there are safety concerns, some families are relocating due to a lack of alternatives.

However, in certain estates, management has also been actively involved in providing relief and assistance to the affected communities.

### **Activities conducted by The Society**

Quini Ranjith and I (as members of the Third Order) conducted all our relief activities in collaboration with the SSF First Order. Financial support was provided by Society members as well as local and foreign individuals who came forward with contributions. The work is being carried out under the guidance of Fr Michael.

Our ongoing efforts include the following activities:

- \* Visits to the affected areas to provide psychosocial support and engage with impacted families.
- \* Visits to temporary refugee camps to offer emotional support, guidance and help.
- \* Providing individual counselling services to address the specific needs of affected community members.
- \* Organizing educational sessions for children while local schools remain temporarily closed.
- \* Distribution of essential relief items, including dry rations, clothing and household goods, to support immediate needs.
- \* We will continue to visit and support the people in these areas, addressing any issues that may arise. We also plan to assist them with documentation for government housing, depending on the provisions and decisions made by the authorities.

We pray for God's guidance and strength as we continue this work and remain committed to standing with the affected families in their need.



*Distribution of supplies*

# Seeking St Francis

## Pirrial Clift tssf and Colin Valentine tssf

‘Seeking St Francis’ is an on-line Zoom group which grew out of the Vic / Tas region almost two years ago. We meet every 6-7 weeks for about an hour on Thursday evenings – Enquirers and Associates mostly, although Novices are also welcome. Elizabeth Albiston, a Novice at the time, floated the idea as a way of strengthening community in our dispersed order.

The group is fluid, and entails no obligations on the part of participants. We hope it provides a venue which fosters an interest in all things Franciscan. People can get to know other Seekers and form closer ties with Franciscan brothers and sisters. Usually we limit the involvement of professed members to two, leaving the floor to participants.

The meetings are freely structured, and have covered a broad range of topics from theology and spirituality to history and procedural matters. At our January meeting we spent time discussing Clare and how her contemplative, enclosed life contributed to making Christ known. Sometimes an article is sent out with the reminder letter in case it sparks interest, or a book or other resource is recommended, but the intention is less about teaching and/or ‘leading’ the group than facilitating a casual and friendly atmosphere with everyone’s contribution or question welcome.

St. Francis’ name is very well known, and interest in him is strong; we hope to provide a space where that interest can be addressed in a low-key, non-threatening way.

Living in a world of constant change, where their world is forever shifting under their feet, young people in particular are disinclined to make long-term commitments. Taking part in a group that hovers on the fringes of the Third Order and provides a window into the Franciscan life is our aim, and we do not see it as a loss if someone chooses not to continue, if they have gleaned what they needed to know. In short, it is not about recruiting Tertiaries but about providing a friendly space for the exploration of what it means to follow Christ in the company of St Francis and St Clare.

*With the approval of Chapter, the Seeking St Francis Zoom group is now available to all Australian Regions. If you would like to join a meeting, please contact your Regional Minister.*



*Centrepiece at a retreat*

# Evening Prayer and Meditation

**Jeannie Minnis tssf  
Regional Minister, SA**



We have Zoom Evening Prayer and Community Obedience on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, attended by Tertiaries, Novices, Enquirers and an Associate. It is edifying to pray with members from other regions, including New Zealand.

The prayer times are as follows:

Monday QLD 5:30pm; SA 6:00pm; Vic & NSW 6:30pm ; NZ 8:30pm

Wednesday WA 5:00pm ; QLD 7:00pm; SA 7:30pm ; Vic & NSW 8:00pm; NZ 9:00pm

Thursday QLD 5:00pm; SA 5:30pm ; Vic & NSW 6:00pm; NZ 8:00pm

## **Meditation**

Louise Townend leads a group meditation, 'A Quiet Place', lasting approximately 30 minutes, following Evening Prayer on Monday and Thursday evenings. Fr Nicholas Rundle, the priest in charge of the parish of Port Elliot and Goolwa, and who created the structure of the sessions, has kindly given consent to share the format of 'A Quiet Place' with us. All are welcome to participate.

## **A Quiet Place**

Fr Nicholas Rundle

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest.'* Mark 6:32 (NRSV)

Welcome to this quiet place as we rest in the Love of God. Our meeting for worship normally lasts for 35 minutes recalling Revelation 8:1, where there is silence in heaven for about half an hour, so that the prayers of the saints may be heard. We gather surrounded by the cloud of witnesses.

*'For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength.'* Isaiah 30: *'God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.'* John 4:24

If you can, arrive before the appointed time and take your seat. If you come late or leave early, do so quietly. Make yourself comfortable, loosen tight clothing and you may remove your shoes. Sit in an upright position without slumping or stretching. Some people use a cushion to sit on or to support their back. If you are new, remind yourself that you are surrounded by prayer.

## **Evening Prayer and Meditation link:**

<https://tinyurl.com/5c5tynkx>

Meeting ID: 867 4738 5748  
Passcode: 760383

If you would like to receive a reminder for the sessions contact Jeannie: [jminnis4@gmail.com](mailto:jminnis4@gmail.com)

## Coming together in Quietude

The person leading our worship will offer words of welcome. \

The bell will be rung three times as a reminder we gather in the name of the Trinity. This may help you to further centre yourself.

*‘Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: 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 through Christ our Lord. Amen.’*

The leader will read a brief passage of Holy Scripture as alone and together in community we enter the quiet place at Christ’s invitation.

*‘Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.’* Psalm 19:14

Please use this time as you feel led for reflection prayer, meditation, or reverie.

## ‘The ministry of silence’

A form of contemplation based on *The Cloud of Unknowing*:

- \* Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
  - \* Consciously relax your breathing, drop your shoulders, and feel through your body from the head down: as if your mind was like a hand stretching into a long glove. Relax eyes and jaw. You may place your tongue lightly against your upper front teeth. Let go of active thinking.
  - \* Notice that as you relax your body your mind becomes calmer.
  - \* Breathe through your nose and be aware of your breathing.
  - \* As you breathe out say a short word that is sacred for you. Many use the word ‘one’ on the exhalation. Rest in your word without thinking about its meaning. Its purpose is to help you focus and be present.
  - \* Slightly open your eyes especially if you find it hard to turn off the mental movie or feel sleepy. Adjust your posture if you are slumping.
  - \* Remain inwardly passive, resting in God. When thoughts or feelings even of God or holy mental images distract, do not dwell on them. Rest in the flow of moments and be attentive to the inward Light.
- ‘By love God can be grasped and held, but by thought neither grasped nor held.’* (The medieval *Cloud of Unknowing*)



## Present to others

The bell will be rung as we bring to the Light a situation in the world, or a person for whom you feel concern. Simply be present to that person.

## Sent out in the Spirit

Two minutes before the conclusion, the bell will again ring as you begin to move into a time of reflection. You may choose now or later to note what you have discovered or learnt in this quiet place. The fruits of resting in God are found not in feeling peaceful but in everyday life and relationships. If this time together causes you more stress and anxiety then it is not for you. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us evermore Amen* (2 Corinthians 14:14)

- \* The bell rings three times as we stretch and greet one another.

# 2030 vision

Jan Down tssf

There are prophecies of doom and destruction in The Bible, but there are also visions of a great reversal, new heaven and new earth, God restoring the fortunes of Israel, when there will be peace and security, and the flourishing of relationships between God, the people and the land.

It's as if God knows we need a vision of the future, something to work towards and to give us hope. I believe God knows the future, has it in hand, and invites us to be co-workers in creating it.

The importance of a vision is also understood in various movements and organisations that are working to address the climate and ecological crisis.

One of these is the Transition movement which invites people to imagine a future world (or more specifically, their local area) thriving without the use of fossil fuels – to really picture this, and so create a vision that they, as a community, want to work towards.

Rob Hopkins (in the UK) was the co-creator of the Transition movement 20 years ago. He handed that over some time ago and is now doing other, closely related work. During 2020 he started a podcast called 'From What If to What Next?' This ran for 100 episodes, and has recently re-started.

The podcasts consist of conversations set in 2030 with a wide range of real people, from economists and entrepreneurs to poets and bakers. On landing with Rob in a 2030 where humanity has done everything it could to avert disaster, they describe what that looks like, in terms of their own expertise. So it's an imagined time-travel to a positive future, but not fanciful, as it is based on things that are already happening – just not everywhere yet.

Rob chooses 2030 because of the Paris agreement, which says that by 2030 those of us in the global 'north' need to have cut our emissions by about 48%. He also refers to the United Nations Emissions Gap Report of 2022 which declared that it is still possible to avoid runaway climate change, but that 'wide-ranging, large, rapid and systemic transformation is now essential'.

Episode 68 of the podcast explores the question: 'What if the advertising industry helped create a positive future for humanity?' Rob invites Lisa Merrick-Lawless of Purpose Disruptors ([www.purposedisruptors.org](http://www.purposedisruptors.org)) and strategy director and writer Michael Hines to hop up into his time machine (which he says has recently been redecorated with some beautiful wallpaper he picked up on a recent trip to 1927) and away they go to 2030. You can travel with them here: <https://tinyurl.com/yvubz4ux>

Thank God for the gift of imagination, and the enormous power it has to help us work with God for a better world!



*Community Garden,  
Bermagui NSW*

**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:**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**Please send to:**

**[jeidown@protonmail.com](mailto:jeidown@protonmail.com)**

*This article will also appear in The Gippsland Anglican April edition, with kind permission.*

# Franciscan takeaways from COP30



*Brother Christopher-John SSF and Robson Hevalao tssf from the Solomons, in a queue at COP 30*

COP30 came to an end on 22 November 2025, closing two weeks of negotiations for which more than 56,000 delegates descended on Bélem, Brazil. In a year that marked the 10th anniversaries of the Paris Agreement, the encyclical *Laudato Si*, and the 800-year anniversary of the Cantic of Creatures, Franciscans International supported a large delegation to attend the UN Climate Conference.

Twenty-four brothers and sisters, representing all branches of the Franciscan family, took part, sharing concerns of the grassroots communities they represent to demand stronger climate action.

Despite an ambitious agenda set by the Brazilian presidency, COP30 ultimately fell short of delivering a breakthrough in the struggle against climate change. Billed as the ‘COP of implementation’, negotiators failed to adopt an envisioned roadmap to phase out fossil fuels. Instead, the commitment to transition away from fossil fuels made two years ago at COP28 in Dubai continues to be watered down at the insistence of a coalition of oil-producing countries.

‘This is a great disappointment and shows the failure of political leaders to take the climate crisis seriously,’ said Budi Tjahjono, FI’s International Advocacy Director. ‘While it’s encouraging to see that over 80 States are considering their own initiative to phase out fossil fuels, COP30 did not meet the moment. Similarly, while delegates agreed to an urgently needed increase in funding, these political pledges need to be made concrete. However, Belém did make one thing crystal clear: across the globe, people are running out of patience.’

## **Moving the debate forward**

Spurred on by climate-vulnerable nations and civil society, the push for stronger climate action continued. As part of these efforts, FI and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) launched a new report exploring faith-based perspectives on a Just Transition (see <https://tinyurl.com/4hrxehf5>) – one of the key issues being discussed at COP30. Drawing on inputs from communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis, the organisations propose that a Just Transition should not be narrowly approached as a shift to a low-carbon economy, but rather as a structural and systemic transformation to a more equitable, inclusive, and greener society.

*This text is from the FI website 2/12/2025, slightly edited.*

# The privilege of poverty

*The Paradox of Poverty: Why are the poor in spirit “blessed”?*

Susan R. Pitchford tssf  
Collegetown, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2025.  
ISBN 9798400802102.  
283 pages, from \$AUD45, Kindle \$42.

## Reviewed by Ted Witham tssf

Tertiary Susan Pitchford’s latest book on Franciscan spirituality is a paradox in itself: it is rich with the history of the way God’s people have understood the idea of poverty from the Psalms to the present day. A wealth of poverty.

Poverty is, in Pitchford’s words, ‘any experience that diminishes us, that suggests that we need something or someone we don’t have.’ (p.7) It is poverty of spirit, not enforced poverty. I found it helpful when Pitchford looks at what poverty is not: ‘The opposite of poverty is not wealth, but *entitlement*.’... ‘Grabbing instead of receiving.’ (p.58).

Poverty is receiving with gratitude the world as it is. Poverty envisages the world as gift. We claim nothing but instead are given everything because God loves us.

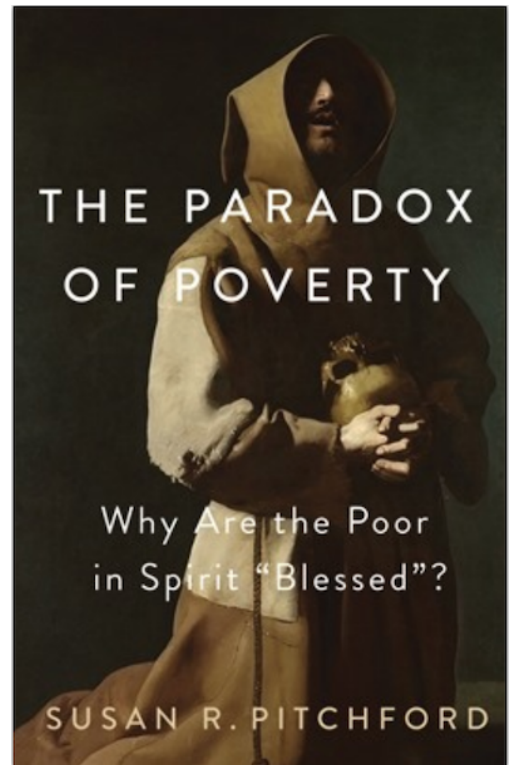
I learned a new word in *The Paradox of Poverty*: ‘belovedness’ (pages 110, 113 et passim), Even my spellcheck doesn’t recognise the word. Its meaning is easily discerned. Knowing that we are loved, belovedness, is the fruit of poverty.

(My parish priest assures me that the word ‘belovedness’ is common in contemporary spirituality writing. A Google Books Ngram shows that although the word was coined in about 1650; only since 2000 has its frequency surged. Maybe that shows my age!)

According to Pitchford, we should be shocked if we really listen to what Jesus is proclaiming in Matthew 5:3; that people experiencing spiritual diminishment and destitution, those who grieve or mourn, that is, the poor in spirit, are *happy*. As she says, when you really hear this, your reaction might well be to ask yourself, ‘with all piety and reverence, “What, is he nuts?”’ (page 2)

The Roman emperor Constantine abandoned the primitive Church’s ideal of poverty for the ‘Unholy Trinity’ of ‘wealth, power and a compromised church’ (p.19). The story unfolds by showing the pushback against this compromise, firstly by a retreat to the desert, and later through the story of Saints Francis and Clare among others in the Middle Ages.

Francis famously married his Lady Poverty, and Clare persisted



against all the power of the Church to obtain the privilege of poverty. They knew that possessing nothing they would enjoy all things.

I enjoyed Pitchford's flashes of zany humour. I didn't expect to laugh so often. The best spirituality refuses to take itself too seriously.

The chapter about the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the best Anglican explanation of the devotion that I have ever encountered. The Sacred Heart draws us closer to Jesus in his passion. We 'enter' through the wound in Jesus' side, and so must be small to do so. We come to the heart of Jesus through littleness, claiming that we have nothing that we can bring.

'The Sacred Heart,' as David Richo has said, 'is the ring of flames God places on our fingers after the courtship of the ages.' (p. 153)

Susan Pitchford begins the book by thanking Sister Laura Swann OSB, who encouraged her 'to bring more of myself as a sociologist to my work.' (p. xi)

In the last chapters on quests for poverty in the 21st Century, the sociologist shines in presenting Alcoholics Anonymous with its famous Twelve Steps and poverty as 'hitting rock bottom' and revealing the spiritual significance of the movement. She is straightforward about the limitations of AA; it manages a disease, not cures it, it works for some people and not for others, but if a person can admit they have no power over their addiction and need a Higher Power (however imagined), they understand poverty and are open to the gift of a new life.

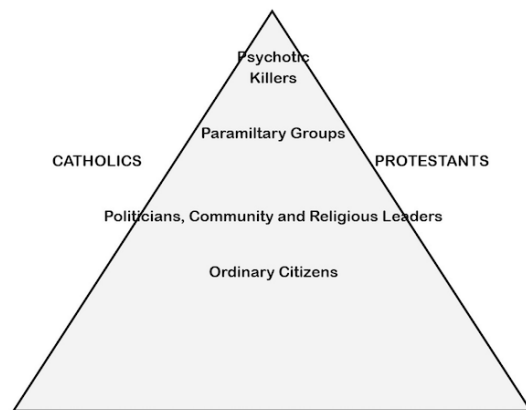
Susan argues that marginalised groups experience poverty. She goes a long way towards convincing me that gender, sexuality, race as minorities are poor *because* they are *minorities*, that is, lesser groups in the sense that Franciscan friars are *minors*. (Chap. 5).

She enthuses about a workshop on racial hatred she attended in Northern Ireland where a pyramid describing the tensions of the Troubles was presented. At the bottom of the pyramid was the general community, rising through religious and community leaders, through militaristic and other groups to, finally, at the summit, psychotic killers.

Each level gains its permission from the level below. Killers believe that the rhetoric of neo-Nazis or the Animal Liberation Front gives them space to act in their name. Paramilitary groups like the IRA or the Ulster Volunteer Force gained their legitimacy when community and church leaders did not call out their anti-social views, and community leaders often only spoke out when the community challenged them. I bear in mind that all Third Order members are visible Christians, and therefore religious leaders.

This pyramid came out of Mediation Northern Ireland, but has wide applicability. 'It shows in simple, intuitive terms how people who think they have nothing to do with one another can actually be cooperating in perpetuating a sectarian (or racist) society.' (p. 206)

Look around contemporary Australia. General members of our community believe that they are not anti-semitic. However, religious leaders too rarely preach against anti-semitism or other hate thinking, and



*Image Courtesy  
Mediation Northern Ireland*

neo-Nazis mount protests where they feel they have permission to make explicit anti-semitic statements, thus giving space to killers who can claim inspiration from them.

As Jewish MP Josh Burn put it concisely in the condolence motion for those killed at Bondi, ‘Not every act of hate ends in violence, but every act of violence begins with hate.’

Our thoughtless racism may be a point of poverty from which we can begin to know the gifts of God’s grace, knowing that we are powerless to change society’s racisms by ourselves.

To know the joy of belovedness, we need to know that we have nothing we can bring God; this is the paradox of poverty. With Susan Pitchford, I wish this treasure of wisdom could be shared more with our Church.

Susan concludes this readable survey of poverty with her own koan, a religious riddle: ‘We have seen the people of God grappling with the knottiest of questions: how are the poor blessed? Or, perhaps, why are the blessed ones poor?’ (p. 280)

*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. (I John 3:1-2 NRSV, and quoted p. 157)*

## Darleen Pryds on Lady Jacopa

Glenys McCarrick

Late last year I attended a talk by Dr Darleen Pryds PhD, on ‘Brother Fire and the Spirituality of Interdependence: Living the Canticle in the 21st Century’, with Sr Pia & Alison Stone.

I was particularly interested in what Dr Pryds told us about Lady Jacopa, a tertiary who worked with St Francis, founded a hospice, and attended St Francis on his deathbed.

Dr Pryds’ book, *Enduring Presence: Diversity and Authenticity Among the First Generations of Franciscan Laity*, includes a chapter on Lady Jacopa. See: <https://tinyurl.com/3mm93wep>

See also her chapter in: *Death, Dying and Mysticism. The ecstasy of the end*, edited by Thomas Cattoi and Christopher M Moreman, Palgrave Macmillan 2015; and ‘The Spirituality of Presence: the story of Jacopa and Francis’ in Franciscan Connections, *The Cord*, Vol 65, Issue 2, June 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/m2uac85m>

Many of Dr Pryd’s article length publications can be accessed through Academia.edu: <https://fst-us.academia.edu/DarleenPryds/>.



*Lady Jacopa*

# Letter from Pope Leo XIV

## To the Ministers General of the Franciscan Family on the 8th Centenary of the Death of St Francis

Assisi, 10 January 2026

‘Our Sister Death’, exclaimed Saint Francis on 3 October 1226 in Porziuncola, as he went towards her as a man finally at peace. Eight centuries have passed since the death of the *Poverello* of Assisi, who wrote the word of Christ’s salvation indelibly in the hearts of the people of his time.

In commemorating the significant anniversary of the eighth centenary of his passing, I wish to join spiritually with the entire Franciscan Family and with all those who will take part in the commemorative events, hoping that the message of peace may find a profound echo in the Church and society today.

At the beginning of his evangelical life, he heard a call: ‘The Lord revealed to me that we should say this greeting: ‘May the Lord give you peace’ [1]. With these essential words, he conveys to his friars and to every believer the inner wonder that the Gospel had brought into his life: peace is the sum of all God’s gifts, a gift that comes from above. What an illusion it would be to think that it can be built by human efforts alone! And yet it is an active gift, to be welcomed and lived every day [2].

It is the same greeting that, on the evening of Easter, the Risen Lord addresses to his disciples, afraid and locked in the Upper Room: ‘Peace be with you’ [3]. It is not a formula of courtesy, but the certain proclamation of Christ’s victory over death. Like the voice of the Angels on Christmas night – ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those whom he loves’ [4] – so the peace that the Seraphic Father proclaims is the peace that Christ himself made resound between heaven and earth.

In this age, marked by so many seemingly interminable wars, by internal and social divisions that creates mistrust and fear, the continues to speak. Not because he offers technical solutions, but because his life points to the authentic source of peace.

The Franciscan vision of peace is not limited to the relations between human beings, but also embraces whole of creation. Francis, who called the sun ‘brother’ and the moon ‘sister’, who recognizes in every creature a reflection of divine beauty, reminds us that peace must be extended to the entire family of Creation. This insight resonates with particular urgency in our time, when our common home is threatened and cries out under exploitation. Peace with God, peace among human beings and with



*St Francis and the wolf of Gubbio by Carl Weidemeyer, 1922 (Wikipedia)*

creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the example and spiritual legacy of this Saint, strong in faith, steadfast in hope and ardent in active charity towards his neighbour, inspire in everyone the importance of trusting in the Lord, of living a life faithful to the Gospel, and of accepting and illuminating every circumstance and action of life with faith and prayer.

In the Year of Grace, I wish to offer you a prayer that Saint Francis of Assisi may continue to instil in all of us perfect joy and harmony:

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago  
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,  
intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano,  
teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation  
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war  
and misunderstanding,  
give us the courage to build bridges  
where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division,  
intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers:  
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.  
Amen.

With these sentiments, I express my fervent wishes for good, especially for all of you who follow the charism of the *Poverello* of Assisi and for those who will commemorate the anniversary of his *dies natalis* in various ways, while I cordially impart my desired Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 7 January 2026  
LEO PP.XIV

[1] Testament 23.

[2] Cf. Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 16 May 2025

[3] Jn 20:19

[4] Lk 2:14

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# A holy accident

**Tony Poon tssf**  
**Hong Kong**



*Tony Poon*

The weakening of the legs was progressive. Weight lifting exercises helped but the loss of thigh muscle did not stop. Paces were not as long or quick as before.

It was the first Station of the Cross devotion of the year. The service was at 12:15. In the morning, I went to check out the flat of a friend who had emigrated before going to the church. Time was a bit tight and the slower paces did not help. There was a long flight of stairs and I was catching my breath when reaching the door. The service started at the high altar. I approached in quick paces.

There were three steps of stairs from the nave to the platform where the eucharistic table was. One had to traverse the platform to reach the high altar.

I slipped at the third step and fell forward. My hands and forearms protected my face and I ended up lying prostrate, next to the eucharistic table, in front of the high altar, and in front of the cross. The marble floor felt clean and smooth, almost a comfort to embrace.

I didn't feel that I had had an accident. I felt that I was lying prostrate in front of the cross, just as priests did at ordination. A clear sense of joy welled up. It was probably a couple of seconds before I heard the priest ask, 'Are you alright?'

I was alright. I was more than alright, and participated in the Stations of the Cross devotion.

## **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation**

Peace is not distant; it is built.  
It is not imposed; it is cared for.  
It is not armed; it is lived.

May God accompany us in the year that begins, so that we may continue walking together, in justice, peace, and care for creation.

Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM  
Br. Taucen Girsang, OFM  
General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation  
General Curia

*From the ending of OFM's JPIC Newsletter, December 2025 (used with permission)*

# The Spirituality of St Clare of Assisi:

Retreat notes available

A retreat on the Spirituality of Clare of Assisi was originally presented in 2005 by Briega O'Hare OSC, a Poor Clare of the Light of Christ Monastery, Dundalk, Ireland, to the Sisters of St. Francis of Stella Niagara, New York.

The link below can be used to access the audio files and transcripts from this retreat to learn more about Clare.

We thank the Poor Clares, Waverley & the Stella Niagara Franciscans for allowing us to use it and for making this material available to others:

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



*Briega O'Hare OSC*

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# Matters of note from Chapter

Mandy Wheatley

(continued from page 2)



## Requested release from the Order

Graeme Frazer (NSW A)  
Jenny Bickerton (NSW B-ACT)  
Evan Pederick (Vic-Tas)  
Sam Amos (Sri Lanka) 12.02.26  
Prince Nesan (Sri Lanka) 12.02.26  
Dijen De Saram (Sri Lanka) 01.05.25  
Eun-gyeong Deborah Gim (Korea) Released 09.09.24  
Ricky Pupuka (Dogura PNG) Released March 2025  
Simon Fong (Hong Kong) Released 30.08.25

## Deceased, may they rest in peace

Cleone Rolfe-Reardon (Qld B – N NSW) – 16.09.24  
Winston Svensen (Qld B – N NSW) – 15.02.25  
Anna Mark (Goroka PNG) – 01.04.24  
Doreen Wauwe (Goroka PNG) – 04.10.25  
Jean Aito (Popondetta PNG) – 11.10.25  
Shem Damore (Dogura PNG) – 26.05.24  
Basil Kaibo (Dogura PNG) – 14.11.25  
Geoffrey Mabira (Dogura PNG) – 01.09.24  
Eric Newton Sawaroa (Dogura PNG) – 04.06.24  
Theodore Siburewa (Dogura PNG) – 17.03.24  
Valda Paradies (Qld A) – 09.09.25

