

THE THIRD ORDER:

Australian Province Newsletter

Volume 7.1

.....Easter 2007

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

From the Minister Provincial

Dear brothers and sisters in St Francis.

Every blessing in the joyful season of Easter. There's a great wonder in knowing the Risen Christ that makes all of life full of light and inspires us to love.

We apologise for the lateness of this newsletter. Both Editor Bill Gates and I have had surgery, which has slowed us down temporarily. The Lenten reflection I had originally prepared as my letter to you is printed later in the newsletter.

Book for Novices – and all Franciscans

I have recently finished a book by American Tertiary Susan Pitchford, which tells the story of her journey as a novice in the Third Order. The book is wise, funny and moving. It explores aspects of Franciscan life and spirituality under the familiar headings of our Aims and Principles. If you are a Novice Counsellor, I recommend that you buy it as a gift for your Novice early in the noviciate ... and "older" tertiaries won't regret reading it either.

Details of the book:

Susan Pitchford tssf, 2006, *Following Francis: The Franciscan way for everyone*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.

You can order the book from Rainbow Book Agencies in Melbourne (www.rainbowbooks.com.au), from St John's Books in Fremantle WA (www.stjohnsbooks.net) or from your local Church bookshop. Recommended retail price in Australia is \$29.95.

A fuller review is on page 8.

Peace joy and love,

Ted Witham

Our website is under construction at www.tssf.org.au

Installation and enthronement of tertiary Philip Freier as the new Archbishop of Melbourne

It was fitting that earlier in December the large screen in St Paul's Cathedral which hung over the whole chancel arch had been removed and the restored choir and sanctuary were visible in their new glory. Two thousand or so people, clergy and laity of the Diocese plus visitors, packed the Cathedral. There were several tertiaries there; in particular, I spoke afterwards with Jeremy Ashton and Keith Slater. All the expected church and civic dignitaries were in attendance. The Governor of Victoria, Dr David de Kretser, an active member of the Wattle Park Uniting Church, read one of the lessons and when the Roman Catholic Archbishop, Denis Hart, spoke his words of welcome I thought back to the days of complete separation between our two churches, a mutual suspicion overcome only when Archbishop Frank Woods went to visit Dr Daniel Mannix. It is widely known that +Philip enjoyed close relations with aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, a happy friendship to which he referred in his sermon and which he will seek to repeat in the very different circumstances of a large urban diocese. One of the notable parts of Saturday's liturgy was when an aboriginal man processed the full length of the Cathedral's central aisle playing the didgeridoo. St Francis gained recognition though the choice of the concluding hymn: 'All creatures of our God and King', all seven verses in unexpurgated form.

When people arrived for the service many noticed and some spoke to a man who was holding up a huge placard begging the church to respond to the claimed injustices of the new Industrial Regulations. It was a favourable omen when the new Archbishop himself later joined in conversation with this man.

As is generally known, Melbourne is a diverse diocese, embracing all forms of Anglican worship and belief, from the extreme to the drab, from zeal for the gospel to the cosiness of a religious club. There is hope for the future in that when Philip Freier was

chosen at the August Synod both 'Catholic' and 'Evangelical' Anglicans expressed their pleasure. He has a great task ahead of him in diocese and city, given not only the alarming figures of the decline in Anglican church attendances but also the perceived irrelevance of Christian faith and practice for the lives of several million Melburnians. We, the members of the Third Order, are thrilled that Philip agreed to this onerous ministry and we hold him up to God in our prayers.

Denis Woodbridge

Archbishop Freier presented with gift from the Province



Here Helen Granowski, Regional Minister for Victoria/Tasmania presents the cross to Archbishop Philip on behalf of the province.

The cross was a profession cross mounted on wood. Brother Geoffrey Adam of the [Little Brothers of Francis](#) crafted the cross. His description of his work follows.

Here is the cross, writes Brother Geoffrey. I suppose it is nothing you imagined! It's nothing I imagined at the beginning of the process, but I believe what has been created is something original and beautiful in its design and expression. I chose a free form shape that suits the flow and abstract beauty of your profession cross.

The centrality of the crucifix in the wood speaks of God's sacrifice which has drawn all things to Himself. From east to west from north to south, like a compass that works in reverse which points to its centre from every direction. Both near and far God invites, attracts and compels all nations and peoples to gather as one. The crucifixion - the deepest expression of God's love

for us - is what now brings life and health to this fallen world. *'Behold, I have made all things new.'*

The name of the work I have decided on is '**We find our rest in Thee**'. I decided on this particular title after completing the work. You notice how the profession cross cradles or is 'pillowed' into the wood! This evokes for me - and others I hope - an understanding of rest, a rest that is eternal that we all struggle towards. To use those lovely words of St. Augustine. *'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee'*. It is this rest we shall possess one day, a rest won for us by Christ's labour and bloody sacrifice, and we shall take our rest, in the very measure of our sufferings in this life.



I believe art in all its forms is a means to help the human spirit to perceive beyond this world's veil that so blinds us from what is true and real. It is my hope this cross will inspire the capacity in others and be a means of grace, to see beyond the veil and glimpse true joys.

The wood is RED STRINGY-BARK. It comes from the brothers' place at Eremophila. It is a hard-wood and will make good wearing.

On behalf of the Little Brothers of Francis, I hope the Third Order will accept this cross as a gift and blessing to Philip Freier, in his new role as Archbishop of Melbourne.

Your brother in Christ and fellow traveller in the Spirit of St. Francis,

Brother Geoffrey Adam. LBF

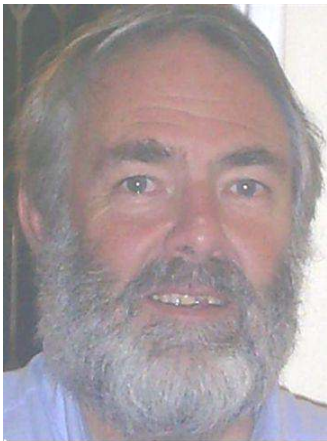
New Minister Provincial for Africa

The Rev'd David Bertram was commissioned as the new Minister Provincial of the African Province by Dorothy Brooker, Minister General of the Third Order at the Provincial Chapter held in Johannesburg from 14 - 16 July 2006. Previous to that, the Bishop Protector, Rt Rev Merwyn Castle, had declared David's nomination to be the only valid one he had received.

David is a born and bred Zimbabwean who felt a call to the ministry after 15 years in secular occupations. He trained at St Paul's Theological College in Grahamstown, South Africa and then returned to Zimbabwe, being rector of two parishes in the Diocese of Harare from 1987 to 2005. Just 12 months ago David emigrated to South Africa to become rector of Christ Church, Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg) in the lively Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist, the most northerly diocese in the Republic, abutting on to Zimbabwe.

David is a widower, his wife, Maureen, having died after a protracted illness at the end of 2004. His three children live in the United Kingdom.

David was professed as a Tertiary in 1990. He has held a number of Regional and provincial posts, being Regional Guardian of the Central Region (Zimbabwe) from 1992 to 1998. His vision for the Third Order



*From the Newsletter of the African Province of the
Third Order of the Society of St Francis
No 64: Advent 2006*

From the Editor:

I have had a bout of illness which has been developing for the past few years. It came to a crisis about two months ago. Resulting in an operation from which I am still recovering. I received many emails from many people that all show the power of faith and prayer. I must say I have been humbled by my experiences in the past few weeks.

I had a prostate operation in the Dudley hospital in Orange. The continuous irritation and dull pain was preventing me from participating in many activities and I look forward to a return to normal.

At times like this one thinks of one's mortality. I realized that a century ago people with this condition would not have survived, so I must give prayerful thanks for the skill of the doctors and nursing staff in working towards my recovery in the next week. I can only guess in a very uninformed way about that which God has in mind for me but please pray with me that God's Will be Done.

I have successfully recovered from surgery but have been firmly warned not to undertake any physically stressful activity. I am not permitted to drive and they frown upon my travelling by car until healing has fully taken place. I am told the recovery period is from four to six weeks.

So, I have plenty of time now to get my tax records, the newsletter and other pieces of deskwork up to date.

Hospital became for me a time of reflection on my life and my relationships. I am currently working through Brother Ramon's book "A Month with Saint Francis". On the morning following my operation I was reading Br Ramon's words for Day 21 and was particularly taken by the repetition of the Jesus prayer- "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner". I am still saying it more or less as a mantra. I have become more aware of the care and love of God and His guidance. I was able to see and feel the love of others, my wife, my daughter and friends, which I admit I have been beginning to take for granted.

This experience has been one in which my faith has been strengthened and the work of Saint Francis is now becoming better understood. I now know that God

has other plans for me which He will reveal in due course but I have that strong feeling that there will soon be new and different directions in my life, directions that will further deepen my trust in the Love of God and his Son Jesus Christ and in the works of our beloved Saint Francis.

May the blessing of our Lord and our beloved Saint Francis be with you now and always.

Thank you Pax et Bonum

Bill Gates

Newsletter contributions

For the Newsletter it would be really a change to have contributions, at least once per year, from each Area Convenor or people within that area. In that way the newsletter will more truly represent many aspects of a Tertiary's role and the activities happening in each part of the province. I have now overcome the problem of large image size in relation to photographs and am able to satisfactorily reduce their size for publication making electronic transmission easier. So if I am sent images of any kind then I can reduce them to a publishable size. I hope this helps.

Bill Gates

Old tapes to new CDs

A problem I have come across, unrelated to the newsletter, is that some people have old audio tape cassettes which are wearing out. I have been able to successfully transfer these tapes to CD for playing either on your computer or on your standard CD player. Just send me the cassette and I will return you the cassette and the CD. It will cost people the postage charge plus that of the blank CD. I will find out what this does cost and ask people to include a cheque to cover these costs.

Bill Gates

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given me
and for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

Richard of Chichester

Office for Franciscans International to open in Asia-Pacific region.

The Franciscan Family of Asia Pacific has called for **the establishment of a Franciscans International regional office in Bangkok.**

I am happy to announce that Julie Morgan has been asked to join Franciscans International as the Asia Pacific Project Coordinator.

In addition to her experience as the JPIC Coordinator in Australia, Julie also acquired valuable skills working as the Deputy Director for Caritas Australia, and as regional representative for Caritas Oceania for peace building. During her career, she has gained the confidence of many members of the Franciscan Family, religious and secular, in the Asia Pacific region. The superior leadership she has demonstrated in coordinating the FI Asia Pacific feasibility study and steering committee gives me great confidence in her ability to lead this initiative.

Julie will commence work in Geneva on Phase 1 of the development process in February 2007. In 2008, Julie will move, with the FIAP team, to Bangkok for the initial establishment of the FI office. By 2008, under Julie's supervision, FI expects to have a fully-functioning office in Bangkok, providing services to all Franciscans in the region.

Julie brings a **unique strength and understanding** to the FI Asia Pacific Project. I am confident that under her supervision, the opening of an FI office in Bangkok will be a great success.

Congratulations Julie and welcome to Franciscans International! -Peace,

John Quigley, OFM

Director, [Franciscans International](#)

The Anglican Franciscans in Australia and New Zealand have committed \$5000 per annum for the Bangkok office. The Third Order Province will provide \$1000 of this. Your contributions are sought for this worthwhile project putting us more closely in touch with the needs of the poor in this region.

Editor



Minister Provincial's Lenten Reflection

Observing Lent as an Order of Penitents

The WA Tertiaries have an annual tradition for the Saturday immediately before Palm Sunday: they meet for a Quiet Day to mark the Day of Penitence. They meet at Maxine's, who makes a superb soup for lunch, and hosts a day of reflection on the Scriptures, especially on what it means to be an Order of Penitents. We wash each other's feet as a sign of the mutual service we are all called to.

The Order is wise to provide a day for us to reflect on the original title that St Francis gave to the Third Order: the Order of Penitents. "Sin has sundered us from God", James McAuley reminds us. (Hymn 463 *Together in Song*). We are not consistent in loving God. We blow hot and cold in our love for others, even those close to us, and we have great difficulty in "constantly being aware of the poverty in the world and its claim on us." (Day 12, *Principles*). Morning and Evening Prayer used to tell us regularly that we are "miserable sinners". I could do with that sharp reminder more often, as I find it so easy to drift into a vague and false - and dangerous - sense of doing all right as a Christian.

The purpose of being an Order of Penitents, however, is not to remain in the grovel position before God. We contritely acknowledge how sin has sundered us for God, we confess our sinfulness, and ask for God's forgiveness. And God gives forgiveness as a wonderful gift.

Forgiveness is a package, a bundling together of three great gifts. When God forgives you and me, God grants us

- Freedom
- Power to do good, and
- Joy.

When we are forgiven, we are made free once more. We can get on with our lives free of the burden of guilt and self-doubt. God gives us the great freedom just to be ourselves in love with God and neighbour.

But God knows, loving is not easy. The second parcel in the package is "power to do good". We have been praying the week of writing this that we may "bring good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives" (Collect Year C, 3rd after Epiphany).

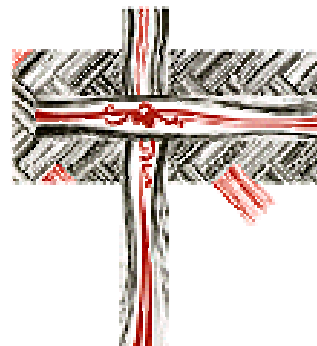
I recite the words with a sense of helplessness: how can I possibly do those things? Then I walk the dog,

and find myself saying "G'day" to the alienated teenager sitting on a letter box, encouraging the angry mother of squabbling toddlers, and greeting the fearful old lady looking out from behind her locked screen door. The power to do good is a gift, not coming from within my own resources.

Who wouldn't feel a deep joy when they experience that freedom and mastery of good and loving deeds? Joy too is part of the gift bundled to us as "forgiveness".

This Lent leading to the Day of Penitence (officially the *Friday* before Palm Sunday), remember that St Francis called you as a *penitent*. If it is your tradition, Lent is a good time to "avail yourself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation" (Day 16, *Principles*), but how ever you do it, live deeply into the experience of acknowledging your lack of love, your sinfulness, and of opening yourself to receive the astounding gift of forgiveness.

Ted Witham
Minister Provincial



May they rest in peace and rise in glory!

We were saddened to hear of the recent deaths of **Brother Justus van Houten SSF**, the American head of Newton Theological College in PNG, who died suddenly while travelling in Papua.

Brother Timothy Joseph SSF, who also died while travelling in PNG.

Effie Fitzpatrick, a Perth-based tertiary, the widow of a missionary teacher, after a long illness.

Brother Geoffrey SSF, who died in England aged 83. Brother Geoffrey began the Third Order in PNG and Australia when he professed Betty Hay as a tertiary in 1959. There will be more about Br Geoffrey in the next issue, and celebrations of our 50 years as a Province in 2009.

Our prayer is that these brothers and sister will now be singing with Francis and the angels.

New CD from Sister Briège O'Hare of the Poor Clares in Sydney.

The Peace of God

Songs from a Celtic Monastery,

by Briège O'Hare osc

Hermitage Productions

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Discounted for Christmas \$ 26.00

Songs from a Celtic Monastery
(Inspired by the CARMINA GADELICA)

By Briège O'Hare, osc
Sung by Marie Cox, rsm

For centuries, the Celtic Christians lived their days in a deep consciousness of the spiritual world. Prayers, hymns, invocations and songs marked their days and they faithfully passed on this oral tradition from one generation to the next. Their profound Christian faith informed every hour and every activity, from dawn to dusk. Their sense of the presence of God, the angels and saints was a part of their everyday consciousness, for they experienced no difference between the sacred and the secular in their lives. In his work, the Carmina Gadelica, Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912) has spent a lifetime preserving this remarkable oral tradition for posterity. His six volume work is perhaps the most outstanding achievement in Celtic Literature and is an invaluable source for understanding Celtic spirituality.

The songs in this album take their inspiration from Carmichael's work, in these musical settings it is hoped that the listener will be able to enter the world of early Celtic Christians, that is, God's world, a creation where everything reflects the beauty and goodness of the Creator.

Order:	CD 'Peace of God' _____	\$ _____	
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Provincial Chapter meets

Provincial Chapter met for 2007 at Stroud in Easter week. It was wonderful to be together as Franciscans to celebrate the resurrection and to try to discern where God is leading our Province.

We worshipped mainly in the Monastery Chapel where the Clare Community had prayed and felt the presence of their prayers. We also attended Eucharist in the Brothers' Chapel at the Hermitage one morning, crowding out their tiny but prayer-full space. Tertiary Bishop Bob Butters celebrated on that morning.

New Name for Province

We are now to be called officially "The Province of Australia, Papua New Guinea and East Asia". This name replaces the growing, and increasingly inaccurate, list of countries which has previously been our official name.

Training materials for Novice Counsellors

The Provincial Minister is developing new materials for use by Regional Ministers in training Novice Counsellors. We trialled one of the sessions at Chapter, declaring the materials to be helpful in supporting Novice Counsellors. These will continue to be developed.

We noted that our Province and Aotearoa-New Zealand have a higher proportion of Novices than Europe or the Americas, an indication of our rapid growth. Our Novice Counsellors are crucial to making sure we grow

as a Franciscan community, and not as an approximation of what we should be.

Franciscan Holy Days

Section F of our Manual contains only saints from the early years of Franciscanism. Chapter would like to include more from the story of Anglican Franciscans, including Brother Douglas, Jack Winslow, Fr Algy, and for PNG and Australia, Brother Geoffrey.

Draft materials will be developed and discussed at the meeting of Provincial Ministers this September.

Retiring Regional Ministers

Faith Drodge (SA), Rosemary Bradford (NSW-A), Flemming Beicher (WA) and Michael Buma (Malaysia) have all completed six years as Regional Ministers, and **Vic Hall (Qld-A)** is not standing for re-election because of his illness. Chapter thanked God for the ways in which they had inspired people in their Regions on their Franciscan journeys.

John Clarkson (NSW-B), Cleone Rolfe-Reardon (Qld-B) and Helen Granowski (Vic-Tas) have completed three years and are willing to stand again.

Elections in all Regions for Regional Ministers will take place in May-June, and the new Regional Ministers will take up their appointments on August 1.

You will receive election papers in the next few weeks. Please give this your prayerful consideration.



Chapter and other Tertiaries in the Community Room at the Stroud Monastery

Open Letter to Susan Pitchford tssf

Susan is the author of the 2006 book, [Following Francis: The Franciscan way for everyone](#), Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.

Dear Susan

I greatly appreciated your new book. It is written with love and insight. I liked it for two main reasons:

1. You reminded me of my own journey as a novice 25 years ago towards a fuller realisation of my vocation as a Franciscan.

2. Your struggles with aspects of our life like simplicity and chastity inspired me to go deeper into those areas in my life to make it conform a little more to what a Franciscan might be.

Novices will appreciate the way you have demystified some of our jargon and show how words like "Rule", "Joy" and "Obedience" are concepts that can reinvigorate Christian living. Drawing up one's personal rule at the beginning of the journey can seem an almost bureaucratic requirement. You, however, have explained clearly, for example, how important the Holy Eucharist is to you and its particular place in Franciscan theology.

I suspect it's partly because you're a fan of Teresa of Avila, but your chapter on prayer as desire and fulfilment was very helpful. It's interesting that in his 2006 encyclical [Deus Caritas Est](#) the new Pope Benedict XVI has also allowed that *eros* is a characteristic of God. God's desire for us - as you show so clearly - is the basis of the life of prayer.

Following Francis is funny. It frequently made me chuckle out loud. Your wry and humorous observations, say of birds from your window, are exemplars of how following Francis is *fun*.

You made me laugh by the way you laugh at yourself. In the concrete examples you give of your attempts to follow Francis you allow us to see a little of who you are. You know the cost of being a Franciscan. You, for example, have foregone tenure as a professor. I have a friend who has also been reluctant to seek promotion as a University lecturer. I've seen how such decisions are painful and difficult, not the least because colleagues either can't understand or are threatened by these decisions.

But your personal examples give the book its strength. For many of us in the [American](#) and [Australian](#) Provinces at least, the challenge of being a tertiary is

complicated by our middle class lives. In our wealthy countries, it can be counter-productive to give away all our money and possessions. We are held by so many safety nets - most of which we middle-class folk make good use of - that trying to stand aside from our wealth might simply make us dependent not on God, but inappropriately on other people.

I struggle with these issues, and I am so encouraged, Susan, by your struggles with them. I am glad that your fellowship group helped you own the extent of your influence for good in your sociology teaching.

And I enjoyed going with you on your 'Franciscan road trips' to Ghana and Cambridge. You show imaginative ways in which we can bridge the great divide between us and "the poverty in this world and its claim on us".

So thank you Susan for taking the trouble to write this book. I shall recommend that all Novice Counsellors in the Australian Province (you call them Formation Counselors, I think) give *Following Francis* as a gift to their Novices. It's readable, and has some excellent exercises at the end of each chapter for readers to work on.

In addition, we who have been on this journey for some more years can continue to gain from your insights into Retreats as *yihud*, into the power of the Profession vows and their renewal each year, and so on.

Like you, I read many good books about the life of Francis, some excellent books about the ideal of Franciscan spirituality and the story of the Franciscan family. But your book is about *being a Franciscan*, in particular about being a Third Order Franciscan. It's an insider's book, and as such will be helpful for many.

Peace, joy and love to you in St Francis,

Your brother in the Third Order

Ted Witham

Blogs – online food for thought

A number of Franciscans are using their online blogs to record thoughts and feelings about being a Franciscan.

Try Brother Nathan-James' blog. "The Mendicant Mind and Body" is at <http://brnathan.wordpress.com/>

Brother William's blog is at www.divineuniverse.info

The New Zealand Provincial Minister John Heberton has a blog at <http://colourfuldreamer.blogspot.com/>

Ted Witham's blog is www.blognow.com.au/twitham