

THE THIRD ORDER

Australian Province Newsletter,

PNG & East Asia

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Easter Edition

Dear sisters and brothers,

I am delighted to announce that Gloria Malouf-Marsh has agreed to be our Newsletter Editor. Thank you, Gloria. Please support her by sending news from your Area or Region, or other contributions. This is her first issue, and I am sure you will find it interesting and helpful for your journey in company with St Clare and St Francis. By the time you read this, God willing, brothers and sisters in Papua New Guinea will have taken delivery of a new vessel with an outboard motor. (You may gather that there has been some frustration in getting the money from Australia to PNG!)

On behalf of the Tertiaries in the Dogura and Popondetta Regions, I thank the Australian Tertiaries for their generosity in providing this coastal dinghy. I particularly salute Canon John Clarkson, with his wife Lorraine's support, whose efforts raised well over \$2000 towards the total. I write in the early weeks of Lent and reflect that being able to give of ourselves is at the heart of our faith, whether it is money we give to Haiti or PNG, or whether it is love we give to our neighbour. And yet, there is a paradox. Lent is 40 days in length (or 42, depending on how you count it!) but Easter, the great season of joy is 50 days in length. God's giving to us is so much larger than our giving: God's gift of Creation continues to replenish our bodies, minds, spirits and souls. God's gift of the Risen Jesus continues to hold us in God's eternal presence, God's gift of the Holy Spirit empowers us with joy and love. This is why the Cross stands as the border between Lent and Easter, and why St Francis constantly invited us to contemplate the Cross: the crucified Christ draws us to himself, and we learn how to begin giving of ourselves.

Yet the more we are drawn to the Cross, the more we are amazed at the depth of his giving to us. We say every day: "Here and in all your churches throughout the world, we adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world."

Let us adore and bless.

Please keep Provincial Chapter in your prayers as we meet in Adelaide at the end of April. I ask your prayers for me that my health will allow me to travel and chair the meeting as I am planning in faith to do. Pray for your Regional Minister, as she or he brings the names of those who are ready to be professed as well as those requesting release from the Order.

Peace, joy and love,

Ted,

Ted Witham tssf.

Minister Provincial



*Provincial Chapter
meeting in Adelaide -
April 29 - May 2, 2010*

Visit us on the web at www.tssf.org.au

THE EARLY FRANCISCAN MOVEMENT

Franciscan Origin

By: Peter Lockyer

St. Francis of Assisi has inspired Christian people by his life and example for more than 800 years. Francis' love for God, his joy in life and his wholehearted following of Jesus Christ are deeply challenging. His great devotion to God flowed on to people especially the poor, the sick and those distressed in any way. As we are aware Francis' deep commitment to and love for God extended beyond human persons to all creation which he embraced with great enthusiasm and understanding.

We make a great mistake if we think of Francis as in love with the earth and its creatures and forget that that love was derived from his love for the Creator God first and foremost. Francis' commitment to and passion for God and God's ways challenges the, at times, half-hearted acknowledgement of God we encounter in our Australian society. We thank God on 4th October each year for Francis, his life, work and example. But, as we do so we need to be ready to be shaken out of our sometimes, smug complacency since we can be tempted to give mere lip service to Francis and his proclamation of the saving message of Jesus the Christ. If we give only a nodding acquaintance to the following of Christ in the Franciscan Way then let's be ready to be rocked to our back teeth as we seriously consider what is involved for individuals and congregations seeking to follow Christ in the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

As we think about Franciscan origins we have to acknowledge that Francis is not the only person to have contributed to what we know today as the Franciscan Life. St. Clare who lived for 34 years after the death of Francis, contributed greatly to keeping the Franciscan spirit alive over those years. Clare provided a steadying influence on the Order of Friars Minor during the turbulent years up to the election of St. Bonaventure as Minister-General. In his time in that office from 1257 to 1274 Bonaventure wrote the official biography of Francis and was able to settle the disputes of the time and help the Order to move forward. Those disputes were between the Spirituals who wanted to follow literally St. Francis' Rule, and the majority who recognized the need for a more moderate course in keeping with the needs of the greatly expanded order and the society of the day. In spite of Francis'

dislike for books there have been many Franciscan saints and scholars over the last 800 years. These people have contributed much to the life of the Church and the understanding of the teachings of Francis and Clare.

During the 16th century Henry VIII dissolved the many monasteries in England and the religious life ceased in the English Church until it reemerged following the Oxford Movement in the late 19th century. It was during the Great Depression of the 1930s that Douglas Downes with the later help of Father Algy Robertson began to establish a Franciscan life at Flowers Farm in Dorset. This developed into what we know today as the Society of Saint Francis (SSF). Their work at the beginning was providing care to the unemployed men who tramped the roads and lived rough so their families could survive during those terrible depression years.

SSF came to Australia in 1964 when Brother Simon and Brother William settled in a derelict house provided for them by the Diocese of Brisbane. This was a situation rather like the arrival of the first Franciscans in England in 1224 when seven of them slept in a barn in Canterbury with only straw and each other to keep them warm. These people we have mentioned, along with countless others over the centuries have been concerned with establishing and living the Franciscan life. They, I believe, have witnessed to origins as the Franciscan life has been and continues to be lived in different parts of the world and stages in history. The areas of greatest growth for SSF in our day are the Solomon Islands and Papua-New Guinea, while help is being provided to new communities in Brazil, Zimbabwe and Korea.

Many of us have heard the stories of Francis' conversion and growth to understanding of the mission laid upon him by God. We may know something of Bernard, Leo, Maseo, Angelo and the other brothers who were his early, close companions. They were people of deep devotion to God who lived in poverty and simplicity under the inspiration and leadership of Francis. It is appropriate that we now consider those elements that characterised Francis' life and continue today to characterise people who live the Christian life in the spirit of Francis and Clare.

Francis Bernadone lived in a time when the world

was going through great social change and political upheaval. In the 13th century the settled nature of the feudal system in the mediaeval period was being challenged and new patterns of life and society were emerging. This change was not without trouble and resulted in conflict between people. There was also conflict between towns that included Assisi. As an idealistic, rich young man Francis was enthralled by the stories of King Arthur and the Round Table that spoke of chivalry, knighthood and victory in battle. Following a battle between the Assisi army and that of neighbouring Perugia, Francis was taken prisoner and held in prison for twelve months awaiting a ransom payment. This experience was for him a step on his journey to conversion and the acceptance of a new master.

Pietro, Francis' father was a cloth merchant and a hard working member of the emerging, wealthy, middle class. Francis benefited from that wealth, through the education it made possible and the experience of being a son in his family with the opportunities for travel to other countries with his father to market his father's cloth. Many of us will be familiar with Francis' very personal and steady progress from being a young dandy and the life of the party with the other young, rich sons of Assisi to being the founder of a new religious community that before long, took the world by storm.

Some of us may have watched "The Abbey", on ABC Television over recent Sunday nights and learnt something of the Benedictine religious tradition. That tradition and that of the Augustinian Canons were well established in Francis' day and had widespread communities living under their Rules. Francis chose not to adopt either of those rules for his brothers but rather developed his own. His rule was for a community of mendicants who owned nothing, lived and worked among the poor and begged for their food from door to door. Surprisingly, Pope Innocent III approved Francis' Primitive Rule (which has been lost) in 1209. This rule was short on detail and is believed to have been largely, made up of a compilation of scripture passages that described Francis' ideals and intended manner of life.

The five obligations Francis espoused in the rules he developed over several years were, obedience, poverty, chastity, humility and harmony. These five were commitments to self-restraint and designed to conquer his ego and that of those who joined him.

The injunctions in the rules to prayer, work and preaching pledged the brothers to unselfish activity. Initially, Francis believed Jesus' command, "Rebuild my Church which is falling into ruin" referred to the neglected churches around Assisi which were in need of his experience as a builder. Before long he became aware of a much greater and more demanding task that God had for him and his followers, the work of building up the people of God. In this, we can see a strong parallel between the needs of the church of Francis' time to its needs in our own day.

Obedience for Francis meant working in accord with the law of the church and respecting the people in positions of authority.

The vow of Poverty recognized that possessions stand between God and us. Brothers were required to sell all they had and give the money to the poor.

Chastity enabled the brothers to be available to everyone because they had no family obligations.

Humility meant that the friars were able to identify with the most despised and worst afflicted men, women and children wherever they found them. The friars claimed no privilege for themselves and were happy to be minor brothers.

Harmony with the church and its clergy was fundamental for the continuing success and development of the order. It was also important in the time when discipline in the church was slack and loyalty to the church was being questioned.

Prayer was the brothers' mainstay. It played a major role in providing stability for the order. Francis, in his life and practice, demonstrated the priority of prayer for him and how it was to be practiced by the brothers.

Infinite respect for the mass, the host, the cross and the churches they passed was required of the brothers as they engaged in their evangelistic journeys through the world. Francis worked every day with his hands in a leper colony or in building. He required brothers to learn a trade and to do whatever work was needed. The preaching of penance was laid on each brother.

Francis had the view that the preacher needed to draw from his secret prayers what he would later pour out in holy sermons. He said the brother in his preaching needed to grow hot within before speaking words that are cold in themselves.

The Franciscan history is one of great richness. We thank God that Franciscan life is planted among and within us. We thank God that Francis of Assisi continues to challenge and inspire the church at large and us with his passionate devotion to God. Francis' injunctions to, obedience, poverty, chastity, humility, and harmony call each of us to self-restraint and a setting aside of our wants and desires so we can more effectively serve God. His emphasis on prayer, work and preaching pledge us to unselfish activity for God. In our world there is so much that lures us away from these Franciscan ideals.

May we so encourage each other that we do not lose sight of these fundamentals in the following of our saviour Jesus Christ. With those down the ages who have responded to the inspiration of Francis' life and work we can choose to passionately live for God as he has done. In doing so we will join the Franciscans of the past and those of the present day who live in the spirit of Francis and Clare as we follow Christ.



An Easter Prayer

By: St. John of Damascus

“Now let the heavens be joyful,
Let earth her song begin:
Let the round world keep triumph,
And all that is therein;
Invisible and visible,
Their notes let all things blend,
For Christ the Lord is risen
Our joy that hath no end.”

Through the eye of the Needle

By: Hilary Singleton 2009

Through the eyes of a novice at her first conference.



It was with great excitement that I travelled to Sydney to take part in the Third Order of St Francis General Chapter, July 16-19, 2009. I was warmly welcomed and embraced as part of the family for this is what the gathering over four days felt like. It was more than a conference. It was belonging to a loving family, like minded (in most things!), sharing experiences, and learning from our excellent speakers, but above all living in God's grace.

As we approached the Altar for Holy Communion I reflected that through the eyes of the world this small group had very little to offer. Not lithe and beautiful, living as students and sharing bathrooms, using public transport for our excursions and making our own entertainment. The eyes of the world, at a casual glance, would fail to see the sparkling diamond held in the midst of this ordinary group of people. Our Trinitarian God was reflected in myriad facets as the diamond flashed peace, hope, joy, humility, love, service, justice, worship, acceptance, generosity and an openness to learn more. The charism of St. Francis and St. Clare was truly present as we lived in intentional community and joined with the greater community of Franciscan saints. The worship at Morning Prayer, daily Eucharist and Compline was a joy and nurtured my spirit.

All the speakers were excellent and I will comment particularly on Dianne Langham on the topic of reconciliation. Dianne is chaplain to the Maitland jail and spoke to us about her work with indigenous prisoners.

By forming practical relationships of understanding and support she has the respect and trust of her people. She is known as Auntie Dianne by all staff, residents and their families because the title 'Auntie' is one of acceptance and respect.

Restoring spiritual identity and connectedness to the land restores hope, purpose, dignity and belonging. One of the ways she achieves this is to take the young men to significant sites in the nearby country.

Auntie Dianne told us the story of Tidalik the frog who was so greedy that he drank up all the water in the rivers, lakes and billabongs and caused a terrible drought. Using traditional stories like this helps to connect her young men to their problems and behaviors that have caused them to be sent to jail. But these are not simply stories about morals; they are spiritual dreaming from which many indigenous peoples have become disconnected.

The dreaming then becomes present in a spiritual experience through bush walking to the 'frog' rock, caves and traditional rock paintings in the area. God is present, depicted in the paintings and landscape. God becomes real to the young men as their spirit is awakened. It is a long path and not always successful as generational problems are difficult to overcome. I was impressed by her ability to share her love of God within the indigenous heritage; a heritage that we all share. Yet she is also very practical and has her own family struggles to deal with. I wondered how she fitted it all in!

She embodies one of the aspects of Franciscan spirituality that draws me; the all embracing, incarnational love of God present in all creation and expressed in every person who is the image of God and loved by God. With Auntie Dianne's work there is hope for reconciliation even though it may appear to be as difficult as passing a camel through the eye of a needle.

It was a great blessing to meet Tertiaries that I only knew as names in our prayer cycle, especially those from Papua New Guinea who made our virtual community very real.

At the end of the conference my thought was that I would like to stay another week with this group in order to get to know my fellow Tertiaries better. I am saving for Melbourne in three years.....

To Follow In The Footprints of Our Lord

From: "Francis of Assisi" – Writer & Spiritual Master

By: *Thaddee Matura, O.F.M.*

All my brothers, let us pay attention to what the Lord says: *Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you* for our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footprints we must follow, called His betrayer a friend and willingly offered Himself to his executioners. Our friends, therefore, are all those who unjustly inflict upon us distress and anguish, shame and injury, follow and punishment, martyrdom and death. We must love them greatly for we shall possess eternal life because of what they bring us.



- *Earlier Rule 22*

To follow in the footprints of Jesus Christ is a theme that is very dear to Francis. It is even said that the following of Christ, the *sequela Christi*, characterizes Franciscan spirituality. This is true as long as we give an accurate content to this expression.

This theme, borrowed from the First Letter of Peter, 27 does not speak of the deeds and gestures of the earthly life of Jesus that we would need to reproduce. It is rather an invitation to enter into, with tenderness and patience, the mystery of the blessed Passion of the Lord, and thus share in his painful and glorious destiny. Rather than a mystique of poverty understood in the sociological sense, the *sequela* is a mysticism of the passion that in following the Lord finds its fulfillment in glory. To follow the footprints of Christ is to live according to all the demands of the gospel, suffering and death included, and to open ourselves to the promises that this gospel proclaims.

(A reading from the Bull of Canonisation)



A Tribute to Margaret Butters

Born	1930
Professed tssf	1965
Born to Eternal Life	2009

Excerpts from her Eulogy

At the top of her list was Margaret's **strength**: the fact that at the age of thirty she was helping to run a mission station in New Guinea in very primitive conditions, with three young children. One of the many visitors to our house there, Howard Johnson, records in his book, *Global Odyssey*, a glimpse of those years. He remembers returning late one night, at a time when Bob was sick. These are his words: On entering the ... darkened house, I nearly tripped over a human figure lying prone on the floor. That afternoon the dormitory of the girl's school, perched on stilts, had gently subsided to the ground and then collapsed altogether. Thus Margaret had on her hands not only a sick husband and their small children, but also a bishop and his servant, and a visiting canon, and a missionary couple in transit, and twenty-seven adolescent girls asleep on the floor. Quite a household—and in such an inadequate house! She had neither electricity nor running water to help her. But she took it all with total calm. I thought to myself: The day of the pioneer woman is not over. Mum and dad had met each other at an Australian Board of Missions summer school. For her, the years in New Guinea were an exhilarating challenge, and part of a vocation shared with him. She was president of the St Stephen's, Mount Waverley, Mothers' Union, and was also the Area Deanery President. In Melbourne she was secretary of the Clergy Wives Association and Diocesan President of the ABM auxiliary. Later she was Provincial Minister of the Franciscan Third Order. Her leadership qualities were obvious; like her own mother, Mim, she could organise anything and anyone—in the most delightful way.

Passion

Also prominent throughout Margaret's life has been her energy and her passion. Dayspring at Stroud was an absurdly ambitious idea. But somehow she pieced together the finance, and—out of the clay soil, hard labour, and her own imagination—sculpted beautiful mud-brick buildings in a beautiful bush setting.

Creating Dayspring was one of her passions, and it became a place where she could pursue others: organic gardening, bread-baking, beer-brewing, cooking Christmas dinner in the mud oven she made, her cows. Mum's joy in everything about Stroud was infectious; the whole creation was inspirational.

Over the years, there have been many other enthusiasms: singing, baroque music, bird observing, silver-smithing, swimming, and making yoghurt, to name a few. She would bubble with them; she was open to anything. And she'd encourage other people's passions: the aviary Pete built as a teenager, Jo's scrapbooking, my yoga, Bob's piano.

Love

And she loved people. After church, or at parish functions, or at parties, she would be disappointed if she hadn't talked to every person who was there. She had an easy ability to find what was important in their lives. She made sure everyone felt included. At one point, mum was in England on Franciscan business, and Mary Hillard, with whom she stayed briefly,

wrote to dad about her effect on people. The letter began:

I can only say it has been the greatest joy and privilege to meet

Margaret and have her in our home the last few days.... She has

captivated everyone whom she has met here, and a friend of Barbara Frith, with whom she stayed when she just arrived, said that "God really shines out of her" and this expressed beautifully what we have all found. She has taught us much of Franciscan joy and simplicity.

People

As you would all know, wherever Margaret went, people were drawn to her: at Frankston, Essendon, Camberwell, Lara, Popondetta, Pascoe Vale, Surrey Hills, Mount Waverley, Sydney, Brisbane, Canterbury, in the eighty parishes of the Eastern region in the diocese of Melbourne, in Stroud, and—though perhaps less of her has been present here—in Taree too.

Faith

Running through Margaret's life, informing everything, is, of course, her deep belief and her deeply ethical way of being-in-the-world that flowed

from that. Her faith and values underpinned her strength and her passions and her relationships with people.

Mum's enjoyment of stillness was part of her appreciation of the creation. That stillness could also be more explicitly devotional: staying with them, you might catch the murmur as mum and dad quietly said morning and evening prayers, a ritual that gave a daily rhythm to their life together.

Not surprisingly, Margaret flourished in the roles that went with the vicarage, or the deanery at St John's, Brisbane, or with being a bishop's wife. If anyone was a daughter of the vicarage, she and Elizabeth were: their father, Philip, and both their grandfathers—George Sproule and Archdeacon Reginald Hayman—were priests in the diocese of Melbourne.

Bob

At the centre of mum's life—again informing everything else—has been her love for dad: they've been married for more than fifty years, and there was a long engagement before that. Mum adored him, and sometimes while she watched him, you could see that in her radiant expression. In Sydney, half-way through their marriage, she'd go to Cheltenham railway station to meet him after work, and they'd walk home holding hands.

During the last few years, many of us here have been moved by the beautiful and all-encompassing care that dad has given her—and by radiant expressions on his face.

In Conclusion Margaret's life has been a very happy one, filled with many kinds of abundance.

Erratum to new Manual

In the *Song of Brother Sun*, page E8, please add the word 'by' in the eighth last line, so that the line will read: 'for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.'

The Language of their Rule permeates the Lives of Tertiaries

From Franciscan Documents

2009 Questionnaire

By: Ted Witham

The second impressive thing about the Tertiaries who responded is their consistency of language. All are committed, for example, to "speak out for ... international peace." (Day 9, The Principles).

For some Tertiaries speaking out for international peace means a commitment to non-violence. These Tertiaries wish to resist evil even if the resistance itself provokes more violence. Other Tertiaries are pacifists eschewing all violence, even in resolving conflict. A number of Tertiaries are members of the military, equally committed to international peace, but seeing a positive role for the armed forces in maintaining peace.

The common desire to speak out for international peace surely arises from the Christian commitment of these Tertiaries. However, the commonality of language appears to come from the Principles themselves.

Again and again in the questionnaire responses and in talking to Tertiaries, the language of the Principles is heard clearly. Tertiaries wish to "make our Lord known and loved everywhere." (Day 5 – the First Aim of the Order). Tertiaries see that "the heart of their prayer life is the Eucharist." (Day 15) The fruit of Christian living is joy (Day 28).

This commonality of language appears from four factors.

1. It arises from the obligation of Tertiaries to use daily the Community Obedience. This includes reading the Principles on a monthly cycle.
2. All Tertiaries are required to wear their profession cross "as a habit". One significance of wearing the cross is that it bestows a sense of belonging to a distinctive community in which the values embedded in the Principles are encouraged.

3. All Tertiaries have at some time been a novice. Novices are exposed to twelve sets of reading from the Franciscan tradition, and invited to reflect on these readings. Novice Counsellors encourage novices to dwell in the readings and make them their own. When all twelve Novice Notes have been read and reflected on, the newly professed Tertiary can look back and see in these Notes where in the Franciscan tradition of the Principles they have been derived.
4. Each Tertiary must renew their promises annually. This keeps them in active contact with the community with its Franciscan charism, and makes them accountable for their use of the Daily Obedience, and hence of their reading of the Principles.

(A reading from The Praises of God given Brother Leo on Mt. La Verna)

You are holy, Lord God – you do wonderful things.
You are strong. You are great. You are the Most High.

You are the almighty King. You holy Father, King of heaven and earth.

You are three and one, the Lord God of gods;
You are good, all good, the highest good,
Lord God, living and true.

You are love, charity; you are wisdom, you are humility,
You are patience, you are beauty, you are meekness,
You are security, you are rest,
You are gladness and joy, you are our hope, you are justice,
You are moderation, you are all our riches to sufficiency.

You are beauty, you are meekness,
You are our protector, you are custodian and defender,
You are strength, you are refreshment. You are our hope,
You are our faith, you are our charity.
You are all our sweetness, you are our eternal life:
Great and wonderful Lord, Almighty God, Merciful Saviour!

From:
Merril Ruback

Today I promise I'll be true
and do the things I ought to do.
I'll keep my thoughts all shining bright
my spirits buoyant, clean and light.
I'll speak with calm and careful tongue;
rejoice when I see work well done.
I'll love my neighbour down the street
and guard my sometimes wayward feet.
I'll seek the best, the fine and true,
and let no angry thoughts come through.
I'll offer help when need I see,
for that's the way I ought to be.
And can I, Lord, this promise keep,
and when at night lie down to sleep
Remember that my thanks are due - to God,
the one who saw me through.

Mabel Clarisse Warburton(1879-1961), missionary and educationist

***Brothers and Sisters
This is Your Newsletter***

The Newsletter is a wonderful vehicle of communication in sharing our experiences, strengths and hopes, along with our journey in Franciscan Spirituality. There are four editions issued yearly and they occur at Easter, Pentacost, Francistide and Stigmatide. You are welcomed and encouraged to submit articles for possible inclusion. When sending articles please send unformatted material on Microsoft Word, as this makes it easier for me to work with. Thanks, I do appreciate this. I can be contacted by email on:

gloria@radiantpathways.com.au or by phone on 07 33710265 or mobile 0412 400374. For those without internet access, my address is: 26 Fairley Street, Indooroopilly. 4068 Qld.

I would like to wish each and everyone of you a Blessed, Joyful and Safe Easter.

Pax et Bonum

Gloria Malouf-Marsh (Newsletter Editor)