

THE THIRD ORDER

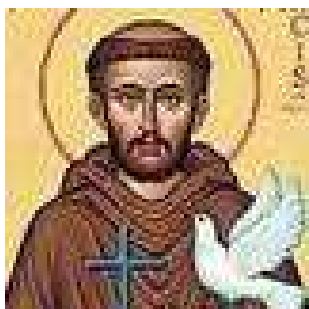
Australian Province Newsletter, PNG & East Asia

E a s t e r

E d i t i o n

Dear sisters and brothers,

Another year has unfolded giving each of us the joy of new beginnings. There are many local, international and social issues to challenge us as Franciscans and Christians leading us to speak out, and step out whenever and to whatever God may ask of us. As we enter into Lent we are given an opportunity to reflect on our calling, and our journey in Christ with our brother Francis.



Our Principles are ideal for reflection not only day by day but should be read and studied as a whole during our Lenten observances so as to lead and strengthen us as Easter dawns and the joy of God's promise to each of us is revealed anew.

'In the example of his own sacrifice, Jesus reveals the secret of bearing fruit. In surrendering himself to death, he becomes the source of new life. Lifted from the earth on the cross, he draws all people to himself'. Day 2 [Principles]

'The primary aim for each of us is to make Christ known. This shapes our lives and attitudes to reflect the obedience of those whom the Lord chose to be with him and sent out as his witnesses. Like them, by word and example, we bear witness to Christ [where ever we may be].. Day 6 [Principles]

'...it is Christ's love that inspires us to service and strengthens us for sacrifice.' Day 14 [Principles]

'...The chief form of service that we have to offer is to reflect the love of Christ, who, in his beauty and power, is the inspiration and joy of our lives...' Day 20 [Principles]

St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 12: 12-31, struck a chord in me when it was read on the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany this year. We are all more than familiar with the imagery as Paul outlines how each of us, with our individual gifts, is made part of the one body, the body of Christ. This message is the joy we share as members of the Third Order, one body of brothers and sisters striving to proclaim God's message, striving to support those who have need of us and striving in the Spirit to fulfil God's will. It is wonderful to know that we are not alone as each day we pray as one body in Christ for one another.

St Catherine of Sienna describes spiritual life as a large tree:

- The trunk of the tree is love
- The core of the tree, that middle part that must be alive for the tree to flourish, is patience
- The roots of the tree are self-knowledge
- The many branches, reaching out into the air, are discernment

Once again we are reminded in this imagery, linking us to the world that surrounds us, to be whole as individuals and as community so that true love can embrace us and through us, embrace those to whom we minister.

The end of the reading in Corinthians 12: verse 31 calls us to 'strive for the greater gifts and I will show you a still more excellent way'.

Please keep Provincial Chapter in your prayers as it meets on April 12-15th at Stroud in NSW. Pray also for your own Regional Ministers as they prepare for this gathering, for those in your regions who have entered the noviciate and for those who will be elected for profession.

Peace, joy and love to each of you this Easter,

Colin tssf [Provincial Minister]

Meditation based on Jesus' Seven words on the Cross

First Word – "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Second Word – "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom, And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Third Word – "Woman, behold thy Son. Behold thy Mother."

Fourth Word – "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Fifth Word - "I thirst."

Sixth Word – "It is finished."

Seventh Word – "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."



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



*The New
Assistant
Provincial*

Sandra Jackson

‘I wish I could be a Franciscan’, I confided to a friend as we stood looking at a series of pictures of the life of St Francis. It was 1985 and we were taking part in a retreat at the Hillsborough Friary in Auckland. When I said those words, I had no idea that my friend was an SSF companion, nor any knowledge of the Third Order, but she urged me to go and talk to Brother Daniel at the Friary in Parnell. I did. Profession came in 1988.

It was as if all my life had been leading to this point. As a child in Sydney I had been much impressed by a radio program we listened to on Sunday evenings, ‘Hour of St Francis’. After 1956, when my family moved to Melbourne, we spent all our holidays with our beloved Austrian grandfather. In his garden room was Giotto’s ‘St Francis preaching to the birds’ and one of his favourite books was *Das einfache Leben* (The Simple Life). Working alongside my grandfather in his 3 acre garden, I too talked to the birds, learnt to feed them on my hand and absorbed his ‘I – Thou’ relationship with Sister Earth and all the natural world. The simple life beckoned.

After Marrying Hugh in 1967, I lived for 2 years in Cambridge, England, where St Bene’ts became our parish church and the brown-robed friars of SSF a part of my life. A St Bene’ts parish retreat took me to Pleshey – my first retreat that taught me the importance of ‘being’, the verb of the spiritual life – ‘Be still and know that I am God’. Strangely, our parish church in Glen Innes, Auckland, 1981 – 88, was also home of the First Order brothers before they moved to the Friary in Parnell. In Auckland I was heavily involved in the environmental and peace movements and doing voluntary work for CORSO (overseas aid organization). Again simplicity – ‘Live simply, so that all may simply live.’

I was wanting a deeper level of Christian commitment and a greater sense of community, - the sort of community I’d known in the 70s in university housing in Canberra. What attracted me most about St Francis was his recklessness in following Christ – ‘My God and my all’ – a total self-giving.

As a tertiary I value the very real sense of being knit together in community and prayer, the discipline of our Rule and the wholeness of the Franciscan way of

living both in the marketplace and the desert – called to reflect the love of Christ to all people, sustained by a life of praise and prayer.

When Colin asked me last year to be Assistant Provincial Minister I was totally taken aback, but said I would consider and pray about his request. A week or so of uncertainty and some panic went by until the Sunday, when I was reader at church. It was a favourite reading, the call of Samuel: ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth’, followed by the Gradual hymn: ‘The Summons’.

‘Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? . . .

Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?’ I knew then that I must ring Colin that very night and say ‘Yes’. Sally did such a wonderful job as Assistant Provincial and I can’t fill her shoes, but, wearing my own, I am relying on ‘the power that is made perfect in weakness’, to assist Colin in a pastoral capacity: doing what I can to keep in touch with isolated tertiaries and follow up prayer requests. I would be grateful if you could pray for me in this new role.

*Thanks To
The Order*



**FROM: Inger Russell
(Daughter of Kath Beicher)
Kath Beicher TSSF A**

I am sending this on behalf of my mother, Kath Beicher. Could the message below be placed in your newsletter, or circulated on your email address book? I think this is the address my brother, Svend, used to let you know of Dad’s passing. He and I will regularly check the email and help Mum respond to messages sent to her while she adjusts to life without Dad.

Thank you all for the thoughts and prayers expressing sadness and concern at the passing of Flemming. I have received so many cards and flowers that it is not possible to reply to everyone individually, but I would like to thank you all. Knowing how many people have loved and will miss him has helped to ease the sadness of this time. Kath Beicher TSSF, A. Thank you also from Svend and me for your support of Mum.

The Rev'd Flemming Beicher tssf 1934 - 2013

By: Rev Ted Witham

Flemming was born in Denmark and remembers the war years. Denmark was occupied by the Nazis and Flemming often talked about the King of Denmark. Christian X rode his horse through Copenhagen every day as a kind of protest at the occupation. He moved among the people and was able to be a strong point of community for them. A story got around that the king even wore a yellow star in solidarity with the Jews. Flemming was impressed by the king's example of love for his people and his strong and gentle resistance of evil.

Flemming and Kath were married for 50 years, and they were both blessed by the deep love that they had for each other; a love that was obvious when you met them.

Brothers Alan Barnabas and Daniel were the first to introduce Flemming to the Franciscan family. The Brothers had come to conduct a mission in the parish. Brother Alan was billeted with the Beichers, and Flemming saw how Brother Alan, after a late evening of quite hard work in the parish, and a whisky before bed, would be up again at 6.30 to say his prayers. This dedication had a real impact on Flemming. After meeting Brother Alan, Flemming was encouraged to live his life in dedication to God.

Flemming was a deacon, and I know he felt a connection with Saint Francis also ordained a deacon: for both the heart of their diaconate was service to others.

Flemming and Kath became Tertiaries together after this mission. They were professed together in August 1991. Flemming was Regional Minister for WA on several occasions, and he and Kath invited many to follow Francis with them. Quite a number became Third Order members as a result.

When I think of Flemming – as a brother tertiary, as a Christian, a deacon, a friend, I think of a man whose sincerity, loyalty, humility and love made him much loved in return.

Kath says that tertiaries from all around Australia called and emailed and wrote to assure Flemming of their prayers. There were 100 mourners at Flemming's funeral held at the Beicher's parish church of St Brendan's in Warnbro on Monday 4 February. Again Kath was moved by the love that came from all the Franciscan family.

Kath would like to thank you for that love and for the prayers.

GANCHON - KOREA

Br. Raphael Suh has been elected new guardian of St Francis Friary, Gangchon. Please pray for him and the brothers in Gangchon, as he takes up his new ministry 20 January 2013, the feast of the Founders of Anglican Franciscan Communities.

Fr Raphael Pazzelli's St Francis and the Third Order

From: "The Franciscan and Pre-Franciscan Penitential Movement." Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989.

By: Esme Parker

When I took up my role as Regional Minister for NSW A, I was hopeful that we could have a focus at each meeting that would increase our knowledge of the life and ministry of Sts Francis and Clare, and of Franciscan theology. This was not possible for the first few months because it was necessary to focus our energies on General Chapter, held in Sydney in July, 2009. After we had recovered from Chapter we started looking for a suitable book. We found this in Fr Raphael Pazzelli's *St Francis and the Third Order*, recommended by Ted Witham in one of our Franciscan Newsletters. The great value of this publication is that it is actually written in the English language, not translated, and is very well researched. Fr Michael Giffin obtained a copy of the book and kindly undertook to email the Sydney group with a chapter before each meeting, where the host would prepare a few questions, for circulation before the meeting, to get the discussion going.

It has to be said that the early chapters were a challenge to most of us. Some of our group questioned the relevance of learning about the state of church politics and culture between the 3rd C to the 13th. C. The language was difficult, for those of us with no theological training, there were descriptions of Greek terms, reference to Latin documents and the use of ecclesiastical terminology. The formation of the penitential movements was described in great detail and came as completely new knowledge to many of us. Not until Chapter 6 did we start on the more familiar territory of the life of St Francis and the emergence of the lay followers of St Francis as part of the wider penitential movement. Even here there were surprises. We were all familiar with the general outline of the life of St Francis. Personally I had not appreciated that most of the writings from St Francis himself came from the period after 1219, following his visit to Egypt and his famous visit to the Sultan. This reinforced for me the importance of core documents in any reading and understanding of writings about St Francis.

We persevered. We completed the study at our last meeting in 2012 and the general consensus was that it had been a very worthwhile undertaking. It had met my aim to have a Franciscan focus for each meeting, and has been completed before I end my term of Regional Minister later this year.

I can only speak for myself in reviewing the study of this book. There is a temptation to see St Francis as a radical Christian seeking to literally live the Gospel life that Jesus presented, within the orthodox control of the Church, but there is so much more to be gained from the study of his writings.

A JOURNEY, Continued

By: Nola Stewart

A journey that has been challenged often, can be an insight into my own being where I am brought into focus with God. So often I could take another path and rely entirely on myself and enjoy the me, myself, and I attitude. Finding the inner voice of the Holy Spirit has always given me the ability to walk each day, slipping often along the way and coming back from my will into God's will.

In St. Francis, grace had shown him who everything was, his intimacy with Christ and his wholehearted embracing of this lived out in the community. A crucial role of the Holy Spirit working in his life. I believe that it is very helpful to my human growth to have a role model such as St. Francis who had a deep love for God and a deep love for God's creation. His message is of peace - the peace of God which passes all understanding. He found something much more lasting than the everlasting pursuit of what pleases 'me' - namely, a relationship with God, with other people and with the whole of creation that is more satisfying than anything or anyone else.

For St. Francis, his life experiences had been lived in the light of the way Christ himself had shown him and in the strength of the love that the Passion revealed to him. His heart was always filled with that love and with the thought of Christ's suffering. He said: "We can boast in our weaknesses and in carrying each day the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." At the time St. Francis received the stigmata, Brother Leo heard him pray: Who art Thou, sweetest God? And who am I, a wretched worm, thy worthless servant?

Recently reading "Cries From The Cross" by Erwin W Lutzer, he said: Unless we see ourselves as deserving of the verdict that Pilate gave to Jesus, unless we see ourselves as worthy of hell, we will never understand the Cross. The Cross shatters all pride and undercuts the ultimate value of self-effort. The Cross stands as proof of God's great love but also reveals our own ugliness. The cup that the Father gave Christ to drink: that cup meant that he would become our "sin bearer." The horror of our Savior's holiness coming in contact with our sinfulness is what Calvary was all about.

*Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine
substance
And transform your whole being into the
image of the Godhead Itself through
contemplation!
So that you too may feel what His friends feel
as they taste the hidden sweetness
which God Himself has reserved from the
beginning for those who love Him."*

By: St Clare of Assisi

EINSTEIN, SCIENCE AND GOD

By: Steve Howes

In our December Newsletter, Rev Dr Robert DeCaen drew our attention (page 10) to a 1954 letter by Albert Einstein in which the great physicist wrote that the word God was "nothing more than the expression and product of human weaknesses, the Bible a collection of honorable, but still primitive legends which are nevertheless pretty childish."

I am concerned that many people still assume that one must choose between science and religion. To counter this misunderstanding it helps to know a little about some great scientists who have also been committed Christians. *Michael Faraday* (1791–1867) was perhaps the greatest ever experimental scientist in Physics and Chemistry and for him there was no conflict between his Science and his Christian faith. Some of his sermons have come down to us and they indicate his thorough knowledge of both Old and New Testaments. For Faraday, God is the author of both the book of Nature and of the Bible. (As a member of his church he ministered to the poor and needy and frequently visited the sick. Very Franciscan!)

What of the 'Big Bang' theory? This concept was developed from Einstein's General Theory of Relativity by *Georges Lemaitre* (1894–1966) who was both Professor of Astrophysics and a Catholic priest in Belgium. We may well ask if Lemaitre kept his Science and his theology in separate compartments in his life. On the contrary, he connected Science with his Christian beliefs as he maintained that "There are two ways of arriving at the truth. I decided to follow both of them." At conferences of the greatest physicists, including Einstein, Lemaitre was easily recognised by the white insert in his black clergy collar.

Here in Australia we have a community of around 50 Christian professional scientists known as *ISCAST*, the Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology. The first aim of ISCAST is "To promote an understanding of science, technology and the Christian faith which is consistent with the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of Creation, with its emphasis on God as the God of nature." ISCAST is keen to provide resources for churches to use for the annual National Science Week, 10-18 August.www.iscast.org

We cannot prove that God exists simply by counting Christian scientists but we can reassure people there is no necessary conflict between Christian belief and ground-breaking scientific work.

*Live simply,
so others may simply live.
By: Mohandas Gandhi*

Embracing Darkness

By: Terry Gatfield

Paul Simon in 1964 penned these haunting words in his song The Sound of Silence:
Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again

My observation of many Christians suggests that darkness should be something that should be held at a distance and, if possible, eliminated from our lives altogether. A nice sentiment but perhaps not our God of the scriptures. Genesis informs us that on the first day God made the night just as he made the day – and God saw that both were good. Yet in the main darkness in our contemporary thinking and teaching has become an enemy. We fear the darkness and it is often the counsel of others that we move ourselves, and others away from it to places of light.

Yet much discernment is needed about what we mean by darkness. What I mean does not refer to suffering psychological depression or illness; or a time when we may be mentally battered and disconnected from the world. Nor does it refer to demonic darkness. Rather, I refer it in this context to being spiritually in a place of substantial emptiness and unknowing. A place where there is a void of silence and our own voices and wills are deactivated. A place where we are stripped of being our own rulers and our own gods and the power of self-determination is reduced to zero; our egos take their rightful position. Judgement is suspended and our souls are laid bare before God. Another enters the space. In this place we might be brought to know something of the mind, ways and purposes of God in a new and refreshing way.

It is suggested that we should never shun the darkness but make it a friend, as the song suggests, Hello darkness, my old friend. We should recount spending the first 9 months of our lifetime in the darkness of the womb; seeds germinate in darkness; and in the abode of sleep we spend 1/3 of our life without light.

I am a passionate black and white photographer and know from experience that the best photos comes not just from the lens of the camera but from the darkroom. There silence prevails; contrast is adjusted; toning and tinting is applied; and dodging, burning and vignetting engaged in. The final print is seen in the light but it can only be truly formed in the darkness.

Darkness is often where the voice of God can be most clearly heard - the place where our voice is silent and His is the clearest. The darkness is precious as the Psalmist recounts....

there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you." (Psalm 139:10-12)

This is a brief introduction to a series of articles focused on the fascinating subject of the Dark Night of the Soul that will feature in future editions of the Franciscan Newsletter.

JOHN OF THE CROSS - SELECTIONS FROM THE DARK NIGHT -
HARPER COLLINS 1987



Humility, Love and Joy

By: Margaret Holt

As Lent begins, and both Easter and my profession as a Franciscan approaches, I am drawn to think more and more about this life of humility, love and joy. It is central to our lives as Franciscans but more importantly I have realised over these past two years that it is central to the Christian life because it was the core of Jesus' being and therefore the very core of God himself. Humility and love cannot be divided as it is revealed to us in Jesus – it is because of God's passionate love for us that Jesus 'emptied himself' and came amongst us to give his life. God himself, Creator and Lord, coming to be with us is the greatest example to us of humility and love. Jesus, one with the Creator and Lord of us all, became a servant who washed his disciples feet with complete humility. A servant who, just before he was about to face such a frightening trial of pain and suffering, could see through the other side and speak to his followers about joy:

"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." John 16:22. Br. Francis followed this way of humility, love and joy because he wanted nothing more than to follow the life of his Master and God. A yearning and desire that culminated in his passionate words on Mt. La Verna:

"My Lord Jesus Christ, I beg thee to grant me two graces before my death: first, that for the rest of my life I may experience in my soul and in my body, as much as possible, the same pain that you suffered, O sweet Jesus, during the time of thy most cruel Passion; and second, that I may feel in my heart, as much as possible, the same love which inflamed thee, the Son of God, and led thee to suffer thy passion gladly for us sinners."

Though we are far from where Francis was in this pivotal moment in his life, his passionate words of love should move us also to come close to our beloved Jesus this Passiontide - to hold Him close to our hearts and comfort him in his suffering by our love and devotion. By our love, service and humility we bring Him great joy and we come closer ourselves to knowing the heart of God as our Br. Francis did.

Your annual subscription to Third Order for the year 2013 is now due.

Subscriptions fell due on 1 January 2013
and Chapter asks that they be paid by
31 March 2013.

**Payment made by Direct Debit; Cheque/
Money Order with completed Subscription
Invoice To -
Geoff Jordan (Provincial Treasurer)
15 Streeton Court,
Morayfield. Qld. 4506.**

PNG Formation - Finances - Aug 2012 ;

From the Treasurer: Geoffrey Jordon

At its meeting in August this year, Provincial Chapter took several positive steps in PNG's formation process, designed to bring PNG to the status of a Region.

Firstly, Rt Revd Tony Hall-Matthews was appointed "Assistant Provincial Minister for PNG". It is the intention of Chapter that all communications with PNG will be made through Bro. Tony and likewise all communications between PNG Tertiaries and the Order in Australia will also be channelled through Bro. Tony. He will advise Chapter of progress in PNG's development and will approach Chapter where there is a special need to be met.

Secondly, it is desirable that Tertiaries in PNG begin to administer their own T.O. finances. To this end, Chapter has made an allocation of \$2500. [for this financial year] to be administered by Bro. Harold Joinoba under Bro. Tony's supervision to meet ongoing T.O. expenses in the Popondetta and Milne Bay districts. Bro. Harold is to ensure that total accountability is maintained with the understanding that if there are no receipts, there is no further money. Bro. Harold is also being encouraged to establish a system of subs payments among PNG Tertiaries to supplement the allocation made by Chapter. At the end of the financial year, Bro. Harold is to arrange for his financial books to be audited by the Provincial Treasurer.

The whole procedure will be reviewed after twelve months to assess its success or otherwise and before any further allocations are made by Chapter.

Donations to the Developing Region Support Fund [PNG] will be used to offset in part the allocation made by Chapter, to cover large cost items that may be identified by Bro. Tony and to cover travel costs of bringing Bro Harold to Australia for Chapter meetings. Any donations specifically identified for "dinghy running expenses" will be forwarded to Bro. Harold [via Bro. Tony] and clearly designated for this specific purpose. They therefore will be over and above Chapter's allocation. All donations are still to be sent to the Provincial Treasurer. Donations are not to be sent directly to Bro. Tony or Bro. Harold.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BISHOP ROGER HERFT RECEIVING ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

Bishop Roger Herft, Protector General of SSF, was recognised in the Australia Day civic honours list, and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM): "For significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia through leadership roles in ecumenical and interfaith relations and advocacy for social justice."

Recommended Reading

"The Ladder of Divine Ascent"

By: John Climacus

The Classics of

Western Spirituality



On Humility

Excerpt: from 'Ladder of the Divine Ascent',

By: John Climacus

Humility is a grace in the soul and with a name known only to those who have had experience of it. It is indescribable wealth, a name and a gift from God "Learn from Me," He said; that is, not an angel, not from a man, not from a book, but 'from Me,' that is, from My dwelling within you, from my illumination and action within you, for 'I am gentle and meek of heart' (Matt. 11:29) in thought and in spirit, and your souls will find rest from conflicts and relief from evil thoughts.

The appearance of this sacred vine is one thing during the winter of passions, another in the springtime of flowering, and still another in the harvesttime of all the virtues. Yet all these appearances have one thing in common, namely, joy and the bearing of fruit, and they all give sure signs and evidence of the harvest to come.

***Humility and simplicity belong together;
Where we have no wish to compete with
our neighbour; Where we can be open and
helpful; Where we can comfort the dis-
tressed, And encourage those who are left
behind. Humility is what Peter called;
"The imperishable jewel of a gentle and
quiet spirit". (1 Peter 3:4)***

Psalm was 51:10-12

- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
-

Provincial Communications Coordinator

From: David White

As part of David McAvenna's transition into the Provisional Secretary role, all emails sent to provincial.secretary@tssf.org.au will now only be sent to him.

Official emails requiring my attention should be sent to comms@tssf.org.au.

My new position, Provisional Communications Coordinator, is an expansion of the previous Publication Officer role, which I have been effectively handling while there was no-one handling that. My responsibility includes the website, print and electronic communications, including email lists.

Note that changes of address should be sent to the Provincial Secretary, but sending me a copy of the email will save David Mc having to also notify me of email address changes.



Francis of Assisi - The Easter Saint

Excerpt from "The Praying Francis"

<http://www.poorclares-belleville.info/Fruits/Easter2.htm>

The Road to Easter - For St. Francis, the spiritual Easter was not a one-time event, but a journey, a process. Like St. Paul, Francis could declare: All I want to know is Christ and the power flowing from His Resurrection! This knowledge and

power enabled Francis to take the Cross-road which leads to glory: sharing in (Christ's) sufferings by being formed into the pattern of His death, Francis hoped that (he) too might attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:10-11)

The Encounter - Francis' road to Easter began with a profound encounter with Jesus Crucified. Praying before the crucifix in the church of San Damiano outside Assisi during the first years of his conversion, Francis heard Christ address to him the heart-shaking words: Francis, rebuild My house! The future saint felt a mysterious change in himself, but he could not describe it. This was the beginning of his spiritual Easter.

St. Francis journeyed to Easter transformation by contemplating and imitating Jesus in the mysteries of His poverty and humility. Seraphic love even compelled the Poor Man to ask Christ to grant him to feel in his body the pains of the Passion and to feel in his heart the love which urged Christ to die for sinners.

The Icon of the Crucified - In September 1224, two years before the Seraphic Patriarch's death, God answered his prayer with the imprinting of the Sacred Stigmata, making Francis an icon of the Crucified Jesus.

Yet, Francis' immersion in the mysteries of the Passion did not make him sad or somber. Rather, the sorrows of the Lord opened Francis to a deeper, truer joy. The wounds of Christ's Passion which the Poor Man bore were in truth signs of spiritual resurrection, God visibly confirming Francis' passage through death to life.

A New Creation - The Easter life is new life, - life in Christ. Again and again, the 13th century authors hail St. Francis as the new man. In him, new signs of sanctity appear, new prodigies are made manifest. His religious family is a new flock in the Church, a new Order, living a new life. Francis proclaimed even in his body that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature: the former things have passed away. Behold! They are made new! (2 Cor. 5:17)

All is Made New - Francis' Easter newness was the fruit of his union with the Crucified and Risen One. This union is the secret of the Little Poor Man's joy, his peace-making skills, his enthusiasm for the things of God, his unique relationship with creation. Illness, disappointment, pain, betrayal and misunderstanding still marked Francis' earthly pilgrimage. But, he saw these sufferings in a new light. He understood that through them, God was making all things work toward an eternal good, an eternal Easter. And so in Francis and through him an unexpected joy and a holy newness came into the world.

Not I, but Christ! - St. Francis' mission of newness did not end with death. Those present at his funeral services saw his body, adorned with the wounds of Christ, shining with a marvelous brightness. In life, Francis bore in his body the likeness of the

sufferings of Christ. In death, his body presaged the glory of the future resurrection: The wounds he has, show forth/ Gifts of a newer kind. The power of this new life was also manifested in the wonders which occurred through his intercession: he shone with the new light of miracles after his death.

And Alleluia is His Song - Against this backdrop, the Easter references in St. Francis' writings shine with a new splendor. When composing his devotional Office of the Cross, the Seraphic Father included a special Office for the Easter season. Yet even in the solemn Offices for Holy Week, the thought of Resurrection is present: Arise, my glory! Arise, lyre and harp! I will arise at dawn! I have slept and risen and my most Holy Father has received me in glory. Christ made Francis, the Easter Saint, a singer of the new song of Redemption. In the "Exhortation to the Praise of God," the Poor Man sang as his own the hymn of those who stand before the Throne of God in heaven: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, glory and honor! His song of Easter triumph is likewise that of the Church on earth: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Conclusion - St. Francis of Assisi shows what can happen when the grace of Easter becomes effective in a Christian's life. He teaches us that every earthly suffering holds the seed of resurrection.

From the Editor,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,



The liturgical colour for Lent is purple. Lent prepares us for the observance of Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection for us. It is a time for self-examination, repentance, prayers, quiet time with the Lord, penance, almsgiving, deepening our

faith journey with God and devoting disciplined study of the Scripture. It is also a time to accompany Jesus in the desert for 40 days. Most of all, it is a time of renewal and new beginnings through our baptism.

I would like to thank all those who contributed articles for the Easter Edition. They were most inspiring. I always enjoy reading them with excitement as this gives me a deeper understanding of each individual walking the steps of Francis, in their own way. When I read about your experiences and your honesty, it makes me feel I'm going well too, sharing the same journey, the rocky roads, sharing your anxieties, fears, joys and experiences, we are all very human, thank you!

I thank each one of you for providing articles for the Easter Edition and I invite contributions from PNG and SA for our Pentecost Issue. I also thank you all for your support in your readiness to assist me.

The deadline for the Pentecost Newsletter is the 30th April
You are most welcomed and encouraged to submit articles for possible inclusion.

Thanks to The Order for upholding my brother Rodney in prayer during and after his heart surgery. Praise the Lord! He is progressing well.

In closing, I'd like to wish you all a very Blessed Easter.

Pax et Bonum,

Gloria

Saying "Happy Easter"

in Lebanese Arabic Language

"El Maseeh Qam" (Christ has Risen)

Reflections on walking the Camino Francais to Santiago.

By: David Masters

There is a saying "You do not do the Camino, the Camino does you" Before you go, you may think you understand that and shrug it off with "Oh yes, maybe." But my own experience is that the Camino does just that.

You start the first day full of adrenalin and excitement. At the end of the day you have done close to 30kms and climbed over 1300 meters to Roncesvalles; you are very tired. This goes on day after day, with an average of around 25 kms per day. After a week or so you are getting fitter but also the world you left behind is becoming less important - you haven't got the energy to worry about it (you can't do anything about it anyway!). But you have time to think while you are walking.

I found that it was difficult to pray in the evenings. There is little privacy and quiet in the albergues. The mornings were much easier. When you are walking each day, you can choose to walk by yourself, no one minds, even if you have walked with someone previously - you have no obligation to anyone else, other than if they need your help. To walk by yourself, when the dawn is breaking, the moon is setting and there is mist on the hills, the loneliness of it, is indescribable. This is the time I found it best for prayer. This environment and your physical state, can place you in a very special place with God. You are with God. That place was extremely simple - no issues, no uncertainties, just God and you. As each day comes and goes, this sense of the presence of God, for me, persisted longer and longer into the day; and I know from talking to some other pilgrims that it happened to them.

By the end, I had discovered a new certainty about God for myself; a great peace. This sense of peace was reinforced by the contact I had with the other pilgrims. Everyone I spoke to was either looking for something or a thankfulness for something. Liz, a peace from a messy divorce, Mary a sense of achieving something by herself (many of the older women were doing this), Jim, a thankfulness for achieving his goal of helping a young person through cancer, Mary and Lindsay a thankfulness for a full life, and so on; they all had a vague need to contact the Spirit. . They all had a spiritual need, but they all came at it from different points of view and different needs. None of the people, old or young, said they didn't believe in God. Their image of God varied quite a bit, but there was always a fundamental acceptance of the omniscience and omnipotence of God.

I can't be sure what my own apparent reason for wanting/needing to travel the Way was. I think it was a need for certainty in the way I see God. I felt that my belief system within my church was always just a little suspect - not quite "Christian". I have come back with a solid certainty; I don't mind what others think of my understanding of God. This was the point finally at which the desire to join the Franciscans crystallized.

The very hard part in this is that we all have to live in the real world. To walk the Camino is a unique opportunity and tremendous privilege, to shrug off the many pressures of life - it is long enough to slough off those pressures, and to accept the simple world around us, to let God in, if we want. But we have to return (unless we become monks perhaps). When we return, the world returns as well! To find a new balance is the hard part.

REFLECTIONS ON LONELINESS AND ALONENESS

By: John Blakemore

Feelings such as anger, fear, pain, guilt, joy and shame are protective mechanisms informing our thoughts and assisting our self assessment of situations we may find ourselves in. Fear tells us to be cautious, that there is danger about while joy opens our hearts to gladness, gratitude and each other. In the same way, loneliness is a protective emotion warning us of possible danger in being alone.

As social beings we choose to live together, often in large urban communities. Initially we did this for our safety, banding together to protect each other and to assist in collective survival. Paradoxically as the collective life has become safer, it has become increasingly complex. More and more we must seek out opportunities to be alone, to gain a fresh perspective on our relationships with ourselves, each other and God. Thus we could say that aloneness is a choice we make overriding the warnings of loneliness and by "going it alone", face ourselves at a deeper level.

Rumi, a Sufi poet and contemporary of St Francis, well sums up this paradox that we think of as a "modern" problem.

What I most want

is to spring out of this personality,

then to sit apart from that leaping.

I've lived too long where I can be reached.

We are constantly in reach. Technology moves our voice, image and ultimately ourselves to and fro between family, friends, parishioners and business overwhelming opportunities for a quiet moment alone with our thoughts and with our God. The "still, small voice" is lost to the "leaping personality", always plugged in and on line.

When we have lived "too long where we can be reached" we must go apart, follow the paradoxical call to aloneness in the model of Jesus who "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:16)

Choosing "aloneness" is a constituent element of a spiritual life. Like Jesus, like Francis, we must from time to time withdraw and share ourselves with the Creator and in doing so become reacquainted with the person beneath our personality.

Murray Bodo in Francis The Journey And The Dream, writes of the Saint withdrawing to the cave on the side of Mt Subasio. "There at that high altitude, in those stark caves, it was possible to return to the primitive, the elemental in nature and in oneself."

Bodo writes of Francis' concern for those who lacked opportunities for aloneness, "What of those who never made the Journey inwards? Francis had seen them all his life. They were in his boyhood home and even, he feared, among the brothers. You knew them by their insensitivity, for they were insensitive as the outer man is, compared with the inner... because they never went deep enough, they found only themselves and in that meeting began to worry about their lives, their future, what they should leave behind for others to remember. In short, they saw only their mortality and were frightened at the brevity and seeming futility of living, then passing on, in time forgotten by everyone."

When we chose aloneness we need loneliness as our companion to warn us of the danger in isolating ourselves. Francis understood the balance necessary between lonely retreats and returning to life with his little band of brothers. We too must balance our private time with God with the understanding that God wishes us to carry his love and blessing to our family and community.