



The Province of Asia-Pacific

AUSTRALIA, HONG KONG, MALAYSIA
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SINGAPORE & SRI LANKA

NEWSLETTER

Stigmata / Francistide Edition



FROM THE PROVINCIAL MINISTER

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I have just returned from the biennial meeting of Provincial Ministers of the Third Order, held this time near New York.

Each of our five Provinces of Europe, The Americas, Africa, The Pacific and Asia Pacific were represented along with John Heberton our Minister General.

One of the purposes of the meeting is to share experiences of living the Franciscan life under our common Rule and to make sure the local interpretations of the Rule in our Statutes are in harmony across the Provinces.

Four of the provinces including our own include a range of countries from highly developed First World societies like the USA and Canada, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, developing countries like Sri Lanka and Mexico and Third World countries such as Guyana, Papua New Guinea, Zimbabwe and Vanuatu.

A common theme for us all, including Europe is the Climate Emergency facing our planet.

We were privileged to have Jeff Gollither tssf as our guest. Jeff is an Episcopal (Anglican) priest and cultural anthropologist. Much of his work has focused on the spiritual dimension of the environmental crisis and in this capacity, he has represented the Anglican Communion at the United Nations.

As Franciscans our attitude to creation must be relational, and not purely functional. As Francis reminds us, the sun, the moon, the earth and water are our brothers and sisters. Planet Earth and all its living creatures are not separate from us and are certainly not here for us to plunder and pillage as much of humanity has done without mercy, particularly for the last 200 years.

Most of us know it is time for action to make sure global average temperatures do not exceed 1.5C above where they were in preindustrial times. Alarmingly two thirds of global warming has happened since 1975!

For our brothers and sisters in Third World countries like Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, there is little they can do to help. Indeed, they and those in other Third World countries are already feeling some more immediate effects of climate change in rising sea levels.

For the rest of us, especially those of us in developed countries, we can not only change our ways, but also exert significant pressure on reluctant governments to take action that can make the difference we all need to see.

The first tertiaries were known as The Order of Penitents. That has something important to say to us all. Like the prophets we may be called to speak the truth and call for repentance for change before it is too late.

May we be courageous to do our part, The time for action is now incredibly short.
+Godfrey tssf.

COLLECT

Lord Jesus Christ, who when the world was growing cold, to the inflaming of our hearts by the fire of your love raised up blessed Francis bearing in his body the marks of your passion: mercifully grant to us, your people, true penitence and grace to bear the Cross for love of you; who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



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



Letter of the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor on the 800th Anniversary of the Encounter between St. Francis and Sultan al-Malik al-Kâmil

Taken from:

[https://ofm.org > blog > letter-of-the-general-minister-on-the-800th-annive...](https://ofm.org/blog/letter-of-the-general-minister-on-the-800th-annive...)

My dear Franciscan Family,

Eight hundred years ago, our Seraphic Father St. Francis set sail for Egypt, finally fulfilling a long-held dream of reaching out to Muslims. He arrived at the camp of the crusading army, among Latin Christians who through years of preaching and the rhetoric of holy war had been taught to scorn Muslims. Those same Muslims had every reason to scorn Francis, assuming that he, like most in the crusader camp, was an enemy and not a bearer of peace. We today celebrate what no one at that moment could have foreseen: that a Spirit-filled man with nothing of his own crossed the battle lines unarmed to request a meeting with the Sultan, was received with grace by that Sultan, enjoyed an extended period of hospitality with the Muslim leader, and emerged from the visit to reflect anew on the mission of the Friars Minor. Francis returned safely to his homeland profoundly moved by the encounter and crafted a new and creative vision for his brothers about how they could go among the Muslims, about the things Friars could do and say “that would please God” (*quae placuerint Domino*, RnB 16.8). The anniversary of Francis’s encounter with al-Malik al-Kâmil at Damietta in 1219 beckons us to ask again what deeds and words, amid the pluralism and complexity of the world today, would be pleasing to God.

We live in a time when people of various faiths traffic on the demonization of Muslims and incite others to fear them. Aside from study and prayer about the themes of encounter and dialogue, I encourage followers of Francis who lack much personal exposure to Islam to recall the experience of our founder by taking a simple and concrete step: meet a Muslim. Get to know him or her, beyond the pleasantries of a cup of tea and social nicety. Try to learn and appreciate what experience of God animates him or her and allow your Muslim friend to see the love God has poured into your heart through Christ.

To our Muslim sisters and brothers, let me say how warmly we Franciscans remember the hospitality shown to our Holy Father Francis when his life was at risk. The interest many Muslims have shown in commemorating this anniversary testifies to the desire for peace expressed anytime a Muslim greets a fellow believer. I pray that this year will deepen the brotherhood we share under the God who created all things in the heavens and on the earth and that this bond continues to strengthen long after 2019. God could have made us all the same, but God did not (*Al-Shûrâ* 42.8). With you, your Franciscan sisters and brothers are eager to show the world that Christians and Muslims can and do live alongside each other in peace and harmony.

BREAD OF LIFE AND THE EUCHARIST - LET THE WHOLE WORLD TREMBLE (JOHN 6.25-35)

By: Reverend Mandy Wheatley

At the time of St Francis, apathy had spread through the Church about faith and the role of the priest, the meaning of the Eucharist and its reverence. St Francis taught that by continuing to celebrate the Eucharist, God’s people are participating in the mystery of Christ’s incarnation. It was a continuing reminder that Jesus Christ would never abandon his people, nor leave them alone in the world.

So moved was Francis about the ‘fiery love of Christ in the Eucharist’ that several letters attributed to him were written to the friars and priests concerning how the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass be properly offered.

To the friars he wrote: “I conjure you all to show all reverence and all honour possible to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the things that are in heaven and the things that are on earth are pacified and reconciled to Almighty God.”

To the clerics he wrote: “Let those who administer such most holy mysteries, especially those who do so indifferently, consider among themselves how poor the chalices, corporals and linens may be where the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is sacrificed. . . . by many it is left in wretched places and carried by the way disrespectfully, received unworthily and administered to others indiscriminately.”

Jesus’ statement; “I am the Bread of Life”, implies he is living bread, the leaven which will produce the spiritual life in us. If we invite him to come into our lives daily, he will work within us as leaven in bread dough to turn our faith into a living and powerful aspect of our spiritual and physical lives. With food for ourselves and more to share, we do not need to be able to rationally explain this process to others, simply accept that Christ’s presence in our lives has enriched us beyond rational comprehension then share it with others.

To finish with Francis’ words to his friars: “Let the entire person be seized with fear; let the whole world tremble; let heaven exult when Christ, the Son of the Living God, is on the altar in the hands of the priest. O admirable height and stupendous condescension! O humble sublimity! O sublime humility! that the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under a morsel of bread.”

Footnotes:

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/wosf13.htm> - Letter to all the Friars

https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/wosf05.htm#fn_137 - On Reverence for

the Lord’s Body and on the Cleanliness of the Altar.

**Live simply so that others may simply live.
- Ghandi**

Some thoughts on “Simplicity - A Simple Life”

By: Fr John Clarkson tssf

This year I remember that it is sixty years since I joined the Brotherhood of St.Barnabas in Cloncurry, NW Queensland. I met up with the Bishop of North Queensland, Ian Shevill at the Lambeth Conference in 1958. He was an energetic, young Bishop and he challenged me to join his Brotherhood. At the time, I was a member of the Company of Mission Priests at my parish at St.Saviour, Luton in Bedfordshire, where I lived with two other priests - one being the Vicar, the head of the house. We lived very simply with no stipend but all provided for. I found living in community as parish clergy a source of encouragement and support, whereas young clergy in those days when I was ordained priest in 1955, were unmarried and lived in “digs” which could be quite lonely. This simplicity of life I carried on with in the Brotherhood. The concept of “the Brotherhood” was to provide shared ministry to remote communities in the outback. Unfortunately the numbers did not allow for two or three Brothers to live together in community, but we did have fellowship meetings and retreats when we all met together. The Brothers were described by one Bishop as the “laughing cavaliers of God”.

A distant cousin of mine, Brother Barnabas Lindars, a First Order Franciscan Theologian, introduced me to the simple life that St.Francis lived, which expressed something of the life that I lived in CMP and the Brotherhood but the Third Order seemed to put it altogether for me. I saw in Francis the maxim, *the minimum necessary and not the maximum allowable* which encourages us to live our life responsibly and frees us from attachments to things - a life of simplicity in a life of increasing complexity.

Some thoughts after reading the article “Discovering That a Life of Less is More” by Martin Bennett OFM Cap. in Franciscan Connections: The Cord - A Spiritual Review Spring 2017.

The challenge which we face is to tell our story in an increasingly disenfranchised world. Can we bring fascination to the good news that resonates? The world seeks authenticity in a world of superficiality. How do we cope with this paradox? In fact, the less we have the more we become who we really are. We need to realise that dissatisfaction in life is partially solved when we realise that there are God shaped spaces within all us that desire the presence of God.

On his knees Francis beseeches God, *Who are you Lord and who am I?*

Francis teaches us not to be afraid of simplicity. When he divested himself of his fathers wealth, he found an amazing God given abundance in the simple pleasures of life. He talked about his “adolescent vanity”.

The minimal necessary approach allows for maximum engagement with God and others no longer running to stand still, living in the abundance of a gracious God.



Honor the Feast of St Clare

Just as St. Clare steadfastly devoted her daily life to prayer within the convent, letting herself be enfolded by Love which enabled her to say “...It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me. I am secure in the Lord. I can look out, now, through the Lord’s eyes. I can see the world as he created it, in his mercy, I can see my sisters and brothers with his love”, we too can grow to be enfolded by Love to see the world and our brothers and sisters through Christ’s eyes.

Prayer: St. Clare of Assisi
I pray you most gentle Jesus, ...
Give me a lively faith, a firm hope,
and perfect charity,
so that I may love you with all my
heart,
and all my soul, and all my strength.
Make me steadfast in good works
and grant me perseverance in your
service, so that I may please you always.
Amen



The Bee and Bramble. (Aegina, Greece).

By: Elizabeth Bellhouse

I sit in the shade of the monastery wall; the bees try to land yet don’t taunt me. They go, only to return; it would be I who would have to leave, the power of the bee. And I walk along the stone path between the brambles which so easily impede my way, the power of the bramble.



Potato Point Gathering, NSW

Material provided By: Rev Mandy Wheatly

It was a small but joyful gathering on Saturday, at Bag End, Potato Point.

Thank you Kay (and Terry) who opened their home to us as we caught up, reflected, prayed and played together.

Among those who attended were Tim, Margaret, Peter, Mandy, James, Cass and Amelia and Kayof course .

Thank you Tim for your excellent time of reflection. It was the right timing for us to slow down for a while together. We reflected on scripture, and had a gentle but bracing walking around Potato Point’s beautiful beaches .

We shared the good news of Chapter’s approval for Kay’s profession as a Tertiary at our Retreat this year. Cass Hearne has approached me about being made an Associate of the Third Order. She and Peter Edridge were able to talk together about what being an Associate means. A tentative date for her admission would be at the Retreat also.

For our Retreat at the Gathering Place, 10 - 12 Oct, Kay has kindly agreed to meet our catering needs. We may ask a few people to share leadership duties during the Retreat and one suggestion is to watch a movie - (Brother Sun, Sister Moon or similar) on the last night. Any other ideas are most welcome. Do you like the possibility of our theme being titled “Sacred Spaces, past, present, future”?

We have been asked to “save the date” 22-25 July 2021 for our next TSSF Conference by WA Region.

Theme is Old Way, New Way.

They advised that if you save \$20.00 per week all costs will be covered (around \$2,000) by Conference time.

\$700 for the Conference cost and \$225 (share) or \$510 (single). Return airfare from Canberra would be approximately \$900.

Early bird registration will be opening soon with monthly payment plans available.

Those who were there at Potato Point may remember things I have forgotten, but we pray that everyone who has been unwell may recover their health speedily, and that those who were unable to join us were blessed and felt our prayers and God’s love.



from left to right: Bishop Tevita Talanoa, Bishop David McCall, Archbishop Allan Migi, and Robert McLean,taken at Archbishop Allan’s enthronement at All Souls’, Lae.

VALE BISHOP TEVITA TALANOA

Sent to me by: Rev Mandy Wheatley

<https://www.abmission.org/news.php/476/vale-bishop-tevita-talanoa>

Sat 08, Jun 2019

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. So we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- 1 Thessalonians 4.14, 17b, 18

The Bishop of Popondota, the Rt Rev Lindsley Ihove, has written to tell us of the death of Bishop Tevita David Talanoa last night at about 8.00pm at Popondetta General Hospital.

Originally from Tonga, and brought up as a United Church member, Bishop Tevita came to PNG as a teenager to become an Anglican Franciscan Brother. After his service as a Brother, he was released from the Order and became a priest. He married Winifred (from Oro Province) and eventually became Bishop of Dogura until he retired.

Bishop Lindsley writes, ‘He was a great singer and a guitarist, contributing a lot in the extension of God’s Kingdom in PNG’.

Bishop Lindsley says that ‘Before he closed his eyes he said to his wife, “I can see the heavenly throne coming down to receive me”’. May he rest in peace and rise with Christ in glory.

Music’s only purpose should be for the glory of God and the recreation of the human spirit.



- Johann Sebastian Bach

St Stephano Church in Assisi



Journeying with St Francis

By: Rev Paul Arnott

I first heard stories about Francis and Assisi as a young child. One of my mother’s older sisters married an English poet called Clive Sansom in the mid-1930s, and being Quakers, were drawn to Assisi and St Francis. Then my uncle wrote a series of poems about St Francis. I visited Assisi in 1978 during my first overseas trip and fell in love with it. My wife Rosanne and I spent a week in Assisi in 2012 and attended the Sunday Eucharist at St Leonard’s Church. Following the service, we and other visitors were invited to join the congregation for lunch at a nearby restaurant. The chaplain invited us to join he and his wife for dinner the following week in the apartment which is rented for St Leonards by the Society of St Francis in Hilfield in Dorset. St Leonard’s can’t afford a fulltime priest so they invite visiting clergy to take services for up to three months at a time, providing them with free accommodation. When we returned to Melbourne I discovered that it was possible to serve as chaplain and did so in May 2017. It was a wonderful experience, as St Leonards gave us permission to simply “get to know Assisi and Francis and Clare”. There are two Assisis: the tourist town and the home of St Francis and St Clare. Our favourite times are when the tourists have all gone home and we can wander the almost deserted streets, when it’s not hard to sense the spirit of Francis.

Assisi has many churches, but our favourite is St Stephano’s, a small church with frescoes untouched since the time of St Francis. The church has an amazing sense of God’s presence, which is very tangible. The church apartment has a wonderful library of books about Francis and we learned a great deal more about his life and ministry. I was surprised to discover that St Francis’s primary spiritual gifts were preaching and evangelism, not ecology. In May this year we spent another month with the St Leonard’s congregation. Wonderful people, who extend hospitality every Sunday to pilgrims from all over the world. This time, we especially enjoyed meeting Marina Zola, the Ecumenical Officer with the Roman Catholic Church in Assisi. Her work involves building bridges between the many churches and other groups, which visit Assisi in large numbers every year.

“The Heart of our Prayer is the Eucharist”

By: Margaret Edridge

Many years ago, when we had to report yearly to our Regional Minister on the keeping of our rule, I spent considerable time reflecting and meditating on the various headings under which we each compile our individual rules. Under each heading I wrote the results of this quiet time followed by my intention.

Under the heading ‘Communal and Liturgical Prayer’ I wrote the following:

The Holy Eucharist is the celebration of God’s presence with us. In the Eucharist we meet God the Father, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit within the family of the Church.

The Eucharist is indeed the centre of my worship, the fulfillment of my relationship with God. It can only be meaningful if I participate in the celebration of the Eucharist in a spirit of reverence and humility, which requires me to spend time in preparation so that it may in truth be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

My intentions have varied over the years depending on where and when we worship but my reflections have never changed and have stood the test of time. However, one Regional Minister complained that my rule was too long and complicated so I have now shortened my rule so that most of my actual reflections are omitted and I seldom read them.

Recently, I have been feeling sad that I have not been giving nor gaining as much as I should when I worship each Sunday. The liturgy, music and preaching are all wonderful, but where is my heart?

Bishop Godfrey’s challenge to consider the TSSF Principle: *The heart of our prayer is the Eucharist* immediately made me turn to my original rule and there was the answer. I put no effort into preparation. I no longer reflect on the readings for the following Sunday, even if only the evening before. Nor do I consider my rule regularly before I lay it on the Communion Table at renewal and swear to keep it for another year. It has become a formality! The Eucharist has become a formality!

This has truly been a salutary lesson for me. So thank you, Godfrey, I am truly grateful.

Praying that Hong Kong is strong

Time to revive

Won’t take long.

Best wishes our goodwill song,

With us God would

watch along.



By: Simon Fong

Guided Home By Francis

By: Rev Daniel Hobbs

It was October 2008. The windy road to the hilltop village of Assisi was lined with the colours of early Autumn.

As our tour group stood at the entrance to this renowned Italian hamlet, framed by an arched Roman gate, there was some excitement. We knew we were entering a site of historical significance.

Wandering through the tight cobblestone streets, surrounded by flat faced sandstone homes, most housing window flower boxes overflowing with red, pink and white, it was easy to be transported back in time. I thought to myself as I ambled along, “are those polished timber doors and light framed window shutters there to keep out modern life, tourists like me, or are they trying to keep in, to protect, a time of great moment”.

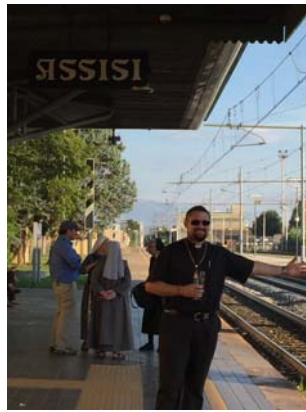
And then, as if from nowhere, the tall sandstone walls of the church of St. Clare emerged upon the undulating Umbrian countryside. Inside we were welcomed by coolness amid a warm day and the warmth of overwhelming transcendence; this is most certainly the home of God! In a side chapel hangs high the original San Damiano, the cross before which St Francis knelt and felt his call, “Rebuild my church”. I too knelt to pray and began to weep, overwhelmed by the spiritual and historical weight of the moment.

Soon our guide had us back on the road, drifting the streets of this gorgeous little town. At one point I was taking photos of the whole-in-the-wall Italian bakeries, jewelry shops and cafe’s when I heard my wife, Kylie, sigh. “Look at that”, she says with joy. I turned to find myself face to face with the Basilica di San Francesco d’ Assisi, perfectly manicured green lawn at its front, stunning bell tower reaching toward the sun at its rear.

After sharing with us the characteristics of this beautiful church and its place in the story of the “Little Brothers”, our guide says, in her best English, “but come see the best bit”. Walking slowly, and somewhat tentatively, down a spiral brick staircase, the temperature of the air dropped a little further. Whispering in a reverential tone our guide said excitedly, “this is the tomb of St Francis”.

Abruptly, the world stopped! Like St Paul the scales fell away. Instantly, the hair on the back of my neck and arms stood erect. My heart rate increased, my palms sweat. I was somehow here and now, while simultaneously elsewhere before - transported. My memory blurs for a second, then I recall an image; I could literally see myself kneeling at the tomb, as if from above. I was floating out of myself. Deep in my soul St Francis quotes St Matthew, “This is my son, with whom I am well pleased”. I bow, tears streaming down my cheeks and off my chin. I hazily approach, kneel before the burial place of this great man and weep uncontrollably. I know not why. Sometime later the sound of Kylie calling for me breaks my focus.

Unbeknown to me, I’d been kneeling in that spot overwhelmed by a mix of joy, comfort, release and clarity for over twenty minutes. Our tour guide was losing patience, I later learnt.



Daniel awaiting the train from Assisi to Rome, September 2016

Making our way back to the front of the church, I pass a bronze plaque upon which is printed in black text:

“Lord, what do you want me to do?”

“Go back to your city and you will be told what you must do”, replied God.

At the break of day, Francis, with his reformed inner self, desired only to conform to the will of God.

Kylie asked if I was ok and what had happened. I couldn’t explain it. I just cried some more. She hugged me.

When our trip came to an end, we boarded our flight home. Awoken suddenly from an onboard nap, I turned to Kylie and said, “God wants me to be a priest, to be ordained”. “Of course he does love, of course he does,” she replied, patronizingly patting my knee.

In returning to my city, I was told what to do. I started the journey to ordination, began study at St Francis Theological College. I was ordained Deacon on 5th December 2015 and Priest on 3rd December 2016.

When the opportunity arose to return to Assisi in September 2016 for a Christian leaders course, I swiftly booked my tickets.

The stunning Umbrian countryside hadn’t changed a bit. But I had.

When kneeling at the tomb of St Francis this time, having spent 8 years reading and studying his story, his theology, his spirituality, his worldly ministry, this was a coming home. This time the holistic, healing, redeeming, reconciling, accepting love of Christ expressed by Francis became my own. I was now conscience of a love so powerful it literally changes lives; a love only made available through Christ; a love demonstrated so beautifully by our “Little Brother”.

Fr. Daniel Hobbs is Parish Priest of St Paul’s Anglican Church, Manly and presently in the second year of his TSSF Noviciate.



God's Call For Me

By: Jeni Nix

This poem was written after a long struggle to discern clearly God's call on my life. Having felt called to ordination for several years now, I have more recently felt a stronger tug to live more simply as 'just' as a Franciscan. This has been a difficult journey, and often a painful one. And God may yet ask me to be both Franciscan and ordained. But with much love, patience and guidance from my Spiritual Director, my path for the near future is now clear and profoundly peaceful.

Birds just are.

They don't do anything,
Except be birds.

A small flock of galahs gently grazes, on the beautiful green grass, wandering slowly from tasty morsel to tasty morsel.

They know nothing else but to just "bird" - all day, every day.

Why do we humans spend so much of our lives trying to find what we're meant to "do", to "be", instead of who we are?

It's lonely being rare.

Everyone around me, working so hard to get somewhere, to gain a degree or a title or a job, to find their 'place' in society so they can confidently answer the question -

"So what do you do?"

And until this very moment, I have been the same.

Too broken to "do" any of these things, I finally know who I am,

And what I do - my vocation, and life's call.

I am Jeni, Scar-Bearer.

And healer..

*A humble man is never hurried, hasty or perturbed,
But at all times remains calm. Nothing can ever
surprise, disturb him, for he suffers neither fear nor
change in tribulations, neither surprise nor elation
in enjoyment. All his joy and gladness are in what
is pleasing to the Lord.*

- St. Isaac of Syria

Advent Edition

Articles in by 20th November please. Thanks for all your contributions for Stigmata Edition.

Please forward any articles that would be of interest regarding your area events or other Franciscan happenings in time for the next issue 20th November.
Blessings, Gloria



Elizabeth of Hungary – 18th November

Philanthropist, Patron of the Third Order 1231

From: "A Sense of the Divine" Page 382

Elizabeth's holiness began to come to its full flower. All her life she had been the comforter of the poor: now she became the helper of the starving. Outside one of her castles she built a hospice and gathered in its sick, diseased and crippled men and women. Besides, anyone who came asking for alms received unstinted gifts from her charity. She did the same wherever her husband's jurisdiction ran, pouring out all the resources she had in all parts of his territories, until in the end she sold even her jewels and her sumptuous dresses.

She went twice a day to see the sick, in the early morning and at nightfall, and it was those with the foulest diseases she made her personal care. She fed them herself, made and cleaned their pallets, carried them in her arms and nursed them in whatever way they needed. Her husband, of happy memory, gave a completely ungrudging consent to all she did. When he died she felt she should now attempt the heights of perfection. She came to me and begged me with tears to let her beg her way from door to door.

On the Good Friday of that year, after the altars had been stripped, she knelt in front of the altar of the chapel she had given to the Friars Minor and laid her hands on it. Then in her presence she renounced her own will, her earthly estate and all that our Saviour counsels us in the gospel to put aside.



SEASON OF CREATION

Taken from: Seasons of Creation

<https://seasonsofcreation.org/>

The Season of Creation is our special time for the Creator and each other. From September 1 to October 4, Christians around the world celebrate the Season of Creation. Some of us pray, some of us do hands-on projects, some of us advocate.

We all protect creation. It's powerfully good work that's urgently needed. The momentum continues long after the season ends through ongoing prayer, changes in lifestyle, and advocacy.

A global movement

During the Season of Creation, Christians around the world rejoice together. We're called to honor the Creator by loving creation and each other. This year, we're protecting the web of life in all its variety, because each species reveals the glory of the Creator

An annual celebration

The Season of Creation ends on October 4, the feast day of St. Francis. The suggested theme for this year is "the web of life." One million species are threatened by our lifestyle. Solving this challenge serves the Creator of all.

Sermon at QLD B/ NNSW Retreat at James Byrne Centre, Highfields

By: Rev Ray Clifton -

Text: Luke 10. 25-37

Humility, Love and Joy: Francis, a Sultan and a Samaritan

Some time ago in the Brisbane CBD an older aboriginal woman collapsed. There was an outcry at the time because many people were shocked that someone who was sick could be left lying on the foot path for so long without help. Many people walked past. Some because that didn't want to get involved. Others because they made some assumptions about aboriginal people and being drunk. Many people did walk by; but one didn't, and the woman was eventually attended to by emergency services and taken to hospital.

Someone dared to cross a boundary and labels and cared for a person in need.

Our theme and today's Gospel challenge us to go beyond stereo types and labels to humbly and joyfully offer loving service.

Neighbour? Who?

In the Gospel reading, the Lawyer, we are told by Luke, wanted to test Jesus. In fact, the word in Greek can be rendered to 'put on trial'. The Lawyer wanted to put Jesus on trial or test his orthodoxy as a Jewish rabbi or justify himself.

'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

As is common in rabbinic circles, Jesus retorts with a question. *'What is written in the law?' 'What do you read there?'* No doubt the Lawyer didn't like the idea of Jesus asking the question.

The Lawyer recites from memory from Deuteronomy 6.5 and Leviticus 19.8.

²⁷He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.'

Not satisfied with Jesus' response of, *'...do this, and you will live'*; the man comes back and asks, *'Who is my neighbour?'*

The lawyer wants definitions to this label, neighbour. In the lawyer's mind this defines action which aligns with law and obligations.

A neighbour, or 'near one', in the Law is defined as family, others close by and could even be another Israelite; and perhaps allow some obligation to the stranger.

Labels can include and exclude. With exclusion comes denial of responsibility, restriction of relationship and resources. Exclusion excuses mistreatment by intention through actions of violence and racism.

Labels set boundaries and break human connection.

I once provided pastoral care to a young pregnant woman in hospital who also had a diagnosis of cancer. She had both obstetric and oncology specialists managing not only her wellbeing but also the wellbeing of her unborn twins.

When I visited one day, the young woman was angry. As I listened and explored her feelings, she explained that because she also suffered mental unwellness. People were treating her as a mental illness and not a person capable of understanding and participating in her treatment and worried about her life and her babies.

She looked up at the crucifix on the wall opposite, and said, *'...at least he understands me.'*

Eight hundred years ago, Francis crossed a boundary and entered an area between two armies at risk to himself and his companions. They went unarmed and motivated to go in peace and share the gospel.

In the background, the Pope expected Francis and other missionaries to convert the 'infidel' sultan and his kingdom. Otherwise, the Pope's forces would bring the change by the sword.

Infidel, is a label that would excuse violence, dehumanise and ignore the faith and desires of the 'other'. The 'other', the Sultan – Malek al-Kamil was to be converted or negotiated with to mitigate risk and loss or conquered. The motive of the Church was arrogant and closed to the other.

Francis went in peace, in the spirit of humility, not knowing what would happen. His openness started from the point of humble obedience to Christ, the incarnate image of God. Obedience to Christ who loves without distinction and brings healing peace and wholeness through loving service and brokenness.

Sultan al-Kamil was a man of God too, seeking salaam (peace). The Sultan met Francis with hospitality, once he saw something of the essence of the humble, little man of God. The Sultan needed humility too to reach beyond royal protocol and status and his suspicion of the 'infidel'.

Both men, before the encounter, were regarded as the 'other'. Both sought peace from God and eternal life. These two who wore labels, broke the labels and became neighbours through humility.

What does being a Neighbour look like?

There's a story often used at Maundy Thursday based on an incident witnessed in the great shrine and centre of pilgrimage at Santiago de Compostela.¹ In the story, Alberto is asked to join eleven other men to have their feet washed by the Bishop at Mass for Maundy Thursday. Alberto is uncomfortable with this but goes ahead. During the liturgy, on cue he is ushered to the chancel steps along with the others and the Bishop eventually washes their feet. Afterwards, the master of Ceremonies signals to them to move back to their seats. Ten of the men leave for their places, but Alberto and his friend are having difficulty with putting their shoes back on while everyone impatiently waits. When Alberto has his socks and shoes back on, he notices that his friend is having trouble tying his laces. Alberto kneels with difficulty and fixes his friend's shoes and the two old men help each other back to their seats.

Jesus responds to the lawyer's question about neighbour with a parable.

In the parable we see a contrast in the actions of three characters. Every good story needs three. Those listening though, weren't expecting the twist at the end.

Coming down from Jerusalem, after serving rostered duty at the Temple, we are told two religious people, come upon a man beaten and left for dead by robbers. One a priest and the other a Levite.

The priest on seeing the beaten person, walks by ignoring him. Depending on which side of this debate you are on, you might be happy the priest did so because he followed the Law's injunction to avoid touching a dead body and risk impurity. On the other hand, you might be disappointed because the priest, under the Law had an obligation to aid a neighbour.

When the Levite is introduced, both sides look to see if things would be the same or different. What would the Levite do? The Levite walked by too! The same result! Those listening were justifiably happy or disappointed.

Perhaps the third time might be different. Maybe someone, a faithful Israelite might appear and keep Torah and right relationship with neighbour.

Wait! What's this? A Samaritan! A heretic and enemy!

The Samaritan, one who also lives under Torah, is labelled as an 'outsider' and not a part of the promise of God. This Samaritan, from a people sometimes treated as subhuman, keeps Torah.

The Samaritan engages humbly in the spirit of Torah representing the intention, grace and mercy of God. The Samaritan draws aside, bends low, and is moved with compassion. Compassion or Love which flows from living Torah not just by observing it. This one bears the image and response of God and is neighbour to the one beaten on the road.

Go and Do!

There's a saying from a commercial which I sometimes use to motivate myself. 'Just do it!' It is the Nike slogan.

The Samaritan as we have seen, bent down in humility, was moved with compassion to care for the man with risk to himself.

The Lawyer begrudgingly recognised that this outsider fulfilled all the duties under Torah and showed mercy.

Jesus says in return, 'Go and do likewise.' It's not enough to recognise and define the need to respond in mercy and be living Torah. Go and do.

Definitions aren't enough to motivate. The motivation to care is born in humility, arises from love and is freely and joyfully offered without counting the cost.

Jesus was pointing to the fact that doing mercy and keeping Torah starts from a movement within. It starts from the compassion of God for all people without partiality. A movement which recreates relationships because of the recognition that we all rely on God for all things and that everything can be freely offered in the service of our relationship with God and each other. The free and generous offering which stems from the joyful delight in what God is doing and in that service.

This movement of the Spirit of God from within, creates relationship, overcomes barriers, restores and heals. God's love which took flesh in Jesus, binds us in communion with each other and the Trinity. The Spirit calls us joyfully to be attentive to the ways the image and compassion of God are manifest in the other.

This is why the little man of God, Francis, continuously delighted in what God was up to and where he would meet Christ. The meeting with Sultan Malek al-Kamil was transformative for both men. Each, seeking peace, entered relationship humbly and were held in communion by the God who is the source of the peace they sought and eternal life they believed God gave.

This communion would leave its mark because each one met God in the other, knew the compassion of God and were changed by this. Joy was the fruit of this communion of respect and peaceful engagement.

We are called to live in communion with whoever Christ gives us. The challenge is overcoming label, the fear of retribution or being marginalised by the other. We are called to engage with the whole creation and with each other, following the movement of God's compassion and humbly taking courage to serve.

Who are the ones God puts across our paths – known or unknown; directly or indirectly to serve and delight in without expectation? Who are we called to courageously advocate for when everyone walks by or dehumanises?

(Endnotes)

¹ Story from Maundy Thursday in Santiago De Compostela - Joy, Margaret (1998) *The Washing of the feet*, The Tablet, Vol, 11/18 April, pp470-472.

Scripture references from: *The New Revised Standard Version*, copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America
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Qld/NNSW Retreat at Highfields



Prayer in Honor of the Sacred Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi

O Lord Jesus Christ, who when the world was growing cold, in order that the hearts of men might burn anew with the fire of Your love, did in the flesh of the most blessed Francis reproduce the stigmata of Your passion: be mindful of his merits and prayers; and in Your mercy vouchsafe to us the grace ever to carry Your cross, and to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. To all the faithful who, upon the five Sundays which immediately precede the feast of the sacred stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi, or upon any other five consecutive Sundays during the year, shall exercise themselves either in pious meditation, or in vocal prayer, or in any other work of Christian piety, in honor of the said sacred stigmata, a plenary indulgence is granted once a year, on each of the five Sundays, on the usual conditions.

Taken from:

[Prayers & Devotions - Franciscan Order of the Stigmata
franciscanuk.weebly.com > prayers—devotions](http://franciscanuk.weebly.com/prayers-devotions)

Glimpses of God

By: Roselind Ruwoldt

This talk is called little snippets of people. I have called the talk "A glimpse of God". I have taken special instances out of people's life and called it a glimpse. Most of these people would have had many glimpses or walks with God – I have stolen a few. I have used the word, 'Glimpse', but it could also be contact, or touch or communion.

The bible is full of stories of mankind's glimpses of God; I have just taken a few that appealed to me. I am trying to see the visions that the following men and women had at their personal meeting with God.

Using imagination and starting right at the beginning when man and woman walked with God in the Garden of Eden, full of wonder and innocence. This is right at the beginning when mankind still held the hand of God and looked into his face. This is not ancient history it happens every day. We glimpse God in innocence and we turn away.

Then moving on to Hagar. Hagar is pregnant, abandoned and a runaway slave - she has an encounter with God, and she glimpses God. There, beside the well, she proclaims, "You are the God who sees me... I have now seen the One who sees me" (Gen. 16:13). She saw enough and received the courage to take up her life again. But she had an encounter with God; she saw God and God saw her.

Moses who came down from the mountain and had to cover his face because it shone – we are told he talked to God. What vision glimpse did he see?

Then like Elijah who did not glimpse God in the thunder, the lightening or the storm. The Glimpse of God is seen and heard in the silence.

Then to Isaiah, who said "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne" and he goes on to cry out about the wonderment of the angels around the throne, and how he felt so unclean before the amazement of his glimpse of God

John the Baptist sees Jesus walking towards him, and cries out, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" What vision did John see that made him utter these words – This was his cousin whom he played with as a boy and youth.

Remember Zacchaeus who had to climb a tree to get a glimpse of the Son of God. He beheld God and found a new way of life.

Jairus' little daughter - she awakes and looking into the face of a man she did not know. Imagine what she saw in the eyes of Jesus Christ when he called her back from death.

Mary who anointed His feet with ointment, tears and hair, and had her glimpse of God and found love.

Judas Iscariot bent forward to betray Jesus and calling Jesus "teacher" he kissed him. Jesus called him friend, but Judas did not glimpse God then. Did he glimpse God when he tried to hand the money back? A glimpse of God that came too late.

Then I leap ahead to Christ's death. The penitent thief dying beside Christ – turns and asks to be remembered – what was his vision as he looked into the dying eyes of Jesus. I am sure he saw God. And then to the centurion who had just performed the ghastly deed – truly this man was the Son of God – what vision did he see, as he stood there amidst the tortuous horror.

Peter and the other disciple (we believe is John) run to the tomb. Both entered and John sees the burial linen lying and believes. He sees God in empty burial clothes.

Mary Magdalene wept at the tomb. She glimpses Jesus when he calls her name – she calls out Rabboni and falls at his feet - another glimpse of God.

Thomas "My Lord and my God." His glimpse of the Risen Lord and the invitation to touch the wounds. Image how he looked at Christ in that moment?

Then to Stephen lying dying amongst the stones – looks up at his Glimpse of God and sees heaven.

Then to our St. Francis of Assisi who sees and hears God before a painted crucifix which in the end leads him to the stigmata – There is great wonder at this vision.

Then moving on and using a little imagination – what vision did Maximilian Kobe see when he was left the last one alive in the cell and just before he was injected with death – did he look and see God waiting for him.

God does not promise us power, He just promises to be with us. Let us all pray for the glimpses of God.

Then there are our own private glimpses of God, perhaps found in a sunset, a stillness in the air, a blossom on a tree, an autumn leaf picked up from the ground, a whisper on the wind, a night sky of stars, a loving embrace, the sweet still voice, and in the touch to the heart in the breaking of the bread.

Now for an exercise, if you would like. Try for one day or half a day to be out and about and glimpse God in all you see, and think on this parable:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, 'I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'"*The King will reply, *'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'* (NIV)

Begin with just seeing people and creation and remembering God in all of it. See a young mother with a baby and see Mary and the Christ child. See a workman and think of Christ in the carpenter shop. See friends walking together and see Christ and his disciples. See a homeless person and see Christ who had nowhere to lay his head. Try it – I am sure it will lead to prayer and to God.

The Servant Song - TIS 650

Brother, sister, let me serve you,

Let me be as Christ to you:

Pray that I may have the grace to

Let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey

And companion on the road;

We are here to help each other

Walk the mile and bear the load.

Saint Francis of Assisi, October 4

Excerpt taken from: Patron St. Francis Of Assisi - Franciscan Media

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org> ›

(September 26, 1182 – October 3, 1226)

Francis of Assisi, was a poor little man who astounded and inspired the Church by taking the gospel literally—not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit, and without a sense of self-importance.

Serious illness brought the young Francis to see the emptiness of his frolicking life as leader of Assisi's youth. Prayer—lengthy and difficult—led him to a self-emptying like that of Christ, climaxed by embracing a leper he met on the road.

From the cross in the neglected field-chapel of San Damiano, Christ told him, "Francis, go out and build up my house, for it is nearly falling down."

He must have suspected a deeper meaning to "build up my house." But he would have been content to be for the rest of his life the poor "nothing" man actually putting brick on brick in abandoned chapels.

Francis' first rule for his followers was a collection of texts from the Gospels. He had no intention of founding an order, but once it began he protected it and accepted all the legal structures needed to support it. His devotion and loyalty to the Church were absolute and highly exemplary at a time when various movements of reform tended to break the Church's unity.

During the last years of his relatively short life, he died at 44, Francis was half blind and seriously ill. Two years before his death he received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side.

Francis of Assisi was poor only that he might be Christ-like. He recognized creation as another manifestation of the beauty of God. In 1979, he was named patron of ecology. He did great penance—apologizing to "Brother Body" later in life—that he might be totally disciplined for the will of God. Francis' poverty had a sister, Humility, by which he meant total dependence on the good God. But all this was, as it were, preliminary to the heart of his spirituality: living the gospel life, summed up in the charity of Jesus and perfectly expressed in the Eucharist.

Prayer for Humility:

Lord Jesus, when you walked the earth,
Your humility obscure your Kingship.
Your meekness confused the arrogant,
Hindering them from grasping your purpose,
Your nobleness attending to the destitute.
Teach me to model after your eminence,
To subject my human nature to humility.
Grant me with a natural inclination
To never view myself greater than anyone.
Banish all lingering sparks of self-importance
That could elevate me greater than you.
Let my heart always imitate your humility.

Author unknown

A Novice Journey

By: Phillip Dibbs

As far as the society has it on paper, I have been doing this for just short of 3 years. Truth is, I started this journey a few decades and a half ago. It's just that St Francis was always turning a corner "just up ahead" and when I got to that corner...gone!

But all things in their right time! I think Solomon might have said that. My time as a Franciscan novice did coincide with other "guest" into the clutter that I call my mind. I had begun to practice "mediative/contemplative/listening" prayer (to me the last two are interchangeable); I had begun to question the certainty of black and white answers provided by a literal rendering of the Word, literal is fine but as Richard Rohr says, it is also the least useful way of reading Scripture; and a desire to make sense of "relationship". The rules, robes, rituals and roofs of Churchianity had value but it did little to make Christ real *in* me. I felt like the husband and wife of 40 years who go out to dinner and sit in silence until he pays the bill.

I was coming out of a period marked by major crises and upheaval. I had been stripped back to the bone. That is often the beginning of many a Jonah journey or road to Damascus story. But I am neither Jonah (though I grump at lot to my Abba (Father) about trees, and worms and fish and Ninevians) nor Paul...though I probably could make a tent if push came to shove). But I had come from a place that perhaps Francis would have understood...a place of position, possessions, power and privilege that I really wanted to leave. But at the root of my being, I had no answers to some basic answers. Like "who am I?"

When I started my formal novice journey, I had began to talk with a young Catholic man entering the OSF as a postulate, I was reading *The Shack* (which really did bring about a new understanding of what relationship means), I began exploring contemplation deeper, and I began looking back over my life for the lessons and examples of role modes I had once admired before (like Gens Cosgrove & Monash).

During these three years, my life has been pared back even further, but I only see it as "learning to be content in all circumstances", of enduring and overcoming, and of being thankful in everything, always. I write in present tense...

So, am I ready to "don" the brown habit? Pardon me while I roll on the floor laughing. I feel the least qualified, least saintly, least anything to be anything to anyone! So, I am thankful that apparently that is all that is needed follow Jesus...nothing. In that I am loaded! And I have worked out that Francis may well have agreed with me as well.

I'll close this little waffle by thanking Mac, for his patient counsel and his support during this time. Another role model in my life that shows me what living authentic spirituality looks like.

Shalom aleichem

To fall in love with God's Creation

By: Terry Gatfield

If there is ever a word that is so sloppily used and without clarity it is love. The word love in the English speaking world is used for expressing the highest, deepest and most intimate relationships, such as a mother at the birth of her first child. However, the same word, *love*, is also used for such things as loving a pair of old socks. We are faced with the tragedy of an inadequate language for the incredible range of emotional, sexual, social, psychological and behavioural complexities when using and understanding the word, love. CS Lewis came to our rescue in 1960 when he penned the book, *The Four Loves*. There he describes from the Greek the four words used for love which we simply translate into a singular term. The four Greek words are *Storge, Philia, Eros* and *Agape*. In ascending order of affection they can be roughly classified as *fondness, affection, intimacy* and of the highest order *agape – unconditional love*. Agape has the power to subordinate the other three natural loves and to raise our humanity and spiritual consciousness to new places.

I commend the wonderful work of Lewis but I want to turn our attention to the wonders, beauty and the current sadness of our ecological world and to our lack of love for it. No doubt most people on the planet are concerned about the environmental problems we are currently facing, especially in light of our inability in making significant corrections to our habitual consumerist, environmentally-damaging lifestyles. All this, despite the massive daily critique feeds on the news media, in addition to our own observations of the natural world.

However, the spirit and values of St Francis may provide us with some partial hope in our dilemma. There is no doubt that St Francis had an incredible Agape experience of God, an epiphany that changed his world. A love encounter with the Creator and His creation and he became one with them. As Tyndale, the great bible translator of the 1500's, would have expressed it - an 'at-one-ment' with God – the atoning moment, meaning 'becoming one with'. The atoning moment - one with God through Christ and one with His world that He created. For God so loved the world....

From that salvific moment of allowing Christ free reign in St Francis life a brand new equation emerged. He and creation became one. An at-one-ness, a new respect and a dignity for creation was found. It was now for him an interrelationship and a co-dependence; all was God's and he was Gods. Agape for God and an Agape for His creation had now superseded all other loves, interests and passions. Communion with the natural world seemed as natural as breathing. St Francis would talk to the birds, leapers, wolves and had a family love relationship with all of creation, perhaps summed up best in his own words on his deathbed:

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Franciscan & Holy Days To Note

2019

October	3	Transitus
October	4	FRANCIS OF ASSISI
October	11	All Franciscan Saints
November	1	All Souls Day
November	2	All Saints Day
November	8	John Duns Scotus
November	16	St Agnes of Assisi
November	19	Elizabeth of Hungary
November	23	Fr Algy SSF
December	1	Requiem for all departed Franciscans
December	8	Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
December	25	THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.
Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.
Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You my Lord through our Sister,
Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,
producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

My question remains with you and with me; do we perhaps need to have a fresh Agape affair with creation to be its healer and lover?

Readings and other material for worship and devotion are in the Manual - Section F

“May the Lord bless you and keep you!

May the Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!

May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!”
(Numbers 6:24-26)