



The Province of Asia-Pacific

AUSTRALIA, HONG KONG, MALAYSIA, KOREA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SINGAPORE & SRI LANKA

NEWSLETTER

Advent

Edition

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On November the 23rd the Third Order in this Province experienced a moment of transition when Betty Hay met Sister Death. It was wonderful that our sister Sally Buckley, the newly appointed parish priest in Denmark WA was able to support Betty on her way.

I mention transition, as Betty was one of the first tertiaries in what is now the Province of Asia Pacific, having been professed by Brother Geoffrey SSF on September the 1st 1962 at the Friary at Jegarata near Popondetta PNG. The only tertiary present was Margaret Butterss. Betty's profession cross was a crucifix from a set of rosary beads. This was a time well before the universal tssf profession cross was introduced.

Two months after her profession Betty was asked by the Minister General of the First Order in England to become Novice Mistress for Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the SW Pacific. Betty served as a novice counsellor until she retired in 1994.

Betty was trained as a nurse. She also trained as a pilot, and with these qualifications and her faith she and her husband Bob moved to serve our Lord in Papua New Guinea, sponsored by ABM.

Betty's memoirs "November Papa Mike" was published in 2014 and I do recommend it.

Betty's time as a tertiary spanned the time from when the Third Order was very much in the care of the First Order Brothers right through to when it became an autonomous part of the worldwide SSF family, along with the First and Second Order.

As I think of the beginnings of tssf in this province through reflection on Betty's story, I realise that the way we began with the help of SSF brothers, is way in which we are now growing the Third Order in Sri Lanka, and in Korea with the help of both SSF brothers and and CSF sisters.

The season between All Saint's Day and Advent Sunday and into Advent itself is one where our focus shifts to remember the bigger picture of our faith and our hope of the joy of heaven, with a strong sense of the Communion of Saints who cheer us on our way to the heavenly city.

We recognise this every day when we pray the Daily Obedience, as we give thanks and pray for our departed brothers and sisters of the Third Order.

Betty Hay our sister remains with us in a new way as she now joins us in prayer from the perspective of the fullness of heaven, along with Mary, Francis and Clare, and all the saints and faithful departed.

Please pray for her husband Bob, and for their children Robert and Alison and their families as they mourn Betty with thanksgiving.

+Godfrey



The Coming

By: Simon Fong

Advent is the time to prepare ourselves for the arrival of Christ who is the Prince of Peace.

Peace – turmoil seems to defy;

Perhaps we do not ask 'why'.

Simply in God is our trust;

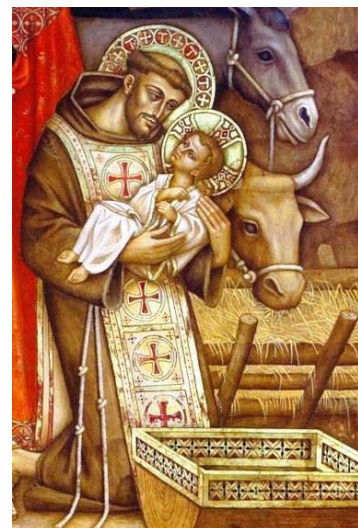
For we know this is the 'must'.

As each of us, a Christian;

We know we have the mission –

Turmoil causes much unease,

Still we know we pray for peace.



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

Advent means

'Coming' in Latin - the coming of Jesus into the world. This article is adapted from a liturgy inspired by "A Franciscan Christmas", by Kathleen Carroll. Sent to me by: Rev Mandy Wheatley



History credits St Francis of Assisi with the beginning of the tradition of the Christmas crèche in the town of Greccio, 1223. Let's take time to reflect on those within the Nativity scene.

JESUS

For some it may be their first Christmas in a new home, with a new baby, a new partner, or they may be living the season for the first time without a partner, a child, a parent or a beloved pet.

Jesus gave only one gift to the world at Christmas . . . himself. So the best gift we can give anyone is the gift of our time – precious because we only have so much of it.

~ Who needs more of your time? – spouse, child, a friend....

MARY – is shown as the perfect mother, but that was only because she was willing to depend on God.

What we learn from Mary is that who we are depends on God's opinion, not anyone else's.

Do the children in our lives know that their worth is unrelated to what is under the tree on Christmas morning? ~ Do we ourselves know the same thing?

Let us remember it is who we are that matters far more than what we have.

JOSEPH - had two honourable choices with Mary's pregnancy . . . to denounce her to be stoned or dissolve their betrothal and leave her to whatever might befall her.

Instead he chose to marry her - not the honourable choice for a man of his time. His heart was open to God even though he may have struggled at first. We must find a way to be the men and women God created us to be and to encourage and respect the same struggle in everyone around us.

This Christmas celebrate the uniqueness of each person in your life.

~How might you do that?

SHEPHERDS - were poor people, living on society's fringes, just like those Francis served.

Despite their humble position the Shepherds heard the good news and, praising God, repeated it to others.

~ Is this our role in the places where we live and work?

This Christmas remember those on the margins – the friend or relative you've lost touch with, the sick, poor, and lonely. Do what you can to help someone to remember how special they are.

THE MAGI - came from different countries and probably different faiths; Arab, Persian, Indian ... they met and journeyed together, risking everything to seek and find the King of the world!

~ How is your work, your life, an example of this to those around you?

This Christmas share your faith without using words.

<https://www.sosj.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/03986.pdf>

Reflection "Christ is Near!"

By: John Gibson tssf (NSWB/ACT Region).

The Advent season is a time in the midst of my daily activities that I can take time more intentionally to pause and reflect. How can I and all of us live with more purpose in my home, church, community and, if relevant for you, your work place. The following story of St Francis and the suggestions that follow helps to focus on these questions. Much of this will be familiar but it is still helpful to sharpen up on that which we know.

"Christ is Near!" The story is told about St Francis of Assisi and one of his closest followers Brother Juniper. Juniper had been impressed with St Francis' marvellous gift of preaching and asks Francis to teach him how to preach – he would like to preach as well as Francis does. St Francis pauses for a moment and then says, "I will teach you to preach even better than I do."

The next day Brother Juniper joins Francis to begin his instruction in the art of preaching. Instead of heading for the library or Church as Juniper expected they head out into the streets and begin to walk all through the town. Down the twisting, narrow, filthy streets they go. As they pass the townspeople, the water-carriers, the women with their meagre supplies of bread and meat, and the merchants in their grand attire, Francis greets each one. For some time there is simply a warm smile and word of friendship, for others a gentle touch of concern, for others a helping hand. Brother Juniper watches with astonishment as he sees Francis reach out and take a basket of washing from an old lady in bewilderment. "Brother Francis, when will you begin to teach me to preach?" Then with a wry smile, came the reply, "But we are preaching!"

How do we show in our daily life that Christ is near? Here are a few ways?

- Listening to someone.
 - Smiling and acknowledging the presence of a person
 - Giving a helping hand.
 - Offering hospitality.
 - Volunteering for your church or a community organization/s.
- It is whenever by word or action, we show forth Christ.

There are also opportunities in the statement "Hearing the Cry of the Earth" and in the Pastoral Letter from our Minister General John Heberton which we all received recently

via + Godfrey. (See Page 5)



Follow Jesus, Live the Lifestyle

By: Ann Ellis

I often say that we do not think ourselves into a new way of living, but we live ourselves into a new way of thinking. I'm not suggesting that theory and theology are unimportant; but I believe that faith is more about how we live on a daily basis than making verbal assent to this or that idea. In fact, my life's work in many ways has been trying to move heady doctrines and dogmas to the level of actual experience and lifestyles that are an alternative to our consumer culture. In today's reflection, Shane Claiborne—an Evangelical I deeply respect—invites us to quite literally follow Jesus: Richard Rohr

Over the past few decades, our Christianity has become obsessed with what Christians believe rather than how Christians live. We talk a lot about doctrines but little about practice. But in Jesus we don't just see a presentation of doctrines but an invitation to join a movement that is about demonstrating God's goodness to the world.

One of the reasons that Francis of Assisi is so beloved is that he followed Jesus so closely. In Shane's words:

Francis did something simple and wonderful. He read the Gospels where Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give the money to the poor," [Matthew 19:21] "Consider the lilies and the sparrows and do not worry about tomorrow," [Luke 12:24, 27] "Love your enemies," [Matthew 5:44] and he decided to live as if Jesus meant the stuff he said. Francis turned his back on the materialism and militarism of his world and said yes to Jesus.

The following is taken from Environmental Sustainability "Simple Daily Gestures" <https://institute.mercy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Simple-Daily-Gestures-booklet.pdf>

Other suggestions include, Water, Waste, Travel, Procurement, Investment

Also-Consider the free app just earth- 40 days of READ, QUOTES, ACTION.

Here are some practical suggestions for energy conservation.

Turn off your computer, monitor and printer when you finish using them or when you leave work at the end of the day.

Turn off lights in rooms you are not using.

Turn off air-conditioning (if applicable) when you go out or leave work at the end of the day.

Turn dishwashers off when dishes are not being washed.

Use dishwasher only when full and use on economy cycle.

Run the dishwasher at off peak times to lessen your electricity costs (Generally after 9pm and before 7am)

In winter, open your curtains in the middle of the day to let the warm sun in. In summer, use your blinds to block out the sun's heat.

Dress for the weather – in winter, wear extra layers inside and lower your heating thermostat. By setting your heating thermostat between 18-20°C, you can decrease your running costs by up to 10%. In summer, wear lighter clothing and keep your air conditioner's thermostat between 24°C – 26°C.

Only heat or cool the rooms you are using and close off doors to unoccupied rooms.

Your fridge runs 24 hours a day 365 days a year. This adds up and makes it the most expensive appliance to run. Make sure that the door seal is tight and free from gaps so cold air doesn't escape.

The Season of Advent 2019

By: Rev David Craig

The season of Advent plays a very important part in my journey of faith to the cross. With this in mind the story of Pilgrim's Progress rings loud and clear, which I read soon after my Damascus road experience in my early teens. I usually begin my Advent journey at the start of Advent and the journey end is at the great celebration of Christmas Day, with the birth of our Lord.

Some years the journey is more troublesome than others. The burden becomes heavier each and every day and I need to examine what is in the backpack more often. At times I seem to overlook some of the troublesome parts of the burden as it looks too hard to unravel. Other years the journey is easier and not as heavy going.

A few years ago I realised that St. Francis was on a continual journey and became burdened with personal and communal issues. He combated these issues daily, with prayer, meditation and consultation. He had the best mentor, Jesus our Lord. He used our Lord's strength and example to overcome the greatest of burdens, some of which he was led to have an audience with the Pope at the time. But in doing all of this he remained humble, a most humble servant of our Lord and God.

During the Advent season I prepare for the Christmas Celebration of the birth of our Lord by more in depth prayer and meditation. I find it a time to look closer at the burdens that I carry, some personal and some communal, also time to meditate on the example that is given through St. Francis. So then it is time to move onto touching the hem of our Lord's garment for strength and a deeper commitment. Eventually the journey comes to an end, at the foot of the crib, in the manger, the burden is removed and a new beginning starts.

Further, as being isolated, by distance, from brother & sister Franciscans I find community strength as I meditate and pray using the TOSSF Prayer Cycle book, The Rule and the Manual books. As I daily use these I am aware that I am a member of the whole Order and become united within the Society for the one cause as we see St Francis setting the example and pointing to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

My prayer for Advent being that we are all strengthened through this season.

Reading from the Principles of the Third Order The First Note, continued

The faults that we see in others are the subject of prayer rather than of criticism. We take care to cast out the beam from our own eye before offering to remove the speck from another's. We are ready to accept the lowest place when asked, and to volunteer to take it. Nevertheless, when asked to undertake work of which we feel unworthy or incapable, we do not shrink from it on the grounds of humility, but confidently attempt it through the power that is made perfect in weakness.

Praises of God

St. Francis of Assisi's prayer in praise of God given to Brother Leo

You are holy, Lord, the only God,
and Your deeds are wonderful.
You are strong.
You are great.
You are the Most High.
You are Almighty.
You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.
You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.
You are love. You are wisdom.
You are humility. You are endurance.
You are rest. You are peace.
You are joy and gladness.
You are justice and moderation.
You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.
You are beauty.
You are gentleness.
You are our protector.
You are our guardian and defender.
You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.
You are our faith, our great consolation.
You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord,
God Almighty, Merciful Saviour.

After his return from Damietta, the influence of Islam was clear in Francis' life,. His prayer the Praises of God closely echoes the 99 Beautiful Names of God that are central to Islam.

Francis promoted the Angelus and other daily "calls to prayer" having been impressed by the Muslim practice of prayer throughout the day.

Prayer for Humility: Author unknown.

**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.
Amen**

St Francis and the Sultan

Friar Robert Lentz(OFM) has painted a beautiful and very unusual icon of Francis and the Sultan, where both are pictured in Islamic style with flames surrounding their heads. It is sign of holiness. Both St Francis and the Sultan walked in peace, holiness and reconciliation.



Praises of God in Islam

English Meaning

- "The Gracious"
- "The Merciful"
- "The King"
- "The Holy"
- "The Peace"
- "The One Who Gives Security"
- "The Protector"
- "The Mighty"
- "The Compeller"
- "The Majestic"
- "The Creator"
- "The Maker"
- "The Shaper"
- "The Forgiver"
- "The One Who Subdues"
- "The One Who Bestows"
- "The Provider"
- "The Opener"
- "The Knowing"
- "The Withholder"
- "The Expander"
- "The One Who Abases"
- "The One Who Exalts"

**For more Praises go to:
99 Names of Allah (God) - IslamiCity**



The Saint and the Sultan Adventure

By: Reverend Ted Witham
(1119-2019 – 800 years)

It was a foolhardy mission,
and Saint Francis, hardy fool,
was best qualified to greet
al-Malek al-Kamil on Christendom's behalf.

He took with him Brother Illuminatus,
(Brother Bright Spark by name):
together they wandered through the enemy's base
calling 'Sultan! Oh, Sultan!'

The Saint took care to note the change:
here disciplined troops, neat tents,
not drunken lords, just curious animosity
to strangers' unbidden presence.

Could the God of peace be ruling here?
causing order and blessed restraint?
Crazy reversal of truth and infidel,
Crusaders' zeal just blood lust in fact?

Two bodyguards seized the open-mouthed pair
and marched them to the Sultan's opulent tent.
Though their attire was torn and dirty,
the curious Sultan invited them in.

Sultan and Saint made a valiant attempt
to discover differences in their faith-stories.
But the more they scrutinised, the more
they found the same God in play.

They say the Saint challenged the Sultan's priests
to an ordeal by fire. I think fake news;
as was the Sultan's demand that his guest
step on the cruciform shapes of his plush carpet.

No: Two diplomats, their language steeped in
respect, engaged with love, the Saint and the Sultan,
they valued the ideas both presented;
each made sure his dialogue graced the other.

They parted with gifts; the Sultan gave the Saint
an ivory horn to call the faithful to pray:
hearing its call, the Saint composed on parchment,
adoring the 99 Muslim names for God.

Saint Francis, with Brother Bright Spark at his side,
moved on, his world enlarged by light.
He travelled home and wept that Brothers did not share
the openness of encountering the Sultan's God.

Pastoral Letter from our Minister General John Hebenton

Hearing the Cry of the Earth

Taken from: Meeting of the Ministers of the Five
Provinces of the Third Order, the Society of Saint Francis
August 2019, Sisters of the Cenacle Retreat Centre ,
Long Island, New York..

What is creation saying to us?
What are the land, the animals or the oceans saying
to us?

They are saying, "Help! We're in trouble!"

How are we as followers of Francis and Clare called to
respond to the trouble?

What will happen to our children and grandchildren if
we don't stop global heating from going past 1.5 degrees? The
web of life is unraveling and we see the pain and suffering in
God's creation. In our care for each other and the gift of God in
creation, we respond with joy and love. What does this joy and
love look like?

In this time of planetary trouble, what do joy and love
look like?

Many of us have used Genesis Chapter One to treat
creation as an environment to exploit rather than as our brother
and sister. We have forgotten that we are made in the image of
the creative and life-giving God. "God gave them his blessing
and said: 'Have a lot of children? Fill the earth with people and
bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the
birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.'" (Gen. 1:28)
Dominion (rule) is not about control or about using others
(people, animals, or the earth) for our gain. It is about living in
a way where we join with the Creating Spirit so that all of creation
and all of us who live in it may flourish. We lament we have not
lived this way.

Day 8 of our Principles calls us to love Creation and
God's gift and to resist all injustice. God's creation embraces all
life, as Francis continues to show us. We are all brothers and
sisters and must watch out for each other. We will continue to
love what God has made. We affirm the work that many
Franciscans are doing in addressing this climate emergency. More
work is to be done.

We can all do something in our local area and some of
us can do that and more by speaking to people in power about
the anguish of creation. We may need to change priorities and
do less on some things we presently do and more to address the
climate emergency.

**"Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is
possible; and suddenly you will be doing the impossible."**
Attributed to St. Francis.



29 November All Franciscan Saints

Taken from: Franciscan eucharistic supplement
 SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS

There have been many saints who have followed the Franciscan way in one of the three Orders. Traditionally, they are all remembered together on the eve of St Andrew's day, at the end of the month which began with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. On this day we give thanks for the lives of many faithful followers of Francis, those known to many and those known to few. The Church also recognised this day as appropriate for intercession and thanksgiving for the missionary work of the Church. Francis, as a preacher and a witness to a new way of Christian life, gave a new impetus to the missionary work of the Church; the Franciscan Orders have, since their beginnings, been involved in that part of Christ's ministry. The life of prayer of all Franciscan communities, the prayer of living and departed members, is what still sustains the life in Christ of all who are walking with Francis on the way that leads to salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

COLLECT

Everlasting God, you have adorned your Church with the splendours of the saintly followers of our holy brother Francis: grant that as we commemorate their holiness we may come at last with all the pure of heart to share the vision of your eternal glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. **Amen.**

Monastery on the Hill.

By: Elizabeth Bellhouse

I go to find your majesty mounted on its throne, its frame of immense proportion yet somehow seems squat, not so gigantic at all.

I have driven up there, entered its doors, inside the skeleton of its frame and I look to where you normally are looking stern, a little angry but You are not there, only your bosom black as a raven's feathers, night with no moon and stars with blue and nightingales now have settled. You have left the great heights and come down, we hold on, we have placed Your table and we gather but the structure has gone. You are skipping over stones and the water flows, cackles, crystal clear, cold, it sprinkles Your face and splashes up and sprinkles ours. As we set out, the bosom of our boat and table, its cloth is being blown softly by the wind, caressingly, and we tire, we come back to the table and the structure rises, the boat again bosom, and You are not angry, just a little maybe. And I look to the structure so majestic on the hill, I do not enter, it was You who ripped it from me. Was it in anger, maybe, and I was too.

Yes it is I feel excluded but the skeleton frame is a winter tree and its blossoming flowers and the majesty is mounted on its throne and the roman crowns are bosoms I suckle, the sap running from the frame.



Antwerp

Madonna

By: Sue Ball

March/April 2010

' This is a photo of an icon which my son brought from Antwerp for me, hence why I gave it this title. I do not know what the actual name of the icon is.'

Lady in blue
 with the watchful eyes,
 holding your child securely
 you look away from him,
 in the other direction,
 checking for danger
 in that prescient maternal way.

Are you intuiting the dangers to come,
 dangers so overwhelming that a mother's
 arms cannot defend against them?

The child looks away from you
 wanting to escape your secure and confining clasp.
 Still a child, despite the professed divinity,
 straining to escape and taste the world beyond.

I look at you, mother and child,
 Knowing the events beyond this crystallized
 moment and feel the ache for you,
 and feel the ache for you, lady in blue, powerless to protect
 your child once he has fled your
 restraining and protecting arms.

**Franciscan & Holy Days To Note
 2019/2020**

December	1	Requiem for all departed Franciscans
December	8	Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
December	25	THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
January	16	The First Franciscan Martyrs
February	9	Anglican Franciscan Pioneers
March	6	Ash Wednesday
April	10	Good Friday
April	11	Brother Geoffrey SSF
April	12	Easter Sunday
May	29	Jack Winslow
June	13	Anthony of Padua

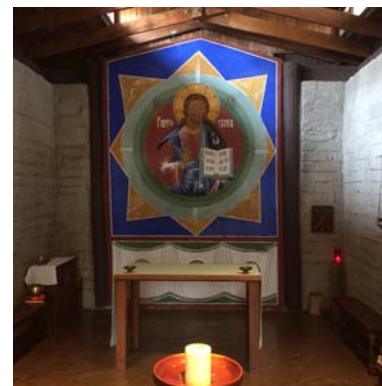
'Readings and other material for worship and devotion are in the Manual - Section F's

The Stroud - Prayer, Hospitality and Mud Bricks

By: Terry Gatfield tssf

It is possible to conceive that prayer and hospitality are twin sisters, joined at the hip. I have been thinking about that notion on my recent sojourn while enjoying the love and kindness of the First Order Franciscan Brothers at their Hermitage in Stroud.

Stroud is a tiny unspoilt, quasi-agricultural town of some 1000 people, about 200 kilometres NW of Sydney, set in the heartland of the Karuah Valley, founded in the early 1800's. It is off the well-beaten tourist track and not renowned for anything spectacular, apart from hosting the annual International Brick and Rolling Pin Throwing Competition in July – Wow!



Stroud is the home of a band of First Order Franciscan Brothers, set in a constellation of charming hand-built mud-brick hermitages and conference-come-hospitality buildings sitting among stately woodlands. It is home to the red-necked wallabies, echidnas, koalas and a large variety of colourful slithery reptiles; this is heaven for twitchers. The environment is an ecological paradise and the complementary rustic buildings are a delight to the eye, a joy to the senses and balm for the soul.

The hermitages are exceptional and built mostly from materials found locally; all the spaces have their own special footprint but the chapel stands out as being very special.

The small, almost windowless, chapel embraces a spectacular icon of the Pantocrator standing about 4 meters high and 3 meters wide. Each corner has the emblem of a Gospel writer, which is drawn largely from the Book of Kells. The icon writer was one of the former Brothers, Leonard Brown. Of special interest is the floor made from compacted mud – it is a stunning masterpiece of natural art, colour and texture which has been sealed and polished.

Brothers, Bruce-Paul, Christopher John and Alfred Boon Kong are the three Brothers who serve at the hermitage. Their life is full; they often run retreats, seminars and conferences at the hermitage as well as caring for the occasional visitor like myself or those needing a place of healing, comfort and refreshment. However, their service often extends beyond the immediate ministries, as is the case of Brother Christopher who, as the International Minister General, is called upon to undertake many overseas duties and meet appropriate needs; as a consequence, he can be away for six months of the year. In addition, Brother Christopher, being an ex-librarian, has sourced an incredible array of Christian literature on spirituality – it is a treasure-trove in fact. Brother Alfred seems to keep young with his native botanical skills and passion and Brother Bruce-Paul is the man for everything. However, notwithstanding all the duties of running a hermitage for hospitality and retreats, the primary function of the Brothers is the call to prayer and contemplation. This is taken seriously five-times-a-day for the community of Brothers, with the first at 6:30am. It provides an invitational space for guests and visitors.

Alas, as welcoming as the Brothers are, there are limited resources in which to optimise care for guests; therefore, they normally limit the number to 3 or so. I have been one of them and my life has been enriched. It is now settled in my mind and heart that prayer and hospitality are twin sisters joined at the hip.

The Old Parsonage



The Old Parsonage Guest House Front Door



From Freeland in October, 2019

By: Anne Wilson

Ken and I were in Freeland for a couple of days in October. We met Br Hugh, fresh from Extinction Rebellion on London Bridge and received a “hot off the press” new Third Order publication called “Franciscan Charism: Living a Franciscan Lifestyle”. I’ve attached a photo of the front cover in case anyone is interested. This was made possible by Sr. Caroline who I think was European Provincial Minister in the late ‘90s and remembers a visit to Provincial Chapter in Perth, but is a recently Professed sister in the Community of St Clare. I asked for more copies of some other publications I had found useful, particularly, “Reflections on the Principles” and the booklet (No.1) on Poverty which are very helpful. There was a Third Order local member who brought them round for me.

If interested in publication above please email Anne Wilson, email: annewilson@westnet.com.au



NSW B/ACT ANNUAL RETREAT 2019

By:
*Graeme and *
Kathy Dunn.
Area Convenors.

The NSW B/ACT Region held its Annual Retreat recently from the 10th to the 12th October at The Gathering Place in Canberra. The theme of the retreat was “Open to God moment by moment”.

The Gathering Place has been a Brigidine Convent in the past and about 30 years ago it was transformed into the Retreat and Christian Conference Centre that it is today.

Our region has now held its Annual Retreat at The Gathering Place for the past 15 years. As one walks through the doors of this place there is an intense feeling of calm, peace and God’s presence in all we do and share in our time there.

We were so fortunate on our first evening to have our Provincial Minister Godfrey Fryar and Bronwyn with us as we shared a meal together. Godfrey and Bronwyn then shared their recent trips to the U.S for the Ministers Provincial Meeting, Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Hong Kong with us.. We were given a wonderful insight into how The Third Order is growing overseas.

The following day was devoted to the theme, led by Anthony Frost and Tim Narraway, allowing us all to ponder on and closely examine our encounters with God as we journey with Jesus in the company of Saint Francis on the road of life. We all were re-awakened by those experiences which initially led us to an awareness of Saint Francis and a desire to be a part of The Third Order.

It was a wonderful time of refreshment and reconnection with those experiences that we maybe had forgotten.

Our final worship together was the Eucharist in the Chapel at which our dear sister Kay Pendlebury was Professed as a Tertiary of The Third Order. It was a wonderful celebration as Kay was officially welcomed into the great Franciscan family.

Following the Eucharist Anthony Frost was farewelled by the group as he and wife Kim prepare to leave us to take up a position as Priest in Charge of East Burwood in Melbourne.

We wish Anthony well as God leads him on the next phase of his journey in the faith.

In all it was an excellent retreat at which 16 of us from many diverse locations (the South Coast, Cooma, Carcoar, Goulburn and Canberra) came together and shared together as one, on our faith journey.





Vic/Tas Annual Retreat, 11th – 13th October, 2019

L to R (standing): David Miller, David and Patti Singleton, Colin Valentine, Pauline Weston, Barry Thompson, Chris Winkett, Barbara Axten
L to R (seated): Barrie Cledsmith, Sandra Jackson, Jan and Michael Down, Pirrial Clift, Drew Stocker, Sean Carson

By: Colin Valentine and Sandra Jackson

For some years now our Regional TSSF Retreat around Francistide has been held at Goyura, the Salesian Retreat Centre at Lysterfield. This year, however, we met at the Community of the Holy Name’s Spirituality Centre in Cheltenham, 11 – 13 October. In one sense it was a homecoming, as before it was closed, we had held many retreats at the Retreat House adjacent to CHN – one particularly memorable one led by Bob and Margaret Butters.

Our recent Retreat was a weekend of many blessings. There were plenty of uninterrupted times of silence within, against a lovely background of birdsong, the doves especially seeming to be singing ‘Praise the Lord’! Colin Valentine, our Regional Minister, shared with us something of the life of Bro Ramon SSF and provided us with some of Ramon’s prayers and short extracts from his writings for our reflection. Revd. Pirrial Clift led our worship and at our final Eucharist gave us a detailed interpretation of the San Damiano Cross icon which I, for one, much appreciated. Our renewal of vows was a very special time this year as it included Sean Carson’s Profession. What a joy that was! We had two enquirers with us: David Miller from Gippsland and Barry Thompson from Torquay. The photo below was taken after lunch following the final Eucharist on the Sunday. Catherine De Ron is missing in the photo as she couldn’t stay for the Sunday, and Lizzie Bellhouse came just for a short time on the Saturday.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Taken from: “Live Like Francis”
By: Jovian Weigel, OFM and Leonard Foley, OFM



Francis was an extremely simple man who understood the very heart of life. We know that the desire for peace, is one of the deepest desires of the heart of man – and of Christ. Wherever Francis went, he would greet people with, “The Lord give you peace!” And he meant it!

Francis lived the Beatitudes of our Lord. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” was the wellspring of his sanctity. “Blessed are the peacemakers” was the light of his apostolate. Because these words were in the Gospel, he wanted them to be a special rule of life for all his brothers and sisters. Since the time of Francis the greeting of Franciscans has been “Peace and all good

things to you!” The memory of Francis can add a rich warmth to this greeting among Franciscans and as Franciscans greet others.

Peace is not simply pleasantness or the absence of problems, temptation, or suffering. Christ had peace on the cross and Mary had peace when she lost her son.

The peacemaker must be humble, prudent and patient. St Paul says: “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). One must be ready to be silent when words are futile forgiving when sarcasm would be the most satisfying and patient, when there is every reason to give up.

Professions & Novicing Qld B & NNSW 2019



Regional Francistide Gathering:

A great time of worship and fellowship was enjoyed by the many tertiaries and supporters who attended the recent Regional Francistide Gathering at St Mark's, Clayfield in Brisbane.

Qld/NNSW (South Side) Region at Toowoomba

Saturday, 16th November, 2019



Blessings of Animals

By: Margaret Holt (Deacon)

The blessing of animals took place on Sunday 13th October on the Tyndale Christian School oval in Strathalbyn, South Australia.

Fr Daniel Irvine and I put the service together and then did the blessing of the animals together.

With me being a Franciscan, we decided a Blessing of the Animals service would be a great way to celebrate St Francis-tide and God's love for all his 'little ones'. It was a lovely day and we had a lot of fun!



St Francis at Greccio (1223-1226)

Excerpt taken from: "The Life of St. Francis of Assisi"

By: Nesta De Robeck

It was Advent, and before leaving Rome Francis asked the Pope's permission to represent outwardly the poverty of Christ in the manger. He may have remembered Nativity dramas seen during his childhood in which the crib, was a representation of a manger

Shortly before Christmas he was back on Monte Rainerio and sent for a friend Giovanni Vellita, and told him to prepare for the feast in the hermitage in Greccio. This was another of Francis' favourite mountain retreats. "I desire to represent the birth of that Child in Bethlehem in such a way that with our bodily eyes we may see all that He suffered for the lack of the necessities for a new born-babe – He lay in the manger between the ox and the ass". For Francis, Christmas had always been the – "feast of feasts" - the feast of light and hope, of peace and joy, and brotherly love. It was the day when "heaven and earth are made one", when God "condescended to be fed by human love".

Giovanni willingly fell in with Francis' plan and arranged a manger filled with hay, and sent an invitation to all the friars and people of the neighbourhood. Many people attended during the night when the weather was most beautiful. Lights were kindled, many songs and hymns were sung with great solemnity by the many brothers. The man of God stood before the manger filled with the utmost joy, and shedding tears of devotion and compassion. By his order the manger had been so arranged that Mass was celebrated on it, and blessed Francis, the Levite of Christ, sang the Gospel, and preached to the people on the Nativity of Christ our King, and when he pronounced His Name with infinite tenderness and love, he called Him – "the little Babe of Bethlehem".

Hidden Hope - Isaiah 11:1-3

*A shoot shall come out from the
Stump of Jesse.
and a branch shall grow out of
his roots.*

*The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the
fear of the Lord.*

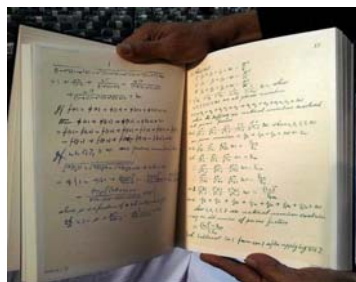
*His delight shall be in the fear of the
the Lord.*

God requires that we assist the animals, when they need our help. Each being (human or creature) has the same right of protection.

- Francis of Assisi

And God said...

(by Wayne Philp, *tssf*, in South Australia)



What follows has little to do with Franciscan Spirituality, the Christian faith or the Hindu faith. What follows has a lot to do with the reality of spiritual ideals and the absolute existence of independent “Truth”. Maybe, like me, you will find this little bit of history – amazing.

In philosophy, Empirical Method, has at its core, a belief that all natural “truth” is discoverable, self-evident and eventually knowable by an unbiased observer – this is the study of “Natural Philosophy” (as opposed to Metaphysics) and is generally called “Science”. Great

empirical scientists of the past (e.g., Sir Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, Isaac Newton) sought to permanently separate scientific-method from religious dogma: Gnostic Wisdom by divine revelation, and Theism (the belief that God’s Will powers and drives the workings of the universe) were considered to be metaphysical nonsense. So began the age of scientific investigation – observation, hypothesis and empirical testing - the age of enlightenment. But every now and then someone, something, breaks the rule of cause and effect; leaving us mystified, stupefied and devoid of explanation. Such is the case of Srinivasa Ramanujan who was arguably the world’s greatest mathematician; although most western high-school students have never heard of his name.

Ramanujan was born in Madras (Chennai) on December 22, 1887, as the son of a sari shop-clerk. He was one of several children in a Tamil Brahmin family, but all his family besides Ramanujan and his mother were lost to a smallpox epidemic in 1889. In abject poverty his uncle took the two survivors into his own modest household. As a child, Srinivasa didn’t have many friends, because few could understand him: his mind worked differently from others his age. At age eleven he encountered two college students who lodged for a while in his uncle’s home; although he had little schooling beyond basic literacy, he learnt all he could from them about mathematics. Young Srinivasa quickly lost himself inside a world of numbers. By age thirteen, he had mastered Plane Trigonometry and by fourteen, he was working on his own mathematical expressions. Because Ramanujan was very poor, he could not afford paper, so he did all his mathematical workings-out on a slate with chalk. He wrote down in his precious paper notebook only the final statements – The Rules – of each mathematical study. In 1903, Ramanujan came across a library book, a collection of 5000 theorems by George Shoobridge Carr. This book is said to have been his (savant) awakening.

By the age of 23, Ramanujan had penned 3900 advanced mathematical formulations into three notebooks; but no one, other than he, knew what they referred to. To any casual observer the lines and lines of mathematical equations were little more than the bizarre notational scribblings of a socially introverted young man. Around 1912, Ramanujan was inspired by another book, ‘Orders of Infinity’ by G. H. Hardy of Cambridge University, and in January 1913 he wrote to the author and sent him nine pages of his own work. The renowned mathematician took one look at Ramanujan’s theorems and immediately dismissed them: some of the presented theorems Hardy already knew; but others were completely unintelligible. But, after a month, Hardy began to appreciate the possible validity and veracity of some of Ramanujan’s theorems (albeit, presented without proofs). Flummoxed by the incredibility of what was before him, Hardy wrote back to Ramanujan and invited him to visit Cambridge. Initially, Ramanujan refused. It was only after his mother experienced a vivid dream in which their family goddess ordered her ‘to stand aside from between her son and the fulfilment of his purpose’, that he agreed to allow Professor Hardy to sponsor his visit England. Four years later, in 1918, the 31-year-old had become the second Indian Fellow of the Royal Society, and the youngest in history. The same year, he became the first Indian to be elected as a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Once at Cambridge, Ramanujan frequently said, “*An equation for me has no meaning, unless it represents a thought of God*”; such as with Number Theory, Prime Numbers, Universal Constants or Infinity. He privately and publicly credited all his work to the divine providence of goddess Mahalakshmi of Namakkal, whom he looked to for inspiration and guidance. During waking-visions the goddess’ male consort, Narasimha, would reveal scrolls of complex mathematical work to Ramanujan’s conscious dreaming. These scrolls were unfurled in his memory; later he would just write down what he saw. For Ramanujan, the mathematical theorems he was shown had a spiritual reality and an absolute independent existence of their own – beyond human consciousness and beyond space and time – as if mathematics was the language of God. He claimed that the goddess Mahalakshmi’s “Rules” were given to him by way of divine revelation for the benefit of humanity.

Srinivasa Ramanujan is renowned for a priceless and mysterious treasure – three notebooks and a few scraps of paper covering thousands of theorems, equations, summaries of results; all without proof. One of his most popular formulations involves various ways to represent $1/\pi$ as an infinite series. One of his most elegant methods calculated pi to more than 17 million digits (in 1985) with a precision that has never been surpassed. There is hardly a field of mathematics that does not presently employ some of Ramanujan’s theorems. Modern examples, to name just a few, include artificial intelligence computational algorithms, “Superstring Theory” for cosmology, Complex Molecular Systems Theory in statistical machines and the “Renormalization of Black Holes” in Quantum Field Theory.

continued /

$$\frac{1}{\pi} = \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{9801} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{(4k)!(1103 + 26390k)}{(k!)^4 396^{4k}}$$

Even now, 100 years on, scientists and scholars are still working on his three notebooks and sheath of papers. Seemingly every year, yet another mathematician comes forward with an excellent finding as the product of their thesis, only to discover that Ramanujan had already been there and had penned their finding long before.

Ramanujan passed away at age 32 on 26 April 1920, after suffering with hepatic amoebiasis. The man who gave us 3900 theorems, many of which are used to solve today’s most difficult cosmic problems, believed that mathematics is a true and divine language which can articulate the mind of God in accord with God’s own perfect reality. For Ramanujan, the mind of God was knowable, could be spoken using the language of mathematics and existed outside of human knowledge. In reflection, although modern secular scientists may espouse that the pursuit of “truth” demands the separation of science from religion through a process of empirical discovery; the likes of Srinivasa Ramanujan’s divine mathematical revelations seems to put the proverbial spanner in the works. Evidence of God’s creative mastery, by way of His divine knowledge and truth, just keeps popping up.

However we may try to turn the life of Ramanujan inside and out, there is no explanation as to how he wrote down the mathematical theorems that he did. Mathematics is generally an evolutionary process driven by need and application, but it seems that for Ramanujan, the answers came before the need for the questions arose. Wasn’t he some kind of genius? Yes, he was almost certainly an autistic savant, but that does not explain the “how” or the “why” of his divine experiences and the amazing mathematical formulations which followed from his religious dreams.

Sometimes humanity’s insight into “reality” and “truth” comes from the most unexpected sources; especially when God has something he wants to say.

The Bottom of The San Damiano Cross



The Mirror of St Clare

Excerpt taken from: “The Way of St Francis”

The Challenge of Francis Spirituality for Everyone.

By: Murray Bodo

Francis met the Lord when he embraced the leper and when he begged for stones and food; and he would never be detoured from that way, because he had found the Lord there. Saint Clare finds God in the poverty of contemplation, and she in turn never swerves from her way to the end of her life.

For Clare poverty and contemplation are so intimately intertwined that contemplation presupposes poverty, because the Lord promises and gives the Kingdom of Heaven only to the poor.

As she writes in one of her letters, *What a praiseworthy exchange: to leave temporal things for those that are eternal, to choose heavenly things for earthly goods, to receive a hundred fold instead of one, and to possess life, blessed and eternal.*

Since the great and good Lord, on entering the Virgin’s womb, chose to look despised, needy, and poor in this world, so that people in dire poverty and deprivation and in absolute need of heavenly nourishment might become rich in Him by possessing the Kingdom of Heaven, then you who have chosen poverty should rejoice and be glad!

Always it is the Poor Christ whom Clare is determined to gaze upon, consider and contemplate, because he is the image of God, the mirror we are to contemplate.

This image of the mirror is central to Saint Clare’s spirituality. As Francis was the mirror of Christ and Christ of the Father, so the life of the contemplative is to look into the mirror that is Christ and see there oneself, thereby learning who you are. By looking into the mirror who is Christ and recognizing yourself, you become a mirror of him whom you contemplate, and you in turn mirror, through Christ to the Father of all creation. You see yourself both in the mirror and as a mirror.

Saint Clare writes to her sisters: *For the Lord Himself not only placed us as example and mirror for others, but also for our own sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life, so that they in their turn will mirror and example to those living in the world.*

At the very bottom of the Cross the original artist depicted several saints. Their visages in the original cross were damaged over the centuries and are now unrecognizable. In this recreation of the icon, the iconographer has chosen to identify and depict these saints as the four most beloved saints of the Franciscan Order: Saint Francis, Saint Clare, Saint Anthony of Padua, and Saint Bonaventure.

Truly, as Saint Basil the Great wrote, “With a soundless voice the icons teach those who behold them.”

The Prayer of Saint Francis before the Cross at San Damiano

“Most High glorious God, bring light to the darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, insight and wisdom, so I can always observe Thy holy and true command. Amen.”

The Ode of the Theotokos and the Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

The Magnificat is a canticle, also known as the Song of Mary, the Canticle of Mary and, in the Byzantine tradition, the Ode of the Theotokos. It is traditionally incorporated into the liturgical services of the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran Churches and of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

- 1 My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
- 2 From this day all generations will call me
blessed;
the Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his name.
- 3 He has mercy on those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
- 4 He has shown strength with his arm
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
- 5 Casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.
- 6 He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
- 7 He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
to remember his promise of mercy,
- 8 The promise made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

During this Advent Season, may we all unite in prayer, put our differences aside, forgive one another and spread the gift of love and peace to the world, as we await the birth of our Saviour.

May we find it in our hearts to be generous of spirit, give us reason to live in hope, that light will overrule darkness, liberate our thoughts from fears and prejudices, and that we may never feel alone, and to give of ourselves to others in need.

A big Thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this Edition, especially the photos for Francistide, and thanks for your support in your readiness to assist me, this year. I look forward to hearing from you for our Easter Edition, God willing. Please feel free to share your stories when the Spirit calls.

I so enjoy receiving your articles and reading your stories.

The approximate date deadline for the Easter Edition is the 27th March, 2020.

email: gloria@radiantpathways.com.au
Contact: 07 33710265 (mob) 0412400374

Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas.

Keep safe,
Pace e bene,
Gloria



Hymn to Joy – “The Canticle of the Sun”

Excerpt taken from:

“God’s Fool”

By: Julien Green

A good deal has been written about “The Canticle of the Sun.” It remains the first great Italian poem in the vernacular, which was barely out of its Latin swaddling clothes. In it, we find, as in the great biblical texts, a balanced periodic structure that has been compared to the alternate beating of two powerful wings.

Is it all from Francis’s hand? Yes, it is the air of improvisation, its energy wells up from his entire soul, a soul already singing in glory. But the form was provided by Scripture, in the third chapter of Daniel as masterfully translated by St Jerome (the text is not found in the Hebrew Bible). This the Song of the three Young Men, the Jews throw on into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace who raise their voices amidst the flames, uninjured, as they invite all creation to praise the Lord. The resemblances to Francis’s poem are evident, but in the brazier of physical suffering his faith and his genius inspired him to make a change that marks the work as peculiarly his: He calls each of God’s creatures brother and sister, and asks them to intone this hymn of joy that is worthy to be in Scripture.

Francis makes a striking choice of eight creatures, the most familiar and close to us, confers on them an almost human personality, and greets them with courtesy and tenderness. He calls none of them “*Messire*” (My Lord) except the sun, the great lord among all the creatures, but the wind is the only Brother Wind and the Brother Fire, like Friars Minor.

When this work was finished, Francis showed no false modesty. He was enchanted with his poem. He called his brothers and Sister Clare to read it to them, better still to sing it to them to a melody of his own devising – what wouldn’t we give to have it today? He decided that the brothers were to sing it every day, and so did he, morning and evening, with the knowledge he’d given the world a masterpiece. He asked the Friars Minor to see that his song of ecstatic admiration for God’s world was heard everywhere.

**Remember that when you leave this earth,
you can take with you nothing that you
have received - only what you have given:
a full heart, enriched by honest service,
love, sacrifice and courage.**

- Francis of Assisi

