



The Province of Asia-Pacific

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

NEWSLETTER

Pentecost Edition

From the Provincial Minister.

Living in Isolation.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every month, on Day 9 of our Prayer Cycle, we are asked to pray for all Isolated Tertiaries.

I wonder what that means to you?

For 15 years, in two different places where we lived, Bronwyn and I would have qualified as “isolated”, as we were the only tertiaries within 100 kilometres.

We were of course fortunate that we were able to take part in the daily Community Obedience together and connected with others at Francis tide.

Many of us live in countries, that for the good health of all, have required us to live in isolation from others, even close family members.

It has been a very strange experience, unlike anything most of us have ever known, though some who live alone may find it less unusual.

In most countries in our province, all public worship has ceased under instruction both from the state and from our Bishops.

This also has been extremely difficult to cope with, and as Franciscans each time we reach day 15, we are reminded that while ‘the heart of our prayer is the Eucharist’, we are having to face the truth, that the heart of our prayer is missing, in so far as we have been able to gather together to celebrate Christ’s Presence in this way.

In a sense we have become like some of our neighbours and family members, who while not going to Church, nevertheless believe.

However, while we are isolated, many of us feel very connected, even more so than before as we intentionally make contact with others in the same boat.

The Eucharist too has taken on a new dimension, as many of us have streamed Sunday worship on our tv or electronic devices, and while we deeply miss being there



in person, it has created a deep longing for Holy Communion, which is an extraordinary blessing in itself.

Though coming out of isolation will eventually happen, it may take a long time to get back to some of the old ‘normality’, in fact with this experience it may never be quite as it was.

One thing I hope we keep is an understanding of what it is like for those of our community who in some way may always be defined as ‘isolated tertiaries’ and remember how much we valued the contacts others made with us.

Peace be with you all,

Godfrey



**By:
Simon Fong**

Every day in May; is to God let us pray
Coronavirus; is long affecting us
Many become ill; is not cured by a pill
Medical people; is the best they’re able
Save lives one by one; is battle to be won
Our economy; is still very gloomy
Job seekers many; is good jobs unlikely
Students in general; is school life abnormal
With no usual class; is learning days to pass
God you see these all; is their effects not small
In You is our trust; is faith tells it’s the must
Lead us on the way is faithfully we pray.

Amen.

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

IN SRI LANKA TAKES PART IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF DRY RATIONS DURING THE CURRENT CRISIS

By: Rasika Abeysinghe

As the current virus situation spreads across the world and many countries still pass the peak of the crisis, many sectors and communities remain affected. In Sri Lanka these sectors and communities are found in the daily wage earners, labourer, farmer and plantations. While the government has proposed to keep these industries going on, practically this has not been possible due to various issues related to transport, security, policies, costs etc.

We as the Third Order received many such reports of persons who are unable to provide for themselves and their families are in a desperate state. We called for our brothers and sisters of the community as well as well-wishes to join us in helping these affected families. With the support of several donors we were able to collect around Rs 50,000/- and we made use of it by contacting local shops through which they provided food parcels at a discounted rate. With transport being a key issue, we applied for a curfew-pass and made it possible to visit three localities (Wariyagala, Madolkelle, Hantana) in the Kandyan province. Recipients for these rations were selected by the TSSF members in these regions and we were able to cater to around 35 families. Each food parcel contained the basic essential food items and would keep a family of four persons from desperation for at least two weeks.

It as a well received outreach and we had many positive comments. We also reflected on this exercise from a social- economical perspective and found that eventhough the state had sponsored some activities such as this it has not reached the most affected areas. We also felt it was our responsibility not only to work at food distribution but also empower communities in self- sufficiency and food-security. These have been noted as future tasks. We have petitioned the relevant authorities to make sure that whenever such programmes are conducted to enable a mechanism that will develop transparency and equality.

We thank our many supporters in this regard and acknowledge that TSSF has been conducting similar work across the board during this crisis. We uphold all our brothers and sisters in all that they do in each community to make situations better and believe that we must do whatever we can even in a limited manner to assist them who are less fortunate.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is wonderful hearing from our Brothers and Sisters from Seoul, Sri Lanka and Singapore, We are really knitted in community. This Edition is all about Covid 19:- how we are all responding to change; discerning the benefits that bring us closer to the simpler things in life; doing small things for one another; calling up a neighbour; talking to the stranger when walking; gardening and the list goes on. Yes! How we all act differently and yet basically we are all the same. How very much our Franciscanism is working in our daily life at this time. The fresh air we breathe; creation has never been happier; the pollution is easing; the animals are walking the streets freely.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this Edition.. **Keep sending in your articles, for the Stigmata Edition By the 25th August.**

Keep Safe and Well, Blessings and Peace, Gloria



Bro Chandramohan handing over a food parcel in Madolkelle

TSSF blog Reactivated



Fellow - tertiaryaries are sharing thoughts, ideas, poems, and personal feelings on the Third Order blog. A small group has committed themselves to each writing something for the blog, and a new piece is posted every week or so.

There are reflections on the Covid-19 and faith, poems on the presence of Christ, and more.

At this time when meetings have been curtailed, communication between us is even more important. The blog is an additional place where we can share with one another.

The Third Order blog can be accessed at www.tssf.org/blog (or go to the Australian Third Order website and click on the “BLOG”).

If you would like to write a piece for the blog – or have a question or complaint about it, contact Ted Witham at tedwitham1@gmail.com.

2020 Pentecost Message

By: Revd Mandy Wheatley
Provincial Chaplain

It was the day of Pentecost, the day of the Resurrection according to John's gospel, and the disciples of Jesus were in hiding. Fear had locked them behind closed doors, keeping the threat of the world outside. The world was hostile, persecuting and terrifying. Then, stepping into their isolation, Jesus comes. Through every barrier, even his own death, he joins them and announces; "Peace be with you."

Today isolation means a whole lot more to us than it did before. Yet even in a Covid world, Jesus tells us to get out of our isolation and fear, and go and announce the good news as bearers of the Gospel, heralds of salvation and forgiveness by any means given to us. To his followers, Jesus said and still says; "You must go." From this point forward we are being commissioned to do as Jesus has done. Bind the broken hearted, announce the year of the Lord's favour, bring healing and build up the ancient ruins. (Isaiah 61.1-6)

But as we are still scared and unsure, so Jesus breathes on us and promises us the Holy Spirit to enable us to do what we cannot do ourselves. This is the same Holy Spirit who brooded over the waters with God when heaven and earth were made; the same Holy Spirit of the Old Testament prophets; the same Holy Spirit who made a young girl the Mother of God; the same Spirit that came powerfully upon the first followers like tongues of fire and transformed them from whimps into heroes.

The Spirit is full of surprises. Despite secularism, affluence and violence assaulting the presence of God just about everywhere in the world, all is not lost. History has shown us that even in our worst moments like the current Covid lockdown, Jesus' ever-present Spirit can break through and raise up saints like us who can turn things around. The Holy Spirit calls us back to the Gospel and gives us hope.

As Francis and Clare of Assisi appeared out of the moral mess of the twelfth century; or Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward from the Nazi madness to die a martyr, or Brother Douglas who cared for homeless men during the depression or Jack Winslow who wrote the First and Third Order Rules in an Indian Ashram, Pentecost tells us that God is still present, still speaks, still sends out disciples to make a difference, and still calls us today.

Not just the St. Francis' and the Kolbe's but ordinary men and women like you and me. Jesus said at Ascension: "You be my witness."

We are the Church, the body of Christ in the world. What we do the Church does. And what we fail to do, the Church fails to do.

May the Spirit of the Living God go with you today in your conversations, by correspondence, phone or Zoom. Be faithful to the Spirit of Pentecost living in you today.



ST. BONAVENTURE – 15TH JULY

Excerpt from: **Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Source of Light & Life - Bonaventure**

www.bonaventurecrossroadsinitiative.com > author >

Born in Italy as Giovanni di Fidanza around the year 1217, St. Bonaventure entered the new religious order founded by St. Francis of Assisi called the "Friars Minor" around the year 1243, about twenty years after Francis' death. Bonaventure studied theology under the famous Alexander of Hales and became a professor at the greatest school of theology in the medieval world, the University of Paris where he taught alongside St. Thomas Aquinas, the "Angelic Doctor." St. Bonaventure's theology is always written with holy passion, in the tradition of St. Augustine, and always directed towards increasing the depth and intensity of the spiritual life. Because of his burning zeal, Bonaventure became known as the "Seraphic Doctor." St. Bonaventure was elected minister general of the Franciscan Order in 1257 and played a prominent role in settling the dissension that had plagued the order since the death of its founder, St. Francis. In fact Bonaventure's Life of St. Francis was approved by the Friars Minor as the official biography of their founder. Having been created Cardinal Archbishop of Albano in 1273, St. Bonaventure attended the Ecumenical Council of Lyon where he died in the same year that St. Thomas Aquinas died, in 1274. As a theologian, Saint Bonaventure upheld the duty and value of using the human intellect to reflect on the mysteries of faith. But for him all human wisdom was folly when compared to the mystical illumination given to the faithful Christian by God himself. This theme is most beautifully developed in St. Bonaventure's best known work, his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (Journey of the Mind into God).

"Spiritual Communion"

Seeing we cannot physically be together for the Eucharist we are invited to prepare ourselves and then pray the following prayer to make our "spiritual communion" (taken from the Anglican Church of South Africa.)

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.

May your body and blood be my food and drink.

May your passion and death be my strength and life.

Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.

May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.

Let me not run from the love that you offer.

But hold me safe from the forces of evil.

On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.

Keep calling to me until that day comes.

When, with your saints, I may praise you for ever.

Amen.

Holy.Scribblers.Coronavirus

Coronavirus, Liminality, and Meditation

By: Charles Ringma, tssf

Let me make clear that there is nothing frivolous about this heading and this is not a flippant suggestion that liminality is some weird psychology and that meditation is a cure for coronavirus.

This reflection also in no way seeks to undermine all that we need to do to stay medically as safe as we can, and to stay connected and caring in appropriate ways.

But it is most likely that most of us will suddenly find that life is no longer “normal.” That our normal routines and rhythms have disappeared and that we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. This just goes to show how much we are creatures of habit and of regularity.

When these patterns of living suddenly change, and particularly when this is due to external factors, many feel that they have been “thrown off their perch.” Scholars call this entering into a “liminal” space. Liminality has the idea of being in unfamiliar territory and in an “in-between” space. The old has suddenly been interrupted and the new is unclear and uncertain. While one may pine for the “old” and impatiently seek to grab the “new,” the liminal space invites us to something different. While this difference may well involve impatience, we need to embrace a creative waiting. And in this waiting the most productive impulse is “what can I learn here,” and “what may need to change,” and “what new things/patterns need to emerge”? Thus, liminality is akin to pregnancy or being in a “womb-like” state.

Also, we may find that we have more “time on our hands” than usual. This is particularly true of those who can no longer temporarily go to work or who have permanently lost their jobs. And while some will constructively make the most of this extra time, for others this may only increase their anxiety. And this may well result in unhelpful and even destructive forms of behaviour.

One positive and challenging move is *to become more self-reflective*. The well-known Australian journalist, Paul Kelly, has made the point that the cultivation of “a strong inner life is essential” at this time. He goes on to note that this has certainly not been a preoccupation of “contemporary culture.” And ends with the probing question: “do people [still] know what an inner life means”?

Towards an answer to this challenging question, here are some basic suggestions:

First of all, don’t binge out on all daily barrage of news. Don’t become fixated. Be selective in listening to reliable news sources.

Secondly, develop some new routines in your daily life. This may involve some more time in the garden or walking in the park or reading a good novel or playing games with your children.

Thirdly, in thinking of others find new ways to remain connected, while staying safe.

Fourthly, seek to also become more attentive to yourself.

Fifthly, set some quiet time aside each day to think about some of the following basic issues –



- b] What am I most anxious and concerned about?
- c] What changes for the better can I make in these difficult circumstances?
- d] What strengths or weaknesses of mine are coming to the fore in this changed environment?
- e] What can I hope for regarding the future?

In quietly engaging these and related questions one may use deep breathing techniques, differing forms of prayers, journaling, and art or music.

This call to turn “inward” is most appropriate, not only because of the changed circumstances, but also because this is something we have neglected in the more ordinary realities of life where we are busy, distracted, preoccupied, and non-reflective. In normal life one minute of mindfulness does little to ground and orient us.

And the turn “inward” is not about selfishness. It is to become more aware of ourselves in order to relate better to others and life around us.

For those who are happy to do some exploring within the Christian faith tradition, here are some rich resources you may wish to engage in order to deepen your reflections and your meditative or contemplative practices –

St. Augustine. *The Confessions*. Translator Maria Boulding. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001.

Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works. Editor Emilie Griffin. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

Ilia Delio. *Franciscan Prayer*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004.

Hildegard of Bingen: Selections from Her Writings. Editor Emilie Griffin. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love*. Translator Clifton Wolters. London: Penguin, 1966.

Bernard McGinn, ed. *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*. New York: The Modern Library, 2006.

J. Philip Newell. *Celtic Treasure: Daily Scriptures and Prayers*. Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2005.

The Desert Fathers. Translator Helen Waddell. New York: Vintage, 1998.

So, keep safe. Stay connected as appropriate. Change some of your routines. Don’t be afraid of this “in-between” space. Do become more reflective. And journey a little deeper into the rich resources of Christian spirituality.

Shalom,



St Francis Reading of the Two Books

By: Terry Gatfield, tssf

At one of our sub-regional fellowship meetings in Brisbane late last year our tssf group probed what our Franciscan response to ecological issues of the day would be via the lens of reading two books - the book of creation and the book of scripture. As Franciscans, we briefly explored our understanding of this issue followed by discussion; some of that substance is built into this short article.

It has been currency among to believe that God has revealed himself to us, both through the voice of creation as well as through the written word of scripture. Creation and the world we live in is often called *general revelation* or *natural theology*. Natural theology is wonderfully illustrated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1: *Ever since the creation of this world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.* Psalm 19 also tells us, *God's splendour is a tale that is told. His testament is written in the stars. Space itself speaks his story every day.* General revelation is for everybody – it is the voice of God about his provision that echoes his love and goodness but one so often wrapped in mystery and surprise. Everybody has access to this revelation. The scriptures and special revelation, sometimes called supernatural revelation, are his revealed written will that is expressed in history through the Jewish nation and especially by his son, Jesus of Nazareth, *...in these last days he has spoken to us by a son...through whom also he created the world.*

There is nothing new about the idea of Christians reading two books, in particular the book of natural theology, but it is a notion not widely expressed from the pulpit in our current evangelical western culture. However, there are some notable exceptions of many proponents that include Packer, Grenz, Stott and McGrath. Natural theology has a long and deep history, especially in the Roman Catholic tradition, and is a notion endorsed by the First Vatican Council (1868) and the Orthodox church which makes no separation between natural and supernatural revelation. That understanding can be seen in the writings of many significant scholars who laid the foundations of our faith through the ages. These include: William Paley, Francis Bacon, John Calvin, Thomas Aquinas and Basil of Caesarea.

However, it is St Francis who epitomises the personification of the two books and it is no surprise that he has been honoured as the Patron Saint of Theology by John Paul 2. St Francis has the title as the foremost and first 'deep ecologist' - one who has a rich understanding of the integrity of creation, a cosmic kinship and a deep connected passion for all forms of life. So much of his inspiration and wisdom can be gained by practising what he believed, taught and demonstrated. We should be proud, even thrilled, to be waving his banner.

The regional tssf meeting finished well and I think we discovered that we had only begun thinking deeply about reading the book of creation in a more comprehensive way and perhaps for some of us it has been a stimulus to engage more seriously in the practical application of the creation stewardship mandate in our everyday lives.

CORONTINE

Francis and Covid 19

By: Revd Graham Warren, tssf

It is impossible at this time in our history not to write about the current plague and the enforced isolation we have to maintain. But this is not humanity's first plague nor have we not been warned. Several years ago the World Health Organisation warned doctors, and in particular epidemiologists, that the greatest threat from climate change to the human biosphere was a pandemic. Yet the political ears were stopped and scant preparation ensued. I see this pandemic as integral to the greater problem of our age, and that is the devastation of the biosphere by our indiscriminate and wasteful use of the resources entrusted to us. The links are multiple and complex but real.

This pandemic has been a time of resetting the parameters of what is normal – in economics, in social care of the vulnerable, in health preparedness, in work relationships, in religious observance and in our attention to care for our planetary home. I hesitate to entertain the dualism we hear so often of resetting the old normal with a new normal. Why? Well because the old normal was never normal- it was ABNORMAL.

But I am privileged and I recognise this with humility. I do not have to bear the burden that is unevenly shared around the world. I share some of the sentiments expressed by the great diarist, Samuel Pepys who some would say was always better at social than at distancing. At the end of 1665, after the bubonic plague had taken off a quarter of London's population, he wrote in his diary: "I have never lived so merrily as I have done this plague time." By December as the great tide of death had abated, Pepys wrote of "the greatest glut of content that ever I had." I confess that this time has been for me a time of hope. A time of stillness. A time of reflection. A time to remember what matters and one of those things is the return of the sound of birds to our garden.

But we are yet to face the post-plague challenges. This epidemic has not so much caused disruption, as it has laid bare for all to see the dysfunctionality or abnormality of the "old normal". The coronavirus crisis has revealed that many decisions are made solely on economic terms. It has revealed the functional hypocrisy at the highest levels of government. It has revealed the scandal of a 'throwaway culture'

It is not easy for some to be confined to their house. What comes to mind is a verse from the *Aeneid*. In the midst of defeat the counsel is not to give up, but to save yourself for better times, for in those times remembering what has happened will help us. Take care of yourselves for a future will come. Hold to the memory of what is now transpiring – the increasing restrictions on daily life and the 1.5 million people known to be infected – and use that memory to examine our priorities. Virgil's *Aeneid*, said, "*forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*" — which translates as, "perhaps one day it will be good to remember these things too." We need to reconnect with our real surroundings. We as Christians share a different reality and to cling to this reality is our salvation.



Korean novices at the retreat with Godfrey and Bronwyn Fryar

Hyeran Helena Yang,



Novice Formation Study in Korea

By Hyeran Helena Yang, novice, tssf (Seoul, Korea)

“Though I do not understand, Lord,” he murmured, “I do not ask questions –who am I to ask questions? I do not resist-who am I to resist? Thy designs are a bottomless pit. How can I descend into this pit to examine it? ...What today seems an injustice to man’s minute brain becomes, thousands of years hence the mother of man’s salvation.” (p 242 in *God’s Pauper* by Nikos Kazantzakis)

“Divorce me, untie, or break that now again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.”

From Divine Meditations 14 in *John Donne:*
ss The Complete English Poems)

In the first quote above, Francis tries to persuade himself to admit his least favored candidate Elias as his successor while his inner heart is still strongly reluctant to him. Surrendering to what could turn to justice in thousands of years, as he excuses himself, indicates to me more of his resistance as strong as the pulling of unknowable divine pressure.

Similar human resistance is more expressively articulated in the lines of the 17th century English poet John Donne, as quoted in the second quote. He wasn’t Franciscan but is very likely to have known about and been nurtured by stories of the saint’s spiritual journey somehow. The deeper he desires to be united with Divinity, the stronger his heart is pulled to the contrary. This tension ascends in proportion with his

desire to be in God, up to the point where he needs to be imprisoned, enthralled and ravished by God in order to be out of the resisting gravity. These two confessions commonly relate to me with what describes my journey as a Franciscan Third Order novice. Not only with ongoing tension, but also with a renewing affirmation of humanity living in consultation with divine presence. Walking through the formation process moves me to see deeper into my selfish self. Even my truer self, and me in God, and to trust more in Divinity that works out the unknowable way of the world. Surrendering in trust happens to me when deepening my affirmation of both humanity and divinity. That’s where I’m in this journey as Franciscan.

I was one of the 8 Korean novices of TSSF admitted in the attendance of Provincial Minister Godfrey Fryar and Sister Bronwyn Fryar at the Cathedral of Seoul Diocese, Korea Anglican Church, Seoul, Korea on 22 Feb 2019. Since then our formation study has preceded both individual and collectively even though it had to be stopped for about three months due to COVID-19. With no local TSSF novice counselors and language differences, our study of formation notes is proceeding in groups primarily: one group supported by Brother Lawrence of KSSF and the other, by Sister Jemma of KCSF. Currently, five of us are meeting with Brother Lawrence in Seoul every two months, and three others are meeting with Sister Jemma in another city Gumi that is at about 3 hour driving distance from Seoul.

Our three hour regular gathering in Seoul is where we open our lives through saying Community Obedience or Daily Office together, sharing reflections of our life in relation with the designated topic of formation notes, and socializing afterwards. Sometimes in our study on skype, giving us a real sense of belonging to a wider community in prayer. In Gumi, sister Jemma is meeting three novices individually or in a group. In celebration of Transitus, we gathered at Kangchon and Gumi in two groups once again. Celebrating the fest with KSSF brothers and KCSF sisters gave an experience of diversity in our formation process.

Upon choice, a personal novice counselor is available who can communicate with us in English. I am blessed to have a novice counselor who listens to and reads my reflection notes either by skype or email. Thanks to her (Hilary Singleton) sharing-back, and encouraging me. I look into further details of my life that can be difficult to share in group. Thanks to this journey with community “being knit together in prayer”, I have opened to more of my selfish self, my truer self, and in my God, and more, whether in resisting, discerning, or surrendering in trust.

Apart from the formation study, we also offer a venue which is open to anyone interested in TSSF. The gathering in Seoul used to take turns with novice formation study on a monthly base. For now while social distancing is enforced, we’re working to reorganize this open venue in order to have it offered with more structural thematic sequences and better logistic arrangement. Most of the novices actually had come to this gathering first and learned before resolving to go on the current journey. We feel called to continue this gathering as well as the formation study to be more nurturing, sharing, hospitable, and accessible to anyone invited, especially in the time of ascending uncertainty with the unknowable virus.

Peace and all goodness!

Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Brisbane Cenotaph

From: Sandra Beck

Put together by my 2nd cousin at her home in Brisbane my great uncles, my maternal grandmother's brother

Left to right, top row: Charles Calcutt, Boer War and WW 1, Gerald Calcutt, WW1,

And Clare Calcutt, WW1,

Left to right, lower row Brendan Calcutt, WW1, Gerald Calcutt, WW1, and Clare Calcutt, WW1,

Brisbane Cenotaph, Jenny's Anzac arrangement, Gerald died at Anzac Cove, Brendan died as a prisoner of the Turks, Clare came back with shell shock. Charles stayed in South Africa. Clare's photo was used as a recruiting photo for the Light Horse



St Francis's Portrait of the True Franciscan

Taken from "Through The Years with Francis of Assisi", Day 12

By: Murray Bodo

St Francis used to say that a good Lesser Brother should emulate and possess the virtues of these holy brothers: "Brother Bernard's perfect faith and love of poverty; Brother Leo's simplicity and purity; Brother Angelo's courtesy, the first nobleman to enter the Order a man who was all courtesy and kindness; the gracious bearing and common sense of Brother Maseo, and his noble and devout eloquence; a mind lifted up to God; which Brother Giles possessed in the highest degree, the constant prayer of Brother Rufino, who asleep or waking, seemed always to be praying, his mind ever fixed on God; the patience of Brother Juniper, who attained the state of perfect patience by keeping the truth of his low estate constantly before him and whose supreme desire was to follow Christ on the way of the cross; the physical and spiritual courage of Brother John of Lauds, who in his day was physically stronger than everyone; the charity of Brother Roger, whose every deed and word was inspired by fervent charity; the caution of Brother Lucidus, who wouldn't stay in a place more than a month, for when he began to like a place, he would leave immediately, saying, our home is not here, but in heaven."

Mirror of Perfection, 85



From a Franciscan on the “Front Line” of COVID-19

A new lesson in humility

By: Dr Jemma Dashwood, tssf

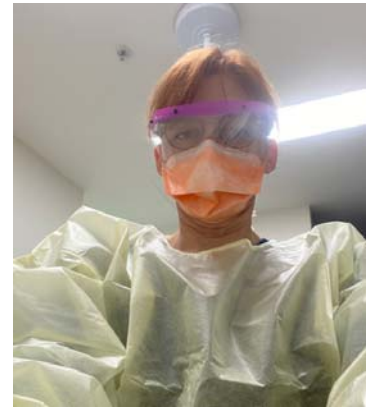
Over the past three months the world has changed quite significantly. Of the many lessons we could learn from what has happened, I cannot help but feel that we have had a chance to learn some more about Franciscan humility.

In the pre-COVID modern world we thought we knew it all – we seemed to compete for who had the busiest life, travelled the most miles, had the most social contact – the list goes on. But a simple virus stopped us all in our tracks. Suddenly we were all very alone. We had to make do with our own company, rely on our technology to simply keep in touch with each other the best we could, and adapt to the new modern world of distancing. And for those of us who live alone, it was a time of silence, and stillness, trusting in God to keep us company.

And yet what was strange about working “on the front line” as a doctor in Emergency and Intensive Care is that from some perspective my life didn’t change that much. There were still shifts to fill, patients to look after and families to break bad news to. However there were very obvious differences too. We frantically redesigned our work spaces so that those who potentially carried the coronavirus were kept separate, we had to learn to work in hot and heavy personal protective equipment (PPE) and more than anything, we went to work knowing that we were putting ourselves (and our families) at risk of getting sick too.

And this is where humility comes in. We were all in the same boat. Junior and senior doctors alike were ignorant. No one was an expert on this virus, no one was immune from getting it and no one was exempt from the social isolation laws. However, with the humility came a chance to love each other a little better, to be more forgiving, more understanding and to put differences aside and help each other. Because if we didn’t, our egos were not going to be enough to protect us from the virus.

My Franciscan community has become even more important to me during this time – we have kept in touch more closely, cared more deeply and offered up our prayers and fears to each other more regularly. And so, by following the ways of St Francis, we can also grow in our relationship with God, and thus be more aware and accepting of the Holy Spirit as it descends on us this Pentecost.



‘No Eucharist’. “The Spirit of Christ is present ...in the light of faith”. Praise God!

By: Edward King (when he was Dean of Capetown)

Sent to me by Anne Kotze

This is an account of a Eucharist held in a prison in Chile in 1988. The person writing about it says, “All we had were our camp beds and the clothing we were wearing. We had no cup to drink from. We all drank from one communal tap. So we had a Mass, a Eucharist, and I want to call it the meal of the empty hands. The non-Christ-ians among us helped by speaking quietly, and they put themselves between us and the guards. Then I spoke to the Christians and said, ‘The meal in which we take part reminds us of the Passion and death of Christ, which ended with His triumphant resurrection. The bread which we do not have today but which, in the spirit of Christ, is present, is the body He gave for us all; that we have none is a sign of the lack of bread because of which the world is starving. The wine we do not have is His blood, present in the light of faith.’ I held up my empty hands towards the man at my side and laid them over his hands and then did the same with all the others, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is My body which is given for you.’ I used the words of the Mass I could remember. After that we all put our hands to our mouths and received, silently, the body of the Lord. Then we embraced each other - and the soldiers came to fetch us for roll-call.”

Listen to the Song of the Reed

By: Rumi



Listen to the song of the reed,
How it wails with the pain of separation:
“Ever since I was taken from my reed bed
My woeful song has caused men and women to weep.
I seek out those whose hearts are torn by separation
For only they understand the pain of this longing.
Whoever is taken away from his homeland
Years for the day he will return.
In every gathering, among those who are happy or sad,
I cry with the same lament.
Everyone hears according to his own understanding,
None has searched for the secrets within me.
My secret is found in my lament
But an eye or ear without light cannot know it . . .”
The sound of the reed comes from fire, not wind
What use is one’s life without this fire?
It is the fire of love that brings music to the reed.
It is the ferment of love that gives taste to the wine.
The song of the reed soothes the pain of lost love.
Its melody sweeps the veils from the heart.
Can there be a poison so bitter or a sugar so sweet
As the song of the reed?
To hear the song of the reed
everything you have ever known must be left behind.

Sacred Spaces in Isolated Times?

James Ellis tssf

As a people called to live in community, we have been living in unsure times this year. What started with bushfires and smoke covering many cities, then turned to a pandemic which has drastically changed the way many of us live. These changes have forced communities of faith to learn, adapt and embrace technology in order to still have some presence among the faithful. Some have recorded full services of worship and uploaded to YouTube or other mediums. Some have live streamed services in a similar fashion. Still, others have embraced video conferencing software such as 'zoom' and held 'live' services with congregants this way to maintain some kind of connection with each other.



Finding the sacred can be a difficult task when we can't meet together as we usually would have. I have been surprised though to find that my own devotional life (which always can be improved and more disciplined) has found ways to be sustained and even revived during this time. As we enter into the season of Pentecost – of the Holy Spirit, I thought I might share some of the ways I have glimpsed the sacred in these isolated times.

A dear friend of mine in the Diocese of Ballarat started doing Morning Prayer on Facebook Live at the start of the restrictions. Having himself returned from overseas and under forced "house arrest", this was his own way of creating a daily sacred space to pray. He started live streaming and I found myself (most days) joining in with him and a dozen others. There was a sense of stillness and focus that this brought to the start of the day. Given that I usually say my community obedience as part of Evening Prayer or Compline, having Morning Prayer as well really shouldered the day in prayer for me. Something that did not often happen in the busy-ness of the pre-COVID world. If you'd like to listen in some time – you can check out "Daily Prayer with the Village Vicar" on Facebook. In a similar fashion, our local TSSF community has been saying evening prayer and our Community Obedience each Thursday over Zoom. This has been a very enriching time and has kept us connected to each other.

For me, a big source of emptiness during this time has been the absence of entering a church building. While of course the church is everywhere and Christ move and lives among us, there is a sense of sacred that comes with the church 'building' in its 'set apart-ness' that is hard to recreate elsewhere. Determined to fill this emptiness, I read with interest of the act of creating a "sacred space" in your home. The concept is to have an area set aside which can be a focal point for stillness, prayer and reflection. It may be small or large. It may be simple or have lots of imagery. You may spend lots of time in front of it, or only give it a passing glance. I created this space on Palm Sunday and started adding symbols to it over Holy Week. You will see from the image what it looked like on Palm Sunday. This prayer space has been a constant presence in my home since and has been a topic of conversation with the occasional visitor, and with my 6 year old daughter who has taken pride in adding things over the weeks.

However you have been getting through these times, I have found that connection to community has been essential in combating isolation. Why we are to be physically distant, we can still connect with one another. We can still find the sacred. How have you found sustenance during this time?

Day 5 – The First Aim of the Order

To make Our Lord known and loved everywhere.

The Order is founded on the conviction that Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of God; that true life has been made available to us through his Incarnation and Ministry; by his Cross and Resurrection; and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Our Order believes that it is the commission of the church to make the gospel known to all, and therefore accepts the duty of bringing others to know Christ, and of praying and working for the coming of the Kingdom of God.



What you do, may you always do and never abandon.

But with swift pace, light step and unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no dust, Go forward, the spirit of our God has called you -St Clare of Assisi

Reflections

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

By: Ann Ellis

The Anglican Church has 5 Marks of Mission the fifth being

“to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”

and there’s our word “**integrity**”

Integrity here could mean the wholeness, the original essence, original intent.

There are some other words to unpack too; **Strive**, make great or strenuous effort to achieve a goal; **Safeguard**, to protect from harm; **Creation**, the original bringing into existence the universe by God; **Sustain**, strengthen or support; **Renew**, give fresh life and strength to.

St Francis did not need this Mission Statement. He had a relationship with creation, an I-thou relationship. We only have to read **The Canticle of the Sun** to know it’s depths.

*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 our Sister,

Mother Earth

who sustains and governs us,

producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

*Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for
love of You and bear sickness and trial.*

Creation praises God. Creation sustains life. Creation is a gift.

Do I love the gift; am I full of gratitude, awe and wonder; am I thankful that this gift feeds and clothes me? Or do I use it and abuse it and think it is my right to exploit it?

In our current time Do I join those who strive, do I make strenuous effort to protect from harm, to strengthen and support and give fresh life? Do I treat creation as my neighbour?

Here is the first and great commandment

Love God and love your neighbour as yourself. It’s not a big leap to include Creation as a neighbour.



Franciscan message

By: Marg Holt TSSF SA

In these strange times of COVID 19 we may still feel like we are in the middle of Lent, rather than Easter celebration, with our social distancing, restrictions, continual washing of hands, and the threat of illness. The Bible revelation is full of times and events that have taken people, both individuals and groups, through journeys which reflect the dark side of things in our world. It is the way of things which all of us, in every generation, have faced at different times.

In all of this we continue to joyously proclaim the truth of Easter resurrection love and hope. Of course, these can be just nice words, or in the true Franciscan way, *we can actually live the path* of love, healing, humility and joy.

I have noticed that people have a love for St Francis and an openness to things Franciscan that enable us to share the love, kindness and mercy of God in unique ways. Richard Rohr has noticed this profoundly in his own ministry and comments that this openness to things Franciscan, “invites us and allows us to do much good in our world – far beyond our actual numbers or importance.”*

What a joyful challenge! As we approach the feast of Pentecost, we are called once again to follow Jesus out into the world around us, with that revolutionary character of the Gospel that epitomised everything our Lord said and did.

We celebrate at Pentecost the coming of the Holy Spirit upon that first community of Christ which enabled and empowered them to go out with joy to live the gospel. The Spirit of God, of course, has always been with us and we see this throughout our Scriptures; brooding over the chaos at Creation (Genesis 1), descending upon men and women, prophets and leaders who were called by God for a special time or purpose...

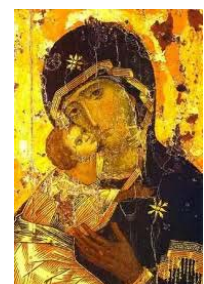
The spirit of God is the creative power of life (Psalm 33:6) and is in all things, but we see at Pentecost an empowering that is profound – an anointing upon, and calling to, all followers of our Lord to go out among humanity and all creation; sharing, serving, loving, healing, listening and journeying alongside others....

As Franciscans, we seek to live simply, to love totally, to live and work for peace, justice and kindness - it’s a big call, but as followers of Jesus, walking with St Francis and St Clare, you will find that people look for this when they hear the word “Franciscan”. We won’t always succeed but what a joy to try, for the sake of God’s Love and empowered by the Sacred Spirit....

Peace and all good

* (Eager to love – Richard Rohr)

Theotokos Greek (literally “God-bearer”) is a title of Mary, mother of Jesus, used especially in Eastern Christianity.



Pentecost Reflection

By: Jeni Nix

When I think of Pentecost, my mind goes straight to two things – an old youth group song (Pentecost Prayer) and the fairly traditional image of red, orange and yellow flames intermingling as they flicker and rise like tongues of fire/Spirit. But I wonder, when we hear the Scripture reading of the Spirit filling everyone with the capacity to understand each other's language, if we are being asked to do more than just be willing to learn the linguistics of another's heritage? Language is far more than just words – we 'speak' in tones, inflections and volume, but also with facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements. We have become more increasingly aware of these as our lack of face-to-face contact has impacted much of our communication and relationships during Covid-19.

We also speak with our hearts, souls and faith. Our attitudes too can relay volumes about how we feel towards people and life. Most of us have made a concerted effort to find ways of relating to our loved ones, without physical contact, during this time. But I wonder how many of us have reached out to those who we don't find particularly easy to relate to...

What must it have been like for St Francis to go to the Sultan of the Middle East during the Fifth Crusade? With the intent of converting the Sultan to Christianity and bringing about peace to their warring religions. Francis went expecting to be martyred, but hoped that what he knew of the Sultan's deep commitment to his faith might spare Francis' life through mutual respect and honour. It wasn't just what Francis had heard about the Sultan's war tactics that he took into account; Francis grasped the personal attitudes and character that made up his enemy's identity, and he knew that the man himself preferred holding prayer to holding a sword. The Sultan too recognized Francis' power yet holiness, and this mutual respect and honour led to a meeting in the spirit of peace and understanding.

The Sultan was not converted; Francis wasn't killed. But we continue to learn from this today, about how to listen and 'hear' the foreign languages our siblings speak in multiple ways, to honour the other's identity and long to understand them as fellow children of our all-loving God. Amen.

Pentecost Collect

Almighty God,
you kindled this day the light of your Spirit
in the hearts of your faithful people;
may we by the same Spirit
have a right judgment in all things,
and evermore rejoice in your love and
power; through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever. Amen.



ABOUT 'COMMON GRACE'

By: Margaret Edridge TSSF

I discovered Common Grace earlier this year when I was preparing a TSSF petition to Parliament supporting the Uluru Statement of the Heart. I have joined this online community of Australian Christians of all denominations who are seeking to live, speak and act more graciously, more compassionately and more like Jesus in today's world.

Common Grace has a membership of approximately 48,000 and is a movement of Christians who are passionate about Jesus and justice – justice in our community, in our country and in our world. In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus was passionate about justice and we know from the experience in our own lives of the transforming power of Jesus' love. We believe his power is able to change the hearts and minds of all people and all nations.

The vision of Common Grace is to see:

a movement arise, bringing together followers of Jesus from across the breadth of the Church, empowered by the Spirit and united in the hope that God's healing justice would roll out like a river across our own land. They seek to be a gracious public Christian voice that is both provocative and compassionate, and one that also helps to reframe public attitudes toward Christianity.

Their approach centres on:

- helping people to follow Jesus' call to love our neighbours,
- mobilising Christians to undertake meaningful and coordinated action to bring about change,
- celebrating examples of Christians pursuing justice, and
- contributing to public discussions in a gracious way.

Their current campaigns focus on four key justice areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice,
- Climate change,
- Refugees and asylum seekers, and
- Domestic and family violence

NAIDOC Week 2020 (5-12 July) has been cancelled for this year due to the coronavirus but lots of things are being planned for National Reconciliation Week (27 May-3 June) which is preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May. It is a chance for all Australians to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture, a culture which dates back some 65,000 years.

If you are interested in any of these broad issues do, please check out the website below. You may be inspired!

<https://www.commongrace.org.au/>



A Region's response to the Pandemic –

By: Keith Slater and Nicholas Whereat
Regional Ministers Qld B/NNSW

Simple Table Services

The Queensland B/ Northern New South Wales Region had prepared for 2020. A calendar of community and fellowship events were planned. The theme for the year, “Transitus?” had emerged for the community gatherings which would occur around:

The Day of Penitence - a planned Quiet Day around the theme of “Transitus -Befriending Sister Death”

The Transitus of St Clare - our Regional Retreat

The Transitus of St Francis - the time of Renewals

The planning for the Quiet Day was well in hand when the coronavirus pandemic began to emerge. Suddenly we were unable to meet. The options were either to cancel, postpone or re-shape the Quiet Day. We opted for the third and produced a format for an ‘at home’ Quiet Day which was observed on Saturday 4 April..

It is interesting to note how the pandemic has challenged the Third Order - as well as the Church - to re-imagine how it operates. The noted positive from the re-imagined Quiet Day (and which should continue to be considered in the future) was that it made it accessible to a wider range of tertiaries in the Region. Another plus was its potential unitive impact for a dispersed community with the ‘at home’ format also being made available to the whole Province.

As the pandemic brought constraints upon our lives we were forced to think more creatively how we might respond especially as Holy Week and Easter occurred during this time. Although originally created privately for a parish situation a resource of “Simple Table Services” was circulated world-wide through the Third Order network.

Within this Region, we have been aware of the need to stay connected - within our local communities, our communities of faith, and within our Third Order fellowships. The eight Area Fellowships have been encouraged to keep in contact with their members. This has resulted in some, with the establishment of Support Chains of four or five folk who ring, email, message one another on a regular basis - and, of course, pray for one another. In others, members regularly Zoom and meet together for coffee.

Upcoming Area Fellowship meetings in May/June are encouraged to use modern technology rather than postpone such gatherings. There are so many platforms that are available: Zoom, Messenger, Skype, Face-time,

In some ways the reality of a virtual community resonates with our context of a community in dispersion. It allows for physical gathering, as well as virtual gathering through modern technology. This was very much the case recently with the Profession of one of our members whilst firm constraints were very much in place. As the liturgy took place folk from all over the Region were able to be present.

The effects of the pandemic on our Third Order life look like being long term. As a result of such a view, our Region has decided to re-imagine our Retreat which was to happen in August. This now will be an ‘at home’ Quiet Day with the theme of “St Clare and the Transitus” with Bishop Godfrey Fryar being the guest input person. This format will again be made available to the whole Region, as well as to the wider Province.

What the world will look like by the time we get to Francistide in October is anyone’s guess. Can we even imagine a Zoom community renewal?

Praises to the Blessed Virgin Mary (1210-1220)

Taken from: “Francis of Assisi, The Essential Writings”

By: Jon M Sweeney.

Francis’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was legendary. In this respect, he followed in the august tradition of the saints who looked to Mary as the prime exemplar of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

In this brief litany, Francis offers accolades that summarize the way in which the Blessed Virgin Mary was set apart by God for a unique role in the history of salvation as the Mother of God.

Long ago, there were tunes that the early Franciscans used to sing these verses – tunes that probably originated with Francis himself. This is the first of three such songs included in the collection of Francis’s writings.

Praise the holy Lady, The most holy Queen, Mary, only Mother of God. She is forever Virgin,

Heavenly chosen of the Father, And consecrated by the beloved Son with

The Holy Ghost, the Paraclete. They three descended in you, And remaining there still,

For grace’s fullness and every goodness. Praise God’s Palace, Praise God’s Tabernacle.

Praise God’s Robe, Praise God’s Servant, Praise God’s Mother.

