



The Province of Asia-Pacific

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

NEWSLETTER

Stigmata / Francistide Edition

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We continue to live under the cloud of the Corona Virus right across all the countries in our Franciscan Province and the rest of the world. We think progress is being made, and then we slip backwards. For the time being at least there seems no end to it.

One of the famous stories of St Francis contains a dialogue between himself and Brother Leo who asks Francis about finding perfect joy. After Leo has given examples that he hopes will be affirmed by Francis, the saint gives his astonishing definition of perfect joy.

“If we arrive at the Porziuncola and if we are drenched with rain and trembling with cold, covered in mud and exhausted from hunger; and if we knock on the convent gate; and if we are not recognized by the porter; and if he tells us that we are impostors who seek to deceive the world and steal from the poor; and if he refuses to open the gate; and if he leaves us outside, exposed to the rain and snow, suffering from cold and hunger; then if we embrace the injustice, cruelty, and contempt with patience, without complaining; and if we believe in faith, love, and humility that the porter knew us but was told by God to reject us, then, my dear Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this also is perfect joy!”

Saint Francis then said: “Brother Leo, if we knock again and if the porter drives us away with curses and blows; and if we embrace this with patience without complaining; and if we believe in faith, love, and humility that the porter knew us but was told by God to reject us again, then, my dear Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this is finally perfect joy!”

Saint Francis said once more: “If urged by cold and hunger, we knock again; if we call again to the porter; if we plead to him with many tears to open the gate and to give us shelter out of love for God; and if he returns more angry than ever; and if he calls us annoying rascals and beats us with a knotted stick; and if he throws us to the ground, rolls us in the snow, and if we bear these injuries with patience without complaining; and if we think upon the sufferings of our Blessed Crucified Lord, then, most beloved Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this, finally, is perfect joy!”

St Paul in Romans 8.38. expressed it in another way .”I am convinced that neither death nor life , nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come ,nor powers nor height nor depth not anything else in all creation will be able to separate us,

from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We could add a contemporary sentence: “neither lockdown, nor disappointment at the selfish behaviour of others, nor wearing masks, nor curfew, nor separation from our loved ones, nor trashing of our dreams and plans , nor unemployment , nor loss of income, nor collapse of our business, nor closure of entertainment, nor our being able to be with our loved ones who are dying, nor not being able to gather for a funeral ,none of these can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Joy is inextricable bound up with love. When we know we are loved we have undefeatable joy despite whatever else is happening. As the Principles remind us “Joy is a divine gift coming from union with God in Christ.it is still there even in times of darkness and difficulty...those who possess it can rejoice in weakness, insults, hardship and persecution for Christ’s sake; for when we are weak then we are strong.”

Even in the face of Corona Virus, the joy of the suffering risen Christ is his gift to us.

+Godfrey tssf.



St Francis of Assisi, stained glass window in
Benediktbeuern Abbey, Germany.



By: Fr. Sieger Koder (Artist)

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

A Post-Corona Virus “World” and the Desert Fathers and Mothers

By: Charles Ringma, tssf



Even though the Corona Virus is still spreading in many countries, in other countries there is speculation about what a post-covid-19 “world” might look like. The main discussions are around economic, education, health and technology issues. And clearly, while there is always the possibility that valiant attempts will be made to recapture “business as usual,” it is highly likely that changes will occur in each of these areas. What is an open question is whether the changes will be first order (fine-tuning within an accepted paradigm) or second order (change in terms of a significant paradigm-shift).

My focus here is whether there will be significant changes in the churches.

In exploring some possibilities in that domain, I first need to make an important *theological* point, namely, that the church is both a divine and a sociological entity. This is somewhat akin to Christology where we make the claim that Jesus is both “Son” of God and “Son” of Man.

What is important about this formulation in relation to the church is that the divine dimension of the church remains the same (though it may be understood and articulated differently), while the sociological dimension may significantly change. However, these two areas should not be separated. Just as in Christology, when we speak of Christ, we speak of the *one* person, so we should speak of the church as *one* entity. In other words, these two dimensions belong together. Martin Luther called these two dimensions God’s Right Hand and God’s Left Hand. The sociological or institutional dimension being the Left Hand.

In the light of this, I wish to make the point that during this period of the Corona Virus the functional reality of church as sociological entity may well have been weakened due to a lack of normal church services. And the three dimensions of church, identified by Dietrich Bonhoeffer as Word, Sacrament and *Fellowship*, may well have been weakened, despite the use of virtual church.

But what is unchanging despite the above changes? Simply put, the faith, spiritual practices, ethics, life-style choices and service and witness of the church’s members. (And this includes all those who live this way and no longer attend church). In this period of social isolation, some, maybe many, may have discovered (or recovered) a new personal spiritual resilience.

The heart of Christianity is people impacted by the gospel through the Spirit and seeking to live in the way of Christ and in service to the neighbour. And for most, the gathered church is important as a source of sustenance and on-going formation, as well as combined missional activity.

If none of the above is too unacceptable, then I can come to my main point. Is it possible that in the post-covid-19 “world” we may see a renewed emphasis on *fellowship* in the churches, *or* we may see a re-vitalised laity who seek to be like the Desert Fathers and Mothers, *or* we may see both, *or* something else may emerge?

Why like the Desert Fathers and Mothers, you may ask? These Christians went into the desert to pray for a renewed church and world. They were a lay movement. They were concerned that the church of their day had become too culturally captive. And they believed that through prayer and ascetic practices a revitalised church could come into being. As such, these desert Christians were the forebears of Monasticism which played such an important part in the further development of Christianity.

So, some core questions are: can we expect a more institutionalised church in a post-covid-19 “world” with the sociological dimension of church becoming more dominant, *or* can we expect a greater emphasis in our churches on community and a shared life, *or* can expect to see a renewed and more resilient laity who will take on a far greater role in shaping the Christianity of the future. Rather than seeing the church as a restaurant or a petrol station to meet their weekly spiritual needs, they begin to see the role they can play in the purposes of the Reign of God.

The core beginnings of these purposes have to do with being birthed anew by the gospel and the Spirit. To embrace a cruciform spirituality. To live a “desert” asceticism. And to become again people of prayer.

Martin Luther wrote: “prayer is the chief work of the Christian.”¹ Prayer not only renews our life with God and blesses the church, but, importantly according to Luther: prayer “can preserve the world.”²

As Christians we are called to live before God and the neighbour. The contemplation of God calls us also to see the world with new eyes and see its healing and renewal in the abundant grace of God.

So, what do you think? What are you wrestling with and thinking about in this time where our more regular routines are on hold? What are you hoping for on the other side of this pandemic? What is “brewing” inside of you? And how are you *investing* in this time reflection, thinking and wrestling so that things may more fully swim into view?

“We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image transformed through transformation. This means we are to become vessels of God’s compassionate love for others.”

- Clare of Assisi

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together With cords that cannot be broken . . Bind us together with love.

By: Sandra Jackson, tssf

These words came to mind as I was reflecting on how being a Franciscan tertiary has affected my experience of living through the Covid-19 pandemic here in Melbourne, with its alarming second wave of new cases and a second lockdown. Belonging to a religious order in dispersion has stood me in good stead in coping with the necessary physical distancing and isolation, as I am daily conscious of the reality of our being 'knit together in community and prayer'. My day starts and ends with prayer, beginning with Morning Prayer and Community Obedience and ending with Compline - the latter shared with my husband, Hugh. Yesterday's Epistle reading was from Romans 8, with its assurance that nothing - including the Coronavirus! - can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. One can't feel alone when connected with so many brothers and sisters and having a sense of belonging to God: 'Fear not, for I have called you by name, you are mine' (Isaiah 43 : 1) Thanks to my treasure of a book, *Celebrating the Saints : Devotional Readings for Saints' Days*, there is also a strong feeling of connection back in time - being part of the Communion of Saints - especially with Francis and Clare.

Because of the lockdown, especially strict for nursing homes, I am no longer able to make my weekly visits to my dear sister, Helen Granowski. However, thanks to the pandemic, wifi is now available in residents' rooms. Last week, with the kind assistance of Marie, Activities Co-ordinator, Helen and I were able to have a Zoom meeting and say our Community Obedience together - two days running! That was such a joy. A few days later, I shared that experience with another tertiary - also a nursing home resident - in a FaceTime call to ninety-year-old David Edmondson in Hobart. The call ended with David giving me the blessing Francis gave to Bro Leo: 'The Lord bless you and keep you . . . ' And I did indeed feel blessed. There is so much for me as a tertiary to be thankful for.



Lebanon's cedars are emblematic

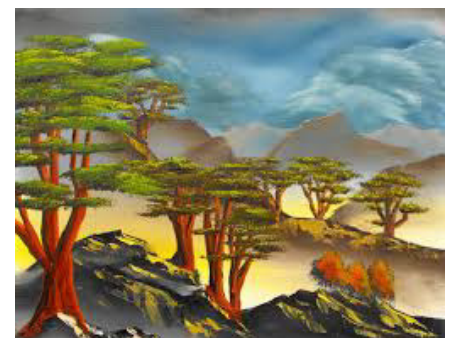
Taken from:

"The cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted." -Psalm 104:16

By: Charles Haddon Spurgeon

www.blueletterbible.org

Lebanon's cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that they owe their planting entirely to the Lord. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not man-planted, nor self-planted, but God-planted. The mysterious hand of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which He had Himself prepared for its reception. Every true heir of heaven owns the great Husbandman as his planter. Moreover, the cedars of Lebanon are not dependent upon man for their watering; they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet our heavenly Father supplieth them. Thus it is with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He is independent of man, even in temporal things; for his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to Him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain. Again, the cedars of Lebanon are not protected by any mortal power. They owe nothing to man for their preservation from stormy wind and tempest. They are God's trees, kept and preserved by Him, and by Him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he stands in the most exposed position; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the eternal God always cover the cedars which He Himself has planted. Like cedars, believers are full of sap having vitality enough to be ever green, even amid winter's snows. Lastly, the flourishing and majestic condition of the cedar is to the praise of God only. The Lord, even the Lord alone hath been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore David very sweetly puts it in one of the psalms, "Praise ye the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars." In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; he is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord's own hand, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed.



"Christ is the mirror of God and 'the mirror of perfection' is a term to describe Francis. Clare was a mirror of Francis. She caught what he taught by his way of life and then sent it into the world through her sisters, her prayer, her writing and the order she established."

By: Ilia Delio

Pieces of the Heart: Pace... a place of peace and prayer

By: Rev Daniel Hobbs

I was dropping my son Jack at school. He was in Grade 2. He was in the back rustling through his things and putting on his school bag... Jack said "Hey Dad, "Did you know that God's heart was so big that it just exploded"!•"Did it mate? Wow!"• Jack said, "Yep! Just blew up!"• (hands thrown in the air as he says this). Jack said, "Yep, and each piece of God's heart became us - became me, you, Mummy and everyone in the world."• I said "that's amazing mate! How do you know that?" Jack said "Don't know! Just do".• I said, 'well that sounds awesome buddy.' As he steps out of the car, he adds, "And all God wants, Daddy, is for all those pieces of the heart to come back together again".back-to-front collar.



In the pure simplicity of a child, something universal, something profound was captured so beautifully.

This is the value of contemplative prayer, of living a contemplative life.

All too often we get caught up in the busyness of daily life. Responsibilities and obligations, demand our attention. All too often we are governed, unconsciously, by our own biases, preferences and desires. We see the world like a racehorse wearing blinkers, unaware of the wider world and hence unable to see our place in it or the impact our choices have on others. This directly shapes our participation in the world, in society, in community. For example, we slip easily into tribal behaviour, thinking the group or organisation we belong to is better than the rest, that only we have the answers, that only our way of life is worthy of pursuit, that those different from us are somehow lesser than us. In neuroscience this is called "negative bias", an evolutionary cousin to "fight or flight". Both developed to protect humanity at a very different time in human history.

We hence see the world through fallen human eyes. It is biological, but these days mostly unhelpful. Unless, of course, like our ancient cousins, we are ever faced with a family of saber tooth tigers.

Contemplative prayer frees us from this blinkered worldview. It takes time and practice, but contemplative prayer is a way of life that opens our hearts and minds to the glorious wonder of all of God's creation and the life-giving Holy Spirit within. The contemplative sees with the heart of God, searches always to experience the world as God sees the world. The contemplative participates in the world the way Jesus participated in the world, gently, lovingly, inclusively, holistically.

My wife, a clinical psychologist, tells me that contemplative prayer, like meditation and mindfulness, actually changes the brain. Contemplative prayer gradually re-wires the brain by changing neural pathways. This is possible because of neuro-plasticity, the brain's capacity to be changed and shaped like the muscles of the body in exercise. Do some Googling for further resources online.

So contemplative prayer is not just taking time out. Contemplative prayer is not an excuse to hide from the world. Contemplative prayer is an intentional practice of transformative Christian living. Through a contemplative heart we see and seek a world made whole by God and experience this wholeness ourselves because of Jesus' revelatory act on the cross. From this place of wholeness, we embark upon the "ministry of reconciliation" in our daily lives at home, at work, in community, in church.

Inspired by the ancient tradition of Christian mysticism, "*Pace*" +(par chay) is a contemplative spiritual community for all who seek a place of peace. We are both a physical and digital community seeking to accompany others as they explore the spiritual life.

Pace (par chay) integrates contemplative spirituality, new monasticism and a centre for spirituality with an existing faith community. *Pace* is inclusive of all spiritual seekers with an emphasis on the ministry of reconciliation and the peace and oneness this ministry offers our world, both within and without. *Pace* follows in the footsteps of Francis and his encounter with the wolf of Gubbio.

As Francis demonstrated and Jack observed, we really are "pieces of the heart". God really does love each of us "that much". And once we become aware of our place in God's creation and experience God's unconditional love we can't help but work to bring "those pieces of the heart back together again". That's the purpose of *Pace*... out of the "mouth of a babe".

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St Paul's Anglican Church, Manly

St Paul's Manly has launched an innovative new ministry called [Pace... a place of peace and prayer](https://pacecommunity.org.au).

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[*Going Deeper*](#) collates a variety of free multimedia resources for spiritual seekers wanting to explore the spiritual life in their own way.

Living a Contemplative Presence is a three part introductory series interviewing three experienced contemplatives on the spirituality and practice of peace and prayer, living a contemplative life and offering the world a contemplative presence. Interviews are underway soon.

Pace's website offers more: <https://pacecommunity.org.au>.

Pace is brand new and we pray you might accompany us in prayer and practice as we foster this exciting opportunity. Pace e bene,



How the secrets of St. Francis' life were captured on this 700 year-old fresco.

If we look more closely at Cimabue's fresco, we see how beautifully he has rendered the stigmatist.

By: Peter Kwasniewski



September 17 is the feast of the Impressing of the Stigmata on St. Francis. On Mount Alvernia, September 14, 1224, Francis experienced a mystical vision of a figure that looked like a crucified seraph, from whose wounds came forth a light that pierced his own hands, feet, and side. It was an event and a mystery that profoundly impressed itself on the minds and hearts of all of his contemporaries; one might say that it, too, burned its way into the collective memory of the Church, which hails Francis as the first one favored with the special grace of the stigmata.

This feast prompts us to remember the miraculous conformity of Francis to his crucified Lord, which had already occurred within his Eucharistic, poverty-loving, Gospel-zealous heart, but which would from then on appear outwardly in his very flesh, making him a living icon of the Savior he served. In this sense, St. Francis himself is one of God's greatest works of art.

However, the visual arts and musical arts were quick to celebrate the life, death, gifts, beatitudes, and virtues of the troubadour of God. All over Europe, Franciscan friars, sisters, and tertiaries composed music and executed paintings in his honor and in exaltation of the ideals of the Franciscan order,

As with 13th-century Italian architecture and sculpture, so it was with painting: the stylistic influences are more numerous, yielding results different from elsewhere in Europe. Italy's ties to the Greco-Roman past and its heavy Byzantine heritage (both historical and contemporaneous) drove its artists, on the one hand, to emulate naturalistic and monumental work from the classical period, and on the other hand to work in the Byzantine iconographic style. In this world was born the artist simply known as Cimabue (c. 1240–1302), whom Giorgio Vasari, a later art historical tale collector, claimed was an apprentice to a Greek painter, before he became, in turn, the teacher of Giotto, although this point is disputed. Cimabue's work may be found in Assisi, Rome, and Pisa, as well as in Florence, his home. It is striking to think that Cimabue was born only about 14 years after the death of St. Francis, many who remembered the saint, especially as the great basilica in Assisi was being constructed and decorated under the guidance of the Franciscans.

“The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.”

– Johann Sebastian Bach



Reflections

My reflections on COVID and surrender:

By: Jackie Fewtrell

*Surrender takes courage
The courage to let go of all control
To submit with no idea what the future will hold
Control is safety
trying to plan for all circumstances
So that if something unexpected happens
We are prepared, "in control"
Surrender is vulnerability
Surrender is faith
I have faith in God
I try to listen
But when I am not sure what God wants,
When I want answers now,
I revert to the known
The control
Change can be hard
Because with change we lose control
Panic because of all the unknowns
I want to forego control
To embrace change and the unknown
To surrender without holding on to the railings
To completely let go
Control gives an illusion
Of safety and security*

BUT REALLY GOD IS OUR SECURITY, OUR ROCK, OUR SALVATION

St Francis is such a good example of someone who has surrendered all. He seemed to be deeply aware that holding on to our safety and our comforts creates a barrier to letting go. He knew and experienced the great spiritual benefits of putting everything into God's hands. That, I think, is why he was so strict with his Brothers, ensuring they too did not hold onto safety and comforts, but trusted that God would provide for all their needs.

I believe that surrendering all is an enormously difficult thing to do. For me, I will start by surrendering my fear of change and the unknown during COVID to God, my rock and my salvation.

The Pandemic Prayer

By: Simon Fong

Rainbow image received by me.
Scenery and colours I see.
As Rainbows carry the Blessings.



May the Lord soon have glad tidings.
And our prayers we lift to thee.
Since we trust in the divine Three.
- Amidst worries we still have peace.
Chaos or turbulence would cease.
The pandemic would be over.
Harmony when conflicts after. Amen

Stigmata/Francistide

Fr. David Craig

A Short Reflection.

As Franciscans, and Christians, we should be reminded daily that our Christ reaches out to us with a loving gesture in order that we may be transformed and strengthened as St Francis was.

And he (*Jesus*) said to them all,
If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.
For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?
For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

Luke 9:23-26 King James Version (KJV)

Public Domain

The Stigmata is a powerful sign from God as St Francis attested to. From his conversion our Holy Father never ceased to preach and teach his devotion to Christ until his death. While in deep contemplation and being totally absorbed in God during the year 1224 St. Francis received the Stigmata. Francis was further transformed and had a inward burning glow like never before and took this with him with joy when he left this troubled world to be with our Lord around two years later.

During the Stigmata/Francistide Season I am always strengthened in my faith as I read something of the life of St Francis and the Brothers and Sisters. I often feel the call to hug the "stinking leper", to look for the underdog and needy within our community and try to bring joy into their life. Joy comes in many forms. The greatest of joy is salvation.

Over the many years of ministering, to many, I know what it is like to be hurt, at times by the Church and other unexpected sources, to be ridiculed, to be physically attacked. My constant strength comes from the example of the difficult life of our St Francis and his example of contemplating prayer on the Cross of our Christ. This is real power in this our troubled world.

As I ponder annually on my Rule of Life I look for the changes that need to be made in the light of the example of St Francis and the touch on the shoulder from our Lord.

May St Francis strengthen you and our Lord bless you.

The Stigmata of St Francis 17th September - Collect

Almighty God, when the world was growing cold you inflamed the hearts of your people with the fire of your love; you raised up blessed Francis, bearing in his body the marks of Christ crucified: grant to us, your people, true penitence, and grace to bear the cross for love of him who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Reflection on 'gathering'

By: Kay Pendlebury

Earlier this year, NSW/ACT sisters and brothers lost access to the ex-Brigidine convent, 'The Gathering Place' where we have held our annual Franciscan retreat for many years. It is a special place for me, because I was professed there in October last year.

As area convenor, I have been looking at other places for us to gather. Every door has been shut because of Covid. Indeed, we have not even been able to gather physically for our monthly fellowship. We have been 'gathering' on Zoom. I suppose that is news to no-one. But it has led me to reflect on 'gathering'; it has somehow become important.

Justin Martyr in his first apology (C155) recorded the first detailed descriptions of early Christian worship: 'On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place ...' A gathering together. That seems very powerful. This gathering of the faithful has been important since the beginning. And yet now, we can't do it. I miss not only the Eucharist, but also 'the gathering'.

One can google synonyms for 'gathering', and there are dozens, but none convey what I am grasping at. Association? Collection? Throng? Turnout? Get-together? And many more. None do justice to what is gnawing at me. In the context of our worship, it is something more.

In the Service for Holy Communion in APBA the first heading is 'Gathering in God's Name'. It is how we begin; we start from our own homes, locations, spaces and move to the church building to gather as a community. We begin as individuals, families or small groups, but as we gather we become one—into the body of Christ. The crucifer, sanctuary party, and presider process through the gathered community to draw us into one. We gather as the body of Christ. It's harder to visualise that on Zoom! And even less so for live streamed services. We are not even sure who is 'gathered'. And some watch the service at a later time. At least on Zoom there is some sense of gathering as individual images pop up on our screen. In the Zoom 'gatherings' I lead or participate in, I try to remember that we are gathering as the body of Christ, not as disparate people coming to sit in front of their computers. I think it's something worth paying attention to. The symbolism in our liturgy is there for a reason!

In my pondering and reading about 'gathering' I came across two Franciscan connections. I was re-reading the story of Francis hearing God's instruction to 'rebuild my church'. Francis rushed out and gathered stones for the project—again that idea of gathering individuals to make the whole. Although it is said that he misunderstood God's message, perhaps he had to go through that gathering of stones to build the physical church to understand God wanted him to gather people to build the body of Christ.

The second connection was the discovery of a delightful little book by Abigail Carroll, 'A Gathering of Larks: Letters to Saint Francis from a Modern-Day Pilgrim'. In the introduction she writes, 'Francis died in 1226 at the age of 45 ... It was just after sunset on an early October evening, and those who stood watch at his passing remarked that larks gathered in the skies.'

I think it is worth reflecting on the importance of our gathering—as we leave our individual-ness behind and become the body of Christ. We need to understand the symbolism and beauty of our liturgy for physical gatherings, and rethink it into a liturgy for virtual gatherings that recreates the original meaning and symbolism.

Managing well

By: Roselind Ruwoldt

Dear brothers and sisters

Here in South Australia, we have been blessed by so far escaping the virus, but lock-down has affected us in some ways. Our TSSF meetings (face to face) have been stopped, and by God's grace, we hope to have a face to face meeting half-way through August. In the meantime we have had e-mails, telephone calls, and talks via e-mails. On page 9, here is one of the talks by Anne Kotze, which at first glance seems simple, but there are great depths in it. We hope you like it.

With our prayers for your safety and with all blessings from Roselind Ruwoldt and the TSSF members in South Australia.



Sent to me by Wane Philip

THE BREAD OF LIFE

By: Pauline Wagner

We are held by hands unseen,

By eyes overflowing with love...

In darkness, In light...

We are visible always, at all times,

Forever, in a sea of love...

Times like now we see only a misty shore,

But He is there...

A fire, fish and salt in the air...

Come, He says, Come closer,

Believe in My love,

Answer this: - Do you love life?

Do you believe in My love for you?

Do you still have hope in your hearts?

Band together and bring your boat towards Me.

I await you with gifts beyond measure...

I know the answer in your hearts,

You know it too...

Keep saying 'YES' over and over until it is true!

Reflections and Readings -

By: Margaret Edridge

Advent is always a special time for me when I try to reflect not only on the coming of the infant Son of Man born in a manger, but also the coming again of Christ in all his glory. Last year, it was also at a time of drought followed by catastrophic fires which seemed to be worsening each day. So I searched the internet for something different to study for Advent. I happened across the Anglican Board of Mission's site and the app of Celia Kemp's *Songs from a Strange Land* and it seemed eminently suitable. It covers the 35 days of Advent to the Feast of Epiphany.

Then came Lent, very early this year. Fires were even worse, prostate cancer for my brother in New Zealand was significantly advanced and the pandemic had begun. A very difficult and disturbing time, where I found it hard to settle to any study nor my usual Lenten routine of Friday fasting. Our meditation group closed and it truly was a time of trial. I desperately needed something different for my Lenten studies. So back to the board of Missions site and this time I turned to Celia's app, *Into the Desert* which covers the 40 days of Lent. The readings and reflections touched my heart.

Another ABM app by Celia called *Deep Calls to Deep* covers 46 days of readings for the period from Holy Week to Ascension. It is based on verse 7 of Psalm 42 - 'Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls; all your waves and billows have gone over me.' It is truly beautiful and so suitable at this time of stage 3 lock downs.

The great beauty of the three ABM apps listed above is that they can be used at any time of the year. Although written for specific periods in the Christian Year, they can be used at any time and season as they do not specifically refer to any particular period. All three apps are interactive so can be used anywhere without needing a Bible in hand as well. Each reading comprises a brief commentary, some appropriate quotes and thoughts for reflection. I find they focus my mind prior to meditation and they restore my soul! They are freely available from the app store on your smart phone. I hope you find them as restorative as I do.

Our Church's Mission in Action Group has studying ABM's book, *Voice in the Wilderness*. This is an excellent study on Reconciliation but comes as a download not an app, though it can be purchased from ABM. Unfortunately I was unable to participate in the zoom meetings but found it very thought provoking and challenging.

Then, however, we were in, what are called in the Taize Prayer book, Ordinary Days and I was a bit lost. Peter was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer and my brother was now well advanced along this journey. At this time I turned to David Winter's book 'After the Gospels', a hundred readings from writings prior to the 6th Century. The following from the Epistle of Barnabas (Day 54) definitely resonated me and so appropriate for these times we are in: *'..... That is especially true in difficult times like these when it almost seems the evil one himself is in control of events. It means we must apply ourselves more than ever to the careful study of what God has done and promised, patiently and reverently reinforcing our faith..... If we can hold fast the faith and seek holiness, the Lord will also give us wisdom, insight and understanding of the times.'*

And so we all journey on in faith, thanking God for family, friends and community all of whom strengthen and uphold us. We shall indeed overcome!

Western Australia Region

By: Anne Wilson

In Western Australia, we are grateful that, to date, there has been no community transmission of Covid-19. It has meant, of course, restrictions on movements. We all pay the price for this willingly, but it has meant that Ken and I have been unable to see any of our five children or four grandchildren who are all located in other states and countries. Trusting to God for them has never been more vital, as we pray for their safety and their emotional and mental wellbeing and try to stay in close contact.

With new challenges come new opportunities. With no meetings possible for the Day of Penitence, Ken and I took the opportunity to use the Day of Penitence Reflections that Bronwyn Fryar provided. For me it was a day of facing some unwelcome thoughts and emotions but it wrought a profound change in my attitude to many things and fuelled a renewed prayer life, which has become a significant part of my daily life. I know others in our Region have appreciated the Simple Table Services provided by Keith Slater, when they could not attend church.

New Growth

Lyn and David Lord started a Franciscan Meditation day and Taizé service in their parish of St Brendan's by the Sea in Warnbro. The first meeting in March was very well attended and appreciated by the Warnbro parishioners and WA Franciscans. It also encouraged one parishioner to become an Enquirer. Unfortunately, Covid 19 put a halt to further meetings. Lyn has recently had a serious accident and hurt both her legs, so there will be a double celebration when this initiative can be re-started.

After some informal discussions in previous years, this year we began an Associates group. With advice from Provincial Chapter and resources contributed by tertiaries in other regions, Evan Pederick, Co-ordinator for Associates, worked with me to develop the forms and certificates that we thought were appropriate for our region. We submitted it for further discussion at the 8 February meeting but it wasn't until the 20 June meeting in Pinjarra that we were able to admit our first Associate, Alison Pederick. We hope that people who feel kinship with Francis and Clare but do not feel called to the Religious life will now have a way of connecting with the Third Order, and we have another way to spread the spirit of love and harmony.

Bev Antipas was admitted as a Novice in February and Craig Bydder, Steve Charles and Ruth Harrison were admitted as Novices in June. I hope that another Novice will be admitted as soon as possible. It will be a great joy to admit Cathy Slaughter as a Tertiary at Convocation in October.

General Chapter

Of course, all our plans for the General Chapter conference 2021 have had to be postponed as we had no confidence that they would not have to be cancelled due to second and third wave of the pandemic, but we look forward to meeting with many people from around the Province in 2022. As Sally Buckley has pointed out previously, now you have more time to save up!

Five Loaves and Two Small Fish

By: Anne Kotze

Read Matthew 14.v 13-21

After reading this story I began to wonder what I could bring Our Lord for Him to use and to multiply as He did with the little boy's offering.

'It seemed to me that the five loaves - just ordinary everyday food - could well be my five senses ... God-given gifts which we sometimes forget are not given to everyone. Seeing, hearing, touch, taste and smell. And then perhaps the two small fish could be my head and my heart.

1. "Seeing: The most obvious way we see is with our eyes. But how often do we thank God for all the beauty that surrounds us? Do we thank God every time we see the amazing, loveliness of our world - flowers, skies, the changing colours of the sea, a beloved face? Do we remember to thank God every time we read our Bibles?

'Just imagine not being able to see any of these things and this will surely lead us to pray for those who are blind. St. Francis was almost blind before he died and I think it wasn't the pain which was the hardest thing for him to bear but not being able to see the beauty of the Creator's world.

With our inner eyes we should learn to see Christ in everyone we meet and to try and see them as God sees them... as the brother or sister for whom Christ died, as a person with the potential to be perfect.

Being aware of God's beautiful creation - His world and His people - will bring us to a new understanding and respect for them. If they are so precious to God, how can we be careless and unappreciative, or unconcerned when the universe or people are damaged or hurt?

The second sense to think about is hearing. We first hear with our ears. We communicate with each other, we hear God's word, we hear music and for all these we thank God and pray for the deaf.

But do we hear the unspoken needs of others? Do we give time, without impatience and with our full attention, to those who need to speak of their troubles and concerns? When we pray do we give stillness and space in which to hear God speaking to us? As someone said, our attitude is so often, "Be quiet, Lord, I'm praying to you!" Remember St. Francis' prayer, "My Lord and my God". Five little words were all he needed to focus on God and allow Him to speak.

3. Touch. Touch is part of body-language. It can be a reaching out by one person to give a sign of love and worth to another person. It shows we are all part of the human family and it may give someone a moment of warmth which could change their day.

It is also not holding people at a distance, whoever they may be. Francis only recognised that the leper was Christ when he had carried Him in his arms.

They have found that babies who are put in incubators for the first weeks of their lives; babies thought to be too frail and ill to handle, will not thrive, and now the parents and nurses are encouraged to spend time with them, stroking and touching them with love and the positive results have astonished the medical profession. We all need to belong, we need to be part of something bigger than ourselves and giving and receiving a touch may bring an affirmation which everyone longs for.

What good flavours and tastes there are! Do we thank God for our good food and pray for those who have none? What amazing varieties of foods give us health and nourishment, though we should not be greedy or over-choosey.

Remember how Jesus thought of His disciples' hunger? He baked fish over hot coals on the shore of Lake Galilee when they had been fishing. And the Passover Meal which He shared with his dearest friends and with the man who would betray Him?

But "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is" said the Psalmist, recognising that taste is a way of identifying something. Everything goes into a child's mouth - it is a learning process.

Do we hunger after God's word? Do we hunger to do His will? Do we hunger after a closer walk with Our Lord Jesus Christ?

The sense of smell is the one which, more than the others brings back memories. How many of us with just a whiff of scent from a flower, the smell of the earth after the first rain, the warm aroma of a certain food cooking, are instantly reminded of a person or an event. Many memories are good ones and we should thank God for them, but some need really "re-calling" so that God can heal the hurts and sadness which may be hidden there.

The ancients thought that God loved scents... "Make a sweet-smelling savour to the Lord", but for us it can represent our memory of the past which we can offer to God with both its joy and its pain.

And so we come to the two small fish which I see as our head and our heart.

Our head represents understanding, reasoning and good sense. You may have heard the saying, "He is so heavenly-minded that he is no earthly good". There is a place in God's order of this world for the practical Martha, as long as she remembers not to neglect the Mary which "is the better part". St. James was very aware of the practical side of faith and deeds.

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his needs, what good is it?"

Today, just as it has always been, we can easily be misled by superstition and even heresy. So let us have the good sense to look at strange sects and beliefs, asking God to show us right from wrong and truth from error.

And our heart represents our emotions, our love for each other, our laughter and happiness, our weeping and sadness. We should try to share the emotions of others and allow them to share our own because if we do not, we may grow hard and apart. God is infinitely involved with all that we experience and Our Lord shares all our griefs and joys because, through His Incarnation, He has been there Himself.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once wrote, "God is not far away from us, altogether apart from the world we see, touch, hear, smell and taste about us. There is a sense in which He is at the tip of my pen, my spade, my needle, of my heart and of my thought."

And so we come with so little, like the young boy. But if Our Lord can feed five thousand people with five loaves and two small fish, just think what He can do by breaking and sharing our sight, our hearing, our sense of touch, taste and smell, and what He can do if we give Him our heads and our hearts to do His perfect will. Amen.

Metastatic Melanoma - By: Rev Philip Thirlwell

Waiting midair on unseen thread, windlessly still. Suddenly there - spider before my face. In such silence within this body's myriad cells and atoms of life others quietly weave their spells. In life's crowded paths we encounter strangers. Giver of life, hold me in all dangers !

Christ be with me, Christ defend me, Christ in minds and hands of all who tend.



Honouring Our Elders

The Reverend Canon John Clarkson tssf

By: Reverend John Gibson tssf

I have just finished reading the autobiography of Fr John and what shines through is a life of dedication and faithfulness to God, family, church and community. John is the fourth generation of his family to be ordained to the priesthood. John was born in the vicarage at Castle Bytham in South Lincolnshire on the 25th June 1930, his father Thomas and his mother Bertie. In his childhood and early adulthood he was provided with good foundations by those who proclaimed the Gospel in word and action.

June this year was a most significant month for John as he celebrated the 65th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood which took place at St. Alban's Abbey U.K. and on the 25th June his 90th birthday. Thanks be to God for calling John to the priesthood and for his response to that call and for the gift of life.

John and Lorraine were married on the 7th October 1967 at St Matthew's, Mundingburra. Their marriage has been a partnership in making Christ known and loved. So it was no surprise when both responded to the call to the Third Order. Both were professed as tertiaries on the 28th May 2020. Their shared spiritual life has been strengthened by praying together The Daily Offices and Community Obedience.

We all have very special memories of those who have been influential in our faith journey. John prior to his profession already had a rich experience of the Religious Life. He had an aunt who was a member of the Community of All Hallows, Ditchingham and a distant cousin who was a Franciscan brother in the European Province. John had experienced the worship and influence of the Mirfield Fathers (Community of The Resurrection) and the Benedictine Men's Community at Alton Abbey. Early in his adult years John felt the call of being part of a Community of Faith that promoted a common life of prayer and service. In 1959 John joined the Brotherhood of St Barnabas in North Queensland for five years. Much later, yearly retreats at The Hermitage at Stroud NSW further 'prodded' John in the direction of the Franciscans.

Fr John was our Regional Minister for NSW B from October 2004 to October 2010. During this time John promoted the Third Order, provided studies and time together for novice counsellors and attended to the varied pastoral and administrative matters that came under his ambit. A great joy for him was admitting members to Profession. We recall the enthusiasm with which John undertook bikeathons for various causes and not least for raising monies for the Dinghy for Papua New Guinea in 2009.

John has and continues to have a passion for social justice and has led by example. He describes it this way – "I have developed a compassion for the needs of others and when I read the newspapers, I always wonder what God wants us to do about what we read because in others we find Him. The following words help me –

'I sought for my soul but my soul failed to see; I sought my God, but God eluded me: I sought my brother, and found all three!'

At Bathurst for example John has been involved with his sisters and brothers with the local Refugee group, Women's Refuge and bringing joy to children by providing Christmas presents to their parents so they would not miss out. At the diocesan level John spoke strongly and with passion urging the Synod to action. He served as a Diocesan representative on the NSW Ecumenical Council and as a member of the Council's Refugee Worker's Advisory Committee.

John retired in 1996. it is only a word! It has meant new opportunities. It included locum ministries and currently celebrating midweek at All Saints Cathedral, encouraging and serving his Third Order brothers and sisters, continuing in thought and action to promote social justice and to bring down all barriers.

At the beginning I mentioned how John and Lorraine have been a partnership. While I have been reflecting on John I think we who know them are all very conscious and John would be the first to acknowledge what a tower of strength Lorraine has been to him; not just in supporting him but also exercising her own God given gifts. Part of their great joy and delight are their three children and five grandchildren which indeed keep them young at heart.

In his autobiography John talks about "events that characterise my unremarkable life". Here I disagree strongly. A life lived with courage, tenacity and faithfulness is remarkable.

I will let Fr John have the last word in one of his prayers, "Give us the grace to seize the gift of this day O God, and enjoy its ups and downs knowing that we live within the ambit of your love". (Part of the conclusion to his Sermon he preached on his 80th Birthday Celebratory Eucharist.)

"We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way."

– St. Francis of Assisi

Coronavirus, Smelling Roses and *Sabbath Time*

By” Dr Terry Gatfield, tssf

A popular song by country and western singer Mac Davis has the opening lyrics

*Hey Mister
Where you going in such a hurry
Don't you think it's time you realized
There's a whole lot more to life than work and worry
The sweetest things in life are free
And there right before your eyes
You got to stop and smell the roses
You've got to count your many blessings everyday
You're gonna find your way to heaven is a rough and rocky road
If you don't stop and smell the roses along the way*

This song was written in 1974. And what was true then, is more evident to us as the millennium clock has well and truly turned. We have had to become computer literate and master new communication technologies. Many of us have had to retrain and change careers. Some have been inducted into fluorescent tubed gyms instead of stimulating walks in the forest. We now shop 24/7. Others may holiday in virtually every other country in the world, but seldom know and explore their own. Many in families have become helicopter parents on a never-ending chauffeuring journey entertaining children's demands, but seldom having time to read them stories.

Others live in the fast food lane and seldom share family meals. Our neighbours are often known just as the people who live next door, and, while it seems imperative that we must know everything, we seldom master anything. We may also abide in a digital and virtual world living life like the proverbial hamster on a treadmill. The world is so crowded with changes and demands that we no longer have time to **stop and smell the roses**.

We may identify with what I think are self-evident truths of our modern world. But things have now changed dramatically. The tables have turned in 2020 and things are now socially, politically, and economically in suspension. The demand of the age is for mega changes as we face the biggest global virus since the Spanish flu of 1918. This pandemic infected up to 500 million and brought death to some 100 million which was a figure that eclipsed those lost in the tragedy of World War II.

We should not be alarmed by the current demands and inconvenience in the present age placed upon us by our governments, health advisors and international communities. This new epidemic age is unlikely to have a short innings but, perhaps, it may give us time to **stop and smell the roses**.

Many of our freedoms, simple pleasures, and often our indulgent privileges have now been completely culled and many that cross the social, demographic, political, geographic and economic divides have had to be restrained. *Ya' can't buy your way out of this, baby!*

However, when it comes to resilience the human race is remarkable and we have proved throughout history that we can make substantial adaptations in the face of incredible situations and circumstances. Though never easily, and often in great pain and at great cost! Yet, it is evident that even in this early period of the epidemic people are making significant changes in their behaviour and lifestyles. One invitation open to all of us is to take more time to **stop and smell the roses**. Exactly what that means may contain a constellation of different understandings for many individuals and groups – and this is far too numerous to document here. But for those of the Christian household of faith. I would like to share a few snippets.

Time can no longer be seen as an annoying and poor friend, but one who has been freed up significantly. Time may no longer need to be the master, but a servant that can serve us more faithfully by freeing us to spend more time in the spiritual dimensions of our life. Perhaps it will provide: time to enrich our current bible reading and reflection practices; time to engage in Christian meditation and mindfulness practices; time to explore centring prayer and contemplation; time to engage with the Benedictine *Lectio Divina* method of bible reading; time to seek the possibility of engaging with a spiritual director or companion; time to consider an inner retreat and, most importantly, time to spend listening, in deeper prayer and reflection.

There are multitude of books and articles on all of the above and more on the web. Though for some, these many options may be a confusing place to start. But one could start with Charles Ringma's book *Sabbath Time*. Although written three years ago, this small book of a hermitage journey about retreat, return and communion could be what you are looking for. The writer spent time engaged in a self-directed sabbatical. It is a most beautifully illustrated book examining and reflecting on subjects such as wandering, being, gazing, waiting, reading and reflecting. This book could be an ideal companion during our time of being locked down. Consider letting it be an invitational friend to you as you **stop and smell the roses**.

Google Charles Ringma – Sabbath Time and you will get lots of options as to where to purchase this book.

Tribute to Reverend Colleen Guttormsen

By: Sandra Beck And By: Rev Daniel Hobbs



Late in 2017, I was asked to be Colleen’s novice councillor. I knew Colleen but only slightly. I knew her as a beautiful, gracious, gentle, genuine soul who, however, was strong enough to stand up for what she believed in.

For the whole of the time I worked with Colleen she was dying. I do not know when she realised this. As we know, becoming a Franciscan is exactly that, becoming. It may involve taking on, it may involve giving up, it may involve, letting go and letting God.

For Colleen it was all of these things, processes which may be unseen and unnoticed by the world. Colleen struggled with letting go of some things. She did not shirk from the taking on of new challenges, even the challenge of letting go, and throughout the process God worked in her, lighting her candles, gently removing her pain, the most recent of which was the acceptance, nay, welcoming of sister death, the burnishing of Colleen’s true mettle.

For those of us fortunate enough to have witnessed Colleen’s profession, we will never forget her radiance as she embraced the reward of her endeavours.

It has been an honour and my absolute privilege to walk with Colleen and Bill on this journey.

‘Somewhere during this process Colleen took up a very demanding hobby, creating beautiful pictures with beads, not your everyday hobby but Colleen was not an everyday sort of person. This labour of love resulted in a number of beautiful creations, one of which you may have seen at her memorial service. We talked about the hobby and it provided a deep sense of meaning for Colleen. She realised that life, her life, is like that. A journey is one bead at a time, and occasionally a bead must be removed and rearranged.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

By:Rev Daniel Hobbs, tssf

This text from Colossians and memories of Colleen conjure up the same beautiful image in my mind.

Depicted as a heart, encircled by a crown of thorns, aflame, piercing forth rays of white light, with a small cross on the top. The sacred heart is a powerful symbol of God’s unconditional, eternal love for all humanity and expresses the lengths to which God will go for love.

The use of Jesus’s heart to symbolise his love for humanity is not found in the Bible but in the writings of medieval mystics. For centuries it has served as a focal point for Christian prayer and devotion.

St Francis in his Later Rule wrote, “desire above all things to have the Spirit of the Lord and its Holy activity, to pray always with a pure heart”. More recently Franciscan Nun Ilia Delio wrote of Franciscan prayer, “the human heart is created to be the home of the Spirit of the Lord through whose life-giving power relationship with God becomes reality. To surrender the “heart” is the fundamental act of following Christ.

Colleen, in word and deed, surrendered her heart to Christ. With humility and grace, she asked God to “create in her a clean heart, to put a new and right spirit within”. In so doing she clothed herself “with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience”. She, like Christ and Francis before her, forgave, loved and sought to “bind everything together in perfect harmony”. She bore her own wounds and weaknesses while, by great faith, sought to bare the wounds and weaknesses of others. Hers really were the hands with which He blessed the world.

Colleen’s presence was a heart aflame, piercing forth rays of white light, pouring forth love, reconciling all things to God through Christ - as a mum, a Narney, a wife, a chaplain, a priest, a teacher and sister in the spirit. We indeed give thanks to God the Father through our Lord Jesus for all we shared with and witnessed in Colleen. “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”.• Eternal rest grant to Colleen, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon her. May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory. **Amen.**



Day 30 The Three Notes
Community Obedience

The humility, love and joy, which mark the lives of Tertiaries, are all God-given graces. They can never be obtained by human effort. They are gifts of the holy Spirit. The purpose of Christ, is to work miracles through people who are willing to be emptied of self and to surrender to him. We then become channels of grace thorough whom his mighty work is done.

Barry Chambers - R.I.P.

By: Jennifer Priest, tssf



The passing of Barry chambers, tssf, from this world has left me with mixed emotions. On one hand, it was a release from the debilitating pain he had endured for many months – so that had to make me feel reel relief. On the other hand I am missing the closeness of a dear friend.

As our close friend Rev Hilary Singleton wrote “We give thanks for the life of Barry.

We give thanks for Barry’s love shared with many friends and neighbours. For his generosity in giving help to so many people and community organizations. But most of all we thank Barry for sharing his journey with us as a much loved companion on the way with Jesus.

Barry had a love for St Francis and followed in his footsteps as a professed member of the Order of St Francis.

We remember and miss you. You were a blessing to us all.

TSSF, CSF, OSC, SSF, CSCI....

Who are we all?

With permission for publishing by “Verena Tschudin
Newsletter of “Little Portion”

*Sister Sue is also
a member of the Little Portion Editorial Team*



Sister Sue CSF brings clarity into the multiplicity of abbreviations.

The proliferation of names and initials of Anglican Franciscan orders can be confusing, even before you consider the vastly more numerous Roman Catholic Franciscan orders and other groupings.

Little Portion is produced by and for the Third Order, Society of St Francis, whose members often refer to themselves as tertiaries. It is the *Third* Order because of the historical sequence in which the Franciscan orders were founded. First the Lord gave Francis brothers, then secondly St Clare’s community began, and thirdly in 1212 Francis founded an order for men and women who wished to commit to following Christ in the way of St Francis, while continuing with their family, work and other commitments, and living in their own homes. TSSF is the Anglican body expressing this strand of the Franciscan tradition.

One potential cause of confusion with Anglican Franciscans is that the name ‘The Society of St Francis’ is both the specific name of the First Order brothers, while also serving as the name of the overarching umbrella organisation of which all three orders are members. Thus, the sisters of The Community of St Francis (CSF) who follow the same rule of life as their SSF brothers and have similar, and in some cases shared ministries with the First Order brothers, are First Order sisters of The Society of St Francis. The enclosed contemplative Order of St Clare sisters at Freeland are the Second Order of the Society of St Francis. Similarly, TSSF is the Third Order, the Society of St Francis. Consequently, when we mention SSF we need always to check that it is clear whether we refer to first order brothers only, or to Anglican Franciscans in all three orders.

The sisters at Freeland, whose community was founded in 1950 when Anglican/Roman Catholic relations were significantly less open than they are today, have the legal name The Community of St Clare (CSCI) to distinguish their foundation from the Roman Catholic Order of St Clare monasteries – OSC. However in recent decades our Anglican sisters have been warmly welcomed to participate, albeit informally, in The Federation of Poor Clare Monasteries, and use the designation OSC, which expresses the reality of their life as Anglican Poor Clare nuns.

In an ecumenical context there are further differences in terminology affecting both the First and the Third Order.

Francis’ order of brothers became The Order of Friars Minor, developing over time into three separate structures of Franciscan Friars: the OFMs, the Conventuals, and the Capuchins. Only these friars are considered to be members of the First Order. If I were a Roman Catholic Franciscan sister with a vocation to active ministry, I would belong to one of the many apostolic congregations of Franciscan sisters categorised as Third Order Regular.

The other strand of Franciscan Third Order life in the Roman Catholic church is the Franciscan Secular Order, composed of lay women and men, married or single, and diocesan priests, who live out their Franciscan calling in a wide variety of life and work circumstances, just as Anglican tertiaries do.

The Friend of Animals

From a sermon of St Bonaventure, evening, October 4, 1255.

Taken from: “Through the Year with St Francis of Assisi”

Translated By: Murray Bodo

That meekness which is so necessary, we should learn from St Francis. For his was an extraordinary meekness, not only toward other people, but also toward animals. He called all animals “brother” or “sister” and we read in the story of his life how even wild animals came running to him as their friend and companion.

Winged Messenger

By: Rev Philip Thirwell

A magpie came into the church this morning - at first a little lost but finding space and light went on to do some teaching.

Swooping the altar, emulating the Spirit's coming upon the gifts, then landing on the pulpit, she lifted her face to the One on the cross above, directing our eyes to the figure of self-giving love.

High in the transepts and low-level over our heads she showed us, height and depth, length and breadth, the glorious love and grace of God, all without a word, proclaimed by a bird.

Alleluia !

The Season of Creation

The season starts 1st September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations.

Throughout the month long celebration, Christians all over the world will come together to repair and restore the bonds that heal us.

"This is the season for letting our prayer be inspired anew by closeness to nature . . . to reflect on our lifestyles . . . for undertaking prophetic actions . . . directing the planet towards life, not death." We pray that our global Christian family will unite by 'walking together' and honouring the abundance of creation. Help us to always be good stewards of your creation and care for the many resources of this earth.

* * * * *

La Verna: Francis of Assisi's Holy Mountain

Taken from: "The Sanctuary of La Verna"

By: Rudolfo Cetoloni

Mount La verna enters the history of the most outstanding holy places of the world due to a meeting between two persons, a meeting marked by kindness, courtesy and spiritual communion.

In the spring of 1213 Francis of Assisi was crossing the region of Montefeltro together with Brother Leo news reached him that a feast was being celebrated at the Castle of San Leone: this may have been for the investiture of some knight, but whatever the reason for it, it always constituted an opportunity to meet people, to speak to them about the Gospel, and to preach its message of love.

As Francis made his way up to the castle, there was taking place on the square what appeared to be some kind of contest between minstrels. He climbed to a wall and launched into the theme of his own song of love: "Such is the good that I await, that any pain is dear to me."

He spoke with such vibrant fervour that the eyes of all remained fixed on him and the minds of all were as though entranced.

Among his hearers was the count of Chiusi in Casentino, Orlandi Catani,. As this man listened, he felt growing within him a sense of an urgent need for a conversation with that "new man, where he could open his heart to him concerning the state of his own soul. When Francis had finished speaking, the Count went up to him and made his request.

Francis was pleased by this and the encounter was intense. The Count experienced the words of the man of God as an enlightenment for his soul, but at the same time the conversation allowed him to catch a glimpse into the soul of Francis. So he felt moved to make him an offer which seemed to him appropriate in the light of Francis's desire to be completely at God's disposal and of his search for solitude. "I have in the Tuscan region a most venerable mountain, called Mount of La Verna, which is very solitary and wild and is extremely well adapted to anyone who wants to do penance in a place remote from people, or wants to lead a solitary life. If it is pleasing to you, I would willingly give it to you and to your companions for the salvation of my soul."

This offer was indeed pleasing to Francis. A short time later, he sent two of his companions to have a look, and when they confirmed the truth of all that the count had said, he accepted the mountain with great joy.

* * * * *

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you to all who have contributed to this Edition. We are really knitted in community. This Edition covers articles 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.

Keep sending in your articles, for the Advent Edition By the 20th November.

Peace, Gloria

