

# The Province of Asia-Pacific



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

## NEWSLETTER

# Pentecost Edition

### From the Provincial Minister

Reverend Mandy Wheatley

*(Photo - "St. Francis of Assisi" ceramic sculpture by A. Vonn Hartung, <https://www.avonnhartung.com/product/saint-francis-of-assisi/>)*

The following is from a description of the ceramic art piece by A. Vonn Hartung. He says; "Indeed St Francis was in love with life and all of God's Creation, hence he brought the Light of Christ to a darkened world!"

"St. Francis stands among the fallen and broken timbers of the abandoned San Damiano Church, scattered building blocks at his feet and the Cross of Damiano above, surrounded by his beloved birds and animals: the doves, songbirds, the lamb and the wolf symbolizing peace and harmony... the wolf tamed and throating harmony to Francis' melody played on his lute and sung as Prayer.

"St. Francis lived in the Holy Spirit. As such, he stands robed in his tattered garment, shoulders and knees worn through by the Cross he bore and the prayers he prayed. Indeed, his exaggerated sized ear becomes a symbol of his heightened spiritual power of observation. Hence his sensitivity to the Beauty and needs of others which make up the whole of our Sacred Community. Additionally, the beehive, symbolizes the sweetness and unity of the communities he brought about wherever he spread the word and deed of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"St. Francis lived in the Holy Spirit. Hence, he like Jesus healed the sick, cleansed the unwashed and served the poor as symbolized by the washbowl and pitcher. "Above all, it was with this love in the Holy Spirit that he answered the call he heard to rebuild Christ's church, indeed not only physically but spiritually through sacrifice together with love in the form of compassion, creativity and extremely hard but joyous work, as well as an awe-inspiring self-denial by a former youth who was spoiled and self-indulgent. In fact, it was a change so profound that it brought about an astonishing miracle of renewal to Christianity through Divine Intervention as seen by the Stigmata in his hands and feet."

The joy of the Holy Spirit was a hallmark of St. Francis life. He encouraged friars who went about with a sad and gloomy face to have a cheerful demeanour. This was St. Francis' habitual outlook, even in trials.

When robbers and thieves beat him up and threw him in a snowy ditch, he continued on his journey and joyfully sang praises to God. Francis shows us the joy that comes from following and obeying Jesus, this joy enables us to endure suffering and persecution. It is the joy of freedom that Franciscan simplicity brings.

The Holy Spirit is breath, is wind, is active and dynamic. Let us use this opportunity of Pentecost 2021 to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a deeper understanding of what it means to emerge from habitual barricades of fear and defensiveness and be sent to all the corners of creation, exploring new paths that God sets before us.

Let us have the courage to be open to what is new, rejoicing in the Holy Spirit as Francis did.

What is the Holy Spirit calling you to do in our Third Order community?  
May God give you peace and a good journey,



Visit us on the web at

# Reflections From Our Novices

## Whit?Whit

By: Rev Selina McMahon

You may know it as Pentecost, the festival celebrating the birth of the Christian church, when the Holy Spirit descended on St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles (minus Judas, naturally), inspiring them to speak out to the crowds in Jerusalem. However, in many places the same festival is also known as Whit Sunday, and the period of time it heralds as Whitsuntide. If Pentecost is a hard enough name to understand, where does Whitsuntide leave us?

Let's start with the easy one. Pentecost comes from the Greek word meaning "fiftieth". It is the word used for the Jewish festival that comes fifty days after the Passover and is also known as the "Festival of weeks" since it comes "a week of weeks" (i.e. seven weeks) after the Passover. The word doesn't appear in the Old Testament but crops up twice in the Apocrypha (specifically, in the books of Tobit and 2 Maccabees), though most of us know it from the New Testament reference in Acts 2.

"Whit Sunday" stems from *white Sunday* and is a term that goes back to (at least) the fourteenth century. It is thought that the name refers to the white garments worn by those who would be baptised on that Sunday and it normally signalled the beginning of a week of celebration. Villages would organise fetes, fairs, and even...Morris Dancing (a particularly English form of folk dancing which dates back to at least 1488, in which grown men bang sticks together, wave handkerchiefs and wear jingle bells on the knees).

The day following Whit Sunday (imaginatively called Whit Monday) became a public holiday in the whole of England and helped to Christianise a pagan festival, Beltane, which took place at the same time of the year (the beginning of summer in the northern hemisphere). In many ways, it marks the beginning of the coming of the light.

As Franciscans celebrate Pentecost, it is a good time to dig out our obediences and reflect, not on how well (or badly) we have kept them in the past, but on how we might better fulfil them in the year ahead.

After all, it's better than Morris Dancing.

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## Welcome to Country

We acknowledge, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, the (people) of the (nation), and recognize their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



## COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST

By: Cathy Richards



Each day I read a short Bible passage and reflection in a series called "New Daylight", published by the Bible Reading Fellowship. The readings for Easter Week in 2021 really resonated with me.

The introduction to this week of reflections, written by the Reverend Elizabeth Hoare, contained a sentence which, I felt, encapsulated the message of our faith - "No day can ever be ordinary, because Jesus is risen".

"Come and have breakfast" was the title of the entry for the Thursday of Easter Week, based on the Bible passage John 21; 9-12. The disciples, after a fruitless night of fishing, meet the risen Lord on the beach. He invites them to eat with him, sharing the fish which they have caught.

Jesus has made a fire and prepared the setting for the disciples to share a meal with him. It is the ordinariness of the scene that makes the message so powerful. You can imagine them all talking, bemoaning the labours of the night, only to be stunned in the early morning by a massive haul of fish. Then the joy of recognising Jesus on the beach, jumping over the side on the boat and wading through the water in their eagerness to reach him.

This reflection reinforced for me that God is present with us in the most ordinary and mundane tasks of our day just as in the times of great worship and celebration. When life seem difficult, it is inspiring to remember that the gift of his love and presence are with us always to transform the ordinary into signs of his grace.

Francis certainly knew the power and worth of the ordinary. His whole life was based on the beauty and majesty of all of God's creation. His love of everything and everyone, and his care not to damage or harm even the most insignificant creature transformed the ordinary into the holy. I listened recently to a podcast by Fr Richard Rohr, and he remarked on the robes worn by Franciscan friars. Fr Richard noted that although Franciscans now wear brown robes, St Francis' robe was not brown, it was an unbleached wool garment that had never been washed! Appearances and wealth had little value for Francis. His eyes were firmly fixed on the risen Christ and the beauty of the ordinary.

My journey as a Novice has led me to really see God in all aspects of my life, the humble and ordinary, as well as in times of uplifting worship and prayer. I am also more passionate about speaking up against injustice and the destruction and waste of Earth's resources. The awareness of the beauty of God's presence in everything, everyday, is enriching my walk with God and my time as a Novice.

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"True progress quietly and persistently moves along without notice."

- St. Francis Of Assisi

## Pentecost

Rev Karly Ferguson

In the pilgrimage of our own Franciscan journey, the stories are forever changing through the different seasons and experiences of our lives, but the One spiritual principle remains the same. God is with us.

The same of course is true for the non-believer, the broken, the leper, and the forgotten ones of our communities. In everything we experience in life, including our limitations and sufferings. God is with us.

Obedience in loving service is the essence of the gospels. The word obedience coming from the Latin word “Audire”. To hear, to listen, so that our hearts and minds are given to the action, in response to our love of God and His people. Christian mission begins with extending the hand of friendship. Building relationships based on acceptance and trust. Friendship that translates love for our neighbours.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes “The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity”

Joy, as the Principles reminds us, is a divine gift, coming from union with God in Christ. If we are one with Christ, then in the spirit of compassion we enter into the suffering of others, as He does.

All of creation is orientated towards a fulfilment in God. Through all levels and stages of being.

Our calling is not to withhold our presence from those around us. Our calling, as imitators of Christ, is to bestow ourselves; to seek ever new ways of being more fully present to our brothers and sisters, and the people that God gives us to share our lives with. God’s presence enables us to be open to one another in community. He empowers us to risk making ourselves knowable, and recognizable in the way we need to be. Which in turn enables the individual to know and recognize Christ.

This can only happen when we approach the other in love. When we acknowledge and recognize one another in love, we are actually sharing in the divine life.

Our dialogues, also allow us to discover the hidden Christ within those with whom we meet. The Spirit looks into the heart of both, and knows, and has access to all the riches of love and truth which dwell within. Its that same Spirit who reveals Jesus as the Son (Mark 1:10-11), and who empowered, purified, and united the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2).

The Spirit of God is within us, yet how far are we willing to go?

This Pentecost, we have the opportunity to ask the Holy Spirit to provide us with a deeper understanding of what it means to be sent, to be hurled to all corners of creation, to explore the new paths that God sets before us, without resistance, and without fear.

Our life stories may vary greatly, but in our mission, we all remain the same, called to incarnate Christ in this broken post-modernistic world we live in. The Holy Spirit is breath, is wind, is active and is dynamic. Let it be so among our community.

From Francis’ final exhortation. . . “I have done what was my duty to do – may Christ show you what is yours”.  
“We love, because He first loved us” (1 John.4:19)

## Pentecost

By: Lloyd D’Souza

Rûah in Hebrew means air, breath, spirit, wind. It is this word that I ponder upon during Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. As I reflect back over the last year, I wonder what sort of world might I be called to serve in, as a candidate-in-formation and as a novice in the third order?

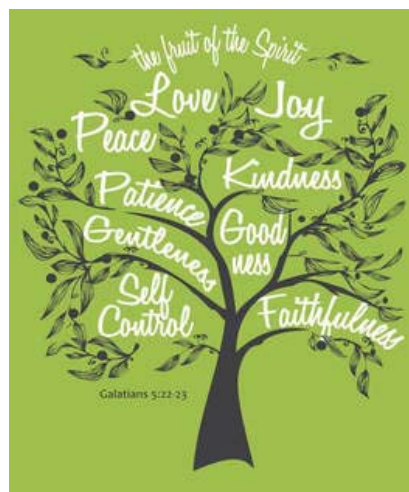
Breath is the evidence of life. Breathing has been a difficult affair for many, the tragic consequence of a virus, especially those in India affected by the nationwide shortage of oxygen cylinders. It is unfortunate that a nation producing vaccines could not help its citizens. The exportation of vaccines seemed a profitable business to the corrupt politicians.

It is also the death anniversary of George Floyd, an unarmed black man killed under the knee of a police officer. George Floyd’s last words were, “I can’t breathe”, which led to widespread protests seeking reform in the treatment of Black people in the US and Indigenous people in Australia. Nothing could keep these protesters behind their doors, not the virus, neither the politicians nor the police.

We hear in the scriptures of the disciples being frightened and hidden behind locked doors. Their messiah and the hope he kindled in them is dead, and the news brought by Mary Magdalene not yet grasped. Like the disciples, during this pandemic, perhaps we too may have felt the breathless anxiety for our loved ones, or ourselves, suddenly vulnerable and defenceless. In Acts, we hear of the dramatic arrival of the Holy Spirit, not in breath, but with the rush and clamour of a violent wind and with flames of fire resting on the disciples. Amidst the confusion and chaos, the disciples were able to speak in different languages, each proclaiming the Good News of the risen Christ.

In the formation notes, there is a story of Francis and the Crucifix. As directed by the Spirit, Francis goes into the church of San Damiano. While in prayer, the Crucifix spoke to him and said, “Francis, don’t you see that my church is being destroyed? Go, then, and rebuild it for me”. Pentecost is a time when we commemorate the foundation of the church. And in reflecting on

this, I think it is important that we remember that rebuilding the church has not been completed yet. Like Francis, may the Rûah lead us to this place to pray and to contemplate the love of Christ for his church. Like the disciples, may we too speak in different languages of justice, hope and love.



## Pentecost! St Francis!

By: Beverley Antipas

What do they have in common? And do I share in their commonality? The answer is yes. We are connected by the voice of God. To misquote scripture, ‘The voice of God is alive and active..’ Hebrews 4:12. At a Pentecost celebration 2000 years ago, God spoke very unexpectedly through the Christian believers to some Jewish visitors from assorted cultures, in their own language.



They were amazed. At the San Damiano crucifix 1000 years ago God spoke unexpectedly to Francis ‘Go and repair my house.’ My guess is Francis was amazed.

Here in Perth 2 years ago God spoke to me, ‘This is for you.’ I was amazed. From time to time a friend shared a little of her Franciscan journey with me and I was pleased for her as I saw it had given her a deeper level of peace. But not once had I contemplated such a journey so it was a complete shock to me to hear those words. My worshipping communities have been Presbyterian, Uniting Church and Baptist. We know nothing of Saints! So what did this call mean for me? I have learnt to trust the voice of God, in the various ways it has come to me because I have experienced God’s purposes and plans and presence only as good and loving. And so it is proving on this novice pathway. As I draw closer to my ninth decade life is truly delightful with Jesus, and now Francis, as my companions. I have fallen in love with Francis, as strange as he is! His love for Jesus and most of humanity is inspiring. (I am sad and puzzled that it seems he did not reconcile with his mother and father, especially as the words ‘We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way’ are attributed to him.)

I am enjoying learning of these ancient Christians and how they lived the gospel life. And I am especially grateful for the Rule of Life. It is a discipline I need. I fail too often to live it faithfully and I thank God for his constant mercy. Without confession and most times without liturgy in my Christian walk it is easy to be lazy and blind. The Franciscan call has grounded me in a most challenging and worthwhile way and I thank God for this journey.

***“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.”***

***– St Francis of Assisi***

## A Novice’s way to Live the Community Obedience

By: Hyeran Yang



The praise “We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your cross you have redeemed the world” has been around my mouth since I was admitted as novice in February 2019. Thanks to the Community Obedience that I say almost every morning my reflection on Jesus and his cross become more real even at mundane moments of life. Given too many good-willed advices and suggestions from friends and neighbors for my husband’s health recovery after a year-round of cancer treatment, I was about to feel guilty with loss for not implementing any of them skillfully or effectively. I couldn’t be more miserable when Lent started this year. The unknowable-ness of my husband’s condition and our business in timebanking\* were overwhelming to me. I found no other options but I tried to listen to where God was leading me through Jesus Christ.

The cross isn’t all about his suffering to me anymore. Now I admire the cross every morning because that is the epitome of human life aspiring to be in, of, and with God. Human suffering is part of the whole where the relentlessness of my aspiration interacts with my choices and some unknowable wills of other human beings, whether good or ill. So I keep listening to how I feel, how others feel, and how differently we understand and feel even between me and my husband. So, now my prayer goes to the spirit of chastity that sees “others as belonging to God” as I believe in myself belonging to God, which falls on Day 8 of the Principles of the Third Order. The multilingual communications in the Pentecostal upper room (Act 2:1~13) illustrates the fruit of chastity, that is, being ready to open to differences among different languages and ethnic groups. To my wonder, the spirit of chastity surprises me often to face the challenges of living in and among differences in love with God, like Jesus and St. Francis.

*\* Timebanking is a time-based currency. Give one hour of service to another, and receive one time credit. You can use the credits in turn to receive services — or you can donate them to others.*

*An hour of service is always one time credit regardless of the nature of the service performed. (from Timebanks.org)*

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### The Third Aim from the Principles of the Third Order **To Live Simply**

The first Christians surrendered completely to our Lord and recklessly gave all that they had, offering the world a new vision of a society in which a fresh attitude was taken towards material possessions. This vision was renewed by Saint Francis when he chose Lady Poverty as his bride, desiring that all barriers set up by privilege based on wealth should be overcome by love. This is the inspiration for the third aim of the Society, to live simply.

## The Pentecost

By: Saroja Namadevan, tssf, Sri Lanka



The Day of Pentecost greets us once again, assuring us of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the life of the Church.

We discover the spirituality of the Early Church in the celebration of

Pentecost. Originally Pentecost had its beginning in the agricultural celebration of the Old Testament. During the Hellenistic/Greek era, it took on a religious meaning as a day of thanksgiving for the gifting of The Law of God.

What is important to us is the Day of Pentecost that followed fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, which was also the tenth day after His ascension. This became the day on which the final promise Jesus made to his disciples was fulfilled with the gifting of The Holy Spirit as foretold by Prophet Joel. This led to the birth and the eventual building up of the Church.

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised.....in a few days time you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.”Acts 1:4,5,8.

When Jesus returned to heaven, God’s kingdom would remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit until His second coming. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus (Acts 2).

The Pentecost had become a regular Christian observance by the time of Paul’s ministry. Josephus the Historian has calculated the Pentecost to be falling on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

The Church looks forward to this day of Pentecost in order to thank God for the presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Now it is considered a gift from God to renew and restore the Church every year.

“The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, must be understood in the light of his total work in Christians.” The Spirit begins a lifelong companionship with every Christian as we become more like Christ through a new personal relationship. Also the Spirit, as in the day of Pentecost when people spoke in many tongues were united brings joy, fellowship and mutual growth in the context of the Church.

“When the Holy Spirit works, there is excitement and growth”. The Spirit is challenging us today, to take the good news to the world through our word and deed.

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## Prayer and the Spiritual Journey

Taken from: “Franciscan Prayer”,  
By: Ilija delio, OSF



*What you hold, may  
you (always) hold,  
What you do, may you(always) do and  
never abandon,  
But with swift pace , light step,  
Unswerving feet,  
So that even your steps stir up no dust,  
May you go forward  
Securely, joyfully, and swiftly,  
On the path of prudent happiness,  
Not believing anything  
That would dissuade you from the  
resolution  
Or that would place a stumbling block for  
you on the way,  
So that you may offer your vows to the  
Most High  
In the pursuit of that perfection  
To which the Spirit of the Lord has called  
you.*

- Clare of Assisi
- The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague”

## Learning about St Francis and St Clare

By: Kyongok Monica Park  
Busan, South Korea

I first learned about about St. Clare in the Formation Notes. It has been six months since I became a my novice, I have enjoyed reading and learning about St Clare. I attended the Feast Dau of St. Clare at the Franciscan Sisterhood in Kumi.



I was a little bit curious and wondered why we should remember St. Clare and studied about her. I thought that my Formation Notes taught me to study about only the spirit of St. Francis and his life. However, I my knowledge of Francis and Clare were at the foremost of my learning.

I had leant about St. Clare in the second topic of formation notes, and I would like to think about her more. St Clare looked active and passionate in her life. She was a daughter of a Noble family and already was a good Christian.

Her passionate belief of life was always looking for a way to please God, and she was involved doing charity activities and helped the poor. I think that God knew this passionate heart and had led her to meet St Francis. Her whole life was changed totally after meeting St. Francis.

As a disciple of St. Francis, she spent more than 40 years at the convent in prayer and silence. She sold everything that she had and shared it with the poor like St. Francis. She and her Order lived without any possessions. I can not imagine how it could be possible.

St Clare gave up all the richness of the world and comforts of life, abandoned what belongs to the world, and left the world completely to enter the convent and work for her Lord. I can see that St Clare had strong convictions and had a great love for God.

For a moment, I thought about when I had just become a Christian. I did not give up anything that I had as a Christian. Furthermore, I cannot remember what kind of things I was to give up voluntarily. But now, as I am applying the three ways of service to my life, I am learning what it means to live simply and understanding the spirit and life of St Francis.

I also imagined the scene of St. Clare when her hair was tonsured by St. Francis. It would have taken a lot of courage as a woman to shave her head. In my personal thought that she had cut out any chance for returning home, and obeyed God completely, and showed her determination and will to live differently.

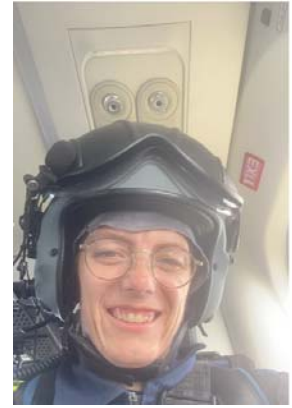
One of the words that I always think about with Clare is “the privilege of poverty.” St Clare always fought against the customs and against the Pope to get “the privilege of poverty”. It is hard to understand the word of the privilege of poverty as a Novice beginner, and I have to confess that the more I learn about the life of St. Francis and St. Clare, I feel I am a beginner and so much to learn. Although, I am often reminded about busyness of the secular world, I must confess that St. Francis’s teaching is becoming a compass for me and keeps me grounded.

Lastly, I sincerely hope that we all pray together in one heart for our neighbours and other countries who are suffering more than us so that we can overcome this difficulty together which we are all suffering through without exception.

## Franciscan in the Air

By: Rev Gemma Dashwood

I have recently embarked on a new adventure – a 6 month placement as a doctor with Lifeflight at the Toowoomba Base. To be honest, it is rather exciting. Most work days involve helicopter rides out to small rural hospitals, or private properties or even to the side of the road. Wherever the sick person is, that is where we go. It brings to mind one of the Aims of the Third Order: to make our Lord known and loved everywhere. Because we literally go everywhere!



So how do I make the Lord known when my clergy collar is off and I am working as a professional in the medical world? Obviously, I don’t fly around with the Bible in one hand and a scalpel in the other! I think part of the answer can be found in the way you treat people. It’s hard to do that sometimes when you are thinking of the thousands of practical problems you have to solve when you airlift someone who is critically ill, but the most important thing is never to forget that it is the patient (who is usually quite understandably terrified) who is at the centre of everything and, of course, their family.

One of my favourite Franciscan statements is “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.” I am learning that it can be the subtle touch, the extra minutes you take to explain what is happening or the pause before loading the patient on the helicopter so that the patient can have one last (and sometimes it really is the last) kiss from their loved ones, that makes the difference. No matter what their backgrounds, their faith, their history or their mistakes, if I ask God to be there with us, God is there.

Although the flight is usually too busy to pause to pray myself, I know that I am literally surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. It is truly a spiritual experience as you fly above God’s creation. Even hardened pilots have been heard to gasp at the beauty of nature from the bird’s eye view.

Outcomes from our jobs can be exhilarating or heartbreaking, or anywhere in between. But for me, I know that God is always ready to listen to whatever I need to talk about, and I know that my Franciscan Community are praying for me, as I am for them. Surely there is no greater blessing than that.

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### 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.

# Safeguarding

By: David White, tssf,  
Provincial Secretary

Over the last few years, Chapter has addressed issues relating to the conduct of tertiaries and safeguarding requirements for office bearers.

In the 2021 version of the Manual sent to you earlier this year, you will find this at section 1.7 of the provincial statutes on page K5. Part b) of this statute requires office bearers to abide by the Code of Conduct for their own diocese, and a declaration to the Order to this effect.

At last year’s Chapter meeting, we became aware that this process was not working. Some members have been prevented from accessing their diocesan Code of Conduct, because they did not hold any diocesan positions.

Consequently, as a province, we need our own Code of Conduct and safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding or Safe Ministry is often linked to ministry to children. This is clearly not relevant for the Third Order, since members are required to be at least 18 years old. However, Safeguarding includes those who may be vulnerable – this could be due, for example, to age or disability, among others.

In recent months, Chapter has explored the Safe Ministry Check program, supported by Ansvar Insurance. This program has several online courses, each taking no more than 30 minutes, which are based on short videos with follow-up questions. It is a cost-effective method of delivering training and record-keeping.

At the Chapter in June, we will be considering whether to make this program part of the province’s safeguarding process. Safeguarding falls under the role of the Provincial Chaplain, who will respond to any issues that arise. It is proposed that David White will be administrator, handling any online issues.

If this is approved, then all members, whether individually, or at a group gathering, will be able to access the Awareness Course. This explains how everyone has a role in safeguarding our members.

Office bearers and people taking leadership roles in the Order, whether at local, regional or provincial level, will need to complete one of the three levels of course – Leaders, Supervisors or Board Members. Completion of these courses will cost the Province a small amount – approximately 40c per office bearer per month, or about \$400 per year. This is a small cost, which includes all of the training programs and record keeping.

If you would like to try the Awareness course, as an individual or as a group, please go to [safeministrycheck.com.au](http://safeministrycheck.com.au) and click on the Green button “Try one of these courses now”. Then you can try the Members Awareness Course by clicking on the blue button “Do the demo course free” – there is a Group option for this course.

Feedback to David White at [comms@tssf.org.au](mailto:comms@tssf.org.au) or to Gemma Dashwood at [chaplain@tssf.org.au](mailto:chaplain@tssf.org.au) would be very useful.

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## The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Taken from: “Live Like Francis”

By: Jovian Welch and Leonard Foley

The Holy Spirit makes us alive, fully alive as God intended us to be. By opening ourselves to God’s offer of himself – our ability to respond is itself his gift – our being is gradually transformed. God’s way of loving becomes our way of loving if we allow the Spirit to possess us. God’s way of seeing is the way of our own mind unless we let selfishness darken it. We move into deeper understandings of God’s ways, greater experience of his loving presence and power in our lives, because “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

Only as people possessed by the Spirit can we rightly estimate the individual gifts of the Spirit. We are made to give glory to God as his children gathered together. Every gift of the Spirit is given for this purpose – our ability to pray, to love and to forgive, to work and to wait, to suffer patiently and to fight valiantly, to walk in the valley of darkness or skip along the mountaintops.

The movement toward Gospel poverty in the Middle Ages was an example of a special charism or gift of the Spirit with a special charism to be a prominent part of the renewal of the Church of his day. We now open ourselves to all the Spirit wishes to do for the church today through the continuing spirit of Francis. We are called to be a community of brothers and sisters under on Father, bound together for the sake of Christ and through his love, brothers and sisters in the Spirit.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What phrase or word best expresses your experience of the Holy Spirit?
- 2 What should the Spirit produce in your life?
- 3 How do you recognize the gifts of the Spirit in your life?

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## *Franciscans Day by Day*

*July 14*

*Prayer is the natural response of people who know their place in the universe. It is not designed to be a psychological comfort zone though, surely, comfort it must. Most of all, it is an act of awareness of God and, sitting there in the midst of a praying community, awareness of the rest of the world as well.*

- *Joan Chittester*

## Christian Discipleship Today Part 2. Exploring Poverty, Chastity and Obedience

John Gibson tssf NSW B/ACT Region.

“We are called to serve God in the spirit of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience in everyday life (rather than a literal acceptance of these principles as in the vows of the brothers and sisters of the First and Second Orders). The Rule of the Third Order is intended to enable the duties and conditions of daily living to be carried out in this spirit;” so we read and reflect on Day Four of each month.

In the last edition of our Newsletter I reflected on Poverty, drawing on the insights, responses and life stories of the Sisters in the book by Helen Stanton written in 2017, “*For Peace & for Good. A History of the European Province of the Community of St Francis.*” Again, I have found the insights of the Sisters refreshing and focussed when thinking about Chastity. Where I quote from the book I will acknowledge it by FP&FG and the page number.

The question of gender and sexuality is very much a current topic of interest, discussion and here in the ACT, legislation. When I renewed my driver’s licence there were nine or so boxes I could tick describing my gender. That illustrates the diversity. At our last Franciscan Conference sisters and brothers had the opportunity to attend one of the electives to listen and share with each other something of their experiences in the area of gender and sexuality which included stories of joy, pain and hopes for the future.

Chastity! Mention that word and almost invariably folk think we are referring to sexual chastity. Well yes in one sense we are. For example in the Marriage Service the couple in the presence and before God and all present, promise that they will “forsake all others” and be a faithful spouse. This is what sexual chastity in the context of marriage means.

However “we are a community of females and males, married or single, ordained or lay” (Day Three) so there must be something inclusive about chastity that draws us all together. The link is spelled out in Day Eight. “Our chief object is to reflect that openness to all which was characteristic of Jesus. This can only be achieved in a spirit of chastity; which sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfilment”. This is a dimension of the meaning of chastity which lifts it above and beyond sexual chastity.

The words “not as a means of self- fulfilment” are particularly pertinent. There are many examples to the contrary. Think of parents who at times are tempted to see their children as a means to their own ends or unfulfilled hopes. Parents can be tempted to push their children to play a particular sport or achieve a certain academic level or enter a particular profession. Relationships can be dumped when it ceases to be rewarding or we find it boring or the person has become sick and we find them a burden or too demanding. Seeking to establish my own ego or status within the church are other examples.

By startling contrast one of the great spiritual friendships in the history of the Church was Francis’ relationship to Clare. Francis and Clare had a deep intimacy, but they didn’t see each other often. Clare loved Francis because he served God’s purposes, not her own. Chastity insists that the purpose is to help the other to become the person God intends him or her to be. In my Bible reading notes ‘New Daylight May/August 2020’ I found the same

thoughts attributed to Humility (which we think about on Day Twenty One through to Day Twenty Four.) and I quote, “Humility from the Latin word ‘humus’ meaning fertile ground. Humus helps plants to thrive. Humble people, do likewise, bringing out the best in people”.

This is hard as we want to feel good and we want people around us who make us feel good; and if we are honest we are not always seeking the best for others. Integrity, singleness of heart, simplicity or undivided, totality and prayer are key words and themes I picked up from FP&FG to help us along the way.

Integrity, singleness of heart, simplicity or undivided. “In his popular book, ‘How to become a Saint,’ Jack Bernard continually reiterates the business of integrity and singleness of heart. These are, of course, words redolent with celibacy: integrity has its etymological roots in words that speak of being ‘intact’ or ‘whole’; singleness, though nowadays most frequently suggesting being unmarried, has as its etymological roots the idea of being ‘simple’ in the sense of one, undivided. Both these words suggest the living of life of what psychotherapists call ‘congruence’, the compatibility of evidence and argument, of word and action.” (FP&FG page 160) [Etymological means ‘the formation and meaning of words’ as I had to remind myself] Evidence and argument, word and action coming together.

Totality. Chastity like celibacy is about totality. “This kind of ‘celibacy’ or life focussed towards God in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, is something to which I believe we are all called as disciples, and to which apostolic Religious Life, not least in the Franciscan tradition.——”*The life in which the Blessed Trinity is all in all, is also a life of totality. And it is relational, as St Francis suggests, with all people, especially those who are despised and rejected; with all creatures and with all creation. This is not a life where focus on God means that one can ignore or neglect God’s creation.*

*As we embrace the life of totality, of the undivided (simple) way of God, our integrity or congruence is bound up in the integration of all life. There is no more a holy day or a less holy day, except as one is a distillation of the other, allowing us to focus better on the holiness of every day. There is no more sacred or profane.* (FP&FG Page 160 ).

Totality and Prayer. “I want to suggest that this kind of universal ‘celibacy,’ or integrity, the focussing of all our lives on God, living totality, is prayer. Every minute we are turned Godward, consciously or unconsciously (and for most of us it will be the latter most of the time), we are adopting the demeanour of prayer. St Francis, who did this better than most, said he became prayer. As Sister Liz said of presiding at the Eucharist as a Franciscan: ‘it feels more prayed, the Holy Spirit takes over’. Is this what is meant by ‘the prayer prays me’?”(FP&FG page 161)





## Finding the meaning

Bronwyn Fryar tssf



When I retired I was frequently asked 'What are you going to do in your retirement?'. At first, because I didn't have a particular activity that I was planning to take up, I found it very difficult to answer the question. Then I came across the phrase 'a deliberate life' and I knew this was how I wanted to describe retirement. It is a phrase the Little Brothers of Francis use to describe their life based on the Hermitage Rule of St Francis.

Living intentionally into my vocation as a tertiary with the notes of prayer, study and work give me a framework. Each day can have a measured rhythm, bookended by prayer.

In a world where there is so much homelessness, I feel very privileged that we own our own home. That places on me the claim of the poverty of others and thus my need to be generous. 'Making home' is vocational for me. It has holiness about it and keeps me in touch with the incarnational nature of life. God is already at work there with us. It is the peaceful base to go out from and to return to as we join in God's work in the world.

### Creating

It is absolutely true that some jobs around home are relentless, like washing up, and cleaning the floors! Housework is not effortless or easy. Finding creativity among the monotony does help! Gardening gives great joy as I see growth and beauty so quickly. I do find that bringing beauty, order and simplicity is fulfilling.

### Serving

Caring for and loving those who live within the home and wider family fills life. When children are small just getting through what must be done leaves little time for anything but the needs of the day. Caring for pets has a beautiful, gentle sense of serving the creatures of God, while they give us such simple unconditional love.

The spiritual discipline of the daily examen reminds me that all the 'doing' is serving.

### Hospitality

Hospitality is a major theme throughout the Christian story. It connects our theology with our daily lived lives.

I am a keen cook and thus have frequently concentrated rather too much on providing delicious food, than on the time spent with guests. Doing it more simply has helped me do it more often. It is the welcoming and the time given which are the heart of hospitality. So often, over the years I have been blessed by being a guest in the home of others. I am learning more, how to be a blessing as a host.

As tertiaries we all have our personal Rule of Life. Mine helps me to prayerfully consider the shape of my life and prioritise certain things. Daily life can pass by at a frantic pace. I have found peace, meaning and vocation in looking again at creating home as a place of encounter with God in those I welcome and those I serve. I love the words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Earth's crammed with heaven  
And every common bush afire with God  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

It might be worth reflecting that our homes are 'crammed with Heaven' if we but stop and reflect.



## Directed Retreat A Place of Peace and Prayer

This Silent Retreat is a unique opportunity for personal reflection and individual spiritual direction.

**Need to get away?**

**Want to go deeper?**

**Need some space?**

Enjoy your own room and ensuite, all meals and daily spiritual direction overlooking Moreton Bay.

**Venue: St Teresa Spirituality Centre**

267 Wellington St., Ormiston, Qld.

9.00 am Monday 25th October to

9.00 am Saturday 30th October, 2021

Facilitator: Marie Thompson

[Pacecommunity.org.au](http://Pacecommunity.org.au)

\$1,200.00

RSVP by 8th October

Register: [admin@pacecommunity.org.au](mailto:admin@pacecommunity.org.au)

**Limited spaces! Register now!**

## *Reading from the Principles of the Third Order The Three Notes*

*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 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 through whom his mighty work is done.*

# PATHS TO GOD

## 1. The Emmaus Road

By: Anne Kotze

I have always liked the idea of pilgrimage. Pilgrims have an aim and are never static. They move forwards.

“I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.” *Isaiah 48 v 17.*

We are going to think together about the different roads which lead to God.

Christianity is a never-ending pilgrimage and perhaps for this reason, the early Christian were referred to as the people of the Way.

“Saul went to the High Priest and asked him for letters to the Synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.” *Acts 9 v 2*

I find that for me there are five roads which lead to God:

1. The Emmaus Road
2. The Jericho Road
3. The Damascus Road
4. The Tabor Road
5. The Jerusalem Road the Via Dolorosa

and we will look at them in turn.

### The Emmaus Road

Read: **Luke 24 v 13-35**

This is our first road – the Way of the Scriptures and the Sacraments.

These men on the Emmaus Road had been powerfully attracted and influenced by the personality of Jesus but this had never been linked in their minds with the five great Messianic Prophecies in the Scriptures. If they had they would surely not have said, “We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”

The prophecies were:

1. Who? *Isaiah 9 v.5... David’s line*
2. How long? *2 Samuel 7 v.16 reign for ever*
3. Where? *Micah 5 v.2 born in Bethlehem.*
4. From? *Isaiah 7 v.14 a virgin*
5. When? *Daniel 9 v.25... the exact date He would be born.*

So during our pilgrimage towards God we will find signposts and milestones in the Bible. Daily Bible-reading is part of our Rule, of course, and its teaching is profound. It is amazing how passages read and re-read can suddenly bring us a new revelation and a new understanding. The two men said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us and opened the Scriptures to us.”

But it wasn’t even the way Jesus explained the Scriptures on the Emmaus Road which opened their eyes so that they recognised Him. It was the Sacrament... He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them. Then they recognised the Lord and so do we.

He is present in a special way in the Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Marriage, Holy Unction and Ordination. It is easy to lose sight of Him at some of these events but as tertiaries we have a special role to play by being deeply aware of His active presence.

There are three more things we should learn from those men at Emmaus

1. They were prepared to share their bewilderment and their lack of understand with Jesus.
2. They were prepared to listen as He taught them.
3. They wanted to share their supper and night’s lodging with this stranger whom they had not yet recognised.

## 2. The Jericho Road

In Stigmata/Franciscan Edition

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## THE SPIRIT GOES BEFORE US

By: Reverend Daniel Hobbs



There is something both meaningful and mysterious about Pentecost. We Christians believe it is the moment of inception for what we know consider “the church”. The Holy Spirit of God revealed to us on the Day of Pentecost unites all peoples as one body of Christ through the transcendent and immanent presence of the Divine. Gender, language and culture are all eclipsed by the universal Spirit of Life. The Alpha and Omega, our beginning and our end, is unmistakably revealed to us and we are each embraced by it.

For this to be true - for the Spirit of God to return to us - the Holy Spirit must first go before us. The Prologue to John’s Gospel expresses this most beautifully. The material world we occupy might function by clock and setting sun, but the spiritual world into which God envelopes us at Pentecost knows no such markers. Instead, “we live and move and have our being in God” (*Acts 17:28*). Francis knew this intuitively and modern science is affirming it. What might this mean for the life of the church today? How might we Christians organise ourselves as local faith communities in such a way as to reflect this eternal truth?

Perhaps we could practice what we preach - that is, invite the Holy Spirit that goes before us to once more reveal to us what it is we are called to be? As a large organisation it was inevitable that the church would succumb to the corporate practices of our day - committees, strategic plans, KPIs and management speak. While there is clearly a place for such things when a group of Christians are called to steward God’s people and resources, it allows very little room for the Holy Spirit. Instead, it creates a mechanistic institution driven not by Spirit but by strategy. Such a church reflects the “world of men”, not the Kingdom of God.

So what’s God up to at your place? What is emerging in your own community right now (inside and outside church walls) that could be an invitation to participate in the life of the Holy Spirit? How would your community’s Mission Action Plan look if it was written by the Holy Spirit?

Pentecost is an invitation to prayerfully discern what God is already doing in the world and to get involved in that!

May the Spirit of God, in the footsteps of Francis, call you forth.

## Pentecost

James Tabor tssf

Festival of St Anselm, 2021



I recently wrote an article for my School Newsletter about Ascension Day, and lamented the fact that there is no longer a holiday (or even a half-holiday) for schools. This is in part because the significance of “Ascension” as described in Luke and in Acts is lost, and we are left with trying to reconcile an image as “Jesus as rocket” heading off into the cosmos.

At the time that Luke wrote his account in his Gospel, St Paul had already attested to the historical fact of the Ascension, and it brought to an end the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. The image Luke used to describe Christ’s ascent has become increasingly difficult to square with our understanding of the nature and extent of the cosmos.

But of course, all this is to miss the significance of the events described. If we allow the physics of the account to overwhelm the theology, we might miss the fact that Christ moved out of our human perception of time and space, and into that of the Creator. To my mind it is hardly surprising that we struggle to reconcile our capacity to perceive, with the ineffable nature of God.

That seems a great pity, because at its heart the account of the Ascension is hugely comforting, and we are only just now recapturing the cosmic significance of these events. A close reading suggests that as Christ moved out of time and space (as we perceive it) He moved into a time and space called heaven which was not so distant, but had an immediacy, an intimacy and a proximity which we might in fact see as reassuring, and not distant and unknowable.

Pentecost is similar, in my mind. We are too easily lost in the details; the disciples in fear, the terror of wind, and noise and fire all heralding the return to our reality of God as Spirit.

Hidden behind the story is a simple and reassuring message, which is obscured by the kinetic quality of the events described. The disciples were celebrating the Festival of Weeks, the celebration of first fruits and the harvest. In the mind of those present, there would have been a spirit of thanksgiving, and reassurance that they would eat for another year, that life would go on after the tumultuous events of the previous months.

In this reading, we can see the disciples not as the inspired leaders of the new Way, but rather as the first fruits, the first harvest, and the reassurance that far from being finished, the harvest is now assured.

These gentler interpretations of the Ascension and Pentecost stories seem to me to reflect the gentler, reflective nature of the ministry of Francis, and of Clare. Whilst it is alluring for us to see our God as the cosmological figure, outside and within all creation, reflected in fire, and wind and heat and strength, so much of what God does in us and through us is achieved by the simple, the quiet, the intimate. As we come to celebrate Ascension Day and Pentecost, let us focus not on the pyrotechnics and furious energy of traditional interpretation, but on the gentleness, the quiet, and the reflective example of Francis, and of Clare.

## The Franciscan and Islamic Foundation Tradition

By: John Clarkson, tssf

I have been reading the current copy of *THE CORD*, an American Franciscan publication about the current Pope’s attraction to Saint Francis. In his recent Encyclical, *FRATEILI TUTTI*, the Pope emphasizes our second aim “to spread the spirit of love and harmony” in Principles 7, 8, and 9. He refers to the 800th anniversary (2 years ago) of Francis’ encounter with the Sultan as an example of universal fraternity. This is the kind of friendship to which Pope Francis calls all humanity following on from St. Francis, that we desist from following all arguments and disputes. On several occasions now, the Pope has met with the Grand Mufti of Egypt. As human beings, we are to live together as brothers and sisters, equal in all rights, duties and dignity. One Muslim scholar has remarked that the Pope has represented him in every word he expresses in this encyclical, and speaks of the rebirth of humanity.

The Pope concludes his paper with these words “God does not see with his eyes, but sees with his heart and God’s love is the same for everyone.”

In these days when there are forces at large that create the disasters of Yemen, persecution of Christians, sexual abuse, Aged care neglect, the overthrow of elected Governments etc, we need the example of St Francis and the Sultan, as well as of our present Pope with his recent visit to Iran, and embrace the meaning of our Principles in our daily lives as tertiaries.

*We pray for our Brothers and Sisters of other faiths or of no faith that dark walls of separation may be broken down. Open all our hearts, Great Saviour, and attune us to each other’s hopes, that we may learn to know and respect each other.*

## Black Lives Matter – Respect All Genders

By: Reverend Hayden McKellar

A few years ago there was an Australian movie released with a title that disturbed me. It was called ‘Ride like a Girl’. While the title is an important part of the movie and Michelle Payne’s life-experience, I found it to be so wrong on so many levels. It is disrespectful to women, humanity and the whole of God’s Creation.

But what is our response to such a put down – ‘don’t be a girl’? Do you brush the comment off with an uncomfortable laugh? Or do we pretend it was never said? A comment like this ignores what Scripture tells us about genders in humanity. In the Hebrew canon, in the first and youngest creation narrative, we are told: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27 NRSV).

In the Christian canon, Paul, in writing to the faithful in Galatia, emphasises that the divisions that humanity so often imposes to control and oppress others cease to exist in Christ. Don’t believe me; read for yourself: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28 NRSV).

Last year, as the Black Lives Matter voice grew louder among the First Nations people of this great southern land, there were attempts to silence it through a series of what seemed to be quite sensible responses. Too often I heard the response to ‘Black Lives Matter’ was ‘All Lives Matter’. On the surface, this seems both logical and reasonable, but is it? Such a response belittles the reality of life for non-Caucasian people. I make this comment as a Caucasian male observer.

During the late 1980’s, my family were with a mixed First Nations family taking their young child for a walk on a hot summer evening. Our young child sat up in the stroller taking in the sights while theirs was hidden from public view by heavy blankets. This was done out of fear of the child being taken by Government authorities. On several occasions we have had police come to investigate crimes involving the rectories we were living in. Each time the investigating officers implied that the culprits were First Nations people, my response was ‘Let’s wait to see the culprit.’ Each time I gave such a response, it was received with a fair degree of contempt. At the turn of the century, in the parish under my care, I had an active Vietnam vet parishioner who was also a First Nations elder. The parishioners were happy to have him to do the manual work around the parish buildings, but when I appointed him to Parish Council, the response was very different.

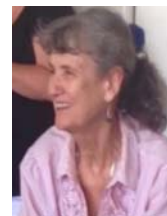
Yes, all lives do matter and every gender does deserve respect. But when we put down people on the basis of their gender or their heritage, then we belittle ourselves and we are disobedient to God. We are disobedient to God’s command to love our neighbour as ourselves.

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***Thank you to all who contributed to the Pentecost Edition. Articles for the Stigmata/Franciscan Edition in by 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2021. Blessings, Gloria***

## St Francis

By: Sandra Beck



How do I come to follow this man, this saint, whom I claim to follow? I have often asked myself this question. It could, perhaps, be likened to ‘why do I follow such and such a football team?’ I can’t claim inherited inclination. My family were largely nominally Anglican, except for my mother who leant towards the Baptist church and later towards Pentecostalism, regarding saints as a Roman Catholic aberration along with papal indulgences. I have followed the path to God in the footsteps of St Francis since I took the first step of trying to follow, not so much St Francis as a Rule of life. I see my Rule as a living document, my recipe for my Christian life. Sometimes it needs a tweak here or there, a bit more or less of an ingredient, a bit more or less stirring, cooking or refrigeration. The more nearly I follow in the saint’s footsteps, the more my Rule and myself are moulded

Over the last few years, I have been more and more drawn to trying to know God through the guidance of saints. I pray through an ever increasing number of saints, currently nineteen plus two angels, but of course this is underpinned by the path Saint Francis trod in his Christian journey. Reading his words and of him every day, he soaks into me. He is very strict in some areas, it is a miracle we have so much written about him, since he virtually prohibited the ownership of books by his followers, yet he frequently said, ‘Write this...’

My reading seems to have taken a change of direction. I am perhaps more meditative. What I call my daily reading includes St Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources, and Francis and Clare (The Classics of Western Spirituality). This is my own journey into love of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the company of our two saints, my own Pentecost. What then do I experience in Pentecost as a follower of St Francis? The answer is an overwhelming love for our Trinitarian God, almost a bursting of my heart and an ever-increasing desire to immerse myself in writings of and about St Francis.

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### Franciscan & Holy Days To Note 2021

|           |    |  |
|-----------|----|--|
| June      | 13 | Anthony of Padua                       |
| July      | 15 | Bonaventure                            |
| August 4  |    | John Vianney, Cure D’Ars               |
| August 10 |    | The Transitus of St. Clare             |
| August 11 |    | Clare of Assisi                        |
| August 14 |    | Maximilian Kolbe                       |
| August 15 |    | Mary, The Mother of the Lord           |
| August 25 |    | Louis, King, Patron of the Third Order |
| September | 17 | Stigmata of St Francis                 |
| October   | 4  | Francis of Assisi                      |
| October   | 11 | All Franciscan Saints                  |
| November  | 19 | Elizabeth of Hungary                   |

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

## ***The greedy and the hungry***

By: Jacqueline Fewtrell

*The gap between  
The haves and have nots  
is expanding.  
The developed and the developing  
The comfortable and the disadvantaged  
We have all we need  
And yet **many** have nothing  
We know that most live in poverty  
While we continue in our comfortable lives  
Ignoring the plight of others  
We even blame the other  
What can we do? We ask  
Our desire to consume more and more  
Means that while we revel in our greed  
Others do without.  
The greedy and the hungry  
The more greedy we are, the more hungry others  
become  
The more damage we do.  
But does our consumption make us all happier?  
We have more and more things  
And yet  
More and more depression and dissatisfaction  
The paradox seems to be  
The more we have  
The more we want  
The unhappier we become!*

The world economic model is geared towards growth. If GDP has not increased we are in recession. If sales in shops do not go up year on year, we worry. Marketing has been perfected to encourage us to consume more and more.

We can learn much from the example of St Francis. St Francis took money and security out of the equation, and although he took living simply to the extreme, I believe living simpler offers solutions to many of today's problems. We do not have to give up everything and sell all as the early Franciscans, for most of us that is beyond our abilities. We can though think carefully about our wants and our needs; make an inventory of what we possess and what we use and what is important to us. We can work to reduce the gap between the haves and have-nots; we can look towards meaningful relationship with others and with God's creation and an appreciation of the beauty and the wonder all around us.

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## **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

## **Pentecost**

By: Simon Fong

On the Pentecost Day  
God acts in special way  
Some say the church birthday  
Tongues of fire on the day.  
Seeing the colour red  
We remember each bed  
Those beds in hospital  
Where lives are not normal  
The Covid pandemic  
Making many so sick  
Patients feeling hopeless  
Christians nevertheless  
Turn to God Almighty  
From Him peace and safety  
We would expect to see  
And we would be carefree.  
Some have hope in vaccines  
So there are no more scenes -  
Lying unattended  
Corpses then cremated.  
Hurtful pictures we see  
A duty is for me  
I think also for us -  
Pray for Covid virus.  
God gives men competence  
In medical science  
Scientists' brilliance  
His divine providence.  
Things may appear dreadful  
Worried, life's still blissful  
As Christians we're trustful  
We believe God's faithful.

Amen.

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## Joining In a Time of Distancing

By: Charles Ringma, tssf



We are all only too aware that the current covid-pandemic has brought about many changes, great distress, and real suffering. These have been more significant in countries where the pandemic has had a greater impact. Thus, we do need to be careful that we don't over-generalise.

But we are not only aware, but also deeply disturbed, by the conflicting responses to the pandemic that we have seen in various countries. Tensions have been rife. This has been most clearly seen in the push on the part of the authorities for lock-down, social distancing, and covid-testing, and the protests of people who insist that they should be free to live and do as they like, and not have their "freedoms" restricted.

And somewhere in all of this, there lurks a tension that has to do with cooperation on a massive scale on the one hand, and on the other, the important role that social distancing is meant to play in keeping us as safe as possible. Thus, we have here a dialectic: joining and distancing or that of joining and separating.

One way of putting this is to say that we are to join together in the art of separating. However, this may be nicely said, but is fraught with all sorts of problems. The most obvious is that participating in the "dance" of joining and distancing, we undermine one or the other of these dimensions.

The most painful is that the more we practice social distancing the more we undermine joining and the bonds of social relationships that are so important to human well-being and flourishing.

We are all deeply touched by the elderly in aged-care facilities who died without family members being there to comfort them; weddings and funerals with many not being able to attend; and religious services where faith communities can no longer gather in the usual way.

What all of this means is that there is pain and loss in living this tension.

But this current crisis, can also be used to reflect on past realities and future possibilities with regard to the tension of joining and separating. Let's explore this and see what may surface.

The first, is that our pre-covid joining was fraught with some problems. The main, I would argue, was that our joining was marked with the fault-line of a rampant individualism that left our sense of joining in an acute state of precarity. We joined in marriages, joined companies, joined clubs, political parties, and religious groups, only to abandon them again when problems arose or at a mere whim or fancy. Keep our options open was more the mantra, rather than the challenge of making deep commitments.

The second and related issue in our pre-covid world, has been that our joining has led to exclusivity. I belong to this group and therefore have nothing to do with that group! We have seen this most clearly in matters of race, religion, politics and gender.

Just in the light of these two factors alone, and I not seeking to be exhaustive here, we may conclude that our sense of joining has been rather marred and fractured. To put that in other words, many of our societies have been both wonderfully diverse, but also deeply divided and fragmented. A sense of joining that has led to both solidarity and a commitment to the common good, or to the "common-weal," has been sadly lacking.

And to see this from the other side – that of social separation – we see people living with both the pain and anger of not-belonging, victimization, and social exclusion.

All of this is not a wonderful picture, let alone a mosaic!

But what of the future? Can the present realities of joining and distancing anticipate a new way of being in a post-covid world? Many would say, not. We are most likely, they would claim, that we will revert to the old realities. They may well be right.

But let us dream. Is it possible that in learning in our present circumstances to cooperate is social distancing, can we learn to cooperate in other areas of social life that are pressing in on us. Can we join together in the challenges of responding to climate change? Can we join together in responding better to poverty and social fragmentation? Can the realities of distancing and fragmentation lead to new ways of mutual listening, relationship-building, joining, and cooperation.

Yes. It is possible! What would you suggest? How do you see future possibilities?



*Pace e Bene*