



Newsletter for the Province of Asia-Pacific

The Third Order, Society of St Francis

www.tssf.org.au

Advent / Christmas 2022

What is ours to do?

Mandy Wheatley
Provincial Minister

Dear sisters and brothers,

I am writing this reflection in transit to Perth to join the TSSF Convocation where we will be focusing on aspects of poverty in contemplation and action.

It has been a joy to have visited with many regions as well as New Zealand in the past few months, reflecting on the common theme; “What is ours to do?”

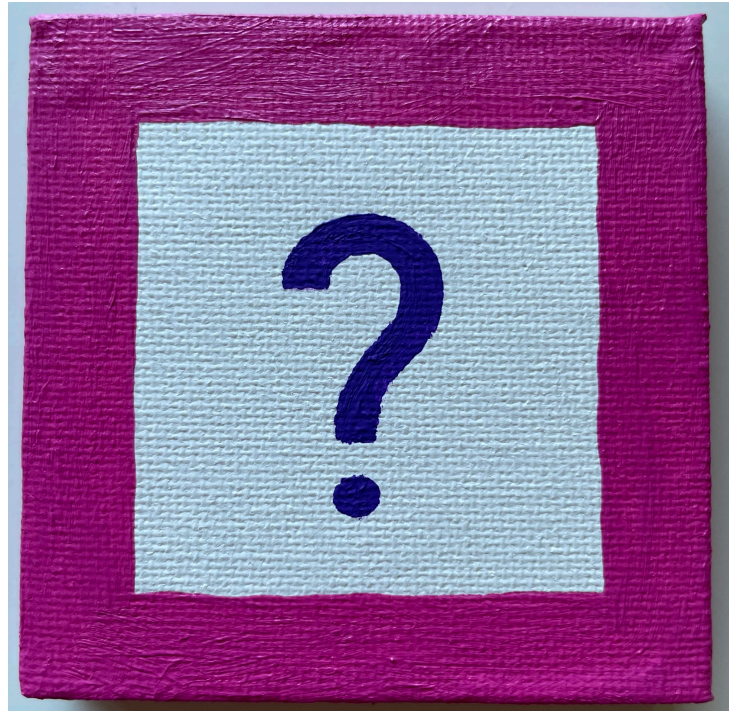
I have been able to speak by Zoom with Rita Simeni thanks to Br Christopher John who visited the brothers in Popondetta last month.

Rita sends her love to us all, and is keen to move from Covid restrictions and into action with the Third Order in PNG.

Br Alfred has visited Bradley Sangan in the past few weeks and joined the Malaysian sisters and brothers in Kuching as they all renewed their vows after two years of isolation.

It was a most joyful meeting indeed.

This newsletter is rich with the kind of Franciscan contemplation and action that has been lived out in the lives of many of our current as well as our dear departed tertiaries.



‘What are YOU waiting for?’

Advent painting by Jeni Nix. Jeni writes: ‘Christmas – what are you waiting for? The excitement of gifts? The family gatherings with ‘all’ that loved ones bring? The festive food? Seasonal songs? That blissful, tummy-crammed afternoon snooze? Midnight church? Or is your heart longing for something else to arrive with the baby?’

Each of us is called by the example of Francis and Clare to look at Jesus’ life of simplicity and poverty, seeing God’s hand at work in the world and following Jesus in reaching out to those in need in whatever ways we have been called to act.

Advent is a time of preparation and self-examination for such action.

You may find it helpful to ponder this question or find some of your own to discuss with another tertiary or novice:

How is the rhythm of contemplation and action that were enacted in the lives of Francis and Clare present in your life today?

May you be blessed as you prepare to send in your reports to your regional ministers.

If you haven't yet had the chance to meet with a group to renew your vows, remember to arrange this with your local priest or Regional Minister's help.

May God bless you with peace and good today and always,

Mandy tssf

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'Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.' (Psalm 27:14)

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Creation's pain, world poverty –

From John Hebenton's letter to the Province

Grace and peace to you all.

The ministers provincial of each of our provinces met in the last week of August in Australia... As we prayed and shared we were aware of the pain of so many, and as we said after our last meeting, the pain of creation crying out. And we reflected on what as an Order is ours to do in this time and as we look forward to the Inter-Provincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC) next year.

We discerned that we are being called to live the gospel in the way of Francis and Clare as described by our rule of life, we are being

invited to listen deeply to the gospels and scripture, to the pain in creation, the voices of the indigenous, marginalized and vulnerable, and of younger people.

As we listen and contemplate on all these we are being invited to take seriously and live out what it means to live simply. Living simply is living in ways that do not add to the poverty of the world and the pain of creation. It is living in a way that all creation and all people thrive.

This is shalom, the fullness and completeness that God desires. The restoration of humanity and renewal of creation that is at the heart of the biblical story. This is not a linear process, but a life-long circular system of contemplation, missional action, reflection and contemplation....

In response to your deep listening and contemplation we invite you to wonder what needs your attention, both as individuals and your group. What more study needs to be done. Which groups might you need to build relationship with. And who might need your



Provincial Ministers' gathering in Canberra, August this year

prayer at this time.

At our meeting next year we look forward to hearing the stories of the fruit of our deep listening as we continue to offer Christ's hope in this time of pain and fear.

Te pai me te rangimārie (peace and all good).

John Hebenton, Minister General

Welcome and hope

John Clarkson reflects on 30 years of work for refugees

At the beginning of the 1990's, I became a member of the NSW Ecumenical Council's Refugee Worker's Advisory Committee. I heard about the trauma of refugees fleeing persecution and the desperate need of asylum seekers turning up unexpectedly on our shores.

I reflected on the Holy Family's escape from Herod's anger, fleeing their home in Bethlehem for the foreign land of Egypt.

I felt a compulsion to become involved. I formed an Ecumenical Refugee Support Group in Blayney (NSW) in 1991. We started by offering brief country breaks for refugee families living in Sydney.

I remember vividly walking down the main street of Blayney with a visiting family when suddenly the family froze – looked around and waited. Now Blayney was a small country town with a population of about two and a half thousand. Not unusual to have 'quiet times' – no one around. But these folk were used to something different. No one around meant a raid was imminent and every one had taken shelter.

How different our life was from what theirs had been.

We, the small Refugee Group, were given confidence when a family of ten from Uganda so enjoyed their time in Blayney that it gave us new insights of refugee experience. We went on to offer short term respite for families from



A recent photo of the Rev'd John Clarkson tssf

Uganda, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Burma, Chile, El Salvador and Somalia. Hamdi and her four sons from Somalia settled for a number of years. They arrived from a refugee camp in Kenya with all their possessions in two sports bags. All these stories were very humbling.

When I retired from full time Ministry in 1996 and settled in Bathurst, I felt that one contribution I could make to my new community was to share my experience of helping those fleeing from persecution and start a support group here. Being motivated by Christian principles, I hoped that such support would mainly come from the churches, so I started by canvassing the clergy and the congregations with varying success. I hoped to have at least one representative from each church in our group. Main support came from the Roman Catholic, Baptist, Uniting Church and Anglican Church congregations.

'Refugee Sunday' was celebrated, and with the encouragement and support of the full time Refugee worker of the NSW Ecumenical Council, we held a training day and formed a

CRSS Group – Community Refugee Settlement Scheme.

Our group was trained in how to assist our refugee families with shopping, schooling, visiting medical facilities, and introducing them to community interest groups. Our first group came from Kosovo and then we were asked to help families from East Timor and then from Bosnia, Vietnam and Iraq.

However, the Government changed their policy and voluntary groups, with their personal touch and links with the community, became redundant. After much debate, at the beginning of 2000 the Ecumenical Council decided not to give support to the new model that left a group like ours lacking in direction.

Without the assistance of the Refugee Worker of the NSW Ecumenical Council, I believe that it would have been hard for us to keep going as a group, as they gave us the knowledge, encouragement and backing that we needed. Mrs Mary Hanoun-Killa, the Refugee Worker at the time, encouraged us to educate the churches and community, and to promote awareness of refugees' needs. At this time I produced the first of many newsletters that were sent to the various churches and wrote many 'Letters to the Editor' in the local paper highlighting various situations. I also wrote to many Politicians criticizing the Government's 'Pacific Solution'.

We also organised an annual Refugee Service in one of the Bathurst Churches using the kit that the National Council of Churches provided each year.

Speakers raised unfair Government Policy issues, delays in processing refugee status, conditions in Detention Centres, and the psychological problems many refugees were experiencing.

Other speakers came from Rwanda, Kosovo, as well as Sydney based advocates, lawyers, and a journalist.

A variety of functions were organised – such as film nights, Christmas Tree gift nights and special dinners. Profits were used to give respite to families and to purchase phone cards for inmates of

Villawood Detention Centre in Sydney so that they could contact family.

About 2015/16, when 'The Pacific Solution' was at its height, Carol Hucker tssf made known the appalling personal conditions some refugees found themselves in. With help from other advocates she was able to send names, age and clothing sizes to us. We were able to purchase items needed – such as underwear, tee shirts, shorts and rubber thongs. People from the community donated the money and many parcels were sent in a short time.

More recent times

Now the new Australian Government is abolishing Temporary Visas and there is more hope for the future, BUT they continue to support offshore processing and have no current plans to address the resettlement options for the remaining 505 refugees still trapped in Papua New Guinea, Nauru and hotel rooms in Australia.

Recently the Orange City Council organised a 'Welcome to the Central West' experience – offering a three day 'taste' of what life is like in the Cowra, Orange and Bathurst Regions. We had the opportunity to greet folk mainly from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Iran and, with the help of interpreters, were able to share personal stories of family and experiences.

While there is still Border Control, red tape and inhumane government action, I have hope that the hearts of all Australians will be more compassionate, more respectful, more accepting and more loving. People power changed the Government's policy for the 'Biloela Family'. May more Australians act for those still incarcerated in detention.



Lex Nason

Interviewed by Sandra Beck

I met Lex at the TSSF Conference, at St Hilda's, Southport about 1988. I was amazed by him.

I had spent much of my adult life as a special-needs teacher. I quickly registered how much Lex contributed to discussions at the conference, and indeed to the TSSF community. He stated, 'We are all disabled. The important thing is what we do about it.'

When I was teaching at Montrose School working with physically disabled students, I used Lex's statement on posters I made for the Year of the Disabled.

It was not possible to go anywhere with Lex without hearing people call 'Hi, Lex', and he would launch into discussing some interesting topic. As well as his wide range of interests and adventurous spirit, he is a great lover of classical music, ballet and opera. He is widely travelled. He worked as a librarian for 20 years with the Queensland Health Department and has a Masters in Theology.

Sandra: *Lex, tell us a bit about when and where you were born.*

Lex: I was born at Longreach 29 Dec 1946. My father was Advertising Manager at *The Longreach Leader* newspaper. My parents had met in the Services.

S: *How old were you when your parents moved to Brisbane?*

L: They moved to Brisbane when I was about three, to get more help with me. I started at New Farm Spastic Centre School and completed kindergarten and prep there. The family lived in Rosalie before moving to Wynnum where they lived until their final years.

S: *What do you know of your first few years?*

L: I attended a regular Primary School attached to the Spastic Centre until I finished Year 8, when High School started at that time. I still walked independently until about 1987.



Lex Nason tssf

S: *How did your parents manage with three children?*

L: I don't know how they did it, but they did. Dad worked at the Courier Mail. Mum was an office worker at Albion Motors, driving the long way from Wynnum. I was collected from Wynnum by Spastic Centre bus. Greg, two years and Charmaine, three years younger, attended Wynnum Central Primary. We all went on to Wynnum High School.

S: *How did cerebral palsy affect your schooling?*

L: I had a portable electric typewriter and another student would be appointed to help me. My favourite subject was Modern History. An interest in Politics helped me get into university.

S: *What were the biggest challenges in your schooling?*

L: Someone had to write for me in exams.

S: Did you always think you might go to University?

L: I always hoped to. My Arts degree majors were English, Government and History, taking me five years. My first job was as a temporary clerk in Labour Relations, a Queensland Government department. I started a library course at QIT taking me three years and I transferred to Queensland Health Dept Library.

S: When did you develop a deep interest in religion?

L: In Rosalie, our family worshipped at St Martin's, part of Auchenflower parish, long closed, and later at St Peter's, Wynnum. We kids attended Sunday School and school religious education. Aged about 26, I was elected to Parish Council.

S: What led you to join the Third Order?

L: I attended the Friary at Brookfield, saw the movie *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, and was attracted to the idea of following St Francis. I adjusted rapidly to a Rule of Life and found that it suited me. I was professed in 1984. In 1985, I moved to Clayfield, living independently, and attended St Mark's Bonney Avenue, still my main parish.

S: Tell us some highlights of your overseas trips and how you managed travel.

L: I have been on several tours including Europe, New Zealand and the UK twice, and several cruises. I once won a trip 'overseas' to Fraser Island and once was nearly lost in gentle surf at Bribie Island. I particularly loved everything in London. I take a companion/carer.

S: You do not think of yourself as being a disabled person. Tell us your life's biggest challenge.

L: The biggest challenge was moving into Aged Care a few years ago. My facility is first class but I feel imprisoned. I 'escape' as often as I can when not in lockdown. Occasional trips to hospital give another break. I attend church, movies and my usual round of theatre etc, dining out, parties and Third Order gatherings.

S: Tell us something about yourself which we may not know.

L: I'm a romantic. Perhaps that explains my love of Opera.

Marathon Walk for Mental Wellness



The Rev'd Selina McMahon tssf and the Rev'd Dr Gemma Dashwood tssf at the mid point of the Marathon Walk for Mental Wellness on 28th October 2022. They were walking to raise awareness of mental illness in clergy.

Vale Helen Granowski

Jan Down

In 2003, Helen Granowski wrote a one-page life-story, which began:

I was newly confirmed when I entered University to study Science and I brought with me a tremendous thirst for both God and for knowledge of God's world. I'd not been brought up in the Church, although I'd got some basics from my Presbyterian school – just enough to make me long for a feeling of connectedness with God... My dog and the bush were my greatest loves – besides Science.

Helen went on to study God and God's world in great depth, all her life. She completed a BSc (Hons) at Sydney University (1955), a Master of Science, then a Dip Ed (1975) and in London, her PhD (1981), on the sociology of morality and education.

Helen was Head of Science at Merriden Anglican School for Girls in Sydney and went on to be principal of two schools: St Hilda's, Southport, and then Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School.

Having later discerned a calling to ordained ministry, Helen trained at Melbourne College of Divinity and was deaconed in 1991, serving at Holy Trinity Kew. She was ordained priest in the Melbourne Diocese in 1992. Helen continued at Kew until 1998, and was then Priest-in-Charge at St George's Flemington until 2003.

During her final year at the University in Sydney, Helen had joined the Anglican Society and was involved in planning a university mission. The missionary who came out from England was Fr Charles Preston SSF, of whom Helen wrote:

I'd never come across anyone like him. Humour, compassion, originality and vision



The Rev'd Dr Helen Granowski tssf in earlier days, with her dog Talbot at Stroud

all joined in someone who was more intensely human than anyone we'd ever met. Not only was he 'holy' but he loved adventure and revelled in our bush. Two of us were admitted as Companions.

Denis Woodbridge, in *Franciscan Gold*, quotes Helen as describing Charles Preston as 'the person who had the greatest influence on my life'. When Helen moved to Queensland, she became a regular visitor at the Brookfield friary. Eventually Helen was professed as a tertiary at the Brookfield Chapel in 1970.

She later became Regional Minister for Victoria/Tasmania and then Provincial Chaplain, during which time she made a memorable visit to Papua New Guinea, on behalf of Ted Witham, who was unwell at the time.

Helen's funeral service was held, fittingly, at Holy Trinity Kew, with seven tertiaries amongst the large congregation. One of the eulogies was given by Dr Jane Sullivan, a former school student and life-long friend of Helen's. The full text can be found on the TSSF blog at: <https://tssf.org.au/>

Helen spent the last six years of her life at Mary MacKillop Aged Care, where she was faithfully visited each week by Sandra Jackson.

Several people have sent in tributes:

Betty Ashton (former tertiary):

I first knew Helen Granowski by repute; initially we corresponded by letter before we met in person. The connection came through the Sydney University Anglican Society. Helen, reading Science, was an early – if not founding – member. She had completed her degree/s and left to teach at an Anglican girls' boarding school near Bathurst the year before I joined the Society. Within AngSoc Helen was greatly respected for this choice – it was considered brave, because Bathurst was on the wrong side of the mountains, and humble, because her prospects in academia were bright. We were encouraged to support her in it, so I did!

After I graduated, we found ourselves teaching in the same school, Meriden at Strathfield. Meriden had long had its own company of Girl Guides, and when I arrived, Helen was its captain and I became her assistant. This engagement was a natural extension of her pedagogy.

Then I went off to Papua for the next 25 years and Helen blazed her path in education in Australia. Our paths crossed from time to time: for example, when a pastoral tour of her far-flung boarders' parents – her habit during school vacation – brought her to PNG, she made a detour to visit me.

Life in SU Anglican Society was a seminal experience for many of us, expanding our local

parish church experience. The baseline was that our faith and practice were to be taken seriously: to be studied – and *enjoyed* – with the same commitment as our other studies: good preparation for the Franciscan invitation to live a serious and joyful life that came later.

Helen was a loyal friend, understanding loyalty includes a duty to challenge and admonish as well as to support. She was an irrepressible enthusiast and a great encourager. She encouraged her Guides to appreciate each other's achievements.

I leave you with a strong memory from those years, appropriate for this moment. Girls were quietly honoured by the company singing in round:

'Bravo, bravissimo; bravo bravissimo; bravo bravissimo; VERY WELL DONE!'

Barrie Cledsmith:

Helen was my mentor and loyal friend for more than 30 years.

I met Helen in 1989 when she was about to be ordained as a priest. It was through Helen's guidance that I became a member of the Third Order, Society of St Francis. This has been a significant influence on my life and a force for good.

Sandra Beck writes of Helen's 'vast intellect, spirituality, compassion, leadership and sense of humour... Her reputation was gigantic, a truly inspiring role model.

The first time I met her was at Conference at St Hilda's, Southport, about 1988, and the last time was for novice counsellor training following the trial and subsequent introduction of the current novice notes. Vale, Dr Helen. You will never be forgotten by anyone who knew you, however slightly.'

A poem for Helen, by Simon Fong

Parting is the time for our adieu
As Helen leaves, there's a chapter new.
Repeated thoughts on her departure
Trusting a path to a serene future –
In God's embrace is tranquillity
No more any life's difficulty.
God our Father, in peace may Helen rest.
Amen.



*Simon Fong
with Helen at
Mary
MacKillop
Aged Care*

Tree planting and prayer service

Margaret Edridge tssf reports on an ecumenical event for the Season of Creation and St Francis Day



Kay Pendlebury tssf wielding the spade at the tree planting

The Season of Creation is a period that brings together the entire Christian community worldwide to pray and take action for the care of the environment.

It begins on September 1 with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and ends on October 4 with the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

It was established by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, in 1989, when he proclaimed September 1 as the Orthodox Day of Prayer for Creation. For his part, in 2015 Pope Francis made the Season of Creation official for the Roman Catholic Church.*

This year the Rev'd Kay Pendlebury tssf was invited to join an Ecumenical Service of Prayers and Tree Planting in the grounds of St Peter Chanel's Catholic Church, Yarralumla, ACT. Peter and I accepted the invitation to attend together with Ailsa McPherson from Queanbeyan.

And what a lovely service it was. A truly ecumenical one, led by Archbishop

Christopher Prowse and introduced with an Acknowledgement of Country and a didgeridoo recital by a member of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry.

Our Kay, together with senior members from the Greek Orthodox, Woden Valley Lutheran, and Uniting churches, took part in the service with Fr Trenton van Reesch, Catholic parish administrator, Alison Weeks, chair of the Caring for Creation Movement and representatives from the Christian Ethical Society. Senior children from Catholic Colleges also participated in the planting of the *Laudato Si* tree, a silky oak.

Our group was so warmly welcomed by all. We also reconnected with brothers and sisters from the Secular Franciscan Order, and we look forward to recommencing our fellowship with them after a hiatus due to Covid.

*See Pope Francis on the Season of Creation as 'an opportunity to cultivate our ecological conversion': <https://tinyurl.com/kuymxus8>

In brief

Nicholas Whereat reports on his nine day fast

As a lament for the nine years of detention of asylum seekers off-shore, the Rev'd Nicholas Whereat tssf recently fasted and prayed for nine days in a cage at St John's Cathedral, Brisbane.

Others joined him for Morning or Evening Prayer, either in person or via Zoom, and some stayed with him through the night.

He writes of a visit from Bishop Daniel Deng:

'When he is home from South Sudan Bishop Daniel lives in Toowoomba with his family. He came especially to share how he and his community had been encouraged by the news of my fast and to pray for me. He told me of his story as a young boy fleeing from Sudan, spending six years in Ethiopia and then finally nine years in Kenya. As a young man he was finally granted refuge in Australia.

Daniel then quoted from the book of the prophet Daniel chapter 10 assuring me that, like Daniel, my prayers were being answered from the day I set my mind to pray and fast.

Perhaps if nothing else the prayer for the refugees was being heard by the refugees themselves and it was bringing healing. But I continue to pray that real change will come.'

Nicholas' full reflection can be found on the tssf blog at: <https://tssf.org.au/>



*The Rev'd
Nicholas
Whereat tssf*



Geoff Jordan tssf and his wife Fay

Thanks from Geoff Jordan's family

Geoff Jordan was a tertiary for many years and served as Provincial Treasurer. He died on 18th September this year. A card received from his wife Fay reads:

'To Geoff's brothers and sisters in the Third Order,

Fay, Greg, Andrew, Leanne and their families thank you so much for your kind words and prayers at Geoff's passing.

We are grateful for the support and messages from many Third Order members. The orchid is flowering beautifully.

Blessings to you all,
Fay'

*'And the Word
became flesh and
lived among us, and
we have seen his
glory, the glory as of
a father's only son,
full of grace and
truth.'* John 1: 14

800 years – so great a cloud of witnesses

Editorial

Around the world this year the Third Order has been celebrating and reflecting on our 800th anniversary. It is 800 years since Francis founded the Third Order. 800 years of contemplation and action, of continuity and change.

The Third Order of the Society of St Francis is of course ‘the revival within the Anglican Communion in the twentieth century of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance originally founded by Saint Francis’, as our Constitution puts it. So it hasn’t been an unbroken history.

Yet we find our roots in Francis’ own recognition of a vocation for some to live the gospel with the same whole-hearted intention as his, as a dispersed community in the world.

Francis was ‘simply’ continuing Jesus’ work and answering Jesus’ call. And Jesus was ‘simply’ continuing on from the prophets, Moses and Abraham, and even ‘Adam’ and ‘Eve’ – living out the original calling of humanity to walk with God in the garden. When you look at it that way, we have a very long history!

And we have to discover what our vocation means for our own time and place. I still have Mandy Wheatley’s words ringing in my ears, from our recent Vic/Tas retreat. Coming fresh from the Convocation in New Zealand, which was titled: ‘What is Yours To Do? Celebrating 800 years of The Third Order Society of St Francis – 1221–2021’, she reminded us of how Francis had said to his brothers on his death-bed, “I have done what was mine to do. Now you must do what is yours to do.” Mandy then asked us to think about ‘what is ours to do’ in our time, making reference to the Rev’d Canon Jeff Gollhofer’s talk on climate change, and the urgent need for action.



*Attentive listening. Photo by
Christine Morris*

How do we live out our vocation in the context of a planetary crisis – of millions of refugees, of extreme poverty, of rising slum life, of collapsing ecosystems, and churches often seeming to have lost their connection to the Earth and her people.

There is a delightful story about Francis and the founding of the Third Order, which you can find on the European Third Order website (<https://tinyurl.com/2mzv5jnd>). It describes how Francis visited a village known to be in a rather negative state, yet responding very positively to Francis’ preaching and all wanting to join him. But he was interrupted by the noise of the birds, so he told them to give him a turn to talk, and they all quietly settled on rooftops and ledges and listened.

Here in Sale, I often look up to see a flock of Sacred Ibis flying over, from one body of water to another. Now I will think of them as part of that ‘great cloud of witnesses’ behind and ahead of us – an encouragement to listen carefully and hear ‘what is mine to do’, and to do it.

Jan Down

Kath Beicher's Third Order Chasuble

Ted Witham tssf

Sometime in the late 1980s, Sue Sturcke (Sister Seraphima) and Pearl McGill made a generous gift to the WA Tertiaries: the beautiful pottery chalice, paten and cruets we still use.

Kath Beicher and I were lamenting the lack of a chasuble to complement these Eucharistic vessels. I thought it would be wonderful to have a Franciscan-themed chasuble to use for our worship together. Kath, an expert seamstress, was quick to pick up on the idea.

'It should show Saint Francis adoring our Lord.' Kath had already devised a cloth design for this.

Our brainstorming quickly followed.

'It should reference the *Canticle*.'

'Brother Sun, yes, and Sister Moon.'

'And it should refer to Genesis too.'

'The two great lights, plus the separation of earth and seas.'

'That means we should show some animals.'

'They must be identifiably Australian.'

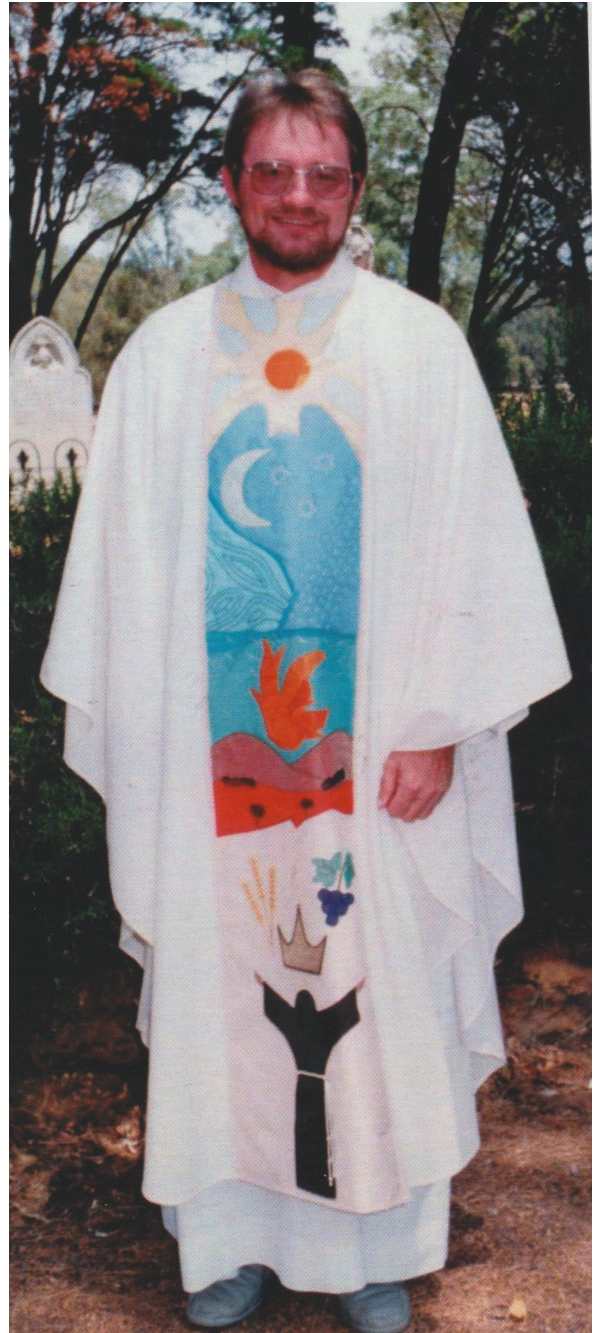
'Brother Fire is very Australian, and he was important to St Francis, too.'

'If St Francis is shown in adoration, the Eucharist was central to his worship.'

'The wheat and the grapes need to look Australian too.'

I was delighted and stunned when within weeks Kath turned up with a prototype of the chasuble. All the WA Tertiaries acclaimed its beauty and simplicity.

Kath finished the chasuble and we added it to our Regional worship immediately. In 1993, General Chapter and Conference was held in



*The Rev'd Keith Slater, Provincial Minister
1993-1999, wearing the Third Order Chasuble.*

Photo scanned from Franciscan Gold.

Swanleigh, just out of Perth. (That was the Conference when Compass Airlines collapsed, leaving some Eastern Staters without transport to Perth). It was also hot that January, almost too hot for chasubles. Even so, the new Minister Provincial, Keith Slater, wore it on its first outing to the Province.

It's been in constant use ever since, a testament to Kath's creative prowess.