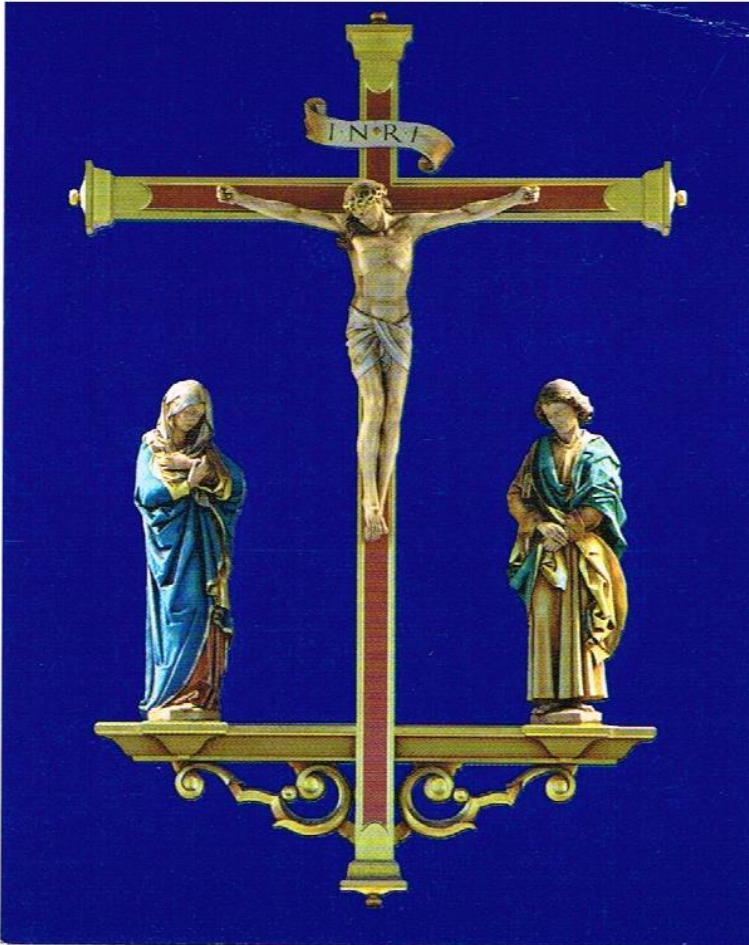




EAR Newsletter 2
Mid-Lent 2016
Hear EAR Here!



**The Rood is in Saint Mary & All Saints Church, Little
Walsingham, Norfolk.**

This is my second effort at producing a form of TAU 'magazine'. It relies on you, dear readers, to send your news to me so that I can spread it around. Email me: michaelsimmonds36@virginmedia.com Please inform me of any errors and criticise this publication so that it can be improved.

Please print copies for your fraternity members who do not have a computer and forward it to those who have.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I send this second electronic EAR Newsletter early, so that you may the better appreciate its contents during this Lenten period. Let us be grateful to those who have contributed contents. I look forward to more in the coming weeks. [I send the Cambridge minutes complete, as it is good to know how other fraternities function and we can learn from each other.]

**CAMBRIDGE 'OUR LADY OF THE POOR' FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR
FRANCISCAN ORDER – MINUTES OF THE MEETING AT OLEM ON SATURDAY
13 FEBRUARY 2016**

Present at the start of the meeting were Jaci Agarwala, Daphne Bristow, Sr. Rosalie Temple, Chris Whittam, Michael Mortimer (from Bedford OFS fraternity), and Noelle, a visitor. Trudie Warner and Trish Bridgeford both sent apologies for not being able to come for health reasons. Nick Brand soon joined us, and Peter Qualey arrived later. The meeting began with Opening Prayer from the Handbook and after this we together prayed the Saturday Office of Our Lady. During this Jaci invited each of us to name any special intentions. Michael asked that we hold in prayer absent OFS members and friends; Sr. Rosalie appealed for unborn children and an end to abortion; Noelle asked that we pray for those engaged in study, also for her Godchildren that they would come to know and love God. Daphne's prayerful intention was for her daughter, and recovery from ill-health. Nick's concern was for the homeless, likewise Chris, and Jaci chose lapsed, or non-practising Catholics, to pray for. We then offered an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, for the Pope's intentions, made our Franciscan Consecration to the Sacred Heart (from the Handbook), asked St. Joseph for his intercession (previous prayer of the month), and together sang 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace'.

From the minutes of our January fraternity meeting, where we had discussion on the Epiphany of Our Lord, and the relevance of the message of Christmas

today, Daphne gave a correction or further explanation on what she had said. While a star had brought the wise men to Jesus 2000 years ago, Daphne felt that today we have a new star, in Pope Francis, to show us the way to Jesus and to bring Christians together. Jaci drew our attention to a new video link to highlight Pope Francis' monthly prayer intention, which for February is focused on the environment and that we should pray for 'an increase of attention to and care of our common home' (thepopevideo.org/). Widespread poverty and the fragility of the planet demand changes in economic policies, freedom from consumerism and care for creation. Each month this year at our fraternity meetings we intend to read a brief extract from 'Laudato Si', Pope Francis' encyclical letter, followed by reflection, discussion, and prayer. The theme next month is 'Pollution and Climate Change'.

We then had reflection and discussion on the Day 4 reading from 'Lent and Easter Wisdom from St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi', in which we were urged to recognise our vocation and follow the call to holiness. Sr. Rosalie said we must focus on Our Lady and through her come to Jesus, who were 'crying out for souls'. Michael agreed, saying "no mother – no child". Our 'prayer of the month' is to be the Fourth Station of the Cross – 'Jesus meets his Mother' (Handbook page 138).

Jaci then read briefly from a letter 'On Prayer and Fasting' by Fr. Peter Carota, described as a traditional Catholic priest. In this letter Fr. Peter argues that prayer and penance, 'two fundamental elements of Christian life', have been diminished in the requirements and recommendations for Lenten observance in the Church, and he urges that 'we must follow the Way of the Cross ... May we, during this Lenten Season, hear the call of Jesus and Mary and engage ourselves to follow them in this crusade of prayer and penance'. By this time Fr. Anthony, assistant priest at OLEM, had joined us, and he led us in praying the Angelus. We had further discussion on the penitential nature of Lent, with Jaci reminding us that the OFS is an Order of Penance, and that more

than ever, in modern society, prayer and penance are necessary; our penances and self-denial are beneficial both for us and for others, and we should go beyond the light rules of the Church and engage in prayer and extra Lenten devotions, and fasting and almsgiving, for others and for the world.

Diary dates: 12 March next Fraternity meeting at OLEM; 7 May Day of Recollection in Norwich; 14 May 'Our Lady of the Poor' Fraternity pilgrimage to Walsingham. The secret bag collection was £35, and after the deduction of capitation and hall rental this left a new cash in hand sum of £15.66. We enjoyed a shared lunch and the meeting ended with Closing Prayer from the Handbook.

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Prayer is the light of the soul

[Divine Office – Friday after Ash Wednesday]

There is nothing more worthwhile than to pray to God and to converse with him, for prayer unites us with God as his companions. As our bodily eyes are illuminated by seeing the light, so in contemplating God our soul is illuminated by him. Of course the prayer I have in mind is no matter of routine, it is deliberate and earnest. It is not tied down to a fixed timetable; rather it is a state which endures by night and day.

Our soul should be directed in God, not merely when we suddenly think of prayer, but even when we are concerned with something else. If we are looking after the poor, if we are busy in some other way, or if we are doing any type of good work, we should season our actions with the desire and the remembrance of God. Through this salt of the love of God we can all become a sweet dish for the Lord. If we are generous in giving time to prayer, we will experience its benefits throughout our life.

Prayer is the light of the soul, giving us true knowledge of God. It is a link mediating between God and Man. By prayer the soul is borne up to heaven and in a marvellous way embraces the Lord. This meeting is like that of an infant crying on its mother, and seeking the best of milk. The soul longs for its own needs and what is received is better than anything to be seen in the world.

Prayer is a precious way of communicating with God, it gladdens the soul and gives repose to its affections. You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but the gift of God's grace. As St. Paul says: we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Anyone who receives from the Lord the gift of this type of prayer possesses a richness that is not to be taken from him [or her] a heavenly food filling up the soul. Once he [or she] has tasted this food, he [or she] is set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up the soul.

To set about this prayer, paint the house of your soul with modesty and lowliness and make it splendid with the light of justice. Adorn it with the beaten gold of good works and, for walls and stones, embellish it assiduously with faith and generosity. Above all, place prayer on top of this house as its roof so that the complete building may be ready for the Lord. Thus he [or she] will be received in a splendid royal house and by grace his image will already be settled in your soul. [St. John Chrysostom 347-407]

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REFLECTIONS ON MAUNDY THURSDAY

I have a Maundy Thursday poem that may be of interest. It was written some years ago when my disability made it not possible for me to attend Mass easily and I was very disappointed at missing the Holy Week services, particularly Maundy Thursday, my favourite. [Anne Murrin ofs]

COULD I HAVE REMAINED AWAKE?

At supper You shared Yourself with your friends
Exposed Yourself for all time;
“Eat this Bread” You said, “It’s My Body”
And then poured out Your Blood that was wine.

You shared the cup and broke the bread
And all of them partook
“We’re your friends” they said, “We love you Lord”
But one of them forsook.

One of them? Judas, alas, was not alone,
Though to betray Him for shekels he chose.
The others who swore to be His friends
Could not remain with Him close.

At the time our Lord felt most alone
With His human thoughts and fears
He pleaded to God in his despair
He sweated blood and tears.

He remained alone in His misery
In that garden dark and cold
He could not escape the agony
Of foreseeing His death as foretold.

And where were His friends when He needed them most?
They were not too far by.
He had begged of them to remain with Him
But He gave up with a sigh.

For all of them had fallen asleep –
It was the second time He’d asked
He’d wanted them to be near to Him,
To be aware of His gruesome task.

He wanted support, He wanted their love,
He simply wanted them near,
But some could not remain awake
And the others had fled in fear.

Oh Jesus! I wonder if I would have stayed?
I don't think I'd have known where to start.
Could I have laid my arm about You?
Could I have nursed Your broken heart?

Could I have borne to witness Your agony?
Could I have listened to the words on Your breath?
Could I have helped your unspeakable loneliness?
Could I have pictured Your gruesome death?

I feel sorry for the poor Apostles –
They got such a very bad press.
They were too human to cope with Your agony
So God with sleep did them bless.

For what You suffered in the garden
No earthly man could have borne
For though You were God made man
You suffered in human form.

We cannot begin to comprehend
Just what it was that You went through
In anticipation of Your death on the Cross.
And He did it for me and for you.

Maundy Thursday 2001 [Anne Murrin ofs]

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TIME FOR REFLECTION

Jesus spent forty days in the desert, reflecting and praying. The desert may be a hard place, but it is an ideal place for reflection and prayer.

This desert experience came at a crucial moment in the life of Jesus, a time of great awakening. It would be impossible to exaggerate its importance for him. As a result he grew to love solitude and made a habit of seeking it at difficult moments in his life. When people and events threatened to engulf him he would steal off to a lonely place to recover and re-dedicate himself to the Father. What he was doing was deepening his first desert experience.

We too need a lonely place for reflection. Often we live foolishly and unspiritually driven on by stupid desires and imprisoned by selfish habits. We are surrounded by noise and constant activity. We get our priorities wrong, we are unable to be alone, to be silent, to be still. And we wonder why we are not happy, why we don't find it easy to get on with others and why we can't pray.

We need solitude. In solitude we begin to stand on our own feet before God, and the world, and accept full responsibility for our own lives. The hermit goes into the desert, not to lose himself, but to find himself. In solitude we meet our demons, our lusts, our addictions, our anger, and our need for recognition and approval.

'Only in solitude and silence can I find gentleness
with which I can love my brothers and sisters.'

[Thomas Merton]

[From the St. Francis of Assisi parish newsletter, Shefford, Beds, donated by Michael Mortimer of St. Francis would agree with this.]

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My God, My All

Jesus, I kneel at your feet
and worship you, as it is meet;
I gaze at You and You at me –
I reach into eternity.

I gaze at you and what I see
is You Who died for love of me;
in your mind, from eternity,
I was already little me.

You formed this body I now use,
gave me a soul, a will to choose;
I was Baptised, You made me Yours –
that's how my life began its course,

O Jesus, when I gaze at You,
as I am sure you wish me to,
Your Glorious Face and Sacred Head
are shrouded in Transfigured Bread.

John wrote in Gospel lines to see
The Trinity, in mystery,
Philip, The Father asked to see,
You answered him, and also me;

“To see the Father, look at Me –
When you see Me, Him, too, you see;
He is in Me and I in Him”
And where they dwell there is no sin.

“I will not leave you orphans, no.
I will come back, but have to go;
in you both He and I will be,
from here and through eternity.”

“To Me each one of you is dear –
I will not leave you orphans here.
I’ll ask the Father and He’ll send
an ADVOCATE, your loss to mend.”

“That Advocate, our Spirit be,
Proceeding from Father and Me;
But We are One and so is He
and have been from eternity.”

“Because We love you I came here
to show you God, with awe, not fear;
The Father, Son and Spirit, three,
That Godhead you can see in Me.”

“If you love Me and My Word keep,
a sure rich harvest you will reap;
My Father will love you and We
will dwell with you eternally!”

[Michael Simmonds -22/9/09 – inspired by St. Clare and Exposition of the Blessed
Sacrament.]

[Based loosely on John 14, 8-23.]

I wish you all a holy preparation for Easter and a holy Eastertide. I am taking part in the Bedford Street Passion Play on Holy Saturday from 10:30. I am Caiaphas! Please send me more for the next Newsletter. Thanks to those who contributed to this one. We will discuss the merits or otherwise of this at our next Regional Meeting. Watch this space! Michael.