



Midland Franciscan

Newsletter of the Midland Region
of the Secular Franciscan Order GB

Spring 2018



Begin doing what you want to do now.
We are not living in eternity.
We have only this moment,
sparkling like a star in our hand - and
melting like a snowflake.

Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

And suddenly you know:
It's time to start something new and trust
the magic of beginnings.

Meister Eckhart (c.1260-1327/8)

Do everything as far as you can for love and
you will see what you are capable of! One
can make more progress this way in a year,
than in ten by the way of fear.

St. Mary Euphrasia (1796-1868)

Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt.

William Shakespeare. Measure for Measure.

Love and Live the OFS Rule.

11. Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

12. Witnessing to the good yet to come and obligated to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.

40 Years of the revised Rule

On 24th June we celebrate 40 years since the promulgation of the revised Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order.

From the OFS General Constitutions.

The brothers and sisters should love meeting God as His children and they should let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. They should seek to discover the presence of the Father in their own heart, in nature, and in the history of humanity in which His plan of salvation is fulfilled. (Article 12.3)

News and Reflections From Around the Region.

Midland Region Council

Regional Minister: Patrick McGuire: Vice– Minister: Margaret Williams: Secretary: Mark Bligh:
Treasurer: Adrian Goodall: Minister of Formation: Seán Ward: Presence in the World (JPIC): Bell Hunt

A Date for Your Diary: Saturday 26 May 2018 . Formation Study Day at Selly Park, Birmingham, led by John Power OFS, National Formation Minister. Professed members, candidates for profession, enquirers and visitors are all invited to attend. Further details will be given early in 2018 through local fraternities. This is also an opportunity for members of the Order in the Midland Region to meet together. Each Participant is invited to donate £10 to cover the costs of the day. See programme at the end of this newsletter.

Clay Cross

Thoughts for Spring 2018

A rough original (non-dictionary) definition of my Professional Business of CIVIL ENGINEERING is;

“To best utilise the God given resources of Earth to create infrastructure and construction for the benefit of mankind.”

Now as a Franciscan, I can find myself in somewhat a deep dispute of this abuse of the Earth. But where would we be without using these resources left for us on Earth. We use chemicals to allow us to treat and then drink water. We have used rock and clay to build shelter for ourselves when we moved out of the caves. We use liquids and solids out of the ground for a massive number of uses and we have cultured the land to feed ourselves.

Some of what we do brings doubt. We create vehicles of many types to transport us and goods. Has this made things better, or just faster and more complicated?

Indeed, I wouldn't have a job if we didn't develop things the way we have. But are the people in undeveloped countries that much worse off? We would have to say yes. Do they have water and food? Many times the answer is no. So the responsible thing to do is to assist these people to at least achieve survival. We none of us should really have half the luxuries we have.

God designed us to be clever, but are we too clever for our own good, have we made an irrecoverable mess in doing so?

When you have had a moment's thought, make up your own mind, it might surprise you.

Blessings to One and All, Adrian Goodall ofs.

Congratulations to Phil Aldred, who made her profession at Clay Cross on 22 March 2018

May the Lord bless her and keep her. May the Lord show His face to her and have mercy on her. May He turn His countenance to her and give her peace. The Lord bless her!

Oxford

Congratulations to Eamonn McNamara, who made his profession at Greyfriars on 17 March 2018.

May the Lord bless him and keep him. May the Lord show His face to him and have mercy on him. May He turn His countenance to him and give him peace. The Lord bless him!

An address given at Nazareth by Blessed Pope Paul VI. The example of Nazareth

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus – the school of the Gospel.

The first lesson we learn here is to look, to listen, to meditate and penetrate the meaning – at once so deep and so mysterious – of this very simple, very humble and very beautiful manifestation of the Son of God. Perhaps we learn, even imperceptibly, the lesson of imitation.

Here we learn the method which will permit us to understand who Christ is. Here above all is made clear the importance of taking into account the general picture of his life among us, with its varied background of place, of time, of customs, of language, of religious practices – in fact, everything Jesus made use of to reveal himself to the world. Here everything is eloquent, all has a meaning.

Here, in this school, one learns why it is necessary to have a spiritual rule of life, if one wishes to follow the teaching of the Gospel and become a disciple of Christ.

How gladly would I become a child again, and go to school once more in this humble and sublime school of Nazareth: close to Mary, I wish I could make a fresh start at learning the true science of life and the higher wisdom of divine truths.

But I am only a passing pilgrim. I must renounce this desire to pursue in this home my still incomplete education in the understanding of the Gospel. I will not go on my way however without having gathered – hurriedly, it is true, and as if wanting to escape notice – some brief lessons from Nazareth.

First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for silence, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us, besieged as we are by so many uplifted voices, the general noise and uproar, in our seething and over-sensitized modern life.

May the silence of Nazareth teach us recollection, inwardness, the disposition to listen to good inspirations and the teachings of true masters. May it teach us the need for and the value of preparation, of study, of meditation, of personal inner life, of the prayer which God alone sees in secret.

Next, there is a lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character. Let us learn from Nazareth that the formation received at home is gentle and irreplaceable. Let us learn the prime importance of the role of the family in the social order.

Finally, there is a lesson of work. Nazareth, home of the ‘Carpenter’s Son’, in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work; here I would restore the awareness of the nobility of work; and reaffirm that work cannot be an end in itself, but that its freedom and its excellence derive, over and above its economic worth, from the value of those for whose sake it is undertaken. And here at Nazareth, to conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern, their brother who is God. He is the prophet of all their just causes, Christ our Lord.

We moderns, tainted by the scientific method, have forgotten how to read sacred literature. We look for empirical truth when the stories are full of mythical, symbolic images. In order to understand our Scriptures, we must be willing to look for the symbols, to treat sacred stories as powerful, truth-bearing stories, not historical reporting.

Richard Rohr. Jesus’s Plan For A New World. The Sermon on the Mount.

LOOK UP!

A Network for Grateful Living is a global organization offering online and community-based educational programs and practices which inspire and guide a commitment to *grateful living*, and catalyze the transformative power of personal and societal responsibility.

We hold *grateful living* as an engaged mindfulness practice, grounded in both wisdom and science, which supports our ability to see the wonder and opportunity in every moment, and motivates us to act boldly with love, generosity, and respect towards one another, ourselves, and the Earth.

<https://gratefulness.org>

The Omega Center is an online forum striving to facilitate a deepening of consciousness, conversation, and connection as we seek God in our scientific age. The website is dedicated to education, formation, and inspiration in the converging fields of science and theology and exists to promote and support the work of Ilia Delio, OSF.

The Omega Center seeks to provide a way to engage science and theology, through the lens of Ilia Delio's work, facilitating a deepening of human consciousness by inviting visitors to:

Think: engaging topics of educational material which draws upon issues in science and religion.

Become: providing contemplative forms of integration, participatory reflection, and responsive creativity.

Act: inviting visitors to engage their local communities in Omega-related discussion, join the dynamic online learning platform done in community at the Omega Center, and participate in Omega events.

"The fragmentation of our age reflects a deep need for a new consciousness of connection." This website will seek to address this need by differentiating the critical differences in the following three fundamental questions: Becoming or surviving? Thinking or reacting? Hope or futility?

<https://www.omegacenter.info>

Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity. (CUSP)

Prosperity Matters . A prosperous society is concerned not only with income and financial wealth, but also with the health and wellbeing of its citizens, with their access to good quality education, and with their prospects for decent and rewarding work. Prosperity enables basic individual rights and freedoms. But it must also deliver the ability for people to participate meaningfully in common projects. Ultimately, prosperity must offer society a credible and inclusive vision of social progress. The over-arching goal of CUSP is to contribute to that essential task.

<https://www.cusp.ac.uk/>

The World Community for Christian Meditation. (WCCM) Meditation is a universal spiritual wisdom and a practice found at the core of all the great religious traditions, leading from the mind to the heart. It is a way of simplicity, silence and stillness. It can be practised by anyone, wherever you are on your life's journey. It is only necessary to be clear about the practice and then to begin – and to keep on beginning.
wccm.org



Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me a correct faith, a certain hope and a perfect charity, sense and knowledge Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command.

Francis of Assisi. Prayer before the Crucifix.

God's Philosophers. How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science. James Hannam
Icon Books 2010. Paperback and Kindle versions available.

"In the Middle Ages, to know the natural world [science] was to know God [theology] and it was precisely the consonance between nature and scripture that gave rise to the great summations or cosmological-theological worldviews. The divorce between science and religion is less than two centuries old and is based on the distortion of facts that include Galileo's confirmation of heliocentrism and the discoveries of Columbus and Darwin." (Ilia Delio OSF: God Loves To Do New Things. Omega Center - Blog - 23 December 2017)

I was struck by this comment in Sr. Ilia's blog as I had just finished reading James Hannam's book. Hannam demonstrates, in a most lively and entertaining way, just how much of the science and technology that we now take for granted has medieval origins. He writes:

"The most famous remark made by Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was: 'If I have seen a little further then it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.' Few people realise, however, that Newton's aphorism was first coined in the twelfth century by the theologian Bernard of Chartres (who died around 1130).

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church actively supported a great deal of science, but it also decided that philosophical speculation should not impinge on theology. Ironically, by keeping philosophers focused on nature instead of metaphysics, the limitations set by the Church may even have benefited science in the long term. Furthermore and contrary to popular belief, the Church never supported the idea that the earth is flat, never banned human dissection, never banned zero and certainly never burnt anyone at the stake for scientific ideas. The most famous clash between science and religion was the trial of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) in 1633. Academic historians are now convinced that this had as much to do with politics and the Pope's self-esteem as it did with science."

Hannam describes the work of a number of medieval scholars including Roger Bacon (1214–92) the English Franciscan who investigated light; Richard of Wallingford (1292–1336) astronomer and abbot of the monastery of St Albans who invented new astronomical instruments and built a renowned clock. Andreas Vesalius, (1514–64) the anatomist from the Netherlands whose book "On the Fabric of the Human Body" tried to reform the work of the Greek physician, Galen; his student Gabriele Fallopio, (1523–62) who first identified the fallopian tubes; Nicholas of Cusa (1400–64) theologian and mathematician who speculated on a limitless universe and life on other planets; Nicolaus Copernicus, (1473–1543) Polish priest who remodelled the universe with the sun instead of the earth at its centre; William Gilbert (1540–1603), a London doctor whose book "On the Magnet" is celebrated as a seminal work of experimental science; Johannes Kepler (1571 – 1630), a German mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, best known for his laws of planetary motion; and, of course, Galileo.

Seán Ward OFS

From: Bonaventure, Major Life of St. Francis, VIII, 6. Everything comes from the same source.

The realization that everything comes from the same source filled Francis with greater affection than ever and he called even the most insignificant creatures his brothers and sisters, because he knew they had the same origin as himself. However, he reserved his most tender compassion for those creatures which are a natural reflection of Christ's gentleness and are used in Sacred Scripture as figures of him. He often rescued lambs, which were being led off to be slaughtered, in memory of the Lamb of God who willed to be put to death to save sinners.

From a sermon by St Gregory Nazianzen.

Two bodies, but a single spirit

Basil and I were both in Athens. We had come, like streams of a river, from the same source in our native land, had separated from each other in pursuit of learning, and were now united again as if by plan, for God so arranged it.

I was not alone at that time in my regard for my friend, the great Basil. I knew his irreproachable conduct, and the maturity and wisdom of his conversation. I sought to persuade others, to whom he was less well known, to have the same regard for him. Many fell immediately under his spell, for they had already heard of him by reputation and hearsay.

What was the outcome? Almost alone of those who had come to Athens to study he was exempted from the customary ceremonies of initiation for he was held in higher honour than his status as a first-year student seemed to warrant.

Such was the prelude to our friendship, the kindling of that flame that was to bind us together. In this way we began to feel affection for each other. When, in the course of time, we acknowledged our friendship and recognised that our ambition was a life of true wisdom, we became everything to each other: we shared the same lodging, the same table, the same desires the same goal. Our love for each other grew daily warmer and deeper.

The same hope inspired us: the pursuit of learning. This is an ambition especially subject to envy. Yet between us there was no envy. On the contrary, we made capital out of our rivalry. Our rivalry consisted, not in seeking the first place for oneself but in yielding it to the other, for we each looked on the other's success as his own.

We seemed to be two bodies with a single spirit. Though we cannot believe those who claim that everything is contained in everything, yet you must believe that in our case each of us was in the other and with the other.

Our single object and ambition was virtue, and a life of hope in the blessings that are to come; we wanted to withdraw from this world before we departed from it. With this end in view we ordered our lives and all our actions. We followed the guidance of God's law and spurred each other on to virtue. If it is not too boastful to say, we found in each other a standard and rule for discerning right from wrong.

Different men have different names, which they owe to their parents or to themselves, that is, to their own pursuits and achievements. But our great pursuit, the great name we wanted, was to be Christians, to be called Christians.

Brethren and friends, let us never allow ourselves to misuse what has been given us by God's gift. If we do, we shall hear Saint Peter say: Be ashamed of yourselves for holding on to what belongs to someone else. Resolve to imitate God's justice, and no one will be poor. Let us not labour to heap up and hoard riches while others remain in need.

St Gregory Nazianzen

News from the International Council

Press Release

The International Fraternity of the OFS today voted to have permanent offices for formation, communication and JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) with the aim of improving the functioning of these areas and decentralizing the management of the CIOFS Presidency.

In the first case, the intention is to better coordinate the work carried out at the international level in regard to both initial and on-going formation, with the ultimate goal of deepening the sense of identity and belonging to the OFS.

Regarding JPIC, a secretariat will be established to coordinate activities and to collaborate with other organizations in the Franciscan Family with similar areas of interest.

Finally, a communications office will be established to bring the life of the international fraternity closer to the brothers and sisters scattered around the world.

The above are measures approved by the General Chapter to improve the management of the Secular Franciscan Order in its entirety. In addition, the Chapter approved the creation of an international register of local fraternities; that national fraternities establish national registers of Secular Franciscans; the establishment of a group of experts; collaboration with the Franciscan Family and the development of a financial strategy.

However, the most emotional moments of the day were when presentations were made on causes of beatification and canonization of two Secular Franciscans who gave their lives as martyrs for their faith: Lucien Botovasoa, a teacher from Madagascar, and Franz Jägerstätter an Austrian farmer.

Immediately following, a report was given on the beginning process of the causes for the beatification of Augusto Natali (Italy), one of the precursors of the international fraternity, and for General Ministers Manuela Mattioli (Venezuela) and Emanuela de Nunzio (Italy), whose death was six years ago today.

Rome, November 10, 2017 Reprinted from "Vox Franciscana".



Lucien Botovasoa (1908 – 14 April 1947) was a Madagascan Roman Catholic school-teacher and a professed member from the Secular Franciscan Order. Lucien served as a teacher for his entire life and was dedicated to both the religious and secular education of children. His thirst for the religious life led him to discover the Secular Franciscan Order in 1940 and he became part of it; he taught others about Saint Francis of Assisi and encouraged them to enter the Order.

Lucien was murdered during a period of unrest in Madagascar and his cause for canonization opened on 11 October 2011 under Pope Benedict XVI in which he named as a Servant of God.

Pope Francis confirmed in mid-2017 that Lucien was killed for the Faith and decreed that he be beatified. The ceremony will take place in Vohipeno, Madagasca, on 15 April 2018.

A homily of Pseudo-Chrysostom. Prayer is the light of the soul

The highest good is prayer and conversation with God, because it means that we are in God's company and in union with him. When light enters our bodily eyes our eyesight is sharpened; when a soul is intent on God, God's inextinguishable light shines into it and makes it bright and clear. I am talking, of course, of prayer that comes from the heart and not from routine: not the prayer that is assigned to particular days or particular moments in time, but the prayer that happens continuously by day and by night.

Indeed the soul should not only turn to God at times of explicit prayer. Whatever we are engaged in, whether it is care for the poor, or some other duty, or some act of generosity, we should remember God and long for God. The love of God will be as salt is to food, making our actions into a perfect dish to set before the Lord of all things. Then it is right that we should receive the fruits of our labours, overflowing onto us through all eternity, if we have been offering them to him throughout our lives.

Prayer is the light of the soul, true knowledge of God, a mediator between God and men. Prayer lifts the soul into the heavens where it hugs God in an indescribable embrace. The soul seeks the milk of God like a baby crying for the breast. It fulfils its own vows and receives in exchange gifts better than anything that can be seen or imagined.

Prayer is a go-between linking us to God. It gives joy to the soul and calms its emotions. I warn you, though: do not imagine that prayer is simply words. Prayer is the desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not given by man but brought about by God's grace. As St Paul says: For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf in a way that could never be put into words.

If God gives to someone the gift of such prayer, it is a gift of imperishable riches, a heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. Whoever tastes that food catches fire and his soul burns for ever with desire for the Lord.

To begin on this path, start by adorning your house with modesty and humility. Make it shine brightly with the light of justice. Decorate it with the gold leaf of good works, with the jewels of faithfulness and greatness of heart. Finally, to make the house perfect, raise a gable above it all, a gable of prayer. Thus you will have prepared a pure and sparkling house for the Lord. Receive the Lord into this royal and splendid dwelling — in other words: receive, by his grace, his image into the temple of your soul.

The Office of Readings. Friday following Ash Wednesday.

It is the domestic Church that converts us; it is the job of the liturgical Church to send us back there. It is the unexciting world of details, diapers and "women who have lost one dime" (see Luke 15:8-10) that appears to offer the teachable moment for Jesus. It is much more, it seems, than the world of stipends, sermons and sacristies, which tend to become their own industry.

Richard Rohr. Jesus's Plan For A New World. The Sermon on the Mount.

Non-Violent Resistance to Evil



Franz Jägerstätter – OFS Martyr

Franz Jägerstätter was born on May 20 1907 in Sankt Radegund, Upper Austria, a small village near Salzburg. He was the illegitimate child of Rosalia Huber, a chambermaid, and Franz Bachmeier, a farmer.

As his parents could not afford a marriage, Franz was first cared for by his grandmother, Elisabeth Huber. His natural father was killed in World War I when he was still a child, and when his mother married in 1917, Franz was adopted by her husband, Heinrich Jägerstätter.

In his youth, Franz gained a reputation for being a wild fellow, but, in general, his daily life was like that of most Austrian peasants. He worked as a farmhand, and also as a miner, until, in 1933, he inherited the farmstead of his foster father.

On Maundy Thursday of 1936, he married Franziska Schwaninger (1913–2013), a deeply religious woman. After the ceremony, the bridal couple proceeded on a pilgrimage to Rome. Inspired by his wife, Franz began to study the bible and the life of saints. The marriage produced three daughters.

When German troops moved into Austria in March 1938, Franz rejected the offered position as Radegund mayor. He was the only person in the village to vote against the *Anschluss* in the plebiscite of 10 April; nevertheless, the local authorities suppressed his dissent, and announced unanimous approval.

Although he was not involved with any political organization, and did undergo one brief period of military training, he remained openly anti-Nazi.

On 8 December 1940, he joined the Third Order of Saint Francis and, from summer 1941, worked as a sacristan at the local parish church, being deferred from military service four times.

Drafted for the first time on June 17 1940, Franz, aged 33, was again conscripted into the German Wehrmacht armed forces in October, and completed his training at the Enns garrison.

He had to take the Hitler oath, but could return home in 1941 under an exemption as a farmer. Faced with his experiences in military service, the suppression of the church, as well as reports on the Nazi T4 'euthanasia' programme, he began to examine the morality of the war.

He even proceeded to Linz to discuss this with his bishop but emerged from the conversation saddened that the episcopate seemed afraid to confront the issues.

After many delays, Franz was finally called to active duty on February 23 1943. By this time, he had three daughters with his wife, the eldest not quite six.

He maintained his position against fighting for Nazi Germany and, upon entering the Wehrmacht garrison in Enns on March 1, declared his conscientious objection.

His offer to serve as a paramedic was ignored. He was immediately arrested, first at the Linz remand prison, from May 4 at Berlin-Tegel. A priest from his village visited him in jail and tried to talk him into serving, but failed.

Continued overleaf

When he heard of the faith of the Austrian priest Franz Reinisch, who had been executed for his refusal to take the Hitler oath, he was destined to go his way.

Franz was criticised by his countrymen, especially by those who had served in the military, for failing in his duty as a husband and father.

Accused of undermining military morale, Franz was sentenced to death in a military trial in Berlin on July 6 1943.

He was deported to Brandenburg Prison on August 9, where he was executed by guillotine in the afternoon, aged 36. After the war, in 1946, his ashes were buried at the Sankt Radegund cemetery.

Franz was criticised by his countrymen, especially by those who had served in the military, for failing in his duty as a husband and father.

The municipality of Sankt Radegund at first refused to put his name on the local war memorial and a pension for his widow was not approved until 1950.

Franz's fate was not well known until 1964, when US sociologist Gordon Zahn published his biography, *In Solitary Witness*. Thomas Merton, the famed Trappist monk and peace activist, included a chapter about Franz Jägerstätter in his book *Faith and Violence* (1968).

In June 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued an apostolic exhortation declaring Franz a martyr.

On October 6 2007, he was beatified in a ceremony held by Cardinal José Saraiva Martins at the New Cathedral in Linz.

His feast day is the day of his Baptism, 21 May.

(With thanks to Deacon Richard Budgen. Minister, Oxford Fraternity.)

Sophie Scholl

Sophia Magdalena Scholl (9 May 1921 – 22 February 1943) was a German student and anti-Nazi political activist, active within the White Rose non-violent resistance group in Nazi Germany. She was convicted of high treason after having been found distributing anti-war leaflets at the University of Munich (LMU) with her brother, Hans. As a result, they were both executed by guillotine. Since the 1970s, Scholl has been extensively commemorated for her anti-Nazi resistance work.

Sophie was brought up in the Lutheran church. In 1930, the family moved to Ludwigsburg and then two years later to Ulm where her father had a business office.

At the age of twelve, she joined the Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls), as did most of her classmates. Her initial enthusiasm gradually gave way to criticism. She was aware of the dissenting political views of her father, friends, and some teachers.

In spring 1941 she began an obligatory six-month stint in the auxiliary war service as a nursery teacher in Blumberg. The military-like regimen of the National Labour Service caused her to think very hard about the political situation. She began as well to practise passive resistance. After her six months in the Labour Service, in May 1942, she enrolled at the University of Munich. Her brother Hans, who was studying medicine there, introduced her to his friends, all of whom were anti-Nazi. In Munich, Sophie met a number of artists, writers, and philosophers, particularly Carl Muth and Theodor Haecker, who were important contacts for her.



See Overleaf

The question they pondered the most was how the individual must act under a dictatorship.

Religion was important in Sophie's life; she had given two volumes of Cardinal John Henry Newman's sermons to her boyfriend, Fritz Hartnagel when he was deployed to the eastern front in May 1942. In their correspondence Sophie and Fritz discussed the "theology of conscience" developed in Newman's writings.

During the summer vacation in 1942, Sophie had to do war service in a metallurgical plant in Ulm. At the same time, her father was serving time in prison for having made a critical remark to an employee about Hitler.

Sophie learned of the White Rose pamphlet when she found one at her university. Discovering that her brother had helped to compose the pamphlet, Sophie herself began to work with the White Rose group.

With six core members, three more White Rose pamphlets were created and circulated over the summer of 1942. Sophie helped to copy, distribute, and mail pamphlets while also managing the group's finances.

She and the rest of the White Rose were arrested for distributing the sixth leaflet at the University of Munich on 18 February 1943. In the People's Court on 22 February 1943, Sophie said: "Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did."

On 22 February 1943, Sophie, her brother, Hans, and their friend, Christoph Probst, were found guilty of treason and condemned to death. They were all beheaded by a guillotine in Munich's Stadelheim Prison only a few hours later. She walked with great courage to her execution. Her last words were: "How can we expect righteousness to prevail when there is hardly anyone willing to give himself up individually to a righteous cause? Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go, but what does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action? "

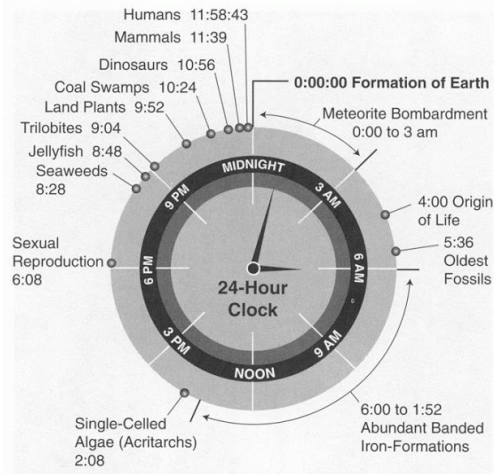
"Stand up for what you believe in even if you are standing alone."

Sophie Scholl

Living Christ, deep within my heart the fire of justice burns; so I ask this day for inner courage to walk in solidarity with all who are betrayed, exploited, driven from home, violated, imprisoned, detained without trial, held hostage, robbed, enslaved, silenced, abused. From the Iona Prayer Book.

"The extravagant abundance with which the Earth's table is laid is meant to be a blessing from God for all. However, human frailty has often turned this blessing into a temptation that feeds human greed. People have amassed goods, thinking that these treasures will diminish their vulnerability and compensate for their sense of insecurity and inadequacy in the face of the contingencies of life. They do not see themselves as part of the wonders of Earth, but as titleholders and unrestricted authorities over all. Such an attitude presumes that Earth's wealth is meant primarily, even exclusively, for human enhancement. It rejects, if it even considers, the intrinsic value of Earth and all that comes from Earth." Dianne Bergant. *A New Heaven, A New Earth. The Bible and Catholicity*. Orbis Books 2016.

This is another splendid book in the excellent *Catholicity in an Evolving Universe* series. Sr. Dianne Bergant explores the relationship between Scripture and science, with ecojustice as the major theme. Although the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago the message of the Scriptures is nevertheless still remarkably relevant to the dilemmas and paradoxes of our modern day lives. Sadly we have not evolved very far; we are still madly ambitious for power, possessions and prestige.



Picture from flowingdata.com via Google.
Original source unknown.

Picture the history of Sister Mother Earth as a 24 hour clock. Humans arrived at 11:58:43pm. We are the last -comers, the destroyers. Just who do we think we are, smashing up God's creation? The authors of the Books of Isaiah and Job tell us, with marvellous poetry and in no uncertain terms, what they think God says about our arrogance.

Job 38: 4-18.

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Tell me, if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

Who stretched a measuring line across it?

On what were its footings set,

or who laid its cornerstone—

while the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?

"Who shut up the sea behind doors

when it burst forth from the womb,

when I made the clouds its garment

and wrapped it in thick darkness,

when I fixed limits for it

and set its doors and bars in place,

when I said, 'This far you may come and

no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'?

"Have you ever given orders to the morning,

or shown the dawn its place,

that it might take the earth by the edges

and shake the wicked out of it?

The earth takes shape like clay under a seal;

its features stand out like those of a garment.

The wicked are denied their light,

and their upraised arm is broken.

"Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea
or walked in the recesses of the deep?

Have the gates of death been shown to you?

Have you seen the gates of the deepest

darkness?

Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the
earth? Tell me, if you know all this.

Isaiah 45: 8-12

Shower, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,
and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also;
I the LORD have created it.

Woe to you who strive with your Maker,
earthen vessels with the potter!

Does the clay say to the one who fashions it,

"What are you making"?

or "Your work has no handles"?

Woe to anyone who says to a father,

"What are you begetting?"

or to a woman,

"With what are you in labour?"

Thus says the LORD,

the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:

Will you question me about my children,

or command me concerning the work of my hands?

I made the earth,

and created humankind upon it;

it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,

and I commanded all their host.

Young Franciscan

St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio.

Once upon a time in a town in Italy called Gubbio, there was a fierce wolf who had been killing farm animals and even killing some of the people, including children.

During his visit to Gubbio, Francis went out to meet the wolf. When the wolf saw Francis, he came charging at the saint with his mouth open, ready to attack. Francis immediately made the sign of the cross over him and said, "Come here, Brother Wolf. I command you on behalf of Christ that you do no harm to me or to anyone."

As soon as Francis did this, wolf closed his mouth and stopped running; and once the command was given, it came meekly as a lamb, and threw itself at the feet of Francis.



Francis told off the Wolf for destroying and killing the creatures of God. "The whole town is complaining about you," Francis told the wolf gently. "But I want to make peace between you and the people. And so I promise that I will have food given to you regularly, Brother Wolf, by the people of this town so that you will no longer suffer hunger. And I want you, Brother Wolf, to promise that you will never harm any human person or animal." The wolf showed agreement by simply bowing his head.

And so Francis asked the people of the town if they will promise to provide food for wolf regularly. They said they would feed the wolf. Finally, Francis asked the wolf to give a guarantee in front of all of the people that he will no longer harm anybody in Gubbio or any animals. Then, the wolf agreed, lifting his right paw, placed it in the hand of Saint Francis. Because of this action there was such rejoicing and wonder among all the people. They all began to praise and bless God who sent Francis to them who, through his merits, had freed them from the cruel beast.

Afterwards that same wolf lived in Gubbio for two years, and he tamely entered the houses, going from door to door, without doing any harm to anyone and without any being done to him; and he was kindly fed by the people. Finally after two years Brother Wolf died of old age, which made the citizens very sad. The wolf had become like a pet dog to them.

"The invitation to be contemplative is nothing new, but it now carries with it an urgency particular to our time. This call to live contemplatively is offered to everyone. Often we want to relegate such a practice or lifestyle to the "religious" or "spiritual" in our midst, but the simple truth is that we have all been given eyes to see. We simply need to choose to live with vision. What is becoming more apparent by the day is that we must all become contemplatives, not merely in the way we reflect or pray, but in the way we live—awake, alert, engaged, ready to respond in love to the groanings of creation. Human life depends upon our living this way. It is important not to confuse contemplative living with passive living. In our faith tradition, contemplation has always required response—not just interiorly, but out in the world where the fruits of our prayer and reflection are tested and tasted by all we encounter. The contemplative response requires our blood, sweat, and tears. It asks us to die to ourselves again and again and again so that all creation might live. Anything less is useless sympathy. A real contemplative, rather than being passive and unresponsive, is actively and passionately engaged, moved by the Spirit and motivated by love."

Judy Cannato, "Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe." This book is a wonderful collection of reflections, prayers and meditations which brings together the worlds of science and religion. Highly recommended.

Seán Ward OFS

Scripture Stop.



Colossians 2:16-3:4: **New life in Christ.**

From now onwards, never let anyone else decide what you should eat or drink, or whether you are to observe annual festivals, New Moons or sabbaths. These were only pale reflections of what was coming: the reality is Christ. Do not be taken in by people who like grovelling to angels and worshipping them; people like that are always going on about some vision they have had, inflating themselves to a false importance with their worldly outlook. A man of this sort is not united to the head, and it is the head that adds strength and holds the whole body together, with all its joints and sinews – and this is the only way in which it can reach its full growth in God. If you have really died with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you still let rules dictate to you, as though you were still living in the world? 'It is forbidden to pick up this, it is forbidden to taste that, it is forbidden to touch something else'; all these prohibitions are only concerned with things that perish by their very use – an example of human doctrines and regulations! It may be argued that true wisdom is to be found in these, with their self-imposed devotions, their self-abasement, and their severe treatment of the body; but once the flesh starts to protest, they are no use at all. Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him..

The Last Word. From the Regional Minister.

Maternal and Feminine Image of God.

Francis's ideal of an all-inclusive community-or Family-seems to have developed from, or been influenced by, a strong maternal concept of God. Erich Fromm describes the maternal concept in this way:

In the matriarchal aspect of religion, I love God as an all- embracing mother. I have faith in her love, that no matter whether I have sinned, she will love me, she will not prefer any other of her children to me, she will rescue me, will save me, will forgive me.

Psychologically speaking, this seems to be the concept of God that Francis enjoyed. It might be a natural result of his closeness to his own mother, Pica, and his possible rejection of the father image as seen in his pained relationship with his own father, Pietro. In my years of teaching in many cultures, I have found Erich Fromm's insight to be continuously true: " The character of the love of God depends on the respective weight that each group gives to the matriarchal and patriarchal aspects of religion "

Richard Rohr: Eager to Love (p133-134)

Dates for the Diary. Elections: Nottingham, Saturday 07/04/18 Starting with Mass 10am.

Stourbridge, Saturday 14/04/18 Starting with Mass 10am. Clay Cross Thursday 31/05/18

Midland Region Formation Day: Saturday 26/05/18

National Elections: 14-16 September 2018 at High Leigh (Christian Conference Center, Hoddeston, Herts.) Please pray for the success of these meetings and support them where you can.

Patrick McGuire OFS

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis

Midland Region. Formation Day.

Saturday 26th May 2018

Venue: St. Paul's Convent - 94 Selly Park Rd, Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7LL

Programme

10 - 10.40am Arrivals. Tea/Coffee

10.40 - 10.55 am Morning Prayer. (Saturday Week 7 in Ordinary Time)

10.55 -11am Introduction – Seán Ward, Regional Formation Minister

11am -12 noon. John Power

12 - 12.10pm Comfort Break

12.10 - 12.55pm John Power

1 - 2pm LUNCH Shared Table – Please bring a little food to share.

2 - 3.30pm John Power

3.30 - 3.35pm Closing Remarks - Pat McGuire

3.35 - 4pm Tea/Coffee

4pm - 4.15 Evening Prayer. (Evening Prayer 1 Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity) and Departure.

This day is open to Professed and Admitted Members of the Order, Enquirers and Visitors.

Participants are invited to donate £10 each to assist with the costs of the day.

Train travel: change at Birmingham New Street for Selly Oak or Bournville Stations. Short taxi ride from those stations to venue.

Local Taxis: Castle Cars 0121 472 2222 www.castlecars.co.uk

Yugo Taxis 0121 655 5555 www.yugocabs.com