



Secular Franciscan Order

South East Region

ISSUE 19 – SUMMER 2015

*Building the Kingdom of God
with Living Stones*

A PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

Fear God and glorify Him!
You are worthy, Lord,
to receive honour and praise.
Praise the Lord, all you who fear Him.
Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Bless the Lord, heaven and earth,
Bless Him, seas and rivers;
Children of God, praise the Lord!
This is the day the Lord has made,
let us rejoice and be glad.
You are the King of Israel.
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord, for he is good;
Let all who read this praise the Lord!
Bless the Lord, all you His works,
you birds of heaven, praise the Lord!
Bless the Lord, all you children,
young men and maidens,
Praise the Lord!
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive
praise, honour and glory.
Blessed be the Holy Trinity
and Undivided Unity.
Holy Michael the Archangel, defend us!



Apparently St Francis inscribed these invocations with his own hand on a wooden table. It was intended for the altar of the hermitage at Cesi di Termini in Umbria.

Dear brothers and sisters

I hope you will indulge me while I talk to you about bees. I have wanted to talk to you about them for some time and as we are now in this wonderful summer time and the bees are frantically making honey it is an exciting time.



Male

When I first started to keep honey bees I was in awe of what they do and I continue to be so as they have so much to teach us. In many ways they are so incredibly like people. Their roles are gender specific, the males only have one job and the females multitask and are ultimately in charge!!! Work is everything for bees, each one has a specially designated job to do and as they get older in their short lives they move through a system of roles from nurse bees that look after the young and keep the hive spotless; to feeding the male bees; to forager bees who go out to collect pollen and nectar, the food for the young and the adults; to guard bees who protect the hive, and who may be called on to give the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to protect their community.

Religious communities are well known for keeping honey bees. It was the stories about John Bradburne having a hive under his desk that awakened my dormant interest in keeping them myself. Humans have been working with bees for centuries. It used to be that they lived both in man-made hives and in the wild but sadly with the parasite varroa living on their backs they would simply die out completely, weakened by disease, if people did not look after them. Very few honey bees live in the wild in England today.

I am working hard to find a way of building a friendly relationship with my bees. Actually it is not as straightforward as some romantically seem to imply. Today I visited a local apiary where the apiarists had been removing honey from the hives. Unfortunately for me the bees were still madly searching for the thief and it was all I could do to get back in the car without being stung. With my own bees it is always a delicate balance between inspecting the hives thoroughly for signs of disease or swarm preparation and upsetting them. If they think I am stealing from them then you can guarantee that they will find any vulnerable flesh that I have not covered. And it is fair enough, because I have stolen from them, though I always made sure I left plenty of honey for them!

Of course everyone is talking about bees these days and how we need to save them, but saving bees goes to the core of what is wrong in the world today. It taps into the desire to exert power, to control nature's resources, for an ever growing economy, and for the desire to make money. For me, the vulnerable position of bees in our world does in some way mirror the vulnerable position of humanity on our planet, but in such a way that it had felt like nobody was really properly listening. Interestingly, recently on a bank holiday when it was raining after a long dry period the priest at Mass, tongue in cheek, commented that perhaps God had heard the cry of the plants for rain rather than our cry for good weather, and it reminded me a little of the cry of the Israelites to be released from slavery in Egypt. If creation had a voice what would it really be saying? I wonder.

That is why the Pope's new encyclical Laudato Si is such a blessing and it brings to the fore what for me and perhaps for you too, is a Franciscan way of living in the world; that is of treading lightly, and simply, being dedicated to the service of God in our secular state; of bringing issues relating to social concerns, justice, peace, ethics and the environment to completeness by placing Christ at the centre of everything we do. This means bringing our rule into every single thing that we do in our daily life, from turning the heating on, to where we do our shopping and what we buy. It is helpful to remember that what we do in our consumer driven world really does have an impact on our poverty stricken brothers and sisters on the other side of the world even when we are alone in our homes.



Female

Pope Francis reminds us that when those who have plenty still decide to turn the heating down and put more jumpers on, it is a blessing for the world. Those small simple things really make a difference.

A few years ago when studying a course on environmental issues I came to realise that the poor make no impact on the use of carbon in the world and have more or less no carbon footprint whatsoever. I believe that St Francis and his followers also made no impact on the use of carbon. Can we do the same? God has

made this wonderful planet and we are able to enjoy it, let us do what we can to keep it beautiful for all humanity of the future to enjoy. We are called to remember the dignity of man and to live a life that upholds that dignity in relation to all of creation.

Let us begin again to follow our Rule because now more than ever the whole world and especially Europe needs people who are living a Gospel Way of Life.

Kathy Maskens
Regional Minister

ENCYCLICAL LETTER
'LAUDATO SI'
OF THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS
ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



“Laudato si’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (*Rom 8:22*). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

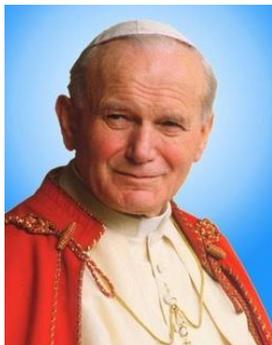
Nothing in this world is indifferent to us



More than fifty years ago, with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis, **Pope Saint John XXIII** wrote an Encyclical which not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace. He addressed his message *Pacem in Terris* to the entire “Catholic world” and indeed “to all men and women of good will”. Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet. In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.



In 1971, eight years after *Pacem in Terris*, **Blessed Pope Paul VI** referred to the ecological concern as “a tragic consequence” of unchecked human activity: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation”. He spoke in similar terms to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations about the potential for an “ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of industrial civilisation”, and stressed “the urgent need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity”, inasmuch as “the most extraordinary scientific advances, the most amazing technical abilities, the most astonishing economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic social and moral progress, will definitively turn against man”.



Saint John Paul II became increasingly concerned about this issue. In his first Encyclical he warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”. Subsequently, he would call for a global ecological *conversion*. At the same time, he noted that little effort had been made to “safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic *human ecology*”. The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”. Authentic human development has a

moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system”. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is.



My predecessor **Benedict XVI** likewise proposed “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment”. He observed that the world cannot be analysed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”. Pope Benedict asked us to recognise that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless. We have forgotten

that “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature”. With paternal concern, Benedict urged us to realise that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognise any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves”.

If you have not already read the full encyclical elsewhere you may want to read it on the Westminster Diocesan website: <http://rcdow.org.uk>

REGIONAL GATHERING – SATURDAY 23 MAY 2015

Held at Our Lady of the Assumption, Addiscombe, Croydon

Dear brothers and sisters

What a lovely regional meeting we had in Croydon. Sadly it was not a large gathering – twelve in all. For those who could not make it – you were sorely missed.

Well, I would love to tell all those who could not come all about it. It started with our Mass in the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption. Afterwards we were welcomed in the hall with Danish pastries, cakes and other refreshments.

We sang spontaneously and it was really uplifting.

Kathy Maskens took us for the first talk: *Contemplating the inner self*. We felt that being 12 was a good number and sat in a semi-circle with an altar arranged to form a circle. There was a chair left for the Lord. On that chair was an Icon of Jesus and a light.

We did **ACTS**:
A - Adoration
C – Confession
T – Thanksgiving
S – Supplication

With our eyes closed Kathy talked us through each action. We also contemplated a light that we place within ourselves. I thought the light could be the light of Christ shining through us for others.

Then we made our petitions for ourselves and others, which brought us to our break for lunch. Croydon had provided some lovely tit bits for us.

The second part of the meeting was taken by Paula. Paula's talk was on the Holy Spirit and its Holy Activity.

We all agreed that life in the Spirit brought us holy joy. When we pray we are to pray with a pure heart and to remember that of ourselves we are nothing. Paula reminded us to be fraternal in our fraternities. The phrase 'pray and forgive our enemies' brought in a lot of discussion so Paula never quite got to finish her talk. Maybe next regional meeting it could be resumed. Paula gave us the following to look up:

The Rule 2, 10, 23

The Constitution: 1, 11, 12, 37

Hilda Delaney ofs
Minister - Erith

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WRITINGS OF FRANCIS AND OFS GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS

The Regional Day of Recollection was held on the eve of Pentecost. The theme was Prayer and the Holy Spirit in the writings of St Francis.

In the Rule of 1223, Francis exhorts his brothers to have "*The Spirit of the Lord and its holy activity*". I believe that everything that brings me closer to God is the activity of the Holy Spirit. Francis often quotes the Gospel of St John in his writings. It is in this Gospel that we are assured the Spirit wants to make a home in us which can come about through "activity" that is good, God-centred, holy. The activity of the Spirit is whatever enlightens, enlivens, renews my soul as it seeks to know, love and serve God.

In the Prologue to our Rule, Francis' Early Admonition and Exhortation addressed to penitents who were the secular Franciscans of his day, Francis writes:

"O how happy and blessed are those men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make his home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do and they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the next paragraph he writes that "*We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him (meaning to make Jesus alive to those around us – Paula's interpretation) through a holy activity which must shine before others.*" We can reflect on the desire that God has for us to be in communion with Him and how we are invited to share this desire through the holy activity of the Spirit.

We are being encouraged by the international presidency, CIOFS, to know better the official documents of the OFS. The following references, from the Constitutions, bring to mind our dependence on the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit. Encourage others in the fraternity to read the Rule and General Constitutions and discuss them as part of ongoing formation.

General Constitution Chapter 1

Art 1.1 All the faithful are called to holiness and have a right to follow their own spiritual way in communion with the Church

Art 1.3 (See OFS Rule 2) The OFS "is formed by the organic union of all the catholic fraternities whose members, moved by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves through profession to live the Gospel in the manner of St Francis, in their secular state, following the Rule approved by the Church.

Art 11 Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to His inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things "the Spirit of God at work within them'."

Art 12 Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis and, above all, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, each day the brothers and sisters faithfully live the great gift which Christ had given: the revelation of the Father.

Art 37 (Concerning Formation) Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation and always attentive to collaboration with Him.

Art 99 (See OFS Rule 6) As a living part of the people of God and inspired by the Seraphic Father, the

secular Franciscan, “living in full communion with the Pope and the bishops” should seek to know and deepen the doctrine proposed by the teaching Church through its more important documents and they should be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit, who vivifies the faith and charity of the people of God.

Paula Pearce July 2015
Regional Secretary

The Formation Weekend at Crewe: 19-21 June 2015

24 people attended this national weekend, including Mark Kennett (Minister, Ashford) and Salvina Bartholomeusz (regional representative). We thank John Power for organising the event so well. John knows how to keep an audience in good spirits with his trademark digressions and anecdotes that help us to understand better his approach to Formation.

The audience was much better able to progress than at the previous formation weekend, for a number of reasons

- Members are better acquainted with his approach
- The focus was Enquiry, these 6 topics having now been approved by the National Council. It is evident that John is working in line with the observations CIOFS has made concerning initial formation
- The material was well received – 6 groups working on one topic each. John will make a few changes in response to the reports of the groups, but nothing major
- Members received both direction and material that they could confidently use

Everyone worked hard, with dedicated commitment, such that the Director of Wistaston Hall remarked on how impressed he had been by the spirit he saw at work throughout the weekend.

John informed us that the new website, nearing readiness, will contain formation materials which will be built up in the coming months. There will be a bibliography to which it is intended to add guidance (over a period time). It will have to be a work in progress for some time as volunteers and those who produce guidelines must have relevant knowledge.

The need for resources adapted for people with specific physical impairment was raised. There is a growing stock of audio-visual Franciscan materials already in existence but we will have to adapt the formation materials to meet the needs of enquirers and candidates. This will probably happen as formators respond to need making adaptations available to other members.

The 6 topics that form the core of the Enquiry stage are as I listed in the previous newsletter and, in the autumn, I intend to organise a formation event for our existing enquirers and any others who would like to attend.

The topics are:

- In the Beginning Francis a summary of Francis' life with selected episodes from the Franciscan sources
- Formation – what do we mean by this?
- The Rule of the OFS – what does it mean to observe our rule?
- Introduction to our Rule Way of Life with emphasis on articles 4 – 9
- Scripture – an introduction to the use of Scriptures in our faith and as Franciscans;
- Prayer
- A Secular Calling – explaining the meaning of Secular Franciscan Order, Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis

In addition to these topics, John has prepared a brief history of our Rule that will act as a bridge between enquiry and candidacy.

Increasingly we have all learned that the goal of initial formation must be to discern whether the person in formation has a true vocation to OFS. Those present at the weekend appreciate that fraternities should not be thinking about a time limit but rather explain that Profession is a goal that will be attained only when the individual is ready. That will vary from person to person. Therefore, it is better not to think that someone should be expecting to be professed after such and such a time period as this may cause an individual to think they should be ready within a time limit, and any delay must reflect a weakness or failure in him/her.

It will take time for professed members to adapt to the changes the initial formation programme is bringing about but, again, it is not about time, it is about understanding and becoming willing to work in a different way. John is trying to move away from the idea that formators are the experts, and he is leading us to become aware that formation is not about reading so many pages between meetings, which sets up a sense of being examined. It is we who have to adapt and the weekend led me to believe that we can do this, with guidance and training as necessary.

Paula Pearce July 2015
Regional Secretary

Bringing Awareness of the OFS

I would like to suggest that it would be great if each one of us was prepared to stand up in our own parishes on Sunday 4th October this year and say something about what it means to be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order.



If you feel it is something that you can do that would be great, and we would love to hear about how it goes. If you don't feel able to speak yourself and there is more than one of you in a parish then the best speaker could speak and someone else could make themselves available after Mass perhaps. Or maybe one person could speak and someone else write something for the parish newsletter. It would be great if you could think about whether or how you would like to do this in your fraternity and support each other with it. Do we not belong to an order of preachers?

Short and to the point seems to be the preferred way in my parish and may be the same in yours. So I suggest something like this;

1. Perhaps you could introduce by saying something about how we began, changes over the centuries and where we are now.
2. You could mention something about the support from the Popes and the parents of St. Therese the Little Flower.
3. You could mention our rule and link it to your life or, if you wish, to the Pope and what he hopes for the world, maybe even his latest encyclical.
4. You could say something about what it means for you, how it has changed your life, why you joined.

These are just a few ideas, I am sure that you will be able to improve on this. With the feast of St. Francis falling that weekend we could invite him and all Secular Franciscans who have gone before us to walk with us. Now more than ever the world needs to hear about the Gospel Way of Life. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to be with us, if we put our total trust in him, he will speak through us and we will not need to worry about it one bit. Look at how God helped the prophets to find a voice. I am sure that your priests will be very pleased for you to speak. Let us all begin to pray for this together now. God is just waiting for us to ask him!

Kathy Maskens
Regional Minister

OFS SE REGION – DATES FOR OUR DIARIES 2015

<p>Fri 25 – Sun 27 September Saturday 3 October</p>	<p>National Electoral Chapter – Crewe (incl International Visitation) Regional Gathering – ASHFORD - St Theresa of Avila Maidstone Road, TN24 8TX – Rule/Transitus - 10am (Mass) – 4pm</p>
<p>Sunday 15 November</p>	<p>Erith fraternity elections</p>
<p>Monday 16 November</p>	<p>SER Council – West Malling</p>

2016

<p>Monday 1 February</p>	<p>SER Executive – West Malling</p>
<p>Monday 18 April</p>	<p>SER Council – West Malling</p>
<p>Fri 6 – Sun 8 May</p>	<p>Retreat: 'My God, My All' led by Paula led at Pantasaph, N Wales</p>
<p>Sun 5 – Sun 12 June</p>	<p>Pilgrimage: Assisi led by Paula</p>
<p>Sunday 26 June</p>	<p>Croydon DOR – Emmaus Retreat Centre – details to advised</p>
<p>Monday 11 July</p>	<p>SER Executive – West Malling</p>
<p>Monday 3 October</p>	<p>SER Council – West Malling</p>

FRATERNITY CONTACTS

South East Region Executive Council from 13 December 2015:

Minister:	Kathy Maskens	Croydon	kathymaskens@hotmail.com	01372 812 923
Vice Minister:	Salvina Bartholomeusz	Croydon	Salvinaofs@yahoo.co.uk	077 1133 2267
Secretary:	Paula Pearce	Ashford	paulapofs@gmail.com	01303 813 095
Treasurer:	Cordelia Rice	Erith	blossomsrice@yahoo.co.uk	020 8300 1760

ASHFORD

St Pio of Pietrelcina

Last Tuesday 7.00pm – 9.00pm: The Priests House, St Teresa of Avila, Maidstone Road, TN24 8TX
Minister: Mark Kennett 01304 205 980 eaglebeakkennett@hotmail.com
Vice Minister: Robin Saunders 01303 862 894 r.c.saunders3@gmail.com

CROYDON

St Mary of the Angels

4th Sunday 2.30pm – 4.30pm: St Mary's, Small Hall, 70 Wellesley Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2AR
Minister: Declan Walsh 020 8642 2420 Declan007@talktalk.net
Vice Minister: Sarah Driver 020 8660 0708 sdriver@laretraite.lambeth.sch.uk

ERITH

Our Lady of the Angels

3rd Sunday 2.45pm – 4.45pm: The Angelus Centre, Carlton Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1DN
Minister: Hilda Delaney 01322 589 701 h45@hotmail.co.uk
Vice Minister: Michael McCarthy 01322 448 811

HOLLINGTON

St Clare

1st Sunday 3.30pm – 5.30pm: Poor Clares, 22 Upper Church Road, Hollington, TN37 7AS
Minister: Glenn Lowcock 0182 583 0266 glennlouis@hotmail.co.uk
Secretary: Mary Sharp 0142 484 2914 maegwen.top@btinternet.com

Franciscan website links:

Secular Franciscan Order GB

<http://www.ofsgb.org.uk/>

Secular Franciscan International Order

<http://www.ciofs.org/portal/>

Franciscans International

<http://www.franciscansinternational.org/>

A prayer for Our Earth *from the Encyclical Laudato Si*

(to share with all those who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator)

All-powerful God,
You are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all
that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your
love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters,
harming no-one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

