

Ordo Franciscanus Secularis

VIEWPOINT

The Southern Region Newsletter 1/16

The glory of God is in the living

We are individually called to be and to do.

We are all creatures of God; we were made by God and therefore belong to Him. He made us because He is love and love not shared has no meaning. God wanted a co-equal lover, as John Duns Scotus puts it. And thus God became Man; Jesus, second person of the trinity is wholly God and wholly Man. It is through Jesus that we love God. This is man's natural state; to be full of God's glory and close to Him.

So, we are all creatures of God, yet we are all different. We are individuals and enjoy an individual relationship with God. In that relationship we are all called to open ourselves to Him in love. In this way He can conform us into what will best serve us as we are. This is our basic vocation which we recognise as Christians. That call will put us in the best position to love God and to be loved by God.

In His love for us, he has called us to follow in the steps of Francis of Assisi, to be Franciscan. Our Franciscanism stems from and flows out of our basic Christianity. Without that basic grounding we cannot hope to be Franciscan. As Franciscans, we are family and take our position and role in fraternity or brotherhood. As family we help each other in our life's pilgrimage. Our journeys are different, unique to each one of us. Yet we share that common heritage, all being creatures of God.

The call from God is to us as individuals. The call is tailored to our own specific characters and needs. My call is different from your call. We are all different and yet we are all creatures of God. Our different natures and talents come together in fraternity and the whole **should** be greater than the sum of the parts. The more we give to fraternity the more we will recognise and appreciate that fraternity extends beyond our local area. It goes on up through the regions, up to the nations, and up to the wide world.

We recognise the importance and significance of Elections. It is not a hierarchy we are electing but those considered best suited to guide us on our Franciscan Life's pilgrimage. If we are one with fraternity then we will be willing to serve and realise it is a blessing to serve the fraternity in an official role.

We are all creatures of God and are not intended to live alone!

We cannot manage each other; we cannot manage the Order. But we can enable each other and support each other on our Franciscan Life's Pilgrimage. We can minister to each other.

The fullness of the Glory of God resides in **Living** man. Let us help each other to live.

Let us formalise a buddy relationship in our fraternities and let the Regional Executive/Council move around the Region to enable our fraternities. Let us encourage all enquirers, candidates, and professed members to explore their faith and their calling more. We need to be prepared to take risks. If we end up down a “Rabbit Hole”, God will pull us out. If we do not explore and visit new ideas, how do we expect to grow?

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The Cave

Softly speaking into the dark cave’s ear, Francis experienced the parched joy of release. The protective shield of dark made it easier to whisper hushed secrets into the emptiness, or to scream his pain at the cold damp walls.

Every day it became harder to leave his cave and meet the harsh light of all the staring world. The farther into the cave he retreated, the more comfortably insulated he felt.

“Lord Jesus, let me stay here; let me hide in the womb of this wet earth sponging me in soft, gentle mud.”

But every day he was driven outside again by the panic that the light would not be there to blind him.

“O womb of earth, hide me from eyes that freeze me into this paralysing fear.”

It was in the cave that Francis met Jesus and saw himself for the first time. Up to that time his voices and dreams always seemed to come from without, from a great distance. But during the agonizing hours in the cave, he began to hear a voice inside himself, a deeper, clearer voice that was like discovering a part of himself he did not know was there. The more he prayed and turned to Christ for inspiration, the deeper he plunged towards some inner force that gave him strength and peace. He stopped talking to the bare walls of the cave

At first, this inner search was a painful and terrifying look at himself, at his weakness and sinfulness; and the journey was a downward dive that made him feel that he was drowning in some vast, bottomless lake. But as he persevered in prayer, he came at last to something like a great, silent, waterproof cavern in which the sound of his own voice seemed mellow and deep; and there at that depth within, Jesus spoke softly to him and made his heart burn with love.

Afterwards he would soar to the surface again, renewed and encouraged. Yet each time he had to make the painful and frightening dive. And each time he was afraid he would not be able to find the cavern again.

During that whole year after hearing the voice of Christ at Spoleto, Francis went to the cave outside Assisi, and plumbed his own depths trying to bring that inner cavern-peace to the surface permanently.

In the end, he sensed somehow that the search for the cavern would be his daily journey the rest of his life; and if he was able to be at peace, he would have to delve deeply in prayer every day.

That thought gave him great joy, because he had come to love the quest and the fear and the anticipation as a part of the whole process of praying and listening to Christ.

From Betsy Hart

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Reason for Jubilee - Pope Francis

Last year, our Holy Father gave a **simple reason** for the **Jubilee Year of Mercy**; it resounds so strongly in our own Franciscan Rule – which we simply must fulfil!

Rule 19: *Mindful that they are **bearers of peace**, which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, **trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.***

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

“Here, then, is the **reason for the Jubilee**: because this is the **time for mercy**.

It is the **favourable time** to **heal wounds**, a time **not to be weary** of meeting all **those** who are waiting to **see** and to **touch** with their hands the **signs of the closeness of God**; a **time to offer** everyone, everywhere, **the way of forgiveness and reconciliation**.

May the Mother of God open our eyes, so that **we may comprehend** the task to which **we have been called**: and may she obtain for us the **grace** to experience this Jubilee of Mercy as **faithful and fruitful witnesses of Christ**.”

Article 6: They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should **go forth as witnesses** and **instruments of her mission** among all people, **proclaiming Christ by their life and words**.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote **themselves energetically** to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic **effectiveness and creativity**.

Let us then, dear Sisters and Brothers, be happily about Our Father’s business – and make good – or at least a little better - the world we tread!

And, Some Food for thought...

Each day, since the Year of Mercy began, I receive short daily readings. Some are enduring – like this one, from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus (Sermo 43: PL 52, 320, 322) received on *Fasting Friday*, 11th December 2015.

Prayer Knocks, Fasting Obtains, Mercy Receives

Year of Mercy (Daily email)

“There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are **prayer, fasting and mercy**.

Prayer knocks at the door, **fasting** obtains, **mercy** receives.

Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, **mercy** is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have **nothing**.

So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others.

If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself.

When you fast, see the fasting of others.

If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry.

If you hope for mercy, show mercy.

If you look for kindness, show kindness.

If you want to receive, give.

If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery..."

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With every blessing during this happy season of Lent and glorious Year of Mercy,

Basia ofs, Perfect Joy Fraternity

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Isle of Wight Group – Laudato Si' Chap VI

In Matt 19 Jesus tells the disciples that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Astonished, we are told, the disciples ask, "Who can be saved then?" When I was last with you I rather felt, and I think perhaps some of you did too, that in the light of all this doom and gloom about climate change, what can we do? We ask like the disciples in Jesus' own time, we wonder, what should we do? After quite a lot of theory, a lot of theological reflection perhaps, the Holy Father in the sixth and final chapter of *Laudato si* turns his attention to this more practical question. What can we do?

The Pope acknowledges that we are all subject to powerful capitalist and consumerist forces, but we need to regain awareness and recapture a sense of the common good (204). The Pope underlines that we do have the capacity, and we are able, to change, to a new lifestyle, centred on reverence for life (207). We have to educate ourselves anew and break our bad habits. We must realise happiness is not to be found in amassing things but by living a newly virtuous life. The Pope says new laws are not the key, but the individual practice of virtue.

- Consume less
- Turn the heating down and wear a jumper
- Try to use less water
- Recycle paper and plastics
- Buy and cook only the food we need (waste not!)
- Share cars and use public transport (211).

The Pope suggests that if we all do these little things the benefits will and indeed do add up. Furthermore, we need to try and do these things at an institutional level too, at church, in schools and in our work places. "The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change, is also a

community conversion” (219). We need to learn moderation, to be happy with less, and to learn that, so often, ‘less is more’.

The key that will enable us to do this, the Pope teaches is the cultivation of gratitude. A recognition that the world is not ours by rights, it has been given to us (in trust), and we must protect it. We are not completely autonomous individuals, we are children of God, and if we have forgotten this, then an interior conversion is needed too, centred on repentance (217-218). We need to restore an ‘inner balance’ which has perhaps been lost (225).

Finally we should remember that before Jesus invited the rich young man to give away all that he had, (Mk 10:21) he looked at him and loved him. St Therese invites us to practise the little way of love (230) and to do what is so hard: to recognise that our world has a purpose – God’s purpose. We are a small part of a bigger plan! The more we can recognise this plan the more we recognise God himself! The Pope points to the Holy Eucharist as one of the principal channels of recognition (236-237) and reminds us that Mary our mother is always ready to assist us in the task (241-242).

At the end we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (243, c.f. 1 Cor 13:12), but in the meantime God has not abandoned us, “he does not leave us alone”...rather ...”his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward” (245).

Laudato si’ – praise be to him

Given as a talk by Paul Severn, a visitor to the IoW Group. Paul is author of “St Anthony of Padua; in Search of the Evangelical Doctor”

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News from Around the Region

Website update from Jennie McManus Our old website was taken down on 31st December 2015, and our new website [OFSGB: Home](#) is now up and running.... but it is still in its infancy and patience will be required as it is very much a `work in progress`.

Please take a look at the website, in particular under the subheading [OFSGB](#), go to [Regions](#), scroll down to [The OFS Southern Region](#) and to the right of this is [Newsletters: sou](#).

In [The OFS Southern Region](#) you will find information from our Fraternity leaflets, including contact details for each of the five Fraternities. There is also a lovely photograph of some of the people who attended our Retreat at Ladywell Convent in November 2015, and a short write-up on the occasion.

At [Newsletters: south](#) there are copies of our two most recent Newsletters, August and November 2015.

Remember this website no longer requires passwords to access it.... it is open to all Fraternity members, but ALSO to visitors seeking to learn more about `being a Franciscan`, therefore it is important to make our Southern webpage as inviting and informative as possible... especially as a visitor may be interested particularly in our region.

Finally it is really IMPORTANT that all Fraternity members in our Southern Region, who have access to the website, sign up to receive the automatic e-mails. These in particular will not only inform you of what is happening at Regional and National levels, but make you feel much more that you belong to a larger welcoming Franciscan family. Yesterday I received `What have we been up to at National` and `Lent 2016` both by our National Minister Paula Pearce. It is very easy to subscribe - just go to the right-hand sidebar, scroll down to `SUBSCRIBE VIA EMAIL`, enter your e-mail address, and `click` the red `SUBSCRIBE` button.

I hope in the next few weeks, when arrangements have been finalised, to place our `Franciscan Celebration` on August 13th and our November 18th - 20th Retreat at Ladywell Convent on the `Diary` page of the website.

Jennie McManus, Regional Communications Officers @jenniemcmanus.plus.com 01483 20 3642

Ladywell

In December six members of the Ladywell Fraternity distributed 1000 Christmas cards in Guildford High Street. Some people took the cards happily and others did not want to know and then some were very grateful and it meant a lot to them to receive a card. One person thanked us for talking to her; she said that she had not spoken to anyone all day. It took us under an hour to distribute them.

(Ed; This is a simple outreach to the local community which has some positive effect. We should do more of this sort of thing.)

Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight

Please pray for our Sister Val O'Donnell who is fighting cancer with her usual upbeat manner. The Isle of Wight group has grown to 8 now. They follow broadly the same programmes as the Fraternity under the leadership of Simon Peck, Minister and Formation Minister to Portsmouth. Please do pray that they will all discern God's calling for them, whatever that be. The group, however, does include John Moyse, who has endured poor health for some time, not least cancer in the throat. Praise be that he has now been given the "All Clear" from that. The Fraternity meets with the Group on the Island in April when we hope to profess John fully in to the OFS. Please pray for him.

Littlehampton and Worthing On 18 December last our Fraternity met for a Christmas Lunch at a local pub. Seventeen members gathered together with two friends. Everyone enjoyed the celebration in a totally relaxed atmosphere. We have agreed to do something similar in the Summer. If we play together will we not pray better together?

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Publishing slipped with this issue for which I apologise. Please do send in anything you would like to share, not least what the Fraternities are doing and how they are developing.

Please pass on copy to anyone with a Franciscan heart.

Have a happy and joyful Easter and do take care of Mother Earth.

Edward Cuerden, cuerden2ed@talktalk.net

