

Ordo Franciscanus Secularis

VIEWPOINT



The Southern Region Newsletter 17.3

What does Rublev's icon say to you?

What is the Role of the Regional Fraternity?

I would love you to share your thoughts with me please?

Fraternity – What is it?

Francis saw himself as Brother to everyone and indeed to everything created by God. Christ is the Brother to all for we all are members of His body. The question is whether we have actually taken that in; it is not solely a Franciscan concept after all!

Do I live in isolation? Do I sit on my bed at night and simply list the ME ME ME? Do I, rather, consider whether I have actually connected with other people? And, if I believe I have, was that connection positive or negative?

Who is God to me and who do I think I am to God? Where is my Life's journey going? Where should it be going? Do I engage with other people in finding my way along this journey, or do I find myself alone and rather lost?

“Whenever you did it to the least of one of mine, you did it to me.”

The Gospel message is that we are dependent on everyone else and that everyone else is dependent on us! The link is Christ Himself.

The Franciscan journey is to Christ and the way to Him is He Himself! God lowered Himself to take on our humanity so that He might show us the way to God Himself. He does that through pure love, the love which gives of itself and asks nothing in return. From here John Duns Scotus and Bonaventure lay out the Franciscan reasoning for the incarnation, which they argue was always the intention and not the result of man's fall. The Father is for us and the Son is with us and the Spirit is within us. We are born in to the Trinity, all of us. Mankind is a UNIT and operates best as a UNIT. We each have our own identity and our own unique personality but we only function effectively in the UNIT. Now where that UNIT starts and ends for you and me may be a moot point, but why not make the positive move towards our fellow humans and connect with them? This is what I believe is the basis of fraternity. If we take on this idea then fraternity at levels higher than local takes on an increasingly real meaning. We not only meet now and again at Regional and National level but we embrace the possibility of identifying with that wider community. Indeed, we see the increased opportunities open to us at Regional and National gatherings. If we fail to show that sense of community, will others see any reason to recognise their calling and come with us? Has there not been a buzz when we have met in Regional Fraternity? If you don't get a buzz from local fraternal meetings then you probably won't bother with those at higher level!

If we do not function as fraternity then we do not function at all! As one of our wiser members stated once, you cannot be an isolated Franciscan. It makes no sense.

If you ever studied Physics and Chemistry at school you will remember that the atom is made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons. Each has its own identity but it takes a combination of all three to make an atom. Many atoms make a molecule. There is the identity of the individual component but the identity of what they combine to form has so

much more meaning. So it is with us. We can exist on our own but we only come to life when we connect. To LIVE in the Trinity is to live connected with mankind. The MORE the BETTER. Why else would we look to our presence in the world?

So, how do I connect? Make the first move. Make the most of a move from another. Pray that the Spirit will renew your Life so that you will show love towards the other. AND, let's encourage each other in fraternity, in work, in play, and indeed in all circumstances.

If we do not know what we have from our calling then nobody else can know either! Furthermore, the more you think of what is stopping you the less you can empty yourself of the self and the less you will see anything outside yourself!

God for us, we call You Father. God alongside us, we call You Son. God within us, we call You Spirit. You are the eternal mystery that enables, enfolds, and enlivens all things. Even us, and even me!

Every name falls short of your goodness and greatness. We can only see who you are in what is. We ask for such perfect seeing – as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.

Elections to the Regional Executive

On Saturday 16 September we are all asked to gather at Park Place for the Regional Elections. While not every member has a vote all have a voice and may and, indeed, are encouraged to share their hopes for the future of the Region. Do you feel that Regional Fraternity affects you at all? Have your formation needs been satisfied over the past three years? Are there aspects of Fraternity you would like to see changed? Do you relate your local Fraternity with the Regional Fraternity? Your voice is as important and valued as anyone else's. We are all FAMILY.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-

The Wintershall Gathering and Presence in the World (Saturday 12 August)

We gathered at Holly Barn on the Wintershall Estate in the heart of the Surrey countryside once again for the annual gathering of anyone with a Franciscan heart. For the third year running, we were blessed with fine weather. It really is a lovely spot when the sun is shining. This year, Rob Hardie from the East Anglia Region was invited to speak on the topic "Called to be Presence in the World".

Rob opened with the message that God has His own plan for each and every one of us individually. As scripture tells, we enter by the "narrow gate". What might that conjure up for you? We certainly are not all going to bustle through "willy nilly"!! You might say that

there is a price to pay, albeit a price God is willing you on and helping you to find if you have the will. That price involves a radical change of life from what scripture defines as “World” to what I would term as Spirit. The gate is Jesus Himself; He is the Way and He is the destination. But to give up “World” or, if you prefer, worldly things you have to change your life quite radically.

“Blessed are the Poor in Spirit”. That poverty relates to the self. It relates to adopting a true humility. We lose the “I am it” syndrome and listen attentively to the other. We become forgiving and humble enough to ask for forgiveness when we offend. Rob quoted the late but much loved Peter Hall OFM who always said that Power, Privilege, and Possessions are to be avoided if we are to step truly in the steps of St Francis. In themselves they can corrupt, though they do not always. They certainly do when you crave them and grab them! For Francis recognised the need for “The lesser state”. There is no doubt that the adoption of such requires a particular strength. Perhaps the seeking of Simplicity in life is more expressive. We have what we need and we do what we need to do according to our talents.

And in his lesser state Francis recognised the hand of God in all creation. All of creation is in a brotherhood. Francis often referred to Christ as Friar Christ, Brother Christ. After all, we are sons and daughters of God. Francis made no exceptions in his reverence for God’s creation; even the worms were picked up carefully and placed out of harm’s way. Towards the end of his life he composed the “Canticle to the Sun” in which he relates the Universe as he knew it and all of matter as he understood it to the Divine Creator, and blessed the Divine Creator in all of His creation.

The Spirit of God is within you. We know that because Jesus, only Son of God, told us so before He returned to the Father. We are the same Son or Daughter. The Spirit who is the persona of the Father’s love for the Son, which is wholly reciprocated, is given freely to us. God loves us unconditionally. We are learning to return that love, but we can only do that in any sense once we recognise God’s love for us.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still.

Be.

God has called me. He knows me. Do I really know Him? Do I really know me?

Francis fully recognised and realised that to die is to live. Rob quoted the German writer Johann Wolfgang von-Goethe, *“And so long as you do not know that to die is to become, you are just a wretched visitor on this dark earth”*. Strong words, yes, but there is no “cherry picking” in Real Life.

Francis exhibited a presence. He walked all the way to Rome to see the Pope and to submit his rule of life. Pope Innocent III eventually saw something special in what must have been a rather dirty and travel-stained Francis. Innocent had a vision of Francis holding up the Church and was moved to him.

We are an Order of Penance, of Renewal. We should go through a Daily renewal seeking God's help to conform us deeper in to His will for us.

Rob related how his fellow Secular Franciscans were asked to suggest how they might show their presence in the world. The following suggestions were made:

You must be renewed; you must BE. You should wear the Tau. You should be present! Work with the poor. Visit the elderly. Speak to strangers. Take a friend in. Assist with CAFOD in their work. Live simply. Support your Priest. Support ecology! And, Help evolving Countries! Doubtless, you could come up with more.

What is your presence in the world?

0-0-0-0-0-0

Rob later demonstrated a simple water purifier. All the tea and coffee dregs were collected together with other forms of dirty water that had collected and he demonstrated how this simple pump filters out all the filth and rubbish and releases clean drinking water. The pump has a cost of £32 currently and the one requirement is that in use it is cleaned out regularly to prevent clogging. You had to see it to believe how effective it is, unless of course you had seen it already.

Thank you Rob.

0-0-0-0-0-0

Four Charities had accepted an invitation to speak about their respective missions. Eamonn Delaney is the founder of ***The Number Five Project*** which offers a direct access, short term emergency night shelter accommodation with support for homeless men and women over the age of 18 in and around Guildford area.

Rod Boreham is the Guildford Town Centre Chaplain and part of the Chaplaincy team who administer the ***Street Angels of Guildford***. They are a group of volunteers who go out in to the town on Friday and Saturday nights to help people in need, whoever they are. They will offer a friendly ear to their troubles; they will care for them and refer them, as appropriate, to specialist Agencies in the Town.

James Phiri has just returned from visiting rural clinics in Zambia. James is a leading light in ***Mary's Meals*** which is a Global Charity, largely manned by volunteers who refuse to accept that any child should go hungry in a world of plenty. Every school day, the Charity feeds over one million children a daily meal in their place of education. They are operating in 14 Countries.

Jo Lewry is Community Participation Coordinator for **CAFOD**. This is the official aid agency for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It fights poverty and injustice in the world, wherever the need is greatest. Its priority is to equip people with the skills and the opportunity to live with dignity, support their families, and to give something back to their communities.

Two further Charities unable to be represented in person were mentioned. **“Les Amis”**, which has figured in Viewpoint, was founded by Gillie Nicholls of the Ladywell fraternity. The charity serves the poor and needy, especially women, in Burkino Faso, Africa. Also, **St Martin-in-the-Fields** had provided copies of their Newsletter which tells of the different ways they can help the homeless and vulnerable around the UK.

0-0-0-0-0-0

*May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord set His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord look kindly upon you and give you His peace.
May the Lord bless you.*

Edward



Viewpoint is published 4 times a year, and the end of February, May, August, and November. Copy for inclusion is required by the 20th of the month of production, preferably by email, but long-hand is acceptable. Send to cuerden2ed@talktalk.net or Edward Cuerden 94 Mays lane, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 2ED, as appropriate.