

Secular Franciscan Order

South East Region



ISSUE 25 SUMMER 2017



Building the Kingdom of God
with Living Stones

THE WAY OF ST FRANCIS

Do not be concerned about tomorrow

At that time, as Blessed Francis was with his brothers whom he had then, he was of such purity that, from the hour the Lord revealed to him that he and his brothers should live according to the form of the holy Gospel, he desired and strove to observe it to the letter during his whole lifetime.

Therefore, he told the brother who did the cooking for the brothers, that when he wanted the brothers to eat beans, he should not put them in warm water in the evening for the next day, as people usually do. This was so the brothers would observe the words of the holy Gospel: 'Do not be concerned about tomorrow [Mt 6:34].' So that brother used to put them in water to soften after the brothers said matins.

Because of this, for a long time many of the brothers observed this in a great many places where they stayed on their own, especially in cities. They did not want to collect or receive more alms than were enough for one day.

The Assisi Compilation, 52
The Founder, 151-2



Dear brothers and sisters

A LITTLE REFLECTION IN EVERY HEART!

As you know, we are coming up for elections in our region again, in December this year. So perhaps it is helpful to spend some time reflecting on each of our own unique places in the Order. We all have a special place, just like in a family where each person has their own important part to play, we too have a particular place that we may not be able to see on our own, but that our brothers and sisters can help us recognise.

As the South East region we also have a special place in the OFS of the UK, just like all the other regions. I think it would be very helpful to consider what that place is, where God calls us to be, and whether we are in the right place, or on the road to the place he is showing us.

In the last 3 years as part of the Regional Executive and also the Regional Council, I feel that I have received many spiritual graces, and I don't think that I am the only person to experience that. As a small group, we have come together at regular intervals throughout the year and we have been able to spend a very rich time together of love, friendship and in particular peace that we might not otherwise have had. Do you remember that peace was that gift we sought to develop for the Chapter of Mats? The gifts that each person has shared have been priceless and will be treasured, and I want everyone to know that.

In our region we have many members who cannot get to regional meetings and who would probably not feel able to stand for office in December. But those people are the spiritual rock of our Order in my opinion. I can think of several people in my own fraternity whom you will never see unless you come to us, but you will meet them when I share the things they have taught me, because when I come to regional meetings they come with me in my heart. Not only that but it is my responsibility to bring them with me as they are part of the same body that I belong to and I would not want to turn up with only part of the body present. So if those people are the rock, who are the ones who venture out to gather and share food, at the region. Are you one of those people, because we do need you on the regional executive.

I would like you all to think about the special role that you have in your fraternity. Be open to what you think that role is, because even if you do not have a formal office, you still have a role, everyone does. It is also important to know what your brothers and sisters believe your role is, so you should all be talking about it. Then, as you think about that, please consider also what special role you hold in the regional fraternity and in the national fraternity, because even if you cannot get to the meetings you are still part of these extended families. I believe that through having these kinds of discussions, accompanied with prayer, reflection and discernment, we will be able to elect a new regional fraternity in December.



Earlier this year I was privileged to go to Gibraltar with two of my boys. It was a brilliant experience for me personally, and the boys had a great time too. On reflection one of the gifts that the Gibraltar fraternity share is community. We have been nurturing that gift in our own region too and now we are hoping to reach out a little further with that.

We are hoping early next year to have our own gathering over a weekend in such a way that people can stay overnight. It will be at Aylesford Priory in February. There will be physical heating as well as the warmth of friendship and sharing, and physical food, as well as the food that will feed our souls. Please please come. We have booked it and we are collecting deposits of £10 now. It would be lovely to have as many people there as possible. We will have a new regional executive council by then. Let us pray that it will be a time of new beginning and new growth.



***Kathy Maskens ofs
Regional Minister***

LOOKING BACK OVER A RICH FRANCISCAN LIFE

I think it was because our regional elections are planned for 9 December this year that I decided it was time to share our future plans with all of you.

My Franciscan life began when I was a student in Canterbury. At that time, the Franciscans had begun to build the Franciscan International Study Centre while the Franciscan students lived in Canterbury but did courses at the university and we got to know quite a few of them. It was a very happy and blessed time for me. Having left Northern Ireland because I could not bear the consequences of "The Troubles" and, at that time, could see no practical way to be of useful service there.



Canterbury was a joy to me because religion was important in the city which had an inter-denominational freedom I had never experienced. We spent Sunday afternoons with a mixed Christian group and we attended events in various churches. Most important for me was meeting the Franciscans and beginning my long journey to become a very active member of ofs. I have never felt any doubts that this charism is the coat that fits me. I was surrounded by active and inspirational friars and privileged to attend many courses, once the Centre opened. A natural next step was for the Canterbury ofs (then still Third Order) to be established but, unusually, in the care of two

first order families – OFM and OFM Conv. I was a founder member, further privileged, blessed and delighted to be professed in the original old Greyfriars in June 1979.

I was a teacher for about 14 years but family circumstances led me to give up teaching to concentrate on our home situation. This painful time ended with yet another gift from FISC. When I was free to take on some outside activity, I wanted to see if I could study more. It was now the 1990s, we had a new Rule, we were no longer TOSF and I loved everything about this exciting change. I still do, but recognise the pain it caused some older members over the years. A Conventual friar was then Principal, Fr Jarleth, and he welcomed me, inviting me to take any courses I could manage. That marked a wonderful time. I eventually became Director of the Franciscan Studies Programme. I would never have believed this possible and I can only thank and praise God because this was His work. I met many Franciscans from all over the world and learned a lot. If I could select the most influential part of all this, it was the intensive training to become a spiritual director. This was a powerful conversion moment.

Many years have passed. I have held most offices at local, regional or national level but never treasurer, I am relieved to say. For each of these I was given the grace of the office. I got things wrong, I hurt some members on the way, I have never doubted my own weakness. Many times, I have been grounded again by other members and I have felt huge warmth, generosity, love and support. Increasingly I know the importance of beginning everything in prayer and I have often asked for the gifts of love, empathy with discernment, courage, perseverance, a deepening prayer, faith and hope. I have faced many challenges, not all of my own making though some were. I know well that we always have to begin again.



Throughout I have had the love and generous support of my husband, Dave, who is not part of the ofs. He has given me freedom to pursue my Franciscan life to the full, and supported us, as my income was generally low or non-existent. I could not have been an active Franciscan without the loving support of this kind companion.

We intend to move to a different part of the country as near as possible to me completing my term as national minister in Sept, 2018. We hope to find some shared interests but know ourselves well enough to be certain that we will never share identical interests.

I will not stand for any regional office in December but will be available if needed, principally in formation I would imagine. I will run an Assisi pilgrimage in May or June 2018 and hope many SE travellers from previous pilgrimages might join us. This will be with the help of Dave who is a real partner for me during the pilgrimage, as many of you know. Once I know the dates I will let you have them.

Pray for us as we plan this new stage of our lives and know my love and gratitude for OFS SE Region. Also pray for our Region as elections draw near and for National ofs.

Paula Pearce ofs
Regional Secretary

SER GATHERING – Saturday 1 July 2017 at The Hermitage, West Malling

Sometime in May we'd seen a notice inviting us to "find out more" featuring a picture of a dandelion and mentioning an OFS Regional Day on 1st July. The venue was The Hermitage at West Malling, a beautiful venue which has fond memories for us and we were looking forward to learning more about dandelions.



We were visitors from the Franciscan parish at Rye with our experience of OSF being only one previous visit to the Hollington fraternity. The three of us were keen to find out more. The welcome was warm, the hospitality generous and it was inspiring to be amongst a group of about 25 lively friendly people. As we crossed the imposing threshold of The Hermitage Fr Prins welcomed us with his most



amazing smile and we were offered coffee and introduced to Paula Pearce. We were very happy to see familiar faces from Hollington in Pat and Sue Lee. As other people arrived we learned that fraternities from Croydon, Erith and Ashford were represented. We all took seats in the large airy room overlooking the garden and Kathy Maskens began the presentation about dandelions.

We listened to an illuminating recording about the nature and meaning of dandelions. This seemed a promising start and we suspected there was a link between this and Franciscan spirituality. The recording was followed by shared reflections about the presentation. I had been struck by the mention of roots growing strong when surrounded by good earth and said that I hoped and prayed that being a secular would be like this. The seculars hopefully being a fertile place to grow faith and spirituality. We were then all invited to wander around the garden to look at other natural objects. There had been mention of Brother Wind and Sister Sun

and St Francis talking to dandelions: does Franciscan spirituality have its' own language?

At midday Fr Jesmond Pawley OFMConv arrived for Mass which was concelebrated with Fr Prins. We were able to have a brief chat with Fr Jesmond as we had heard about the Friars at Waterloo from our Parish Priest, Fr Matthew Chadwick OFMConv.

Lunch was most generous and enjoyable with everyone engaged in interaction and social discussion. During the lunch break I realised that the main point of the day was to build fraternity and deepen relationships between all the professed members present. I shared some personal spiritual aspirations with Paula and helped her setup the projector. I found her to be very warm and empathetic – its always lovely when someone understands!



The afternoon began with an explanation of proposed changes in the organisation of the Region with elections taking place later in the year. Fr Jesmond explained that Franciscan organisation does not include "superiors" or "leaders" but that all who take office are expected to give service as well as they are able.

Paula then projected a film about the fraternity in Gibraltar followed by a film about rural Ethiopia. The village in Ethiopia is desperately poor with very little of anything and lacking health care and many services we consider basic. There was a link between the fraternity in Gibraltar and the village in Ethiopia but I'm not sure exactly what the link was. We then saw a further short

film where Ethiopian children were being given lollipops which were a huge novelty to them. Watching anything showing profound poverty in other parts of the world is always a humbling and thought provoking experience.

The day then ended. We were disappointed and a little surprised that no prayers were said during the day outside of mass. We all enjoyed the day but left with more questions than those we arrived with. We felt more aware that we are at the start of a journey which perhaps may be more difficult than we had

anticipated. In the car on the way home we all resolved to continue our journey in prayerful hope.

Mags Ivatts

Rye – Visitor, Hollington

OFS SE REGION – DATES FOR OUR DIARIES

2017

- Fri 1 - Sun 3 September** **RETREAT: LIVING IN FAITH IN DAILY LIFE** *led by Paula Pearce of*s
Pantasaph Retreat Centre, Pantasaph, Holywell, Flintshire CH8 8PE
£105 (all-inclusive/full board); Book: 01352 711053 / pantasaph@gmail.com
- Saturday 23 September** **AUTUMN GATHERING – St Clare – Hollington**
22 Upper Church Road, Hollington, TN37 7AS
1000 – 1530 hrs
- Monday 9 October** **SER Council** (*Executive + Fraternity Ministers or representative*)
The Hermitage, More Park, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HN
1000 – 1530 hrs (Mass celebrated by Bp Paul Mason at 1000 hrs)
- Saturday 18 November** **FORMATION – New Programme**
The Hermitage, More Park, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HN
For **all** members of the region as it will explain the new formation programme
and provide some training
- Saturday 9 December** **SER Elections**
The Hermitage, More Park, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HN
1000 – 1500 hrs (Mass will be celebrated)

2018

- Fri 9 – Sun 11 February** **SER RETREAT:**
The Friars, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7BX
20 spaces available - £10 deposit to SER Treasurer, Paula Pearce via
your Fraternity Minister/Treasurer. First come first served.
More details in due course.
- June/July** **ASSISI Pilgrimage** - led by Paula – *finer details to follow*

FRATERNITIES SHARING:

ERITH

Erith fraternity is doing just fine. We have seven healthy members. Robert will be a full Member by Christmas please God and Valerie would like to start her formation so at our meeting in July we will welcome Valerie as Enquirer.

Lena will no longer be joining us at fraternity as at the moment she is very ill and has been transferred to a home run by the Sisters of Charity, which was her wish. There are seven other members who no longer come - some are finding it hard traveling with age and illness.

Now we come to William who is looking to join us. It was lovely meeting with him at the Bishop's house, and we hope that he will come to join us at Erith in September. I am sure he will give us a good spiritual input. Fr Prins seems very well and suffered no bad effects after that fall at our Gathering a few weeks ago. God bless everyone.

Hilda x

Minister

CROYDON

Br Declan RIP - at our dear brother's well attended funeral in March donations were given to the sum of £300! Declan had strongly wanted to support the Barton Project so this is where the money has gone.

Candidate - Sadly, Joseph Uwagba, advised in May this year that he no longer wished to continue with his formation as, although he enjoyed fraternity and had great admiration for St Francis, he felt he wanted to explore other spiritualities and charisms as well. We wish him well.

**Day of Reflection - 25 June – Led by Fr Jesmond Pawley OFMConv
OFS and Franciscan Charism**

On that day the following points of reflection were taken in:

1. We live in the world in such a way that the world knows we exist...
2. What do we do to show that we are Christians?
3. We want the impossible but rarely do the possible.
4. The fruit we give depends on the vine - what fruit did I give this week?
5. Should we renew our Profession every day?
6. Are we discovering what God wants from us?



JOHN BRADBURNE - A CHRISTIAN MYSTIC?

The term “mystic” has been often used by those who have met or discovered John Bradburne. Is it right? What is mysticism? What is it to be a mystic? These terms have so many meanings, from the mystery of God to quiz on the Net, that it is better to be prudent. In Christian mysticism, it is God who takes the initiative to communicate with man.

John’s itinerary of life with God started in 1942. After the English army was crushed by the Japanese in Malaya, John, then a 20-year-old second lieutenant, fled with Captain Hart for a month in the Malay jungle, but was struck by cerebral malaria - usually fatal if not treated in time. One evening, as he dragged himself under the trees,

Above the rubber-forest shone a star,
The brightest Westward, beckoning afar;
It seemed to me a sign from Christ the King,
Who out of chaos joy and peace doth bring.

This quickly led him to a second discovery: “I felt for the first time that there is something beyond us – if only we could get in touch with it”, and that he himself possesses as it were a sixth sense to perceive this “something beyond us” (he will rarely mention it). After arriving in Sumatra, he was during three days between life and death, and he has a vision of a “Lady” (he will speak only twice of it). On the fourth day he came out of the delirium, just to become aware of what would change his life :

O blest delirium that told
Me clearly that to find The God
Was all I really wanted! odd.
But thus He called me to His Fold.

He began at once his spiritual quest which would lead him into the Catholic Church, then tried several times to enter religious life or to be a hermit in most incongruous places (top of a mountain, organ loft of a Italian Church, under a reservoir, into a henhouse or in a cell full of bees in Africa). It’s only with the lepers of Mutemwa that he found his vocation: serving them by day, and being a hermit-poet with God and Our Lady at night (and sleep ? Don’t ask).



Since the start, John had understood that the initiative of the encounter he desired was for God alone:

We are all misguided children,
We are all lost children until we find our
heavenly Father, or, more truly, until we allow
ourselves to be found by Him (1949).

25 years later, he was still on the trail:

It seems to me a sempiternal trend
For blending with The One is none the worse
Even for endless aeons unbegun,
To wit: God - Holy Spirit, Father, Son (1974).

And he was, as he wrote, “piped by God”, as a tune is piped by a flutist.

A trinitarian mystique

John's story of love with God had many dimensions. His relations with nature, with the animal realm, especially bees, with poetry and with music were important parts of their encounter. We could also distinguish what was deeply original in him and what is coloured by Franciscan and by Carthusian mystical spiritualities, and by the *Cloud of unknowing*. And, above all, his mystical wedding with Our Lady and the passionate and chaste relationship he had with her was definitely part of his mystic way. But, as he wrote in 1976 to his mother, "To come first to what matters most: The Blessed Trinity... this is the most important message of the purpose and purport of my life".

It was during one of the darkest periods in his life that his trinitarian meditation and life literally exploded, in 1973, when he was removed from his position as Mutemwa Warden and had to leave the Centre to climb the Chigona and stay there under a tent. The innovative analogy (even if not totally unprecedented) of Father/Thought, Son/Word, Spirit/Voice he developed had the fragrance of personal experience. John, quite indifferent to what he wrote, took it very seriously, wanted it to be known, and seemed to say discreetly that this mission was entrusted to him from above:

The thought, The Word, The Voice are Persons Three
Of Love in Love with Love for evermore,
I am assured that it is up to me
To write this down as clown and troubadour (1974).



A mystique of participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ

The touchstone of Christian mysticism is, of course, Christ himself, and mystical experience is an eminent form of the grace of baptism, participating in His salvific mission and his paschal mystery. John saw his personal relation with Christ and life in him as the one of a minstrel, troubadour, juggler, jester, idiot, fool, buffoon and herald, as in the Franciscan and Fools-for-Christ tradition. Moreover, it was in the lepers that John met eminently and mystically Christ, of whom he wrote in a premonitory way, a fortnight before hearing for the first time about the Lepers' Centre of Mutemwa: "Thou leprous God! Thou outcast stricken thing!" (*Man Friday*, 1968). And John was so assimilated to his companionship with Christ servant serving Christ served in the least of his brothers that he invented a verb to mean it: "Jesus who brothers us in everything." (1974). Does this mean that this life with the lepers was easy for John? No: "He was just unwilling as the rest of us. It is not a nice disease and yet John totally gave himself to these people. I stayed at the side of a bath where he was washing an old man. I don't think you would like that sort of thing, but it has to be done, and John had to do it." (John Gough); "Death is never a pleasant sight, but the death of a dirty, smelly, deformed creature is repellent. That is when John's saintliness was really apparent." (Mona Smith).



This participation to Christ Passion through the poor lepers of Mutemwa was crowned by John's own Passion and death for them. The Christ-like figure dimension of his last days cannot escape to those who learn about it: agony, arrest by treason, mockery, John's silence, trial, role of Pilate played by the commanding judge, crowd that claims death, execution in a garden 'outside the city' – it's impressive. And what happened after his death seems to show that if John participated to Christ Passion, he is working with him beyond death.

So, was John a Christian mystic? I asked the question in Zimbabwe to Father Dove in 2010, his closest friend and *alter ego* when they were together. His answer: "We could say that John was a mystic but it came quite naturally in his religious life, in his case. Yes, he was a mystic, but it was so natural, so lovely for him. I would say he was a mystic, a man who readily talked about God, and had an easy conversation with Him."

As every charism, St Paul tells us, is for the good of the whole body of Christ, the Church, John's mystical charism is also a gift for each of us, and Jean Vanier is a good witness of this when he writes: "The story of John's life has touched me, heart and soul, and brought me closer to God. It has revealed to me a God wonderfully full of surprises, better, more intelligent, more creative than we could imagine. An extraordinary God who cannot be confined in rational concepts or in an 'ordinary' religious life."

Celia Brigstocke

<http://johnbradburne.com/about.php>

FRATERNITY CONTACTS

South East Regional Fraternities:

ASHFORD Last Tuesday	St Pio of Pietrelcina 7.00pm – 9.00pm The Priests House, St Teresa of Avila, Maidstone Road, TN24 8TX
CROYDON 4 th Sunday	St Mary of the Angels 2.00pm – 3.45pm St Mary's Church, Prayer Room, 70 Wellesley Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2AR
ERITH 3 rd Sunday	Our Lady of the Angels 2.45pm – 4.45pm The Angelus Centre, Carlton Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1DN
HOLLINGTON 1 st Sunday	St Clare 3.30pm – 5.30pm Poor Clares, 22 Upper Church Road, Hollington, TN37 7AS

For more information contact:	Regional Minister:	01372 812 923
	Regional Vice Minister:	07789 4142 53
	Regional Secretary:	01303 813 095
	Regional Treasurer	020 8300 1760
	National Minister	paulapofs@gmail.com
	National Secretary	pamsvt@aol.com

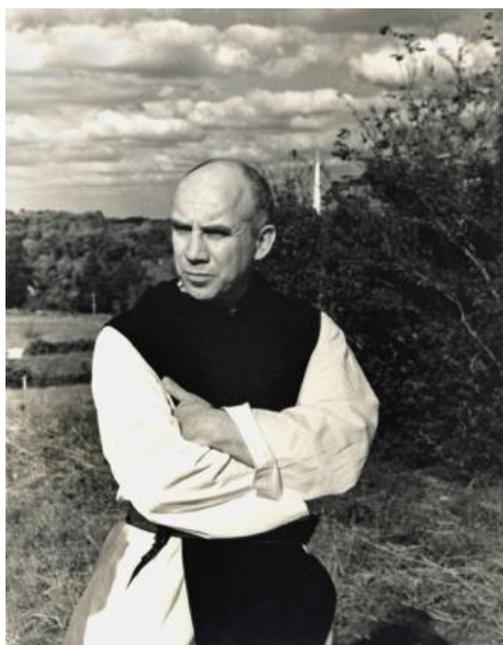
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Franciscan website links:
Secular Franciscan Order GB
Secular Franciscan International Order
Franciscans International

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

THOMAS MORTON : 1915 – 1968 “I have no idea where I am going!”



My Lord God,
I do not know where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end,
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your Will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

From Thoughts in Solitude

*Converted to Roman Catholicism 10/12/1941
Ordained 25/5/1949 Fr Louis OCSO
Autobiography: The Seven Storey Mountain*