

# **Ordo Franciscanus Secularis**

## **VIEWPOINT 19.1**

**OUR Southern Region Newsletter**



**Called to be franciscan**

**In the world but not of the world**

**Why is God calling me to be Franciscan? What is it that God sees in me that says the way of St Francis is the way ahead for me? What is lacking in me that the way of St Francis will give?** If I have no answer to these sorts of questions, what am I doing to find them? As I progress through another year do I sense a growth, a movement, a change? Am I still growing? Does belonging to this Franciscan family fill me with joy and excitement? I must engage with my fellow men. I must open my eyes to God's amazing creation. The best way to have God work through me is to get on with what I see needs to be done, to have a go with sincerity and purpose. If I stumble, He is always there to catch me. For God has called me to be wholly centred in Christ. From that flows my mission in life, to do God's will in our everyday lives as the Spirit of the risen Christ breaths essential life into us. Why do we make it so difficult?

***Ilia Delio ofs explores what it means to consciously, intentionally participate in evolution:***

Because we humans are in evolution we must see Christ in evolution as well. Christ's humanity is our humanity; Christ's life is our life; to live Christ is to live community; to bear Christ in one's life is to become a source of healing love for the sake of community.

We must liberate Christ from a Western intellectual form that is logical, abstract, privatized, and individualized. We must engage in the complexification of Christ, which means accepting the diversity and differences of the other as integral to ourselves and thus integral to the meaning of Christ. Engagement with the other is not dissolving ourselves into the other but being true to ourselves—our identity—by finding ourselves in God and God in the other.

Christ is the power of God among us and within us, the fullness of the earth and of life in the universe. We humans have the potential to make Christ alive; it is what we are created for. To live the mystery of Christ is not to speak about Christ but to live in the surrender of love, the poverty of being, and the cave of the heart. If we can allow the Spirit to really take hold of us and liberate us from our fears, anxieties, demands, and desire for power and control, then we can truly live in the risen Christ who empowers us to build this new creation. We can look toward that time when there will be one cosmic person uniting all persons, one cosmic humanity uniting all humanity, one Christ in whom God will be all in all.

On the whole we are not conscious of evolution, and we do not act as if our choices can influence the direction of evolution.

What will it take for us to realize that we are unfinished creatures who are in the process of being created? That our world is being created? That our church is being created? That

Christ is being formed in us? The good news of Jesus Christ is not so much what happens to us but what must be done by us. The choices we make for the future will create the future. We must reinvent ourselves in love.

We must consciously evolve; we must orient our being toward new life and growth because the unity that we really are, the deep connective tissue of oneness, will not let us rest with separateness. Too much is at stake now to hide behind our secure walls.

We must *choose to be whole*, to be attentive to God's ongoing work in our lives. God will not create a new future for us, but God invites us to become more whole within ourselves so that we may become more whole among ourselves. Evolution toward greater wholeness is evolution toward more life and love. This is the basis of contemplative evolution and the emergence of Christ.

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**Letting Go** *taken from "Ten Evenings with God" by Ilia Delio ofs*

Living in the will of God is living in the freedom of love. As Jesus was preparing His disciples for mission He said to them, "If you continue in my word...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free". Perhaps the key to living freely in the will of God is given in Jesus' words, "If you continue in my word". Too often we keep the Word of God at a comfortable distance from us; we do not allow it to invade our lives and change us. We keep the Word of God at a safe distance by allowing it to be a dead letter rather than a living Word of life. But the Word of God, the words of scripture, are words of spirit and life. They are meant to instil new life in us, and where there is life there is change and growth.

Among the ancients the spoken word was an empowered event, one that connoted some kind of praxis. For the desert fathers the spoken word of the Abba imparted action and direction to the disciple's life. How many of us have heard the famous story recounted from the desert tradition in which Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and told him he was doing all the right things-fasting, praying and meditating, living in peace and purity of heart-yet it was not enough. He still felt lukewarm, a certain ambivalence in his spiritual life.

Whereupon the old Abba Joseph stood up, removed his loincloth, and stretched out his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, "If you will, you can become all flame. Letting go of everything that hinders us or separates us from the love of Christ, including our thoughts, our actions, even the way we pray, is the real beginning of life in God. If we allow ourselves to be consumed by love we will become living flames of love.

Of what use is it to pray and do good things without being transformed? Of what use is it to hear the Word of God and not make it one's own? Life in God is meant to be transforming, changing us from virtue to virtue and glory to glory. (See Corinthians 3.18) if the Word of God is not made our own, then the scriptures have no more meaning than reading a good novel or the Sunday newspaper. The Word of God is meant to be taken into one's life, consumed and digested to stimulate growth. We should grow into the freedom of love that God is. We should grow into "another Christ" renewing in our lives the mystery of divine love. Perhaps the will of God remains a question for many of us because we never get beyond the initial stage of knowing God. We never make the Word of God our own; hence, we never really come to know the truth of Christ nor are we set free. We remain enslaved to our selfish desires and material things, marginally Christian but never fully engaged in the life to which we are called. God remains a personal devotion but not the animating centre of our lives. Hence the will of God continues to haunt us, especially as we ponder our destiny.

Jesus said to His disciples, "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12.49) As Christians we are to set the world ablaze with love, a love that radiates from the depths of our inner lives. We are cocreators in Christ. All that we hope for in this world cannot be realised without our transformation and participation. If we truly seek the will of God, then we must seek the path of love that will lead us to truth, and from truth to freedom. Only when we are truly free will we hand ourselves over to the fire of love that purges our thick layers of selfishness and transforms us into another Christ. Then we will be able to call ourselves Christian and really mean what we say.

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**Order of Franciscans Secular {OFS} and the Fraternity of the Holy Spirit: A Retreat led by Sister Evelyn FSMA at Park Place Pastoral Centre, Wickham 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

I would like to thank Sister Evelyn and the Holy Spirit for a most inspiring retreat. To start with Sister Evelyn spoke of the history of Park Place from the conversion of the convent school to a Pastoral Centre, which has now been in place for nearly fifty years. Because of British rule the sisters came from India bringing with them much of their own Indian culture which so enriches their work here. There are now five sisters, who in accordance with the Franciscan way of life, work with their hands in order to earn their living. By example and encouragement, they provide a framework for new and older Christians to grow. They focus on the Fatherhood of God and Jesus the Way; they are Guardians of their brothers and sisters and treasure the gift of Creation. We are reminded of St Francis's Canticle of Creation, where he speaks of Sister Wind and Brother Sun.

After a beautiful Mass with Fr Andrew in the St Thomas Moore Room Sister Evelyn again addressed us, this time about 'Letting Go and Letting God'. She reflected on our present preoccupation with technology, saying that in her view the closer we get to

technology the further we get from each other and the things that really matter; Celano writes of St Francis who shed tears of joy in contemplation. Live simply that others may simply live. The true simplicity of Our Lady who said, 'Thy will be done'. The story of the Passion is a story of self-emptying, of surrender to the will of God. Here is the Kingdom of God. We finished the session with a recitation of the Litany of Humility.

In the afternoon Sue Malpass who had recently visited Palestine described the situation of the Palestinians who were watching their land gradually disappearing under the power of their Israeli neighbours. Both sides were suffering, and it was difficult to see how these tensions might be resolved.

Finally, Sister Evelyn introduced the subject of Creation starting with a reading of the first chapter of the gospel according to St John, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Sister Evelyn then considered the work of Matthew Fox and his books 'Original Blessing' and 'Creational Spirituality', where the focus was on giving thanks to the Lord and praising Him for the beauty of creation. It echoed the Canticle of Creation by St Francis. As a Franciscan Sister Evelyn was inspired to paint the beauties of Creation as the background of the St Damiano cross; a cosmic Christ in the midst of all the contrasts and paradoxes of Creation, as, for example, Heart and Head, Male and Female, Light and Darkness, Sun and Moon, Fire and Water and the Lotus Flower growing in muddy water and the local countryside of the Meon valley.

In conclusion a few practical tips: in your garden leave a little corner for weeds as St Francis recommended; remain optimistic and smile at passers-by; in a Friary in Brazil there are numerous bins for the reuse and recycling a variety of materials like plastics and fabrics.

Staying at Park Place gave us the opportunity to meet OFS members of several Fraternities and new visitors. Sister Judith provided splendid meals and all the sisters made our weekend a real pleasure. Our warm and grateful thanks to all of them. ***Esme Vivian, Minister of St Anthony's Fraternity of the Solent Area.***

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### **Dates for the Diary**

Saturday 11 May is set for our day of Recommitment at Ladywell. This will be a whole day gathering.

Saturday 10 August is the provisional date for the annual gathering at Wintershall for anyone with a Franciscan heart. The topic for the day is under discussion.

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*Is this a fast to keep the larder lean and clean from fat of veals and sheep?*

*Is it to quit the dish of flesh, yet still to fill the platter high with fish?*

*Is it to fast an hour, or ragged to go, or show a downcast look and sour?*

*No: 'tis a fast to dole thy sheaf of wheat and meat unto the hungry soul.*

*It is to fast from strife and old debate, and hate, to circumcise thy life!*

*To show a heart grief-rent: to starve thy sin, not bin; and that's to keep thy Lent.*

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***May the Lord bless you.***

***May He set His face to shine upon you.***

***May the Lord give you His peace.***

## **Edward**

***Viewpoint is currently published four times a year, at the end of February, May, August, and November. Copy is badly needed and should be sent to Edward Cuerden at [cuerden2ed@talktalk.net](mailto:cuerden2ed@talktalk.net) or 94, Mays Lane, Fareham, PO14 2ED***