

The Cord

Secular Franciscan Order
St Bonaventure Region
South East England UK

Issue 33 Lent 2022



The Prayer Before the Crucifix by St. Francis of Assisi

Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,
that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.
Amen.



The gift of Counsel Pope Francis

I may have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial. (1Cor.6:12)

Counsel is the gift through which the Holy Spirit enables our conscience to make a concrete choice in communion with God, according to the logic of Jesus and His Gospel. In this way, the Spirit makes us grow interiorly, he makes us grow positively, he makes us grow and also to live in community. The essential condition for preserving this gift is prayer.

Prayer is so important. To ask the Lord: "Lord, help me to give counsel, what must I do now?" And through prayer we make space so that the Spirit may come and help us in that moment, that he may counsel us on what we all must do. Never forget prayer! Never! Pray that the Spirit give us the gift of Counsel.

(The Gift of Counsel 7 May 2014) Fr Paul Rout OFM₂

LENTEN REFLECTION

Kathy Maskens OFS, South East Regional Minister

Hello everyone.
I am writing this as I make my way to the London region elections to co-preside with Betsy but all I can think about is the horror of the war in Ukraine. In the last few years I have had the good fortune to meet many people from Ukraine. One of our recent parish priests is Ukrainian, and every year our parish is supported by Ukrainian priests from one of the seminaries there. Then there is a member of staff in my team at work, our new OFS international councillor Dina and the numerous young people that we met in Lithuania. There is also our wonderful OFS sister from Russia, Paula who was also at the International Chapter, quiet and gentle and always a bosom pal to Dina.

This war feels very different to wars that have gone before, I really feel these are my brothers and sisters. Of course I should feel like that about any war but my human failing let's me down. I am at a loss for what I can do. Feeling completely stunned. Prayer and time given to God feels precious and highly valued and I know that it is this that makes a difference along with the

physical support that we can give. Let us open our hearts and ask the Lord what he wants us to do and let us pray fervently for a peaceful end to this conflict.

On a lighter note it feels like we are beginning to be able to live with COVID and perhaps return to a nearer to normal life. We, as South East region, are just starting to come out into the light and almost all fraternities are meeting face to face. On Saturday 19 March we will have our first regional day. I am really looking forward to seeing everyone after this very long hibernation and taking the opportunity to share our spiritual journey together again.

May the Lord give you peace and bless you and may he help you to make this a very precious and spiritually enriching Lent.

Prayer for Peace in Ukraine



God of peace and justice, we bring into your love all those who live in war torn places, and especially for the people of Ukraine.

We pray for peace and an end to war around the world, we pray for all those wherever they are, who fear tomorrow.

We pray for those who have power over war or peace, that they may show wisdom, discernment and compassion in their decisions.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FIVE LENTS OF FRANCIS

From Franciscan Intellectual Tradition <https://www.franciscantradition.org/>

The early sources about the life of Francis mention five “Lents”.

A Lent to prepare for Easter and for Christmas

For 40 days before Easter, Francis observed the “Great Lent”, what we know as Lent today.

Francis also observed a similar period of 40 days of fasting and prayer in preparation for Christmas, beginning after the Feast of All Saints on 1 November. It was at the end of a Lent preparing for Christmas that Francis arranged for the display of the Nativity scene at Greccio.

Both Lents were observed by his brothers as well (*Later Rule*, Chapter 3).

A Fast like Jesus’ in the desert

Francis also recommended a fast of 40 days after the 6 January. On this day in Francis’ time, the Church celebrated the Baptism of the Lord (as well as the visit of the Three Kings), so Francis reasoned that Jesus began his fasting of 40 days in the desert on 7 January.

A Lent in summer

In some years Francis also observed a Lent in summer, from the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June, patrons of the Church of Rome, until the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (whom Francis calls “the virgin made church”), which occurs on 15 August.

A Lent to honour Saint Michael

Finally, Francis observed out of personal devotion a Lent in honour of Saint Michael after the Assumption until 29 September. It was during such a “Lent of Saint Michael” that Francis received the vision of the Seraph on the mountain of La Verna, followed by the appearance of the stigmata on his body.

During the Lent of Saint Michael at La Verna in the fall of 1224, Francis was accompanied by Brother Leo, with whom he prayed the Office, while spending most of the time in prayer alone.

Fasting, Solitude, and Prayer

We have indications from the early sources about how Francis observed these Lents: in fasting, solitude, and prayer.

One year Francis spent the “Great Lent” before Easter on an island in Lake Trasimeno, near Perugia. A fisherman rowed him out to the island, and Francis took with him just a little bread and asked to be brought back to shore at the conclusion of Lent.

Early Franciscan spiritual practice

If these Lents are indicative of his usual practice each year, Francis would spend probably three and perhaps as many as five periods of about 40 days each in relative seclusion, dedicating himself to prayer and fasting in solitude, sometimes with one or other of the brothers, sometimes by himself. This would amount to about four months or as much as seven months a year in a secluded, contemplative way of life, frequently spent in the hermitages, a characteristic feature of early Franciscan spiritual practice.

Anxious to know the Will of the Lord

Basically, Francis was creating the space and time to step apart and reflect on how God was asking him to deepen his commitment in terms of the ever-changing situation of his life. “When blessed Francis stayed constantly in a place to pray . . . he was always anxious to know the Will of the Lord, about how he could please him better” (Assisi Compilation, 118).

Recommitment to Fundamental Objectives

Most Franciscans today, committed to many activities, do not have the time to spend all of Lent in a hermitage, let alone make several “Lents” a year. The challenge is still there for us to create sufficient mental space during this sacred season to “go apart” from our daily activities to discern God’s continuing call, to “know the Will of the Lord. . . how we might please Him better.”

The example of these five Lents of Francis can encourage us to seek out times of solitude for prayer and silence and fasting during our preparation for Easter this year. Simplifying our lives by removing the excesses of noise, food and drink, turning toward our neighbour in need: all of these are ancient Christian practices embraced by Francis and life-giving for our world today. Lent is a time to recommit ourselves to our Fundamental Objectives!

Friendship with Christ –Ilia Delio OFS

If Francis was truly a friend of Christ, as Bonaventure claimed, then to be a friend of Christ is to be willing to love like Christ, with compassionate love for others. In his “Instructions to the Novices,” Bonaventure indicates that the love of God is not a speculative idea, it is not abstract. It is real and concrete and it is shown to us in the figure of Jesus on the cross. He writes:

Prayer is the ladder on which Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending. So, once a day, separate yourself and call to mind the many blessings of God with deep humility of heart. Remember for your sake, He willed to be born, suffer, and die. Picture the bloody sweat, the outrageous blows, the stinging lashes, the thorny crown, the blasphemous spit, the mocking words. Picture Him hanging from the cross, the bloodshot eyes, the pallid lips, the bowed head, the agony of death. No need for more. Life itself has died for us.

We don't usually think of our closest friends hanging on a cross. Usually we want to help our friends get down from the cross. We want our friends to be happy, to enjoy life. Yet there is no doubt that sacrifice is part of friendship.

HOW CAN I BEST SERVE MY FRATERNITY ?

A letter from Betsy Hart, National Minister OFSGB

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Matthew 20 verse 28

We are asked to become co-disciples and co-missionaries of Christ in how we live our lives and govern our Fraternities. We are servants of one another and we are to challenge, change and support our Fraternities. At local level we support our Region and the Region supports the National Council and the National Council supports the International Council. Each level has its own part to play in animating, guiding and supporting our Order throughout the whole world.

Having just come back from the International Elective Chapter in Rome I have experienced first-hand how National Councils have been helped with their own individual difficulties. So the question to be asked is not ‘What does REGION do for me and my Fraternity’ or even ‘What does NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL do for my Fraternity’ but rather ‘How can I best serve my Regional, National and International Fraternities’ One important way in which we do this is to give of our wealth to help support our worldwide Franciscan Organisation. Similar to last year the guide contribution remains at £24 per Admitted member (both Professed and Candidates) of each Fraternity. This is a MINIMUM contribution but if you can afford more you are invited to do so. Of this £8 per person is retained by the Regional Council and £16 per person is forwarded by the

Regional Council to the National Council. Contributions towards OFS GB activities in 2022 become due on 1 January 2022. Regional Ministers should contact local Fraternity Ministers who in their turn will contact Fraternity members. Previous guidance applies concerning the gathering of contributions within individual fraternities. Please suggest an offering but remember a donation is only what each member can afford to contribute. Any Fraternity shortfall should be met, as far as is possible, by Regional Councils. For National Council contributions, bank transfers are welcomed and may be made to Secular Franciscan Order National Council via the website www.ofsgb.org.

Please remember that we must all regard it as a joy, an honour and a privilege to be able to Serve our Order.

‘How can I best serve my Regional, National and International Fraternities?’

One important way in which we do this is to give of our wealth to help support our worldwide Franciscan Organisation.

REFLECTION ON FORMATION

Mags & David Ivatts OFS St Clare Fraternity Hollington

We were professed on 2 May 2021, at a beautiful ceremony held by special permission at the Poor Clare Convent in Hollington, during the 2nd lockdown. We had to wear masks. If it hadn't been that one of our brothers had videoed the ceremony I think I would remember very little. I was in a daze and felt emotional. David was cool and collected and has every moment emblazoned on his memory.

Since our profession, it has been really interesting (also wonderful) to notice how things have changed. Pretty much immediately, being fully professed members of our fraternity, dynamics

between us all changed. David and I found a new confidence in putting ourselves forward to do more, especially for our Region and we've even attended a couple of National meetings via Zoom.

Being newly professed we have a strong sense of the value of Formation, especially for Candidates leading up to profession. Profession itself became a realisation of so much that had been important to us for many years. It was exciting, we felt on Cloud 9 and at the same time very aware of the solemnity of Profession, of what it meant to make the promise before God to live the Gospel Life, to witness Jesus Christ and follow in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. It can seem so daunting, and of course we felt unworthy in the way probably everybody does. But it was, and is, wonderful!

One of the things we really appreciate is the value of the gentle love and support of our Minister Pat Lee and our Secretary Sue Lee.

Pat is a quiet, unassuming and thoroughly gentle man. His unstinting and consistent care and kindness towards us, from the first time we met him, to the Rite of Profession, gives witness to his love and the fine example of Franciscan living that he is.

As well as his example, and holding the responsibility of Minister of the Fraternity, he never misses the opportunity to bake an excellent cake! Our fraternity meetings are

not only held in the warm comfort of the Poor Clare Convent community room but when we break for tea some delicious baked yummy is always on offer. Sometimes almost a literal slice of heaven!

In this way, witnessing building relationships and witnessing the

love within the fraternity, formation takes place. It is of course valuable to read all the books you can, write notes and prepare reflections and discuss. But in our lived experience the love within the fraternity is the real formation.

We were also soon recruited into a small working team with National Formator Terry Mortimer to look at the OFSGB formation material. There has been much discussion and preparation of documents and a couple of zoom meetings. As yet a plan is to be formulated. We look forward to contributing and seeing how things develop.

Meanwhile our call as secular Franciscans is to do the works of the Father, to be a dwelling place for the Spirit and to be spouses, sisters, brothers and mothers to the Word made flesh in our own times.

No small task. It is also very important to bake cakes. Thank you Pat and Sue.



Hollington Fraternity meeting with Tandu the cat hoping for attention!

From the editor

I do hope you enjoy this Lent 2022 edition of The Cord, our regional newsletter.

Have you noticed our website OFSGB has had a significant re-vamp? It is looking a whole lot better than it was. Congratulations and well done to everyone who has contributed to the work, which must have been considerable.

For those of you on the mailing list for daily formation reflections from the National Formation Minister you will have noticed they are no longer regular. Terry Mortimer (the Minister) had a spate of technical problems and is no longer sending reflections daily. Hopefully they will resume soon.

Meanwhile there is no shortage of excellent material of all sorts on franciscanmedia.org. One of my favourite sites.



OFSGB South East England UK
DIARY DATES for REGIONAL GATHERINGS
2022

ASHFORD

19 MARCH 2022

AYLESFORD

18 JUNE 2022

ERITH

8 OCTOBER 2022

FRATERNITIES SHARING

Croydon Fraternity - St Mary of the Angels

Salvina Bartholomeusz OFS

During CoVid restrictions we have been successful with Zoom which was a big learning curve for many of us. We held Formation Tuesday evenings which preceded Fraternity Sundays afternoons.

We have two visitors joining us monthly one from Jersey and one from Sweden. Errol is now a Candidate; Jude and Alfonso are Enquirers. Jude has recently located to Edinburgh for work reasons and will continue to join us for our monthly Formation and Fraternity. We are looking to return to our Seat for Fraternity in the spring- there is a TV etc in the hall so we can still use zoom and Visitors and Enquirers may continue to join us that way if they wish. It is all quite exciting.

We keep in touch with our brothers and sisters unable, for health reasons, to participate via zoom or in person.

Hollington Fraternity—St Clare of Assisi

Pat Lee OFS

We have been meeting at the Convent since July last year and it is so good to actually be able to meet in person again. We have six professed members, and Leslie is now an Enquirer. We also have a Visitor, Richard, who joined us in February. We are so blessed that our Poor Clares: Sister Frances Teresa, Sister Paul and Sister Marie Therese still join us for our meetings. Ray has been unable to come to our meetings for several years and we are hoping that he may be able to join us on Zoom sometime.

For our Formation we have been discussing the Admonitions; we are up to Admonition VII so we only have another twenty-one to look at! In January we discussed Atilio Gallimberti's thoughts on "The OFS with the Lord Pope" on the private audience with Pope Francis during the International Chapter in Rome in November. Pope Francis said that the OFS must "be led where God wants us to be".

Ashford Fraternity - St Pio

Mark Kennett OFS

We now meeting on the last Monday morning in the month instead of Tuesday evenings. This came about due to various reasons about meeting in the evening. We are about to use the Church Hall for the first time since the start of the pandemic and after extensive building work.

Thanks to Mary Riddle for her kind hospitality in allowing us to meet at her house.

In our new format we start with Mass at 10.00am followed by Fraternity. At the moment we are using CIOFS material on St Louis, King of France, patron of OFS, for formation. Louis was alive in the early 13th century and was friends with St Bonaventure in Paris. The course looks at all aspects of his life. It is interesting to see how someone of such high authority, and standing, was able to lead a deep Franciscan life and be canonised by the church for it.

Erith Fraternity - Our Lady of the Angels

Mary Nee-Murrills OFS

This year is flying so fast and already, we're in March! Although a few of us contracted CoVid during the winter months, all have now recovered and back in good health. Thanks be to God.

Life is ticking over peacefully in our Fraternity and our monthly meetings are lively and participative. We currently have seven professed members, four Candidates, one Enquirer and two visitors, making fourteen members in all.

Erith Fraternity is gradually coming to terms with the recent loss of our dear sister Ann Allen. Ann devoted her life to the benefit of others. She was a wonderful and dedicated Franciscan and friend to so many people both within the OFS, and to the wider community.

Ann worked with a number of charities and support services over several years, and was a local Councillor for Dartford Borough Council, and Chairperson for the Kent County Council. Through her many charitable works, Ann was awarded the MBE. We miss her warm personality and her ever ready smile. May she rest in peace.

Our beloved Sheila Whitehead hasn't been able to attend for quite a while due to ill health and difficulties with mobility. I visited her very recently and spent a great afternoon chatting about anything and everything. Although Sheila has several health issues, she remains so positive and very cheerful! God bless her.

We are pleased and very excited to announce that one of our candidates, Valerie Curran, will be going forward for her profession into the OFS on **Saturday 26th March at Our Lady of the Angels RC Church Erith.**

We are pleased and very excited to announce that one of our candidates, Valerie Curran, will be going forward for her profession into the OFS on **Saturday 26th March at Our Lady of the Angels RC Church Erith.**

The ceremony will take place during the **5.30pm Parish Mass** and everyone is welcome to join us for this wonderful Franciscan celebration, and to welcome Valerie into the Order as a newly Professed Secular Franciscan.

Afterwards, there will be light refreshments in the Angelus Centre adjoining the church. We do hope you can attend Valerie's special day and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

We ask the Lord to give Valerie His support and encouragement as she begins her lifelong commitment to *'follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis'*. May Valerie always find peace and contentment as she lives daily *'From Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel'*.



Sponsor Sister Clare Wing Walk

Sister Clare Bernadette Knowles, Franciscan Missionary Sister living in Hollington, is fantastically brave and is doing a wing walk in support of Crisis the homeless charity. Sr Clare says “I am happy to be raising sponsorship for a Wing walk challenge at Damyns Hall Aerodrome, Essex, in aid of the valuable work of Crisis, the national charity for homeless people. The event has had to be postponed due to coronavirus prevention measures and health issues from the planned date of 6 June 2020. It has now been rescheduled for 4 June 2022. A tree has been planted in the garden of our convent near Hastings to offset the carbon emissions for the short flight.”

Please sponsor Sr Clare by visiting her just giving page:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Clare-Knowles2?

