



# TAU November 2023

## The Province of the Pacific, Third Order Society of St Francis

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## Advent Greetings

Advent, coming as it does at the beginning of every church year, reminds me of cyclical aspects of our lives: we sleep then rise, we kneel and rise, we fall and rise.... Rising, or being risen up, is a characteristic of our faith that links us intimately with God and each other: we are nurtured, nursed and nourished by God so that we can respond: first to God, and then to each other (and later even that distinction may start to disappear...). God comes to us in Christ and enables us to go out to others with Christ and as Christ.

As important as the events of Bethlehem were 2000 years ago to us and all of humanity, it is the regular coming of Jesus into our lives daily that we need to discover. Mysteriously and mystically, Jesus is encountered every day, and it is in this realisation that the church grows. Individuals in their awakening, prayer and reconciliation are being changed and can bring change to the world. It starts small - usually - hardly surprising given that most seeds and babies are too! And it grows, paradoxically as we give more and more of it away.

Advent prepares us for Christmas, and the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. As we prepare to celebrate the rising of the “Sun of Righteousness” let’s allow ourselves to be risen up by the one who comes down to us.

***Pax et Bonum from our Bishop Protector, The Rt. Rev. Steven,  
+Steven***

## **E ai a Werahiko Tapu – te pai me te rangimārie.**

### **St Francis says peace and good**

We are in a time when dreams of peace can feel far off. At the time of writing, in late October, we are regularly reminded of how the land of our Saviour's birth is riven by war. With daily ongoing atrocities – and countless innocent victims – realistic hope for a peace that is lasting and just can feel impossible. We know that with God all things are possible. We remember, too, that Francis reminded us to start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible. Sometimes these sorts of statements feel trite, particularly in the face of the enormity of inter-generational, inter-religious geo-political realities. They can sound like the “thoughts and prayers” that are said after other apparently intractable problems by people who do not want, or do not know how, to act – think gun violence in America. When we reflect on these statements, however, we can view them as invitational, as ways into insurmountable problems. May we be more than simply peaceful, may we be (as Jesus says in Matthew 5:9) *peace-makers*. That is, may we actively strive for peace. May we do so in our communities, in Ukraine, in Israel-Palestine and in all places. As Franciscans, let us start with prayer and discern what form of action we are led to from there...whether as individuals, as Areas or other configurations.

When we look ahead to Advent, a time traditionally for prayer and preparation, we might be tempted to do so with a good New Zealand dose of wariness for we know how busy this time of year can be. The opportunity to prepare our hearts and our world for the good news of the coming of the Messiah can seem a distant second or third priority to the seemingly pressing needs of present-buying, party-attending and church-service planning. Taking time to be still during Advent can therefore have that added degree of power and poignancy in our lives.

We recall the novelty of the live nativity scene that Francis introduced during his lifetime. Imagine how it made the Christmas story come alive for people then. Let us be attentive to opportunities to be similarly innovative in the places we have influence over. Let us prayerfully consider how we might creatively invite others – and ourselves! – to make space for God in our lives as well as in the manger this Christmas...whether we have a live scene or not!

The Third Order has been a place that I have often personally connected with peace. It is also a place where I have found that which is good. I pray this is so for you, too. Sometimes this is as simple as feeling peaceful enough to have a snooze on a seat during a retreat. Sometimes this is being inspired to change how we live, whether by volunteering for groups that do good, abandoning practices that while convenient were not life-giving, or some other way.

Let us encourage one another with our own stories of that which is life-giving, too.

In the spirit of St Francis and St Clare, may we be makers of peace and bringers of the good – news, life and love – for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Peter Bargh, Minister Provincial**

## Reflections from Interprovincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC)

Here I was. In England. At IPTOC. Not exactly a dream come true as I had never dreamed I would be there. We gathered on the first afternoon for eucharist. So many faces; some known, many new. First Order brothers and sisters obvious in their robes, which identified other Third Order members clearly. It was a small group – three representatives from five Third Order Provinces plus a few more, about the same for First Order. One joy was meeting Hyeran from Korea and discovering that she knew Lynn Kim, a novice from my Area in New Zealand now residing in Korea. From the first day there was a sense of belonging to the same community, which grew as we prayed, ate, socialised, worshiped and worked together over the next ten days.



Marion Fairbrass, Provincial Formation Director

I am grateful that the three Ministers General who were at IPTOC (John Heberton TSSF, Br Christopher John SSF and Sister Sue CSF) have written a clear and comprehensive summary of IPTOC. I can reflect on what impacted me.

High Leigh Conference Centre is a huge complex catering for several groups at a time. The central core of the building is what was quite a grand house set in spacious grounds. Two storied accommodation wings have been built with very classy ensuite bedrooms. I did get lost once or twice before I found a pleasant route outside the buildings. I particularly enjoyed the early morning walk, with mist over the surrounding grassland; long shadows from the rising sun; rabbits squirrels and magpies amusing me as I walked to “Group Lectio”.

When I saw the timetable for the first time and noted the time of Group Lectio (7.30 am), I was daunted. To be up and dressed and ready to face others by that time? I wondered if it might be optional rather than expected! We had been organised into small groups with a mix of Orders and nationalities in each group. I was in a group led by Sr Sue (European Province - UK) with Hyeran Yang (Asia Pacific – Korea), Sally Buckley (Asia Pacific – Australia) and Bongikosi Buthelezi (Africa). For two days we were joined by speaker Cathy Ross.

This early morning gathering became one of the highlights. To my surprise we were not using bible readings, but passages from Christa Seva Sangha, the First Order Principles and the Third Order Principles. I am ashamed to say that although I knew that SSF had part of its beginnings in an Ashram in India, I have never before paid much attention to this. As we prayed and shared our way through a different section each day, my understanding and appreciation of the source of our principles and the depth that can be found in them deepened.

I offer the following thoughts on this part of our Principles on Three Ways of Service. I have used my notes taken during at IPTOC and quotes and information from the booklet "Walking in the Footsteps of Christ: The Historical Documents of the Society of Saint Francis", edited by Sister Joyce CSF, published by SSF in 2003. Many of you will have access to a copy of this.

## **Where did our Principles and Rule Come From?**

Saint Francis himself wrote about three or four versions of a Rule or Principles, and Saint Clare famously battled with Popes for years to have her Rule approved. Their early Rules are still available (and included in the publication named above). These were the base documents that inspired those from England who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, began to revive the Franciscan movement.

### **Timeline**

1922: Establishment of Christian Ashram led by Fr Jack Winslow.

1928: Fr Algy Robertson and others who joined influenced by Franciscan movement.

1934: Group split into 2 groups. The more Franciscan group led by Fr Bill Lash took the name Christa Prema Sangha.

Ft Algy returned to UK and formed the "Brotherhood of the Love of Christ", which later amalgamated with "Brotherhood of St Francis of Assisi" to form the Society of St Francis. He brought the Principles and Rule of Life from India to England and SSF.

## Three Ways of Service

“The brethren seek to serve their Master by the life of devotion, by sacred study and by works, these corresponding in some measure with the three ways long known in India as *bhaktimarga*, *dnayanamarga* and *karmamarga*.”

1. **“*Bhakti* holds always, as of right, the foremost place in the lives of the brethren. An ever-deepening devotion to the Christ is the hidden source of all their strength and joy. He is for them the One all-lovely and adorable, God incarnate, crucified and risen, whose love is the inspiration of service and the reward of sacrifice.”**

The Christa Prema Seva Sangha then outlines the times of prayer for the community; why each is important; the centrality of Eucharist and the need for both corporate and personal prayer, including the following:

“Without the constant renewal of divine grace, the spirit flags, the will is weakened, the conscience grows dull, the mind loses its freshness and even bodily vigour is impaired. They must, therefore, always be on their guard against the constant temptation to let other work encroach upon the hours of prayer, remembering that if they seek in this way to increase the bulk of their activity it can only be at the cost of its true quality and value.”

2. **“*Dnyana*. The true knowledge... is the knowledge of God... The first place therefore in the brethren’s work of *dnyana* will always be given to... the devotional study of the scriptures.”**

The Christa Prema Seva Sangha goes on to talk about studying “Christian theology, philosophy and history, the study of non-Christian religions and such branches of secular learning as the abilities of its members may from time to time be made possible.”

3. **“*Karma*. Jesus the Master took on ...the form of a servant. He came *not to be ministered unto but to minister*. Those who would claim to be his servants and follow him must be diligent in ministry to others.” “The active works begin in the Ashram... there are many opportunities of ministry particularly to the sick and suffering and needy.”**

Charlie McCarron TSSF, American Province, discussed these Three Ways of Service in a way that changed my understanding. I have always seen them as three separate things, unconnected from one another. Three different pathways of service, like parallel tracks. After talking about how our service needs to come forth from our time of contemplation, he drew a diagram and related it to the building of a road. In this way of seeing things, our life of service is one path with three layers rather than three different pathways. *Bhakti* is the primary purpose of our lives. *Dnyana* and *Karma*, study and work are ways we come to *Bhakti*: that ever deepening relationship with God, which is the main thing. If we take the foundation out, the road is in danger of caving in.

**Marion Fairbrass, Formation Director**

## Prayer page

**We pray for Blair Matheson, John Hebenton and Peter Bargh, in new roles and giving thanks for their ministries.**

**We pray for San Damiano our new Area, now embracing all Third Order members throughout the South Island.**

**We pray for all leaders here and overseas, for wisdom, discernment and justice for all.**

**We pray for all children affected by conflict in their countries, that they receive care and respect.**

**We pray for the work of Franciscans International.**

**May the Peace of God be with you.**

**Amen**



An IPTOC group anticipating a session: – Mandy, Pip, Br Christopher John, John Hebenton. Photo, Marion

## Franciscans and Human Rights

### Marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 10 December 1948

*Based on a talk to Auckland Rainbow Community Church, October 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 for the Feast of St. Francis*



Diane, Margaret, Maryan, of Juniper

It is nearly 800 years since the death of Francis of Assisi. It is also 30 years since the New Zealand Human Rights Act 1993 was passed. Here I bring these two anniversaries together. I have long seen the values and practices of human rights as useful tools for living a Franciscan life.

Francis' life and teaching call us to a life of prayer and simplicity, of action for the care of all creation to working non-violently for peace. I focus here on Francis' developing insight that this Way must lead to recognition of the equal value of all people, a leper, an enemy' Sultan, in the loving sight of God. He viewed all people not only as his equals but as brothers and sisters, astonishing attitudes in 13th century society.

This commitment to equality for all human beings brings us to the modern human rights movement.

The foundation of that movement is generally regarded as being the 1948 adoption by the United Nations in the aftermath of World War II of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in 1966 of two legally binding International Covenants, which include civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Central to all three as a core, or even **the** core, value is equality.

The first sentence of the Preamble to the UDHR states

*Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...*

Article 1 reads:

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*



The victimisation of particular groups during that war led the international community to seek to achieve equality for everyone by addressing group discrimination through a series of international instruments. These protect racial and ethnic groups, women, then children, people with disabilities, migrant workers, refugees, stateless persons and indigenous peoples.

Thus the Human Rights Commission Act 1977, in which New Zealand agreed to be bound by the two Covenants, focussed on anti-discrimination through a brief list of grounds where discrimination would be illegal in certain contexts: sex, marital status, religious or ethical belief and racial or ethnic origin (earlier addressed in the Race Relations Act 1971).

It is important to remember that these rights imply that an **obligation** lies on **someone** to see they are protected and delivered. When human rights advocates speak of “human rights” they are using shorthand for “human rights and duties in a web of community and concern”. “Human rights” as such would not make much sense or have little effect otherwise, except as a utopian ideal.

It gradually became apparent that other groups must be included. Hence the campaign which led to the Human Rights Act 1993. This outlawed discrimination on a further range of grounds, including disability and sexual orientation.

That was a major step forward at that time. But times and societal attitudes change in 30 years, and hopefully we deepen and broaden our understanding of the scope of human rights.

There is now more emphasis on collective rights, for disadvantaged groups to land and language, and gradually for all to sustainable development, a safe, clean healthy environment and to the need for peace and the links between human rights and climate change, all of which bring human rights closer to Franciscan values and commitments.

But very worryingly this expansion is happening while the influence of international institutions is weakening and the foundational commitment of the United Nations to keeping the peace is being abandoned.

But meanwhile for Franciscans, in all our prayer and action, the human rights movement can provide useful tools.

**Margaret Bedggood, Juniper**



### **Blair's welcoming ceremony at Franciscans International**

The International Board of Directors (IBD) of Franciscans International met in Assisi, Italy from 11-14 May 2023. After significant deliberations, prayer and discernment, on 13 May the IBD appointed Blair Matheson TSSF, second from left, to be the new Executive Director of FI. He will replace Brother Markus Heinze OFM, far left, on 1 January 2024.

Blair is an Anglican Third Order Franciscan from New Zealand. He and Brother Markus will work together during the transition period from now until the end of the current calendar year. The members of the IBD look forward to working with Blair and the dedicated staff of FI as we continue to stand up for human dignity, care for creation, and promote peace, defending human rights and raising these concerns at the United Nations and to the international community.

Tertiaries around New Zealand were privileged to see Blair's welcome in Geneva via Zoom. The first act of Pope Francis was to go to a Roman prison and wash the feet of prisoners, including a Muslim woman. Franciscans have an intuitive sense of placing themselves among the least and by simplicity, prayer, devotion to Christ are inspired to live in harmony with all. Franciscans seek to raise up each person by recognising the dignity of others and helping those whose needs have been denied. Blair was introduced as having run businesses and for his advocacy for the marginalised and excluded, especially leprosy sufferers. He has fought hard to ensure leprosy is eradicated and has been linked deeply with issues around poverty and exclusion, to ensure disadvantaged New Zealanders have a place at the table. Blair has a deep Franciscan optimism, a belief in the goodness of all people and a desire to help make the world the place God wants it to be. A message from New Zealand tertiaries included: "We are so proud of you, Blair. What a gift you have been to us here. You have led us for five years with compassion. You are held in high regard. May your work honour the legacy of Francis and Clare. Arohanui, from the tertiaries back home."

Armed with gifts for Brother Markus, Blair responded: "I am overwhelmed by your words and the warmth of your welcome. Here is a kete. Indigenous people weave bags or kete and take them on a journey. Here is a rock to keep you well grounded. Here is a journal to fill as you journey along. And here is a little brown book, full of sayings, prayers and questions that need answering."

**Submitted by Rosemary Jamieson, Chapter Rep, Gubbio**



Anglican Indigenous Leadership Initiative (AILI)



Leonard and Peter

### **Peter Bargh, our new Minister Provincial: an Introduction**

Kia ora tātou, greetings my Franciscan sisters and brothers, It is humbling to be writing to you as your Minister Provincial. My thanks for the support you have offered and the warm welcomes, prayers and messages I have received. It has been great to meet with some of you since stepping into the role in mid-September, too. Some of you have asked me to share a little bit of a bio about myself. So, here goes...with a generous amount of cribbing from what I wrote for the Minister Provincial election!

Kahu and I live in Hamilton with our three boys, Timothy, Francis and James along with two cats, Felix and Paschal. We have lived around the upper North Island in Auckland, Northland, the Coromandel and Waikato. As such, I have been a member of three TSSF Areas. When we were first married, Kahu and I also lived and taught at Bishop Patteson Theological College in Kohimarama, Guadalcanal; so, I have some experience of life in Melanesia, too.

I am a priest in the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki. We don't currently have a home parish as a family, with that being a goal for 2024. That will be a helpful shift from the roving itinerancy of this year where I have led Sunday services in 19 different ministry units, primarily in the Waikato. It is a privilege to get around so many communities but it is also a pleasure to worship together as a family with some consistency.

I believe that our Church, with its bicultural commitment and Three Tikanga, can be a place of hope in Aotearoa and the South Pacific. I have quite a good sense of the life of the wider Church and generally enjoy engaging in those spaces. My involvement includes being part of our General Synod | Te Hīnota Whānui, the National Anglican-Methodist Dialogue and the New Zealand Council of



Christian Social Services. I have also been a Lion, am involved with the PTA at my son's school, and enjoy running, reading and relaxing with the whānau.

My work is with Kurahautū | The Archbishops' Wayfinder Unit, where I am the Deputy Director. This work takes me around Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia. Recently, this saw us host the inaugural gathering of the *Anglican Indigenous Leadership Initiative* (AILI) which drew together (primarily) indigenous Anglican leaders from across the world to the Hawkes Bay. Check out <https://kurahautu.org/aili-wananga-interviews/> to hear some of the attendees' stories.

Within the Third Order: I was professed in 2012 and have since been a Novice Counsellor, serving as a Chapter Rep and Provincial Secretary. I first encountered the Third Order when I was a student in Berkeley, California in 2008. I found a deep connection to the clear spirit of simplicity accompanied by prophetic action and prayer. "What a shame we don't have this in New Zealand," I sighed. I was advised that not only did we have TSSF here but that I actually knew quite a few Tertiaries... I just didn't know they were Franciscans! Around that time, I volunteered alongside several Tertiaries in Auckland on the then Diocesan Social Justice Council and Climate Change Action Group. With the Third Order, I came to appreciate a deep spiritual underpinnings for our shared outworking of the faith in the areas of social justice and care for creation. I have come to be deeply grateful for the sense of community and accountability within the Third Order.

### **Reflections thus far**

It is a privilege to serve as your Minister Provincial. I am grateful to work with Pip Colgan as Assistant Minister Provincial as well as other colleagues, including Chaplains and Chapter. I also need to note the support and leadership that Blair Matheson, our previous Minister Provincial, has offered me. How helpful that has been. My thanks to all of you for what you do for the life of the Third Order and beyond.

So far, it has been a busy few weeks in the role. In addition to zooms, emails and phonecalls, it has been a blessing to gather with some of you in person. I appreciated being able to meet with some representatives of what is now San Damiano Area (formerly Southern and Nelson) in Christchurch on St Francis' Day; likewise, it was good to attend a meeting of Juniper Forest in Auckland, where we gave thanks for Elizabeth Farrands' ministry as Chaplain and commissioned Anne Moody as the new Chaplain. Our Chapter has met by zoom to attend to some matters raised at the Inter-Provincial Third Order Conference (IPTOC) and I also joined with my own Area (Te Aroha), in Matamata where I was commissioned as Minister Provincial. It has also been lovely having the odd in-person encounter or two with tertiaries from Portiuncula and King's Companions. As mentioned, my work saw me involved with hosting ALLI. Among the attendees were several Franciscans: Archbishop Philip Freier of Melbourne; Paulo Ueti of Brasil (who works for the Anglican Communion Office in London), Christina Winnischofer of Brasil (their General Secretary) as well as our own Emily Colgan and myself. Paulo had spoken to those who had gathered for IPTOC in England a few weeks beforehand so was excited to be with other Franciscans in New Zealand.

It was similarly wonderful to spend time with Archbishop Leonard Dawea from Melanesia as well. We are looking to head to Solomon Islands in 2024 to spend time with our fellow Tertiaries there. It was exciting to be encouraged by Archbishop Leonard to consider connecting with the Church more broadly there.

I am feeling hopeful about what I hear God doing in our midst within the Third Order; and, I look forward to joining with the other Areas around Aotearoa as well as connecting with Melanesia in 2024.

### **Conclusion**

*I am excited about the direction of TSSF at present generally. I find it heartening seeing younger people exploring their Franciscan calling in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am filled with joy hearing about the growth and maturity of the Third Order in Melanesia.*

*Our focus on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation while discerning what is ours to do in our context is something I find life-giving. This is true for me on a personal level. I also believe this is a gift we can offer to the changing world in which we live.*

**Peter Bargh, Minister Provincial**

## Blair's welcome to Franciscans International

I chose to take up the invitation to attend the service for Blair's welcome.

I was thrilled to see that there were people from all around the world on line. There were a mixture of lay people, Brothers and Sister Franciscans attending.

I was aware of how awesome it is that Blair is there amongst them, so many of them from the Catholic persuasion, and how that will be a delight and perhaps

sometimes a challenge for them all. This is indeed the way ahead.

It was a simple service, with a great outpouring of love and thanks for the retiring Executive Director, who had been in the position for 13 years. Then they welcomed Blair and he graciously gave the retiring Director a Kete with some gifts, including one of our "little brown books", our principles, for his new journey ahead.

I was struck by the simplicity, the humility of these people, who hold such an amazing place in the world. Today's scripture reading is on going out for the lost sheep and leaving the ninety-nine and so it is indeed for Blair and these people, the Board and the staff there in Geneva.

These are the people who really care and work and give their lives for the lost. May we continue to pray fervently for them and to support them in any way we can.

I personally am humbled and encouraged to have been part of that occasion.

Blessings and peace

**Jan Brodie, Chapter Rep, San Damiano**



**Jan Brodie**

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**Blair Matheson**



## 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Francis' Nativity Scene

St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps the most revered of the saints of the pre-Reformation church. Born in 1182 into the family of a wealthy cloth merchant, he enjoyed a privileged and secure life. He served in the army and was taken prisoner for a time. It was through an encounter with a leper and some mystical experiences associated with a crucifix that Francis had a radical conversion that transformed his life. He felt called to rebuild God's church.

At the heart of Francis' understanding of the gospel were the evangelical counsels of simplicity, humility and freely chosen poverty. From being a soldier, he became committed to peace: from being proud he became humble and from being affluent he embraced poverty. Francis gathered around him a group of brothers who committed themselves to live close to the teaching of Jesus. He was affectionately called *Il Poverello*, the poor little one, which speaks of his humility and poverty. He cultivated a joyful spirit.

The rule that Francis developed for his community was so radical that Pope Innocent III hesitated to endorse it, suspecting that it was unrealistic. After some revision, the rule was approved and the community began its life of identifying with the poor and preaching the gospel. The brothers rejected material comfort and sought simplicity close to nature. Francis saw birds and animals as kin.

Central to Francis' spirituality was his wonder at the humility of God in the incarnation. He marvelled at God becoming vulnerable in sharing the divine life with humanity. His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, comments on what Francis saw in Christ: "Jesus embraced both the humility of the Incarnation and the clarity of the Passion because he came to love us by becoming one of us. Love was the reason for the Incarnation." This was a different emphasis from seeing the incarnation "as a remedy for sin."

Francis saw the birth of Jesus depicting the humility of God. We are told that Francis reflected upon these two realities almost to the exclusion of all others. He meditated on the text from St. Paul: "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty, you might become rich." (2 Cor. 8: 9) Through their poverty, having nothing to defend, his brothers could truly become peacemakers in the spirit of the gospel.

We believe that Francis spent the years 1219 – 1220 in the Holy Land visiting places associated with Jesus' life and ministry. He was especially impressed with a cave which was held to be the place where the Christ child was born. This was probably the inspiration for Francis wanting to recreate the scene when he returned to Italy.



It was in 1223 that Francis sought permission from Pope Honorius III to set the scene for “the kindling of devotion” to the birth of Christ. With his special reverence for the incarnation, Francis wanted to show the poverty into which Christ was born, and the humanity of Christ who shared our often precarious lives. Thomas of Celano observed: “toward the mother of Jesus he was filled with inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother.”

Francis contacted a noble, John Vellita, whom he had befriended in the rural town of Greccio. He sent a message saying: “Giovanni, if you want to help me, this year we can celebrate the most wonderful Christmas ever ... In one of your woods, in Greccio, there is a cave similar to that in Bethlehem. I would like to represent the Christmas scene and see with the eyes of poverty in which the child Jesus came into the world. I want to see how he was placed in a crib and lay between an ox and a donkey.”

Giovanni made arrangements for the scene to be recreated in the cave at Greccio. A manger was built, hay gathered and an ox and ass brought to the cave. Francis and his brothers assembled with local people. Lights shone in the darkness and a priest presided at the celebration of the eucharist, with the manger as an altar.

Francis, being a deacon read the gospel, sang and preached. He regarded Christmas as the Feast of Feasts. Deeply moved, he spoke with simplicity of the babe of Bethlehem who was born into poverty – a sign of the humility of God. Those worshipping experienced great joy.



The recreation of the scene of the birth of the Christ child made a deep impact on all who were present. Thomas of Celano tells us: “There simplicity was honoured, poverty was exalted, humility was commended and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem.” Francis’ intention in recreating the birth in the manger at Christmas 1223 was to inspire devotion. Ever since churches around the world, Catholic and Protestant, have followed his example.

It was in 1291 that the first Franciscan bishop of Rome, Pope Nicholas IV, decided that a permanent nativity scene be constructed in St. Maria Maggiore, a prominent church in Rome dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This year, to commemorate Francis’ vision of the nativity scene, an exhibition of “100 cribs in the Vatican” will be held to honour the occasion of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first crib. Francis knew that tangible, material reminders of events in our Christian story have power to evoke, nurture and confirm faith.

Along with St. Catherine of Siena, Francis is the patron saint of Italy. In 1979 Pope John Paul II declared Francis, patron saint of ecologists.

**Submitted by Tony S. and Bronwyn E., Juniper, with permission,  
of Terry Wall**

***Rev Dr Terry Wall is a retired Methodist minister living in Tuakau***





**San Damiano Retreatants, Holy Trinity Avonside, Christchurch,**



**River Avon, Photo Ian Lothian, Area Chaplain, San Damiano**

## **Awa rere (River flow)**

*We met beside her grassy banks  
Wildflowers richly blooming  
And how the joy of gath'ring there  
It healed dispersal's yearning*

*Met with Christ in deeper learning*

**Flow, Awa rere, flow ~ ~ ~**

*Walked Emmaus roads together*

**Sweet Avon flow softly ~ >< ~ ~**

*Areas were coalescing*

*Past ones fondly visioned*

*New Name fully welcomed*

*Matariki ritual helping*

*Usher in our season-changing*

**Flow, Awa rere, flow ~ ~ ~**

*Yay! for Francis' Joy in Creation*

**Ōtākaro flow softly ~ >< ~ ~**

*Admiring fine songs, then singing out*

*Gloaming soothing hallowed ground*

*Compline prayers glide in to night*

*Quiet, peace-filled – restful bound*

*Clarion Rugby's, silvered morn*

**Flow, Awa rere, flow ~ ~ ~**

*Joined in joyous worship's song*

**Waipounamu flow softly ~ >< ~ ~**

*Susan's lovely scene, absorbing,*

*We re-member-ed Christ's mission*

*And from amongst our very midst*

*Came Anne to make profession*

*Then, annual vows re-new-ing*

**Flow, Awa rere, flow ~ ~ ~**

*Con-celebrating HIS comm-union*

**Aotearoa flow softly ~ >< ~ ~**

*Our time together drew to closing*

**Flow, Awa rere, flow ~ ~ ~**

*On our ways, we went, rejoicing*

**God's channels flow softly ~ >< ~ ~**

**Written by Christopher  
Diggle, Provincial  
Aotearoa Secretary,  
with the assistance of  
Richard Roberts;  
both of San Damiano.  
A reflection on San  
Damiano Area's First  
Retreat - at Holy Trinity  
Church,  
Avonside,  
27-29 October 2023**

## The Retreat at Makira

We, the TSSF Honiara members had our retreat at the Sisters of the Church place outside of Honiara. Sr Veronica who also ordained led our retreat: Our theme was "Embracing God's Call with Humility". We ended our retreat on Sunday, 20th August 2023 with a Eucharist officiated by Sr Veronica and also she shared God's word. Four of our TSSF priest brothers assisted Sr Veronica at the Eucharist. About 30 of us attended the weekend retreat. It was a blessed weekend filled with Joy, love and peace. We came back to the city energetic and ready to continue with our works of life with a renewed mind to continue to make our Lord Loved and Known everywhere.



Praying for our future area activities and missions.

**Peace,  
Jimmy Maeigoa, Area Convenor, Honiara**



**Sister Veronica**, center with retreatants. Photos supplied by Sarah Hart



# LIFE TOGETHER

The Gubbio Area group met held at Robin Clarke's home for their Quiet Day and began by giving prayers for those of us who we missed, unable to be with us today, for a variety of reasons.

Today we greeted old friends and new, with a full complement of enquirers and postulants.

Here's the link to the three profoundly insightful online retreat presentations Ailsa Cornell recommends. The one we saw today was on Love of Self.

<https://tssf.org/resources/articles-videos/love-the-bridge-to-the-kingdom-february-2021/>

We had the pleasure of blessing Claire Russell our newest novice, as well as the annual renewing of vows for novices and for those professed.

Rev Reg Weeks presided and Rosemary Jamieson stepped in for Chaplain Jenny Barns.

Our Christmas meeting, for those who can make it, is on Friday 15th December at the Lady Chapel in the Cathedral for 12.15pm Eucharist followed by lunch at a nearby Cafe.

**All Third Order members welcome.**



### **Te Aroha Area Members Meet in Person**

After a year of meeting infrequently in zoom meetings, and one Quiet Day in Tauranga in July, it was a joy to meet together in Matamata on 14 October for our St Francis Season celebration.

While only 7 of our 12 professed members could meet, we enjoyed being able to meet face-to-face. We missed John Heberton overseas, and Blair Matheson only just returned from overseas. They have both recently laid down their positions in ministry to us.

After the rearrangement of Areas last year we began meeting at Katikati thinking it the most central in an area stretching from Turangi to Coromandel to Opotiki, but we found Matamata to be even better. Best of all, after renewing our professions during a Eucharist, we were able to give thanks for Blair's Ministry among us and then to commission Peter as our new Minister Provincial.

Lesley's dog Lexi was a keen participant alongside Penny S. and Sarah. We spent some time in study of a portion of Laudate Si, followed by the usual shared lunch, and look forward to another meeting soon.

**Brian Hamilton, Te Aroha Chaplain**

## Submitted from UK "Songs of Praise"

Jesus Christ is waiting,  
Waiting in the streets;  
No one is His neighbour,  
All alone He eats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am lonely too.  
Make me, friend or stranger,  
Fit to wait on You.

Jesus Christ is raging,  
Raging in the streets,  
Where injustice spirals  
And real hope retreats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am angry too.  
In the Kingdom's causes  
Let me rage with You.

Jesus Christ is healing,  
Healing in the streets;  
Curing those who suffer,  
Touching those He greets.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I have pity too.  
Let my care be active,  
Healing just like You.

Jesus Christ is dancing,  
Dancing in the streets,  
Where each sign of hatred  
He, with love, defeats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I should triumph too.  
On suspicion's graveyard  
Let me dance with You



Submitted by Rosemary  
Jamieson, Chapter Rep,  
Gubbio

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Jesus Christ is calling,  
Calling in the streets,  
"Who will join My journey?  
I will guide their feet."  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
Let my fears be few.  
Walk one step before me;  
I will follow You.

Anne Moody, Area Chaplain, Juniper Forest, extends an invitation to subscribe to the **franciscan**, the European publication, published three times a year. The cost will be covered by the Order. If you are interested, contact Anne Moody who will order on your behalf in the new Year.

[Anne.moody3@gmail.com](mailto:Anne.moody3@gmail.com)



An invitation to subscribe to the  
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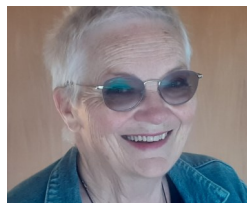
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## Invitation to all

### Night Prayer



This is a recurring meeting

Hosted every Monday evening at 7.30pm ,  
by Bronwyn Emson, Chapter Rep, Juniper Forest

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/96577491352?  
pwd=YUVVYT0t5OE04N1lZNndKSskF6NVBydz09](https://zoom.us/j/96577491352?pwd=YUVVYT0t5OE04N1lZNndKSskF6NVBydz09)

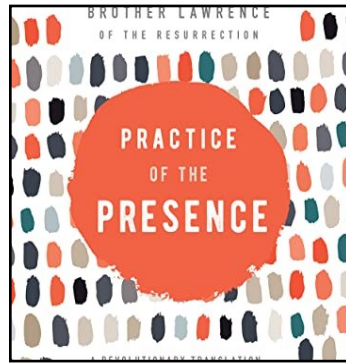
Meeting ID: 965 7749 1352  
Passcode: 255912



**Book review: Practice of the  
Presence of God  
(conversations with  
Br. Lawrence)**

**A Revolutionary Translation by  
Carmen Acevedo Butcher.**

**ISBN 978-1-5064-7860-9**



This spiritual classic was first published in 1692. The preface notes that, “these letters are so edifying, so rich in unction, and have been found so full of delight by those who have had the joy of reading them.

Now 300 hundred plus years later this small pocket size edition (which I have and treasure) has been translated by Carmen Acevedo Butcher, a woman of colour and renowned scholar in medieval texts. Acevedo brings us a dynamic translation that is gender inclusive “freeing it from its centuries-long prison of dogma and binary language”.

I have found it profoundly edifying to pray with both the old and new, and would highly recommend this bold, vibrant and transformational edition.

The inclusivity of the language reaches a global audience. Acevedo offers a glimpse into the Bibliotheque Nationale de France “where you can view the digital versions of the 1692 book, with its shapes evoking swirling oak trees, then after clicking to open it, discover blue-brown marbled papers. I felt an awe. While I was quarantined at home during the pandemic, I imagined the fragrance of tannin and time-seasoned paper there in a deep library silence”.

The book is dedicated to the Women’s Prison Association (WPA).

**Maranu Gascoigne, Portiunclula**

## Chapter in informal discussions



**Update from Chapter:  
Sue Liapis, Juniper Forest, is now the keeper of the  
TSSF “brown booklet”, Principles in Plain English.**

**Contact Sue For more copies**

[conandsue@xtra.co.nz](mailto:conandsue@xtra.co.nz)

## Companions' Corner

Dear Fellow Companions,  
haere, haere, haere mai.

You are most welcome to submit any  
piece that you feel  
expresses how you are in your journey,  
as a group or as individuals.

We welcome your contributions.

Please send your writing, scripture, or prayers for inclusion in Tau,  
to

[penelope.kennett@gmail.com](mailto:penelope.kennett@gmail.com)

Nga mihi nui

**Penny Kennett, Provincial Newsletter Editor**





Photo Sarah Hart

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### **From the Treasurer, following Chapter August 23**

I have been asked to give you some feedback about the process of giving to TSSF. Remember our financial contributions enable us to function as an organization.

There is a \$6000 shortfall in our current Budget. Fortunately, we have savings to cover this. However, the closer we can meet our budget through our donations the better. It currently works out that if each member of TSSF gave \$235 per annum it would cover all our costs (i.e. approximately \$20 per month or \$5 per week). This is only a guideline, as your giving is a decision between you and God, and you should only give what you can afford.

We encourage members to set up a Direct Debit to make their contributions.

Our bank account is: 38-9014-0214422-00.

Please make sure that the details coming to us include:

(1) your surname and initials, (2) 'Donation', and (3) 'TSSF.'

Chapter has agreed to make a significant donation each year to Franciscans International. If you would also like to give a specific donation to Franciscans International, I suggest that Francis-tide (October) is an appropriate time of the year to make an extra donation to us. But remember to put 'FI' instead of 'TSSF' in the particulars. Finally, on behalf of Chapter I would like to express my thanks to you all for your regular contributions to TSSF.

# For your diary

## **Area Retreats**

Please let us know  
as other members may wish to join you

## **2024 Chapter**

1 - 3 October Vaughan Park, Auckland

**Convocation** 3-6 October

Vaughan Park

**National Retreat 2025 more details in next issue**

## **Tau's next issue due end of February 2024**

**Articles, reviews, reports welcome by  
Friday 16 February**

Contact: Penny Kennett Provincial Newsletter Editor

[penelope.kennett@gmail.com](mailto:penelope.kennett@gmail.com)

3 Farm Road, Wellington 6012, ph. 021-0222-7355

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**Website** - <https://tssf.org.nz/>

Any changes of address, please email to Janice Thorne,  
Membership Secretary and Web Person

Please check the website for updated Intercession and  
Address lists.

Contact: Janice Thorne [janicethorne@gmail.com](mailto:janicethorne@gmail.com)