

Troubadour

Volume 62, No 2

Autumn 2018





In the 12th century Christ spoke to St Francis of Assisi from this cross:

“Francis, go and rebuild my Church which you see is falling down.”

Don't complain about the Church in the 21st century.

Hear Our Lord's call and do something about it!

The Friars Minor have followed St Francis' example for the last 800 years.

Why not be one of them?

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Troubadour

A MISSIONARY MAGAZINE

at the service of

- The Franciscan Missionaries working throughout the world but especially in disaster areas.
- The Franciscan Missionary Union.



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COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:

Front cover: Children gather for mealtime at the new kitchen of St Elizabeth's Convent, KwaZulu-Natal.

Back cover: Sisters tending the crops supplied with water from the new borehole, St Elizabeth's Convent.

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St Elizabeth's Convent, Natal

St Elizabeth's Convent, KwaZulu-Natal, close to a place called Osizweni, is a convent of the Franciscan Minoress Sisters who are based in Melton Mowbray and also at St Francis' Nursing home in Glasgow.

The FMU sent a substantial contribution to help the sisters with their projects.

The last of the European sisters have now left South Africa and the local South African sisters are now running all their missionary works on their own. A tremendous amount of praise is due to the Franciscan Minoress Sisters who established this flourishing community.



Thank you to the FMU

With immense JOY in our hearts we write to thank you for your help with the completion of the three projects that we asked money for.

- 1 Borehole
- 2 Chicken and Pig project
- 3 Soup Kitchen

Your donation has helped us to do almost all that we intended doing, although we are still busy with the Pigs house.



When we received the money, we had to find the water diviner – SHE CAME AND SHE IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFIED THE SPOT.

And the Engineers came to drill for the Borehole it took them four days to reach the water table.

So the bore hole has been drilled and we have the water now 60 metres deep and we can pump the water 5000 litres per hour - which is very good and it seems that there is a lot of water in that area.

We had to buy the generator to pump the water since we are unable to get an electricity supply until next year in the area.

We had to build the little outhouse for the generator.

We connected two water tanks to pump in the water and we got pipes for irrigation.

1

To drill for the borehole



There is a big difference in the vegetables now. We are eating fresh vegetables from the plots now and we are able to cook for the children – so it has been a great success!

Last week we put down the potatoes and we also got the whole place ploughed to plant mealies in one month's time. We have found a place where we will be able to grind the mealies later to help with the feeding projects - we hope and pray all will go accordingly.

Far left: Drilling engineers took four days to reach the water table.

Left: Before the borehole the younger sisters had to fetch water from the river to water the vegetables.

Below: Healthy crops due to our new water supply ... and hard work!



2

To build a children's kitchen

The money received was also used in our second large project - to build a kitchen to help feed the poor children of the area.

The pictures on the following pages show the situation that prompted us again to start the feeding project of the children. We discovered many of the children in Mndozo Osizweni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, sleep without food and have no house or even a bed to sleep in.

Many people live in this situation, and there is a lot of child sexual abuse because of small houses, where you often find 10 members of the family living in these small houses.

We began cooking for the hungry children in February of 2018 and the room shown opposite was used as a Kitchen in

St. Elizabeth's Convent. Here the food for 80 children was cooked and we used the sink outside for washing the dishes. The children sat on the grass to eat their meal.

Eventually we got chairs with the money given by FMU while we were waiting for the building to finish.





Poverty in South Africa means many, many families, like the one shown below, have to live in squalid, and often unsanitary conditions.



Poverty in South Africa - some facts ...

- South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. This is according to a recent report by the World Bank that listed 149 countries.
- The report analysed South Africa's post-apartheid progress, focusing on the period between 2006 and 2015.
- The report found the top 1% of South Africans own 70.9% of the country's wealth while the bottom 60% only controls 7% of the country's assets.
- Neighbours Namibia and Botswana were second and third.
- More than half of South Africans (55.5%) or 30-million people live below the national poverty line of R992 (around £50 Sterling) per month. This number has increased since 2011.
- The groups worst affected by poverty are black South Africans, the unemployed, the less educated, female-headed households, large families and children.
- The official unemployment rate was 27.7% in the third quarter of 2017 while youth unemployment was 38.6%.



Sr. Barbara has visited most of the families to assess the situation and some houses are worse than the others, as you can see. The many hardships suffered by these families is almost overwhelming and the help given by the Sisters, through generosity given by yourselves, is absolutely invaluable.



Before the kitchen was built, the children had to sit on the grass to eat, but now have the option to eat indoors, out of the heat of the strong sun. Some, of course still choose to eat outdoors ... but it's nice to have the choice.





The kitchen begins ...

On 12 March 2018 the foundation of the new kitchen building begun. Exciting times.

A big Thank you to FMU who gave us money in February 2018 to start this project.

The foundations for the new kitchen are dug then concreted. Once the concrete had set building began.



The roof is started and things are taking shape.



The kitchen is all but complete.



On the day of the opening of the new kitchen it was blessed by our Parish Priest, as seen in the picture below.

The finished kitchen has a stove and a sink and we have recycled and utilized old cupboards from St. Theresa's

It has a little storeroom for food.

There is veranda for the children to sit when it is hot.

Beside it we added a working room. In the morning it will be a *sewing room*, for teaching ladies sewing skills to help them gain basic skills.



It will then be used as a dining room for the children in the afternoon, when they come for their meals.

We have put built in cupboards for sewing material, and sewing machines.

It was joy for all us to watch their faces full of smiles when they were put sitting at the tables to eat their meals.

We had also stated that we wanted to have Pigs and chickens in the Farm.

The chicken house has been built and we now have a few chickens!

We are starting the pigs house soon and we hope to start with two pigs and see how it goes from there.





Francis of Assisi

- an approach to Franciscan Spirituality

Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226) turned abruptly from seeking fame and fortune to pursuing the absolute and unmitigated poverty which he believed Christ had demanded in telling his disciples to provide themselves with neither gold or silver, clothes nor shoes (Mt10:7ff). Discarding all his personal possessions, and not a few of his father's, and giving himself utterly to the imitation of the poor Christ, he began preaching God's love.

As initial ridicule gradually changed to admiration, followers flocked to join him. Never an organiser, he was persuaded to seek permission from the Pope to establish an Order and compose a Rule. Before his death, he sought solitude on Mount Alvernia, where he received the stigmata, the wounds of the crucified Christ.

Something happened to Francis. What changed this friendly, jovial young man, ambitious for worldly fame into

the Saint we know: a man utterly convinced of his own unworthiness of the graces bestowed upon him by his Good Lord? We can say that God stepped into his life and changed him irrevocably. Francis felt his life being "redirected" along new paths. He longed for an ever-deeper desire for intimate union with God. He needed to be alone and began to spend extended periods of time in prayer. This was not prayer of a single moment but prayer of long duration, full of devotion, serene in humility. Walking, sitting, eating, drinking, he was always intent on prayer. He sought out deserted places, caves, abandoned Churches where, with the grace of God, he won many battles of the spirit. His growth was such that his early biographer, Celano, wrote of him that "one person seems to have entered (the place of prayer) and another to have come out."

Yes, Francis seems to have been "touched" by God. Francis, himself,

in his Testament testifies to his keen awareness of the Lord's presence in his and his followers lives. His Testament, composed shortly before his death, rings with the firm conviction that it was the Lord himself who revealed to him the kind of life he was to live. It was the Lord who led him among lepers, who gave him faith in the Church and in priests; it was the Lord who gave him brothers, who inspired him to write the Rule, and who revealed to him the greeting of peace.

This experience of God brought about in Francis a new look at certain of the Christian values which are important values that we would do well to examine in our own spiritual lives:

Brotherhood: Francis grew in awareness of God as Father and himself as son. But this spread so that he saw everything and everybody in relation to the Father. People, animals, even inanimate creatures were 'sons' and 'daughters' of the one Father in heaven and Francis saw them as brothers and sisters.

Poverty: Standing before his God, the Almighty and Perfect one, Francis became aware of his own nakedness and nothingness. Everything he had was 'gift'. Francis saw himself as 'the poor little one', the beggar who stretches out his empty hands with the confidence that his Good Lord will fill them.

Obedience: In his awareness of the Lord's presence in every situation Francis became deeply obedient to the will of God as he learnt it from the Word of God, the guidance of the Church and through the advice of others and the promptings of his own heart.

Gospel life: God's revelation to Francis that he must follow the Gospel showed in his life style of preaching and poverty as well as his observance of the great commandment to love God and neighbour.

The following of Christ: Francis' desire to walk always in the 'footsteps' of Christ brought him to a realisation that just as Jesus emptied himself and surrendered himself to the Father, especially at the Incarnation but also at Gethsemane and on the Cross, so too must he attempt. He sought to become a man of love and surrendered himself into the hands of his Father in heaven. He externalised this by his joyful simplicity and poverty in serving others.

These values, and the experience of God which underlies them indicate what Francis' life was all about. And they indicate what the spirituality which bears his name is about. Francis was caught up in God. He spent his life in praising and thanking God for his greatness and goodness. He invites us to do the same.

(Acknowledgement to Franciscan Saints series).

The way of prayerful reading

Bro Robert Stewart was a Franciscan originally from Bristol, England who joined the British Franciscan Province but spent most of his Franciscan life in South Africa. He was renowned for his spiritual guidance especially in the formative years of many friars. We will print a series of articles from him regarding spiritual Reading which you may find of help in your own spiritual life.

First letter to those wishing to learn Spiritual Reading

Dear Friend,

This brief outline of the nature of Spiritual reading is offered to you to help you to acquire

the ability to read spiritually. This ability is essential if you wish to grow in your life with God and participate effectively in the work of evangelization, catechesis and ministries within the Church.

The immediate question which will spring to your mind is "Why do I need instruction in spiritual reading?" The reason is that spiritual reading is entirely different from ordinary reading and requires another style and set of attitudes. Ordinary reading is directed to study, gathering information, or filling the time pleasantly in your free time. It is mainly concerned with the development of learning whether this learning be theological or literary, sacred or secular, whereas spiritual reading is aimed at touching your whole being, not stimulating your mind or some other part of you. You read spiritually not merely to take in ideas and concepts but to receive the Messenger and his messages to which you are called to respond. This response is made to a call to communion with the Word of the Father through the Spirit. Spiritual reading brings you to an interpersonal relationship while ordinary reading leads you to a subject-object relationship. The principal aim of spiritual reading

is transformation and growth rather than learning. To allow this transformation to take place you have to make connections between the text being read and the life situation in which you find yourself. Spiritual reading then has to be clearly distinguished from ordinary reading even when the latter is concerned with material which is labelled spiritual.

Since ordinary reading is usually a process of acquiring facts and knowledge, you will try to approach the text in an aggressive manner. You will try to dig out facts, get the guts out of the book, pull out the information you require. You will remain with the text only long enough to master it, to analyse what it is saying, or to accumulate the facts. Indeed, the quicker you can master a text, or drag out the relevant information, the more effective you are. It is the world of speed-reading, evaluation, judgement, criticism, distinguishing, data analysis in which you are dominant.

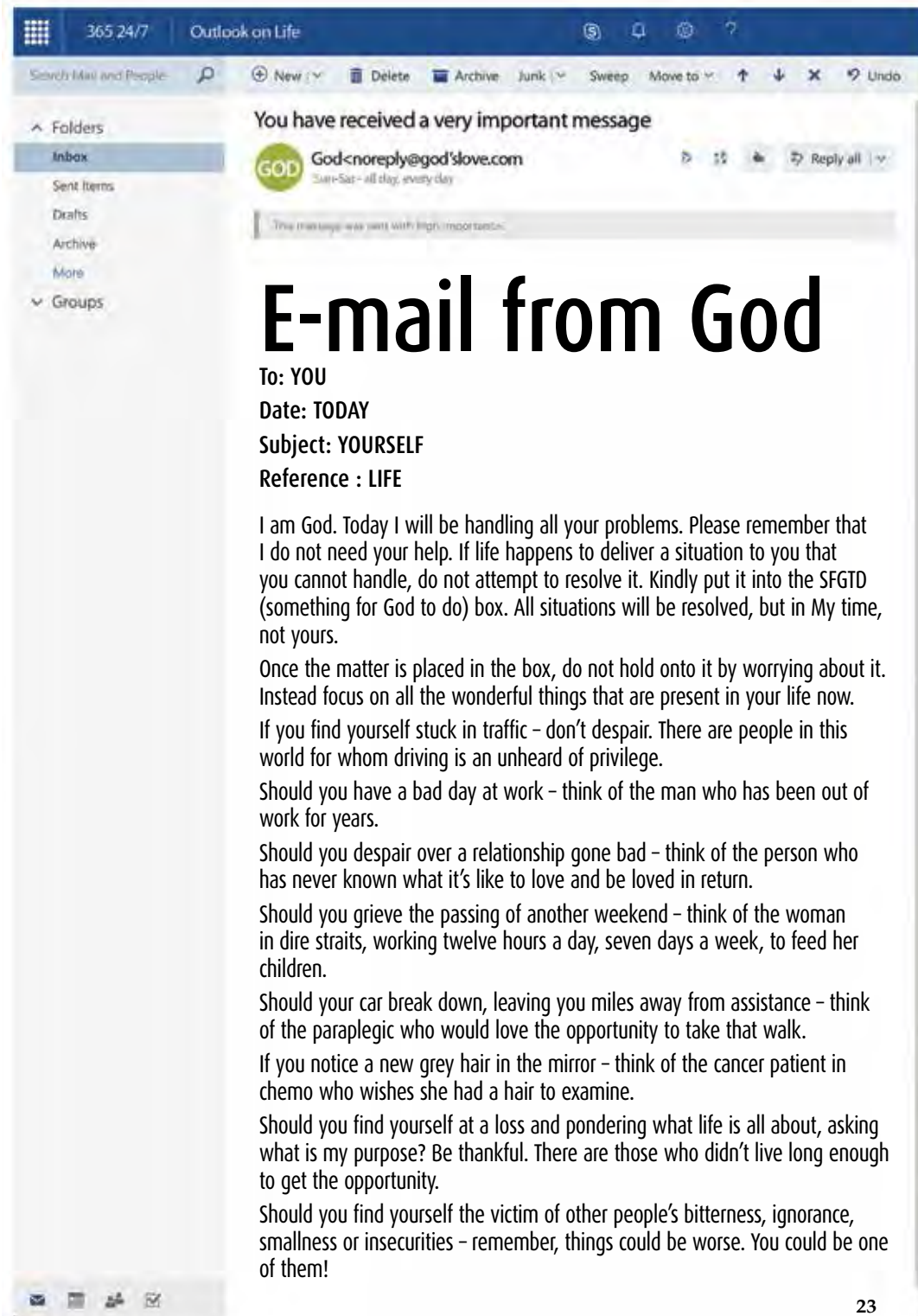
Now in Spiritual Reading there is another approach to the text. You bring yourself humbly before the text and submit to its guidance. You do not set out to master the text but to become a disciple eager

to learn. To become a spiritual reader you have to slow down your speeding mind and take time to dwell peacefully with a text. You seek guidance from the text for your journey to God. Through the text you come into contact with the Word behind the words. He is present, leading you to reconciliation, healing, forgiveness. You have to be sensitive to the messages you receive. Do they affirm your present way of behaving? Do they challenge your life style? Listening to and waiting on the Lord, you allow the light of Truth to illuminate the Way you must take if you are to come to the fullness of life. Spiritual Reading is never done in an aggressive fashion but rather with a docile, receptive spirit open to all the messages that direct your journey into God.

There are a few personal questions arising from this outline that you need to ponder in order to discover if you are doing any spiritual reading. When they become positive statements they draw a portrait of spiritual reading in its traditional meaning.

- Are you bringing yourself humbly before the text as a disciple before a master?
- Are you communicating with a master who is present?
- Are you allowing the text to touch your heart, not merely your mind?
- Are you using the text for your own purposes or submitting to its wise guidance?
- Are you prepared to submit your spiritual journeying to its messages to see if you are going the right way?
- Are you listening to your own expectations or to the message of the master?
- Are you prepared to do something about the obstacles to your spiritual life that the text reveals.
- Are you able to relate the message of the text to your own situation?
- There may be other questions arising from this first letter but the ones above will serve you as starters.

May God bless you.



The screenshot shows an Outlook email interface. The top bar indicates '365 24/7 Outlook on Life'. The email is from 'God <noreply@god'slove.com>' with a subject line 'YOURSELF'. The body of the email contains the following text:

To: YOU
Date: TODAY
Subject: YOURSELF
Reference : LIFE

I am God. Today I will be handling all your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help. If life happens to deliver a situation to you that you cannot handle, do not attempt to resolve it. Kindly put it into the SFGTD (something for God to do) box. All situations will be resolved, but in My time, not yours.

Once the matter is placed in the box, do not hold onto it by worrying about it. Instead focus on all the wonderful things that are present in your life now.

If you find yourself stuck in traffic - don't despair. There are people in this world for whom driving is an unheard of privilege.

Should you have a bad day at work - think of the man who has been out of work for years.

Should you despair over a relationship gone bad - think of the person who has never known what it's like to love and be loved in return.

Should you grieve the passing of another weekend - think of the woman in dire straits, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week, to feed her children.

Should your car break down, leaving you miles away from assistance - think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.

If you notice a new grey hair in the mirror - think of the cancer patient in chemo who wishes she had a hair to examine.

Should you find yourself at a loss and pondering what life is all about, asking what is my purpose? Be thankful. There are those who didn't live long enough to get the opportunity.

Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance, smallness or insecurities - remember, things could be worse. You could be one of them!

“O God, Creator of the earth, you give life to the seeds that are sown so that they may grow and bear fruit. Bless the labours of those who work the land so that there may be an abundant harvest to feed the hungry of the world. May all farmers receive a just wage for their labour so that they may continue their noble work of caring for the land and feeding us. Amen.”

