

Troubadour

Volume 63, No 3

Autumn 2019





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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More than just a field in Kinoni

by Brother Cornelius ofm

The picture below is of a field. Yes! It's a field; and a very special field. This field is where we plan to build our new Novitiate. But perhaps you don't know who **we** are – or who I am writing to you. Well, if you are parishioners of Ballater Street, Glasgow, or parishioners in Stratford, Woodford Green or Clevedon, you will have had a glimpse of me as I make my fleeting tri-annual Mission Appeals for the Franciscan Missionary Union. Mission appeals, which you all support most generously. And I should say here a big “thank you” because without your help we could not have bought the field. Where is it? It is situated in a place called Kinoni in the district of Mbarara, Uganda. In fact it is 22km from Mbarara town thus ensuring a quiet environment which is a must for a Novitiate.



But let me say a little more about who we are. We are the youngest Province in the Order of Friars Minor, and one that covers all of East Africa. So you find us in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia, Madagascar and Mauritius Island. Our title: the Province of St. Francis in Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius.

We were born out of a reflection made within the Order during the time of celebrating the eighth centenary of Francis' birth in 1982. The Minister General of the day, Brother John Vaughan and his Definitors wanted to find a fitting way of commemorating Francis' birth and they came up with the idea of rooting our Order more solidly in the soil of Africa. For centuries friars in various parts of this great continent had worked valiantly to establish Christianity among the indigenous peoples and had made significant progress, so we can say that friars are not strangers to Africa; but no one, so it seems, had ever thought that God might be calling young African men and women to religious life as Friars Minor or Poor Clares.

And so it came about that on 16th January 1982, Brother John

Vaughan, Minister General, issued “The Call of Africa” inviting friars from all over the world to volunteer for this new and exciting venture of establishing the Order among the indigenous peoples of Africa. Twenty-eight friars responded and after preparation in Rome, these twenty-eight were sprinkled over the countries of East Africa. I say “sprinkled” quite deliberately. The project before them was gargantuan bearing in mind the size of some of these countries – they are vast – and so beautiful. But we were encouraged by the thought that Jesus set about his world mission with only twelve disciples; and his project seems to be doing quite well.

Obviously when we arrived we had to start from ground zero: learn the local language, adjust to rather basic living conditions, comprehend local customs and learn to adjust to different kinds of food (rule: you only eat what the local people eat – no imported foods) and be ready to cope with Malaria, Typhoid, Amoeba and Worms etc.

The beginning, understandably, was slow and we did make mistakes here and there, but God has been good – as always. We are now in our thirty-sixth year and

have just elected our very first African Minister Provincial, Brother Frederick Odhiambo. Frederick is from Kisumu region of Kenya and now ministers to a growing Province of 197 friars, ninety-eight percent of whom are Africans.

Now back to our need for a new Novitiate. Our present Novitiate was built in 1985 of mud-bricks faced with plaster. It is now beginning to crumble and with the increase in numbers it is too cramped. That is one reason why we need new buildings. But the reason to move comes from changes in our local environment. Some years ago the local Teachers' Training College was upgraded to University status and this brought about a great influx of students into the area looking for accommodation. Our neighbours understandably began building Hostels to accommodate the students but these Hostels were located around the perimeter of our Novitiate and so we lost our peace and quiet which are essential ingredients in any Novitiate programme. So we decided to look elsewhere and found eventually the land we needed in Kinoni, land which with your generous help we were able to buy.

Well that's all for now. We really are most grateful to all of you who make real sacrifices that we may be able to continue the work of grounding ever deeper our Franciscan vocation and vision here in East Africa. The Lord does, I am confident, bless you and I pray that each and everyone of you experience His blessings in your daily lives.

Thank you.



Young Ugandan mother.

St Francis of Assisi: A point of view and a contrast.

by Dominic Devas ofm
(1888-1982)



“Of medium height, inclining to be short; his head small and round with an oblong rather prominent face, and smooth, small forehead; little, frank, black eyes, dark hair and straight eyebrows; an even nose, thin and straight, small upright ears and smooth temples; his words kindly, impressive, penetrating, a strong voice, but a pleasing one, clear and sonorous; well joined teeth, white and even; small delicate lips, rather thin black beard, and slender neck; straight shoulders, and short arms, thin hands with long fingers and nails; his legs slight, and his feet small; delicate skin, and very spare.” Such is Celano’s famous if not over-flattering description of Francis.

The outward ordering of his life falls easily into three periods. For twenty five years he is in the world – very much so – the world of commerce, gaiety, war and sin. Then, after two years spent alone, tending lepers, repairing churches, reaching forward, with soul empty and hungering, towards the hidden designs of God, there follow thirteen years in which Francis, swept forward by the full tides of divine grace, is a centre of influence, gathering his friends and fashioning his company. Five final years of retirement, troubled by a parting of the ways – himself and a few on one road, the Order on another – sweetened beyond all

human measuring by the Stigmata, crowned during two years by the, to him, soothing touch of sickness; and then death at the age of forty-five. *Let men give thanks for all things, he would say of the sick, and as God wishes them to be, such let them wish to be.*

Perhaps the most telling witness to the impression Francis left on all but a very few who knew him intimately, is to be found towards the end of the *Chronicle* of Jordanus a Jano. The latter is carrying back to Germany relics of his lately canonised Holy Father. He is greeted with extraordinary and unprecedented marks of honour. Why? Jordanus is puzzled till he remembers the relics which, unbeknown to the brethren, he bears upon his person. Ah! This must be the cause of such unwanted veneration. He thinks more of Francis now than he did before. Obviously the sanctity of Francis – like that of most saints – was not so compellingly impressed on others, that the sentiment might not be definitely deepened later. There were those – Celano notes them expressly – who agreed with Francis outwardly but made little of him behind his back. True the main body of his followers looked up to him as the saint he was, loved and admired him; and, yet, for the practical ordering of their lives looked to his Vicars for leading.

Poor Francis, he came to see this in time, and would not have been the sweet, human character he was, if he had not felt it deeply. He would say: *I know Christ, poor, crucified:* and that sufficed. All his life through he was to learn this lesson more and more intimately. Right at the beginning it is from the Cross that Christ miraculously addresses him, not, as to St John Gualbert, to detach a nailed arm gently to embrace him, but to bid him face the uphill task of labouring among ruins: and it is again from Celano we learn how Francis, after thrice opening the book of the Gospels and alighting on the Passion of Christ, knew that it was to be “through many tribulations, and many a narrow way and many a conflict that he was to enter into the Kingdom of God.”

However little we might like the idea of associating Francis with real, downright sorrow, I do think that no one can read his life, truthfully written from the many sources we possess without being convinced of the deep pathetic tragedy that overhangs his later years. To say Francis had quite definite views of his purpose and work as a whole cannot, I think, be maintained. But he had quite definite views on certain individual points like study



“let not the unlettered strain after learning” (Rule Ch. 10) and solid permanent buildings “Let the brethren be on their guard against receiving at all, churches, poor little dwelling places and



ought else that may be built for them, unless they duly conform to the holy poverty which we have promised in the Rule, sojourning here always as strangers

and pilgrims... and wherever they are not received, let them fly into another land.”(Testament). Yet even here there is an indecisive element, as his undoubted approval of the lector Antony and tenacious clinging to his dear house of St Mary of the Angels show us quite clearly. Yet it was these individual questions, study, buildings and the like that provided grounds of contention and paths of divergence. They ought to have been made square with some sort of existing plan. But here, precisely, was the difficulty. Francis had no plan, no scheme, cut and dried like an Ignatius, which he meant to follow with iron resolve and inflexible determination, and sedulously watch over to the end. Ignatius – what a wonderful comparison and contrast the name suggests. The noble Spaniard follows the son of the Italian merchant along the beaten highway to great things, warfare followed by sickness, sickness followed by conversion in its real sense, a turning to God and divine truths. Then they part company, Ignatius with a definite purpose, and definite means to be utilised to attain it, Francis groping cheerfully among lepers and ruined chapels awaiting the voice of God. Ignatius acknowledges his Order without misgiving, and wisely and tenderly governs it till

death, busy with multifarious duties of ruling right to the end, then hands it on to dependable successors, and the Society follows its appointed course with iron accuracy and efficiency.

Francis receives his first companions as life-long friends, but their numbers grow so rapidly that the bonds of friendship can no longer reach them. He comes to kindle among a few the dying embers of divine charity, and lo! the flames have caught and burst up to unimagined heights, quite beyond all controlling. By the time Rules are thought of, divergence has already appeared, and strong characters like Elias, and far seeing ecclesiastics like Ugolino. And yet, no two men in all Italy would seem to have loved Francis more. Even in all the troubles about the Rule, Elias, if we may trust the earliest Chronicles, would seem to have been the mouthpiece of the dissident ministers and not the instigator; and as for the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, none can read of his hospitality to Francis, or of his anxiety for the saints health, without being convinced, not merely of his admiration, but of his genuine and most tender affection.

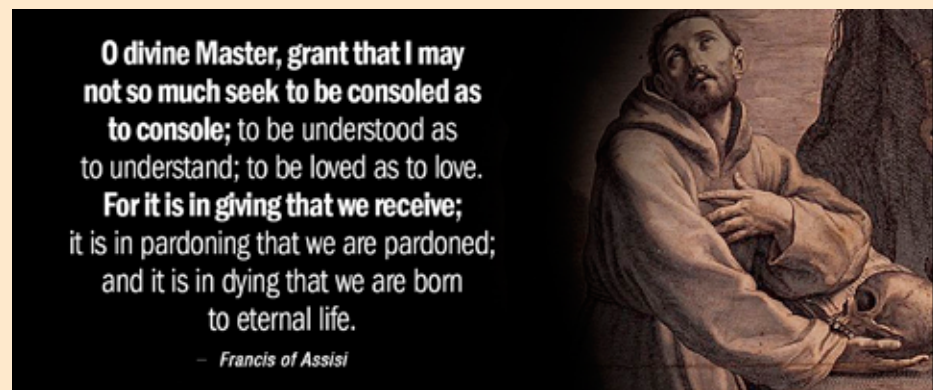
When the final Rule did come at length, it is idle to pretend that it was not, to Francis, *a best under the circumstances*, and hardly more; and indeed what fire does not the Testament, his own untrammelled

composition, breathe into its tempered words. Rules themselves formed no part of his original theory of government – no interim Nine Rules carefully enumerated by an Ignatius to tide over the interval till the Constitutions are complete – only a few texts from the Gospel and a blessing of the Lord Pope. Francis leant far more on example than on precept as the sweeter – and indeed for the few around him – the surer way. Not merely, then, on account of sickness, but of sorrow as well, did Francis draw off from the government of his family. *Amodo mortuus sum vobis*, (*I am already as good as dead*) he said alleging pointedly his infirmities: but later when interrogated by a certain friar who evidently was still not satisfied, Francis confesses in confidential conversation that some of the ministers are far from guiding the fraternity aright, and are endeavouring to introduce an element of organised monasticism on the traditional lines. “Who are these?” he cried out a little later, when physical pain was weighing heavily upon him, “who are these who have snatched my Order and my brethren from me?” pointing thus both to divergence and to a waning sympathy. It was in asperity, then, at first, before it came to be in the spirit of sweetest self-surrender before God’s will, that Francis thus allowed himself

to become isolated from his family. Contrast St Ignatius busy in his office in Rome, and Francis almost alone in the valley of Rieti: the Order, advancing everywhere with masterful, rapid strides and ruled by his Vicar; and he aloof from an order which mystified him, happy in the slender company of his first friends. Not without bitterness was the first parting of the ways, as Peter Stacia knew who was Guardian of Bolgna when Francis disbanded the convent; or perhaps the good Dominicans to whom Francis on that occasion turned for shelter, and who tried to calm his indignation; or those again who first heard the Malediction issue from the Founder's lips.

But the fret and worry were not meant to last. It was a sorrow from which Francis was to emerge more like than ever to the figure of the Master who wept over those whom, time and again, He would have gathered, and they would not, who was wounded in the

house of friends, and who found enemies among His household. There grew in Francis a readiness to leave what pained him to God, and to look for and fix upon the *good* in men. Here, indeed, was no difficulty for *good* abounded, and Francis greets with joy true sons of his, not merely around him, but others from France and distant Spain. Had not God told him that all the work was His, and He the chief defender of the Order and that it would survive always *unshaken*? To crown all comes the Stigmata, evident pledge of divine satisfaction both with Francis and his work. The saint is joyful again, inexpressibly sweet and gentle and childlike once more filled with absolute trust and self-surrender before God's will. Almost his last words express this new attitude of utter peace of soul which uncertainties could disturb no more: *I have done my part to the best, may Christ now teach you yours.*



A message from the Managing Director

A journey of healing in the spirit of Ubuntu, along the Eden path.

Ubuntu is an ancient African word meaning 'humanity to others'. It also means 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. The domains of wellbeing – joy, connectedness, autonomy, meaning, growth, identity and security – are seen to be foundational qualities that define St Antonine's Home.

The hardship and poverty in today's world are too often accompanied by a loss of respect for humanity generally, and our generation have allowed a decline in the esteem and care traditionally given to the elderly.

Our older people are today left alone. They are lonely with no one to listen to them, to care for them – it is as if they never had a son or daughter. They are seen as burdens and they are left to fend for themselves in their frailty. These men and women are left to die without respect and honour. These people are human beings who go through atrocious sufferings, often left for dead and thought by many to be of no use to society. It is important that our generation who neglect and snub



Managing Director of St. Antonine's Home, Sr Lucia Raseipone FCSC.

“The old one who is loved,
is like winter with flowers.”

the elderly develop an appreciation and understanding of who they once were, the contributions they made and of the rich possibilities for their futures.

Living the Ubuntu spirit: natural inclination towards empathy and respect for elderly. As a result of staff coming from traditional families, there is a natural empathy and respect for the elderly. They are able to relate well to the elderly who have a genuine desire to listen to their stories.

Implementing Eden alternative philosophy. The Eden Alternative Model as a modern Ubuntu has helped us to focus on the needs of the elderly beyond medical treatment. Employing caring and compassionate people who can implement programmes that deal with loneliness, helplessness and boredom has reduced the need for formal medical care.

Ubuntu and rural life cannot be separated. We still believe this to be true. Our challenge and hope is to create a sustainable approach to the care of the elderly that will

incorporate the old ways but be flexible enough to adapt to the new!!

Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to thank the exceptional St. Antonine's team, our support and donors for their continued commitment to delivering exceptional service to our residents and by having the spirit of Ubuntu. May God bless each and every one of you for your continuous support and love! Let Ubuntu rule this family of St. Antonine's and the neighbouring community.

THANK YOU



To all of those
who continue
to support us ...



We wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the financial support we received from different donors. We also wish to thank all those who have contributed to St. Antonine's Home for the Aged,

making it possible for us to continue providing health and care service

Thanks to our counsellor and his team of ward 32 for his continuous support to our residents

THANK YOU



Delighted residents rejoice in your generosity.

The Life of St Antonine

St. Antonine was born in the City of Florence, and christened Anthony. His parents, Niccolo and Thomasina Pierozzi, were in high standing, as Niccolo was a Notary within the Florentine Republic.



Anthony felt the call to Religious life early and at sixteen years of age he entered the Dominican Order. In spite of his youth, he was soon tasked with the Government of various houses within his Order including Cortona, Rome, Naples and Florence. The Monastery's cells, including one for Cosmo de' Medici, were painted in fresco by Fra Angelico and his assistants.

Pope Eugenne IV consecrated Antonius as Archbishop of Florence in 1446. He quickly won the esteem and love of his people, who were grateful especially by his energy and resourcefulness in combating the impact of the Plague and Earthquake in 1448 and 1453. It was they who began the use of the diminutive form of

his name which is still used today. Antonius lived a life of austerity as Archbishop, continuing to follow the Dominican Rule. His relations with the Medici Regime while close, were not always harmonious. He died on May 2, 1459 and Pope Pius II who was on his way to the Council of Mantwa returned on learning of the Archbishop's death to conduct his funeral. This Feast of St. Antonine is celebrated 2nd May every year. This year we came together as St Antonine's family to celebrate his feast. It was an exciting day to St Antonine's Residents, we were visited by some family members from different places. Our seniors experienced the love that St Antonine showed to everyone.



Some of the residents enjoying a little outdoor recreation.

Pope: Cry of the poor is 'growing louder'

At St. Antonine's Home we are also trying to live according to the quoted words from Pope Francis on the poor and elderly.




ROME - In his message for the third Church-sponsored World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis said that today millions of men, women, young people and children are enslaved by "new forms of bondage." In his message the pope wrote that the world can build "any number of walls and close our doors" in an effort to feel secure "in our wealth, at the expense of those left outside," but this will not last forever, because the "day of the Lord" will destroy these barriers created between nations and "replace the arrogance of the few with the solidarity of many." "The marginalization painfully experienced by millions of persons cannot go on for long," Francis said. "Their cry is growing louder and embraces the entire earth." "Daily we encounter families forced to leave their homeland to seek a living elsewhere; orphans who have lost their parents or were violently torn from them by brutal means of exploitation; young people seeking professional fulfilment but prevented

from employment by short-sighted economic policies; victims of different kinds of violence, ranging from prostitution to the narcotics trade, and profoundly demeaned," he continued. According to Francis, the poor are often judged as "parasites on society" and are "not even forgiven for their poverty," seen as useless or as a threat. "To make matters worse, they can see no end to the tunnel of extreme poverty," he said. Poor people, Francis said, are forced to work endless hours under the burning sun to gather fruit, receiving "ridiculously" low pay. The pope said "a change of mentality is needed," since we live in a consumerist culture of waste, which spreads "a shallow and ephemeral wellbeing." Those who follow Christ, he wrote towards the end of his message, are called to have preferential option for the least and discarded members of society, not to "impugn the Church's credibility," but to give real hope to others.

"The involvement of Christians in this World Day of the Poor and especially in the events of everyday life, goes beyond initiatives of assistance,"

Pope Francis

A vertical image on the left side of the page. The top half shows a vibrant sunset with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a glow over a range of mountains. The bottom half shows a silhouette of a hand reaching upwards, palm open, against a blue sky with soft clouds.

A fifth letter to those wishing to learn Spiritual Reading

by Robert Stewart ofm

Dear Friend,

The time has now come to share with you some of the obstacles that might prevent you from becoming a spiritual reader.

The first obstacle is a know-it-all attitude so that instead of being open and receptive to the words of the master you enter into a battle of wits with the text. The humble realization that you are in need of guidance may be lacking in your life. You must be very aware of why you are turning to scripture in the first place. What are you looking for? If you are searching for information then you may or may not be on the

author's wave-length. But if you are searching for God and his guidance, then you are in tune with the author. You have to surrender your drive for control and mastery and let the text speak for itself rather than try and pit your theological or secular knowledge against the text.

The second obstacle to being a spiritual reader is to have an instant mentality which makes you impatient with yourself and with God. Such a mentality fails to recognise that you are on the way and you must grow at God's pace with God's grace. Often the text may evoke in you an inner shame that you are not there, not perfect, not what you appear to be. Well relax, you just have to move along as best you can. God only expects you to do what you can. The authors often give their experiences resulting from a life-long following of the path, so there is no need to feel guilty or ashamed you are not there. This sense of shame may result in you putting a text out of your mind or heart instead of inviting you to begin to follow the way humbly and submissively.

Another obstacle is your desire to be in control. Because of a basic anxiety to get your lives under control there is often a hidden desire to control | God. There is a refusal to be "surprised by the Spirit" and

to accept that "God's ways are not our ways". Remember God often "writes straight in crooked lines." You need to leave room for God to surprise you, to blow to pieces some project you had going. You have to be open to the possibility of the Holy Spirit speaking through the vehicle of the text in ways that you do not want or would not have chosen for yourself. Let go of the past and the future and let God into the present moment.

A familiar obstacle is failure to give attention to the text at hand. As soon as you settle down with the text you are filled with distractions. Your busy mind begins to race. You think the solution lies in chasing away distractions but this only serves to concentrate your mind on the distraction. It is like a fly buzzing in your room; if you chase it then you will be totally distracted but if you ignore it, then it will go away in a little while. So with distractions, if you just gently and firmly return to the text then they will go away.

Other obstacles are spending a lot of time applying the text to others instead of to yourself and preaching to others from the text, seeking there an immediate solution or to satisfy your need for spiritual consolation. There is always the danger that you may expect the

spiritual life to come automatically and so become impatient and lack perseverance. Remember that in reading you are just laying the fuel that in God's time will be fired by the fire of the Spirit. Just trust God and become aware of how fallible you are and "Be still and wait."

There are a number of questions that emerge from this consideration of some of the obstacles to spiritual reading.

Why are you reading the scripture? Are you open and receptive to the text? Do you feel guilty or ashamed that your life is not yet conformable to the gospel text? Are you impatient with yourself and with God? Are you prepared to be surprised by the Spirit? Do you preach to others from the text or apply it to yourself? How do you personally deal with distractions? Are you prepared to persevere with a

text even though it does not bring immediate satisfaction or consolation? Are you ready to accept the guidance that is given to you through the text?

I would like to thank you for persevering so far and pray that you may be able to discern the obstacles in yourself to becoming a spiritual reader and have the courage to gently but firmly set out with God's grace to overcome these obstacles. Robert Stewart ofm.

Fr. Robert recommends a few books for those wish to progress in their spiritual reading.

Dr Susan Annette Muto has a trilogy of books: *Approach to the Sacred: An introduction to spiritual reading*; *Steps along the way: the Path of spiritual reading*; *The journey homeward*. She also wrote "A practical guide to spiritual reading" which is highly recommended



Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

St Francis

This is a **ROUND TUIT.**
Guard it with your life, **TUITS** are hard to come by, especially the round ones. It will help you become a much more successful person. For years you've heard people say "I'll do this when I get a round tuit." Now that you have one you can accomplish all those things you put aside until you got this **ROUND TUIT.**

**A SINGLE
SUNBEAM
IS ENOUGH
TO DRIVE AWAY
MANY SHADOWS.**

Francis of Assisi

