

Troubadour

Volume 66, No.3

Winter 2024



In the 13th century Christ spoke to St Francis of Assisi:
*"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?

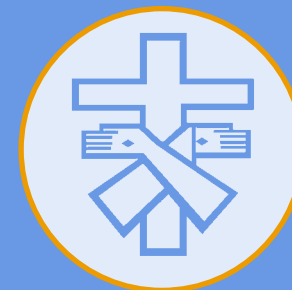
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Troubadour

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:

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Courage and Hope in the Holy Land.

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"Mothers of Jesus".

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Hope and Courage in the Holy Land

Lucia Borgato writes of how the young Christians in the Holy Land are coping with the turmoil of war.

The feast day of Mary, Queen of Palestine was celebrated at the Shrine of Deir Rafat on Saturday 26th October. This annual event is a moment of joy, but also of meditation and prayer, for all the Christians in the Holy Land. On this occasion, we met the young people from the Franciscan parish of St Saviour in Jerusalem. They talked about their lives and their difficulties and uncertainties, and

how living as Christians is a daily challenge.

“Agape, the name of our group, means the love of God, a love that invites us, young people of Jerusalem, to live the divine grace every day. We give with charity; we try to help our neighbour and we do everything with love.”

With these words, Taym, a young theology student who lives in the Old City of Jerusalem, explains the reality of the youth group. With her is Issa, a civil engineer, who lives in Jerusalem with his wife

and together they attend the Agape group.

“We have come with the youth group to Deir Rafat for the first time,” Taym continues, “to pray together and enjoy ourselves. If there is faith, we believe that every prayer, even if small, can move a mountain.”

A Daily Challenge

Bearing witness to the Christian faith in Jerusalem is a test that these youngsters face with great courage.

“Jerusalem,” says Issa, “is a city characterised by religious and cultural diversity, and this is also true within the individual faiths. We all believe in a single God, but for me being a Christian means living the teachings of Jesus.”

Taym, on the other hand, emphasises the special bond that every Christian feels with this land.

“Being a Christian here means a lot. Many believe that this land belongs to someone in particular, but we think that

God gave it to everyone. For us as Christians, it is a miracle to be here, where Jesus was born and lived. Living in this land is a blessing for us.”

Uncertainty for the Future

For the young Christians of Jerusalem, having hope in the future is not easy. The direct and indirect consequences of the war have a deep impact on their lives, interrupting their normality and filling the days with uncertainty.

Issa describes how the first effect was precisely the suspension of social life; people have stopped going out and the continuous news of violence has had severe repercussions on their peace of mind.



The friars seek to encourage and support.



"All we want is peace, but it is difficult to see so much suffering every day. The only thing we can do in our daily life is live the life that God gave us."

Taym also speaks of the difficulties in looking to the future, a feeling that is shared by many young people. The war brings distress, and they are tempted to leave the land where they were born, but faith becomes their anchor of salvation.

"I personally find it difficult to look to the future, and I think that this goes for all the other young people around me. We think about everyday life, we wake up with the thought of people dying. Many of us are thinking of leaving, but our faith keeps us here, because we believe that, just as Jesus was born and lived here amongst us, we can also stay and He will protect us."

A Morsel of Hope

Deciding to stay despite the difficulties is a great testimony of courage and faith which these youngsters are offering. Experiencing hatred and violence makes those moments of love all



Table fellowship - the joy of being together.

the more appreciated. They give a morsel of hope for the future of the young people in the Holy Land.

Issa concludes, "We have decided to stay because in spite of the tensions and the difficulties, we live in a very beautiful place. At times we face hatred that comes from various sides, but it is exactly at those moments that we appreciate the gestures of kindness, above all when people show love, even though they have all the reasons not to do so."



The future for Palestinian Christians is uncertain.

A Journey of Healing

Edward Lennon OFM writes from Namibia about two programmes that bring hope and healing to people's lives.

President Hage Geingob was buried in Heroes Acre in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia on Sunday the 25th February 2024. I offered Mass for him on that day and prayed for him and for all the people of Namibia.

He became president on the 21st March 2015. He spoke on that day of the Namibian House and declared

that everybody had a place in this house. It was a theme to which he returned on many occasions. In his New Year address for 2024, he spoke of it again, saying, "I call on all of you to hold hands and to ensure that no one feels left out of the Namibian House"

I connected the president's call that everyone had a place in



the Namibian House with the call of Pope Francis that we all belong in our One Common Home, this planet earth. The Pope says that nobody and no creature is excluded from our common home and that we all have a responsibility to take care of this our home.

I had the privilege of being invited by our Archbishop Liborius Ndumbukuti Nashenda OMI to join him at a meeting of Church leaders with President Geingob. We were welcomed to State House in



Edward "Teddy" Lennon OFM.
"May the Lord reward your gracious generosity."

Windhoek and seated in a circle in a large room with the President and some members of his cabinet. There were between 30 and 40 of us. He invited each of us to speak. The man

who spoke before me was a Lutheran minister. My memory of his talk was that he said that many of the people he ministered with were feeling hopeless; the young people did not see a great future ahead of them and many were downhearted.

Two Programmes

I spoke about two programmes which we as Catholic Church were offering to people in Namibia. I said that these programmes were

being offered to people of all churches and of no church. The first programme was called YES - Youth Encounter Spirit. It was offered to young people from the ages of 16 to 116 and we invited all who attended this program to say YES to themselves, YES to others and YES to God. We encouraged all who came to look at the positive side of life and to be able to say as they left our gathering the words "I AM GREAT".

The second programme we were offering was called *Healing of Memories*. In this programme we invite all who attend to tell their story; we listen attentively to everyone's story, and we acknowledge each one's story. Everyone living in Namibia has a story to tell. People have been affected by the war of liberation, families were divided, people have been affected by the system of apartheid and people have been affected by the longstanding effects of the German/Herero/Nama war of 1904 to 1908. People have also been affected by day-to-day problems in their families and in their communities.

We ask people who attend to answer a number of questions. Some of these questions are - When you look back at your life to date

can you answer these questions: What did I do? What was done to me? What did I fail to do? What could I have done better?

A Journey of Healing

The programme helps people to join a journey of healing for themselves, for their neighbours and for the wider community. It leads to healing and reconciliation within families, within communities and within the wider nation.

As we left the meeting place President Geingob shook everyone's hand. As he shook my hand, he said, "Thank you for those two programmes".

I saw him in action in another way. During the liberation war many young people who left the country to join the struggle were arrested by their own comrades and accused of being spies for South Africa. Many were put into dungeons in the ground in Angola. Some spent five years or more in these places, Some never returned.

A number of those who returned formed a group called "Break the Silence". They wanted to clear their names. Each year they sent a letter to the office of the president asking for a meeting. They got no reply until President Geingob took office. He invited them to come and



The late Dr Hage G. Geingob, former President of Namibia.
"All are welcome."

meet him in State House. A number of them have since attended our *Healing of Memories* programme.

My Gratitude

I thank President Hage Geingob for his message that there is a place for everyone in the Namibian House and I thank him for reaching out to all sections of Namibian society and showing by his actions that no one is excluded.

We are very grateful to Fr. Michael Lapsley who introduced us Franciscans to the *Healing of Memories* programme. He continues to walk with us and with the people of Namibia on our healing journey. He started this programme soon after he was the victim of an attempt on his life. This happened because of his opposition to the system of apartheid in South Africa. A letter bomb was sent to him while he was in Harare in Zimbabwe. It resulted in him losing both his hands, an eye, and spending 18 months in various hospitals.

He started the *Healing of Memories* programme in South Africa. Today it is offered in many countries all over the world. We are blessed to be part of this programme in Namibia.

The president said thank you for the programmes that we Franciscans have been able to introduce under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops Conference. I wish to say thank you to you, the readers of Troubadour magazine, because without your support and the support of the Franciscan Missionary Union these programmes could not be offered to the people who live in Namibia. May the Lord reward your gracious generosity.



Fr. Michael Lapsley: an example of the power of forgiveness.

How one Donation has made such a Difference

*Your generous support has provided
a much needed vehicle for friars working among
the poor in a remote region of India.*

The Franciscan mission at Reddypalem, established in 2011, serves a remote and underprivileged community in Ranga Reddy district, Telangana. The mission provides both

pastoral and educational support to a village comprising 80 Catholic families and around 600 regular parishioners, with up to 1,000 attending on special occasions. The villagers are





Friar Sleeve OFM, founder of the mission: flies kites with the children.

- to ensure affordability. In contrast, corporate schools charge significantly higher fees, ranging from \$625 to \$1,000 annually. The school operates with minimal financial resources, relying largely on charitable donations.

The mission, nestled in rural isolation,

predominantly farmers and daily wage workers, reliant on a single annual crop due to rain-dependent agriculture, making their livelihoods precarious. Additionally, many villagers belong to lower castes, face economic vulnerability, and have limited access to education.

Recognising the critical need for education, the Franciscan Friars responded by establishing the Reddypalem Mission School in 2013, which now serves around 600 children from Reddypalem and surrounding villages. Most students come from economically disadvantaged families, with annual school fees kept deliberately low - between Rs. 6,000 and Rs. 8,000 (\$75 to \$100)

lacks basic infrastructure such as public transport, making mobility a significant challenge for the friars, particularly as they manage both pastoral and educational ministries.

The Reddypalem Mission is located far from the main road and lacks access to public transportation. The Franciscan friars, who serve this remote community, often have to travel on two-wheelers to reach the village, nearby settlements, and towns for essential supplies, pastoral visits, and administrative tasks related to the school.

However, the terrain and long distances pose a danger for two-wheeler travel, particularly in the monsoon season. Recently,

Friar Bhaskar was involved in a road accident while riding a two-wheeler, highlighting the risks involved in such travel. These challenges impede the mission's ability to effectively support both the pastoral needs of the community and the administrative requirements of the school. Given that the Reddypalem Mission School operates as a charitable endeavour, it is unable to finance a four-wheeler on its own.

There is canal they need to cross to reach to this mission.

During the rainy seasons it becomes difficult to cross with two wheelers when canal overflows.

For almost nine years the friars have managed with two wheelers, but with the growing number of dangers and lack of safety, friars expressed their need for the four wheeler. Before they were relying on the youth of the

parish for their transport. Now youth being moved to the cities for job purposes, they found it difficult to avail them when they need the most.

The donation of \$18,841 to the mission, made possible only because of your generous support, has provided the Franciscan friars with a safe and

reliable mode of transport for pastoral and educational duties.

With better transportation, the friars are able to ensure smoother operations of the mission school, including procurement of supplies, staff coordination, and continued development of

educational services for the 600 children who depend on the school.

The new vehicle allows the friars to efficiently manage pastoral responsibilities, including timely visits to the surrounding villages, attending to parishioners' needs. It equips the friars with the ability to



Pastoral ministry among the people.

quickly respond to medical and pastoral emergencies within the village and surrounding areas, where public transportation is non-existent. It has also enabled the friars to visit and serve other remote villages that are currently difficult to access using two-wheelers, thereby expanding the reach of the mission.

respond to the community's needs more effectively, fostering trust and deeper relationships with the local population.

The Franciscan mission in Reddypalem plays a critical role in addressing both the spiritual and educational needs of a remote, economically vulnerable population. The acquisition of a



The school provides a chance for poor, "lower caste" children.

In addition, replacing two-wheeler travel with a safer four-wheeler option, reduce the risks of accidents and physical risk to the friars, especially during inclement weather or on challenging terrain. The ability to travel safely enables the friars to

four-wheeler has not only enhanced their safety and efficiency but also ensures the sustained growth of the mission school and broader pastoral outreach, benefiting both the Reddypalem community and surrounding villages.



A Celebration of God

Saint Francis wrote his prayer in praise of God on Mount La Verna after he received the Stigmata in September 1224, 800 years ago this year.



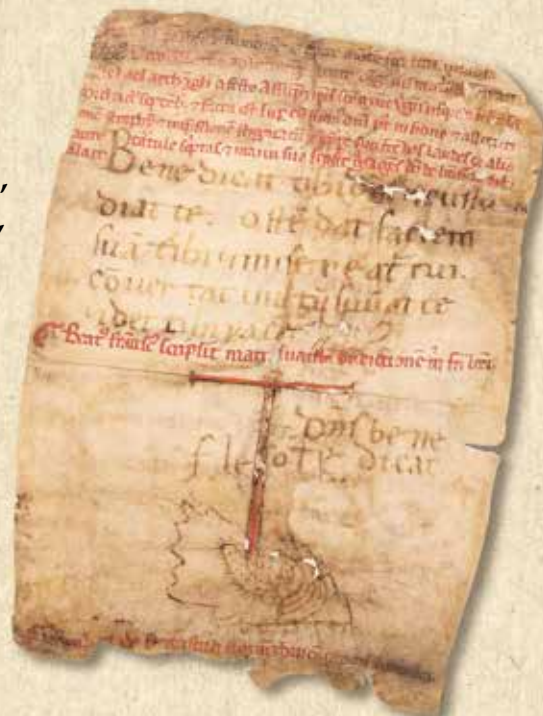
On one side of a little piece of parchment (which can still be seen in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi) he wrote a blessing for Br. Leo and on the other side these words:

The Praises of God

Lord God:

you alone are holy,
you who work wonders!
You are strong, you are great,
you are the Most High,
you are the almighty King,
you, holy Father, King of heaven
and earth.
Lord God: you are Three and you
are One,
you are goodness, all goodness,
you are the highest Good,
Lord God, living and true.
You are love and charity, you are
wisdom,
you are humility, you are patience,
you are beauty, you are sweetness,
you are safety, you are rest, you
are joy,
you are our hope
and our delight,
you are justice, you are
moderation,
you are all our wealth
and riches overflowing.
You are beauty, you are
gentleness,

you are our shelter, our guard
and our defender,
you are strength, you are
refreshment,
you are our hope,
you are our faith,
you are our love,
you are our complete consolation,
you are our life everlasting,
great and wonderful Lord,
all powerful God, merciful Savior!
Amen.



'Twas the night before Christmas

A parody by
Sister St. Thomas, B.N.D. de N



'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the town,
St. Joseph was searching, walking up roads and down;
Our Lady was waiting, so meek and so mild,
While Joseph was seeking a place for the Child;

The children were nestled, each snug in their beds,
The grown-ups wouldn't bother, there's no room they said;
When even the innkeeper sent them away,
Joseph was wondering, where they would stay;
He thought of the caves in the side of the hills,
Let's go there said Mary, it's silent and still;

The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,
Made pathways of light for their tired feet to go;
And there in a cave, in a cradle of hay,
Our Savior was born on that first Christmas Day!

The Father was watching in heaven above,
He sent for His angels, His couriers of love;
More rapid than eagles God's bright angels came;
Rejoicing and eager as each heard his name;

Come Power, Come Cherubs, Come Virtues, Come Raphael,
Come Thrones and Dominions, come Michael and Gabriel;
Now fly to the Earth, where My poor people live,
Announce the glad tidings My Son comes to give;

The Shepherds were watching their flocks on this night,
And saw in the heavens and unearthly light;
The Angels assured them, they'd nothing to fear,
It's Christmas they said, the Savior is here!

They hastened to find Him, and stood at the door,
Till Mary invited them in to adore;
He was swaddled in bands from His head to His feet,
Never did the Shepherds see a baby so sweet!

He spoke not a word, but the shepherds all knew,
He was telling them secrets and blessing them too;
Then softly they left Him, The Babe in the hay,
And rejoiced with great joy on that first Christmas Day;

Mary heard them exclaim as they walked up the hill,
Glory to God in the Highest, Peace to men of good will!

Liturgical Calendar

A Catholic Guide to the Christmas season.



Dec. 8

The Church prepares for Christmas with Four weeks of the Advent Season before the celebration of Jesus's birth.



**Dec. 24-
Jan. 10**

The Christmas season officially begins on Christmas Eve. It lasts until the Baptism of the Lord, which is usually the second Sunday in January



**Dec. 25-
Jan. 1**

From Christmas Day until Jan 1st, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, is the **Octave of Christmas.**



Jan. 6

There are many feast days during this season (Holy Family 12/26, Holy Innocents 12/28, etc.) The Epiphany, commemorating the visit of the Magi, always falls on Jan 6.



Colour this page as neatly and brightly as you can. HAVE FUN!



A child is born for us. A Son is given to us!

“ We are mothers of Christ when we
bear Him in our hearts and bodies
with divine love and with pure and sincere
consciences; and we give birth to him through
a holy life which should enlighten others
because of our good example. ”

Saint Francis

