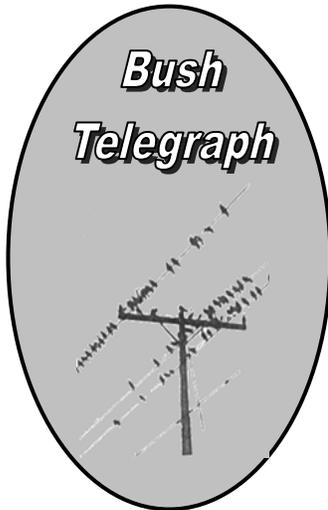


An irregular newsletter
Little Brothers of Francis

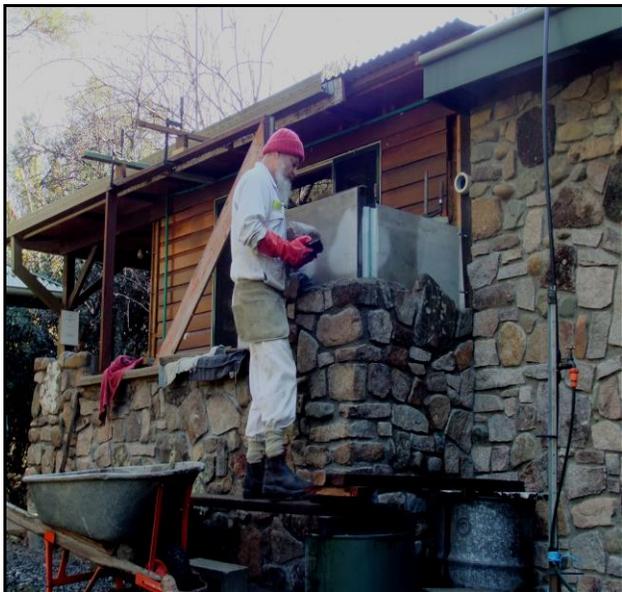


2019



New wood stove

Not being the top of the range, our wood stove had reached the end of its life. Nevertheless our stove has given us community meals and hot water for the kitchen over many years. On it, Brother Howard has made countless jars of marmalade, jam, and a variety of sauces for sale in parishes in South Eastern Queensland and Northern NSW.



Old wood wall in background

Brother Geoffrey has collected stone from around our property for a stone wall which has extended our cramped kitchen by a metre by replacing the existing timber wall. This has a number of advantages. Unlike wood, it is not combustible in a bush fire, not white ant friendly like wood, and the stone is from the place where we live, which speaks of our commitment and stability. Visually it is a work of art.



Access road or a goat track?

There have been many challenges getting the wood stove to our remote location the final one being our access road or, as many have said. "it's not an access road but a goat track".

SHEPHERD



Our Maremma dog who we called our fourth shepherd, we being the other three shepherds, died recently. During his life with us he lived with the sheep and goats as a guardian dog. Before Shepherd arrived and despite our excellent fences and vigilance, we still lost sheep and goats killed by both wild and domestic dogs, but that all changed once he began his life as our fourth shepherd. But Shepherd was more than a guardian dog: he became an integrated friend to each of the Brothers and is sadly missed by us and all who came to know him. His death was a good one in that he was surrounded by much love from us and our lives had been enriched by his presence among us.

BUSHMAN'S ANGELUS

Around world the Angelus rings out at sunrise, midday and sunset.

The bell invites us to pray and ponder the great mystery of our faith, that God entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is this profound mystery that captivated St. Francis, and became central in his life and spirituality.

It is not surprising then that it has been the Franciscans who have been prominent in spreading the tradition of the Angelus since the thirteenth century. The Angelus has taken the form of a bell being tolled in three sets of three and then one of nine, with a pause between each set. There are prayers that can be said with the ringing of the bell. Most important of all is the directing of our attention at the beginning of the day, at midday, and at sunset, to the mystery of the Creator entering His own creation in order to reveal His great love for us.

Kookaburras fill the landscape with their joyful and distinctive call at dawn, midday, sunset.



Bushman's Angelus

Three times a day, at sunrise, midday, sunset, they join with the Brothers in the Angelus

The Angelus invites us to join St Francis and countless others to be lost in love, wonder, and praise of God's great love for us, revealed in Jesus.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

The most important celebration for us as Franciscan Brothers is what is called the Transitus or Francis's last days before his death held on the evening of 3rd of October: the end of this life as we know it.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING



This Liturgy is sad, recalling the Brothers present with Francis as he died in pain and blind. But it is also filled with tenderness as he says goodbye to his Brothers, Sister Clare, friends, and all God's creatures, filled with faith as he departs this world for the next, to the one he has loved and sought to follow, Jesus, who was crucified but has risen from the dead.

It was a great joy to have Sister Carol, as our special guest for the Transitus. Sister Carol is the Mother Superior of the Community of the Holy Name, an order of Anglican Sisters founded in Victoria Australia in 1888.

THE WILDLIFE CREMATORIUM

8,500 hectares were burnt out in the worst bushfire we have experienced in our 32 years at our hermitage in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range west of Tabulam. We have experienced a number of serious bushfires before this one.

This fire broke out in a terrible drought. The wet season has failed to come this summer and we have had no significant rain for 4 months. The bush was extremely dry, with trees losing their leaves or dying. Our creek had stopped running a long time ago and our large water hole has been shrinking before our eyes with no relief in sight.

The fire started when we were sweltering in temperatures over 40° Centigrade (100°F). The fire crossed the Clarence River and the Rocky River and became three separate fires travelling in different directions due to strong and unpredictable winds driving each fire front.

At the time there was only one Brother home as the other two Brothers were in Victoria, representing the community. Twice in three days Brother Howard had to evacuate the hermitage, opening all the gates for access to and from the property, releasing and providing as best he could for the animals, closing the buildings and leaving. At one stage, when trying to assess the fire front down our road, he was confronted by a huge wall of fire that crossed a kilometre down the road and saw two neighbours who were fleeing for their lives. Since then we have learnt that, in that stretch of our road, five dwellings have been burnt out.

Learning of the bushfire, Brothers Wayne and Geoffrey cut short their trip and caught the first available flight home. Father Matthew Jones, the Anglican priest at Ballina, met them at the airport to inform them that Brother Howard was safe but not at the hermitage and they could not get back as the main highway was closed at Tabulam and our road was definitely closed. But Matthew's nephew Callum was going to Tabulam that morning and could get them to his parents' place until they were allowed back to the hermitage. *However, if you know anything about the Brothers and their history, you will know there is no such thing in their lexicon as "you cannot".* To cut a wonderful story short, we were helped to find a way to get home by Richard Jones, the brother of Father Matthew. Richard lives just across the Rocky River bridge at Tabulam.

It's difficult to explain the situation because of the steep terrain, the changeable winds and the complexity of the fire fronts threatening our place. On arriving home Brothers Geoffrey and Wayne discovered another fire front, from a different direction, was threatening the buildings, the orchard, the beehives and the animals (both domestic and wild). Through a Herculean effort, they started to back burn to try to halt the fire. Later, two volunteer firemen, aerial water-bombing by helicopters and Brother Howard saved the place. The fire came within three metres of one of the hermitages.

People say the Australian Bush is resilient—and it is. But after the fire went through, for a week or more, we would hear a loud noise as these wonderful old trees came crashing down to the ground making the earth vibrate

with their fall. The land had been cleared before the first World War so there were only a few 150- to 200-year-old trees left. One weeps for these grand old trees, home of sugar gliders, possums, nesting places of Kookaburras, parrots and a myriad of other creatures. The bush has taken on an eerie, silent, lunar moonscape like a desert; no birds, no forest floor creatures like quails, lizards or insects.



No human life was lost, including our own, thanks to our own effort and work over many years in preparing for bushfires and the support of the Rural Voluntary Fire Service. We cannot begin to express our love, gratitude, our tears and emotions, for all those both local and far away who have been there for us in a palpable way with their concern, friendship, prayerful and practical support.

Bush Telegraph

Little Brothers of Francis

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A Religious Order in the Anglican Church
in the contemplative tradition.
Protector: Bishop Godfrey Fryar