

# Bush Telegraph



SUMMER 2015

## Imagine our embarrassment.....when!

As a group of Brothers we try to be as self reliant as possible. Learning from scratch we built most of our buildings with one Brother becoming very competent in building in stone from our own property. We have fenced many kilometres in rugged, rocky hill country. We do all our own domestic work, cleaning, cooking, shopping etc. Being meat eaters, we raise and kill our own animals. We have an extensive vegetable garden and fruit trees.



*Harvesting a cold variety of bananas*

However there are some things which are beyond our ability and require the skills of others, like repairs for a computer or the mechanical work on the ute and so on.



*Harvesting dead trees on our property*

Most of the time we cook using our wood stove and this of course requires time to harvest and cart back to the kitchen the dead timber of which we have ample on the property. However, on very hot days or because of demands on our time we use our gas stove. Our trusty old gas stove has four gas burners and an oven but unfortunately the ignition switch had begun to fail. Various solutions were offered but failed.



It was decided to seek professional help. The trip from our kitchen to the repair shop is 105 kilometres so the return trip is 210 k. It was out of the question to pay someone to travel to us - that is if they would. So we decided to dismantle the connections and

take the stove in ourselves. After pointing out various parts which needed renewing, imagine our embarrassment to learn it was a simple problem of a flat battery which was the source of the energy for the ignition switch having died!

## **Being called to a more contemplative life**

by a Friend of the Little Brothers of Francis

Many of us who are drawn to contemplative prayer have felt this call to some degree, but perhaps have not understood how we might best answer it, especially outside of the monastic life. While not living formally as a nun or monk I can, in my own particular living circumstances, learn to accept God's grace, to be open to continual conversion of heart, and self-surrender, and responsive to the life experiences God gives me. I don't believe it is necessarily easier to develop this receptivity of heart/mind inside a monastery or hermitage than outside it as a lay person. We are all subject to the same difficulties of "trying too hard" or of being distracted from receiving God's grace by daily concerns, by our own pride or self-focus.

### **Community and the Hermitage connection.**

Where do we find the community that will support and encourage us in our call to be contemplative? I may not have the opportunity or call to full monastic membership, but I do have the grace of connection with the Hermitage of the Little Brothers of Francis. The Little Brothers share their insights and experiences with their Friends. Through their generosity we can participate in their liturgies and be inspired by their way of life lived in the love and service of God "for himself". We can visit the hermitage and join in the life of the Brothers for a time, or we may attend a Parish Quiet Day or weekend that the Brothers run. Getting our families and closest friends on side can be the hardest part

of being contemplative. If we can start to articulate what it is we are doing and why we are doing it, those who matter most to us may well be won over. Or we might join a meditation group, or simply join up with others of like mind for specific times each week to sit together in silent prayer. The active or even tacit support of another human being in our practice of contemplative prayer can be enormously helpful in keeping us focussed. When I first became a Friend of the LBF, I used to pray their liturgies at the same time that I knew the brothers were praying them. This made me feel completely part of their prayer community. So, my community may not be all around me, but if I look for it, it will be there.

### **Silence and solitude.**

To assist the process of "becoming contemplative", regular periods of silence are necessary. If we are creative we can find times for such silence. For some, this silence may be found taking an early morning or evening walk. For a busy young mother it may be a time when children are asleep, or in the middle of the night feeding a baby. Sometimes when living in families or other circumstances where silence isn't necessarily valued it may mean that we have to assert our need for silence. In an "always on" society that leaves less and less space for us to think and even just to "be", finding times and places for silence may be quite a challenge. But it is essential to be creative in dealing with this problem. Sometimes a period of formal retreat is needed and can help us to see the ongoing value of silence, time to listen to God, or simply to empty our thoughts so that God may have a space to come in. It can take years to "grow more quiet", to still the incessant voices that invade the silence. But, the rewards are well worth the patience required. Take it gradually. We shouldn't try to do everything at once, or we will surely give up in frustration.

# A 'fragile' human being....but!

He was born in a town set in the side of a mountain overlooking a lush valley in central Italy. Fun loving playboy, clothes, money, fame and vanity were the hallmarks of this young man from an affluent family.

Along with others from his town he went to war with a neighbouring town, where in a bloody battle he was captured and spent a year as a prisoner in primitive conditions and became very sick. On his release he returned home, sick, confused and disillusioned about the meaning of life and his future.

No one in their right mind or wildest flights of fancy would consider this person to be a candidate to become a source of inspiration for countless others which has transcended his time and place for over eight hundred years.

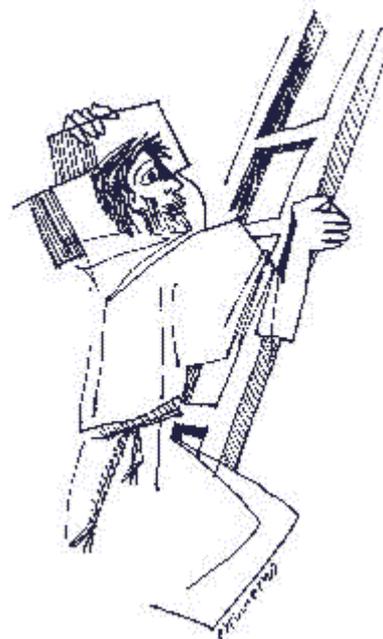
More biographies have been written about Francis, the little poor man of Assisi, than any other person in the history of the church. His appeal is so diverse, encompassing those who love creation; radical reformers and orthodox church members; those opposed to war and committed to peace and reconciliation; those who are hungering for something deeper, meaningful and life-giving than the consumption of goods and services and the pursuit of wealth; those who reach out to people in the margins of society. His life was his sermon which critiqued those who seek power in social, political and church hierarchies. He was a mystic and contemplative. Francis is held in high regard by people of other religions and people who don't believe in God.

To understand this ordinary but extraordinary person, we need to look at what was at the core of his motivation and inner spiritual life.



On returning to his home town after being released from prison Francis was confused and disillusioned about life and his future. Then one day, outside the town, he entered a church that had fallen into disrepair. There kneeling in front of a crucifix during what must have been a long, intense period of prayer, Christ spoke to him: "Francis, go repair my house which as you see, is falling completely to ruin".

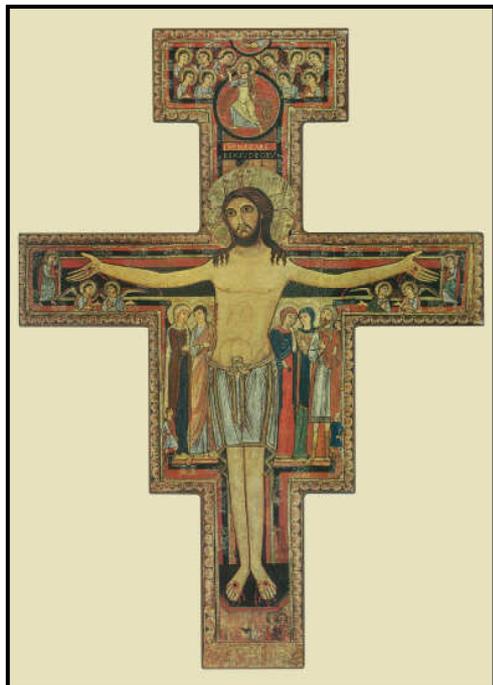
Francis began to rebuild the crumbling and abandoned church. The physical rebuilding of the church was also an outward tangible sign of what had begun in his own life.



*Let yourselves be built into a spiritual temple where you will serve God who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

*(Peter, one of the earliest disciples of Jesus)*

Francis came to realise that the conspicuous consumption of the middle class he belonged to (money, fashions in clothes, mind numbing party going) and its preoccupation with position and power were all false desires and empty illusions. The neglected and crumbling church was a symbol of all that was wrong in his life, society and the church.



Now he realized that the hunger for the meaning of life can only be satisfied in Christ. Jesus became the focus of his life and his only desire was to be like Christ and live for Christ alone.

Stone by stone, step by step, in all weather, Francis began not only to rebuild the church but his own life, centred in the life and teaching of Jesus found in the four Gospels. It was about daily conversion; learning by his mistakes and facing the difficulties life put in his way.

In lonely places and hermitages far from the noise of commerce and the empty pursuits and chatter of the crowds Francis sought to nourish his relationship with Jesus. This was the source of inspiration from which all his other activities came.

## LITTLE BROTHERS OF FRANCIS

Building on our experience as Franciscan Brothers we came together in 1987 and founded the hermitage at Tabulam.

Franciscan Hermitage

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Founded in  
1987 by

Brother  
Howard

Brother  
Wayne

Brother  
Geoffrey



As Franciscan Brothers and with the Rule or principles set out by Francis for those living in hermitages, do we follow Francis? Perhaps it may surprise you that we say “No”. We follow Jesus; we are first and foremost his disciples. We are challenged and draw great inspiration and encouragement from Francis because he helps us to focus more intensely on Christ and what discipleship meant for him.

When someone points to something of exceptional interest, wonder, or beauty and we stay focused on the pointing finger, we miss the very thing being pointed to. Francis points us to God who enters his creation in the person of Jesus.

## BUSH TELEGRAPH

(An irregular newsletter)

As the name of our newsletter suggests we are dependent on the good will of others to pass it on, photocopy it and financially support it. We are grateful for those who do this and wish to thank them and encourage others to join us and them in the distribution of the Bush Telegraph.

**Little Brothers of Francis  
Franciscan Hermitage  
Eremophila**

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[www.franciscanhermitage.org](http://www.franciscanhermitage.org)

A Religious Order in the Anglican Church  
in the contemplative tradition.

Protector: Bishop Godfrey Fryar