

# Bush Telegraph



WINTER 2014



*Hi, my name is Handsome, not that I am vain but that is the name the Brothers gave me.*

My introduction to my new life at the hermitage was a disaster to say the least. On arriving at the hermitage I was put in a paddock by myself which seemed very antisocial to me. So I decided that this was not right and broke out. Not being confined and free, I then bowled up ready to be friendly with the other sheep, when a big white wolf, or so he seemed to me, came bounding down the hill with every intention of killing me. After a brief skirmish, I didn't worry about losing my dignity; I fled for my life thankful to be rescued by the Brothers.

The Brothers took me back to the paddock and my escape route was sealed. There I was to remain for six months, isolated from but within sight of my fellow sheep, and that big white arctic wolf who the Brothers called endearing names among them *Shepherd*. Wow, what a upside down world had I come to?



Since that horrible encounter I have learnt that the *arctic wolf* is a Maremma dog called Shepherd. I was not completely wrong as his relatives are from the mountains in central Italy where they were used to protect the flocks of goats and sheep from wolves.

Then a dramatic change took place. After six long months of imprisonment, which seemed more like a life sentence as I could not see circumstances changing, the Brothers came and properly introduced me to Shepherd by spending time with us both together. Now we are the best of mates.

Apparently I have other attributes besides being handsome. What we consider good country and tucker many describe as poor rubbish country. We return our thanks by leaving pelletised fertilizer and have been described as "golden hoof" for that reason. We have eaten out all the lantana which is an invasive weed in this part of the world and with the goats are part of the grazing system for bush fire prevention.

## IS THERE A FUTURE FOR THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF FRANCIS?

This is a question that we are asked from time to time.

In responding to this question it is important to say at the outset how we understand our vocation and the lifestyle that flows from that. The life and teaching of Jesus in the four Gospels is central to our life and St. Francis Rule for Hermitages is the framework through which we live this out.

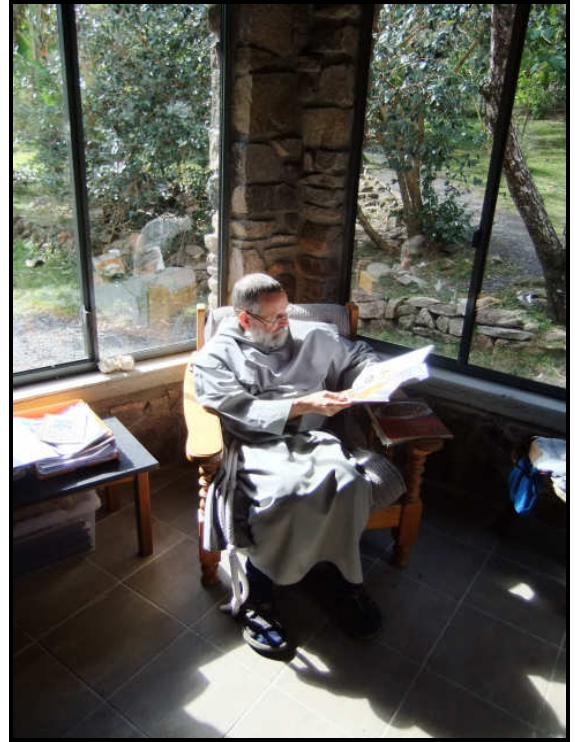
St. Francis of Assisi lived 800 years ago and from his own experience wrote a Rule for those living in Hermitages. It is an inspiration for those who are called to this way of life and has stood the test of time. Its brevity is deceptive. Rather than a long list of regulations, Francis sets out the principles that are essential for this way of life.



*Stone Bell Tower built by Brother Geoffrey who is ringing out the Angelus*

The Angelus which is rung at sunrise, midday, and sunset celebrates that the God of love entered his own creation and became one of us in the person of Jesus.

The rhythm of prayer that Francis sets out for life in the hermitage is our response to that love. In prayer and meditation we spend time with the “One” who loves us.



*Brother Howard in the library*

Francis states clearly that the overall principle which governs the life of the Brothers is:

**Their first care** should be *to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* (Matthew: 6:33)

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray he responded with what we now call the Lord’s Prayer. It begins with an address to God with an intimate term ‘Father’ but the first request is *Your Kingdom come on earth as in heaven.*

This principle is uppermost in the mind of St. Francis when he wrote his Rule for Hermitages.



To pursue, to seek, to put in first place the kingdom of God and to try to live according to its requirements is then for the Brothers central as it is for all disciples.

The more we are totally surrendered to the Lord's will in us, the more the Kingdom of God will be realised. Therefore the core of our "mission" is our conversion.



*Brother Wayne in the vegetable garden reflecting on the weeds, food plants, and other things.*

At dawn in our time of worship together we pray that this time and the following times of worship through the day will be offered with attention and devotion. On leaving that sacred time and space everything else is touched with the divine whether it's cooking, how we speak and listen to each other, respect and care of the tools used in the garden, other motorists on the road, shopping at the supermarket.

So what is the future of the Little Brothers of Francis? In his Rule for Hermitages St. Francis states that 3 or at the most 4 Brothers should live there. We are open to the possibility of a fourth member. But the most important thing is we believe that we have been called to this way of life and must respond to our vocation. Therefore the future, whether there is another 3, 300, 3,000 hermitages, it does not matter, what is important is our personal response.

## PRAISE TO YOU, MY LORD FOR BROTHER FIRE

*Praise to you, my Lord for Brother Fire  
by whom you brighten up the night.  
He is beautiful, merry, mighty and strong  
St Francis – Canticle of the Sun*

### MIGHTY AND STRONG

In St. Francis' Canticle of the Sun, he writes of Brother Fire as being *mighty and strong*. Anyone living in the Australian bush soon learns just how mighty and strong Brother Fire can be. Ever since we were very nearly completely burnt out in the early nineties, we have put a lot of effort into our bushfire protection strategy. This area has recently been identified as one of the most potentially dangerous areas of New South Wales for bushfires. There are four categories, the fourth is the most dangerous and that is us.



*Mosaic burning and fuel reduction*

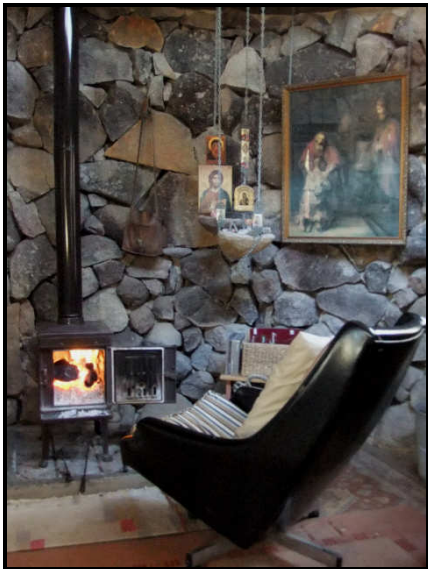
Each week we try to spend at least one morning a week on creating and maintaining firebreaks. In winter, we do fuel reduction burns within the property on a mosaic pattern. Small areas of several hectares are burnt each year in creating a patchwork of burnt and unburnt areas. This strategy preserves the habitat for birds and animals and breaks up a fire front to reduce its destructive speed.

When we were under serious threat from a bushfire last year a neighbour asked what we had been doing to protect ourselves against it. One of the Brothers quietly replied "We've been working on our fire protection strategy for twenty six years".

BROTHER FIRE WHO IS BEAUTIFUL,  
MERRY AND BRIGHTENS UP THE  
NIGHT,

Winters at the Hermitage are mild but chilly. The early mornings especially can prove the coldest part of the day. June and July are the coldest months of the year and occasionally we may get a slight frost. Clear blue skies and crystal starry nights make for a wonderful combination. However the polar winds from the south west can on occasions blow a gale and it is definitely cold then.

At such a time heating is essential. Each hermitage has a small fire of some description – usually a slow combustion stove or pot-belly. Having electric or gas heating is not practical especially when we are not connected to the mains power line. Over winter nights, fire is indeed a friend of warmth and cheer. It brings many wonderful qualities to brighten up the night, making the ambiance of a room merry and inviting. We share its company and sit quietly, we will be drawn in by its hypnotic nature of movement and dance, a living flame which is a joy to watch.



BROTHER FIRE WHO IS PRACTICAL  
We have a wonderful resource in the large number of dead trees on our bushland property as a result of borers, droughts and bushfires.

The dead wood after being harvested with hard work and a chainsaw provides us with fuel and because of its abundance will do so for many generations to come.

With no electricity it is essential for cooking on our wood stove and for hot water for the bathroom and shower and heating our hermitages in the winter. But it remains dead wood until Brother Fire converts it into heat and energy.

SPIRITUAL

There are two prayers which are frequently used here at the hermitage invoking the image of fire.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your heart *burns* with love for me.  
*Inflame* my heart with love for you.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
who when the world was growing cold,  
to the *inflaming* of our hearts  
by the *fire* of your love,  
raised up blessed Francis, bearing in his own  
body the marks of your passion:  
mercifully grant to us, your people,  
true penitence and grace to bear the Cross for  
love of you;  
who live and reign with the Father and the  
Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

BUSH TELEGRAPH

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.

**Bush Telegraph**

(An irregular newsletter)

**Little Brothers of Francis  
Franciscan Hermitage  
Eremophila**

PO Box 162, Tabulam, NSW 2469

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

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