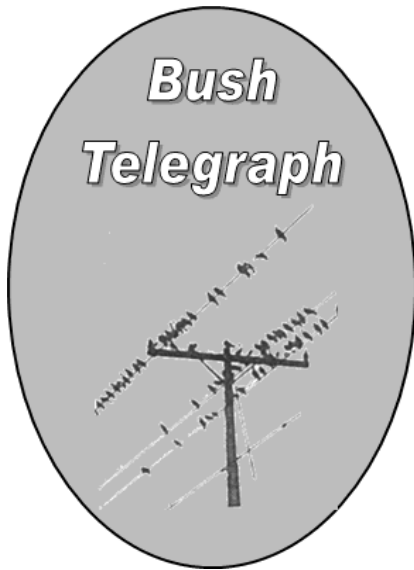


BUSH TELEGRAPH

An irregular newsletter



2022

PLEASE EXPLAIN

This question is asked of us and it can take various forms such as:

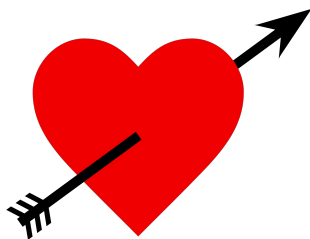


Please Explain...

- What do you actually do at the hermitage?
- Why are you not involved in preaching, taking retreats, or caring for the poor?
- Why did you become a brother?
- With the challenges that face all of us, and the church, are you relevant?

ROMANCE AND INTIMACY

Any analogy illustrating what attracted us to live here at the hermitage as Franciscan Brothers, will be inadequate. Like falling in love, it cannot be really explained. God has planted in us something we call a vocation to this way of life. We know deep within ourselves, no other options life has to offer, no matter how attractive they be, will never be satisfying, except this. Like falling in love, we have found at last, a way of life whose only purpose is the priority of our intimacy with God.

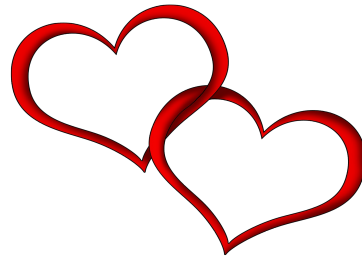


This deep longing for God is central, and in Christ we see the perfect expression of God's longing and love for us.

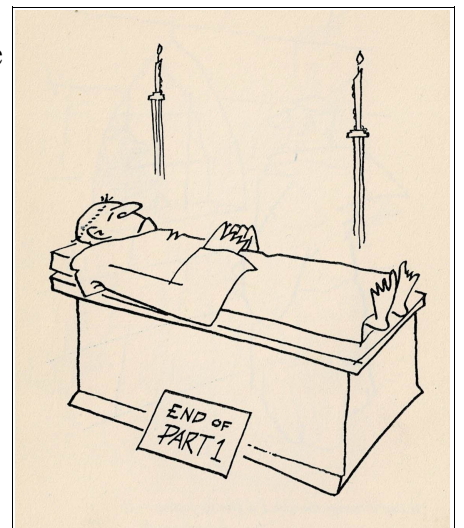
To facilitate this, the whole day is structured around times of prayer set apart through the rhythm of the day. The life and teaching of Jesus informing our meditation and activities.

BEYOND ROMANCE

We may begin with romance but for the relationship to grow, we need commitment. Over time we develop a deep sense of how profound, how costly, is not our love for God, but God's love for us! Our faithfulness to this relationship is in our times of prayer and silence, found in the rhythm of worship for each day.



Whatever life may confront us with, Jesus has promised to never leave us, he is the one certainty in our lives we can trust to the end. In health and in sickness, the different challenges we face are complex and will be different in youth, middle-age and for the latter years. There are times of spiritual joy but there can also be when we experience the sense of the absence of God. Also lethargy can creep in on our part. From day to day the pressure to get things done and the demands that face us daily, means we have to set our times of prayer as a priority. When we fall we get up again and again, until we come to the end of the road and take our last breath.



HELP IS AT HAND

We have Jesus as our loving shepherd and guide. In his wisdom he has not left us alone on this journey, but given us Brothers to support and enrich us as our companions on the journey. The three of us have now been here at the hermitage for 35 years, beginning even much earlier than that as members of a larger Franciscan community.

A common observation made by those who know us, as we laugh and tease each other, is how different we are, but also how we value each other in that difference. Our social backgrounds, family circumstances, education, interests, skill-sets, and personal temperaments, vary enormously. This is a source of great strength in the way we work and live together. But our differences can also be a challenge too, in our personal development and spiritual life.

Most importantly Our Lord has given us the inspiration of St. Francis' life; in particular the simple but profound set of principles he wrote for 3 or at the most 4 of his brothers living in a hermitage – St Francis Rule Living in Hermitages.

FINALLY; INTIMACY WITH GOD

There are two important elements in what intimacy with God means for us and are equally important.



A Brother fencing on the property

1 Every activity within the Hermitage, be it washing-up, care for the tools in the workshop, management of the bees, the sheep and goats, our community prayer times, appreciating the natural beauty of the place, our relationship with each other; all are infused with Christ's values and a daily challenge.



Extra feed for pregnant ewes

2 The disciples of Jesus are scattered throughout the nations of the world. They face complex and vastly different situations from experiencing oppression and persecution to living with abundance in affluent countries. Therefore, their challenge in discipleship varies enormously. Our part in this is to witness that God is to be 'loved for himself.' Jesus said: *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and all your mind and all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment."* The priority of prayer, meditation on the life and teaching of Christ, is the path and key to do this.

OUR COMMUNITY PRAYER:

Father, in your love for us, when we were still far off, you met us in your Son. Dying and living, He declared your love and brought us home. Come Holy Spirit, help us to respond to this love; by offering the Liturgy of the Hours and our times of prayer with attention and devotion; by our love and care for each other; in all that we do today. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our merciful Saviour and Friend. Amen.

HANDSOME



No! not the one in the Franciscan habit

What a journey! For one aging Brother a 6 hour trip is a challenge, but a 14 hour trip is a nightmare, but this is what was required to purchase a Wiltshire Horn Ram after an extensive search to find one.

Why was it so difficult to find a ram? Wiltshire Horn sheep are still a rare breed in Australia, and breeding them is still the preserve of enthusiasts. Like the rest of the country, we experienced a three-year drought and most farmers were forced to destock their properties. Now, after good rains, we are experiencing our best season in decades, and like others who are able, we have been on the lookout for stock to rebuild our small flock, subject to availability and price of sheep. Prices have soared. By good fortune we found the right person who had a ram we really liked, and at the right price. Fourteen hour road-trip or not, we decided to go.

The plan was to travel one day, rest and meet the owner the next day, and return home on the third day. Besides talking about our common interests in the breed, we needed to work out the logistics of getting the ram into our ute, and how early we could collect him on the morning of departure.

That was the plan, but road-trips provide their own surprises. When we returned to the

inexpensive motel we were staying at we found our luggage outside our rooms! Exhausted by the long trip we discovered a mistake had been made in our booking – for one night, not two – and no rooms were available for a second night. So, off we set to find alternative accommodation! The first motel we tried looked rather upmarket, but to our surprise was cheaper than the one we had stayed at (where in one of the rooms the shower did not work and the reading light didn't work). In the new accommodation the rooms were much bigger and “everything worked.”

Early on the third morning, just after sunrise, we collected our ram and headed home. Why Handsome? We had discussed all sorts of names for our addition to the flock, but on first sight both the Brothers exclaimed how handsome he was – hence the name.

STOP; APPRECIATE; NEVER taken for GRANTED.

This year we celebrate 35 years here at the hermitage. In the beginning there were few who supported us in our journey and vocation, but over the years this network has extended and strengthened. Something to; *stop, appreciate and never to be taken for granted.* Among so many diverse friends, it's hard to single out any person or group.



When we first came here, we resolved to develop ways to support ourselves financially and producing honey was the first of those endeavours.

Soon afterwards we began making jam and marmalade to sell as well.

Parishes have a “stand alone identity.” This is realised by people who are committed to the vision and ministry of their parish. To these people we wish to express our gratitude, not only for your support in selling our produce over many years, but just for who you are. The photo below shows one of the many deliveries to parishes in Grafton and the Brisbane Diocese.



No! not pizza delivery, but jams, marmalade & honey

ROAD WORKS

After torrential rain early in the year, and terrible floods that left many in the Northern Rivers homeless, and destroying their businesses, we escaped that sort of catastrophe. Nonetheless we had other challenges, with trees over fences, and more importantly, severe erosion of our access road especially the bottom end which is steep and more susceptible to washing out. This road is one and a half kilometres long and is our lifeline to the outside world and access to supplies for the livestock and ourselves.

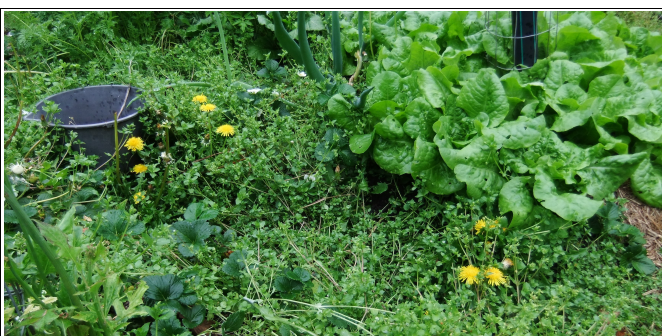
After many delays and complications due to the weather, we eventually obtained six truck loads of road base material. This material is then loaded into our trailer by hand and delivered to various strategic points where the erosion is most severe. A key in good road maintenance is keeping the gutters clean, but like painting the harbour bridge, you never quite finish.



It just takes one shovel at a time!

REVITALISING THE GARDEN

After the big wet season our food-garden looked more like a swamp! The vegetables had rotted and the soil was too water logged to plant any seeds. On drying out the first thing was an abundance of weeds. This was a good thing, because the roots of the weeds aerate the soil. All the nutrients they took from the soil could be harvested to feed the soil, by returning them back to the garden. Very gradually and slowly the process of colonising the garden again with vegetables is in progress.



Bush Telegraph

We are dependent on the good will of others to pass it on, photocopy it and financially support us. 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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We are a recognised Contemplative Religious Order in the Anglican Church.