



The Franciscan Times

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HELPING MEMBERS OF
THE THIRD ORDER OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. FRANCIS SHARE
THEIR COMMON JOURNEY THROUGH NEWS FROM
FELLOWSHIPS AND INDIVIDUALS, REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND
TAPES, POETRY, STORIES, ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS,
MEDITATIONS, GRAPHICS, AND WHATEVER THE HOLY SPIRIT
MIGHT BLOW OUR WAY.

Spring 1999

Touched By God: Reflections on a Franciscan Quest

by Peter Funk

In one way or another, we are touched by God; through associations with people, through our readings, seeing, hearing, interior listening, and by our feelings. Often I reflect in astonishment that, through God's graciousness, I am where I am, from being an agnostic, perhaps even a deist. As a combat Marine in World War II in the South Pacific, I came home troubled and melancholy. In the war I lost not only a brother whom I loved, but also many friends.

Settled in civilian life, Mary and I believed in the importance of setting an example for our children. Consequently, I went to church and served in various capacities. God touched me. An important event for me happened when I met Paul Moore, the future Bishop of New York and future Bishop Protector of the Society of St. Francis. A group of us from our church went to the torn-apart inner city of Jersey City to help refurbish the young priest's rectory and church. Paul had been a combat marine. We had something important in common.

Through Paul, I met Fr. Joseph, an Anglican Franciscan and founder of the Ameri-

*Mary & Peter Funk at
his 1998 Ordination to
the Diaconate*

can Greyfriars. My first session with Fr. Joseph intrigued me. I knew only a bit about St. Francis and was totally unaware of a Franciscan Order in the Episcopal Church. The headquarters, Little Portion Friary and the convent of the Poor Clares, were located on twenty acres donated by Br. Stephen's family in Mount Sinai, Long Island.

Through Paul I also met a young priest, Kim Myers. At one point he and Paul courageously stepped between two violent gangs, preventing a bloody battle. I wrote an article about this for *Faith Today*. Later Kim became Bishop of California and Regional Protector of the Society of St. Francis.

Innumerable people, either in depth or fleetingly, as well as my studies became the various touches of God.

In the 1950s I founded and published

Faith Today magazine. A pioneering effort, it became one of the first truly ecumenical publications and the only religious magazine sold at major newsstands. We had superb international writers. Due to lack of financing, I stopped *Faith Today*. With seven children to support, I took a

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Father Joseph, SSF Founder in America & The Right Reverend Paul Moore, Bishop Protector (The Little Chronicle, November 1969)

waited for you for supper." No sense of reproof lay in his words, only a kind of sadness and wondering. Franciscan courtesy highlighted my discourtesy. How thoughtless of me! Consumed by my own anxiety. I'd given no thought to their schedule and my obligation to be on time. I made profuse apologies.

"Father Joseph would like to talk to you. He's injured his leg and so he stays in his office where he listens to the services." Vladimir led the way.

Impressions: A sturdy figure lying in bed. White hair and thick white eyebrows. Strongly handsome face with prominent finely shaped nose. Brown eyes search me, not severely but wanting to know me. I found humor and kindness reflected in them.

Father Joseph was a scholar of the Anglican Church and may have influenced the revision of the Prayer Book we use today. Singlehandedly he created the *Anglican Breviary* and *The People's Missal*, both based on similar Roman Catholic texts. It was an enormous and magnificent undertaking. As Father Joseph explained, the Prayer Book Offices cannot be celebrated if one stuck to the '29 *Book of Common Prayer* in the sense of doing no more than what is ordered. "In other words, the Prayer Book Rite must be treated as an apocated (shortened) liturgy, for that is precisely what it is." The Breviary and the Missal fulfilled this need.

He dismissed my apologies for my rudeness with a gracious wave of his hand. We reviewed our first meeting and he questioned what I had in mind. After talking a while, he suggested that Vladimir show me to my room. At nine o'clock I'd attend Compline.

Vladimir would be with me. At the time I didn't know that office, as it's not in the '29 *Book of Common Prayer*.

That evening, Br. Vladimir accompanied me to the Visitor's Gallery. Below us, the brothers faced one another, their quiet voices filling the chapel. I felt a sense of peace. When the office ended, the room was darkened abruptly and the brothers pulled the hoods of their habits over their heads. "Put out the light," Vladimir whispered urgently. Since this was my first time, I had no idea of the customary practice, and in my zeal I nearly yanked the cord from the ceiling. The "Great Silence" began.

My room was a narrow cell. A bed with a cross over it, desk, bureau, and chair comprised the furnishings. That night I dreamt I'd died and could see myself in the coffin. Suddenly I sprang out of it. It was such a wondrous dream of new birth, I knew that all would be well, even the huge debt I'd incurred with *Faith Today*.

Touched By God (cont.)

job as a sales manager of a mutual fund, while writing novels in whatever time was left over.

During this period I experienced a growing yearning to "know" God. My weekly church activities did not fulfill me with whatever I sensed I lacked. An interior odyssey developed into a search for the heart of God—a desire that's difficult to express for it comes from a source deeper than words. It is an instinctive longing to merge your life with God so totally that you will be made "one body with Christ, that he may dwell in us and we in him." So often such words slip past us, and we really do not understand their possibilities. I didn't know that I was in search of the Society of St. Francis.

In 1961 I mulled over a possible story that might be written around Little Portion. I called Fr. Joseph and arranged a weekend visit. Following a business luncheon in New York—my luncheon companion thought my adventure sounded weird—I drove to Long Island. As I drove, somehow...somehow I sensed a sharpening awareness that this weekend would have a profound, life-changing effect. In what way? I didn't know. I worried. Felt a chill. Then it seemed as if a strange magnetic force began misdirecting me. Inexplicably I made wrong turns. Became lost. Finally arrived in Port Jefferson, a few minutes drive from Little Portion. Expected at the monastery by 5:30, I decided they wouldn't miss me, and so I ate supper in town.

I recall driving into the circular driveway. Lengthening evening shadows mystically encircled the white building and the railed bell tower with the tall cross. The time was a little after seven. Parking the car, I sighed. Climbing the steps to the front door, I pulled at the bell.

The door opened. A slender brother in a gray habit greeted me. "I'm Vladimir. I'm the Guest Master. We

The following day I met many of the brothers Mary and I learned to treasure as friends. Those who were there at the time included: Stephen, Leo, Dunstan, Mark Francis, Luke, Lawrence, and Paul. I also came to know the redoubtable Reverend Mother Mary Catherine of the Poor Clares.

I used the library, asked questions and cherished the periods of silence throughout the day and during meals. We celebrated the traditional seven offices of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones combined with Vespers, and finally Compline. Generally silence was kept until about 10 a. m. (Today at the friary the routine is different and simplified. For example, silence is kept after Compline until breakfast is completed and four offices from the prayer book are offered.)

Emerging from the overarching quiet of the monastery into my loving, rollicking, noisy family of seven children was like plunging into the wild maelstrom of the New York subway at commuting time. I felt immediately guilty knowing how much Mary would have enjoyed my experience. This would come later.

I kept in touch, learned about the Third Order. Without

Cover of Peter's 1983 Book, High Spirits, With him and Mary and their 8 Children, 1 Horse, and 2 Dogs

joining, I experimented with its Rule-of-Life. During this period I came under heavy stress. With the demanding job as a mutual fund sales manager I traveled half of my time around the country as well as trying to be a full-time writer, getting to bed late and up at 4 a.m. plus running a kind of farm. I felt dissatisfied in my work for I wanted more time to write. Even though I began to be successful, I didn't feel confident enough to go full time. Writing is a hazardous way for most people to earn a living, especially when supporting a large family.

The apparently safe approach became the hazardous one. In 1965 I was diagnosed with terminal intestinal cancer, following which I'd acquired a violent case of hepatitis C from a transfusion. God had to give me a hard push to get me back on my path of life. The mutual fund company summarily fired me when it learned of my illness. Mary said "Good...! Now you can get to your writing."

I became a postulant in the Third Order, reporting to Fr. Stephen who was in charge of the Third Order, and I was professed in 1967. At that time New Jersey had a fellowship with about seven or eight of us including Ed Warner who now lives in Georgia and Claudia Gammon who is still in New Jersey. Later we met with John Scott's lively group in Philadelphia.

As hard as it is to believe now, in those days we Tertiaries took religious names. Ed Warner, for example, was Fr. Polycarp John. I was Peter Bernard: Peter for the disciple and Bernard for Bernard of Clairvaux whom I admired. Underneath our clothing we all wore small scapulars and, when we put them on each morning, we recited Francis's prayer, "Here O Lord in this church..."

At our New Jersey meetings we wore a black cassock, a large gray scapula over the cassock and a gray yarmulka. However, as some people began "playing games" at being religious, these unnecessary outer symbols were quite correctly dumped.

In 1968 the American Grayfriars merged with the world-wide Anglican Society of St. Francis with its roots in India. We became the American Province. Now whether priest, deacon or lay brother, all were called Brother or Sister. To help restructure our province, a group of First Order brothers and Third Order members gathered. The invaluable John Scott and others represented the Tertiaries. In contrast to the Roman Church, the Third Order would eventually grow to have its own Minister Provincial and Novice Directors (later Formation Directors) rather than be under the aegis of the First Order.

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and visit with them. The hospitality exhibited by our Mexican brothers and sisters was outstanding; one whole evening was organized around a shared evening meal. One of our group put it quite well: the spirit in the more remote churches was most moving and generally deeper than elsewhere. We even learned about some of the deeply-rooted, pre-Spanish customs woven into the services.

There was even time to tour the pyramids at Teotihuacan, the exquisite Templo Mayor (Tenochtilan), archeological ruins excavated within the last twenty years in the center of Mexico City, the main archeological museum, and to re-master the metro and bus system which is less hectic than I recall from twenty years ago when I was last in Mexico.

I very much enjoyed returning to a country where I once lived for three years and returning to the Spanish-speaking congregation of San Jorge where my own vocation developed. I loved reviving my Spanish language skills, seeing former friends, and being a whole family with my First Order brothers and sister. It was also a real treat to visit two of our four Third Order members who live in Mexico.

True, we did miss interacting more with the seminary students and learning from them, but, when we return at the Bishop's invitation in Advent 2000, perhaps we can remedy that shortcoming.

Tales of Franciscan Travels

Novice Mission to Mexico 1999

Anita Catron, Provincial Minister

For ten days this last March, a group of Franciscans—Brothers Tom, Clark and Guire (SSF novice), Sister Pamela Clare, and I—were invited to do a preaching/teaching mission in the Diocese of Mexico. The Right Reverend Sergio Carranza, Bishop of the Diocese of Mexico, and Father Vincent Schwahn, Dean of the Seminary of San Andres, organized the nine church engagement. The goal was to share our personal Franciscan journeys, describe the whole Society of St. Francis, give homilies, and learn about Mexican Anglican spirituality—all in Spanish. The churches where we went ranged from small mission churches in outlying areas to large congregations in Mexico City. A few of the Anglican churches were over 100 years old. In general, the Diocese of Mexico is growing.

Perhaps we gained more than we offered. We found the Mexican congregations to be very welcoming, friendly, inquisitive, and open to the idea of "Anglican" religious orders. One of the most rewarding experiences took place when we accompanied a priest to the homes of two sick parishioners to pray

All Franciscans are Travelers

Nancy Roberts Hamner

(additional observations by Dr. Paul Garland who was stationed in Saudi Arabia for a number of years while working in their hospitals)

This past winter I was lucky enough to spend Christmas with my son and his family in Saudi Arabia and New Years with my daughter Laura and her family in Hong Kong. I have six children scattered from Alabama to Michigan to California to Arabia to Hong Kong. What a way to spend the holidays!

Christmas in Saudi Arabia during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan is an amazing experience. To hear the cannon go off at sundown ending the day long fast and listen to the Imam's haunting call to prayer from the many mosques is something I will never forget. The coinciding of Christmas and Ramadan rarely happens, and you feel the tension. [Paul. *The tension is very real because: (1) the Saudis are stressed due to their fasting and abstinence from water during the daylight hours and their very late night socializing causing a lack of sleep; (2) during this special holy month of Ramadan, foreigners are watched very carefully to be sure they do not eat, smoke, or drink in*

public during the fasting hours; and (3) any overt recognition, practice, or celebration of any religion other than Islam is strictly forbidden and is punishable by imprisonment, expulsion, or worse. Non-Muslim religious proselytizing (as interpreted by them) is punished by death. Moreover, because of the Saudi interpretation of the Sharia (the Islamic Law) non-muslims may not even speak in their own defense in court.]

My family and I were able to go to church and celebrate the holy days, but not openly (in fact, I had to print a copy of morning prayer and bring it into the country as just personal papers. Bibles, prayer books or anything not Muslim are not permitted and would be confiscated.) We attended church in a school gym [Paul. Probably in a closely guarded, usually walled, Western residential compound where the Matawa—the religious police—are not very active.]

A family close by had a life-size manger scene set up in their walled back yard, and it was available for families to visit to feel the spirit of the season. Behind closed doors most Christian homes had manger scenes, Christmas trees, candy, and cookies, and presents overflowing. The children could even go to a certain house and have their picture taken sitting on Santa's lap.

One evening at sunset we drove with a group of friends far out into the desert and, around a massive campfire, roasted hot dogs and marshmallows. What could be more glorious than to sit under desert stars hanging like jewels in the night sky and sing to the Christ child. Oddly enough, in that land that rejects

Christ as savior I felt his presence in so many ways. I felt him on the streets of the cities and saw him in the faces of Arabian men dressed in their long white robes and in the happy faces of the children playing in the parks under the watchful eyes of mothers completely covered in black robes and veils. I woke to doves cooing under the eaves among the bougainvillea vines and thought that Christ must have awakened to doves like these two thousand years ago.

A few days after Christmas I left Arabia and spent two weeks in Hong Kong with my daughter Laura and her family. I had spent Christmas there in 1994 and during that visit was thrilled with the Christmas lights that made Hong Kong harbor breathtaking. This time there were few decorations to celebrate the season. The malls had giant Christmas trees and the shops were somewhat festive, but nothing like I remembered. I was told that it was probably a combination of the transfer of Hong Kong to China and a flagging economy. Four years ago Hong Kong's six to eight million were approximately 10% Christian. It may be lower now.

I was anxious to visit an Anglican church and found St. Johns on Hong Kong's main island. This beautiful old church sits among the lush foliage of huge banyan and palm trees right in the middle of skyscrapers. The Sunday I visited they had eight services scheduled—one was in Mandarin, one in Tagalog (Filipino), and the rest in English. The Tagalog is for the thousands of Filipino "amahs" (maids and nannies) that work for the more affluent families. Most live year after year in one tiny room in the home or apartment of their employers.

They send money back to the Philippines to support their own families. These women, both young and middle-aged, meet on the main island every Sunday to go to church and to visit with their friends. Most are Christian and predominately Roman Catholic. After church they spread their lunches on every available space on streets, sidewalks, parks, and walkovers. I waded through this sea of chattering women, food, and gossip, their sweet high-pitched voices sounding like so many singing birds.

The Sunday before I left, I visited my daughter's father-in-law's mission in the bar of the Hong Kong airport hotel. Dr. Barrett and his wife Lynn have kept up this ministry of 15 years. The bar is closed on Sunday mornings, and with the wine lists covered with pictures of the Christ child, it made a perfect chapel.

During the service a Chinese woman spoke of her stay in Beijing while attending university. She visited several Protestant churches over a number of months—the Chinese Christian church is sanctioned by the government. She was so touched by the

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T S S F Publications

The Principles of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis for Daily Reading (\$2.50)

Order of Admission (\$1)

Spiritual Director Guide (\$2.50)

Statutes (\$1)

Devotional Companion (\$4.50)

Way of St. Francis (\$2.50)

Source Book (\$2.50)

Directory (\$3)

(all are available from Dee Dobson

4001 S.W. 5 Terrace, Miami FL 33134-2040)

Touched By God (cont.)

At that time Br. Paul, the first Minister Provincial, suggested I become the Novice Director. As Director I wrote 30 formation letters outlining the different elements of the Franciscan life of a tertiary. These letters would be given to the postulants and novices each month during the 30 months of regular reporting to a counselor.

About this time, the inimitable Br. Robert Hugh, Novice Director of the First Order, happily burst into Mary's and my life. Either, he visited us on our farm, or I would travel to Little Portion. He was my constant and always loving guide. For us he exemplified the Franciscan way of life. In my book *High Spirits*, the story of our life on the farm, there's a chapter about him.

"We also told Robert about our fir trees, and that we'd just placed an advertisement in the local papers stating that people could pick out their own trees, which we would cut for them. It seemed to be an easy way for Mark and Paul to earn money.

"What a splendid idea," Robert said. "I'm sure it will be a success."

However the boys didn't agree with us. They didn't think much of the trees and particularly disparaged the Austrian pines. "Who's going to want a funny-looking tree like that for Christmas?"...

People stopped by, but no trees were sold.

"We told you so," the boys said, discouraged and ready to give up.

"Show me the trees," Robert said after lunch.

Wearing sandals without socks and a heavy, olive-gray sweater he kept on, inside the house and out, he trudged through the snow with Mark and Paul, surveying our stock. With his kindly face, mellifluous voice and a—since reduced—substantial waist, he reminded us of an unfrocked Santa Claus. "You have some splendid trees," he said. "They make fine Christmas trees."

Soon a car drew up and a family asked about the trees.

"What kind are you looking for?" Robert asked.

They described what they thought they would like to have.

Robert thought a bit. "I think we have just what you want." And he led them out among the rows of trees. The people delighted with what they found.

The boys caught his knack of encouraging customers to describe the kind of tree they wanted and then walking out with them to search for just that tree. The afternoon turned out to be far more successful than Mark or Paul had thought it could be.

As we reviewed our list of activities, at least the Christmas tree operation seemed worth continuing. "Thanks to Brother Robert," Mary added.

Peter as "Novice Master" of the Third Order in 1969

Eventually overwhelmed by the many formation reports I received, the Order decided to add counselors. Marie Webner became the first one. She was an indefatigably valuable help, having many good ideas. Gradually others were added until we had about ten of us. The Order grew.

Many people helped in different ways. What would we have done without Helen Webb, who not only played the piano at our Chapter and other meetings, but also acted as Secretary to the Third Order. In addition she typed and proofed my letters, offering suggestions. Dee Dobson played an essential role in shaping our Order's destiny. And she's still a mighty force.

Sometimes the friary would send us young First Order brothers not yet professed who needed some motherly love, of which Mary has an abundance. We remember one 18 year-old who spent the weekend in bed reading comics. We had delightful visits with Joel and Jeremy and worried about them when they left the Order. They seemed so vulnerable. Stephen visited us and I put him to work helping to cultivate our Christmas tree farm. I nicknamed him Mighty Magoo, and he'd burst out in stuttering, happy laughter when I'd call out to him: "Hey, Mighty Magoo, are you feeding enough manure to those young trees?"

I remember so well the English Brother Geoffrey and his radiant smile and sound advice. As the Minister General he visited us one weekend with Br. Philip, his

secretary, and Robert Hugh when we discussed Third Order matters. He suggested that a person cannot travel when burdened down with things. Mary and I felt overburdened then and we still do. Geoffrey's helpful booklet, *The Way of St Francis*, is still available and given to each new postulant as part of *The Basics*.

Yes, the Society of St. Francis has changed. But the change is outward only. Its inner essence remains the same. The Society of St. Francis has done much to help shape Mary's (who also was professed) and my life as we continue to search for God within and without.

Mary and I pray that, with the Lord's loving touches, through the warm dark mysteries of faith that our circle of love will be widened and deepened as we continue our odyssey through the warm dark mysteries of faith.

(Christmas tree story excerpted from *High Spirits*, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1983: 172-3)

1999 Convocation Information Thus Far

- **Southeast:** 9/10-12, Ignatius House (Atlanta GA). Contact Michael Shrewsbury (San Damiano Fellowship).
- **Western:** 8/13-15, The Angela Center (Santa Rosa CA). Contact Joan Kidd.
- **Midwestern:** 8/20-22, Divine Word International (Techney IL). Contact Thomas Janiec.
- **Northern Mountains and Plains (NE-WY):** 7/15-17, (Hastings NE). Crosier Center. Contact Betty Wood.
- **South Central:** 5/14-16, St. Crispin's (Wewoka, OK). Contact Sue Heinsohn.
- **Northeastern:** 8/27-29, Graymoor Friary (Garrison NY). Contact Diana Finch or Lynn Herne.
- **Southwest:** 6/4-6, Canossian Spirituality Center (Albuquerque NM). Contact Becky Thomson.
- **So. California:?** Contact Wai Wah Hillam.
- **Order of Ecumenical Franciscans:** 7/8-11, Palatine Renewal Center, St. Louis MO. Contact Fred Ball.

CONVOCAION NOTES ATTENTION CONVENER:

The Franciscan Times will reach interested and/or isolated tertiaries in your region (and elsewhere) who might make plans to attend your gathering. Advance notice and a name of a person to contact will be helpful to them. Please send the details. to:

R. John Brockmann TSSF,

P.O. Box 277, Warwick, MD 21912-0277.

Deadline for the Fall issue is October 15, 1999

Proclaim the Year of God's Favour:

A 1999 Prayer and Study Guide to Prepare for the Millennium and Jubilee 2000

A 50-page guide to help the Brothers and Sisters of the Society of St. Francis prepare for the new millennium through a year of prayer in the spirit of the biblical Jubilee is now available (courtesy of Brothers Justus and Colin Wilfred of New Zealand) on the World Wide Web at the following address: <http://www.societystfrancis.org/newpage22.htm>. The various aspects of Jubilee are divided over the months, and each of the 12 section includes: a thematic verse for the month; various biblical readings; discussion questions; a piece of Francis's writings appropriate to the month's theme; and a final prayer of thanksgiving or intercession. There is also an introduction and short bibliography. Our hope is that those with Internet access could download and print sufficient copies for those without access in each fellowship and for isolated tertiaries..

Trinity Sunday, 1974

Terry Rogers

Green for the Holy Trinity

Three stars full of gold-green light

Blessing our garden party

Oh, the blossoms hurt my memories

The stars hurt my eyes;

My senses are stiffened, bolted into place,

Trying to die, to become dry branches

The Trinity is too green for me, too alive,

Too bending in blossom

Too starry a sky.

She's only afraid, that's all;

Afraid of turning into a flowering vine with infinite green surfaces,

Too delicate, too swimming in life.

The Trinity is too alive.

Oh nothing dear can kill

And that's the fear.

The sun too is a star—the heat of June celestial fire.

Oh warming scarlet flame, blue dusky flame

Of burning death, this is intense enough to hold me all around

Orange, pink, the hearth of every night,

My heart held in baptism,

Forever making soft ashes of all my wooden words.

Oh blessed Trinity.

All Franciscans are Travelers (cont.)

crowds that came and by their desire to know Christ. They came in such numbers that the congregation spilled over into the courtyard no matter what the weather. Some rose before dawn and traveled long distances in order to get to the early service. There is a great need, she said, for Chinese Bibles. Later I found out that there is an organization called Amity Foundation that prints several million Bibles a year. They recommend that Bibles be gotten to the Chinese people through this organization. The government will let them be distributed through the churches, but does not like Bibles being smuggled in. And while the government has recently eased the repression of religious freedoms, this could change, the woman said, at any moment.

I was so happy to return to my beloved Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Alabama, and thank God for the freedom we have to worship here. Still I did find the Holy Spirit in unexpected places and found that a high school gym or a bar can be quite holy places. I came back renewed and full of the Spirit.

The Center

Gerald Sevick (excerpted from The Living Church with appended AngFran-L Discussion)

In a post a few weeks ago Richard mentioned the disillusion of the Church's middle. I think this is an important issue as we look at the dynamics of conflict, resolution, and healing. This loss of the Center and the implications of that loss must be explored if we are to move away from the secular model of constituency politics and tactics and embrace a more faith-filled approach to conflict, confrontation, and the issues that divide. I want to begin with stating what I believe the Center is not and then mention four factors I believe define what the Center is:

1. The Center is not "the middle". Those in the Center do not stand between two opposing sides looking one direction and then another. The Center is not the place between two positions.
2. The Center is not a group of people with no position on whatever issue is presented for discussion. One often finds the Center depicted as having no boundaries, or at least not knowing where to stand. This depiction is not true.
3. The Center is not a confused lot waiting to have someone explain what is going on.
4. Lastly, the Center is not that group of fence setters waiting to see which way the wind blows. Those

"fence sitters" are an altogether different group from the true Center.

I believe the Center to be a dynamic and vital position in the Church. People often see the issues the church faces as having two legitimate positions. The Center needs to be recognized (and reassert itself) as a valid position in the Church and not the place where the non-thinkers, confused, or apathetic live.

So how might we begin to define the Center? The Center holds that:

1. Living the Christian life means living in paradox. The Christian Faith is one which is strongest when the tensions of the Spiritual life (to gain life one must loose it; to receive one must give, to be first one must be last) are allowed their tension. Those in the Center

Gerald Sevick

not only acknowledge this tension but embrace it with great joy. This means that the extremes of the church not only have a place in the church but play an important part in growth and change.

2. The Church is at her best when she does not seek to change minds but rather to convert through the Gospel of agape love. The Center is neither hesitant about change, nor too frightened to face the conflict that comes when the Church has extreme differences in positions. The issue is not change or growth but the manner with which we bring about change and growth. How this happens says as much about us as the change or growth we are seeking.

4. Conversion/change/growth (mine/theirs) is seen as holy and healthy when it stems from a process that considers the implications and precedents established and the health of the soul of the individual and the church with each step.
5. Conversion/change/growth (mine/theirs) is partly the ability to allow the other side of an issue a place that is honored and valued. There is danger for the body when one part holds that another part has nothing valuable to say, teach or contribute to the Church. Those in the Center believe that the truth spoken must not be cast aside because it seems irrelevant or an unwarranted complication.

To stand in the Center is to listen for the Christian values and truths that are essential for the Church's mission and ministry from all sides of an issue. The Center hears the voices of the many sides and wishes to honor the truth they hold and allow them a place to exist in the church. For those in the Center, to join a side means that the truth heard from the opposing side is to some degree discounted if not totally lost.

During the past two decades or more it has been increasingly difficult to claim the Center as a legitimate position in the Church. Today, the Center is depicted as having nothing valid to say to the issues the church and society face. The Center is explained away by defining it as peopled by those who want the church to be a "no conflict zone". Due to this image of the Center the call from the "left" and "right" is to join a side or get out of the way.

This is exactly what many previously in the Center have done—joined a side or gotten out of the way. Those seeking to win the day have identified the Center as the group to "convince" and "win". The Center is seen as the "neutrals", the undecided constituency that must be brought over to the correct side. This perspective sees the Center as static, unwilling or unable to make a decision. This perspective sees and gives no value to the Center as a position one may honorably and faithfully take. I think that the incredible thing is that the Center began to believe it also. The entire Church has come to see the Center as an invalid place to stand. Paradox is not valued in discussions. There is no place for dialectic thinking. The Center is a moral and faithful place to stand, but we have not communicated that reality in any way.

We are willing to jettison one value in order to maintain another. The Center has lost its place in the dialogue. The message that there is something holy to be discovered in the tension and paradox of the issues has first been ignored then discounted as irrelevant and finally rejected.

I think that the Center may have been living with a couple of misconceptions. The first is that the extremes will "burn out" if given enough time. There is a "wait it out" attitude. The second is an assumption that the Church has never completely "gone over the edge," therefore it never will.

There may also have been the belief that God would not let the tactics of the extremes cause the destruction of the Church as she now exists. There are those in the Center who are beginning to understand the extent to which the various sides will go in order to win. These groups, using secular political tactics, have taken hold of the agenda, the process, and the microphone.

At conventions, resolutions are proposed for the purpose of identifying the battle lines ("Whose side are you on?"). The Center is told that one has to vote for one side or the other. So, because one does "lean" toward one side or the other, a side is taken. This is done knowing that damage has been done to their own set of values and that they are giving up the truth they hear from the opposite side. A vote is taken, a side wins, and the Center is negated or lost.

We elect people based upon the side they are on. This means that someone in the Center rarely will be elected because his or her answer will not convey a clear stand on one side or the other. Or they will attempt to give the "other side" a place in the dialogue. Bishops are expected to have a constituency they speak for rather than a diocese they pastor and lead. We must be able to "politically identify" all the players.

In our society and Church if one wants to be unpopular one only need stand and speak as a part of the Center. To seek the truth and honor the value each side holds will not only result in unpopularity but will also place you outside the dialogue.

I believe that this response has damaged and continues to damage the Church. The Center did not speak up and exert itself in a timely manner. We have not yet recognized the full extent of the damage that ridding ourselves of the Center has done. Maybe once we recognize the damage we can begin to acknowledge that the Center is not an impediment to change or a means of maintaining the status quo but a vital way the Holy Spirit works within the Church.

The Center is seen as doing nothing because what the Center does best is not valued. The Center does not take the various sides and attempt to meld them into a single whole, doing away with the integrity of each side. The Center holds on for dear life to the faithful truths spoken and the Christian values expressed from the various sides. The Center does not want to do away with the extremes because it is believed that the

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The Center (cont.)

extremes encourage us to learn and grow and help define who we are.

The Center does not embrace the truth while ignoring the lies and inconsistencies of each side. In order to "win" the many sides will allow some inconsistencies to exist in their arguments and approach. A faithful Center sees these and factors them into the equation.

Is it time for the Center to re-exert itself? Is it possible to begin saying, in a clear and loud voice, that the Center is a valid place to stand and that it might have some way out of the confusion we live in as a Church?

P.S. Franciscan spirituality seems to embrace the way of the Center. That may sound strange given that we often love to describe Francis in extremes, but I think that when one looks at his whole story, Francis was one who challenged and obeyed, rejoiced in life yet sought to deny himself so much. Francis was a paradox in so many ways. Each time we seek to define him we find other stories that define him from the other side. I think he was comfortable with the tension of the Center.

Gerry

My dear sisters and brothers,

As I read Gerry's article I heard myself. Yes, Gerry I sound just like you in many instances. Some of us are called to stand in the Center and hear both "sides." The exception for me, Gerry, is when we are confronted with issues of justice.

God commands us to love him and one another—so, when the issue is one of disenfranchising a brother or sister in any way—tune up the guitar, I'll grab my marchin' shoes and meet you in the park after work. When it comes to a Christian community, how can we (and I know some do) support the death penalty, crushing national debt (for any nation), partial rights for anyone, ethnic cleansing? I cannot, and I believe we as Christians ought not.

Joy Antonio

Dear Joy

Good point. I agree. And I do not think it sounded self-righteous to me. We are not talking about giving in or giving up by being in the Center. I believe the Center is about seeking change.

I think that each of us will find ourselves moving away from the Center at different times. I do not think the goal is to always stand in the Center (although I think we need to do so more than we do). The goal is that when we find ourselves moving out of Center we continue to honor and make room for those in the Center.

We must do more than just listen. In listening, the action we take can be informed by what we heard. To

hear both sides does not mean to be inactive. What I learn from listening tells me more about those I agree with and those I disagree with. It also explains to me just how far I need to go or how much work there is to do. I think that one can still listen to both sides and be out in the park with signs. The true Center does not stand around doing nothing.

The Center is active. I think that we have been told that to stand in the Center means passivity. We have been told that to live being the Center means to let other people do the work. I do not see this as true.

I think one can live in the Center and take a firm stand on the death penalty or support and work for social justice. The Collect for Richard Hooker speaks of working for comprehensiveness not compromise. I think this is part of what I see being at work in the Center.

Peace, Gerry

Dear Joy, dear Gerry,

Gerry, I read your article on the Center in The Living Church. I continue to be impressed by your effort to be comprehensive in classic Anglican style. But it seems that comprehensiveness breaks down when we get to what Joy calls "issues of justice." And I admire Joy's ability to sniff self-righteousness, even perhaps in herself! (That's probably the only place one should indulge in such sniffing!)

Having spent most of my life in the attempt to see Anglican comprehensiveness—indeed a truly Catholic synthesis—as the best way to justice, I am a bit suspicious of myself when my sense of justice is tickled. I don't want to say I will love everyone except when it comes to issues of justice. And I am deeply suspicious of my own animus about justice issues. It just seems too easy to claim that one's own issue is an "issue of justice," and to decline then to be critical of one's own position on the issue. It's too easy for many of us, including me, to be sure that God's justice agrees with me on my particular issue.

I've been involved in the Diocese of Atlanta in promoting something called "common ground dialogues" on issues of homosexuality and the Church. I find it excruciating when people accuse one another of being either homophobic or unbiblical. There is such a thing as homophobia, but often conservative Christians are not hateful to homosexual friends. They simply value what they see as the biblical "preferential option" for marriage and family life broadly understood. And Christians who are liberal on this issue are usually just as devoted to the Bible, attentive to the Word of God, prayerful, and faithful as anyone else. But because "justice is on my side," it is often easy for each side to condemn the other and decline to be in conversation.

One of the things I find hopeful about Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold is his contemplative streak, his eager seeking to be open to conversion through conversation. I don't get the sense from him that he is absolutely certain that it is only those who disagree with his position that will have to change in conversation. I feel he is open to his own conversion. And I hope I too am, —open to being converted ever more deeply into the truth of Christ, which is yet—and no doubt always will be in this life—further along than I have come.

Which also, Gerry, makes me quite leery of “the Center.” I think of Jesus and Francis as “extremists.” It certainly wasn't his sense of balance and devotion to paradox that got Jesus crucified. And Francis was, I think, genuinely devoted and obedient to the Pope—to Innocent III, for goodness sake!—without ever abandoning his radical openness to “the form of the holy Gospel.” I can't figure it out, but I appreciate it, and want to imitate that sort of radical discipleship in my own life. And I want my Church to do that, too.

Finally, the language of “the Center” is too much from the secular realm to be useful to me. It comes, I think, from the French Revolution, when different parties sat on “the left” and “the right” and in “the Center” of the National Assembly. Contemporary American political discourse tends to see the Center as a place of compromise. Now compromise is not a bad thing in many instances. But Jesus didn't let us “compromise” when he forced us to choose between God and Mammon. And I don't think he's going to let me compromise about faithfulness to God's commandments.

Paradox, on the other hand, is important, and I fear it gets lost in most conversations about justice, from left, right, or the Center. In conclusion, let me quote from Dom Helder Camara, a gentle extremist with love for enemies if ever there was one:

*Become an expert in the art
of discovering the good in every person.
Become an expert in the art
of finding the truthful core in views of every kind.
The human mind abhors total error.*

Pax et bonum, Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

Dear Gerry

Emmett expressed very well many of my own thoughts and reactions to “The Center.” Especially I admire the intent to be comprehensive, as well as uneasiness with the concept and nomenclature of “the Center.” All these spatial metaphors can be disorienting! I have enough trouble distinguishing the map from the territory to have to track my location vis a vis a Center! Moreover, all this talk about “extremism” gives me serious heartburn. One person's “extreme” is another person's “Center” and vice versa. It really begs a lot of

questions about who is making these maps and for what purpose.

Instead of accepting the old paradigm of position (left vs right) and trying to carve out a different location (Center), we need to rethink the whole rhetorical framework. Once you accept the “left vs. right” framework, I don't see how you can escape defining “the Center” as yet another constituency with a particular outlook, agenda, and political commitments. (And I don't think Gerry's article did escape that.) I have a way of thinking about this in terms of commitments, which avoids positioning oneself on a one- or two-dimensional theopolitical map. I'll try to put down some of these thoughts in another post.

The most disturbing section of the article for me was:

The Center does not embrace the truth while ignoring the lies and inconsistencies of each side. In order to “win,” the many sides will allow some inconsistencies to exist in their arguments and approach. A faithful Center sees these and factors them into the equation.

This seems to give those in the “Center” a privileged view of truth not available to the benighted “extremists.” What, we need to ask, are the “lies and inconsistencies” of “the Center?” (That's another way of saying, with Emmett, that we should doubt our own motives and perspectives as well as those of others.) “The extremists” in the article are a political caricature. In real life, real people live out their faith as best they can, with varying degrees of insight and blindness, courage and cowardice — this despite any political labels that others may attach to them or that they may attach to themselves.

Emmett is also right on with his comments about the uncompromising demands of the Gospel. Many of the things that we fight over in the church these days are not really paradoxical in the sense that Gerry seems to be using the word. They are decisions about states of affairs. You can say “God's love is free, and God's love demands all.” That's a paradox of faith. You can't say “The church will now ordain women, and the church will not now ordain women.” That's just nonsense. A decision has to be made between a finite number of possible states of affairs. When it comes to states of affairs, refusing to make a decision is tantamount to making a decision in favor of the status quo, so “the Center” insofar as it delays the making of decisions is not impartial, but always biased for the status quo.

I was really, really glad to see Gerry's response yesterday in which he talked about The Center as a place for seeking change. This activism of the Center did not come through very clearly in the article, at least for me. I'm afraid that, unlike Gerry, many in my circle of acquaintances who classify themselves as “centrists”

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The Center (cont.)

miss this point and want to keep on "dialoguing" and "seeing the truth in both sides" forever in lieu of making any painful changes to address injustices of which they are a part. You know, if the Anglicans and Lutherans want to dialogue for 30 years to reach a compromise on orders of ministry, that's one thing. If people now want to dialogue for 30 years on, say, whether gays can be first class citizens of the Kingdom, then I have to say, "No, sorry, time's about up. Where were you for the last 20 years? Arguing about the wording in the Prayer Book while people suffered?"

Fraternally, John Snyder

Dear Emmett

I think one problem is when we think individualistically. None of us will be in the Center all the time...some of us more than others. The Center is not the "correct" position, it is one of several that must be allowed a place in the issues we face. I do not advocate in the article that all of us should take Center ground in all things but that the Center is a valid place and can help the church move, grow and change. I say that the Center has a part to play in change just as much as the extremes play a part in it.

What I believe is that we have attempted to do away with the Center in order to push a particular agenda. I believe that the Center can play an important role in the church today. I do not advocate that we all stand in the Center at all times. I advocate giving the Center a place in discussion and in the change rather than saying "either you are with us or against us."

I have problems when I read that while the Center is all well and good, it should not apply to certain areas of life. The idea that the Center is an obstruction is what I think has caused the church to rip at itself.

We have to live as a community of faith. We have to live with those who agree with us and those who do not. The Center has a role to play in this. The Center is discounted when we would rather not live with "the other," or when winning is more important than conversion and growth.

Are there times when I would advocate extreme action? Yes, but I hope I would first have listened to those in the Center before taking such a course. The Church is a community with those on the right, those on the left, and those in the Center. They all play a part in conversion/change/growth.

Gerry

Dear John

You wrote:

This seems to give those in the "Center" a privileged view of truth not available to the benighted "extremists." What,

we need to ask, are the "lies and inconsistencies" of "the Center?"

This is correct. The Center is not meant to be the answer to the problem. The Center is a "player" in the community life of change and growth. Of course the Center will have the same weaknesses as any other "side", but that does not mean they that it has no value.

When it comes to states of affairs, refusing to make a decision is tantamount to making a decision in favor of the status quo, so "the Center" insofar as it delays the making of decisions is not impartial, but always biased for the status quo.

I do not see this as true. I know many who have pushed for decisions only to have us return over and over to the same issue because while an "official" decision was made no change actually took place. It took just as long if not longer than if the process had been allowed to work itself out and true change/conversion occur.

Our culture sees no value in process and discussion — therefore anyone advocating it is an obstructionist or an advocate for the status quo. Yes, decisions have to be made. That is not the issue. I am discussing the manner in which we as an entire community seek to make those decisions and whom we listen to and whom we ignore.

Peace, Gerry

Dear Brothers and Sisters

I've been giving a course titled "Jesus and His Relationships" and have come to see just how often Jesus broke through the cultural norms to be with those considered outside those norms, like the Samaritan woman at the well. He broke several norms that the righteous thought obligatory, accepting invitations to dine at Levi the tax collector's house among all the others who came from the excluded groups. I couldn't help wondering what his recently called disciples must have thought of this! When Jesus did go to the Synagogue and Temple, He often managed to upset the righteous, for example by healing on the Sabbath. (I guess that the righteous might have considered themselves to be the middle group—after all they weren't either Zealots or Essenes or Sadducees.)

Jesus did dine at the Pharisee's house and did not say anything about having been treated discourteously by not having been offered water to wash his feet until the Pharisee criticized him for allowing a woman to anoint him, a woman of bad reputation; only then did Jesus let his host know that he had noticed the discourtesy.

It has been a learning experience to look seriously at what Jesus chose to do, where he chose to be and with whom, rather than at what has come down to us of what he said and taught.

Muriel Adey

Prison Letters

Terry Rogers

I was talking on the phone to my friend Sam recently when a recording intruded on the phone line: "This is a call from the South Mississippi Correctional Institution." Neither of us paid these words any attention since we were used to hearing them. Sam is a middle-aged African American man who has been in a Mississippi prison since he was convicted of murder in 1982.

Sam maintains his innocence, and for years has carried on a wide and varied correspondence to seek encouragement, help, and prayers in his efforts to regain his freedom. I found his request in a peace magazine, and he and I have been regular correspondents for over ten years.

Corresponding with Sam has been a true blessing. At first it seemed silly to tell him of my day-to-day life, but my letters were always eagerly welcomed. Reflecting on the circumstances of his life has sometimes helped me put my own problems into perspective. His faith in God has remained strong through great suffering and disappointment, and I know we pray regularly for each other.

Jesus himself became a prisoner at the end of his life, and the Gospel always includes visiting the prisoner in its account of the fundamentally important activities that Christ expects of his followers. Many "visit the prisoners," but most of us are probably not called to do this. Yet, there are ways to become a prison visitor from outside, by writing to a prisoner.

To find someone in prison who has requested a correspondent, write to Jean Basinger, Criminal Justice Ministries, 1335 48th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50311.

Franciscans International Report

by Br. John George

Dear Sisters and Brothers

I am writing you today in my capacity as representative to Franciscans International. Franciscans International is the whole Franciscan movement's presence at the United Nations. It was constituted about ten years ago by the Ministers of the Major Roman Catholic Franciscan Communities, OFM, OFM Cap, OFM Conv, Clares and the Colettines, OSF (Third Order Regular) both men and women and SFO. They are organized with an office in New York and one in Geneva. They also have regional organizations of Franciscans in North America, Europe, Africa, South America and East Asia.

SSF in all three orders have meet with Franciscans International while they have been in New York for Chapters and have many parts of the SSF Family are members.

Franciscans International is presently working on several issues:

Jubilee 2000: The forgiveness of third world debt. They have gather petitions around the Franciscan family and have been active in building the international movement. They are active in discussions around the UN about creating a new financial architecture that is stable and provides more equality for countries of the third World.

School of the Americas: A major issue on this side of the Atlantic. The US government runs a school for Latin America military and police personnel that has been link very closely with the development of death squads in Latin America. The effort is to convince the US Congress to closes the school.

Sustainable development: Tracking with the UN and NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) efforts at sustainable development. They are working on the effects of global warming on small island states such as the Solomon Islands. There is a real danger that some Islands will simply disappear into the sea.

They have also created a solidarity fund that allows members of the Franciscan Family to lend money to development banks in the third world. They are taking a delegation of Franciscans to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Bonn in October.

Inclusion of Women: They remain committed to the UN push to breakdown discriminatory practices towards women and to support programs that assist women in development. Franciscans International is active in working to have national governments ratify Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Peace: FI is one of the endorsers of the Hague Conference for Peace to happen in May. The focus here is to call nations of the world to make a major commitment to peace as their millenium celebration. Sr. Kathie Ulher OSF, from the FI office at the UN in New York, was asked to help coordinate the Religious Dialogue looking at how religions have religion has contributed to war/conflict and more importantly, how they/we can contribute to building a culture of peace.

Another major focus of this effort is effort to create a culture of peace. This was launched by UNESCO in 1994. The effort focuses on getting nations to make peace education a part of their national culture. This includes conflict resolution, listening, and understanding, considering alternatives to violence.

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Eulogy for Vivian Morrel—Died 2/7/98

Michael Gilbride

The last time we gathered, it was a joyous occasion. After many years, I was being life-professed. We thought we knew how and where all the members of the Fellowship were that night. What we didn't know was that our sister Vivian had already gone to eternal joy.

Knowledge and knowing are such mysterious things. Perhaps it was best we didn't know Vivian had already left us. But it begs the question; what did any of us really know of Vivian Morrel. She was at one and the same time such an easy person to sense one knew and yet at her death we knew so little about the actual circumstances of her life.

I've been asked to speak because it was felt in some way I knew her best. Yet, I feel I hardly knew her.

What I can say for certain is actually so little. I knew she sang with her church group, The Canterbury Singers. I knew she served on altar guild and like most who do that she took it very seriously. I knew she had originally made her profession in the Roman Catholic Third Order. But what of the true Vivian? She was at the same time often quiet during Fellowship discussions and yet on retreat she was the one who could not stop talking. She was ever faithful to the Third Order and its Fellowship members. I'll never forget her almost dogged insistence that I accompany her to John Anderson's funeral; something I will forever thank her for. I knew of her deep love for animals. A retreat at Little Portion for Vivian was as much an opportunity to check up on the welfare of Wiley and Zack the two dogs, as it was an occasion for Vivian to be with her brothers and sisters in TSSF.

Though I know so little about Vivian, I am grateful I knew her. She possessed the indomitable spirit of a New Yorker and the loving accepting view of a Franciscan. This can be a strange mix. In Vivian it came naturally.

When I spoke to her last, she was talking about her new home. She was very happy there, and after all the struggle to get into a new place she had in her last days, at last found somewhere she felt good about. I'll never forget about Vivian that her stories, when I first met her, were about the rough conditions of her apartment. I was happy she had at long last found a good place to call home. She even spoke expectantly of the time she would get a cat or dog of her own. I feel badly that she had so little time to enjoy her much worked-for new living arrangement. But the Lord felt perhaps that this was merely a resting-place. He called Vivian to eternal joy; and I envision her greeting

Charles Bjorlin and John Anderson and so many of her other Third Order brothers and sisters.

I imagine the Third Order portion of heaven being stirred up by Vivian's constant yakking. I'm certain she has taken with her to heaven that indomitable New York personality.

So as we wonder what we really knew of Vivian Morrel, let us meditate upon the fact that there is One who knows us in a ways that perhaps we don't really even know ourselves. When we think we've done all that we were meant to do, He calls upon us to do more. For as Vivian had thought she had finally found a safe place to spend the rest of her life He has shown us there is yet a finer place—a place that does not require resting places when we get there.

From other Provinces (cont. from page 15)**From Third Order News—Aotearoa New Zealand and the Solomon Islands Province
Outcast by Diana Wright (cont.)**

"But I think they should stay. The tree felling affects them too, and they live in old tree trunks."

"But they AREN'T birds," said Tui.

"They fly like us," said Ruru.

"Ruru, you are just being difficult. Why do you always have to disagree?"

To keep Tui happy, Ruru decided he had better do something, anything, so he tried, in vain, to persuade the birds to let the bats stay. Despite all his pleading, the birds were adamant; the bats had to go.

Disappointed, the bats flew sadly away. They were never again to try to enter the world of birds. Instead they were condemned to live apart. Ruru, alone of all the birds, paid them any further attention. Every evening, in fact, at twilight, he would call to them, and they would come out to dance in the shadows, and find lovely insects to sustain them through the long hours of daylight.

Caspian often wondered what became of the bats. What had happened at the Council itself was quite another memory. Anyway, Caspian thought, returning to the important matters of the present, it's feeding time! The sun was out, and as it rose higher in the sky, Caspian soared over the little inlet looking for the tell-tale signs of sprats. The water had begun to sparkle. It was going to be a lovely day.

Franciscan Anacrostic Puzzle—The Answer

John R. Synder

A Journal Workbook to Accompany Celebration of Discipline: A Review

Calvin Hefner

Celebrating the Disciplines, A Journal Workbook to Accompany Celebration of Discipline by Richard J. Foster & Kathryn A. Yanni is an in-depth one-year study to assist one in developing a longing for God through cultivating life in the Spirit.

Celebration of Discipline was first written in 1978 and a revised edition was published in 1988. *Celebration of Discipline* charts the path to spiritual growth through the classical Disciplines of Christian devotion and practice. The Disciplines include Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study, Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service, Confession, Worship, Guidance, and Celebration.

The Journal Workbook is structured around four quarters (thirteen weeks) of a twelve-month period. The first quarter consists of an overview of the Disciplines with suggestions for experimental practice and reflections of the Disciplines.

The second, third, and fourth quarters open up the Inward, Outward, and Corporate Disciplines, respectively. Each quarter begins with a "hinge week" for celebration, reflection, and planning which prompts one to look back as well as ahead for personalizing the next segment of one's journey through the respective four Disciplines.

The Journal Workbook is used in conjunction with *Celebration of Discipline* for individual as well as a small group study guide. After the first quarter each section or Discipline is set up with questions for further reading and reflection of the Disciplines, specific suggestion for practice, Scripture passages and literary quotations to contemplate, and "reflection points" for journal entries.

Over a year ago, a group of men at my parish who have been gathering each Friday morning at 7:00 a.m. began the study of *Celebration of Discipline*. At that time we used Richard J. Foster's *Study Guide For Celebration of Discipline* to assist us on our individual journeys. Each participant seemed to grow from the experience and at the end of the year we pondered what we would study next. We found that the *Journal Workbook* was in existence and turned to it to do more in-depth study.

As we began the study of the *Journal Workbook* we found it necessary to re-read the *Celebration of Discipline*. At many of the gatherings we would get to only three or four of the reflection questions with some very in-depth sharing.

Each week a different person facilitates the gatherings and comes well prepared. Each week we try to select a specific exercise to practice in the Discipline that we are studying and report back to our group the outcome of our experience. Most of the men select an exercise that will be a challenge for them and not one that they feel more comfortable with.

I have found that this study has enhanced my Rule of Life and helps me to reflect, in-depth, where I am on my Franciscan journey.

[Editor: Foster has also created a group study program, *Renovare*, that interweaves what they term the five core Christian traditions: Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, and Evangelical. *Renovare* is accompanied by an excellent 300+ page collection, *Devotional Classics*. Write Renovare Inc., 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5609.]

Franciscans International Report (cont.)

Much literature is being developed to assist in shaping this drive. Franciscans International is working with Roman Catholic groups to have the pope call for peace education in all Catholic schools around the world. Well, I could go on, but I hope I have given you the shape of the effort.

Briefly it is a way for all Franciscans of all different parts of the Franciscan Family to witness and work together for peace, justice, inclusion and the well being of the environment.

Membership is both by community and by individual. Individuals should send \$20 to Shell Balek, Franciscans International, North American Region, 3195 South Superior Street, Milwaukee, WI 53207 along with the mailing address. They prefer, phone, fax and especially email address if they have one. Also, be sure to let her know you connection with SSF. Please also notify me that you have joined so that I can keep you up to date as well. If \$20 is to steep for you, FI will accept whatever you can afford. Small cells are forming in many parts of the world to address specific issues. We will work to connect you with groups in your area.

Please let me know if you want to join and if you want to be part of the SSF Peace and Justice Working Group. Our next steps will be to develop some specific organizing goals and to improve our communication system.

Peace and love

Br. John George SSF
Society of St. Francis
P.O. Box 399
Mt. Sinai, NY 17766
(516) 473-0553 fax (516) 473-9434

What We Hear From other Provinces' Recent Newsletters

(new continuing feature of the Franciscan Times)

From Pax et Bonum—African Province

From Wendy Dunn, Editor and Provincial Secretary

Gwen Jones died on 11 December 1998. She truly was an "Instrument of Peace", who came to South Africa from England when she was in her second year of being a Novice and was professed in 1965. At that time there was only one other Tertiary in South Africa, who died soon afterwards. Under Gwen's influence the Order grew steadily in South Africa and for many years she was the Minister Provincial for Africa.

A Requiem Mass was held on 17 December 1998 in her parish church of St. Margaret of Antioch, Margate, on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The Celebrant and Preacher was the Rt. Rev. Michael Nuttall, the Diocesan Bishop of Natal and the Bishop Protector of the Southern Region in Africa. Several priests attended the service and many Tertiaries of the Durban Group were also present.

As Graham Tremeer said in a letter: "Gwen's passing marks the end of an era for the Third Order in Africa—in a real sense we were her 'family' in the Third Order." Gwen's wise counsel will be missed, and we will always remember her with love.

A Tribute for Gwen from Br. Geoffrey, SSF (Hilfield Friary)

Gwen and I had a wonderful relationship of love and trust. We worked closely together in the 70s and 80s to build up the African Third Order. She was a shrewd judge of character and avoided the sentimentality that can so often creep into the Third Order, and yet had a great warmth and a wonderful sense of humour. I shall miss her terribly. One could always rely on her for an honest yet kindly opinion.

From Third Order News—Aotearoa New Zealand and the Solomon Islands Province

Outcast by Diana Wright

The day dawned with a cloudy blue sky and the promise of sunshine. The little inlet was still and silent except for the lapping sound of water meeting the shore and the occasional plopp, plopp of a leaping fish. Cocking his head sideways, Caspian Tern caught the blue and white flash of Kotare Kingfisher as he dived for some poor unsuspecting sprat. Caspian's inlet was nearly always peaceful. He fluffed up his feathers against the cool of the early morning and settled down on a rock, the same rock he'd sat on every morning since he could remember.

The sound of flapping wings interrupted his thoughts,

and gazing upwards he saw the first Godwits arriving from the North in time for the Southern summer. It was good to see them back, even if they were only part-time residents. It meant that all was right with the world. But he remembered that there had been a time, not too long ago when the peace of his inlet had been broken.

The sound of falling trees had disturbed his life that summer. There had been people and fire and the sound of saws. It got so bad that some of the forest birds, especially Tui and Piwaka waka, called a Council of Birds together. From far and wide they had come—Ruru, Tahou, Kiwi and Kaka, Torea and even Kakapo (although it took him much longer to arrive!) They gathered on the edge of the forest by the inlet in a large circle to discuss the problem. Tui had just begun his speech, Caspian remembered, when two strange black things landed in the middle of the circle. Amidst a great squawking, the two black things walked (if you could call it that, thought Caspian) and tried to join the circle. The birds were surprised and even a little shocked because they hadn't heard them coming.

"This meeting is only for birds," said Tui rather gravely. "YOU are not birds."

"But we do fly," said one.

"What do you call yourselves," asked Torea.

"I know who they are," interrupted Ruru, "They come out at twilight like me."

"I'm called Mysta," said one of the interlopers, "and I have a short tail, and my cousin is Calino, and his tail is longer."

"Actually, they're bats," said Ruru.

"BATS!" chorused all the birds. "EEEEK!" (Many of the birds had never seen a bat, but they had heard about them.)

Amidst the general alarm, some birds prepared to take flight. It looked to Tui as if the Council was over even before it had begun. He appealed to the birds not to go.

"Either they go, or I go," shouted Tahou with all the other birds nodding in agreement.

In desperation Tui looked around for Ruru finally finding him on a branch with his feathers all puffed up and his eyes closed.

"Ruru," said Tui, "wake up and help me. The comrades are leaving!"

"I AM awake," said Ruru, "but what can I do about it?"

"You could talk to the bats and get them to leave."

"Why do I have to do that?"

"They know you, and, anyway, you are very wise."

(continued on page 16)

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Coming Next Issue

Please send in your contributions on the following topics as soon as you can!

- A Discussion of the Office
- Reactions to *Proclaim the Year of God's Favor*
- ANGFRAN-L On-line Discussions/Musings on
(a) Following Jesus and Following Francis; (b)
Franciscans and Benedictines