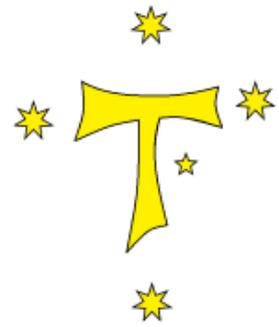


OFS – Conference of National Spiritual Assistants - Australia

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Monthly Spiritual Message JULY 2015

Sources for a Franciscan Spirituality

During these school holidays two of the young teachers from Guardian Angels primary school here in Wynnum Brisbane went away to Assisi. Certainly I have heard of this happening before in other places like Padua College in Brisbane, but it came as a happy surprise for me to find out that the headmaster here and the parish priest had set this trip in motion some time back. The school paid for one teacher and the parish paid for the other.

It all came about when the headmaster, himself went to Assisi and was overwhelmed by the experience. He came back saying, *“Our school is in a parish under the care of Franciscans. The pope chose St Francis as the patron of his ministry, and I believe this spirituality should be part of who we are as a school community.”* Such enthusiasm backed up with a practical response to share his Assisi experience with his teachers and have the spirit of St Francis as part of the ethos of the school nevertheless, surprised me because he is not even a member of the Franciscan Order in any way – perhaps that is the grace of Pope Francis.

One of the best things to come out of the establishing of a Franciscan Federation in Australia at Waverley in 1994 was **Franciscan Schools Australia**: <http://www.fsa.asn.au/> which is sponsored by the Missionary Franciscan Sisters (Kedron) with the Franciscan Leaders. We, who are called to promote our “Franciscan Way of Life” should make sure that our local Catholic schools are aware of this website. One of the constant cries of Catholic parents, teachers and formators is the request for Franciscan resources. What is available?

We, as Seculars, are going to have a **Formation Seminar** this year from September Tuesday 8th to Thursday 10th at Baulkham Hills in Sydney – in about two months’ time. This is important for the quality of our formation processes. Formators from all Regional and Local Fraternities have been invited to that Seminar. The focus of the Formation Seminar carried out by our National Formator, Peggy McNeil is *“Bringing formation to life”*. It will focus more on the how to do formation rather than on resources for formation. There will be group workshops to assist in this process. Two ideas that will be developed are *“the importance of Formation in Fraternity life”* and *“what do Formators do?”*. Beyond formation itself, a National Seminar provides fraternal support for our formators. Actually meeting someone makes email and phone call communication easier because you have met the person already.

The **National non-Elective Chapter**, which is for leaders and delegates only and not for formators, will follow immediately after Formation Seminar. The Chapter will begin on Friday 11th and go to Sunday 13th of September.

The previous Formation Seminar in 2014 by Moya Roadley, formerly National Formator and now Promotions Officer for the Region of Victoria, gave us a priority list of resources for formation. These were: **1. Fully Mature with the fullness of Christ** 3rd Edition, by Benet Fonck OFM. **2. The Rule** **3. The Catechism**. **4. To live as Francis Lived**, for ongoing formation. Since that time another book for formation has been proposed to the National Council by Joan Jowett Regional Formator and Promotions Officer of Queensland and that is: **5. The Franciscan Journey** (Updated Version) Lester Bach OFM Cap. **6. The Regional Fraternity of New South Wales** is presently updating their **Formation Book**, with an Introduction by Fr Norbert Pittorino OFM, who has in fact provided quite a few resources over the years.

The NSW Formation Book will be submitted to the National Council for approval shortly. All these resources should be in the Local Fraternity libraries.

In fact we all need to know about Franciscan resources because each of us is the principal author of our own formation. Our ongoing formation does not just depend on others. Your formation, as a person seeking wisdom, spiritual maturity, integrity, compassion is essentially up to you. First of all you need to desire it or you won't be looking for it. Certainly there is a responsibility on the part of the local fraternity to encourage you and provide the opportunity, but your Franciscan spirituality will only grow if you take the initiative yourself.

I believe that people are attracted to our Franciscan way of life and spirituality because they glimpse a true fraternal vision of the Gospel, but when they do not find it, they lose interest and fall away. Making available Franciscan resources is that important, but perhaps more important is having friends who are inspiring. Try to find people who know and try to live fraternity in a real and genuine way, who have made it part of their lives, even though it demands sacrifice. All our protestation to the Lord, that we love him are verified by the quality of our fraternal love of others. He has warned us about that in the Gospels.

One of the most important things to do to nourish our Franciscan spirituality is to read Franciscan books. Each fraternity is supposed to have a library, but I know for a fact that some Fraternities *have lost their library and don't know where to find it*. Other have theirs, securely under lock and key, in a very difficult place to get at it - so it may as well be lost. Many members of the OFS cannot afford to build their own library of Franciscan books, therefore a fraternity library is still important. Fraternity members should be donating Franciscan books they have read to the fraternity library, or at least leave them in their Will to the fraternity, their relatives will most likely dump them. Each fraternity should treasure their library and have a librarian. Goodness me, do we actually have to make this part of the Statutes too: "*A librarian shall be appointed. His or her duties will be the following...*" To tell you the truth the libraries of the friaries should be in places where they are available to the Seculars and not inside the cloister where no outsiders can access them. Our friaries are supposed to be places where people can to learn our spirituality.

Fr John Cooper OFM Cap
National Spiritual Assistant

***PLEASE distribute this Monthly Spiritual Message
to all MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL OFS FRATERNITY and Spiritual assistants***

(There are approximately 1000 words in this message)