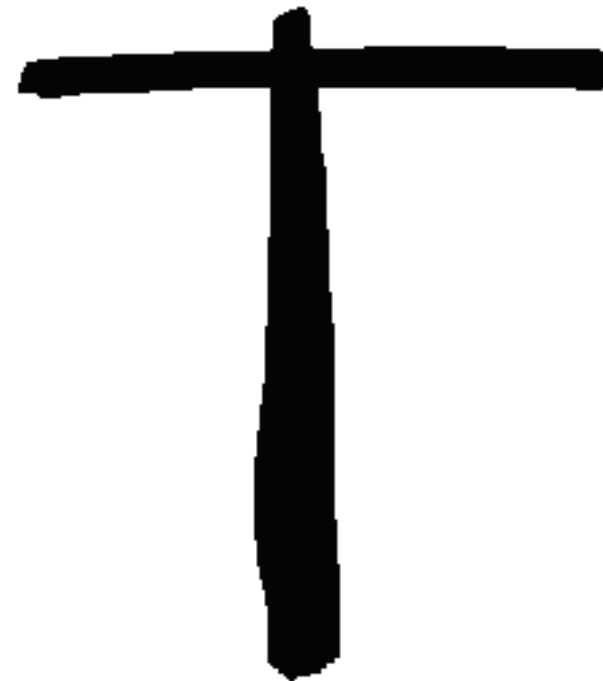


**The Third Order  
Society of St Francis**  
*(European Province)*



**Interested in  
Becoming  
a Franciscan Tertiary?**

*A Collection of Third Order Journeys*

## Interested in becoming a Franciscan Tertiary?

Humility, Love, Joy, Prayer, Study and Work  
are the keynotes of  
The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis

### Francis the Inspiration

Saint, Troubadour, revolutionary, fanatic, clown – whatever impression we may have of Francis of Assisi, no one can deny the inspiration he has been to many people down the centuries.

Whether he is inviting us to be with the poor, or beckoning us to discover God in our Muslim neighbour, Francis challenges us to look again at the gospel of Jesus and believe.

Europe in the time of Francis (1182-1224) was a place of deep divisions. Towns and kingdoms nourished ancient feuds with their rivals while the established princes struggled against the growing power of the merchants. Many people lived in poverty while those at the top fared sumptuously. But even the ordinary poor were not so wretched as the lepers, the ultimate outcasts of those days. Meanwhile the witness of the Church was weak, and Francis responded to the call from God to “rebuild my church”, with Clare, by founding a religious Order at that time.

Francis and Clare, with their brothers and sisters, met the evident needs of the people by sharing food and shelter, and through preaching and living reconciliation, based on prayer and an active love for Christ. They answered the pain of the outcasts by making them their friends, such as the lepers, and shared the reproaches hurled at them. Their witness incorporated a spirit of conversion and penitence, fortified by times of quiet and withdrawal.

Today in the Anglican Church there are three related Franciscan Orders which all started again in the early years of the 20th

## The Next Steps

Once you have decided that you would like to explore the possibility of membership further you will be invited to meet a Novice Guardian in your part of the country to agree the way forward.

You will be encouraged to attend local meetings and will discuss following a basic Rule of Life with the help of your Novice Guardian.

You will then become a POSTULANT for a six-month trial period, keeping the Rule with the support of your Novice Guardian.

After that you are admitted as a NOVICE for two years. During this time you will maintain regular contact each quarter with your Novice Guardian, preferably through face-to-face meetings, to review how the Basic Rule is working out for you and to develop your own personal Rule of Life from it.

After two years, assuming satisfactory progress, you would be elected to PROFESSION as a full member of the Third Order. When you make your Profession you do so with lifelong intention.

Right from your initial involvement, you will be included in Local Group, Area and Provincial Third Order events, to receive regularly copies of the Third Order CHRONICLE and the Third Order News, and to subscribe to the First Order journal the *Franciscan*.

**Retreat**

With the ever-increasing speed and pressures of life today we all need to get away at least once a year for a few days to find an opportunity to rest and grow – physically, mentally and spiritually. To make this possible the Third Order organises retreats all over the country and people find this a time of great renewal.

**Study and Reading**

As Christians we need to be able to give an answer for the faith we hold and, for this reason, members of the Third Order are encouraged to read not only the Bible itself but other books which help us to know more about God in his church and in the world. We are asked to set aside a minimum time for this purpose each week.

**Simplicity**

This in the spirit of poverty. Almost every parish has some form of planned giving as part of its life to-day, in which every committed Christian will wish to share. Giving should include every aspect that we have to offer – our time, our possessions and our money.

**Work and Service**

Franciscans, like all Christians, dedicate their whole lives to our Lord Jesus Christ and bring Saint Francis' spirit of humility, love and joy to this dedication. For some in the Third Order this happens in their normal work, but many also undertake service for their local church, charitable or "gift" work in their fields of interest, or a personal endeavour such as visiting the elderly.

**Spiritual Counsel**

We are able to benefit from regular sessions with our spiritual director, who could be a suitable priest or lay person we know and trust; this normally occurs at least twice a year. In the initial stages we also benefit from sessions with a nominated Novice Guardian who guides our early days with the Third Order.

Century:

**The First Order**, consisting of men and women who live in community according to a Franciscan Rule based on the traditional vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience. They give expression to their mission by a variety of ministries. There are houses in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the Solomon Islands.

**The Second Order**, (known as the Community of St Clare), which is composed of women who feel called by God to an enclosed life of contemplative prayer, coupled with work to be self-supporting. In England there is one house near Oxford.

**The Third Order**, which is open to men and women, ordained or lay, married or single, over the age of 18, who feel that God is calling them to live out their Franciscan vocation in the world. While committed to family responsibilities and engaged in ordinary tasks of life, the Third Order offer a life of challenge and support for those who are called to a deeper commitment to Christ, their lord and Master, to a life under vow.

There are currently over 2,000 members of the Third Order (called tertiaries) in the European Province, based mainly in Local Groups throughout England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Sweden. There are tertiaries also in other Provinces across the world, in Africa, America, Australia and New Zealand.

*The Mission Statement of the Third Order is;*

“The Third Order of the society of St Francis is building a Community of those who accept Christ as their Lord and Master, are dedicated to him in body and spirit with a desire to fulfil the three aims of the Order: to make the Lord known and loved everywhere, to spread a spirit of love and harmony, and to live simply. The Third Order aims to attract, nurture and empowers Christian men and women, loyal members of their own Churches,

who wish to follow Christ in the distinctive way of Francis and Clare.”

This booklet provides illustrative stories from a variety of tertiaries in different walks of life. The stories aim to indicate what membership of the Third Order means to them personally. They may include how or why they joined, and highlight the perceived benefits of membership to them as individuals or couples. We hope that these cameos will stimulate further interest in the Third Order on the part of those who may be seeking an additional resource for their own spiritual nurture and development.

*O God, sublime and glorious,  
Come and enlighten  
The darkness of my heart:  
Give me an honest faith  
A firm hope  
And a perfect love;  
By your gift  
May I feel and know  
Your holy will,  
That I may obey it  
And not go astray  
Amen*

*Francis of Assisi*

## Is it for Me?

You would like to know that it would mean to become a member of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis? Well, as you have gathered, it is an “Order”, a Community of men and women, some married, some single, living in their own homes and doing their own jobs. We encourage one another in living and witnessing to the Christian life and are closely linked to the Franciscan Brothers and Sisters of the First and Second Orders

In trying to become the persons we were created to be we each keep a RULE OF LIFE, tailored to individual needs, which contain the following elements:

### **The Eucharist**

Holy Communion is the heart of Prayer, so our worship should include the Eucharist on Sundays and at other times that fit in with our personal lifestyle.

### **Penitence**

Tertiaries are expected to review their lives on a regular basis, and to pray penitentially for their sins and for the sins of the world.

### **Personal Prayer**

A regular time of daily prayer is the foremost form of service of the Tertiary. It is also a source of strength and joy. Some Tertiaries have more time than others to give to prayer; but all try to keep their allotted time from interruption. Personal prayer time is an opportunity to grow in awareness of God’s presence, and to foster the habit of continual praise and intercession.

### **Self-Denial**

This is simply saying “No” to ourselves by putting God first, others next and self last. Often we know our own particular weaknesses where we should impose some discipline, e.g. listening instead of talking, getting up in time to say our prayers without hurry, eating or drinking less, the need for exercise.

## Keeping Me Sane

I'm a 40-year old priest living and working in South Wales. My first involvement with the Society of Saint Francis was when I got to know the brothers at their Friary at Alnmouth, and later went to spend some ten weeks living alongside them, helping out in the house and gardens. I had spent a year or so living in a small community group designed to end after a year, and I'd developed an idea that I might want to be part of a more traditional community. My time living with the brothers persuaded me otherwise, but I then spent a long while searching for the stability my spiritual life lacked. One day a friend talked with me about her short time as a novice in the Third Order which was interrupted by motherhood, I felt this was something I could explore and we both started off as novices at a similar time. I was professed in 1991 and have found my membership invaluable; it had given form and substance to my prayer life at times when my local church has left me wondering what I was doing. During my theological training TSSF was a steady rock when the rest of life was rocky, and since I have been in parish ministry, group meetings has given me a focus outside the daily round, and quite frankly, kept me sane. I value the friendship and the affirmation that my sisters and brothers give me.

*Alan Williams*

## Journeys with Francis and Clare

### Life in TSSF in Papua New Guinea

Professed as a Tertiary in 1974, I became a science teacher in a Government High School in Madang a year later. The only Franciscan there was Bishop Bevan Meredith, who became my Spiritual Director; most Christians were either RC or Lutheran I was perforce an isolated Tertiary as the Bishop was continually on his Diocesan travels.

I was more fortunate when I moved to Dogura as Headmistress of the Anglican Girls' High School as my deputy, Elizabeth Graham, was also a Tertiary. I got to know the Friars of the First Order, based in Haruro and Port Moresby, who were held in high regard in PNG. In particular, Brother Alfred visited our School and his ebullience endeared him to the girls; he was truly Franciscan in spirit and sadly died early as a result of his zeal.

In my life as a Tertiary I have found that Franciscan friendship knows no bounds; this was very evident on a visit to Sydney whilst in PNG. Now I am back in the UK it is a shock to the system! What I treasure so much is the spontaneity of spirit that is truly Franciscan, and Clare's vision that comes only through prayer.

*Pamela Banks*

### Living in Mongolia

We first came to Mongolia in 1991 for two years, and then returned in 1998, shortly after our profession as tertiaries in the UK. Ulaan Baatar, where we now live in our own house, has a reputation as being the work's coldest capital city that is richly deserved; -35C at night, rising to -22c during the day!! After completing a year of language study we began to work with the

Catholic Mission on an unpaid basis, mainly with poor children; this is one of the valued ecumenical links of the Mission. We help with a variety of initiatives – two classes in our local village school in Yarmag, a mini-school with three classes for children aged 6-15 in the city, also a Children’s Centre that provides a home for street children, orphans and children of homeless families aged 2-18. We assist as well with the children’s service at church, to which 30 and 50 children come on a Sunday morning.

We very much appreciate the powerful support and fellowship of our brothers and sisters in the Third Order in connection with our life and work here in Mongolia.

*Roger and Hillary Parritt.*

## **A Franciscan Journey**

I read Elizabeth Goudge’s “St Francis of Assisi” many years ago and thought “I wish there were a Third Order today” little realising that there was! I was led to join a local Julian Group, and soon I realised that our hostess had a strong link with Francis.

In June ‘84 my enquiry to TSSF received a warm, positive response. In collaboration with my Novice Guardian and Spiritual Director I made my first rule. I was accepted as a postulant on the day, sadly, that my husband Syd died, but the Order opened up a whole new world to me, both people-wise and spiritually.

Being a botanist and a lover of creation I fitted into this rich, warm environment so easily, and have now been a Tertiary for 15 years. Being in the Third Order has stabilised and enriched my life giving me great joy and a new, exciting spiritual knowledge through meeting other tertiaries, spiritual direction (how did I manage without it?), and retreats. I fail so often, but am very grateful for the fellowship and help of others in keeping me going; I thank God for calling me to join TSSF.

*Madeline Davies*

1952 I had become a member of the Methodist Church, and that still remains dear to me. I am also a confirmed Anglican, as the result of a wonderful opportunity that God provided in difficult circumstances. My cup did indeed overflow, but in both of these membership situations I was always responding in words that someone else had out into a liturgy. In contrast to liturgical phrases my Franciscan Rule contains *my* words, reflecting *my* circumstances and *my* personal aims and intentions: though I do sometimes worry about what I have committed myself to! I really look forward to many fruitful years ahead as a professed Tertiary.

*Ken Seagers*

## **The Good Infection**

It was contact with the First Order Brothers and Sisters that triggered our interest in Francis and Clare. On Good Friday 1978, at the culmination of the annual mission by four Brothers and Sisters to the patients in Broadmoor Hospital, we attended the morning worship in the Central Hall. The patients movingly shared with us their learning during Holy Week. Later in the day, Brother Damian, leader of the mission team, came to share a meal in our home and challenged us to be in the Third Order by St Franciside. Earlier, as a member of the West London Chaplaincy of London University, Brian had met some Brothers and Sister Elizabeth. Hazel’s first contact was when she and Brian were at Hilfield for the “clothing” of Brother Stanley, a close friend. Embarrassed during this solemn service by the behaviour of Katie, our three-year old, Hazel removed her, only to be reprimanded later by the Brothers who insisted on giving her a ride on the donkey. There was something about the lightness of touch of the Brothers, their joy and their spontaneity, which was so appealing. But more than that, their spirituality and strong bond in community attracted us. That special fellowship what we have continued to find with the Third Order has been important to us over the years, both in our family and our Christian lives.

*Brian and Hazel Berry*

## A Wider Vision

Some First Order Brothers had led a number of Parish Weekends for our church, and they made a deep impression on us. We are both busy people, one working as a management consultant and the other as a counsellor and psychotherapist, and at that time we were fully engaged in bringing up three children. It was only some years later that we built on this initial attraction, and eventually joined the Third Order. We felt that we needed more spiritual nourishment than our local church was able to provide, and a wider vision of the potential fulfilment of life as Christians in the world.

We have received just that, together; we wanted to be involved in an initiative that we could share, as we normally had to spend so much of our time apart. Though there will always be a tension between worldly pleasures and the focus of Francis on a life of poverty, we find the simplicity of the Franciscan lifestyle a wonderful ideal to aim for. With annual retreats, spiritual direction and a loving Local Group we are indeed nurtured spiritually, well beyond our expectations.

*John and Maria Fox*

## My Rule of Life

My vicar encouraged me to enrol for the Diocesan Faith and Ministry Course in 1998. Though I completed that successfully it did not seem appropriate for me to follow that by training for formal lay ministry. One of the workshops at the whole day event, however, was on Franciscan Spirituality, which I chose because of the speaker rather than Francis! Regrettably I cannot now remember anything that he actually said, only that at the end of his talk, I put up my hand and asked “how can I join?” I have not been a member of TSSF long, but I have found it a great delight to construct my Rule of Life because it is personal to me. Back in

## A Franciscan Angel

I came to know about the Third Order over 20 years ago, at a time of significant change in my life. God sent an angel in the form of Peggie Downie who gave me a lift in her car and started telling me about TSSF. I had been a full-time mother for 11 years.

Our lives had come to the point when my husband needed my support in paying the mortgage and school fees, so I was having to give up my voluntary work and go into a full-time job. I felt as if I was going into the wilderness, and wondered how I could hold on to the sense that I was doing God’s work. When I heard that one element of a Tertiary’s personal rule was a statement about her daily work, and that this was placed annually on the altar in dedication, I felt that this was what I was looking for. It has affirmed my mission in the world, but my husband has found it hard to understand my calling to the Franciscan life. The simplicity and poverty side does not chime with his joyful, extravagant generosity.

I have learned to be attentive to what Christ is saying to me through the life of Francis, and value and loved the support of my TSSF brothers and sisters.

*Liza Coates*

## Not just a Franciscan Fan Club

When I first heard about the Third Order, I was interested mainly because of two things I knew about Francis – that he was concerned for the poor and for the created world. That interest has been developed and increased through the Order – but it was only a start. I found that the Order was much more than a fan club! Membership demands a real commitment – particularly to devise and keep a personal rule of life; its structure I have found to be beneficial spiritually. Most tertiaries take their Christian faith seriously and are prepared to give time and attention to studying,

praying, thinking and acting; above all we are a community of people who aim to support and love one another. At first I recognised that community in my local area; gradually I have seen it binding together people throughout the UK, and indeed the world. Being a Tertiary doesn't prove you are a good Christian, but it might help you to be a better one than you would otherwise be.

The Franciscan way doesn't suit everyone, and there are plenty of other ways you can deepen your faith. But I think it has suited me.

*Robert Dimmick*

## Set Aside

Leave a little of your life. Pause  
To let the fallow hours fall  
Around that cultivated space  
And wonder as the borders grow.

God heals us as we gaze on Him.  
Love brightens knowledge 'til it shines  
With wisdom that creates a field  
Of all that's beautiful and wild.

Life must be tended, worked upon.  
The times are ours and ours the corn;  
Corn, the bunting and the flower.  
This giving back, respect for all,  
Is priceless music; to which song  
Our small child dances for a while

The path to my profession in 2001 has been somewhat long and circuitous. Like many others I was attracted to the Third Order by

With the help of my director I have found a way of keeping my rule which is now as dear to me as an old coat; in spite of age I do my best to live in a Franciscan, open and hospitable way. Nowadays I make my contribution to the life of my parish (Romsey Abbey) by the use of my pen and a few small jobs.

In my 80<sup>th</sup> year, after over 50 years as a Tertiary, I would say to enquirers "join us and know the joy and fellowship of serving our Lord in the way of St Francis.

*Judy Walker*

## Being a Tertiary

I became a Tertiary after a visit and introduction to the First Order Sisters at Compton Durville in Somerset. What attracted me most to the Franciscan way was the insistence on working with the marginalised; something I have never found easy, but an imperative nevertheless. In many ways, joining the Franciscans has been in a sense "a coming home" because of the nature of my work; for many years prior to my joining Oxfam as a member of staff I have been preoccupied with issues of justice and the environment. Fellow Franciscans remind me that such preoccupations can be a vital part of our witness for God. I don't find Francis an easy model; in real life I would have found him very daunting, but I do identify with his desire to stand alongside those in real need. Some sentimentalise his rejoicing in the natural world, but I find his attitude both robust and refreshing. It is both a comfort and a challenge to live by a daily rule, and our Principles constantly remind me that the Franciscan way is no easy option! The annual renewal of commitment "in the company of our brother and sisters" encourages me, without that visible support I would find the Franciscan path very hard indeed.

*Averil Swanton*

last summer". The group falls quiet, his eyes moisten. We spend 20 minutes reflecting on James' bereavement and how to cope when our work and our personal lives overlap so closely.

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy*

She strides into evening surgery, as ever the smart branch manager. "I'm no better today. I'm not coping. Normally I can do at least three things at once, now I'm having trouble with one thing at a time. Don't be sympathetic. I've got to stay in control." We talk. Suddenly she buries her head in her hands and sobs, her body heaving.

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy*

The Third Order has rooted me, since my teens, in Francis and Christ, The rule, daily prayer, quiet days, people, annual retreat, spiritual direction and so much more. All shape my life and touch the lives of those I meet daily.

*Anon*

## **A Vintage Life**

My Story is more notable for length rather than excitement. I spent some agnostic years as a teenager then, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, I came upon the First Order and the living Gospel brought me to my knees. Eventually I discovered the Third Order (very secret then) and was professed in 1947.

I spent 3 years in Greece working for Inter Church Aid. Back in England I married Michael, another Tertiary, and brought up 3 sons. The Third Order in those days seemed to put much emphasis on personal poverty. I wrestled with that in terms of family life and keeping my rule amidst all the distractions and demands of a home. I'm thankful that I persevered. I've been a widow for the last 17 years.

the character of St Francis, the emphasis on contemplation and the bias towards the poor. This journey began 10 years ago when I was living in East Yorkshire. I was made very welcome by the Local Group in Cottingham, but then proceeded to take the long route by testing a possible vocation as a nun in the Community of the Holy Name, then later moving to Nottingham, finding suitable work and generally being busy. After several years I began to explore TSSF again. I started writing poetry as a child, continued throughout young adulthood and my time at university, but have had a block until recently. Writing as a Christian is fairly new to me. Before my profession I was unable to go on a planned retreat at Hilfield, so, with a slight sense of irony, I wrote the "Set Aside" poem above. Perhaps all this illustrates the grace of God, His patience, His timing. As TS Eliot put it in "Four Quartets":

'We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time'

*Carol Whitfield*

## **From Free Church to TSSF**

From the beginning, my life was based in the Free Church, firstly the Congregational Church when cared for by an Aunt as a baby, followed by the Methodist Church when I married, and then the Baptist Church – to accommodate our 2 year old Chinese foster son with learning difficulties. 7 years ago I felt drawn to the C of E and heard of the Third Order; I tried to ignore the calling to TSSF, but God would not put me down! It is quite a surprise that I am now a Tertiary, but God works in a mysterious way. I am a full time foster carer, as our foster son still lives with us and is 22 years old.

What does the Third Order mean to me? Discipline, Acceptance and Freedom are words that spring to mind. It helps to centre my

life on God. Having a rule to follow helps me enormously, and feeling part of this worldwide community brings great joy. Having come from a dysfunctional background the acceptance I found from my brothers and sisters, my “family”, has meant so much to me. Being a Franciscan has freed me to be myself, to offer God the service I can give: it has taught me so much about God’s love. Our cross breaks barriers, and no matter what walk of life we come from we are one in his love.

*Elizabeth Nickless*

## Following the Way of Francis

Francis saw all creation as brother and sister but he also needed a human family, the Order he founded. I value family; my Third Order Local Group is the family where I love and am loved, give and receive support, bear with others as they with me, as together we continue growing in the Christian life.

This family group is the background from which I can venture out to others. For many years I belonged to another branch of the Franciscan family, the enclosed Second Order sisters. In the 1990s I came on leave to care for my elderly father, and the local Third Order helped me to adjust to the new way of life by welcoming me into its midst, keeping alive in me the Franciscan spirit. I left the Second Order eventually (my father lived to 94!) and am pursuing my Franciscan vocation with TSSF – I am discovering that a contemplative life can have a fruitful active dimension in this new setting. Being poor as regards income helps me to live simply, grateful for God’s bounty shown to me and ever more aware of how rich I am in other ways. The rule and our stimulating Group discussions gives me new ideas about how best to use my gifts, I wouldn’t be without my Third Order family.

*Brenda Stephenson*

## Becoming a Tertiary

I grew up in all kinds of Christian traditions and none. My parents were agnostic, and I had myself baptised at the age of 10, my Godmother giving me a copy of “The Little Flowers of St Francis”. This I read when I was 18, at about the same time as I heard a talk by Fr Peter, SSF, who was inspiring. From school I experienced worship in Westminster Abbey, from home the local RC church and at Cambridge, briefly, the Christian Union. I met the Franciscan Brothers there and soon found a niche in their church St Benet’s. Then followed a time abroad, with Lutheran, French Reformed and RC worship. We moved to Derbyshire and went to our Evangelical Charismatic village church, another steep learning curve, but I needed more. I had already become a Companion, but the Third Order drew me and eventually I became a novice and was professed.

So what does TSSF mean to me? Good friends, certainly; people I can talk to with frankness, people who may be very different and from other backgrounds, but who are on the same wavelength. It means discipline in prayer and study and being part of a community of people inspired by the lives of Francis and Clare.

*Adrian Noble*

## A Day in Tertiary Life

Prayer time starts in the morning, then teenage grunts at breakfast.

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy*

Small group teaching with 8 student doctors and a simulated patient. We’re been practising giving bad news about cancer and other illnesses to patients and their relatives. “James, you seem quiet today.” “I just need to watch this morning – my mum died