



CONTEMPLATIVE
NETWORK

The Carceri

To deepen prayer life through contemplation



What is contemplation

by John-Francis Friendship TSSF

Celebrating who we are as contemplatives

by Pauline Godfrey TSSF

Contemplation and Healing

by Susan Pitchford TSSF

Francis and Contemplation

by Nicholas Alan Worssam SSF

Contemplative Life

by Fr.Colin CSWG

SPECIAL EDITION
800th Anniversary of
The Third Order
Francistide 2022



CONTEMPLATIVE
NETWORK

The **Contemplatives Network** was formed in 1999 (originally it was named the 'Solitaries Network'). The object of the Network is to provide support for those tertiaries who felt called to a more contemplative way of following Francis. As followers of St Francis and St Clare we are called to be both contemplative and active, but the Third Order acknowledges that some will be more drawn to the contemplative way, and others to a more active way.

To support those called to a more contemplative way, the Network publishes a magazine, recently re-named 'THE CARCERI', twice a year. The CARCERI contains articles about contemplation, contributions by members of the Network, e.g. poetry and photographs, and book recommendations.

Members of the Network also receive an Intercession List and are asked to pray for five or six members every day of the month. This also gives members the opportunity to link up with those who live in their Area, if they wish.

St Angela of Foligno, (1309) Third Order Mystic

Almighty God, your servant Angela was a faithful penitent who blessed your Church by her visions and holiness:
open our hearts to know your call upon our lives, and our eyes to see your glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

After meditating on the death of the Son of God incarnate, her confessor recounted these words of Angela:

"Joy in knowing God's great love for, but great pain in realising that her love for God was nothing more than play acting."



Bruce Driver

The CARCERI and the Intercession List are produced by the Steering Group.

The members of the Steering Group are:

Paul Alexander, Chairman and Co-editor

John-Francis Friendship

Pauline Godfrey

Emily Miller

Tony Ross, Membership Secretary

Barb Smith Varclova, Co-editor

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EDITORIAL

Contemplation is about living and being in the present moment. It involves going with the flow like travelling down a river or being part of the music of life or moving in time with the light and the dark. It is about the now and the now is constantly changing even though we can be still while it carries us along. The point I want to make is that The Carceri magazine is moving with the times. Recently there have been three major changes affecting the magazine. Our dear friend and colleague, Robert Brown, who as co-editor, helped reshape and transform The Carceri from a news sheet into a gazette decided that he needed to retire. Our best wishes, thanks and prayers go with him. His contribution has been matchless. Robert's departure left us with a serious problem. He was the only member of the team who had the expertise to work IT wizardry, not in the sense of Professor Dumbledore waving a magic wand but more in the sense of an experienced technician handling computer graphics with an understanding beyond the rest of us. We miss him already. But we have been incredibly lucky. Some have said that God had a hand in it. Well, that goes without saying. Hardly had Robert left us than I received an email from a novice, Barb Smith Varclova, who hails from Aberdeenshire. Being IT savvy she wanted to help with the formation of a website. She has quickly become part of the family.

Content

800th Anniversary of The Founding of the Third Order by Tony Ross TSSF	4
What is contemplation by John-Francis Friendship TSSF	6
Celebrating Who We Are as Contemplatives by Pauline Goodfrey TSSF	7
Contemplation and Healing by Susan Pitchford TSSF	8
Francis and Contemplation by Nicholas Alan Worssam SSF	9
Contemplation in Art by Catherine Cocks TSSF	12
Contemplative Life by Fr.Colin CSWG.....	13

Woven in Prayer - Cathy Cocks

Now we are moving from being a gazette, a sophisticated news-sheet, into being a magazine. The art will be in maintaining Franciscan simplicity with an artistically designed magazine that encourages all of us to think of contemplation as being a solace in times of stress, a help in regenerating our spirits and a source of great creative energy. The third major change of late has been the emphasis placed on our forthcoming General Chapter. TSSF has gone through a turbulent period over the past few years but there is now very much a feeling of regeneration. A regeneration of our spirit and The Carceri very much wants to be a part of what feels like the beginning of a great creative surge. We have so much to offer a divided world. The Carceri wants to be part of this movement, leading the way. May everyone in, and involved in, The Society of St Francis, the 2022 General Chapter Celebrations and the new chapter of our life which is just beginning, be blessed with the peace and energy of contemplative prayer.

*Pau!AlexanderTSSF
Chairperson of the Contemplative Network
Steering Group*



sooth Anniversary of The Founding of the Third Order

by Tony Ross TSSF

In Celebrating who we are as Contemplatives in The Third Order, we remember the Founding of the Third Order by St Francis in 1221.

According to tradition, St Francis founded the Third Order because of a request by a married couple Luchesio and his wife, Buonadonna, who wanted to follow St. Francis as a married couple. This wish prompted Francis to start the Third Order. Luchesio was originally a greedy merchant in Poggibonzi. But his life changed after he met Francis around 1213, when he began performing many acts of charity. Initially his wife was not very enthusiastic about this change in behaviour, but she soon became as zealous for the poor and simple life as her husband was. He and his wife sold their business, farmed enough land to provide for their needs, and distributed the rest to the poor. Luchesio and his wife wanted something else, a way of sharing in religious life yet remaining outside the cloister. To meet their desires as well as his own plans for an order for lay people, Francis set up the Third Order (then known as the Order of Penance), and Pope Honorius 111 approved a more formally worded Rule in 1221.

We also remember how St Francis sought to know God's will about whether he should live a life of prayer or preaching.

Prayer

*Beloved Lord Jesus,
thank you for blessing all walks of life
and allowing lay and professed,
married and single,
to find a deeper walk with you
in the very midst of their
earthy challenges, duties, and joys.
Give us who live in the secular world
grace to remember
that we care for you
when we care for our brothers and sisters.
Amen.*

Bonaventure tells us of a conversation Francis had with his companions: 'What do you think, brothers, what do you judge the better? That I should spend my time in prayer or that I should go about preaching? I am a poor little man, simple and unskilled in speech. I have received a greater grace of prayer than of speaking. Also in prayer there seems to be a profit and the accumulation of graces, but in preaching the distribution of gifts already received from heaven.' He sends the brothers to Bro. Sylvester and St Clare to discern God's will through prayer. "Through the miraculous revelation of the Holy Spirit, the venerable priest and the virgin dedicated to God came to the same conclusion: that it was God's pleasure that Francis should preach as the herald of Christ." When Francis received their answer he "at once rose, and without the slightest delay took to the roads." Francis did not give up a life of prayer, spending many days in retreat, seeking silence and solitude in remote places, such as Le Carceri and La Verna.

We celebrate the 800 th Anniversary of the Third Order by thanking God for the inspiration of St Francis to be both contemplative and active.

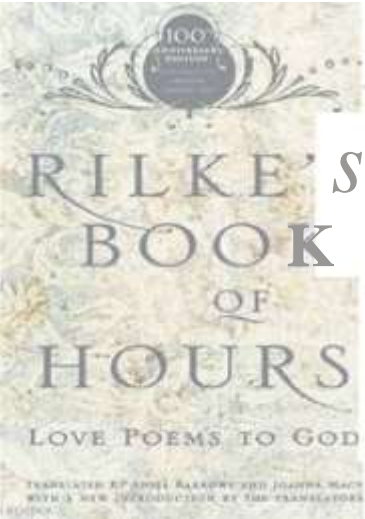
Bruce Driver



RILKE'S BOOK OF HOURS

Love Poems to God

Translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy



Rainer Rilke was a 19th Century Austrian poet who was widely published. However, this series of poems he considered to be more personal and hadn't ever intended to publish them. This edition holds the original German next to a beautiful English translation. Brought up a devout Christian, his life story tells of someone who was seeking to experience the love of God. The deep personal poems are conversations, as much with himself as another, reflecting someone who is searching - and in moments finding. The poems are set in three sections - The Book of a Monastic Life, The Book of Pilgrimage and The Book of Poverty ad Death. For me, as a Franciscan who endeavours to live a contemplative life, these poems can often act as a springboard into that space.
Pauline Godfrey TSSF

*How surely gravity's law,
strong as an ocean current,
takes hold of even the smallest thing
and pulls it toward the heart of the world.*

*Each thing-
each stone, blossom, child-
is held in place.
Only we, in our arrogance,
push out beyond what we each belong to
for some empty freedom.*

*If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.*

*Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.*

*So, like children, we begin again
to learn from the things,
because they are in God's heart;
they have never left him.*

*This is what the things can teach us:
to fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
before he can fly.*

11,16
The Book of Pilgrimage - Rainer Rilke



Prayer before contemplation.
Heavenly Father, open our hearts to
the silent presence of the
Spirit of your Son. Lead us into that
mysterious silence where
your love is revealed to all who call
MARANATHA - Come, Lord
Jesus.
The World Community for Christian Meditation

What is contemplation

view by John-Francis Friendship TSSF

Francis 'contemplated' the world through the lens of Christ - which is our particular gift to the practice. Rooted in the concept of a space reserved for sacred purposes, it has come to be understood as taking a 'long, loving look at the real' (Walter Burghardt SJ), a way to realise a sense of being at-one with an-other. The artist Paul Klee observed: 'In a forest I have felt, many times over, that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I have felt that the trees were looking at me ... were speaking to me ...

I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it.'

St Silouan (1866-1938) points out that contemplation of God cannot exist without repentance and the struggle to overcome our passions - in other words, contemplation goes hand-in-hand with seeking purity of heart, else we are simply engaged in seeking something apart from God by way of what has been identified as 'Quietism'.

For some it is exemplified by the medieval work of an unknown author, The Cloud of Unknowing: 'Lift up your heart to God with humble love: and mean God himself, and not what you get out of him... Try to forget all created things that he ever made, and the purpose behind them, so that your thought and longing do not turn or reach out to them either in general or in particular' (Ch.3).



Boats - Bruce Driver

Disclosure by Ann Lewin

in Watching for the Kingfisher, pub Canterbury Press

*Prayer is like watching for the
Kingfisher. All you can do is
Be where he is likely to appear, and
Wait.*

*Often, nothing much happens;
There is space, silence and
Expectancy.
No visible sign, only the
Knowledge that he's been there,
And may come again.
Seeing or not seeing cease to matter,
You have been prepared.
But sometimes, when you've almost
Stopped expecting it,
A flash of brightness
Gives encouragement.*

FIVE AIDS FOR CONTEMPLATION:

After deciding on the time you will give to this prayer and setting an alarm:

- **Commend this time to God** and ask for the inspiration of the Spirit.
- **Choose a word or mantra** - e.g., Jesus, which Francis longed to repeat on his lips; or 'my God, and my all (Deus, meus et omnia) which he used as a repetitive prayer; or Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner which reflects his understanding of himself in relation to God.
- **Still your body and breathe into your heart**, gently and slowly.
- **Begin to repeat your word/mantra**, first on the lips, then in the heart. Keep doing this for the duration or until you reach a place of silence in your prayer. If your mind wanders, return to your word/mantra.
- **Give thanks to God** when the time ends, e.g.: 'Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen'.

Celebrating Who We Are as Contemplatives

by Pauline Goodfrey TSSF

How do you worship? What enables you to enter those moments of awe and wonder when you lose almost all sense of yourself and the Holy Spirit touches your body, your heart, your soul? Growing up in an evangelical charismatic church I learned to expect those moments in sung worship. The words and music would lift me into a place where I could stop singing and allow myself to be surrounded by God's love. Even in the middle of a vibrant noisy service there would be an overwhelming stillness and sense of God's presence. I believe that this is a form of what we call 'contemplation' although we wouldn't necessarily name it such.

The journey of any pilgrim seeking the contemplative life will often take us on paths both with companions and alone. My choice to become a member of the Third Order was primarily selfish - as a young mum and minister I was seeking a pattern of prayer and study which would anchor me. I thought I was seeking companions with whom I could travel but for whom I would have no responsibility. Of course, I was to discover that that's not what being part of an order is about - we do have mutual responsibility. However, more importantly, I was to realize that what my soul was truly seeking was to rest in God's presence and here in TSSF I would find companions for this voyage.

Baby steps to this have meant that I have sought God in silence and stillness. I delight in the many ways there are to enter this garden - music continues to be a gateway though often a simple chant rather than exuberant worship songs. Watching the leaves of a tree in the wind, the ripples on streams or the crashing of waves, gently praying 'come Holy Spirit' or some other mantra - all of these will draw me into a place where I am more receptive, when I allow God permission to reach me in ways beyond boundaries. They are some kind of key which unlock my reserve and allow me to immerse myself, to discover the ongoing experience of a baptismal faith where we die to self and rise again to renewed life (Romans 6:4) . My journey then took me to seeking these moments and delighting in them. They refresh me, they do renew my soul. But this is just the start - this is merely a tiny flavour of the joys on offer.

The contemplative seeking pilgrim may well begin by expecting like Abba Moses advises 'to sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything'. However, for me the journey has been much more circuitous - the path often leads from deep quietness to noise and busyness, becoming open to God's presence even there. Elijah expected God to speak in fire, earthquake and storm - God responded in stillness. I expect God to speak when I am still and God as usual gently laughs and seeks to surprise and challenge me. Celebrating the call to a contemplative life is delighting in the reality that when it becomes about me I will fail - and often do. It is delighting in the God who spoke to Francis and Clare both in the cave and on the road. It is an acceptance that I will never get there but am always seeking to. It is the joy of travelling with Christ and for us as a contemplative network is the joy of sharing our stories and discovering we are not alone.

Contemplation and Healing

by Susan Pitchford TSSF

*Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.*

Song of Solomon 2:136-14

Francis and Clare were mystics of their time, a time when contemplative prayer was often infused with lavish imagery, with passionate declarations of love. Like many others, Francis adapted romantic stories and songs from the culture and redirected them toward an unearthly Love. Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague of the beauty of her divine Spouse, infinitely more desirable than the powerful men she'd rejected. It was a time when the wounds of Christ's passion aroused intense devotion: when Francis had these wounds imprinted on his own flesh, it was a sign of his utter identification with the crucified Lord. Others saw these wounds—especially the side wound, being nearest to his heart—as portals, points of entry where they could flee to the divine Heart and find a place of refuge, of peace, of passionate love, of fulfilment in total union with God.

Today the Sacred Heart is a symbol that tends to repel rather than attract. Too pre-Vatican II for many Roman Catholics, too Catholic for many Protestants, one would expect Anglicans to hold every possible position on the subject, if we think of it at all. But at some intuitive level, perhaps deeply buried, we still understand the heart of Christ as a refuge: "Rock of ages, cleft for me/Let me hide myself in thee." We are still that dove, invited by her Love to find protection in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff.

Unlike many in our day, Franciscans don't tend to equate "mediaeval" with "irrelevant and probably neurotic."

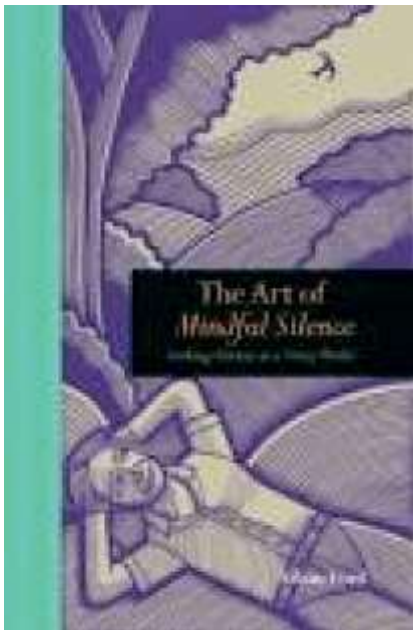


We trust wisdom that has been tested by time, and I believe the Sacred Heart, with its long history as a symbol of all the passionate love of Christ, the consuming fire of God's desire for us, is a devotion we'd do well to reclaim.

I once passed a house in which a woman was sitting at her kitchen table, drinking a cup of tea. She was the picture of serenity, and I wanted above all things to be that woman, to be serene. But my life was fast-paced and demanding, and I was exhausted. I finally came to believe that I just wasn't built for serenity. It seemed I was built instead for passion: not to burn steadily, but to flare up and burn out. Boy, did I burn out.

And yet. The day I learned that the spot on my mammogram was cancer, I made another discovery too: I had an unsuspected reserve of serenity that kept me from panicking. It kept me from brooding over my mortality, from worrying about the future, even from regretting the sabbatical I had longed for, while I went through surgery and radiation treatments instead.

Serenity took me completely by surprise, though perhaps it shouldn't have. I think it's simply the fruit of long years of seeking refuge in the heart of Christ, contemplating his limitless love, coming to know myself as "Beloved" in a place where there is no judgement, no shame. I didn't cleverly discover that place. Like a dove chased by falcons, I was driven to it in desperation. But in the Heart of Jesus, all paradoxes are resolved. So "passionate serenity" is a place to call home. And that is something I celebrate every day.



SEEKING SILENCE IN A NOISY WORLD - The Art of Mindful Solitude

by Adam Ford

This is a relatively short book around 135 pages in length. It is very easy to read and full of personal experiences. Most of us live in a noisy and frenetic world and the need to seek periods and places of silence can be very powerful. This little book not only provides plenty of help in developing inner silence but also warns the beginner to be careful when seeking silence. There are plenty of traps for the unwary. Adam starts the book with a paragraph on 'Interrogating the Silence' which theme he continues exploring throughout the book. It is an invaluable guide. Along with several other books on Contemplation I hope we shall be exploring many aspects of Contemplation in the forthcoming editions of The Carceri magazine.

Paul Alexander TSSF

Francis and Contemplation

by Nicholas Alan Worssam SSF

{Francis} would place before his eyes the One who is manifold and supremely simple. He would often ruminate inwardly with unmoving lips, and, drawing outward things inward, he raised his spirit to the heights. Thus he would direct all his attention and affection toward the one thing he asked of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming totally prayer.



This description of Francis at prayer comes from the supplement to the Life of St Francis by Thomas of Celano, this account being written about 20 years after the death of the saint. It reminds me of an exhortation to prayer from the hand of Clare of Assisi. Clare wrote in her Second Letter to her sister in religion Agnes of Prague: 'O most noble Queen, gaze upon him, consider him, contemplate him, as you desire to imitate him. If you suffer with him, you will reign with him. If you weep with him, you shall rejoice with him.' Clare often uses the image of a mirror, into which she gazes, but in which she sees her beloved Lord while she herself disappears. Clare uses the experience of transfigured sight as her primary pathway to being lost in the embrace of her divine lover.

Francis rarely speaks of contemplation in his own writings, although his voice can be clearly heard in the extended prayer which concludes his Earlier Rule: 'With our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, with our whole strength and fortitude, with our whole understanding, with all our powers, with every effort, every affection, every feeling, every desire and wish let us all love the Lord God ... who is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good.' It is a very distinctive style. Francis takes a word, such as 'whole' or 'every' or 'good' and swirls it around his mouth, tasting it with his tongue, savouring its sweetness on his lips. It is as if both have heard the psalmist exclaim 'O taste and see that the Lord is good' (Ps. 34:8), and between them Francis and Clare drink the metaphor to the dregs.

¹ From The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (1245 - 1247), by Thomas of Celano, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (FA:ED) ed. by Regis J. Armstrong et al, (New York, New City Press: 1999 - 2001), vol. 2, p.310

² Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, (New York, New City Press: 2006), p.42.

³ From the Earlier Rule (1221), Early Documents, vol.I, p.84f

There are several stories about Francis savouring the spoken word. In adjoining beds, Francis converts Bernard, the first brother to join his mission, by praying all night long: 'My God and my All'. At another time Francis prays like an Orthodox hermit, endlessly repeating 'God be merciful to me a sinner' until he knows in his bones that all his sins are forgiven. At Greccio, standing back to admire the first Christmas crib, Francis can't help but bleat the word 'Bethlehem', like a lamb at worship before the Lamb of God, and savours the name of Jesus on his lips.

Francis, like Clare, placed the bloody and bruised body of his saviour reigning from the tree before his eyes more often than the manifold and supreme simplicity of God. He prayed this way in his Office of the Passion, a riff on the psalms as words of Jesus, whispered until a final shout as he downed his Father's bitter cup.

'Not so much praying as becoming prayer' - perhaps that is the phrase to savour, to ruminate on, and for which to give thanks. Who prays anyway? Do we? Perhaps the simplicity is in a breathing together with the Spirit: in the affection of the parent for the child, the embrace of lover and beloved, the pouring of water into full-bodied win.



Reflections on a Windy Evening

by David Bagott

The aching agony of the ages caught in a wind-blown moment.

*As scattered leaves and hearts,
Long for meaning in the tumbled down places,
Where civilisation grasps out and cries,
Not yet in realisation that only in lament lies hope,
For places gone and creatures now dust.*

*And the wind blows.
Stormy seas seem to unleash the anger,
Of planet groaning and even the fungal
networks,
Weep deep in the darkness,
Crushed beneath the weight of progress,
And too much expectation.*

*No help in the hills, heavy and heaving.
Rivers swollen and in spate,
At the estuary, salt and sea,
And strangely the sweat of those,
Whose struggles marked the past,
Horse and man and Autumn calls of geese.*

*And the wise, who speak truth as power quakes,
And at times highways hinder,
Call out for humility and lament.
Stillness in the stormy struggle,
A raging loving silence louder than the storm,
A light within the darkness.*

IMMIGRANT by Lillian Howell

When you think of an immigrant, what do you see?

*A person like you? A person like me?
Or does your mind wander to refugees
The inscription on the Statue of Liberty
The 'huddled masses yearning to breathe free'*

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me'

*Unskilled, unwanted, unessential it seems
We're unessential in every way
Until you find yourself needing fruit for your soiree
Or someone to clean your hotel after your stay*

*Perhaps you realise the necessity of OUR labour
Only in times of YOUR need
A late night shift in a nursing home
We sit comforting your mum, your dad
As the sun rises and you aren't there
But we're there
We are there, and we care*

*Unessential, unwanted
'Go back to where you came from'*

*'Go back home'
Go back, but where?*

Where is home, exactly?

*We left our families and our friends
Separated in hope of a life that depends
On the kindness of strangers*

*Uprooted
Uplifted*

Transplanted

Here.

*Our lives are here AND there
Simultaneously
Torn in identity
Our sense of self torn to shreds
Ignored by society
Hanging by a thread
Ready to snap*



Mirror of Eternity - Cathy Cocks

We are looking for a better life

*Away from war
Away from strife
And we come to you
Begging
Help us*

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25: 35-36, 40

CONTEMPLATION IN ART

Catherine Cocks TSSF

Following Francis-tide 2021 I contacted the Contemplatives Group as I sensed a belonging with. In March this year I contacted General Chapter to ask if art could serve the life of the Third Order and it has gone from there. The TSSF artists group is new and we are still in the process of discerning how to be. Currently we have three active members, Jasmin Donlon - who writes and creates icons, Helen Fenham - who is exploring art as a tool for prayer and myself who has an interest in exploring visual forms of narrative theology. We would like to connect with other who would like to explore art as contemplative practice.

Painting Action and Contemplation is work that I created it at the end of my noviciate as I tried to understand how action and contemplation were part of the same charism.

'Woven in Prayer' was a meditative reflective exercise. I was reflecting on how the various strands of our prayers come together and are woven together in the Spirit's safe hands before being gifted back to the church and the world as a source of living water. The darker images represent the many major news stories that influenced my own prayers. The kola for the wildfires that swept Australia, the Trussell Trust logo and 'open' for all volunteers working over lockdown to ensure those in the greatest need had access to food. Captain Tom's medal for his being a beacon of hope and for the NHS workers and all who supported them. The circle for the Beirut explosion. The candle for a light to continue in all the churches who had to close, the virus for its impact on the world in so many ways, the tears for all those who could not be with family and friends who died, attend funerals yet mourned. As I worked a blackbird kept visiting the pyracantha to eat the ripening berries- every-time I looked up from my art there was this same small bird gathering that un-noticed harvest with joy.

'True contemplation always overflows into creation, it becomes a creative act' [Beverly Lanzetta quote p25 'The Artists Rule' Christine Valters Painter, Sorin Books, Notre Dame, USA] I hold a degree in Applied Theology from Queen's Foundation in Birmingham. I am a self-taught artist married to an Anglican priest who has chosen to live a more contemplative life. I can often be found deep in prayer amidst paints, fabrics, trails of theological books or simply sat lost in wonder in the colours and life that fill my garden. For me art can be a prophetic witness as it contains the potential of giving a glimpse of the kingdom which is often just beyond our worldly sight. I started to use art as a form of theological reflection whilst at Queen's. My Franciscan journey to profession caused me tension between the need of doing within the local church and whatever this was that was in formation that needed space to be. Covid acted as a brake. In the first two waves the last of my family died and that forced me to deeply question everything I was doing. Following the advice of our Area Formation Guardian I let the rule rest very lightly. I needed that time to both rest in God and test if I was simply an introvert who was imagining themselves to be a contemplative as an excuse to disengage from doing. By Francis-tide 2021 I was sure I was truly a contemplative who also happened to be an introvert. My creativity draws deeply from being. It is that very being that provides the space for a gift that can flow out. I started to paint, to embroider and sew and finally made the choice to turn and fully embrace the exemplar of Claire and offered my creative skills to serve the life of the Third Order.

Peace and all good,
Catherine [West Midlands Area]

Edge by Nicole Slee

*Come into the deep
where the ocean floor
shelves steeply away
under the thrust of your feet.*

*Swim out
beyond your depth.
Plunge into waters
cold and sweet.
Come into the free,
cross the boundaries
of home or foreign place,
out into open space
where earth and heaven meet
and the land recedes
beyond your sight.
Taste the wide air,
sharp and sweet.
Come over the edge,
where the rocky ledge
gives way to vastness,
sudden stark. Dive
into wild air, wide time,
beyond your sense.
Freefall into space,
sheer and sweet.
This is the leap
into life and death
way out beyond
all sense and sight and depth,
where the empty air
and water and abyss
call
Come.*

The Community of the Servants
of the Will of God

The Monastery of the Holy Trinity,
Crawley Down, Sussex

This mixed community, was founded by Fr.
Robert CSWG the year after William of
Glasshampton died in 1937.

It is rooted in the eremitical tradition of
the contemplative life, uniting silence,
work, and prayer in a simple lifestyle
based on the rule of St Benedict. They
are especially concerned with uniting the
traditions of East and West and have
developed their liturgy, Divine Office and
use of the Jesus Prayer accordingly.

Contemplative Life

by Fr. Colin CSWG

The contemplative is called to listen, to attend, to be watchful. This listening is primarily to the Word of God, heard by the ears and mind but rooted in the heart. This listening must bring about a response, a desire to do God's will as it is manifested in his Word. In this way, listening becomes a form of obedience. This listening requires some dedicated times of silence and stillness, but it is not confined to those times. The heart and mind must be trained to attend in all places and circumstances. This attention or watchfulness is twofold. In the first place, it is an attention to the presence of Christ, coming to meet us in a variety of ways. In the second, it is attentiveness to what is happening within, looking out for those thoughts of judgement or anger and meeting them with prayer and repentance, so that they do not turn into speech or action. In this way, the heart is purified, the presence of Christ more readily discerned and the will responds with humble obedience.

Obedience needs to be freed from the notion of having your own will crushed and just doing as you are told. There are plenty of monastic stories of heroic obedience and of elders giving junior monks silly things to do to test their obedience, but these are the exceptions. The commandments of Christ free us from our enslavement to sin and our preoccupation with our own will, which come from fear of death, and enable us to discover our true freedom in the service of God and other people. Obedience thus becomes profoundly liberating. The Second Collect for Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer captures it beautifully:

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,
in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life,
whose service is perfect freedom.

This way of service as an exercise of freedom finds its source, of course, in Jesus Christ, who came, not to be served but to serve and to give up his life a ransom for many and tells us to do the same - 'whoever would be first must be last of all and servant of all.'

A religious community that seeks to be contemplative must foster this watchful listening. This is done in its times of corporate worship and in opportunities for solitude, but it must pervade the whole of the life of the community. In his Conferences, Saint John Cassian quotes Abba Moses:

'The goal of our profession is the Kingdom of God. Our direction, that is our means, is purity of heart, for without that it is impossible for anyone to reach that goal. If we set our sights in this direction, we will be safe on our path. If we let our attention wander a little from it, we should immediately turn it back to that direction, and bring it back again to its proper path.'

Our own *Community Rule* says this:

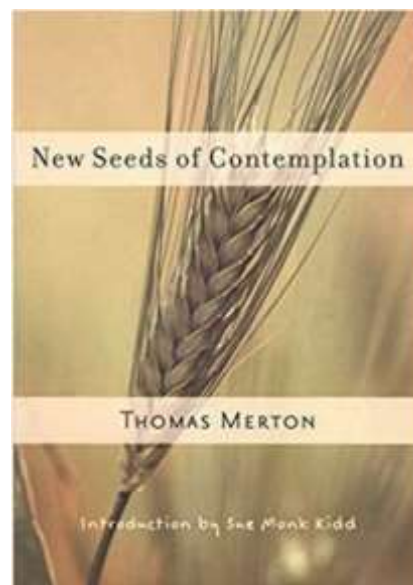
'The enclosure should thus become a still centre in the heart of the world, where the Community is always waiting on God, and invoking his Holy Spirit, so as to embrace the whole world in its life of prayer and obedience to his will.'

Watchfulness makes this personal, so that the heart becomes a still centre, always waiting on God and embracing the whole world in compassionate prayer.

NEW SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION

by Thomas Merton

Recently the RC friar, Daniel P. Horan OFM, wrote a book on Thomas Merton entitled, *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton* (Ave Maria Press, 2014) which led me to re-visit Merton's great work, *Seeds of Contemplation* which was published in 1961. Originally entitled 'New Seeds of ...' the Guardian referred to it as 'a classic of contemplative and mystical religion (offering an} abundance of profound and shrew wisdom', and that commendation I still find correct. In its opening chapter Merton writes: 'Contemplation is the highest expression of man's (sic) intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully alive..... It is a vivid realisation of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source. Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source... For in contemplation we know by "unknowing." Or, better, we know beyond all knowing or "unknowing".' He writes with passion about how, as a member of a great contemplative order built on the foundations of the ancient Benedictine rule, he discovered his vision of life in Christ. That vision contemplates the way individuals, the church and society are called to find their true life through Christ.



This is less a book about contemplative prayer and more about contemplative living; but I wonder what 'contemplative prayer' might be if it doesn't lead to a change in the way we live? That was certainly true of St Francis. This isn't a book about the 'how', it's a book about the 'why' and, if you've not already read this book, do so! It offers profound wisdom for the vocation of any Tertiary.

John-Francis Friendship TSSF

St Margaret of Cortona (1297) Third Order Penitent



Action and Contemplation
Cathy Cocks

God of mercy, give us grace that we may truly repent of our sins following the example of your servant, Margaret of Cortona, and that, by a living faith, we may obtain full forgiveness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After confessing her sinfulness and lack of obedience, she records these words that the Lord spoke to her:

"If you long to know Me, begin by loving Me, your Creator, with an ardent love; then, from the bottom of your heart love all creatures, not even excluding infidels from your affections, for you should sympathise in their perdition. You know that I have created and redeemed them by many torments."



THE NAKED NOW - Learning to See as the Mystics See by Richard Rohr

The title was as interesting as the book itself was. Richard Rohr sums up the message of the book in his Introduction.

"All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing. Without this balance, religion invariably becomes arrogant, exclusionary, and even violent. All light must be informed by darkness, and all success by suffering. St John of the Cross called this Luminous Darkness. Contemplation is a non-dualistic way of seeing the moment. It is living in the naked now, the 'sacrament of the present moment,' that will teach us how to actually experience our experiences. When you can be present, you will know the Real Presence."

A breath of fresh air, which encourages us to seek God anywhere and everywhere. Tony Ross TSSF

A Prayer for Vanuatu - but truly for everywhere

Holy God, Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them: -

We join with the Christian women of Vanuatu in praise to you

- for fertile land and fresh air
- for the sweet melody of the birds, for land animals and the mysterious creatures of the deep
- and for the sounds of children playing.

We thank you for the example of the Christian women of Vanuatu

- for their trust in you and
- for their fortitude as they struggle to provide food for their families and education for their children
- things that we in this country so often take for granted.

We ask your forgiveness for our thoughtlessness, our carelessness and our lack of foresight which has led to the pollution of the environment and the current climate emergency, and is causing irrevocable damage to Vanuatu and to other low-lying Pacific islands.

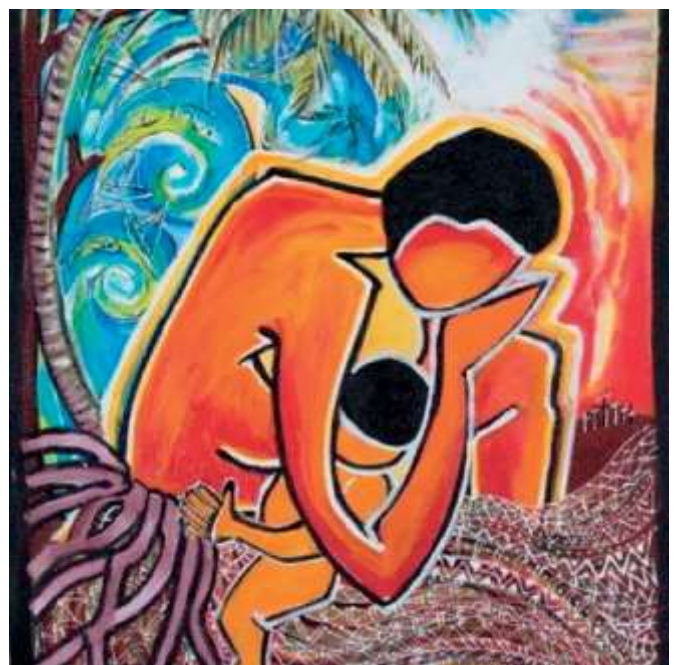
We pray that you will help us

- to listen more carefully to you and to your Word
- to build our homes and communities on its strong foundations
- and to work together towards a world where resources are used more sustainably; where justice and peace reign; and where all your creatures can live in safety and harmony.

We pray in the name of Jesus

Amen.

(Elizabeth Burroughs)



Eremo delle Carceri

The Hermitage of the Prisons

The name 'Carceri' was chosen to remember Le Carceri, the Hermitage about three miles further up the mountain from Assisi, where Francis would retreat for solitude and prayer. Francis and the first of his followers would climb the steep mountain path to a large wooded area where a rocky grotto provided a place to pray and sleep..



The name "de carceribus" comes from the cell-like hovels where hermits, such as as Francis, led an austere life far from the world.

Carceri is one of most significant places of Franciscan tradition. Here Francis and his companions were "imprisoned" to purify themselves from sin.



This is reputed to be the Grotto used by St Francis, which is now an integral part of the buildings of the Hermitage

Theme of next edition:
'Contemplation and Movement'

If you would like to contribute to magazine with article, poetry, photographs or art, please send your entry to the Chairman, Paul Alexander, at plalexander@yahoo.com before 15th January 2023

Are you interested in receiving digital or printed version of The Carceri?

Contact: Canon Tony Ross TSSF, contemplatives@gmail.com



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