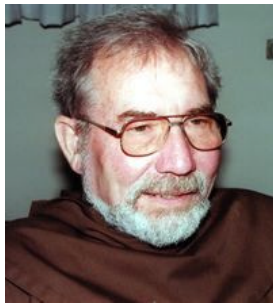


Minister's Letter



Brother Daniel SSF, Minister General of the First Order Brothers, writes:

Dear Friends,

This will be my last turn to write the Minister's Letter for franciscan, as I end my term of office on 30 June. Due to the time it takes to collect and collate the various articles for franciscan I am writing this in early January. We have had for Australia a rather cool Christmas, but things are heating up and the humidity is on the rise. There is also the usual crop of bush fires raging in various parts of the country. Although, believe it or not, Melbourne actually had snow at Christmas, yet some of our politicians do not think we have problems with climate change!

Due to the cool weather we had a very good Christmas, although for me it was tinged with sadness. In December I had made my usual visit to Papua New Guinea and just returned to Brisbane when we had a phone call to say that Brother Justus had died in the Jimi, (a part of the PNG Highlands). It was a shock as only a few days previously I had shared a meal with Justus in his house at Newton Theological College where he was the Principal. He had talked so enthusiastically of his plans for the new year at the College, and was so looking forward to the holiday visit he was to make to the Jimi visiting the home village of one of the students. A meal with Justus was usually an experience as he had a number of quite strange recipes; this time it was very good.

So it was with a heavy heart that I returned to PNG to help make the various funeral arrangements. It was just as all the arrangements had come together that we had a call from Popondetta telling us that Brother Timothy Joseph had died in his home village of Afore in the Managlas. My sadness was compounded as, due to Christmas traffic, there was no way we could get a flight to Popondetta to attend Timothy's funeral.

During Justus' funeral the local Hapkido Martial Arts group with which Justus had worked, were the pall bearers, and one of them spoke very movingly. He described Justus as a very simple man. This brought me up with a start. What do we mean when we call someone simple?

During my pondering of this idea of simplicity I remembered one conference I was taking part in and was asked by one of the OFM Friars what I thought was the mark of the Society of Saint Francis. After a few moments I said I thought it was Humility - 'Yes', he said, 'What I have observed is that that is one of the gifts of the Anglican Franciscan.' Now to this idea I would add the idea of Simplicity. Neither prevents us from being involved in the common ordinary things and issues of life. Which is a wonderful thing to say, for Jesus our Saviour, and our Father Francis who followed his example, were the sort of people who ministered alongside people. The mystery of the humility of God, Ilia Delio tells us in her book 'The Humility of God', was grasped by

Francis through spending long hours in prayer. As Francis entered into the mystery we call God, he discovered two principal features of God: the overflowing goodness and the humility of God. This surely is our mission in this world, even if it is so costly that it costs a cross.

Pax et bonum