Community Routes

Franciscan ways
Helen Julian writes:
Richard Rohr is an American Franciscan friar with an important international ministry of speaking and writing, as well as the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As part of his 2010 UK Tour, the Third Order organised a two day conference in central London, and four sisters and a brother were fortunate enough to be able to attend. Several brothers also attended other events, in Oxford and Birmingham.

Many of those packing into St James' Church, Piccadilly, were tertiaries, but others, both Christian and non Christian, had come to hear Richard speak.

He took four themes - non-dual thinking; creation; emerging Christianity; and action and contemplation today - and in wide-ranging talks, and considered responses to questions asked, opened up the themes in thought-provoking and stimulating ways, always with a Franciscan flavour.

It's impossible to summarise such an event; but I was excited by his identification of both the Franciscan movement and the emerging church as forms of 'alternative orthodoxy' - not a rejection of the past, but a rediscovery of what is at its heart. This might mean moving to 'the inside of the edge'.

Another key idea for me was that the incarnation actually began not 2000 years ago, when God became human, but with the big bang, when God materialised. Hence all creation is inherently sacred - a central Franciscan intuition.

And it was good to hear someone else say that if you try to live a life which combines action and contemplation you can often feel as though you're not doing either properly, certainly by the standards of those who focus on one or the other. Franciscans often feel torn between the two dimensions, tempted to major on one at the expense of the other. These two days certainly helped to encourage me to persevere in the difficult but life-giving task of combining the two; and enthused me once again for the very particular insights of the Franciscan way. Judging by the buzz of conversations at breaks others too were encouraged, enthused and refreshed.

A Mission in Walsgrave
Chris CSF writes:
From 16 to 26 September, Chris, Gerardo and John Gibson TSSF were involved in 'Mission 2 Grow', a Parish event in Walsgrave in the Diocese of Coventry. The parish had had a Franciscan mission 25 years ago, and those who remembered it were keen to have a similar experience again. The main focus of the mission was house groups, where the people were encouraged to discuss life issues and the presence of Christ in their lives.

The three missioners spent a day in the local primary school talking to the children in each class about someone we greatly admired, and the children were asked to do the same. We spent lots of time making visits to individuals in their homes or in hospital and residential homes. This one to one contact, I always feel, is so valuable and meaningful both for the visitor and the person we visit.
Sometimes during a mission we put tremendous energy and preparation into one event. On this occasion it happened to be a five minute rhyming conversation, which was written for the three of us to perform at a talent show on the final Saturday. Whenever I suggested a rehearsal, the others groaned. But in all aspects we got on really well as a team, and I valued having two helpful enthusiasts as my team members.

Seeing the parish from the outside, as it were, we were able to ask people what they valued and hoped for in their worship and the ongoing life of the parish. I was delighted to see a good turn out for the final evening meeting, "Where do we go from here?" The people's thoughts and ideas formed the basis for our feedback report to the parish. I felt this had really been the people's mission, an event which they had worked for and would hopefully want to repeat in another 25 years' time.

**Live the Word**

From 25-29 October, the first Walsingham Bible Week took place at the Shrine of Our Lady. Every year many thousands of people come to Walsingham to discover the ways that God's love impacts on their lives through shared worship, times of quiet and the Sacraments of the Church. This exciting new event offered 180 people the opportunity to focus on this experience of encountering the Lord particularly through the truths revealed in Holy Scripture.

Each day commenced with a keynote address led by Bishop Lindsay Urwin OGS, the Shrine Administrator and Meg Evening (formerly of CSMV and now living the single consecrated life). The focus for the week was the Pastoral Epistles of Saint Paul to Timothy and Titus. Following the address, Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament provided the prayerful centre to each day, and the space to reflect on the Lord's Word in His Presence. During the afternoons various seminars were available. Br Paschal led a seminar focusing on finding wisdom in the company of Jesus through the Psalms, and Br Maximilian offered an introduction to praying with the Scriptures through Lectio Divina. Adam Kendry, Head of Divinity at Ardingly College, explored the Creation stories and the theme of Covenant. A daily sung Mass preceded supper which, as with all the meals, was shared in the refectory, ensuring plenty of opportunity for fellowship within the full timetable.

The evenings concluded with a liturgy in the Shrine Church, wherein the Scriptural theme was further explored through Tuesday's meditation on Our Lady, a liturgy of healing and reconciliation including the laying on of hands, anointing and confession on Wednesday and a rousing Songs of Praise with testimonies on Thursday.

Truly a dynamic encounter with Christ through Word and Sacrament, this is now an annual fixture at the Shrine.

**An Urban Friary on Tyneside**

At the Annual Brothers' Meeting at Pentecost 2009 the decision was made to seek to open a new urban house in the North East of England that would have a role in Novice Formation. After discussions and explorations with dioceses in that region, Alan Michael has now been instituted and inducted as Vicar of St Peter's Cowgate in Newcastle upon Tyne. In time it is hoped he will be joined in the
vicarage by another professed brother and also by up to two novices who will be able to gain experience of urban ministry and undertake various placements in the city. The parish of St Peter's is situated in an Urban Priority Area, straddling a busy arterial road for the city: the congregation is enthusiastic about the brothers’ hopes to build links and a ministry with the particularly challenging area on the far side of that road.

CSF moves to Lincolnshire
CSF now has a new home in the village of Metheringham, Lincolnshire. The house was purchased in the middle of the year, but as it had by then been empty for 12 months, the brambles had rather taken over, including invading the drains. Damp course work also revealed that part of the house had been built without proper foundations, so the place took on the appearance of a builder’s yard for a few months, while the necessary repairs were undertaken. Liz oversaw the building work and assisted by chipping plaster off walls, cleaning and painting. Judith Ann and Maureen moved there in October. The house was blessed by the Bishop of Lincoln on 16 November. The local people as well as diocesan personnel have been very welcoming. It is hoped that the house will become a centre for spirituality as well as various other forms of ministry according to the gifts of the sisters there. The house is set in large grounds which include trees belonging to an old woodland. There is room for one resident guest and up to 24 people in a day group.

Round up
Peter made his profession in First Vows on 23 October and has moved to Alnmouth from Hilfield. Alan Michael has moved from Alnmouth to Cowgate, where he was inducted as Vicar on 17 November. Jason Robert is the new Guardian of Alnmouth. Martin John has moved to Hilfield after a three months’ stay in the Solomon Islands. Athanasius Faifu, from the Solomon Islands, is spending six months in the UK, based mainly at the friary in Canning Town.

Korean Brothers Stephen and Lawrence made their Profession in Life Vows as members of the Society of Saint Francis on 31 October in Seoul Anglican Cathedral. They are now part of the Australia - New Zealand Province, who held their Provincial Chapter Meeting at Gangchon Friary in Korea after the Profession. The next issue of franciscan will include photos of the event.

In Assisi, the friary is moving to new accommodation nearby, so will be closed to guests until 1 January 2011.

St Francis Convent at Compton Durville has now closed and the sisters are no longer resident there.