Simon Cocksedge  
Francis of Assisi - Living Prayer Today  
ISBN 0262 799 X  
Grove Books, 2010, £3.95

How can we live a life of prayer in the midst of all our other commitments? Simon Cocksedge, a member of the Third Order and also a GP doctor, a teacher and a priest, gives us an answer by showing how St Francis' activity in preaching the gospel, caring for creation, proclaiming peace and living as the Poverello flowed essentially from his life of prayer, from a heart focussed intently on God.

This succinct booklet, just 25 pages, is one in the Grove Series on Spirituality. It may be short but this is definitely not Franciscanism dumbed down; it's full of quotations from the Franciscan sources and it has a real grasp of what made Francis tick. After a first chapter on the life of Francis, Simon moves on to ‘Francis on Prayer’ with examples of how scripture, solitude, creation and constancy were all elements of the way he prayed, and then explains how that prayer was lived out through interaction with the world around him.

The last part of the book gives examples of Franciscan prayer being lived in our world today: the Hilfield Peace and Environment Initiative, Br Mychal Judge OFM (the New York Fire Department Chaplain who was a victim of the 9/11 atrocity), the prophetic theologian Leonardo Boff, the UN-based Franciscans International, Franciscans in the three orders, and the growing number of contemporary Franciscan hermits. He shows us that following Francis in the way of the gospel is never about being either a person with a deep commitment to prayer or someone who lives radically in the world, but about being both/and. Prayer and action go together - they are essential to each other. This little book is a gift to all of us who are struggling to find that balance.  

Samuel SSF

Dennis Woodbridge TSSF  
Franciscan Gold  
ISBN 9780 6465 1315 7

Published by The Third Order, Society of St Francis, Province of Australia, Papua New Guinea and East Asia, 2009, 124 pp, $A 35.00 incl p&p

This is a fascinating account of the story of the Third Order of Saint Francis in Australia, Papua New Guinea and East Asia over the past fifty years. It begins with the admitting in 1959 of Betty Hay, the first Tertiary in the Province, by Brother Geoffrey, and describes how the Order has grown to a membership of over 250 in Australia and 80 in Papua New Guinea today. There is a brief description of the origins of the Franciscan family and of the development of Franciscan orders in the Anglican Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Bishop Strong of New Guinea met Br Algy Robertson in Cambridge in 1947 which led, some ten years later, to the foundation of the friaries in Port Moresby and Popendetta. The Third Order soon followed especially when the author became chaplain at the Martyrs Memorial School. The inspirational
visits of Br Charles and Br Michael to Australia, in the fifties and sixties, are outlined, and the consequent beginnings of the First Order at Brookfield.

The Third Order grew through some decisive encounters, throughout Australia, with members of the First Order, and later, as the Third Order began to become more independent, through personal influences, which are well described. It also reveals the tension between the original spirit and spontaneous joy in the movement, and the need for more organization as the Order grew in numbers. For most of the time the Order is a "community in dispersion", because the tyranny of distance makes it impossible to meet. However every three years or so they meet for a General Chapter and Conference where they experience a heightened sense of what the Order is about. There are some interesting accounts of the outcomes of these gatherings. There are also accounts given of the development of the order in different States of Australia.

The final chapters outline the development of the Order in Papua New Guinea, where there have been encouraging signs of new growth. There is as well an account of the Order in South East Asia. There are also references made to the relationship between the Third Order and Roman Catholic Orders, where at many points there is a warm friendship developing. This is a well researched account of fifty years, with a useful list of internet and other sources. It is indeed Franciscan Gold emphasizing the distinctive features of a Franciscan lifestyle. Those interested in the growth of the Third Order throughout the world will find this a good read and a valuable resource book. John Hall-Matthews TSSF