Community Routes

Community life: the young...

**Novices together**

*Desmond Alban writes:*

Novices at Alnmouth and from the Order of the Holy Paraclete at Whitby have come together for study and formation no less than three times over the past year. The process began last October when we took one day of our annual CSF/SSF Novice Experience, held for the first time at Alnmouth, to visit St Hilda’s Priory. In January the OHP Sisters invited the three novices then at Alnmouth to come to the Priory for a residential Enneagram Workshop. I’m told they did learn something about the Enneagram, though a major highlight appears to have been their work together on building a snow nun, complete with veil, as the workshop took place in the depths of that harsh winter. Finally, in balmier weather, Alnmouth Friary hosted Samantha and Helena, with their Novice Guardian Heather Francis for a ‘return visit’ for five days in May. Alan Michael and I led two days’ study on the liturgy of the Mass and the Office and the sisters were also able to visit Holy Island and other sites of spiritual and historical interest north of the Tees.

... and the not-so-young

Two of the brothers and one sister turned 90 this year. Celebrations were held during May for Reginald, in Canterbury, for Arnold in Plaistow and for Cecilia in San Francisco. Ronald remains the eldest member of the First Order.

**Brother Ronald SSF**

*David Jardine writes:*

Over the past couple of years, at the invitation of Brother Samuel, I have been able to visit Brother Ronald in Scotland. He is in the Three Towns Nursing Home in Stevenston near Saltcoats in Ayrshire. I usually bring a friend with me and we sail from Larne to Troon, and then take the train to Stevenston. Ronald is now 97 years of age. He is almost completely blind, and has very little hearing left. He spends most of the day sitting in his chair praying. Yet in spite of these serious disabilities Ronald has never lost his lovely nature. To make yourself heard you have to shout into his ear. Even that is often not enough, but Ronald never becomes impatient. He just smiles, puts his hand behind his ear and invites you to repeat what you have said. The staff of the home seem to admire him greatly and some of them will tell you that he is the most peaceful person in the home.

Ronald has had a great ministry in the Society of St. Francis. Even today, by the way he faces old age and disability, he is still a great witness to all who meet him. I believe he is a great man. Please remember him in your prayers.
The annual meeting of the Permanent International Ecumenical Consultation of Religious took place at Bose, Italy in April. Joyce was one of the two representatives of the Conference of Leaders of Anglican Religious Communities in UK. The other representative was Fr Jonathan Ewer SSM. There were four representatives of the Superiors General of the Roman Catholic Church and Br Guido of the resident ecumenical community at Bose. The meeting has been under review due to fewer representatives attending and the recognition of a general lessening of energy in the present ecumenical climate. In past years the meeting met at venues in different countries in Europe and USA each year. The Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas, some members of communities of the European Reformed Protestant tradition, deaconesses of the German Lutheran Church and the Orthodox tradition have also been represented in former years.

However it was decided that after review and evaluation the group should meet each year at Bose, a location that is ideal in being a welcoming, warm and prayerful ecumenical community. Discussions centred around three papers: one by Cardinal Walter Kaspar (Harvesting the fruits and The future of ecumenism), another by Archbishop Rowan Williams (The ecumenical glass is genuinely half-full) and a summary of the history of the ecumenical movement by Rev’d Mary Tanner. Out of all the discussions a Statement of Purpose was written making recommendations to the sponsoring organisations, some of which were: to give some priority to the subject of ecumenism in their future conferences and to develop formation guidelines that promote ecumenism through the witness of the religious life. It was unanimously agreed that this Consultation was considered an extremely helpful aid in bringing to the forefront of the religious life the Gospel imperative that all might be one.

**Who leads us into life**

22 May 2010 was the occasion of the Farewell Eucharist at Compton Durville. Bishop Peter Maurice, the Bishop of Taunton presided and Damian SSF preached. During the intercessions candles in front of the altar were lit by a friend of the community and an ex-sister, the banner below the candles having been inscribed with the words, “Who leads us into life”. This phrase sums up the Community’s trust in God and the reason for the closure of the house at Compton Durville, despite the sadness around that event - ultimately, it is for the on-going life of CSF that the move is being made. Friends came from all over the UK to remember and give thanks to God for the times spent at
Compton Durville, the tea time before the Eucharist giving opportunity to catch up with one another.

The grass is greener...

Hugh writes:

On 5 June we celebrated UN World Environment Day at Hilfield. In the Recreation Room we put up a display of the UN posters on this year’s theme of biodiversity, and on the wall was a continuous slide show, also from the UN website. I registered us with the UN. About 20 tertiaries were present for the day. After introductions Richard introduced us to the biodiversity of our wild flower meadow. He told us about Yellow Rattle, a plant that is parasitical on the grass, leading to a greater chance for our orchids to thrive. He introduced this plant from an ancient meadow at the Kingcombe centre, a few miles away.

The day continued with an environment liturgy in chapel, devised by Paul and Robert, members of the Hilfield Community.

Thanks to Anne Bennett-Shaw for the pictures of us in the meadow.

FI and the UPR

The full title of this section is 'Franciscans International and the United Nations Universal Periodic Review'. One of the ways in which we can be involved in the work of Franciscans International is by contributing to their submission to the UPR. This has been put in place by the UN Human Rights Council, and every country which is a member of the UN is reviewed 4 yearly with regard to its enactment of human rights. It is an opportunity for non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) to draw the attention of the international community to certain human rights problems which might otherwise be forgotten.

If you observe a situation in which you consider there is inadequate recognition of the human rights of individuals, a brief description of the event can be submitted to FI for inclusion in their report to the UN. With regard to the Franciscan family, it is helpful if one person, or a committee, in each country, be in charge of co-ordinating the collection of information that is sent to FI. The final report for each country is very succinct, but information needs to be available to support the claims made in it and all the information needs to be checked for accuracy, be justifiable and true. There is great value in the reports noting actual occurrences of neglect of human rights.

The UK was last reviewed in 2008 so the next one is due in 2012. More information and the dates of the review are available on the website: www.ohchr.org
**Greyfriars appeal**
Greyfriars, Canterbury, the home of the first Franciscans in England, has a fund-raising appeal under way to provide for much needed repairs, including that of the roof. The brothers at Canterbury use the chapel daily.

**Round up**
Barnabas Francis and Vaughan have moved from Alnmouth to Glasshampton. Matthew has moved from Glasshampton to Alnmouth. Maximilian was ordained Deacon by the Bishop Protector at Hilfield on July 1st.