



Confirmands with Bishop Jo and Youth Pastor Megan



The Franciscan

Advent & Christmas 2009
St Francis of Assisi Parish Newsletter

Contents

Foreword	2
From the Rector's Desk	3
Family Matters Update	5
Youth Ministry	7
Oasis Report	9
Two Testimonies	12
Parish Retreat	15
Understanding Mark 6 : 3 – 6	18
From the Parish Registers	18
John's Imagination	19
Petition	22
A Tribute to the Meiklejohns	23
Blessing of the Animals	25
A Man Dancing	28

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Foreword

The shops began playing Christmas carols at the beginning of November. It is now the end of November and Advent is upon us. Our final issue of the year commemorates both Advent and Christmas, because when exams are over the pews start to empty as Franciscans depart on holiday. We hope you will take this issue with you as it reviews parish events over the past few months and contains several articles that will give you food for thought. My thanks to all the contributors. Please don't stop writing – I'm already looking for contributions to the Easter issue. And Fr Timothy would like four issues next year instead of just three...

The Mission Zimbabwe team recently returned from a third mission. We are not publishing their diary this time as it has been made available elsewhere. If you did not receive it as a printout at church or as an email attachment, you can access it on their website at www.missionzimbabwe.co.za.

Jill Daugherty, Editor

From the Rector's Desk

My dear Parishioners,



You may well be astonished to know that this article had its origins in August (I was determined to get in on the Christmas 'thing' before Brooklyn Mall this year). Somehow I 'knew' what needed to be written for this edition of our Franciscan.

There seems to be a general consensus that this winter was cooler than those which a usually moderate Pretoria experiences. But, as ever, not everyone feels the same way about this turn of events. There are those who say a cold winter is essential to 'kill off the bugs' (I don't know – they may kill off a whole lot, but they also seem to bring a fair number of new ones into play, as a form of 'compromise'?). And then there are others who vehemently disagree: for them, winter is a miserable season – far too long, with very little to recommend it, to boot.

I pretty much have a foot in both camps (as ever the Anglican!). I do love the sun – it's easier to get up early for my constitutional walk and swim. Also I love the colours, sights and smells of spring/summer. It 'drips' with the essence of new life. What did Thomas Hardy say? *Amid the oozing, fat ferments of spring* (or something to that effect). Wonderful! The season proclaims vividly and profoundly that God is Real and that God is Supreme over all things.

But I also enjoy winter (a little). Winter brings with it its own 'secrets'. It reminds me that there's a world of which I am, to all intents and purposes, oblivious. The world of nature. In winter, nature's 'factories' close down. Plants and animals, like humans, 'rest awhile' and build up strength and energy for the 'busy' season ahead. Remarkably, winter (dreary as it may seem at one level), also speaks of the profundity of God's creative life, even in the midst of this 'slowing down'. Winter proclaims God as vividly as summer does. Not only do the seasons complement each other, but more than that, they **need**

each other. The one is totally dependent on the other. Without the 'hiddenness' of the one (winter), the glorious 'reawakening' of the other (summer) would be lost.

As do the Church's Calendar seasons? Similarly, each brings with it something amazing. Each seems to come at just the right time and each teaches much about God, our faith, the Church and ourselves.

Advent and Christmas are the two 'seasons' soon to be upon us. Like winter and spring they too 'need' and 'complement' each other. Both are used by God to speak to us of the 'things of God'.

Advent reminds me of winter – a time of waiting. A season of anticipation. A season of being quiet and still (dormant) – as we trust that, even in His 'hiddenness', God is working with us. The purpose of Advent speaks to me of a 'sombreness' (appropriately, its liturgical colour is purple), in that it is pregnant with anticipation. It requires trust on our part – trust that something glorious is coming soon, which will burst forth from the quiet waiting and anticipating.

Advent is God's gift of 'winter' to us in our spiritual journey. We can enter into a time of preparedness. A time to stop, reflect and listen. A time of repentance and 'stock taking', as we await the Greatest Gift – that of the Incarnation – which Christmas declares, with all its colours and sights and sounds.

The joy of these seasons are that they equip us to avoid the ridiculous momentums the world thrusts upon us – as it careers off on its own very hectic and secular 'pilgrimage' to Bethlehem. Advent and Christmas (like all events on the Christian Calendar) create a 'breathing space' where we can stand still awhile, catch our breath, and wonder anew at the glory of God.

May each of us make the time, and create the space, to use aright these seasons this year. Let us 'rest awhile' in the preparatory soil of Advent and celebrate, with appropriate joy and participation, in the 'splendour' and exuberance of Christmas. *For unto us a child is born – unto us a Son is given.* What a splendid gift!

May you have a blessed Christmas in 2009.

Father Timothy

Editor's Note: I 'googled' the Hardy quote and found it in chapter 24 of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. It describes spring in Froom Vale:

Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of Froom Vale...

FAMILY MATTERS UPDATE

The candles of Family Life

have continued to burn in the Church, signifying a constant focus on our purpose.

Fostering effective communication



Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your hearts be remade and your whole nature be transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God and to know what is good, acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12 : 2)

Above are two quotations, one from our last report to the congregation, and the other from the September '09 *Ad Laos* written by Archbishop Thabo, in which he talked of the importance of building quality communication within the family, especially between parents and child.

Communication is a two way process. Only by listening attentively to the other party to the conversation, and both understanding the points being made, will a situation result in which common ground can be established.

Your Family Matters team have carefully addressed this necessity and from this a number of important activities have become part of our parish life.

A **Men's breakfast** has been successfully piloted, and now forms part of the House Group, or Bible study fellowship groups. See the information leaflet at the back of the church.

The **Marriage Course**, which focuses strongly on the effectiveness of two-way communication in marriage, has been successfully piloted, and the first fully fledged course run. Feedback from participants in the course confirms it to have been a great success. It will continue as an integral element of the Parish Mission.

The various elements of communication in the parish were carefully examined and the conclusion reached that the entire process to date has been one-way! Feedback systems were absent.

The only process of allowing two-way conversation is either the **House Group** or the **Home Visiting programme**. The latter has not been successful in recent years for a variety of reasons. But the need exists. A new approach was needed, to reach everybody in the parish. From this emerged the **TeleVisiting programme** using the technology in our most common link – the telephone.

A pilot run was made in September, with a team of 10 volunteers out of a larger group who had offered to become TeleVisitors. Several logistical hurdles emerged and these are in the process of removal – you will have experienced the clipboards circulating at services aimed at confirming the accuracy of the Parish Roll. The programme will restart in January 2010.

The opening greeting in the phone call is '*Hello, I'm From St Francis. How are you – St Francis cares – can you spare a few minutes to chat?*' The predominant response was '*Yes, of course.*'

This elicited several interesting reactions, generally favourable and encouraging the continuation of the programme. Feedback was received, which was then passed on to the clergy. Some cases of need have arisen, which could receive attention, and one person contacted was delighted to have been contacted in this manner, saying it was the first 'parish visit' she had received since she had been a member – and she is a founder member of St Francis!

From similar feedback, it emerged that in certain families, there exists the particular problem of communication, mainly with young adults. Open discussion in these instances is not always easy and for this reason, these young people seek solace in movements such as our own Youth Group, and other less suitable groups of peers. This is a matter urgently requiring attention and the only way it will be possible is if parents of young persons examine the solutions.

Parents with young family still at home who are prepared to participate in forming a group to address this issue are encouraged to submit their names to either Father Tim or Megan Winn.

Hank Doeg

Youth Ministry – an Appeal for Involvement

I have been working in youth ministry for the last ten years and on a permanent basis for the last three. This in no way makes me an expert, but a big thing I have come to realise is that teenagers and youth ministry need adults to be involved. Teenagers love encouragement and exhortation from older and wiser people, but the youth ministry at St Francis has only a handful of young adults who themselves are just out of their own teens. Many teenagers in our youth ministry come from dysfunctional and broken homes and, more importantly, their parents are not necessarily Christians. Therefore the youth come with different values, many questions and little adult support in their faith development.

I therefore want to encourage your involvement with the youth. There is an excellent book by Mark de Vries called *Family based Youth Ministry*, which is very interesting and highly informative. De Vries concludes that the primary cause of the current crisis in youth ministry is the way our culture and our Churches have systematically isolated young people from the very relationships that are most likely to lead them to maturity. We expect teenagers to grow up, yet we isolate them to spend time with other teenagers only. With the inspiring start of Family Matters at St Francis, the youth have come up with many new ideas to get all ages involved in youth ministry.

Our parents' evening was a huge success and encouraged us to know that we are on the right path and slowly gaining support. Our insert in the pew leaflet appealing for help has not been as well received, so I am once again asking you to get involved, even in a small way. If you don't have the time to get actively involved, your contacts and resources will be warmly welcomed:

- If you are passionate about prayer, there is a prayer roster you can fill in to devote as much time as you can, from the comfort of your home, to pray over and for the youth group as they meet on a Sunday evening.
- If you are passionate about a particular subject or topic, come and share it with the youth.
- If you are passionate about hospitality, host a youth Bible study meeting, or a pool party, or any other function, by offering your home as a venue.

- If you are passionate about teenagers and relationship building, there are many avenues for you to explore: join us on a Sunday evening, help out with confirmation classes, on camps or in mentoring a youth member.

We have started contacting parents informing them about what is happening in our youth ministry, as well as finding out about their family lives and where they might need support, prayer and care. The youth have tried to involve the adults, but there is only so much they can do on their own. I would like to leave you with this challenge from Mark de Vries:

Unfortunately, the last place many teenagers find people open and available is in churches. Instead of a witness to their lives, they are offered programmes and activities. Yet we know that the people who've had the greatest impact on our lives, the people who have changed and shaped us, are the people who were present to us. People who received us in the midst of our pain as well as our breakthroughs.

What kind of home do you want our youth to experience St Francis as?
Megan Winn





The second term extended well into the July holidays with the awesome Lion King Holiday Club run congruently with Brooklyn Methodist (the Methlicans). Our themes for each day were *Family and friends, Lies and temptations, Who am I, Who do we listen to,* and finally on day 5 *Taking our place in the pride.* Every day was filled with different arts and crafts and memory verses to learn. Our postmen were Timon and Pumbaa, who brought letters to the kids every day. On the Thursday evening we had a parents' evening where we all (parents included) spent some time in worship and the children got an opportunity to tell their parents what they had learnt all week. The leaders taught the kids the Hoe-Down from the Hannah Montana movie. (It's quite a complicated dance routine – go check it out on Youtube and see if you can follow it!) We were so impressed that everyone, young and old ;), could do it by the end of the week, and the kids begged us every day to do it at least 3 times! We had a wonderful week and all the leaders worked tirelessly. Thank you so much to all the St. Francis families who supported us.

During the last term, Youth once again was not at a standstill, but a railway station! Six of us went to the Chozen Conference in Edenvale Eastside Community Church. The travelling there and back every day was the best part, as we chatted about our thoughts on what was said and discussed, and we then brainstormed. We decided our youth group needed a purpose statement – why do we as Oasis Youth Group exist? We first looked at changing our name, but decided that our name is unique and has value. We then organised a meeting with all the youth leaders in our church and discussed why we exist as Oasis Youth. We discussed what we do and why we meet every Sunday – we are here for the individual youth members who come on Sunday nights and we find greater value in working on them and letting them know about a relationship with God, instead of learning about a religion.

We as Oasis Youth Group want to challenge the world's influence on young people by discovering Christ's purpose for their lives.

This last term we looked at the Fruits of the Spirit, focusing each week on a different one and going out and applying it to our lives in a practical way each week. It was great to really work on and discover what Fruits Christ has given to each one of us, not something we need to earn.

This year's annual dodgeball tournament was once again a great success, in more ways than ONE. This time it wasn't the boys that took the trophy home, but the girls in blue! We showed them. Blue Steel, Bluegum and the Blueberries played their hearts out and, in case you were wondering, this year we wore blue.

On Youth Day we decided to acknowledge the youth and got together at Jan Cilliers park for an afternoon of fun and games. During the September holidays, a couple of the Youth went to Gold Reef City for a day filled with thrills and fun. The Patronal Festival was great fun and the ice-cream sold by the Youth was a sticky affair. A huge thank-you to Megan Lowes for helping to sell tickets after the 8:30 and 9:30 services.

Our Confirmation service on 1 November was amazing and all the confirmands were so blessed. The Quiet Day before it was a great learning experience, understanding the Eucharist and the ways of the Anglican church. It was also a nervous experience for the first time confessors :). Do keep ***Tyra Jane Chantson, Leigh Grindley-Ferris, Nikita Ferreira, Dimpho Mothibe, Thato Mothibe, Itumeleng Nkoana, Phikolomzi Qwalela, Michael Schumann & Brandon Wiesner*** in your prayers, as they continue to live their lives for Christ.

Our last prize-giving and thanksgiving service was a joyful one and a true blessing. Thank-you to all who helped put it together and made it a great service. Please continue to pray for the youth, for God's protection, guidance and love, and especially for all the leaders going on dcamp on 12 December. Please also be reminded of the prayer slots to fill in on the roster at the back of the church – anyone is welcome to sign up to pray for us during our youth time on Sunday evenings. Youth will be closed for the holidays from 29 November until 17 January.

MeRrY ChRiStMaS and HaPpY nEw YeAr!

Blessings, Megs



Youth Day in the Park



Visit to Gold Reef City

Two Testimonies

Christian Principles in Business

Be honest. Be fair. Be open-minded. Never say anything that may not be repeated. Never have double standards. Pay accounts due. Honour your commitments. Never give people who work for you anything that you could not or would not do yourself – this includes computer technology, gardening and drilling holes in walls.

My staff and I pray each morning before commencing work, asking for wisdom, guidance, leadership and an ability to serve under God's guidance. The only difference between me and my staff is the fact that I pay their salaries. All staff salaries are confidential and negotiated in such a way that, if salaries are discussed, no one will consider themselves cheated. Similarly, working hours are negotiated. New staff members are never paid a higher take-out salary. All dealings are open to discussion and negotiation.

Dealings between parent, child and Master Maths are open. In this three-cornered triangle, nothing is ever said in confidence, or otherwise, that could not be said in the presence of the person concerned. Sales are based on what is educationally viable. Customers pay what they are able to afford. However, taking money from a customer, however little, knowing that it will have no impact on the learner's mathematical skills, I consider to be theft, so we make a plan to suit their needs.

Parents pay me to work for them. I am their employee but, if a customer's principles and mine clash, I defer to God and use the words He puts in my mouth. My service to God is in answer to His request for a helper to guide His people. Obedience to God is my priority. I have been told that I am too soft in business, but I trust that the Lord will continue to guide and lead me in business. We never discuss outstanding fees with students, nor do we throw accusations at parents. We nag and pray until payment is received. I repeat: I never accuse. Accusers are not of the faith. Faith is praying and listening to God's still, small, calm, undemanding voice.

I do not assume that I have any skills except those given to me for an occasion, nor that my gifts are permanent. My gifts are an ability to serve God, in obedience and with humility, in a given situation.

I tithe – which is financial dedicated giving – by giving money and by serving God using my God-given gifts, skills and time, in appreciation for all He has given and done for me.

Joan Jones

Steps on the Way to Commitment

I would not be standing here today without the help of many wonderful people. When my brother and I were children, my aunt used to drag us and our cousins to Sunday School at the Apostolic Church. Every week we were given a beautifully illustrated Bible verse to memorise. One verse that was given to me was John Gospel chapter 3, verse 16: 'For God so loved the World that He gave his one and only son, and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.' This is still one of my favourite verses. The idea of never dying appealed to me as a girl of eight, so when the opportunity arose, in all innocence, I committed myself to the Lord. The seed were sown...

The first Anglican service I ever attended happened to be a Christmas midnight mass to which my late husband Stan took me. I just loved the pomp, the ceremony, the Communion and the incense. Our eldest child had been christened an Anglican when we were in England, so it made sense for me to leave the Lutheran Church to which I belonged and become an Anglican. Father Ian Carrick confirmed me at St Wilfred's when I was in my mid-twenties. I was very excited because now I could also partake of the Eucharist – in those days non-Anglicans were precluded from doing so.

For years though, I was a lukewarm Christian. However, when my youngest child, Angela, was at an age to attend Children's Church, I succumbed to Margaret Swemmer's perseverance and became a teacher. I was hoping this would encourage her, unlike my other three children, to be part of Children's Church. Needless to say it didn't work, but I taught for many years and this was a very good training ground for me because it meant looking at religion through

children's eyes. Through teaching, gaps in my knowledge were filled and the seeds started sprouting...

At about the same time Martin Breytenbach, then Rector of St Francis prevailed upon us to attend a Bible study group for the six weeks of Lent. It has been a long six weeks, as twenty-six years later I am still a member of the Morning Glories. Under the dedicated leadership of Sarah, then Terry and Cathy, this group has shown me what loving your neighbour is all about. Through this group and Children's Church I began to appreciate the Bible. It was at an Alpha course, which Stan and I attended, where I learnt it was possible to have a relationship with God, and I became aware of the subtle presence of the Holy Spirit.

By now I was an Anglican through and through. June de Klerk patiently trained me in hospital visiting. Being licensed to give Communion to the frail, the sick and sometimes the dying has taught me sensitivity, compassion and discernment. Then I enrolled in the pledge scheme, Fill-a-Bag, the soup kitchen and later became a sacristan.

The biggest step in my participation in the life of this parish and my walk as a Christian was when Father Tim invited me to become a lay minister. I was thrilled but very apprehensive, as I had never actually believed I would be worthy of this office. There were issues that had to be overcome and, after lots of prayer, encouragement from several members of this congregation, the Morning glories and my loyal soup kitchen team, I accepted the privilege. Even so, for many weeks, I was expecting to be told that I had not come up to expectations. Apparently I am not the only lay minister to have had such reservations, but Father Time assured us that he was right, he was a priest and knew about these things.

I have tried hard to meet what I feel is the required standard for a member of the laity. I enrolled to study for a certificate in theology. Through this course I have been expected to go through a lot of self-examination. The assignments have forced me to weed out the weaknesses and strive to cultivate the qualities Jesus teaches us. Father Tim has been guiding me and helping me, answering questions with questions. By so doing, he has drawn me into discussions which have made me think and question instead of

merely accepting. Other outlooks and ideas have been generated through these discussions and the assignments.

At some point I asked Father Robin how he managed his serene lifestyle. He simply answered, 'Try tithing'. With some trepidation, I did. Gradually this is teaching me to trust, obey and acknowledge God. I am realizing He is greater than we can ever begin to understand, that He is with us in good times and bad. Finally, being part of the Mission Zimbabwe team has been a good lesson about going into the unknown. It has been exciting to be able to plan and help people in another country with desperate needs. A mission made possible by the generosity of the St Francis family.

The seeds are growing slowly, nurtured by many people. All in all I feel very blessed to be me.

Linda Lewis

Parish Retreat September 2009

The moment I stepped through the gate at Benedict House, the peaceful quiet atmosphere enveloped me and I felt completely at peace. The smell of the supper cooking no doubt added to the welcoming atmosphere.

Once we were in our rooms and the little bit of unpacking was done, I felt thoroughly at home and the stresses of the outside world dropped away. That whole weekend my 'cell' was a very special haven. Father Timothy's words that God does the work when we are praying were taken to heart and for the rest of the weekend the praying done was sitting in silence, just listening and feeling God's presence there.

I loved seeing the nuns walking around and hearing the bell rung five minutes before meals and services in the chapel. The gardens contributed to the awareness of the blessings we receive on a daily basis from our Creator. The colours of the flowers and the birdsong were a fitting accompaniment to the tranquillity I experienced that weekend. The fact that we did not have to think about anything except what Tim had spoken about was great and certainly contributed to the enjoyment of the Retreat. Tim's lessons always

gave us food for thought and helped to expand the benefits of silence and prayer.

The feedback session led by Father Robin just before the end of a lovely break was positive. It gave us the opportunity to get to know our companions a little better and it was interesting to hear how they had been affected by this spiritually rejuvenating weekend. I will certainly be part of the next Parish Retreat.

Linda Lewis

Deep calls to Deep

(composed during the Parish Retreat)

Touch my silence with your gentle touch, God
Breathe on me, your, only just perceptible, breath of life.
I catch a glimpse of You,
Elusive, yet more real than all my 'realities'
Mystical, yet tangible.
Reaching out to me, yet wanting to be sought out, searched for.
So great, yet to be found in a small flower of beauty.
So powerful, yet contained in simple bread and wine.
So loving, yet not cushioning me from the harsh world and all its
needs and hurts.
Strange that through solitude
You enable me to engage
With all those things I have been running from.
Deep calls to Deep.

Cathy Meiklejohn



The Franciscan



Parish Retreat at St Benedict's House, Rosettenville



My Understanding of Mark 6: 3 – 6

The accounts of Jesus in the Gospels are largely meant to show how wonderful he is and how worthy he is of being revered by us as the Messiah. But there is one story with which, more than others, I am able to identify.

It is to be found in Mark, Chapter 6. Jesus had been preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, where the people congregated there knew him and his family. They were amazed by the wisdom he displayed, but shortly afterwards, as he was one of the locals, 'they rejected him' (Mark 6: 3). And then follow the sad verses 5 & 6: 'He was not able to perform any miracles there, except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them. He was greatly surprised, because the people did not have faith.'

We, probably, have had experiences in our own lives where, because no one has had faith in us, we have not been able to continue doing something to which we aspired. We are very dependent on the faith and belief of others to do things which we believe we have the power of accomplishing.

It is heartening to know that Christ, himself, had the same experience. And also to realise that, in a daily way, we enable others to do what they are able to do. However humble we are, or consider ourselves to be, a look, a tone, a remark makes all the difference to another creature. We each have power in ourselves.

Margaret Gouverneur

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms

11 Oct	John Edward Bishop
18 Oct	Tarryn Amber Flynn

Marriages

29 Aug	Roelof and Robyn Steenekamp
26 Sept	Lourens and Angela Graaf

Faithful departed

21 July	Lionel Mattheyse
16 Aug	Joyce Upton
09 Oct	Wim Hans Zeegers

John's Imagination 1

I lie in bed at night trying to work out what a modern St Paul might write to a present day Titus whom he plans to send to South Africa to minister to the Christian communities there. In Chapter 3, verse 1 of his letter to Titus, Paul says:

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. (NIV)

I envisage Paul in prison, but with access to newspapers, radio, even TV, thus well informed about our country. What might he be saying to us now?

"With regard to being subject to rulers, I well understand that a Government which made bad, unjust laws has resulted in a culture of non-observance. On the country's roads, this has brought about an annual average of 4 000 deaths. So starting here, try to persuade the Church members that they can, by observing all traffic laws, bring about a solution to this disastrous situation. It might also help to persuade the manufacturers of cars and motor cycles not to boast about how fast their products will go and, better still, to stop producing these lethal machines.

"I long to see the people of South Africa enjoy fully the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. I understand that the census statistics show about 80% of the population claiming membership of one of the many different denominations that profess to be Christian. If they were all living as Christ's followers should live, what a wonderful country South African would be!

"There is much that needs doing for the people, especially for those now described as 'previously disadvantaged'. They need good houses in attractive suburbs, with tarred roads, water supply, sanitation, health and emergency services, schools and, of course, places where the people can come to worship and learn more about all that Christian faith offers.

“You have here a huge task ahead of you, but I am sure you will find many concerned people already doing much for many people in need. They will need assistance and encouragement. Help the people of the Churches not to fail to contribute generously toward the cost of this ministry. Since time immemorial my people have given a tithe for God’s work – I am sure the followers of Christ can be even more generous! Many in the churches are doing wonderful work, caring for the sick and impoverished. But good though this is, many more of God’s people need to get involved and to think how they can help the authorities to govern better and, of course, to pray for them.

“My fear is that, unless my people become truly effective in righting the wrongs, more will turn to crime out of sheer necessity. The change needs to start at the highest levels, where I perceive much greed, and throughout the government service, where there is much corruption. Our people need to pray for those in authority, that they find their way to Christ and accept His standards for their personal and public lives.

“You will know the proverb: ‘Where there is no vision the people perish.’ So one of your functions must be to give the people vision and belief in what they can do if truly willing to be led by God. South Africa truly led by God could bring much needed change to the rest of Africa.

“God bless you, Titus. It is a huge undertaking I am giving you, but with God’s guidance you can do it.”

John’s Imagination 2

I sometimes spend time trying to imagine the scene in which God the Father briefed God the Son, to prepare Him for the task He was to perform for Him. Perhaps it went something like this:

“My dear, beloved son, I have a task I need you to do for me – it will not be easy and will appear to end in total failure, but will in fact be a triumph to prove that my power is indeed greater than Satan’s.

“I want you to go and become a man, one of that special people I like to think of as mine, the Israelites. Through their prophets I have

promised them a Messiah, and now the time is ripe for this mission and it is you I am sending.

"I have no illusions. Your best efforts will seem to have failed. Those that think they are my leaders will fear your popularity and arrange for you to be killed in an extremely brutal manner. You will accept all this terrible, excruciating pain, because it is a necessary part of my plan, although I hate to have to ask this of you. But my plan is to raise you from your grave after three days so that your followers, especially the small band you will have taught and empowered, may know and understand that you are my son.

"Although only a few thousand of my chosen people will come to believe that you were my son, your followers will take the good news about you all over the world. Those who choose to follow you will be known as Christians – the followers of you, my son.

"Believe me, my son, when I say that for hundreds, even thousands of years, people who believe will have their lives transformed. Sinners will become saints. However, Satan will not give up his efforts to wreck all that we shall be trying to do to enable the people of the world to live honest, clean, caring lives. Satan will manage to convince many that without too much dishonesty they can become rich and powerful, and that there is money to be made by pandering to the worst things in human nature.

"So, my dear son, you and I, together with our Holy Spirit, will find we have much to do, not only to convince people that they need us, but to empower them to become the people we want them to be, bringing sanity into a world becoming more and more materialistic. We will need to remind them that, in our creation, there is enough for everyone's needs, but not for their greed. We shall also need, my dear son, to convince our followers to believe all that you will promise them during your few years' ministry on earth, for I perceive that many who will claim to be Christian will believe only the parts of the Bible that are not too challenging.

"I would like, my dear son, to tell you how I created the universe, of which the solar system with the earth, one of its planets, is a part. It all began several billions of years ago, when I arranged what humans will call 'the Big Bang', and it certainly was big! Then came the solar system with its planets, followed by the many millions of years

needed to transform the earth into a place suitable for the people I created in my own image. And I gave my people a wonderful world with everything in it that they would need. However, as we shall see, they appear unable to share peacefully the wonderful resources I have provided. Our followers will have much work to do to set everything right, but with the power we can give them they will be able to do it.

“So, my dear son, the task I am giving you now, and the way you will do it, will continue to benefit humankind for literally thousands of years. So, I am sure, indeed I know, the sacrifice I am asking you to make can and will bring about a transformation in the lives of believers, and they, if they are obedient to what our Holy Spirit will empower them to do, will bring about a golden age of peace and prosperity as they demonstrate how lovingly even the most diverse elements of humankind can learn to live together in peace.

“There is much more I shall need to tell you before I activate this plan of mine, but this preliminary briefing will give you food for thought, and certainly raise many questions which we shall have to discuss.”

To be continued...

John Mallory

Petition

Give me a good digestion, Lord,
and also something to digest;
Give me a healthy body, Lord,
with sense to keep it at its best.
Give me a healthy mind, good Lord,
to keep the good and pure in sight,
which seeing sin is not appalled
but finds a way to set it right.
Give me a mind that is not bored,
That does not whimper, whine, or sigh;
Don't let me worry overmuch
About the fussy thing called I.
Give me a sense of humor Lord,
Give me the grace to see a joke,
To get some happiness from life
And pass it on to other folk. (Traditional)

Submitted by Ponty Thuynsma

Tribute to the Meiklejohn Family

Every once in a while a family comes into the life of the parish and leaves a mark that is indelible. The Meiklejohn family is one of those.

I have had the privilege of leading the Morning Glories group with Cathy for several years. It is in this context that I have been awed at her skills and her close adherence to God's word and guidance. Our group will miss her more than words can say and wish to say a public thank-you to her.

Cathy is a highly qualified Geographer who currently holds a position as Senior Applied Researcher in the Built Environment section of the CSIR. She has a Master's degree and I have been told she received the highest accolades for her dissertation. She carries out her job with devotion and skill. One of her areas of strength is as a mentor – and I can honestly say, despite her being younger than me in years, she is one of my mentors in life. Cathy's wisdom, organisational skills and dedication are astounding. She is the driving force behind the introduction of the Marriage Course at St Francis this year, despite her full-time work, her commitment to children and family and her outreach to those less fortunate.

Cathy started the programme to teach township children swimming (for which she raised funds from members of St Francis) and gave up endless Saturdays to sit at swimming lessons and then return the children to their homes. She has been committed to the ministry to Euphonia and it was Cathy who motivated Talk Radio 702 to donate the electric wheelchair. In addition to her own deep spiritual journey, she finds time for monthly spiritual direction and manages a retreat every year. She is also so modest!

Dr Ian Meiklejohn is a gifted lecturer and mentor, as will be testified to by so many students at the University of Pretoria in the Geography Department. He is an adventurer, a lover of the environment and nature, and is committed to several research projects, which often take him away from home for long stretches to Marion Island and even Antarctica. Ian has been appointed as a full professor at Rhodes University from next year and this will be a huge loss for Tuks. He has shared with us his wonderful slides and information about his trips to Marion Island and Antarctica. His teaching skills have been

very obvious in these presentations. He has also supported Cathy in presenting the Marriage Course, has been part of the Men's Breakfast, and was a lay minister for some time in the parish. He is also a stalwart at providing coffee after the 9:30 service, which we appreciate so much.

Andrew and Matthew are so much a part of the parish life because they were both born at the beginning of their parents' journey with St Francis – they feel a little as if they belong to those of us who have seen them grow from week one! They are committed members of the Children's Church, enthusiastic contributors to family services and have sung with various choirs – as well as playing the recorder and violin. These highly talented and intelligent boys also have a strong commitment to everything they do (including sport, cubs and scouts) and have such enquiring minds – all of which is not surprising when one considers their highly gifted parents.

Cathy, Ian, Andrew and Matthew – how we will miss sharing your lives, but we believe God has many exciting surprises for you in Grahamstown and that our links with you will continue, despite the distance between us.

Terry Brauer



The Blessing of the Animals on St Francis Day

Dogs, it turns out, are more gregarious than I realised. When I take our big dog for a walk around Garsfontein, I live in fear of meeting a small dog freshly escaped from the confines of its garden, and ready to defend its territory. It is then a matter of who gets eaten first: the Boerboel or the Chihuahua. This is why I did not bring our dog to the 'Blessing of the Animals' held on Saturday 3 October, which turned out to be an impressive gathering of animals on the St Francis lawn. Instead our family brought along a number of cuddly bunnies and a large rat! Rats also need to be blessed you know. Isn't that the message of the Gospel?

Anyway it turns out that dogs, once off their own turf, are quite good at getting along. Malteses mingled effortlessly with Mastiffs. Scotties looked straight in the eye when confronted by Huskies. Whippets, Labradors, Bulldogs and Parrots, all got on with the business of being a community. Perhaps this general *bonhomie* was in some way related to being on holy ground. Perhaps it was the soothing tones of Father Tim reciting the prayer for the animals or sprinkling holy water. Perhaps the animals knew that St Francis, by making us all aware of the sacred in nature, had in some way made their lives better than they might otherwise have been. Whatever it was, there were fewer confrontations than I'd expected, and mostly a lot of interested sniffing.

I do believe I caught a glimpse of a cat at one stage later in the proceedings, but it was very brief and the blessing was hasty.

When the prayers had been said and our animals had all been blessed, we stood around in the setting sun and chatted. The slanting rays came down through the leaves of the trees, the dogs sat calmly with satisfied expressions, in a purple haze (Jacaranda season), and tongues lolling out the sides of their mouths (as young dogs do these days; they think it make them look cool). And through half-closed eyes they checked out the other dogs, the trees, the fire hydrants and the car tyres.

Certainly owners take after their dogs. Perhaps coming to church takes us away from our own turf. Perhaps that is partly what holy ground is. It is a place to meet and engage and find a path that is reasonable as a community. Even for cats and rats. We can all be blessed.

The Prayer for the Animals

Heavenly Father who made us and made all the animals, thank you for all the joys that they bring us. Help us to care for them and never to hurt them by our selfishness. Amen.

For all the animals that live in our homes and give us love and pleasure:
Thank you, Lord.



For all those that live on farms and provide us with food and clothing:
Thank you, Lord.



For animals that live in the countryside, borkies, dassies and jackals:
Thank you, Lord.

For animals that live in hot countries and in our zoos – elephants, lions, tigers and leopards:
Thank you, Lord.



For animals that fly in the air – birds, butterflies, bugs and beetles:
Thank you, Lord.

For animals that crawl on the ground – snakes, frogs, slugs and snails:
Thank you, Lord.

For all living creatures, large and small, furry or hairy, feathered or scaled, fierce or gentle, wild or tame:
Thank you, Lord.

Mark Napier



A Man Dancing in the Street

I see a man,
Dancing in the street.
Smoke in hand,
And watching with twinkling eyes.

I watch with interest,
Wondering what will happen next.
Out comes Friday's garbage.
Up the man gets.
And he dances to an unheard song.

He walks to the trash,
To discover his treasure,
Of old food, paper to sell,
And our torn clothes.

I keep watching,
Now feeling guilt.
I try to look away,
But I can't.

My interest overwhelms me.
But I can't keep watching,
Because the car awaits.
And once again I leave,
For the privileged life I lead.

Ona Botha (Grade 10, PHSG)