

THE GOLDEN THREAD



THE IMMACULATE TODAY



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MARIA

JULY 2022

 THE
GREYFRIARS

The Order of Friars Minor Conventual
of Great Britain & Ireland

Dear Friends.....3

Psalm 42(41)

Quemadmodum.....4

Franciscan

Meet 'N ' Greet

St John Vianney.....6

Tomorrow is Today:

Finding the Here and

Now in the Scriptures.....8

The Two Francises.....9

ARTICLE SUBMISSION

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The Editor,
The Golden
Thread Magazine,
All Saints Friary,
Redclyffe Road,
Urmston,
Manchester,
M41 7LG

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JULY 2022

DEAR FRIENDS

Here we are at Issue number two of the newly on-line Golden Thread. If you are reading this, then indeed I hold to the good hope that people are finding their way to our new home. Perhaps you have already had or may yet find the opportunity to steer someone you know towards us? As we have previously reflected, such moments are very practical ways that we can each help to play our part within the Body of Christ, the Church. In fact, thinking in this way, brings to mind a recent moment from our Liturgical calendar.

On Sunday 19th June, the Church celebrated the Solemnity of The Body and Blood of The Lord, also known as Corpus Christi. This feast was introduced into the Church calendar in the year 1264 by Pope Urban IV, in order to celebrate the Real Presence of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine.

The Gospel reading for this solemnity was taken from Luke.9:11-17, the feeding of the five thousand; this is such an appropriate reading which provides us with the opportunity to reflect upon what treasures lie at the heart of this celebration. Just take a moment to really focus on what is happening in the following extract from the Gospel:

"It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to (Jesus) and said, "Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here." He replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves."

Jesus is telling the disciples that whilst it is entirely understandable that they are approaching him to intervene and help in this situation of great need amongst the people, another aspect of the solution is also at hand. In the presence of Jesus, and with



his direct guidance, they have to hand the resources needed to resolve the dilemma before them. Consequently, the disciples gather what they have to hand, in this case a modest amount of food, which Jesus takes, blesses and then tells the disciples to distribute it. As we know, not only were all present fed to satisfaction, there was much more left over; even more resources for even more people.

Such is the unbridled generosity of our loving Lord, who demonstrates a love that is charitable, practical, and profoundly enabling. When we present our very selves to the Lord and moreover offer ourselves in his service, then Jesus can help us to not only recognise the giftedness that each one of us has, moreover we will find that we can utilise those gifts in ways that we perhaps never thought possible. Of course Jesus personally interacts with those who come to him, but he also relies on us to play our part in practical ways, that serve to spread his life-giving, soul-sustaining love. Don't forget that all-important word of dismissal we hear at the end of every Mass; go. Go and be that which you have received to all those you then meet.

I hope that you are all enjoying a good and blessed summer. Despite the continuing Covid pandemic, it is good to see that people are now able to conduct their lives with a little less restriction. However, we are not "out of the woods" completely yet, and it remains so very important that we stay vigilant and safe, both for ourselves but very importantly for those around us whose health may be a little more vulnerable to infection. There are still many opportunities to exercise charity and good sense one to another.

Do stay safe and well, and every blessing to you all.

Fr. Maximilian Martin OFM Conv.

Psalm 42(41) Quemadmodum

The deepest longings of the human heart can be found in the beautiful poetry and prayer of the Psalms. For millennia the prayerful sentiments of the psalms have been whispered from the lips of Christian and Jewish believers who have made "God's Prayer Book" their own. In every age those who seek God, who thirst for the "living God," journey with the psalms to encounter the "the God of their life."

The largest category of psalms in the Bible are those of lamentation. In one sense this should not be surprising as life brings all sorts of disappointments, moments of distress, uncertainty and failure. In the face of these dark experiences the disciple of the Lord who has tasted the joy of God's presence and consolation will spontaneously turn to Him in prayer seeking assistance. This turning to the Lord in petition reminds us that prayers of lamentation and supplication are also prayers of confidence and trust. This is precisely what we find in Psalm 42.

There are two parts of this psalm that seem to be particularly striking and from which much can be learned. The first is found at the very beginning and takes the form of an image with which the original writer of the psalm must have been quite familiar. The second is contained in the verses that are repeated almost like a responsorial.

LIKE THE DEER

Life on the fringes of the desert can be harsh for man and for beast. There, water is a premium. There, the presence or absence of water can mean life or death. At the beginning of our psalm we are presented with an image of the extreme ache and accompanying weariness of being without something vital for life. Through the use of the image of a deer searching for water in the wasteland the psalmist presents his own deepest longing; to once again experience the presence of God and receive his help in a particular moment of need.

What is transpiring is quite clear. The psalmist, who had enjoyed a fruitful relationship with God suddenly finds himself unable to experience this divine communion any longer. Somehow, perhaps because of illness or accident, because of a turn in social/political climate, he is no longer able to enter into that meaningful communion he once enjoyed. Perhaps some of those closest to him behaved like the friends of Job who were only too quick to underscore the reasons for his predicament laying the blame at his own doorstep or even calling into question the reality of God's justice and goodness. In any age when "bad things happen to good people" questions and doubts will arise. Faith can be shaken.

Today we remember the consequences of the Covid pandemic at its height with our church buildings closed or with restricted access. We think about many of our family and friends no longer able to approach the sacraments regularly because of age or illness or even the distances from the gathering faith community. We think of the tragedies of war or acts of terror and their effects on the innocent. We hear of attempts to nullify the influence of religious expression in society. When these or situations similar are consciously present we can have a personal experience of what led the writer of our psalm to express his feelings in this lament. Where are you, O God? Why do you permit this to happen? Can you not see my sorrow and distress?



Like the deer that yearns
for running streams,
so my soul is yearning
for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for God,
the God of my life;
when can I enter and see
the face of God?

My tears have become my bread,
by night, by day,
as I hear it said all the day long:
"Where is your God?"

These things will I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I would lead the rejoicing crowd
into the house of God,
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving,
the throng wild with joy.

Why are you cast down, my soul,
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still,
my saviour and my God.

My soul is cast down within me
as I think of you,
from the country of Jordan and Mount
Hermon,
from the Hill of Mizar.

Deep is calling on deep,
in the roar of waters;
your torrents and all your waves
swept over me.

By day the Lord will send
his loving kindness;
by night I will sing to him,
praise the God of my life.

I will say to God, my rock:
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning
oppressed by the foe?"

With cries that pierce me to the heart,
my enemies revile me,
saying to me all day long:
"Where is your God?"

Why are you cast down, my soul,
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still,
my saviour and my God.

WHY ARE YOU DOWNCAST, MY SOUL ... HOPE IN GOD

Prayer, of whatever type, is a dialogue that takes place in the context of faith beginning in and progressively unfolding with complete honesty and confidence in God.



Prayer is honest when it takes into account not only the current situation of well-being and blessing or tragedy and hurt but the whole of one's history of relationship with God. This is evident in Psalm 42, particularly in the psalmist's refrain:

**Why are you cast down, my soul,
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still,
my saviour and my God.**

The psalmist is honest with God and himself: there is the suffering of the moment but this suffering is part of a larger story of his relationship with God. Because of this the psalmist is able to be truthful with God regarding the trials of his life but he can do so with the certainty that he will not be abandoned. This confidence in God could certainly be because of his past experiences of God's love and mercy but also because of collective experiences of the many who, over the centuries, have trusted in this same love and mercy; even more so because of the promise of God to be with his friends always. This gives our psalmist the ability to say over and over to himself – "Hope in God, I will praise him still, my savior and my God."

While the Old Testament author of this Psalm had the teaching and witness of the patriarchs and prophets of old, we disciples of the new dispensation, have the witness and promise of our Lord Jesus who has overcome the darkness through His passion, death and resurrection.

What can Psalm 42 teach us?

That for all, even the most devout of disciples, moments of distress will arise in the course of life. Most often unforeseen and unexpected. Our relationship with God is not a talisman to ward off the "cross" but our strength to carry it well.

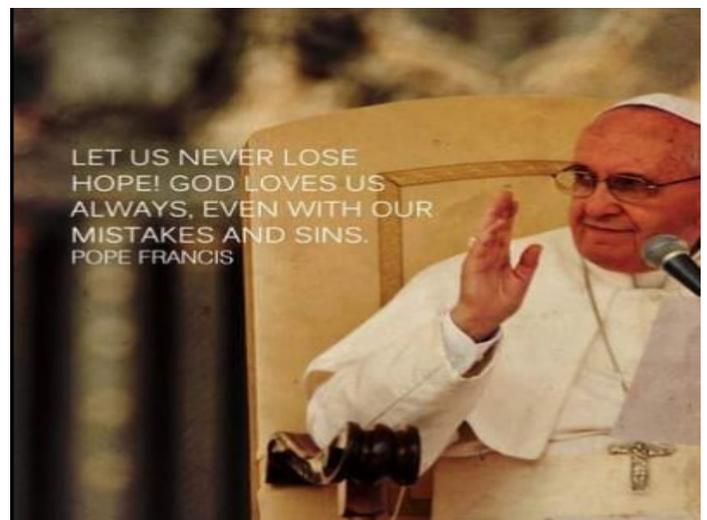
Moments of suffering are real and can have various dimensions; sometimes they are physical or emotional or spiritual. Often they are a combination of all three. For the disciple of the Lord the

dimension of spiritual suffering may be the most trying as it takes on the character of feeling isolated from or abandoned by the Lord. "You have hidden your face and I am put to confusion."

When such trials come what should be the response of a believer? To be honest with ourselves and the Lord – this unlocks the healing power behind every type of prayer. Lamentation is not a simple prayer of complaint – poor me! But an honest conversation with the Lord that springs from faith and confidence in his presence even in the midst of darkness.

Growth in our relationship with God does not take place without a degree of suffering. The challenges, disappointments and distresses of life are opportunities to share in His own sufferings – not to be sought but to be embraced when they come. Sufferings may be stumbling blocks for some but can become the stepping stones for others; opportunities for real growth.

The psalmist's mantra: **"Hope in God I will praise him still"** is indeed a good reminder and a real prayer that can be uttered in times of anguish and grief.



FOR REFLECTION

1. **Have I experienced the deep thirsting for God as presented by the psalmist? What events created this deep thirst? What was my response?**
2. **How did I bring this before the Lord in prayer?**
3. **What do you think about the psalmist's prayer: "Hope in God, I will praise him still"?**

Article By Fr. Giles Zakowicz

Franciscan Meet 'N ' Greet

St John Vianney



Jean (John) Baptiste Marie Vianney [1786-1859]

John was born in Dardilly, France, into a poor family during the turbulent, dangerous times of the French Revolution. From an early age, John had a persistent sense of calling to the Priesthood. It was thought very unlikely that this could ever come to be however, due to the understandably poor level of education that he was able to receive in those times. God though clearly

had other plans, and John was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 30. The question then arose as to where this relatively uneducated priest might best be deployed. Eventually, the sleepy little village of Ars was thought to be the best bet. The community needed a priest, and, it was reasoned, the demands of such a poor little location would not call for an over-exercising of too many "grey cells".

Ars proved soon enough to be a challenge for the freshly ordained priest. There was a prevailing sense of apathy to both high moral standards as well as church attendance that permeated the small community. Gradually and steadily however, John's simplicity of daily life, faithfulness at prayer, availability to the community and especially his practical service to the poor began to stir people's hearts. Church attendance grew once again, and it became clear that John was a very good person to talk to in so many pastoral ways. His reputation especially as a confessor began to extend beyond this little community, and his appointment book really began to fill up! John would spend the entirety of his priestly life and ministry in the village of Ars, and alongside his unstinting service to the local residents, it was estimated that eventually anywhere up to 20,000 people each year would find their way to this holy priest, for guidance and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

John Vianney had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother and to St. Francis of Assisi; indeed much of his own life mirrors that of the "Little Poor Man" who gave so much of himself in service to the poor and needy. John would soon incorporate this devotion more concretely within his ministry by becoming a Franciscan Tertiary (Secular Franciscan). He was canonised in 1925 and in 1929 was declared the Patron Saint of Parish Priests.

St. John Vianney wrote how on one occasion he was approached by a parishioner who told the priest how he was having difficulty believing that during Mass the host truly became the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Counseled by the priest, the parishioner sought the help of The Blessed Mother, asking that she might help him with his uncertainty. St. John describes vividly how, during a subsequent Mass, the parishioner came up to receive Holy Communion, and the Saint and the parishioner witnessed the Sacred Host detach itself from the priest's fingers, and place itself on the man's tongue. Needless to say, in that miraculous moment, doubt...disappeared!

Doubts can come to us in many different situations, so it is surely no surprise that this can sometimes be the case even with our Christian faith. It is therefore Good News for us that we are not alone with such doubts when they do from time to time assail us. Just think of St. John the Baptist. John, the last of the Prophets. John, who while yet unborn had leaped in the womb when in the presence of the unborn Christ at the Visitation. John, who was baptised by Jesus Himself! Just before he would be called upon to lay down his life for the Gospel, John had summoned his disciples to the prison, and asked them to clarify for him, that Jesus is in fact the One sent by God. When they return with that reassurance, John is able to face the dark and difficult path before him with an inner peace that only Jesus can give.

Indeed, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; He and He alone. But as with John the Baptist in prison, and as with that parishioner in Ars, sometimes, we need and benefit from the intercession, and the reassurance that a fellow pilgrim can give to us on our journey of faith.



**"I AM THE WAY,
AND THE TRUTH,
AND THE LIFE.
NO ONE COMES
TO THE FATHER
EXCEPT
THROUGH ME."**

JOHN 14:6

St John Vianney



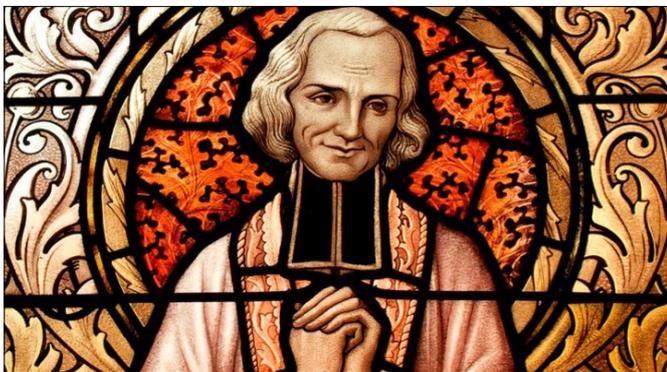
Just reflect for a moment on that miraculous moment in Ars. Our Lady has been asked for help to strengthen the faith of that man, and the help that She gives, is to provide the most direct route into the very presence of Her Son in that moment of Communion. And that is what the Blessed Mother does for all of us, at all times.

Every time we seek Her intercession, Her guidance, she places us directly in the presence of Her Son Our Lord! Think of every single mystery of the Holy Rosary; Jesus is front and centre on every bead!

We may never know, just how important our faithfulness in prayer, word and deed, has been for someone very close by to us, known or unknown; I know for a fact that from time to time I value being able to lean on my brothers and sisters in Christ. "Better together" as the song goes, and our Good God certainly knows this; He creates from the Heart of Community, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He instituted through His Son the Church, so that we can

help, nurture, guide and encourage one another, as we play our part, in the sharing of that charitable, self-giving love that God pours into our hearts, into our world.

Like St. John Marie, like those disciples of St. John the Baptist, and most especially like our Blessed Lady, may we always be ready and willing to guide others into the very presence of Jesus, and most assuredly, He will do the rest!



"There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us"

John Vianney

ST. JOHN VIANNEY

PRAY FOR US

Tomorrow is Today: Finding the Here and Now in the Scriptures.

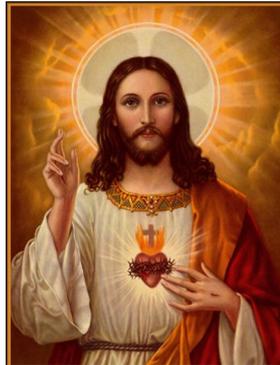
“Never put off until tomorrow, what you should really do today!” The saying goes, but so often, one would think that it actually says, “Let’s put off until tomorrow, what I really *could* do today!” If you are anything like me, I suspect a little bell is ringing just about now. In fact I’m sure that in all honesty, we are all given to a little procrastination from time to time; sometimes out of necessity, and sometimes, well, just because...! “There’s time enough for that...” As human beings we are endlessly inventive when it comes to planning the future, as opposed to just getting on with it. Planning meetings at work, or compelling reasons to hold fire on that job at home; yes, even in religious life, we can spend time discussing things that really, we should just *do!*

In the Gospels, Jesus tells us that He, Jesus, is the Bread of Life, the life of the world; the world that we live in *now!* “Everybody who believes has eternal life” (John.6.47) Jesus says, and here is an echo of another related passage of Scripture, when Jesus says, “The Kingdom of Heaven *is already amongst you.*” (Luke.17.21)

In other words, Jesus is telling us that through faith, through believing in Him, we not only have life eternal in the future, but in Him, we are already living it now! Not, admittedly in the fullness that we have a good hope to share after death, but right now, in the economy of God, is part of that eternity. This wonderful truth, should always be a great source of encouragement for us, to live lives fully focused on Christ each and every day. St. Paul gives us some practical insights on how we should in fact do this. “Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.” (Ephesians.4.32). In other words, Live in the **now!** Be friends with one another **now!** Forgive one another **now!** Imitate Christ, that is, live with and like Christ **now!** “Anyone who eats this bread

will live forever;” (John.6.51). Jesus is saying that eternal life is life to **live now!**

God is with us **now!** Similarly, providing for us in so many different ways, **right now.** The Kindly word from our friends and neighbours; the practical help when in need; the joyful sharing of good news and happy occasions; the joyful sharing of our prayer and worship, within and outside of the church building!

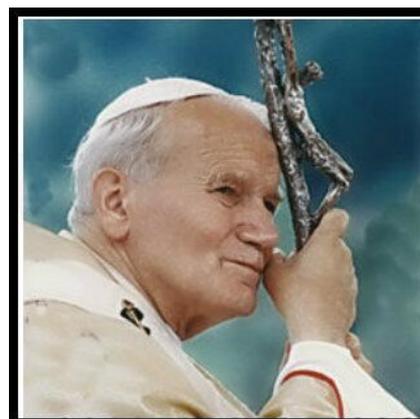


AND KNOW
THAT I AM WITH
YOU ALWAYS;
YES, TO THE END
OF TIME.
-JESUS CHRIST-

In these and so many other ways, we experience the reality of our lives, wherein our good and loving God makes every step of our life’s journey with us, in His Son and through His Spirit! “*I am with you always, even until the end of time*” (Matthew.28.20),

Jesus says, and of course, when time as we understand it runs out.....eternity continues unencumbered by the pitfalls that we sometimes encounter now.

Now is the time...of the Kingdom of God! Jesus gave His life, so that all life, all the time, may be lived in the realm of His Father’s total love! As we receive of this total love through our participation in the life of the Risen Lord, may we continue to live in the eternal life of God’s love; eternal life that is active **now**....hope, doesn’t get any better than that, and we can’t put *that* off until tomorrow, because for God, **TOMORROW IS RIGHT NOW!**



**“The future
starts today
not
tomorrow”**

St. John Paul II

A MESSAGE FROM THE TWO FRANCISES



In conclusion, as you lay the foundation for the implementation of this Treaty, I wish to encourage you, representatives of States, international organizations and civil society, to continue along your chosen path of promoting a culture of life and peace based upon the dignity of the human person and the awareness that we are all brothers and sisters. For its part, the Catholic

Church remains irrevocably committed to promoting peace between peoples and nations and fostering education for peace throughout its institutions. This is a duty to which the Church feels bound before God and every man and woman in our world. May the Lord bless each of you and your efforts in the service of justice and peace.

Message of Pope Francis to the first meeting of states party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. 21 June 2022

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.”

Servants of God cannot know how much patience and humility they have within themselves as long as they are content. When the time comes, however, when those who should make them content do the opposite, they have as much patience and humility as they have at that time and no more.

Those people are truly peacemakers who, regardless of what they suffer in this world, preserve peace of spirit and body out of love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘The Admonitions’ of Saint Francis

