As the people of New Zealand bury their dead and continue the gruesome recovery of bodies, shades of hope, the perserverance of spirit and acts of heroism are also being pulled from among the rubble.

Fortunately, our Kiwi friars from the Region of Saint Andrew, live in Auckland – safe from the earthquake. However, they too share in the pain, loss and suffering of this disaster which has rocked a nation.

Friar Bernie Thomas, who is Director of the St Francis Retreat Centre in Mount Roskill, Auckland and Regional Vocation Director shares his emotional first-hand experience of the earthquake.

“Last week, on 22 February - as I’m sure you are aware - Christchurch, a city of 390,000 people, and New Zealand’s second biggest city, suffered a major setback with a 6.3 magnitude earthquake. This quake was only 5 km deep as opposed to the 7.1 quake on September 4 which was 33 km deep. It could possibly be the country's greatest natural disaster with the death toll currently at 159, with many still missing. The 1931 earthquake in Napier had a death toll of 256.

Tuesday 22 February, will be one of those days that New Zealanders will always remember. I was in the Retreat Centre when one of our staff said that Christchurch had once again been rocked by a major earthquake. I went straight up to my office and turned on live streaming TV and couldn’t pull myself away from the computer as the images from TV3 news were being shown – without any editing. Having lived through a number of earthquakes – I come from Wellington, which is very prone to earthquakes and also survived a number of big earthquakes in Papua New Guinea including a 7.2 – I knew what to expect. But the images I saw that day were unbelievable. We get so used to seeing devastating images of other countries but it was hard to believe this would happen in my own country where we pride ourselves on our earthquake resistant building codes.

I only have one friend in Christchurch so I immediately texted him to see what had happened. Then I kept getting the same text back “house completely destroyed – help”. Communication was crazy that day with cell phone towers down and networks overloaded. When I finally got through to him again I found out that his office was in the CTV building (the building that collapsed and then caught on fire, see below) but he wasn’t in his office that day but lecturing at the Uni.

For the past week, whenever at my desk or in the car, I have had the radio or TV on listening to the stories of recovery and survival, as well as the growing death toll. One week on from the disaster, the whole country stopped at 12.51pm for two minutes of silence. I was at one of the schools I work as chaplain at and the whole school stopped and everyone stood at silence – a very sombre and sincere moment in time.

Now the challenge of the rebuilding will start and the face of Christchurch will never be the same again. There is talk of rebuilding the iconic Anglican Cathedral and my hope is the same for the Catholic Cathedral (see above). The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is 106 years old and in the Roman Renaissance style. It is said to be one of the finest examples of church architecture in Australasia. The latest reports however do not sound promising for this wonderful building.

The greatest thing to come out of the earthquake – I suppose the same is true for many natural disasters - is the unity and support that is being given to the people of Christchurch. The whole country has come together to begin the process of rebuilding. Teams of search and rescue personnel have come from many countries to help us in the recovery and rebuild. There are wonderful stories of heroism in the news and a feeling of hope is already beginning to come through. But, it is a long, long process and Christchurch will need heaps of support. The financial cost to the country is going to be enormous, with other major government projects already postponed or even scrapped.

Please keep us all in your prayers.”
Provincial Minister Paul Smith and Stephen Bliss attended the “Second Regional Gathering of Franciscans” at the Franciscans International Office in Bangkok, 21-23 February with forty other Franciscans from the Asia Pacific region. It is three years since the Franciscans International (FI) office was set up in Bangkok with Julie Morgan as its first regional director. The meeting included a visit to the United Nations offices in Bangkok and reports from the staff at the FI Bangkok office and a sharing of plans for future work. A full report will be available later.

Minister Provincial Sandro Overend-Rigillo and Vicar Provincial Richard Grech from St Paul’s Province, Malta headed “down-under” for a special visit from 9-25 January. Fr Sandro’s first stop was paying friar Edward Zammit a visit, who currently serves the Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea in George Town, Tasmania. He was given the opportunity to meet the local parish community. His next point of call was South Australia where he dropped in to visit friar Gabriel Micallef who is chaplain to the Maltese Community in Lockleys. The Maltese Franciscans have served the community there since 1948. While in Adelaide, Fr Sandro also visited Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson (pictured right).

On Sunday 23 January, a concelebrated Mass was organised at Christ the King Parish Church, at which the Maltese Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus and an encouraging number of the Maltese community attended. The Maltese Queen of Victories Band entertained the congregation. Before he returned to Malta, Fr Sandro said, “We are united as a family and distance is no obstacle to feel thus”.

The next Definitory meeting will be held from 14 – 16 March at the Provincial Office.

Completed application forms for the up-coming friar retreat are due to be returned to Peter Cantwell as soon as possible. The retreat, which will be held at the Holy Cross Centre (Passionists) in Templestowe, VIC, will take place from Sunday, September 18 - commencing with dinner at 6pm and will conclude on Friday, September 23 at 12:30pm. The cost of the retreat will be covered by the Provincial Office. The Retreat Director friar David Flood from the St Joseph Province in Canada was highly recommended by a fellow friar who described him as a, “great presenter, steeped in the sources and always provocative.” The retreat will definitely be on, even if only a few can attend. For more information, contact Peter on: (03) 9899 3975 or (03) 9808 8657. Completed forms should be returned to St Francis Xavier Friary, 1087 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill, VIC 3128.

A wonderful day was had by Barry Kirby on 24 February as he celebrated his 70th Birthday. Starting with morning tea – and a sumptuous chocolate cake – Barry enjoyed his favourite lunch and another birthday cake which featured a picture of a “younger Barry.” He thanked his fellow friars for their support during the difficult time he has endured with his illness and said he was grateful for their friendship and prayers.

Vocations Director Paul Ghanem is asking all friars to keep the aspirants, who will face the Vocation Interview Board on 26 March, in their prayers. “The numbers are yet to be finalised but up to five aspirants will be interviewed in the hope of starting their postulancy later this year. If you could keep these five men in your prayers it would be greatly appreciated.”

On the 13 February, Atif Prince was recognised among 25 other International students for the NSW International Student of the Year Awards.

Atif, who hails from Pakistan, works part-time at Waverley friary and at the Come-In Centre, Paddington.

The Franciscan Centre for Christian Spirituality (FCCS) in Canterbury, UK, is a new venture launched by the Franciscan International Study Centre. Its aim is to “to respond to the desire for a spiritual home where the Franciscan spiritual tradition takes centre stage.”

The Centre is holding Spirituality Days which include topics such as: Telling The Stories Tellingly, Walking with Jesus Through Matthew, and A Lenten Day of Reflection.

For more information visit: www.franciscanccs.org
Friars Joe Nathan and Carl Schafer recently attended the English speaking Commissaries’ Meeting in the Franciscan Monastery, Holy Land of America, Washington D.C.

11 Commissaries met to discuss the annual Good Friday Collection. The new investment strategy of the Custody of the Holy Land was presented. They shared their respective Government’s policies that affect the transfer of money to the Custody. They also discussed better accounting procedures as well as the promotion of the Holy Land Review and of pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

It was a week of fruitful discussion and sharing between the various Provinces and the friars of the Holy Land Custody. During the meeting, they enjoyed a session with the Apostolic Nuncio Pietro Sambi and with Cardinal Wuerl, representing the Bishops Conference of USA.

The meeting, with prayer and fellowship among the Commissaries and the community.

On the last day, the Commissaries were taken on a visit to the Capitol and to the Library of Congress. They didn’t manage to meet Obama or Michele and the girls, but they posed for a photo outside the White House.

M any of us would already be planning what it is that we shall give up for Lent next week but the Church, and the Liturgy especially, remind us that our Lenten preparation cannot be simply about sacrifices and our own personal sanctification.

Isaiah proclaims, “Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”

In other words, our prayers, our fasts and our alms must be to the benefit of others.

In our self-denial this Lent, let us not just deprive ourselves of something but ensure that a brother or sister in need benefits from our fast. The money that is not spent on treats for ourselves may go to some charity. When we forgo a meal, perhaps we can provide for some who needs it. In the time that is freed by our acts of self-denial, maybe some might be spent in companionship with the lonely. Bonaventure said of Francis that devotion lifted him to God, compassion transformed him to be like Christ and self-denial directed him to his neighbour. Lent is an opportunity for us to do the same.

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

What was on the front page of the Franciscan Newsletter in March, 1961?

“400 Years In The One Home”

Featuring a photograph of St Saviour’s Monastery in Jerusalem, the article commemorated the 400th anniversary of the Franciscan’s present “headquarters”.

The article recalled the event held on 12 December, 1960 to mark the anniversary, adding that “Christians throughout the Holy Land joined in celebrations with the brown-robed friars, who have kept the faith alive in these places in all the centuries since the fall of the Crusaders’ kingdom.”

It continues with a brief history of how St Francis sent the first friars in 1219, and from then until the mid-nineteenth century, the Franciscan Provincial or “ Custos”/”Custodian” was the direct representative to the Pope in Palestine.

“After much negotiation and payment of a large sum, they (Franciscans) obtained the use of St Saviour’s from the Georgian (Armenian) monks,” the article stated.

“From December 9, 1560, the flag of the Crusaders fluttered from the top of the Monastery as it had flown from the fortresses of the Crusaders 400 years earlier.”
The Year 5 – 7 boys at Padua College, Kedron, (Primary Campus) raised $835.80 to support families from Our Lady of Good Counsel School (OLGC), Gatton.

The Gatton Parish includes a number of affected towns in the Lockyer Valley.

The 250 Padua boys in Years 5-7, were able to raise the money through the kind support of parents, local businesses and staff at the College.

(above) Mr David White receives a cheque from Lachlan Caldwell, Primary Captain of Padua College.

If you are trying to phone Aitape, you will note that the new phone numbers have a “4” instead of an “8” preceding the number. So, St Anna Friary is 457 4082; Diocesan Office is 457 2046/7.

Archbishop Brian Barnes now has another title before his name. It is “Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu” (GCL). This is awarded to those citizens of Papua New Guinea - and others - for service, achievement, and merit in the highest degree, sustained over a period of 20 years.

The award may be given to no more than 50 living persons. This class carries with it the title of, “Grand Chief”.

The Australian boatpeople saga took an interesting turn last week when the story of Papuans coming across Torres Strait in dinghies surfaced in the Australian media.

The fact that 120 people apparently made the trip should have meant a huge story but like a lot of politicians, the journalists were asleep at the wheel and there was not a single TV image.

According to reports, Australian immigration officials seized the dinghies and the Papuans were sent packing back to Daru.

Last Saturday four young Presentation Sisters made their first professions. One is from Manam Island, Madang; one from Pangia, Southern Highlands; one from Ambunti, Sepik River and the last from Wati/Nuku. She is Joyce Wansana from that great Wati family. Their national leader Antonia received the vows. Their novice mistress Regina, also a national, presented them. I thought how well the sisters are going and then remembered that we had three friars make their Solemn Profession the week before.

The Year 5 – 7 boys at Padua College, Kedron, (Primary Campus) raised $835.80 to support families from Our Lady of Good Counsel School (OLGC), Gatton.

As part of the school’s, “New Guinea Immersion Experience” these students, accompanied by teachers Anne Murphy and Marcia James, spent 12 days in a number of remote villages in Lido, Vanimo.

For these girls – who have never wanted for anything materialistically in their lives - living in a village with no electricity or running water, exposed them to a life which is a reality for so many people around the world.

Teacher Ms Anne Murphy (pictured with some of her students) said what moved them most of all was the treatment of women in PNG.

“We visited a women’s school where girls escaped from unwanted marriages,” Ms Murphy said.

“It was heartbreaking as these young girls could never go back to their village once they left - all because they did not want to marry,” she said.

Ms Murphy added that the whole experience not only exposed her students to the realities of political corruption, over-logging and the inequality of women’s rights, but also gave them a deeper sense of gratitude, opened their eyes to the hard work of the Church and gave them desire to “do something” for those less fortunate.

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Not many people can say they work in the very same place their predecessors did 800 years ago, but Fabian Adkins most certainly can.

It seems that working in the Holy Land has been a calling for Fabian who has spent decades in some of the most significant places - not only for the Christian faith - but for the Franciscan Order.

For Fabian - living in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in Nazareth and now more recently in Mount Nebo, Jordan - is a far cry from the friary kitchens he worked in Australia.

Other than the eight years he lived in Washington (from 1998 – 2005), Fabian has lived in the Middle East since 1975.

“It is almost indescribable the feeling of being in Jerusalem, especially during Easter,” Fabian said.

“To pray and walk and live in the very places Jesus Christ did is exciting and a very special experience.”

Fabian admits though, as well as being the Franciscan in the Church, his job was also to keep the “status quo” among the several Christian Churches within the walls of the Holy Sepulchre.

His next stop was living in Nazareth. This was a different experience all together for Fabian.

Here he was surrounded by Franciscans, and relished his 10 years working as the Sacristan once again.

While living in the United States, where Fabian said he thoroughly enjoyed the culture of the museums, art galleries and the like, the call of the Holy Land beckoned once more, this time Jordan.

“Living in Mt Nebo, Jordan is a beautiful experience for me,” he said.

“My days are filled with showing pilgrims and tourists around the Byzantine Basilica,” he said.

“At the moment, I am working on renovating the monastery, which I hope will be completed soon.

“But, more than anything, it is very special for me as it is daily reminder to trust in God, just as Moses did.”

My name is Lorna McIntosh.

I work as the chef/catering coordinator at Star of the Sea Friary, Waverley. Let me tell you a little about myself in regard to work.

I am a fully qualified chef and have worked in kitchens since the age of 12. After college, I worked in some very trendy restaurants and hotels from Scotland to London and onwards to New York and Canada. Eventually, I decided to work more social hours and so I took up chef/manager positions which led me to Sydney.

And, so that is how I ended up at the friary and have been here for the last 13 years. It’s my calling!

1) What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

The fact that after all this time I still wake up looking forward to work. I also get great enjoyment from watching people enjoy what I have poured my heart into – the making of food that is mostly tasty, mostly healthy and nutritious.

2) What are your greatest attributes, skills and qualities?

I feel I bring good humour and joy to my job with a fair sprinkling of patience. My skills are many; my ability to cater for any situation, to relate to all people, I am a great listener (but can talk underwater too!), hard worker, efficient and well organised. Desserts, cakes and biscuits are my forte.

3) What are the most valuable lessons you have learned?

To love and accept myself as a fully functioning human. To listen well. I’ve learnt from my mistakes and always try to remain positive and up beat no matter what life has thrown my way.

4) What gifts do you bring?

I bring fun with occasional bursts of craziness! i.e singing and dancing around the kitchen. But I also bring a genuine caring heart to my place of work with the ability to somewhat read people’s energies.

5) What are your goals for the coming year?

To keep smiling while working hard at injecting love and compassion into the lives of the friars who have given so much of that to others.
O
n the sunny summer morning of 20 Febrary, over 250 people gathered at La Perouse to commemorate Franciscan Friar Pere Receveur – the man who may well have been Australia’s first Catholic priest.

This year marked the 23rd Anniversary of the Mass which is held annually adjacent to Receveur’s grave.

Special guest NSW Governor Marie Bashir, who was accompanied by her husband Sir Nicholas Shehadie, attended the event.

Other attendees included French-speaking Catholics, Franciscans and parishioners of St Andrew’s Church, Malabar.

The Mass was concelebrated by Fr Christopher Shorrock ofm conv, French community chaplain Fr Jan Chrzczenowicz, Paul Ghanem and two other priests.

Xavier Chung from the Custody of Saint Anthony - who is currently undertaking studies in Sydney - said the highlight of the day was meeting Governor Bashir and her husband.

Maroubra MP Michael Daley also took part in the liturgy.

The day also marked the launch of the booklet by Ed Duyker, (pictured below with Paul Ghanem) entitled, “Père Receveur Franciscan, scientist and voyager with Lapérouse” at La Perouse Museum.

Autographed copies of the book are available at $10 each.

(left) Receveur’s grave featuring the Franciscan Coat of arms.

(On opposite page)

Commemorative Mass at the site in La Perouse in 1933.
February marks the anniversary of the death of Père Laurent Receveur, the first Catholic Priest and Scientist to be buried in Australian soil. His funeral service was most likely the first Catholic mass held in Australia. For followers of St Francis, Père Receveur is even more significant: he was a friar-priest from France, an integral member of the Lapérouse expedition serving as both priest and scientist.

A new work on Receveur has recently been researched and published by Edward Duyker, whose fascination with Receveur dates back to 1983 when Ed first saw Receveur’s grave in Sydney. I’m pleased to say that we have been able to assist with the research for this work, by providing details and images from our collection which document the Franciscan involvement with and care for the site since 1879. Ed has located and translated the letters written back to France by Receveur while on the voyage with Lapérouse, and these shed light, for the first time, on Père Receveur as the young man he was, engaged on a scientific voyage of discovery and research during the time we now know as the Enlightenment.

Born Claude-François-Joseph Receveur in Noël-Cerneux, Russey, France on 25 April 1757, Receveur took the religious name of Laurent when he joined the Franciscans in Besançon. We do not have the exact details of his reception and profession, but we do know that he was living in Paris with the ‘Cordeliers’ (as the Franciscans were known in France) by 1784. It was probably here that he was educated, but details of where he studied the natural sciences (botany, geology, entomology) are not known. He was selected by the Académie des Sciences to serve as naturalist and chaplain on the Astrolabe, one of two ships in the Lapérouse expedition, which left France in 1785.

After an epic voyage which included stops at the Canary Islands, Trinidad, Brazil, Chile, Easter Island, Alaska, California, Macao, the Philippines and Japan, Receveur was wounded in a scuffle with natives in Samoa in December 1787, en route to New South Wales. He died of complications to this wound, probably exacerbated by scurvy, on 17 February 1788, shortly after the expedition reached Botany Bay. He was not yet 31 years of age.

His grave site on the northern headland of Botany Bay – an area now known as La Perouse – has been cared for at different times by the French and Australian Governments and now sits within Botany Bay National Park. The Franciscan involvement dates back to 1879; in the early 1900s the friars provided fencing and ironwork for the grave itself, which was restored again in the 1930s. Correspondence held in the archives show successive Provincials have worked hard to ensure that the Franciscan connection with Receveur, and the significance of the site to all Catholics, is not lost. More recently, both Paul Ghanem and I have been working with the various bodies now charged with caring for the site to maintain this tradition. If you would like to know more about Père Receveur, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Until next time, Kim.
PRAYERS

FOR THOSE IN NURSING HOMES
Felix Chapman
Thomas Murtagh

FOR THE SICK
Peter Fraser
Emanuel Hanson
Barry Kirby
Stephen Marshall
Campion Murray
Pauline Mary Babicci osc
Frances Ledwith osc
Judith Mayoh osc
M Francis Murphy osc
Zafiria Kipriotis
(Mother of Angela Sivris)

EDITORIAL

Ash Wednesday leads us into Lent, which insists we remember that God’s Covenant with us always has a human face.

God is in his Covenant with us, and we with God. Our Covenant has a tangible form, enfleshed in prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Ask God in prayer for ears to hear, for eyes to see what we can and must give away to others, and for faith to believe in the power of our Baptism, still enduring after all these years.

Robert Herrick says in his poem, “A True Lent”:

“...'tis a fast to dole thy sheaf of wheat and meat unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife, from old debate, and hate;

To circumcise thy life; to show a heart grief-rent;

To starve thy sin, not bin.

And that's to keep thy Lent.”

Whenever the Order has struck out on a new path on her long journey, it has usually been because the personality of Jesus has again become living, and a ray from His Being has lit up the Brotherhood. We have realised that, yes, God’s Covenant is real, even in 2011.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Brothers,

I read in your recent bulletin that some of the Australian Friars I got to know many years back are celebrating their Jubilees. Greg Bourke and I teamed up at the Curia in Rome many years ago when the two of us met up as real “Bush Missionaries” for a meeting of Mission Superiors. We also met up later when I was General Visitor in PNG. I also remember from PNG Terence O’Neill with whom I shared a memorable journey or two I’m sure I also met up with Kevin Goode. Cormac Nagle I remember fondly from General Chapters and meetings in Rome and in Bangalore as well as meeting up in Australia. I also have great memories of Brian Barnes, Austin Crapp, Michael Brown and so many others.

Congratulations and Ad Multos Annos to all the Jubilarians.

I have many fond memories of our Australian frati from whom I received hospitality, friendship and generosity. Its a pity we’re separated by so miles of sea, I’m retired to a Mission station in the bundu “Maria Ratschitz” and am battling with spinal cancer. Later in the year, I’ll be moving up to Pretoria to join the friars at Sta Sophia.

Best Wishes to all the Aussie and PNG Brethren. I wish you all a peaceful and holy Lent to be crowned by a Joyful and blessed Easter.

Fraternally, Paschal Rowland ofm
(Bishop Michael)