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FRANCISCAN SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

enriching Franciscan spirituality within schools



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connection

APRIL 2020 FSA Year of Conversion

2020 invites us to be jubilant as we connect more deeply and spiritually to our Franciscan spirituality, to all FSA school communities and to our common home – planet Mother earth.



Assisi – Santa Chiara

Panic over the COVID-19 pandemic has taken over our world and very possibly our peace of minds. FSA suggests that praying maybe that's exactly what's needed.

We tend to avoid prayer when we desperately need it most. So, what are the blessings in this darkly wrapped package? [How can it become a pathway to prayer?](#)

If we think of Jesus as floating amiably three feet above earth, never dirtying his hands or his garments, always surrounded by a golden aura and enjoying a perpetual serenity, the Gospels quickly correct that image. John 6, for instance, tells of Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee followed by a large crowd. Tired and hungry, he sits down to rest with his friends. But guess what? A large, demanding, hungry crowd invades their privacy.

Some of us would run the other way. But Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread to feed them. That leads to the miraculous feeding of five thousand. Afterward, realizing the people want to make him king, Jesus "withdrew again to the mountain alone" (John 6:15).

That alternation between action and prayer seems to be a constant rhythm in his life. He never says, "Today I fed five thousand and cured a leper. I don't need to pray" or, "Those Pharisees are really stressing me out! No prayer today!" **REFLECTION:**

Have you the alternation between action & prayer?



REFLECTION

Three-legged stool

Often under duress, people turn in desperation to the triad of caffeine, alcohol and sugar. *Are you guilty?* A far more stable stool is **CHURCH, RELATIONSHIPS and EXERCISE.**

If this fails and you need some energy say a prayer to St Drogo, patron saint of coffee and [coffee makers](#).

Breathe

Humans live incarnate, and the stress on our minds will inevitably transfer to our bodies. When we're overly stressed, we pour toxins into our systems. Why are we then surprised by the resulting backache, indigestion or migraine? The solution is to breathe. Deep breathing has been part of every major religious tradition. In Genesis 1, God breathes life into humanity. In John 20:22, Jesus breathes courage and forgiveness into a confused and frightened group of friends. So **breathe!**

Blessing

Let us remember our Franciscan Blessing *"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he turn his face to you and have mercy on you. May he shine his countenance on you and give you peace."*

Sourced from [EarthBeat](#) and [FranciscanMedia](#) blog by Kathy Coffey 'Stress: Our Pathway To God'.

'Love one another as I have loved



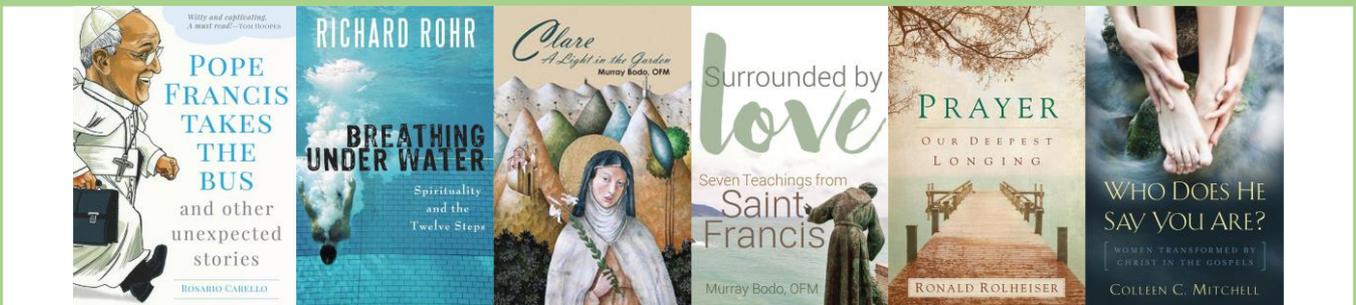
you.' (John 15:12)

STAY CONNECTED



St. Francis knew that everything in existence is intended for relationship and as Franciscans we are especially attuned to our relational nature. How about you turn to the good old-fashioned note?

- Take time to write notes of thanks, encouragement, or news to your loved ones—all with a special Franciscan message. Make your own cards like the ones above with time honoured Franciscan greetings!
- **READ ... check out Franciscan Media's [bestsellers](#)**



Let us stay well, connected and be inspired by our Franciscan scholars during this time of crisis.

For the love
of God
(literally),
stay home, be
safe and pray

Read [Fr Dan Horan's](#) opinion piece in the National Catholic Reporter

From FSA Coordinator **FATHER STEPHEN BLISS**

I am reminded of a friend of mine, who is often reminding me, "**Stephen, life is messy. Invite God into the mess.**" God did not cause this mess, but God is in the midst of it – because that's where God always is – *in our midst*, trying to be close to us, helping us to carry the burden, trying to lift the anxiety, desiring nothing more than to fill us with His peace, His love, His holiness. It's up to us to invite God in so that even in the midst of this crisis, we can find a renewed faith, a renewed experience of our living God who is close to us. As we know **'it is ok not to be ok'**! So please reach out if you need help or simply have a need for a chat



The FSA website is being updated and we are calling for community photographs from our member schools.



Please email high resolution jpeg files to Executive Officer Alison Stone. alisonstone@optusnet.com.au

“Thank You COVID-19”

FATHER STEPHEN BLISS

Fr Stephen offers this reflection piece for FSA communities. You may be able to take some of the wisdom contained within for your up and coming school newsletters.

Had you said to me earlier in the year that I would watch a movie with someone over Facebook, or sent a video message to Parishioners or sat in a School Staff room seeing how the children will learn their ‘tables’ in a virtual classroom, I would have scoffed at you! It is important to acknowledge the hardship of these days well!

It is a certainty that ‘life is changing’.

Last Friday 27 March, Pope Francis spoke to the whole world when he held an extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. This blessing, “to the city and to the world” typically only takes place twice a year – at Christmas and Easter. The Holy Father knew that in this extraordinary global moment, we could all benefit from this blessing. In his reflection, he spoke about the Gospel passage where Jesus and the Apostles are on a boat at sea, and the waters become dangerous.

He said, “Like the disciples, we find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. But, we have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. (The children are very familiar with this story). Just like the disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying ‘We are dying’, so we too have realised that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this. The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. You, Lord, are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.”

My friends, God has not caused this moment – God is very present in the midst of it. Can you feel that Divine presence? At times, I haven’t, but when I have stopped and reflected, I can see the hand of God drawing me and others. As with every moment, there is an opportunity to discover the gift and the grace that is hidden here. Use your time of isolation as a time of prayer. Use your time together as a family as a time to renew, rebuild, or even create a strong family build on faith and love. Think about how you will act differently when this moment passes – do not simply go back to the crazy, busy, unnecessarily hectic lives we have allowed ourselves to create; and instead remember that it is good to slow down; it is good to be together; it is good to gather around the table for a meal; it is good to pray as a family; it is good to have the chance to connect with one another in ways that are deeper than we are used to.

COVID-19 has hit the world at the same moment Christians are marking the season of Lent. Now is the time to allow new life to grow in the ashes of our humanness: that is ‘Churchy’-language for saying let’s allow goodness to emerge in our family-life, in our school-life, in our church-life and indeed in our society! Amid the suffering and sadness, God is “calling us to faith,” and to return to the basics of life: loving those who are dear to us and realising that we belong together as sister and brothers. We are in this life together and we need to care for one another. **This reminds me very clearly of the great and simple message of Jesus.**

At Easter time we profess our faith, we believe in Jesus who is risen from the dead and we reflect on the resurrection for us today. I think more than ever we are invited this Easter to rise with Jesus – rise above the negative, rise above the fear, rise above the doubt, and rise to spread and share the joy of the Risen Lord. It has become clear to me that the Resurrection is not a past event, but something I can truly promote by my actions and thoughts. Thank You COVID-19