

Obituary

for Margaret Scott, TSSF

19th May 1937 – 8th January 2013

Margaret Scott suffered a stroke in November 2011 which restricted her mobility and deprived her of her speech. But in the fourteen months since then, she remained joyful and eager to take part in life as much as she could, and found that hymns and prayers and the Third Order Office came back to her with ease. Sadly another stroke, more severe, has taken her. This is an abridged tribute given at her joyful and hopeful funeral service in a packed Alconbury Church on 24th January.

Following the way of St Francis and St Clare was an essential part of Margaret's calling as a Christian. It was deeply rooted in her marriage with Richard and a vital aspect of their family life.

It all began back in 1958. This was the year Margaret arrived at Homerton College Cambridge to do a PGCE course. Through a mutual friend she was introduced to Richard, then a third-year undergraduate. Richard had already fallen under the spell of the Franciscan brothers, in particular Brother Michael, and had caught a glimpse of the Franciscan life. Seeing his chance, he decided to invite her out. "Are you by any chance doing anything on Sunday morning?" says he, "Would you like to come with me to the 10.00 Eucharist at St Bene't's?" An unusual first date, perhaps, but Margaret said "Yes." I think it is probably true to say that their courtship and marriage were not only an exploration of their relationship but also an adventure into the Franciscan life. Certainly various Franciscan community experiences followed. There was a Hop-Pickers' Mission in Kent, and a mission at St John's

Stockton when she had started her first teaching job, leading to her decision to become an SSF Companion.

Richard and Margaret were married in 1962. They were blessed with four children not long after, and bestowed upon their eldest two the names of the blessed saints Francis and Clare. They moved to Brampton in 1964, and in 1965 Margaret joined Richard in the Third Order. On moving to Alconbury in 1968, they gave their newly-built house the name “Taw Cross” and fixed a beautiful wooden Taw to the front of the house. This is a Franciscan house. In this home, the Franciscan office has been prayed, hymns have been sung, and the Third Order Principles have been read, every day, for 45 years.

Katharine and I first met Richard and Margaret and their children in 1972, during a formative time when with others we were exploring the idea of a family community based at Little Gidding. As it turned out, this experience did not lead us there but instead it led us to the Friary at Hilfield in Dorset, to practise community life for a hectic week in July at the Franciscan Families’ Camp. This annual event had been founded two years earlier by a group of Third Order families, Richard and Margaret being respectively Camp Commandant and Camp Catering Officer. I remember arriving to find that Margaret had been to the Cash & Carry and, to avoid spud-bashing, ever practical, had bought in quantities of Cadbury’s Smash mashed potato, to be followed by even greater quantities of Angel Delight. It was an experience of Christian fellowship which could quite accurately be described as “awesome”, and gave us a new insight into the Franciscan life with its powerful mix of Christ-like love, closeness to creation and joyful and simple living.

This experience sealed my vocation as a Franciscan and eventually as an ordinand. I became a Third Order novice, and Richard became my Novice Counsellor; a year later Katharine also followed this call and her Novice Counsellor was Margaret. Katharine recalls Margaret's gentle care as well as her loving telephone counselling ministry.

Richard and Margaret have been moving spirits in the Franciscan Third Order in the Cambridge Area ever since. Whether it was meetings of the Huntingdon Local Group, of which Margaret was for many years the convenor, meetings of the Area Team or Cambridge Area Meetings, or more widely the Third Order General Chapter at York, the Scotts could always be relied upon, as a couple, to be there, supporting, encouraging, challenging, Margaret, always ready with gentle practical care, to help to serve tea and coffee or with her favourite kind of entertaining, "bring and share lunches".

At the heart of this was Margaret's strong and joyful spirituality, informed as much by the qualities of St Clare, whom she admired for her no nonsense feistiness, as by the qualities of St Francis whom she followed for his enthusiasm and his simplicity.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Richard Ames-Lewis
Area Minister
Third Order of the Society of St Francis, Cambridge Area