

## The Canticle of Brother Sun:

TSSF Study Weekend (2013) at Freeland

Our aim for the week-end was to enjoy, study and celebrate the praise song of St Francis, written towards the end of his life. A group of 8 professed Tertiaries, plus a postulant and an enquirer, took part. As on other occasions, the Sisters of the Community of St Clare made us very welcome, and allowed us to join in their worship. We had a small celebration to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Hugh Beach (62 years professed,) on our first evening.

An introductory session on Friday evening introduced the story of the creation of the Canticle from the original sources; and we heard the Altramar Medieval Music Ensemble sing the Canticum Creatorum to the tune of a medieval Marian lauda, which was very beautiful. Then David Swain gave us an update on Professor Brian Moloney's book on the Canticle, which will be published later in 2013.<sup>1</sup>

We had divided the Canticle into stanzas and members of the Study Group had prepared very varied presentations; our sessions were fitted in between services in the Chapel and an afternoon break for rest and recreation. The weather was warm and sunny, and the garden was coming to life after the long winter.

On Saturday, Kenya Tatton Brown presented 'Brother Sun,' and gave us, incidentally, the best image of the day from a 13<sup>th</sup> century illustrated Bible, showing God as the 'architect' of the universe. Next Graham Gee spoke about the Moon and stars; he had been inspired years back by the moon landing, and has a scientific background in astronomy. He set up a powerful telescope and that night, after dark, some of us were privileged to view the ring around Saturn, and some of the brighter stars. Cecile Joseph spoke of 'Brother Wind', quoting research which showed that wind was necessary for the strengthening of trees, which do not flourish in a wind-free environment. She quoted poetry, made links with the Holy Spirit, and then gave us some fun making toy windmills to test outside.

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<sup>1</sup> This book will be published on 10 October 2013. It will be expensive – list price £55 in hardback. A paper-back version may be published later.

Hugh Beach introduced 'Sister Water' with music, followed by a poetry recital, with members of the group reading different poems. We heard Psalm 104, a tongue twister from Robert Southey, poems by Yeats, TS Eliot, Shakespeare and Rupert Brooke. We ended by singing 'Mud, Mud glorious Mud' from Flanders and Swan. David Swayne presented 'Brother Fire', and Nell Slocock ended the day presenting a paper on 'Mother Earth', describing her own passion for gardens and green issues. <sup>2</sup> This subject provoked the most lively discussion, especially about how Franciscans can live out their responsibility for safeguarding creation.

On Sunday morning, we discussed the two stanzas added later to the Canticle - forgiveness and death, led by Denise Mumford and Jane Morley. Jane spoke about Francis' death, drawing on many sources. She passed round some beautiful images, including one of the Pieta, and another, modern image of St Francis embracing the dead Christ. Thus concluded an inspiring and companionable week-end.

Report by Denise Mumford

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<sup>2</sup> There were only 2 written papers, which accompany this report on the TSSF website.