

John Lovatt Electoral address for Minister Provincial and Trustee of the European Province

Following the guidelines for Electoral addresses given by the Order:-

Relevant TSSF experience (with dates)

Currently Provincial Treasurer (2015-16). Mercia Area Minister 2014-15. Mercia Area Secretary & Treasurer 2012-14. Mercia Area Minister 2002-2008. Convenor of North Staffs Area 1996-2002. Deputy Regional Guardian for the old North Mercia Region 1996-8, and attended Provincial Chapter in March 1999, and was on one of the working parties, and so participated in the restructuring of the Order. TSSF representative at the World Congress of Secular Franciscans (Roman Catholic) in 1973 & 1983. Chapter Clerk in the late 70's when I composed some of our Profession Service.

Any 'specialist qualifications'

As a trustee and member of the Provincial Chapter I have an understanding of how Chapter works, and the strains and stresses of the job of Minister Provincial. As Provincial Treasurer I have made contact with all the Areas, sometimes through their treasurer, sometimes through their Area Minister, and met most of the treasurers personally at our two Area Treasurer meetings this year. Together we resolved many muddles and difficulties. I believe I now have a warm and loving relationship with all the treasurers. I hope also I now have a good understanding of how different Areas function.

My experience over many years of service to TSSF, and the needs and desires of Tertiaries.

My many meetings with First and Second Order brothers and sisters, and my understanding of them.

My international experience as a representative of TSSF, and my ecumenical experience there, including meeting them in Italy and the USA.

As Managing Director of a family business with 350 employees, drawing together diverse people into a shared vision, working together to 'to unite the members around an agreed set of tasks and to guide them forward' (part of the Minister Provincial role description).

How I propose to undertake the job

The first requirement of the 'Role Description' of the Minister Provincial is 'Maintaining the Vision', I hope to help us inspire younger people to join our Order by our setting before them the example of St Francis and St Clare, their simple lifestyle, their humility, love and joy, their relationship with the natural Creation, and the presence of a supporting community for your vocation. At Chapter I would hope we could move away from the temptation to control, and inspire rather than regulate. I hope to bring the 'Jongleur de Dieu' spirit and be informal and lighthearted, even though dealing with actually quite serious things.

As an Order I feel we have lost our way a bit, and that there is too much emphasis on personal discipline, and not enough on simplicity and joy in adversity, and that we are too hierarchical. I don't feel we are a sign to the world and to the Church, and need to return to Francis. Maybe I'm wrong, but could Chapter consider this.

The next task will be the Convocation in May. I hope to help Chapter to listen carefully in humility to the Areas and put into practice if at all possible the recommendations.

I hope to bring my skills and understanding in working together with the Chapter members, helping us to appreciate each other, and see a common vision.

I hope to work closely with the Chapter members between Chapters, so we share responsibility and reach a common mind on everything that comes up, rather than my acting alone.

There is then the International Provincial Third Order meeting (IPTOC) in September, where all Ministers Provincial and big wigs come together. There has been some pressure from within the Order to update our Principles to be more suitable for today and more Franciscan (originally they came from a non-Franciscan source, and there's not much about Francis or Clare). If acceptable, could we discuss this at the June Chapter, and if we wish to consider updating it, I would raise it at IPTOC, because it is a long process. Also at IPTOC I would like to suggest we move away from control towards inspiration.

Short personal description of the background, family and any particular motives that the individual seeks to bring to bear in the role.

I hope you saw my description in the March Little Portion. Briefly, like Francis I reacted against the wealth of my family, wore hessian clothes at Cambridge and met my wife in a refugee camp. I want to follow Jesus and take the gospel commands literally, as Francis did. My wife and I were professed together and are an Anglican family. I have felt for a long time that the Order is not radical enough, and having been in a position of power in the world, have seen how important it is for officers not to make people 'feel the weight of their authority' (Mark 10:42). I hope if I am elected you will find me true to my beliefs!

A brief reference as to why the individual is a member of this Franciscan Religious Order.

I need the inspiration of Francis and Clare, and the support of a community, to maintain my stand against the power-seeking and wealth-seeking world around me.