



FRANCISCAN FOOTPRINTS

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN THE WAYS
OF FRANCIS AND CLARE

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1226, Francis lay dying. He was only in his mid-40s, but worn out by his life of service and penance. Shortly before his death, he looked at the brothers gathered around him. 'I have done what is mine,' he said. 'May Christ teach you what is yours.'¹ It was a characteristically humble farewell from a man who has often been described as 'the little poor one', who called himself a 'lesser brother' and who could never understand why so many people were drawn to follow him.

Clare, the first Franciscan woman, shared this humility and desire to point people away from her and towards Christ. Towards the end of her life, writing to her present sisters and those still to come, she said that they had been called to be like mirrors, in which people could look and see Christ. A mirror doesn't exist to be looked at for itself; its whole purpose is to reflect back accurately what is in front of it.

The legacy of Francis and Clare has left a great gift and a great responsibility for those who believe they are called to follow in their footsteps. The gift is the inspiration of their lives and writings, and the fellowship of their prayers. The responsibility is to discern what is 'ours to do', in our own time and place and circumstances. Between them Francis and Clare set examples of community life, of a deep spiritual life, of care for others in their need and for creation, of pastoral care, of preaching the word and taking it to places where it had not been heard, of simply living in the mundane reality of life and of being willing to lay down their lives even unto death. Their followers throughout the eight centuries since they lived and died in medieval Italy have taken all these examples and lived them out in an astonishing variety of ways.

In this book I want to introduce you to some of these people, in the hope that you too will find your own way to follow Christ in the ways of Francis and Clare. Many of them are officially canonised as saints – they are often the ones who are remembered – but others aren't. I've chosen to share some stories from the sisters and brothers of my own Anglican Franciscan community too, as a way of grounding the inspiration of Francis and Clare in the context I know best and of introducing you to some Franciscans who are not saints (at least not officially). You could think of it as arriving at a party: I'm standing next to you and telling you about the people gathered in the room. Then you can decide who you'd like to get to know better.

I'll begin by introducing Francis and Clare themselves, and then we will go on to various groups of Franciscan followers: the founders of the Franciscan life in the Anglican church; theologians, thinkers and writers; mystics, solitaries and those dedicated to the spiritual life; carers, workers for social justice and peacemakers; martyrs; preachers and missionaries; pastors; and those who simply lived humble lives. Many could of course belong in more than one category – it was with their whole lives that they were following, after all – but grouped together under these broad headings I hope that they can shed light on one another and bring into sharper focus the particular part of the lives of Francis and Clare that inspired them.

As you read, I encourage you also to pray and to ask which is the way in which you are called. An American Franciscan wrote, 'I love reading the lives of the saints, because they show us how many different ways there are to please God.'² I hope that by the end of the book you will feel that you have some examples and friends to guide you as you seek to please God, to be a mirror showing Christ to the world and to learn 'what is yours to do'.

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SHARING THEIR SUPREME TREASURE: MISSIONARIES AND PREACHERS

‘Preach the gospel by all means. If necessary use words’ has become a very popular quotation from Francis. Sadly there is no evidence that he actually said it. It isn’t recorded anywhere in his own writings or in the biographies written soon after his death. However, he might well have agreed with the sentiment, and certainly over the centuries many Franciscans have gone out into the world to share the gospel and to preach the word.

Most of these, as with theologians, have been men; women, as we saw in chapter 3, were excluded from formal theological education, and permission to preach was increasingly confined to priests, who were of course all men. But this did not prevent our first preacher from preaching in the streets of her home town, Viterbo in Italy.

Rose of Viterbo was born around 1233, not long after the death of Francis and while Clare was still alive. When she was three, Franciscan friars arrived in Viterbo, and Rose was captivated by them. She dressed up in a habit tied with a thick rope and insisted on having her hair shaved into the tonsure. She was not just play-acting; from an early age she had a rich spiritual life, seeing visions of townspeople who had died long before she was born, praying regularly and living an ascetic life. Soon she took to the streets and

began preaching as the friars did, and people flocked to hear her. She began to bring them home so she could continue to teach. Her parents were unsurprisingly not happy and tried to stop her, but she embraced every difficulty as a chance to imitate Christ, and they allowed her to continue. It isn't recorded what the friars made of her, but they may well have been concerned about the impact of this unconventional young girl on their own ministry.

Rose joined the Third Order in her early teens and a few years later sought to become a Poor Clare in the local monastery, but the nuns refused. She was too controversial a person to fit easily into their community, and in addition her family was too poor to provide the dowry. Had she entered, it would have brought an end to her street ministry; as it was, she continued to live a life of penance and prayer in her family home and of preaching and prophecy outside it. She died on 6 March 1251, aged only 18. A few years later, her body was exhumed and found to be incorrupt and sweet smelling. The people brought her to the Poor Clares, and the community which had refused her entry in life now eagerly received her body.

The Pope himself began a movement to declare Rose a saint, but it seems that some thought her example too risky to promote. In 1253 Clare died, and her less controversial example eclipsed Rose. Clare was soon canonised, while Rose, though seen as a saint in Viterbo, was not declared one by the wider church until 1457. By this time she was no longer remembered for her preaching and prophecy but only for her ascetic acts and deep faith. The unconventional aspects of her life were written out of the official record. Even two centuries later, when a new biography labelled her an 'apostolic preacher', it was placed on the Index of Prohibited Books until the phrase was edited out.

The people of Viterbo, however, continued to remember and value her. When the church was considering declaring her a saint, the locals recounted their stories of her, handed down the generations in oral tradition for two centuries. Her body still lies in the Poor Clare

monastery, and it is carried through the town on 4 September, her feast day, and has also been brought out at times of threat, such as earthquake or military attack. The young girl whose deeds and words made such an impact in her short life continues to preach after her death. And in light of her own early death, these words of hers are especially poignant: ‘Live so as not to fear death. For those who live well in the world, death is not frightening, but sweet and precious.’⁶⁷

While Rose preached only in her home country, **Odoric of Pordenone** travelled across much of the known world. Unlike the martyrs we met in the previous chapter, he also came safely home again. Odoric was born in northern Italy in the second half of the 13th century; sources vary widely about the date of his birth – 1286 seems most likely, but it could have been a decade or more earlier. He became a Franciscan friar, and around 1317 sailed from Venice as a missionary to Asia, not returning until 1330. Franciscans had been entrusted by successive popes with missions to the east since 1254, perhaps because of Francis’ preference for dialogue over crusade, so Odoric was not setting out into entirely unknown territory. But it was a time of turmoil and violence, which saw the rise of the Mongol empire under Genghis Khan. At his death in 1227, only a year after Francis, Genghis Khan’s empire ‘stretched from Korea to the Persian Gulf, to Georgia, and in the south to India’.⁶⁸

From Constantinople, Odoric moved on to Armenia, Media and Persia (now Iran), where there were already Franciscan mission centres. Travelling to the Persian Gulf he sailed to India, landing in Thane near Mumbai in 1322. Several fellow Franciscan missionaries, led by Thomas of Tolentino, had recently been martyred here. In April 1321, they had been staying with a family, and when a quarrel broke out and the husband beat his wife, they were called as witnesses in the ensuing court case. The judge began a discussion of religion, which led to their condemnation for blaspheming Muhammad.

The martyrs’ bodies were buried at Supera, north of Mumbai; Odoric disinterred these relics and carried them with him as he travelled.

Most he finally buried in China, though he brought Thomas of Tolentino's head back to his hometown and to the Franciscans there. That must have been a salutary reminder of the dangers of missionary journeys and of preaching the gospel.

As well as preaching, Odoric also wrote extensively, and was interested in everything he saw as he travelled. In Puri, for example, he witnessed the Chariot Festival of the Hindu god Jagannath and was one of the first to write about it for a western audience. When he left India he sailed to Sumatra, and on to Java and Borneo before arriving in China, where he spent three years, from 1324 to 1327. He travelled widely through the country, ending up in present-day Beijing, then the headquarters of the Great Khan, the emperor of China. There he would undoubtedly have met and served with the Franciscan archbishop, John of Monte Corvino, founder of the earliest Catholic missions in both India and China, and now in his late 70s. The emperor was well disposed towards the Franciscans, and Odoric and Archbishop John took part in a ceremony of blessing the Khan.⁶⁹

Odoric's interest in the life of the people among whom he was living is shown by the fact that he records the practices of cormorant fishing, foot-binding among women and allowing fingernails to grow to extravagant lengths. Other travellers to the east, among them Marco Polo 30 years earlier, though they must have seen these common customs, didn't record them in their writings. This curiosity would undoubtedly have made Odoric a better preacher and evangelist, able to tailor his message to the lives of those to whom he was preaching. He was remarkably open to other cultures and faiths, recording how impressed he was by the size of Chinese cities and their fleets and visiting Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples. He also loved the food!

Odoric's return to Italy took him overland, perhaps through Mongolia, and in Tibet he may even have visited Lhasa. When he arrived back in Italy, along with Brother James of Ireland, who had

accompanied him for at least some of his odyssey, after a journey of more than 50,000 kilometres, he went to the friary in Padua, where he dictated the whole story of his travels to another brother, William of Solagna. Odoric and James then set out to the Pope, then based in Avignon, to report on their missionary journey. Odoric, however, fell ill on the way and returned to Udine, the capital of his native province, where he died in January 1331. His Franciscan brothers were about to bury him simply, but the chief magistrate of the city insisted on a public funeral. Tales of his travels and of posthumous miracles spread rapidly, and the funeral had to be postponed several times, before finally taking place in the presence of the patriarch of Aquileia and all the important local people. The city built a shrine for his body, which became a place of pilgrimage.

Another Franciscan who both travelled and wrote was **Ramon Llull**, whose particular commitment was to mission in the Islamic world. Unlike Odoric of Pordenone, Ramon, who was born on Majorca in 1232, grew up in a multicultural environment. He 'was the son of wealthy Catalan colonists who settled in Majorca after taking part in the conquest of the island by James I of Aragon'.⁷⁰ Only a few years before his birth, the Balearic Islands had been retaken by Christian rulers from their Arab rulers. Around a third of the population of Majorca was still Muslim, and it was a major trading centre, with Jewish merchants from North Africa living alongside French and Italian Christians.

Ramon married in 1257 and was a court troubadour and head of the royal household. In his early 30s he experienced a profound conversion and joined the Third Order. From then until his death in his 80s he dedicated his life to an attempt to bring Christians, Muslims and Jews together in God's truth.

He studied Arabic and other languages and travelled widely to persuade those in authority of the importance to missionary work of being able to read and speak the native languages of those they

sought to convert. The Franciscans were persuaded first, founding a language school for missionaries at Miramar in Majorca in 1276. Finally, the Council of Vienne in 1311 agreed that Christians undertaking missionary work among Jews and Muslims should learn Hebrew and Arabic, and ordered the creation of chairs in these languages in a number of European universities.

But Ramon did not only seek to prepare others for missionary work; he also undertook it himself. He produced Christian books for Muslims to read and travelled widely through Europe, Palestine and North Africa, preaching the love of Christ. As well as preaching his own sermons, he wrote textbooks on the preparation of sermons.

After spending time in Tunis, he believed that the conversion of Muslims should be achieved through prayer and not through war and violence. He wrote:

I see many knights going to the Holy Land beyond the seas... thinking... they can acquire it by force of arms; but in the end all are destroyed... It seems to me that the conquest of the Holy Land ought not to be attempted except in the way in which You and your apostles acquired it, namely, by love and prayers, and the pouring out of tears and of blood.⁷¹

Violence, however, marked the end of his own life. At the age of 82 he travelled again to Tunis to preach the Christian faith and was imprisoned there. On his release in 1315 he was stoned by an angry crowd but rescued by Christians in the city and taken back to Majorca by Genoese merchants, where he died in 1316, aged 84. He is an important inspiration for those involved in dialogue between the three Abrahamic faiths and also a reminder of the importance for all missionaries, at home or abroad, of understanding and being able to speak the language of those they want to reach, whether that is literally another language or more subtly having an understanding of the words and ideas that will speak to their concerns.

Missionary work and preaching were major enterprises of the Franciscan friars for many centuries, initially in Europe and then, following European exploration across the Atlantic, in the Americas. While many wanted to go abroad, far more often their preaching was to those in Europe who were already at least nominally Christian. They sought to strengthen their faith and to rekindle the faith of those who had become lukewarm. Two of the most famous of these were Anthony of Padua and Bernardine of Siena.

We met **Anthony of Padua** briefly in the previous chapter. As a young Augustinian monk in Portugal he was moved to become a Franciscan by the return of the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs to the friary in Coimbra in 1220. His great knowledge of scripture informed his powerful preaching, mainly in northern Italy and southern France, and he was given permission by Francis himself to teach the friars. His Franciscan heart can be seen in the way that he emphasised the link between conversion to the gospel and social justice. He did this not only in his sermons, but also in practical ways. For example, he persuaded the government in Padua to change the way in which people in debt were treated. Instead of being imprisoned, which meant their situation could not change, they could now declare themselves bankrupt, which allowed them to start a new life.

Anthony preached before the Pope and cardinals in a church council, where it's recorded that in an echo of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) all those present, from many countries, heard him in their own languages, and 'the Pope, amazed at the profound things set before them from the Holy Scriptures by Saint Antony, said, "He is truly 'the Ark of the Covenant' and 'the repository of Holy Scripture.'"'⁷² Anthony died in Padua in 1231, aged 36.

Another of the great Franciscan preachers, **Bernardine of Siena**, was born in 1380 in Tuscany to a noble family. He was orphaned young, but under the care of several aunts received an excellent education. In 1400, Siena suffered a severe plague, and Bernardine along with a few companions volunteered to run the city's largest hospital.

This experience led him to decide to devote his life to God, and he joined a new Franciscan group, the Observant reform, in 1403. Like Anthony, he studied the scriptures in depth, and he travelled widely in northern and central Italy, preaching in an energetic and accessible way. Also like Anthony, he addressed issues of social justice in his sermons.

Bernardine's greatest legacy to the church was his devotion to the holy name of Jesus; when he preached he held up a plaque with the initials 'I.H.S.', an acronym for the name of Jesus. In one of his sermons, he said:

The name of Jesus is the glory of preachers, because the shining splendour of that name causes his word to be proclaimed and heard. And how do you think such an immense, sudden and dazzling light of faith came into the world, if not because Jesus was preached? Was it not through the brilliance and sweet savour of this name that God *called us into his marvelous light?*⁷³

As well as his gifts as a preacher, Bernardine also led the friars of the Observant reform for some years. During his time as a friar the group grew from about 130 to over 4,000 members in Italy. He continued to travel and to preach until his death in 1444.

More than two centuries later, another Italian dedicated his life to preaching in his own country. **Leonard of Port Maurice** was born in 1676 and became a friar in 1697. After his ordination, he wanted to become a missionary in China, but his health was poor and his superiors refused to send him abroad. For the remaining 40 years of his life he sought, through parish missions, Lenten sermons and retreats, to convert his hearers to a deeper and more authentic Christian life. Like Bernardine, he preached devotion to the holy name of Jesus, but his particular devotion was to the way of the cross, and he erected over 500 sets of stations of the cross throughout Italy. The most famous of these was in the Colosseum in Rome, where early Christians had been martyred. About this devotion he wrote:

What salutary insights will the continued meditation on the bitter passion of the Son of God stir up in the soul! Daily experience has taught me that by this devout form of prayer people's lives are quickly changed for the better. For the Way of the Cross is the antidote for vice, the cleansing of unbridled desires and an effective incentive to virtue and holiness of life.⁷⁴

Despite his poor health, Leonard lived to the age of 75, dying in the friary in Rome where he had become a Franciscan.

Others were able to fulfil their desire for mission work abroad. One of these was **Francis Solano**, an aristocratic Spaniard who joined the Franciscans in 1569 aged 20. In 1576 he was ordained, and he became a wandering preacher in Andalusian villages. When an epidemic broke out, he nursed the sick with no thought for his own health. In 1589, he volunteered to be a missionary to South America and was sent to bring the gospel to the indigenous peoples of what is now north-west Argentina, the Gran Chaco region of Bolivia, and Paraguay. He was a successful missionary, learning a number of native languages and, as a violinist, also using music in his work. Many stories were told of the miracles he worked.

In 1601 he moved to Lima, to be guardian of the friary there, and he worked not to convert but to recall nominal Christians to a more committed practice of their faith. He died in Lima in 1610, but today, more than four centuries later, there is still great devotion to him in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Peru. In the Argentinian town of Humahuaca, a mechanical statue of the saint emerges from the church every day at noon to bless the people.⁷⁵

In time the dedicated work of missionaries bore fruit, and local Christians took up the work of evangelism and preaching. One of these was **Frei Galvao**, the first Brazilian to be declared a saint. He was educated by the Jesuits but chose to join the Franciscans in 1755, at the age of 16, and spent most of his life in the city of São Paulo, with a ministry focused on preaching, prayer and outreach

to the poor and needy. He had a reputation as a healer, and many people asked for his prayer. He died in 1822 and was canonised in 2007. He is an example of the positive effects of missionary work in growing the indigenous church.

However, this work has also been controversial, as seen especially in the life of **Junipero Serra**. Like Ramon Llull, he was born on Majorca, in 1713, and became a friar there. He was academically brilliant, and after his own ordination in 1737 he taught the philosophy and theology of Duns Scotus (see chapter 3) to student friars. In 1749 he abandoned this comfortable life and volunteered for mission work among the indigenous peoples of America. Arriving in Mexico, he refused the horse supplied by royal officials and walked to Mexico City, where he joined the Missionary College of San Fernando. Within a year he was sent out to run a mission among the Pame people. He sought to strengthen their Christian life as recent converts, but also to support their farming, spinning and other practical work so that they could support themselves. In 1758 he returned to the college, where he worked in administration as well as undertaking missionary journeys over a wide area.

In 1767, aged 54, he began the work which would make his name and also make him controversial. The king of Spain expelled the Jesuits from Baja (Southern) California, where they had been working for 70 years, and the Franciscans stepped in. Junipero was put in charge of this new mission, which later extended into Alta (Northern) California. He eventually founded nine missions, from San Diego in the south to San Francisco in the north, and died at the mission at Carmel in 1784. He was canonised in 2015, but not without protest by some native American groups, who believed that the missionaries had virtually enslaved those they converted.

The situation was complicated by the overlap between Spanish colonial expansion and Franciscan missionary zeal. An article written by Thomas Reese at the time of Serra's canonisation explains:

Under the Spanish system, the missionaries were paid by the government, so missionaries were both church and state functionaries. From the point of view of the church, the purpose of the missions was to spread the Gospel to those who had not been baptised. From the point of view of the state, the missions were institutions aimed at assimilating the native peoples, making them citizens of the empire. That meant, among other things, learning European-style agriculture, becoming a Catholic, and living in a congregated pueblo-type arrangement, just like people in Spain. A great deal of the tension in the mission system stemmed from this double purpose, for these two aims did not always coexist easily with each other.⁷⁶

The Franciscan missionaries thought that they had a duty to protect the native people from exploitation from ranchers, miners, settlers and soldiers, which was a real risk. But in order to do this they did not allow those they baptised to leave the mission; if they left without permission they were pursued and brought back. It was a paternalistic attitude, which was probably held by 99% of settlers of the time, who saw the native Americans as akin to children, though certainly as people and not as property. After Serra's death the colonial and mission systems became more and more interdependent, with the settlers relying on food supplied by the missions, who had to find more and more 'converts' to keep up production. Herding large groups of people together led to the spread of disease and a high death rate.

But it is unfair to blame the whole later history of the missions on Junipero Serra, who had a genuine passion to reach those who had not heard the gospel. The reality was that the colonial powers would have come anyway, and the missionaries believed that by being involved they could mitigate some of the harsher effects of colonisation. Later history includes grim examples of colonial expansion without missionary involvement:

The example of Indian removal from many regions in the 19th century U.S. is a grim instance. In fact, if there was genocide against native peoples in California, it happened during the gold rush, in the 1850s, when Americans offered bounties for Indian scalps and the native peoples of Northern California were brutally decimated and oppressed.⁷⁷

The example of Junipero Serra is a reminder that missionary work is complex and often a matter of weighing up difficult choices. It cannot be separated from the political and economic realities of life.

The rules of the Catholic church continued to make it impossible for women to be preachers, but as the religious life changed and developed, and women were able to exercise an active ministry, they did serve as missionaries. One of the largest of these congregations in the Catholic church today is the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), whom we met in chapter 6, and it's with two of their sisters that this chapter continues.

The community was founded in 1877 in British India, by a French woman, **Mary of the Passion**. She was drawn to the Franciscan way of life and briefly entered a Poor Clare monastery in her home town of Nantes. Ill health meant she had to leave, and when she recovered she joined another community, who sent her to India to help to establish a native congregation of sisters. In India she made her life vows, aged 28, and became provincial superior. However, in 1876 troubles in the community reached such a pitch that it split; 20 of the 33 sisters left with Mary of the Passion and formed a new community, dedicated solely to missionary work. This included medical care for local people, especially women, who could not access medical care provided by men. A novitiate was opened in France, and many women joined in order to serve overseas.

It was not until 1882 that Mary returned to her Franciscan roots. On a visit to Rome she met the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor and joined the Third Order. Three years later the new

community adopted a Franciscan rule and became the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. Sisters were sent out to a number of countries, including China, where in 1900, as we saw in the previous chapter, all seven sisters were martyred. Four years later, Mary of the Passion, still superior general, died at the age of 65. She left behind 2,000 Franciscan Missionaries of Mary on four continents.

Less than a year later, another sister of her community died, aged only 26. **Maria Assunta Pallotta**, born in 1878 in Italy, was the eldest of five children and the only girl. By the time she was 11 her father had left the family home to find work, and Maria Assunta had to take on new responsibilities to help her mother. She had already left school, having received only two years of education. When she was 20, she left home to join the FMM, undertaking manual work such as cooking, caring for animals and harvesting olives. At the beginning of 1904 she made a request to go to China to work in the missions; in February she made her life vows and not long after was told she would indeed be going to China, to the house where the martyrs had lived. After a three-month journey she arrived, working as an orphanage cook and learning to speak Mandarin.

Within a year of her arrival an epidemic of typhus broke out; she was tireless in nursing the sick, until she herself was diagnosed with the disease. She died on 7 April 1905. The room in which she lay was filled with a wonderful fragrance, which remained for three days until her funeral and burial. In January 1904 Maria Assunta wrote to her parents that she asked God for ‘the grace to make known to the world purity of intention which consists in doing all for the Love of God, even the most ordinary actions.’⁷⁸ Her short and outwardly unheroic life shows that God answered her prayer. Missionary work may be very public and visible, or it may be hidden, carried out quietly in an orphanage kitchen or a sickroom. It is the motivation that makes it a work of mission.

In my own community mission has been domestic far more often than it has involved travelling abroad. Brothers from the UK did

make the long voyage to Papua New Guinea in 1959, and later to the Solomon Islands, with the aim of founding Franciscan communities there rather than carrying out primary evangelism. And a number of brothers have supported indigenous African communities over the years, living with them and seeking to encourage local leadership.

For many years parish mission was a major element in our ministry, with teams of brothers and sisters, often joined by tertiaries, spending up to a fortnight in parishes, teaching and preaching, talking over meals and seeking to strengthen the faith of the faithful and to draw in those on the margins of faith. Changes in parish life and a reduction in our own numbers have made this less central today. However, individuals are still asked to preach, to lead quiet days or retreats or simply to visit parishes.

Francis wrote in his Earlier Rule that there were two ways in which his brothers could witness to their faith:

One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord.⁷⁹

Our Principles echo this, saying, 'The witness of life is more eloquent than that of words.' In a number of places sisters and brothers are following this first way, living in multifaith areas in Leicester, Leeds and London, being good neighbours and being known as Christians. This, as much as preaching the word of God, is mission. Those around us do notice how we live, perhaps more than we realise. I remember, when I lived in Brixton in the early 1990s, a neighbour saying how much they valued seeing the light coming on in the room we used as a chapel and knowing that we were praying. Living our lives faithfully is a witness to what we believe and to what we value, at least as much as preaching, which may often be heard only by the already believing. Francis offers a no less demanding but equally authentic way of engaging in mission.



For reflection

- Rose of Viterbo had a strong sense of calling from a very young age. How seriously do we take the faith of children? Can you find ways in your church community and family home of including them and their gifts more fully?
- How curious are you about other cultures and faiths? Are you stimulated by difference or threatened by it? How might you take on more of the spirit of Odoric of Pordenone?
- Ramon Llull was determined that missionaries should learn to speak the language of the people to whom they were sent. How committed are you, and we as a church, to learning to speak in 'languages' that enable us to be heard? This may be literal languages or, more metaphorically, being able to communicate to those we seek to reach with the gospel in ways they can understand and respond to.
- Bernardine of Siena and the holy name of Jesus; Leonard of Port Maurice and the stations of the cross – what devotion or religious practice would you especially recommend to others?
- The work of Junipero Serra towards the end of his life raises some difficult questions about missionary work. Reread that section and reflect on it. What might be today's quandaries? For example, is it right to work to convert people in countries where the dominant faith does not accept conversion to another faith as legitimate?

- Do you see the ordinary things you do for the love of God as ‘missionary’? If not, what prevents you? And how might you move in this direction? Perhaps you might choose to start each day consciously dedicating all your activities to God and see what difference this makes.
- If you could preach just one sermon, what would you say? What is the core of the gospel for you?

Notes

- 67 franciscantradition.org/blog/21-rose-of-viterbo
- 68 L. Bressan, ‘Odoric of Pordenone (1265–1331): his vision of China and South-East Asia and his contribution to relations between Asia and Europe’, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 70:2 (1997), p. 4, jstor.org/stable/41493334.
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Helen Julian CSF is an Anglican Franciscan sister and priest, serving her community as Minister General. She has written three books for BRF and contributes to BRF's *New Daylight* Bible reading notes.



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