

# Franciscan Angles

A Newsletter of Anglican Franciscans in Aotearoa New Zealand

2016 - 1

## **Brother Brian ssf**

### **Rest in Peace**

**25th March 1925 —29th October 2015**

Many things have happened since our last *Franciscan Angles*.

Brian's health and well-being continued to deteriorate and approval was received for him to move to Atawhai Assisi Home in Matangi, mere minutes from the friary. The move took a lot of effort on Brian's part and he settled well into his new home. It was a full-on time for the community getting together all of the things needed for such a move. Brian made many new friends in the short time he was at Assisi. Sr Anne SLG came from Opononi and was with Brian when he felt that the end was close. She telephoned to Brian's nephew and niece who came down from Auckland and were with Brian when he died at about 9pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Phil and Damian Kenneth went to Assisi and prayed with Brian and the family.

The funeral Eucharist was held in the Waikato Cathedral Church of St Peter, Hamilton on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November. Brian was welcomed back to Te Ara Hou village with a powhiri and poroporoaki on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> and laid in the friary oratory. A vigil service of thanksgiving at the time of our usual Wednesday Eucharist was conducted to which many came to express their thanks for Brian's life and ministry. The funeral was well attended by many friends and supporters, and many church and religious colleagues. He is certainly being missed by the diocese, the village and the friary.

**May he rest in peace and rise in glory.**



# ***The Hermitage — Lik Lik Hap***

With the changes to our life and routine at the friary we are continuing to offer a ministry of hospitality for people for retreat, quiet day, study or reading day, or for rest or respite. Retreatants can usually stay for up to a week.

Our hermitage (Lik Lik Hap\*) is a single-bedded room with a writing desk, an easy chair, an ensuite shower & toilet, and a kitchenette with basic staples.

Meals can be self-catered or the main evening meal can be delivered from the on-site Just Food Café (Monday – Friday).

The hermitage has a separate external exit and is in the same building as the oratory and library. We have a cabin for counselling or quiet prayer or study, and spacious garden sitting areas.

We do not have a 'charge rate' for any of our hospitality ministries and are grateful to receive donations as appropriate.

For more information or for bookings please contact the friary. [friary@franciscan.org.nz](mailto:friary@franciscan.org.nz) or telephone (07) 856 6701.

\*PNG pidgin = "Little Portion"

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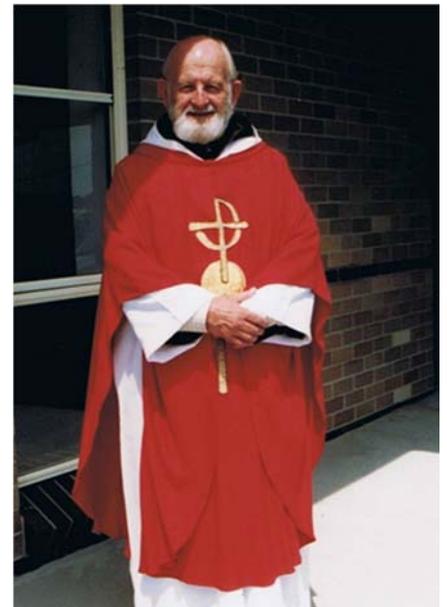
## ***Some Memories by Br Brian ssf***

In Brian's last couple of months he was working with a volunteer from Hospice Waikato to write some memories. These have now been printed and are available from the friary.

We do not intend to sell these as a commercial item and will make them available to the people who have expressed an interest in having a copy. We will be grateful to receive a small donation to assist with the printing and postage.

Our preferred option for payment is by direct banking.

Account name: Society of St Francis  
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If you do not use direct banking, your bank can do this for you, or you can post us a cheque.



## ***From the Library Desk***

Our Friary Library is up and running and books are being borrowed, which is great. Many thanks to Richard Roberts, Doug Pratt, Peter Howorth for their recent donation of books. We have also added some from Br Brian's collection too. They are all most welcomed additions to our Library.

Here are our more recent additions:

Armstrong, Karen

Barfoot, Chris  
& Ridley, Dorothy

Barrington-Ward, Simon

Berthier, Jacques

Borg, Marcus, J

Brian ssf, Brother

Brock, Sebastian (Ed)

Brother Anselm ssf

Chilton, Bruce &

Neusner, Jacob

Christie-French, Rose &  
Stewart, Claire

Crossan, John Dominic

Dalai Lama

Donnelly, Felix

Dunn, James, D.G.

Hodgkinson, Paul And  
Christine

Holloway, Richard

Howorth, Peter

Igumen Chariton Of Valamo

Muhammad: Prophet For Our Time

The Beginnings Of The Third Order In NZ  
1956 To 1974

The Jesus Prayer And The Great Exchange

Songs And Prayers From Taize

Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words  
Have Lost Their Meaning And Power And  
How They Can Be Restored

Salvation Of The People: A Manual Of  
Faith (2015 Edition)

The Wisdom Of Saint Isaac The Syrian  
Memories

Judaism In The New Testament: Practices  
And Beliefs

Joyfully Keeping On... The NZ Third Order  
1999 – 2015

The Power Of Parable: How Fiction By  
Jesus Became Fiction About Jesus

Beyond Religion: Ethics For A Whole World

One Priest's Life

Jesus, Paul And The Gospels

Introducing Icons

How To Read The Bible

Mount Athos The Holy Mountain: Maps Of  
Pilgrim Paths, Monasteries And Sketes

The Art Of Prayer:

An Orthodox Anothology

# ***Bishop Helen-Ann's Homily at the Requiem for Brother Brian***

Amongst the many messages that have been received in recent days, one contained in an email sent to Archbishop Philip and myself by a member of our Diocesan staff, reported to us that Brother Brian had recently remarked that lately his life revolved around three 'Ps':

## **Prayer, Patience and Prunes**

Many of my more recent encounters with Brother Brian included these 'Ps': I shared with him both in the Friary, and particularly during his hospital stay earlier in the year. An abiding memory was watching Brother Brian instruct my husband Myles in saying the Jesus Prayer. Brother Brian and Myles shared a special bond ever since they discovered that they had both been pupils at Radley College in Oxfordshire. Although they were from different generations, this common experience shaped their interactions from thence forward, and Myles knew that when he was with Brother Brian something unspoken was shared between them that only they could understand.

Brother Brian was infinitely patient; the last time I saw him was in his room in the Friary, where I shared the bread of the Eucharist with him. He sat in his chair with a serenity that comes from deep and profound meditation and stillness in the face of God. Indeed, in his patience, Brian reflected the light of God's peace to all whom he encountered. Being with Brian demanded that you take life at a

slower pace; something this bishop at least constantly needs reminding about. When Br Brian acquired his walker in recent months, which increased his mobility greatly, I used to tease him about watching out for the speed bumps in Te Ara Hou village!

And then there are indeed the prunes, which would often feature as part of a meal. Now I have never been a great fan of prunes, but I came across a report recently that gave me hope in that it informed me that women aged between 25 and 54 apparently reacted so strongly to the word 'prune' that the California Prune Board once pressured the Food and Drug Administration in the United States to change their name to the more appealing 'dried plums' which resulted in a great increase in sales. So I thought to myself maybe I should think of them as such. No doubt that story may have appealed to Brian's very sharp sense of humour, which he never lost even in the face of his more recent pain and struggles. Brother Brian was and continues to be an inspiration: a holy man, a saint of God whom we miss dearly and whom we pray we may see again.

This is not a eulogy; that will come in a short while. It is the task of the preacher at a Christian funeral to proclaim hope in belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this was the abiding hope and belief that Brother Brian bore witness to throughout his life and which in his death is given even greater clarity. Although we mourn his death, words

from our first reading remind us of the Cathedral notice the sky, the grass, perspective that is needed: 'the souls the beauty of creation, the important of the righteous are in the hand of details of a creation so often taken for God, and no torment will ever touch granted that are part of the Franciscan them. In the eyes of the foolish they way that Brother Brian was called by seemed to have died, and their God to follow. To live a life that departure was thought to be a powerfully bears witness to the disaster, and their going from us to be resurrection is surely an invitation for their destruction; but they are at each of us to reassess each and every peace' (Wis. 3.1-3). moment of our mortal steps upon this earth.

In fact each of the readings that give texture to the canvas upon which we paint a reflection on Br Brian's life in of Anglican Action's youth team, this service have at their core the Murray Riches wrestling with a goat theme of journeying: of comings and outside the Friary, as you do of goings; arrivals and departures that course. I will spare you the details of point to the place beyond the horizon, why Murray had the goat; but it called the distant shore where the souls of to mind the challenges inherent in the the faithful departed rest in peace and parable in Matthew chapter 25; it's all where they and we share the hope of very well that the shepherd would the resurrection in glory, pre-empted separate the sheep and goats, but this by Wisdom in its hope of immortality. is surely a task that would require We rightly struggle at times with the much skill if it were to be performed idea of resurrection, but this struggle successfully? is surely an invitation and an opportunity in life, in death, and life The kaupapa at the heart of this beyond death to constantly see things Gospel is one that is lived out each anew. When you go forth from this and every day in the village context of



*Brother Daniel SSF, Br Donald Campbell SSF, Br Alfred BoonKong SSF, Sr Alison Francis OSC, Br Damian Kenneth SSF, Mother Keleni CSN, Sr Anne SLG, Revd Phil Dyer TSSF, with Br Brian SSF*

Brother Brian's home in recent years: the struggle of life where the hungry are fed, the thirsty are refreshed, visitors are welcomed, the naked are given clothing, and those in prison are visited, valued and are given support and care when released. The constancy of the rhythm of prayer that Brothers Brian and Damian, Phil and others maintained and continue to maintain was and is the heartbeat of the Gospel message that Anglican Action and the other agencies in Te Ara Hou bear witness to each day: te ara hou, a new way: the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers just that, a new way of seeing the world around us because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Simply to know that prayer was happening created an aura beyond the horizons of daily life. Br Brian was at the heart of that, and even in his frailty there was a strength that you knew was sustaining and at times, life-saving.

The journeying comes to a conclusion of sorts in Paul's second letter to Timothy, where the author knows that death is almost upon him; he wants Timothy to be clear about the task that lies ahead as he picks up the baton from Paul. And yet, for all its urgency, the teacher is to make things clear 'with all patience and explanation'. Here again is a reminder that to truly understand and live out faith takes prayerful patience, loyalty and perseverance; that is why Paul favours the use of athletic metaphors in his letters: you cannot achieve a favourable outcome without investing constant training and attention to self-worth, self-growth and self-discipline that ultimately self might give way to the well-being of others. That is what love is about: not, what's for me but what do you need that will enable you to flourish and be valued? Only in doing that, and particularly at times we feel less inclined to do so, will we gain the eternal reward.

On more than one occasion, Br Brian spoke to me about his time in the Royal Navy, and so it is very fitting that here in Second Timothy, the Greek word used for departure is in fact a nautical metaphor, referring to the activity of untying the ropes and casting off. This is beautifully illustrated in Seamus





Heaney's poem in his series 'Lightenings'.

He describes the monks of Clonmacnoise who were:

...all at prayer inside the oratory (and)  
A ship appeared above them in the air.

The anchor dragged along behind so deep  
It hooked itself into the altar rails  
And then, as the big hull rocked to a standstill,

A crewman shinned and grappled down the rope  
And struggled to release it. But in vain.

"This man can't bear our life here and will drown,"

The abbot said, "unless we help him." So  
They did, the freed ship sailed, and the man climbed  
back

Out of the marvellous as he had known it.

Brother Brian, dear holy man of God, you have been released from this mortal life to journey in the place beyond the horizon. Well done, good and faithful soul for a life well lived. May you rest in peace, and rise in glory. Amen.

*+Helen-Ann Waikato*

November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Wisdom 3: 1-9, 2 Timothy 4: 1-9, Matthew 25: 31-40

# Christ in Evolution - *Phil Dyer tssf*

My first introduction to the Franciscan author, scientist and theologian, Ilia Delio, OSF, was her book, *Franciscan Prayer*. While I found her writing concentrated, I have treasured many of her insights on Christian spirituality. So it was with anticipation I received the loan of her book '*Christ in Evolution*' from one of my Franciscan friends.

Initially I wondered if Ilia was going to offer a rehash of the old arguments on 'Evolution of Darwin vs Intelligent Design'. While Ilia refers to that debate, she skilfully transcends it to place Christ at the heart of our expanding and unfolding universe. Beauty and change surround us on every side: the seasons of the earth, the changing shape of our bodies and lives; the life of our planet; the rhythm of our liturgical calendar; the story of revelation in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures; the dynamic life of the Church. Everything is caught up in the process of change and evolution: nothing is stable nor static. This understanding, she says, must also affect our understanding of Christ.

Ilia, suggests the way we understand our cosmos will affect the way we understand the Divine and illustrates this by swiftly tracing the history of cosmology and theology. She relates the changing views of the universe to the changing expressions of Church, and challenges us with the question: '*How do we understand God and ourselves in this moving world?*'

Ilia then turns to writings of the French philosopher and Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and how he sets forth a sweeping account of the unfolding of the cosmos where everything is ultimately moving towards a reunion with Christ who is drawing all things to himself (Col 1:17-20). This means we too are part of the mystery of Christ: "*We are images of Christ; thus, we are created to bear Christ within us and to express the life of Christ to the world.*" Where Christ is, God is, therefore in Christ we see our future, which is always

more that we could ever imagine because it emerges from within, and through the power of love, that seeks expression in and through us, by God's self-giving Spirit. The same Spirit calls us all to be co-creating agents of love and so reveal the mystery of Christ.

Ilia shows how spirituality is the key to this new understanding of cosmology, and that relatedness governs the new emerging consciousness. To find God is to find God in relationship: relationship with ourselves, with each other, with creation, and with Christ who seeks to draw all people into wholeness. We are always 'becoming'; we are part of a greater whole: "*Such a relationship begins with the life of prayer and an awakening to our identity as to who we are in God.*"

While Ilia draws heavily on her deep knowledge of Cosmology and Theology she grounds us firmly as people of the earth. The earth is our home "*because Christ is the organic, integrating centre of Creation*" making all of the cosmos part of the all flowing stream of divine love.

Some of the big themes I found reflected within this amazing book would include:

- The glory of God is found in the wonder of our unfolding universe
- The presence of God is found in the unfolding of our life
- The compassion of God confronts us in the poor and marginalised
- The creativity of God invites us to be co-creators with Christ
- The love of God invites us to participate in the all flowing stream of divine love.

**Christ in Evolution by Ilia Delio.** Orbis Books (2008) **ISBN-10:** 157075777

*Ilia Delio, OSF is a Franciscan Sister and American theologian specializing in the area of science and religion, with interests in evolution, physics and neuroscience and the import of these for theology. 'Christ in Evolution' is the first of a series of books Ilia has written on this topic.*

# ***Eulogy for Brother Brian***

***Preached at Hilfield Friary by Br Christopher John***

Some brothers have great talent accomplish abundantly far more than as cooks. Brother Brian was not all we can ask or imagine." among them. His cauliflower cheese is legendary at the Hamilton Friary. Or perhaps notorious might be a better word. And anyone who was ever faced with the oily crunchy result of one of his fry-ups would also know that kitchens and Brian did not go well together.

Other brothers have talents in interior decoration. But it would have to be said that this also was not Brian's forte. I remember the day he went out shopping for the hermitage at Stroud, NSW, and came back with the announcement that he had seen a carpet for the hermitage chapel in what he described as "neutral earth tones" and had ordered it for delivery the next day. What turned up was such a swirling mess of psychedelic purples and yellows you almost needed sunglasses. (When Br Colin Wilfred moved to Stroud he was very quick to get rid of the carpet!)

But Brian's gift, his charisma, is something expressed in Day 30 of our Principles. "These three notes of humility, love and joy, which should mark the lives of the brothers and sisters, are all supernatural graces which can be won only from the divine bounty. They can never be attained through our own unaided exertions. They are miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. But it is the purpose of Christ our Master to work miracles through his servants; and, if they will but be emptied of self and utterly surrendered to him, they will become chosen vessels of his Spirit and effective instruments of his mighty working, who is able to

work miracles through his servants; and, if they will but be emptied of self and utterly surrendered to him, they will become chosen vessels of his Spirit and effective instruments of his mighty working, who is able to

work miracles through his servants; and, if they will but be emptied of self and utterly surrendered to him, they will become chosen vessels of his Spirit and effective instruments of his mighty working, who is able to

Brian was a person emptied of self. The Principles begin by talking about the way of renunciation, of sacrifice, of being like a grain of wheat buried in the ground and then producing many fruits. That was Brian's life. He was a person open to God and in whom the Holy Spirit worked, bearing the fruits of a life dedicated to seeking God above all else.

There's something else about him. He told me that his doctor asked him the secret of his life. He replied, "It's the 3 Ps. Prayer, Pills and Prunes." The GP then told Brian – you can add a fourth one: "Persistence." Perhaps I would add Patience. Certainly anyone who sat through as many chapter meetings as Brian did in his life needed lots of that.

He was born 90 years in Bristol. As a young man in served in the Royal Navy towards the end of the War. He served with distinction. A very rare distinction in fact; he managed to lose a torpedo. It's probably still somewhere in the Irish Sea.

Fortunately for everyone's safety he was eventually demobbed and returned to civilian life and he began studies towards ordination at King's College London. During this time, he began to explore testing his vocation with SSF, and after ordination and serving a curacy at St Agnes Church in Bristol came to SSF and was made a novice in 1956 in this chapel, and did his noviciate at Hilfield and at Glasshampton. He made his first profession of vows here in 1959 and then went to work at the school we

were then running in Hooke. He was life professed in 1961 and despatched immediately to New Guinea. SSF had only a short time before responded to the request to branch out from England and set up a presence there.

Although we were short-staffed and quite vulnerable in many ways, the decision was made to send some of our best men. Brian was one of them.

His years in PNG were some of the most formative for him. He was at Koke for two years but then in order to provide a place for training novices we established the friary at what was then called Jejerata, now Haruro.

Brian served there for thirteen years, including several years as the Principal of the nearby St Francis Evangelists' College, training local men to be evangelists in their village. This work of teaching others was very typical of Brian and one which gave him the greatest satisfaction.

While he was there something happened which shows something of Brian's character. One day he fell and broke some bones in his wrist. Proper medical care would have required a flight to Port Moresby, but he refused to have any fuss made over him and to be treated differently from any of the locals he lived among. The fracture never really healed properly and resulted in his rather unique and at times almost indecipherable handwriting.

Brian had been for a long time wanting to withdraw more from active ministry and experience a deeper life of prayer, but there always seemed to be a greater need. Alangaula in the Solomon Islands needed a brother in charge so off he went to that for two years. But then finally the chance for a life more devoted to prayer came his way. The Community of St Clare had

established themselves in Stroud NSW, and were building a mudbrick monastery. Brian came in 1979 to be their chaplain and live with one or two other brothers in the nearby hermitage. You might imagine that being chaplain to a community of Poor Clares would be an easy and quiet job. That would be without Sister Angela being one of those sisters! Brian needed all the patience and persistence he had but provided tremendous stability in the face of Angela's endless experiments and did a lot to help those who suffered from the daily turmoil there.

But Brian's hopes for a life of greater solitude never came to fruition there. First he was elected minister provincial, which occupied him from 1981 to 1987 as he oversaw the new ANZ Province, made from splitting the Pacific Province into two parts. And the experiments from Sr Angela continued ever more and more! He was then elected as minister general in 1991, a post he held for 6 years. He enjoyed the chance to travel and visit people around the world. I'm not sure he enjoyed all the chapters and other meetings he had to sit through. However, he was able to indulge his great love of cricket and somehow it usually seemed that wherever he was there just happened to be a test match to watch.

I was at a meeting with Catholic Franciscans round that time and was asked where our general curia was. Quite truthfully I was able to reply that when Brian was elected minister general we took a junk room at the end of the corridor, got rid of most of the junk, knocked a hole in the wall, put in a window and a desk and installed Brian there. From that desk he ran the international affairs of SSF writing numerous aerogrammes in

that rather indecipherable hand, and would from time to time wander off with his bag in hand, catch the bus to Newcastle, the train to Sydney and a plane to somewhere else in SSF.

Twenty years after Stroud he moved to New Zealand for the next chapter in his life. He was finally able to experience life as a hermit, and for 5 years lived in a small hut at St Isaac's Retreat in Opononi in Northland. There were also several SLG sisters there initially – but in the end only Sister Anne, who still remains there.

It could be a temptation for such a life to be withdrawn from the concerns of those around them, or to be in a spiritual world looking to models on the other side of the globe, but I think what Brian found there was a growing sense of belonging in that place and a deep awareness of the needs and concerns of rural poverty and the struggles many of the Maori living round them had in their daily lives.

Life in a remote rural area was getting too much for an octogenarian Brian and in 2005 he moved south to the friary at Hamilton. Kentigern John, who was then the guardian there, helped arrange a self-contained flat in the friary to give Brian some independence. This phase of his life was not one of inaction. The friary is at the centre of a village of social ministry programmes of different churches. Its ministry is one of witness and presence. And Brian became known as a man of prayer. Always faithful in the offices and daily Eucharist he was a well-known sight as he made his way from friary to chapel and back again three times a day.

One of the most significant things for Brian round this period was that

Archbishop Sir David Moxon, who was also our Protector, asked him to be a member of the Anglican / Roman Catholic Commission of Aotearoa New Zealand. Brian always had a great concern for ecumenism and quickly found he was respected and loved by his fellow commission members.

There are many more Brian stories I could tell, and those of us who have known him all have our favourites too I am sure.

One final one was from earlier this year and very typical of Brian. He had been suddenly hospitalised and in fact we nearly lost him. Bishop Helen-Anne Hartley, David Moxon's successor in Hamilton, had gone to see Brian in hospital, along with her husband, Myles. Brian and Myles had discovered that they'd been at the same school – many generations apart. Myles was curious about the Jesus Prayer rope Brian was holding – and so right then, from his hospital bed, Brian began to instruct the bishop's husband in how to say the Jesus Prayer and to recommend various books.

Brian's final move to Assisi Rest Home, just round the corner from the friary, was to be very brief. He died just ten days afterwards. But he had achieved one of his final goals – he wanted to simplify his life even more and the preparations to move meant he did a final downsizing of what little he had.

Indeed, Brian probably would not want all this fuss over him. Perhaps the memorial which would please him most would be if we all simplified our lives and remained faithful in prayer.

But the final words are from Archbishop Sir David Moxon. David is now the Anglican Representative to the Holy See and Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. He would

like to be with us today, but has ecumenical meetings with Vatican representatives this week. Brian would, I think, be very happy that David is thus occupied.

*David writes:*

Brian was and is a holy man, who upheld us all through thick and thin in prayer and personal holiness. Such a presence is hard to find and of rare value. His passing brings a deep sense of loss, but then a moment later we recall the resurrection and our Easter faith which he lived and breathed in himself in the midst of our busy -ness, burdens, joys and pre occupations. He represented the still point of the turning world for many. I don't imagine that this vocation was easy and was born of many decades of ups and downs, of trials and joys. Maybe that's why his witness was so tangible.

My prayers go out to SSF in general at this time. Brother Brian SSF will be more present to us now than he was before, and he goes on in God. His form of the religious life is beyond measure and is eternally real. How blessed we are. "He being dead yet speaketh."

I think of the words used when the Maori Queen died: "You have gone, but your mountain is everlasting". That mountain for Brian being the Holy mountain of the Lord, the seven story mountain of Thomas Merton, the semi-hermit holy man, which can be found anywhere. For this reason, Brian seemed to be "at home" anywhere: the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia,

## ***Please Pray With Us***

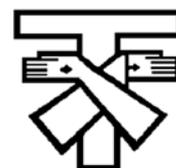
Alfred Boon Kong, Bruce-Paul, Christopher John, Cyril, Damian Kenneth, Daniel, Donald Campbell, James Andrew, Lawrence, Lionel, Nathan James, Noel-Thomas, Raphael Suh, Stephen, William.

England, because he saw the whole world as God's earth, our home. He himself was a human place where God was at home, where the Spirit spoke. Therefore, he saw people as made in the image and likeness of God where ever he was, as did Francis his father.

I think this verse from Paul's letter to the Corinthians witnesses to the heart of his spirituality and faith as a friar: 2 Corinthians 3:16 – 18: "Whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit and when the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. But we all with veiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

And now may light perpetual shine upon him, the fullness of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

May he rest in peace  
and rise in glory.



Society of St Francis  
PO Box 13117  
Hillcrest  
Hamilton 3251

Telephone (07) 856 6701  
friary@franciscan.org.nz  
www.franciscan.org.nz

The Friary of the Divine Compassion  
Te Ara Hou Village  
100a Morrinsville Road  
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216

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