

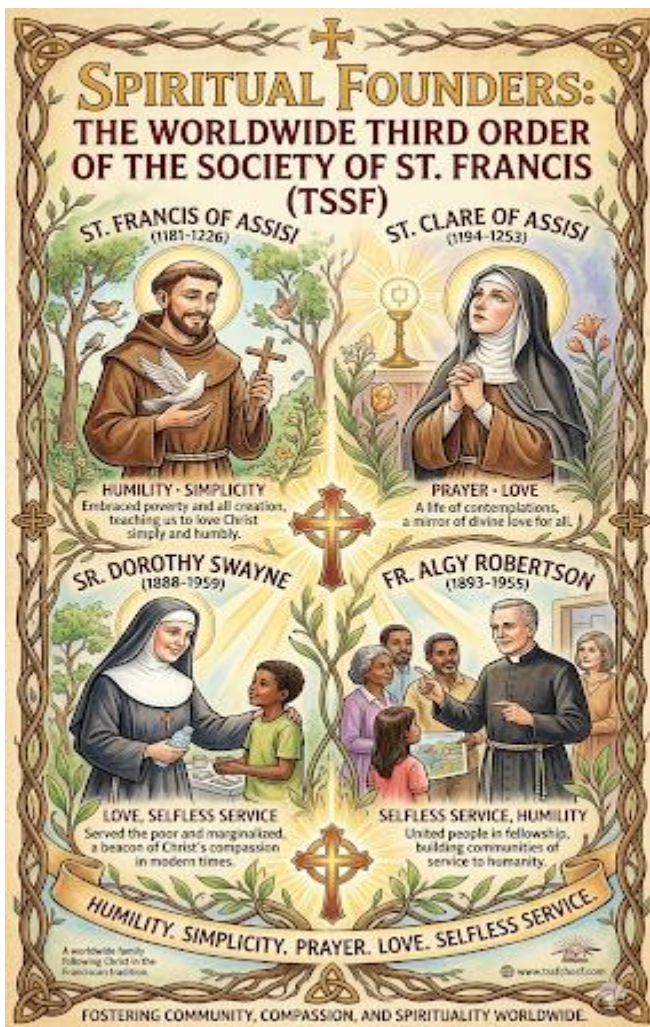


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Pentecost Message to the Worldwide Third Order of the Society of St Francis (TSSF)

From the Minister General – Bro Michael Twum-Darko tssf

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)



My dear Sisters and Brothers,

Grace and peace to you in the joy, fire, and renewing power of the Holy Spirit during this blessed Pentecost Season.

Pentecost is not merely the remembrance of an event in the early Church; it is the perpetual summons to renewal, courage, discernment, and faithful witness. The Spirit who descended upon the apostles did not come to make them comfortable, fashionable, or culturally compliant. The Spirit came to transform fearful disciples into holy witnesses - women and men rooted in Christ, aflame with truth, humility, repentance, forgiveness, and sacrificial love.

As we reflect during this sacred season on the lives and witness of our founders, especially Dorothy Swayne and those who shaped the Franciscan revival in the Anglican Communion, we are reminded that our vocation was never intended to mirror the anxieties, ambitions, or ideological noise of the world, but to offer a prophetic alternative grounded in Gospel simplicity and holy obedience.

Dorothy Swayne’s life was marked by hiddenness, prayer, discipline, compassion for the poor, and unwavering conviction that authentic Franciscan spirituality required a disciplined life of prayer and attachment to Christ rather than accommodation to the prevailing spirit of the age. Her concern about materialism, social privilege, and the spiritual distortions of wealth was not theoretical. It emerged from her lived experience among the poor and her conviction that Christian witness must be shaped by Franciscan simplicity rather than cultural conformity. She believed that hiddenness was precious because humility protects the soul from self-advertisement and spiritual vanity.

The history of our Franciscan family reminds us that our founders were not seeking institutional relevance, ideological accommodation, or public applause. They sought holiness. They sought Christ. They sought to make Jesus known and loved everywhere through lives shaped by poverty, chastity, obedience, humility, love, and joy.

Today, however, we live amid great turbulence. Across many parts of the Church, there is increasing pressure to define faithfulness by secular frameworks, public ideologies, regulatory anxieties, and contemporary cultural narratives rather than by Scripture, repentance, forgiveness,

and Gospel transformation. Prudence requires us to understand the world in which we serve. But discernment requires us not to be ruled by it.

Franciscans have never been called to echo every voice around us. We are called to hear the still small voice of God.

The Spirit of Pentecost does not lead us into confusion, factionalism, ideological noise, or reactive fear. The Spirit leads us into truth, repentance, reconciliation, holy courage, and deeper communion with Christ.

The present challenges within parts of the Order, including times of uncertainty in leadership and governance, should not become occasions for anxiety, division, or distraction, but opportunities for deeper prayer, humility, and communal discernment. Even where institutional processes feel unsettling, our identity does not rest in organisational structures but in Christ and our Franciscan calling. Therefore, I call upon all members of the Worldwide Third Order:

1. Return to prayer

Pentecost began in prayer. The founders understood that without disciplined prayer there can be no authentic Franciscan life. Let our fraternity meetings, personal disciplines, chapters, and councils become places where prayer is primary, not procedural convenience.

2. Reclaim hiddenness and humility

In an age obsessed with visibility, branding, performance, and self-promotion, the Franciscan witness of hidden holiness remains prophetic. Let us be known less by our public declarations and more by Christ-like lives.

3. Recover the spiritual discipline of repentance

Repentance is not an outdated religious word. It is the doorway to renewal. The Church cannot be healed without repentance. The individual soul cannot be transformed without repentance.

4. Recommit to forgiveness and reconciliation

Pentecost created community across difference through the Holy Spirit - not through ideological coercion. Where there has been hurt, misunderstanding, division, or distrust, let us choose forgiveness over resentment and reconciliation over faction.

5. Resist spiritual distraction

Not every loud issue deserves our spiritual attention. Not every policy debate defines our identity. Not every cultural controversy should shape our vocation. Francis fixed his eyes on Christ crucified. So must we.

6. Strengthen local and provincial leadership in formation

I call especially upon Local Ministers, Formation Guardians, Provincial Ministers, Provincial Chapters, and all leadership teams to deepen Franciscan formation - not merely administration. Governance without formation produces management; formation with prayer produces discipleship.

7. Rediscover Francis and Clare

Read again the lives, writings, prayers, and witness of Francis, Clare, Dorothy Swayne, Father Algy, and the early Franciscans of our Anglican tradition. The future of the Order will not be secured by novelty, but by faithful renewal at the roots.

My dear sisters and brothers, Pentecost is not a season of despair but of fire.

The Holy Spirit still breathes life into dry bones.

The Holy Spirit still restores weary communities.

The Holy Spirit still raises witnesses in confused times.

The Holy Spirit still calls Franciscans to radical joy, courageous humility, and faithful Gospel witness.

Let us not be distracted by noise.

Let us not surrender our vocation to cultural turbulence.

Let us not confuse accommodation with compassion.

Let us not exchange repentance for self-justification.

Let us not abandon forgiveness for grievance.

Let us instead become again what our founders envisioned: *“women and men in the world but not ruled by its spirit; hidden yet radiant; humble yet courageous; prayerful yet active; poor in spirit yet rich in Christ.”*

May the Spirit who descended at Pentecost rekindle in the Worldwide Third Order a fresh fire of holiness, discernment, joy, and faithful witness.

“Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”