



In the spirit of reconciliation FSA acknowledges the First Nations People of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. Our schools are honoured to work, play and connect.



Australia in the Season of Creation

Image Astone 2022

In our Franciscan tradition EMBRACE invites us to accompany those who are the 'poor, little ones' of the world.

In the Season of Creation, we open the door of our hearts to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth.

Dear Friends, let's unite for creation!

Most people would immediately recognise Francis of Assisi as someone with a particular love for the natural world, which is why he is often portrayed as a joyous figure in the company of animals or feeding birds from his hands. The bonds of friendship and fraternity, so characteristic of his life were not confined to human persons but included 'Brother Sun', 'Sister Moon', 'Mother Earth' and all created things both animate and inanimate.

Yet this affection was more than just a superficial regard. Francis saw in 'the Book of Creation', the beauty, exuberance, power and wisdom of an eternal, personal, loving Presence - to whom it was only natural to give honour, gratitude and praise. Francis recognised that God created Earth as a mother and God's presence fills our world.

For Franciscans, then, the journey to God begins with our experience of the world. The search for an inner truth begins with our appreciation of the majesty and beauty of the universe in which we find ourselves. There is no distinction between ordinary everyday human existence and the Divine. The Divine is in every aspect of life, every waking moment and in our ministry as educators and as 'People of the Book'.

In this Season of Creation, our focus is on giving thanks for all of creation. The challenge is to be intently aware, isn't it? The wattle I photographed on my daily walk (image opposite) in the bush near my home reminded me that God's eternal power and divinity is here, now, everywhere. In this edition FSA honours and celebrates the way in which member schools and our larger Franciscan Family live unite and honour creation in the everyday.

Alison Stone - Animator of Mission & Identity

## FSA FEATURE SCHOOL STORY

St Gerard Majella Primary School, Woree, Cairns

In this **Season of Creation FSA** brings you a story about pooches praising God and how literacy has gone to the dogs, literally!

At St Gerard Majella School not only are some books in the library well-love and dog-eared, but so are some of the visitors. It is common to find *Brother and Sister* dogs playing a special role in teaching children whose literacy levels need improving. **What better way to break through barriers than by sharing and reading a book with a dog who needs a little help with their words?**

St Gerard Majella School Library Assistant and coordinator of the Cairns Dog Team, Christine told **FSA** that “The program promotes that all children have the right to become lifelong readers.” Asked about the school’s motivation to embrace the Story Dog mission Christine and her first Story Dog, Frankie, honoured in doggy heaven, recognised “The need to bring books back as fun, relaxing and nonjudgmental of a child’s ability. These were the keys that provoked me, as the Library Assistant, to introduce this program at St Gerard Majella in 2017.”



This program is wholistic ~certainly not ruff! And **FSA** found out that it is more than a reading support program.

“We work with volunteers and their faithful dogs who are often overlooked in our communities” Christine explained. “Many volunteers have retired from their professions and now have time to give back to their community.”

“The dogs are assessed. Requiring right temperament and training. **They are the magic that St Francis knew spoke of the Lord’s love and devotion.**”

Christine explained that “There is scientific data proving, stroking of an animal reduces heart rate and anxiety. I have personal witness to the connection between students and their Story Dog. I have seen students light up with joy as they come to relax in the company of a friend who loves them so unconditionally.”

“Our children know that their friend of fur and four paws and their most amazing human waits for them to walk in the door of the Library. For this we praise God.”

*Thanks to Christine Hofmann and Principal, Kelly Sheppard for this story and images.*



If you want the program in your school contact Story Dog Program [HERE](#)

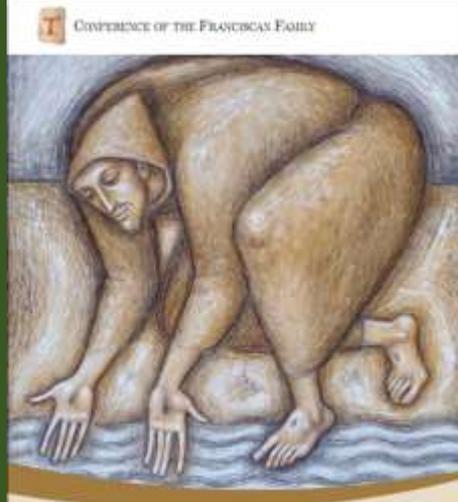




To Francis everything in him and around him was a gift from his Father in Heaven. He expected nothing and was grateful for everything. Even a piece of earth was cause for rejoicing, and he thanked God always for everything that was During this Season **PRAY**

O Divine Presence, make me attentive to the ways you speak to me through nature and all life forms. Help me prioritize communing with you in the great cathedral of the outdoors, knowing that you reveal yourself here in ways ever fresh and new. I pray for eyes to see you, hands to touch you, and lungs to breathe you in every step I take. Amen.

**ACT:** Read the Canticle of the Creatures. Commune in nature.



CONFERENCE OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY  
**2023** A Multifaceted Centenary  
**2026** in Which Several Centenaries Will Be Celebrated

**Centenario-** During 2023 the Franciscan family will commemorate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Later Rule and the Christmas at Greccio (2023).

Read the document [HERE](#)



**How will your school celebrate and honour the life of Saint Francis?**

**May the Lord give you peace!**

*At the six-month anniversary of the start of Russia's war against Ukraine, let's us pray for peace and an end to "the horror of war." Pope Francis*

## Franciscan Connect

Here is an opportunity for schools to support our wider Franciscan Family.



### Reach Out Across the Blue Project

The Missionary Franciscan Sisters invite **FSA** schools to help resource their early learning centre in Aitape, PNG in 2023.

There is information for schools who wish to be involved on our website [HERE](#)

Prayer is another powerful way for your school community to be supportive.

### FEAST DAYS IN SEPT

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation - 01 September  
 Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary - 08 September  
 Stigmata of St Francis - 17 Sept  
 St Pio of Pietrelcina - 23 Sept  
 World Day of Migrants and Refugees- 25 September

**Pope Francis has asked us to pray on the 1st of September each year for the care of creation.**



# Formation: SEQ - A highly successful **EMBRACE EVENT** for **STAFF**



Close to 60 educators and community members attended the event at Mount Alvernia College, Kedron.

As an educator I found it terribly moving and educative because it told the personal stories of young people and highlighted the unjust practices of our Australian Government when it comes to the treatment of our brothers and sisters who seek a better life for themselves and others. As a creative person it was also affirming because I know that music and the creative industries have the power to move people in ways that the written word cannot. Additionally, the link between spirituality and religious celebrations that embrace the arts for justice and goodness made it a compassionate piece of work

If your school is interested in hosting your own event or a network event featuring this documentary film contact Alison. [astone@franciscans.org.au](mailto:astone@franciscans.org.au) View trailer and find out more [HERE](#).



Directors, Lizzi and John Swatland attended with Brian Procopis one of the film's featured musicians, and past parent of Padua College, Kedron.

There was robust discussion about the power of music to change hearts and bring hope.



**Fr Dan Horan OFM**  
*in Australia 2023*

**Travelling Scholar**  
**20 July–10 August 2023**

What here and now questions will your school have for Fr Dan in 2023?



**Education.** Never stop being curious. Every day offers discovery. Explore the world. God is everywhere you look.

**FSA is taking formation bookings for Term 4 and 2023.**

Send us a message via the [website](#) | Email direct [astone@franciscans.org.au](mailto:astone@franciscans.org.au)