

## FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

### PHILOSOPHY SERIES

1. *The Tractatus de Successivis Attributed to William Ockham.* Edited by Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xi-122
2. *The Tractatus de Praedestinatione et de Praescientia Dei et de Futuris Contingentibus of William Ockham.* Edited by Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xi-139
3. *The Transcendentals and Their Functions in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus.* By Allan B. Wolter, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xvi-191-Index
4. *Intuitive Cognition. A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics.* By Sebastian Day, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xiii-217
5. *The De Primo Principio of John Duns Scotus. A Revised Text and a Translation.* By Evan Roche, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xvii-153

Price \$2.00 for each volume. To Subscribers of *Franciscan Studies* or *Franciscan Institute Publications* \$1.50

### HISTORY SERIES

1. *Three Saints Lives.* By Sister M. Amelia Klenke, O. P., Ph. D. .... Pp. lxxvii-123

Price \$2.00 To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or *Franciscan Institute Publications* \$1.50

### MISSIONOLOGY SERIES

1. *Imperial Government and Catholic Missions in China During the Years 1784-1785.* By Bernhard Willeke, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. xiv-218

Price \$2.25. To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or *Franciscan Institute Publications* \$1.80.

2. *The Negotiations Between Ch'i-Ying and Lagrene, 1844-1846.* By Angelus Grosse-Aschhoff, O. F. M., Ph. D. .... Pp. v-193

Price \$2.00. To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or *Franciscan Institute Publications* \$1.50

### THEOLOGY SERIES

1. *The Doctrine on The Holy Eucharist According to Ockham.* By Gabriel Buescher, O. F. M., S. T. D. .... Pp. xviii-173

Price \$2.00 for each volume. To Subscribers of *Franciscan Studies* or *Franciscan Institute Publications* \$1.50

FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE      ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY  
SAINT BONAVENTURE, NEW YORK

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus. In Sacred Scripture names frequently foreshadow the divine calling or mission of the person who bears the name. The Gospel for the Feast of the Circumcision, the first day of the new year, is the shortest throughout the entire Ecclesiastical Year. But, its one brief sentence resembles a ball of golden thread which entwines the eternal decrees of God with a simple rite, performed in obedience. Divine Wisdom, says the Wise Man of old, "reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. 8, 1). In this instance the result of an act of obedience was the naming of the Child by the sweet Name of Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1, 21). In all likelihood Mary and Joseph were unaware that by humbly submitting to the Law of Moses (Gen. 17, 12) and heeding the word of the angel (Luke 1, 21) they were focusing the Omnipotence, the Wisdom, and the Mercy of the Triune God upon the destiny of the entire human race and that, by observing a simple rite of old, they were opening the way to the ineffable Mystery of the Redemption, and lifting up, as it were, "the ancient portals that the King of Glory may enter" (Ps. 23, 9).

Thus Obedience becomes known as the deeper meaning of the Holy Name of Jesus. Hence Obedience is the first lesson of the year; the fundamental law, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, of religious life. The word is derived from the Latin "obedire," originally "ob-audire," which means to listen attentively to the command of another. This etymology suggests three simple questions that may well serve as points for this conference: 1) Whom do we obey? 2) Why should we obey? 3) How should we obey?

In recent years, especially under the leadership of our gloriously reigning Pontiff Pius XII, a wealth of spiritual beauty, light, and power has been showered

<sup>1</sup> In his recent Encyclical, entitled "Centenaria Solemnia," the Most Reverend Father General of the Order of Friars Minor, Father Pacificus Perantoni, described Franciscan spirituality as Christocentric or Christ-centered. Needless to say, the spirituality of every religious Order, as well as that of the entire Catholic Church, may properly lay claim to this general characteristic, for to every devout Christian "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today, yes, and forever" (Heb. 13, 8). St. Francis never deviated from this royal highway of Christian Perfection. But he did choose a manner of life that came to be known as the Franciscan Way because of its direct, wholehearted and intimate approach to the Holy Gospel. To re-live the Holy Gospel and imitate Christ as the Gospel tells his story from the birth to the Cross, that is the specific form of Franciscan Spirituality, and should properly be considered as the source and pattern of all that this spirituality embraces.

We shall do well to make the aforesaid letter of the Most Reverend Father General as our guide for the year 1951, and to meditate upon its rich and varied contents as the various feasts and feasts of the Ecclesiastical Year may suggest.

Vol 1 no 3 Jan 1951

upon the spiritual life of those who live in holy Obedience under a monastic rule. The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which was always believed but not always duly appreciated, has been set before us in all its pristine power and charm by the recent Encyclical "Mystici Corporis." It will amply repay us if we peruse this document and meditate upon the "mysterious law" (the Roman Pontiff calls it "lex mirabilis") by which all the members of the living organism are most intimately knit together with Christ the Head. From this mystical and invisible Head all life, strength, and order proceeds, for He said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing" (John 15, 8). It is easily seen how the Vow and Virtue of Obedience to Christ the Head impart spirit and life to the entire organism and what an important part they play in the work of the Holy Spirit Who is the soul, the vitalizing, energizing, and ordering principle of this organism. It is the same Holy Spirit, we should not forget, Who directs the leaders of the Church and the superiors of our communities in their divine commission of teaching, sanctifying, and guarding their charges until, as St. Paul tells the Galatians, "Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4, 19).

With this picture before us we all understand better the meaning of the life of a Religious that is "hidden in Christ." We realize that Father Faber put his finger on the essence of spirituality when he published a beautiful work under the title *All for Jesus*. At the profession in some communities of Sisters the candidate pronounces the words of the Breviary: "Propter amorem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quem vidi, quem amavi, cui credidi, quem dilexi." This is the road of Obedience, in its usual four stages. The first (quem vidi) is the call to this life. The second (quem amavi) tells of the happy days of the first fervor. The third (cui credidi) is the long, dreary and toilsome road where faith, and obedience through faith, must sustain us. The fourth (quem dilexi) is the perfect possession of the Master, not granted to all, where perfect love rules. The lesson is that Obedience must proceed from love.

Jesus Christ is the source and center of all revelation and salvation. "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14, 6). He is the Alpha and Omega, the King of the Universe, of nations, of our hearts; the chief cornerstone, the head and heavenly Bridegroom of His spouse, the Church. Which means that all power in the Church, all superiority in this vast spiritual organization, stems from Him and must again be placed before Him, for "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend" (Phil. 2, 10).

The Church of Jesus is a Church of order, and order is established by the law of Obedience. Religious are bound to aim at perfection, and perfect obedience is based on the vow; it is enhanced and fortified by the virtue. Yet this bulwark of obedience is flanked by two supports, the superiors on one side, the subjects on the other. Both must stand their ground if the system is to endure. In a sense the superiors have the greater responsibility. Since they receive their authority from Christ, they must exercise it in the spirit of Christ. Superiors should read and re-read and fully assimilate the wise counsels set forth by St. Bonaventure in his inimitable booklet "The Six Wings of the Seraphim" (*De Sex Alis Seraphim*) in which he enumerates the virtues that should adorn every superior. These are the headings of the six chapters: Zeal for Justice, Piety, Patience, Exemplary Conduct, Circumspect Discretion, and Devotion to God. They speak for themselves and their meaning is grasped by intuition. Superiors hold office not by their own right, but by divine commission, and some day they will face the inevitable demand: "Make an accounting of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer" (Luke 16, 2).

From this the subject learns that all vows, precepts, commands and directives, whether they emanate from the divine or human law, from the authority of the Church or the Order, from superiors who are kind, understanding and patient or from such as may despoil their commands of "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour" (Tit. 3, 4), by harshness, unreasonableness, unwarranted partiality or unpredictable moodiness—that all these should be traced ultimately to the kindest heart that ever beat in human breast, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Even as we render thanks to God for every drop of water that falls from heaven in its crystal purity and later mingles with dust or dirt, so should we gratefully receive every command or direction, because we know its source and author. Who says: "My yoke is easy, and my burden light" (Matt. 11, 30). The yoke of Obedience was placed upon our shoulders when we placed our Vow in His Sacred Hands, pierced by cruel nails.

This brings us to the second question: Why should we obey? Here again the Vow is overshadowed by the amiable personality of the Lord and Master who both commands us and obeys for us. To Him we owe our life and being. He loved us "with an everlasting love" and in pity drew us to Himself (Jer. 31, 3); but most of all, He set a glorious example of Obedience which is the safest way to keep close to Him. "Learn of me," He begs, "for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11, 21). If the words and deeds of Jesus were studied in the searchlight of all virtues and perfections, arrayed in a spacious hall of mirrors, each reflecting its own charm and splendor, the Religious would probably halt, and meditate upon the simple sentence: "I do as the Father

commanded me" (John 8, 29). The command of His heavenly Father, who is wrapped in deep mystery even to theologians, evidently directed the course of His life among us. In obedience to His Father's Will He spent thirty years in hidden life, subject to Mary and Joseph; three years of public life, announcing the Kingdom of God; three hours on Calvary, "becoming obedient to death even to the death on a cross" (Phil. 2, 8), and three days in the tomb.

Never has man lived whose life was planned and blueprinted so minutely on the pages of Holy Writ and executed so zealously, as was the life of our Lord and Saviour. The Evangelists had caught the secret. It almost sounds like a refrain to a wondrous hymn as they concluded each event with the simple words: "to fulfill that which was spoken by the prophets" (Matt. 27, 35). Such was His life from the Crib to the Cross.

Such should be our lives, especially when we remember that our Seraphic Father wanted to bequeath to us the Christ of the Gospel; that he wanted to renew and re-live in our lives the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Rule has been properly called the "Marrow of the Gospel" because originally it was set together from a few simple texts taken from the Missal in the Church of San Damiano. There have been changes, but the marrow remains and this is the groundwork of the Rules of all Franciscan congregations, the framework of every Franciscan community, the program of their daily routine and apostolic work.

The question: How should we obey? is answered by St. Alphonsus under four points, viz., with promptness, exactness, cheerfulness, and simplicity. The first pertains to the hands and feet; the second to the head; the third to the heart; the fourth to the spirit of faith. Promptness as to time, exactness as to the manner of execution, are requisites in any organization, but especially in a religious community where time not merely means money but grace, and where the material and purpose of the work usually tend directly to the glory of God and the spiritual wellbeing of the religious household, and immortal souls. Even the most menial tasks in convents and monasteries are conducive to sanctification. The proof is furnished by the catalog of saints which places farmers, tailors, cooks and working people next to the great Doctors of the Church.

Cheerfulness is a Franciscan characteristic and it ill behooves any child of St. Francis to approach a task with a growl, grumble, or a grudge. St. Francis found "perfect joy" even in contumely. "I labored with my hands," he writes in his Testament, "and I wish to labor and I wish firmly that all the other Friars labor in work that pertains to honesty." Meanwhile, he remained the

happy troubador of the Lord, and, walking through the valleys and over the mountains of Umbria, he invited all creation to sing the praises of the bountiful Father above.

Servants, exclaims St. Paul, obey "in the sincerity of your heart, as you would Christ: not serving to the eye as pleasers of men, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart" (Eph. 6, 5-6). St. Francis gloried in the distinction of being the servant of all. "Serve the Lord with gladness," says the Psalmist (Ps. 99, 2). If in our daily work we link cheerfulness with simplicity, that is the "single eye" of faith, our obedience will be seraphic in the true sense. We shall find ourselves with Jesus in the workshop, in the temple among the doctors, in the hamlets and towns of Palestine, healing the sick, instructing young and old, and with St. Francis, we shall reach up, as Murillo visualizes him, to embrace Jesus on the Cross. Then, looking down we shall behold the soldiers casting lots over His seamless garment. That garment which was woven in one piece by His Blessed Mother, as the legend runs, is today committed to our religious Sisters who by their daily little duties continue weaving it, not for the Holy Infant, but for Christ's Mystical Body which is the Church.

Let us renew our Vow of Obedience every morning at Holy Mass, during the Minor Elevation when the priest takes the sacred host and three times makes the sign of the cross over the consecrated chalice and slowly pronounces the words: "Per Ipsum, Cum Ipso, In Ipso." "Through Him" we have received our call; "With Him" we shall toil and labor; "In Him" we shall live and hope to live for all eternity—a worthy reward for our filial and loyal obedience to our Divine Master.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.



How much our perfection depends on our adherence to the smallest point of our holy Rule, with courage and fervor, with constancy and fidelity.

Mother Frances Schervier



Submit blindly to Divine Providence and allow yourself to be sanctified by those means which God Himself has selected and ordained for that end.

Mother Frances Schervier

## THE COMMUNITY AT MARBURG

In the spring of 1228 Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia left the castle of Eisenach for the last time and followed her spiritual director, the monk Conrad, to his native city, Marburg in Hesse. There she discovered that she would have to have a domicile built for herself and her little family before they could live in the city. After arranging for the construction of a simple house they retired to a small place called Wehrda. Not wanting to be a burden to any of the country folk, they took up their abode in the ruins of an old dilapidated home where they had to patch up a shelter for themselves with the boughs of trees. Here they lived and cooked their meals, deprived of every normal convenience of life. With the heat and smoke they had little comfort, but they made the best of it until their new home at Marburg was finished; then they moved into their new home and began their life in God in all holiness.

As soon as they were settled Elizabeth started the construction of a hospital, since they had determined to take care of the sick poor as they had done at Eisenach during the famine. At the suggestion of Pope Gregory IX she dedicated this hospital to St. Francis, who had just been canonized. The Pope also placed her and her little community under the protection of the saint and sent her as a relic some of the blood that had flowed from the side of Christ.

Either shortly before they left Eisenach, or just after they were settled in Marburg, Elizabeth and her maids were received into the Third Order of Saint Francis. There are several accounts of this event, the most reliable being that of the anonymous author who testifies that he has recorded only what he has seen or has received from credible witnesses. He writes, "After the death of her husband the saint made a complete renunciation of the world, and for several years caused herself to be tonsured and the cord tied about her waist like the nuns of the convent of the Friars Minor. She directed that her habitation be built near the church of the Friars, to whose teaching and discipline she was devoted. With them she walked with God until the end. It was said that she had done near Wartburg, but many have testified that Friar Burghard of the Order of Friars Minor, Custos of Hesse, in the presence of Friar Henry of the same Order, gave the tonsure to Blessed Elizabeth as his most precious gift. Her friend and clothed her in the habit, the while Mary Magdalene, her sister, and three or four maids were clothed in the same habit. She and three or four maids were clothed in the same habit."

## THE COMMUNITY AT MARBURG

Elizabeth, patched habit of the religious and embraced perfect continence and voluntary poverty."

The course of this community's life followed the age-old evolutionary process of any manner of life based upon Charity in the true sense: a love-bond between a soul with its God. This true Charity can no more be contained than a flood. Originating in a single heart, it must burst forth and overwhelm a world. Originating in the heart of a religious superior, it must include the poor and unfortunate, then the poor and unfortunate, then every soul capable of glory. The hurdling love of God, that conquered the heart of Elizabeth, engulfed her community, the poor, the sick, and the world.

The community life at Marburgh was lived in great humility and poverty. The usual food was the vegetables from their garden. These were often cooked in plain water and served without any seasoning. And when Elizabeth herself did the cooking they were sometimes burned, for which the others did not hesitate to scold her—presumably all in good part.

She showed the utmost benevolence and courtesy in dealing with her companions. Although they had been her maid-servants, she would have them think of her as one of themselves. She told them to stop calling her Lady; she wanted to be known by her own name, as were other women. She not only shared the cooking with them but ate from the same dishes, slept in the same kind of bed, made herself equal to them in all things. All her words and actions were graced with courtesy and she tried to cultivate this virtue in the others. If anything was said in her presence that savored of vanity or showed anger or indignation, she would quickly but kindly correct it: "Where now is the Lord, Who has promised to be with those who speak of Him?"

In her spare time Elizabeth worked at spinning and weaving wool to earn food and other necessities. Even when she was sick in bed she kept busy with a distaff. If the others felt that this was too much for her strength and took pity on her, she would comb out wool in preparation for work later on. If she gave her more than she thought her work was worth, she gave it back. She would not want anything that she had not justly earned.

Elizabeth and her companions made frequent visits to the hovels of the poor, bringing baskets of food which was distributed to those who needed it. On these visits Elizabeth would inspect the clothes, the beds, and their coverings. Wherever she went she would see that they were provided as far as her means

would permit. Her great concern seemed to be to obtain for the poor the food they wanted; and it is said that the Lord sometimes helped her in this.

When at length Elizabeth received the value of her dowry in money she sent messengers far and wide to call the poor who could come to Marburg. When they were assembled she distributed in the course of a few hours the equivalent of about 10,000 dollars. Her companions, seeing that she was giving the poor what was left of her dowry and everything else they asked for, took to task for it quite severely, but she paid no attention to them. It was brought to the attention of Master Conrad and he tried to put a stop to it, lest she leave herself and her little community destitute. At first he ordered her to give only one coin to each of those who came begging. She followed his instructions literally but succeeded in giving as much to the many as she had previously given to the few. He forbade her to give any money, permitting her to give only bread to the hungry. She gave whole loaves of bread, and that with great prodigality. Finally he limited the amount of bread she might give at any one time. Thus, she said, was she torn between obedience and her many provocations to mercy.

Although the little group distributed alms and helped all the poor as far as their time and means would permit, they were especially diligent in caring for those to whom the hospital gave refuge. Even among these there were two classes they favored, those who seemed more sincere in the practice of the religion and the crippled and sick who were the more helpless. Elizabeth often invited the most abject cases of infirmity to share her meals with her. Her patience with them was remarkable. One day there came to the hospital a pauper who was both blind and sick. He asked if he might be taken in and treated. It happened that Elizabeth herself was in the entrance talking with Master Conrad and she said to the man, "We shall be glad to admit you, and freely. But first of all you must look into the ailing condition of your soul. Prepare yourself and make an honest confession of all your sins." Impatient, as the poor blind and infirm sometimes are, he began to curse and swear and berate such superstitious conditions of reception till presently he broke out into blasphemy. Master Conrad reprehended him. But Elizabeth gradually calmed him down so that he implored their pardon for what he had said and went to confession. After he had eaten and had been put to bed, Father Conrad and Elizabeth went to see him. At the bedside of the poor man the priest said to her, "Now that you have given food to the hungry, give sight to the blind." The full import of his words made her tremble. She asked in all humility, "Who am I that can do such a thing?" He insisted that she try it, and she pleaded with him not to command her. But finally acquiescing to his instructions, she said that she would pray to the Lord and

would not doubt that He would hear her prayers, on condition that the priest would add his more powerful prayers to her own. They both knelt down to pray fervently and presently their prayers were answered; light began to return to the eyes of the blind man. Master Conrad always attributed this miracle to the great virtue of Elizabeth but she in her humility claimed that it was due to his command.

As time went on Elizabeth's laborious and frugal life weakened her, but she would not neglect her duties of charity nor give up the most menial services for the poor sick. God rewarded her by enabling her to give effective remedies to the sick and infirm, no matter what their condition might be. Nor was she less diligent in healing souls than in healing bodies. When a child was born in the hospital she exhorted the mother not to neglect nor even delay the baptism of her new-born babe. "To neglect Baptism," she would say, "is stupid; to delay it is very imprudent. In either case the child's soul is placed in jeopardy." If any of the sick were in danger of death, she was very solicitous in persuading them to cleanse their conscience by a good confession and to receive Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction in time. In spite of the urging of the Saint, one young woman kept putting off her confession, until at last Elizabeth aroused her with the rod from the sleep of negligence to listen to her counsels.

Her death was beautiful. As she lay waiting for it, one of the sisters who was watching nearby heard her singing. As the final hour approached she said to her little community, now gathered about her, "This is the hour of the immaculate Virgin Birth. We ought to think about the beautiful little Jesus, how He was born in winter, at night, among strangers; how He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger; how He was found by the shepherds, revealed by the star, adored by the Magi; these the hallowed mysteries, the enriching favors, the glowing jewels of our salvation. In them all our hope finds life, our faith grows, our love takes fire. Let us probe these truths and make our converse sweet." And with these words she fell asleep in the Lord she had served well.

Washington, D. C.

Fr. Denis Gallagher, O. F. M. Conv. ✓

✠ ✠ ✠

Whenever I gave food and drink to our Lord in His poor, I always felt an increase of sensible love for our Divine Savior; this compensated me abundantly for the little sacrifices which this exercise of charity imposed on me. Oh, how pure and sweet to me was this love.

Mother Frances Schervier

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According To Saint Bonaventure*

The examination of conscience reveals, as it were, the reverse of our spiritual life; for it is a sound philosophical maxim that defects, and, in general, "privations" (*privaciones*) are known by that which ought to be there. Hence, if we are to go about probing the wounds and diagnosing the maladies of our soul, we must, like a competent physician, be aware of what the normal condition of spiritual health would be. For us, this means a thorough knowledge of the Franciscan ideal, and this ideal is always to be the norm of perfection against which we examine the state of our supernatural health. Profiled against the background of perfect Franciscan spirituality, our sins and imperfections and unlovely traits of character will appear in sharp, clear contours.

The most common defects in the spiritual life of religious are rooted in negligence, and for this reason negligence, rather than concupiscence or malice, is the first point Saint Bonaventure proposes for analysis in his plan for examination of conscience. If one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Franciscan spirit is constant renovation in youthful restlessness, the gravest danger to the spirit lies in loss of energy, in loss of youthful dissatisfaction with one's present state of imperfection, and in yielding to lassitude and routine and distraction, and in the smug self-complacency that marks the advent of spiritual senility. Saint Bonaventure, then, would have us examine ourselves with all candor and penetration, on the first point:

### WAS I NEGLIGENT IN GUARDING MY HEART?

Immediately the question arises: What does Saint Bonaventure mean by "heart?" Undoubtedly, the term "heart" is to be understood in the sense of spiritual life, or of religious personality, or in that which Our Seraphic Father Francis calls the spirit of prayer. To keep custody of the heart, then, is to nourish and guard the interior life, to protect it from harmful influences, to keep it in the warm, life-giving atmosphere of religion; for all this is included in what Saint Francis means by living in the spirit of prayer. The religious, therefore, who strives constantly and manfully to realize it at all times and as deeply as possible, his consecration to the Lord; who strives to become what Saint Bonaventure called Saint Francis—"A man of God"—may be said to be guarding his heart. With this large, general ideal in mind we may proceed to examine

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

ourselves in regard to some of its particular aspects. Let us, for example, ask ourselves:

Do I really make every effort to live a life of prayer in union with God? Am I conscious of the Divine Indwelling in the sanctuary of my heart? Do I endeavor to be alone with Our Lord for at least a short time every day? Do I feel the need of being with Him? Are my days filled with lifeless, mechanical carrying out of routine duties, or do I make an effort to work in the presence of God, even though I cannot think of Him directly? Do I make it a point to raise my heart to God at certain times or at certain places during the day? Do I make a sincere effort to see God everywhere, in all His creatures, even in those who repel me?

Do I live in the atmosphere of religion, mindful that by my religious profession I am in the world but no longer a part of it; that I belong wholly to God and to the works of God? And is it, consequently, my deep conviction—not merely a casual assent of the intellect but a principle by which I live—that everything I do is, in virtue of my consecration, a work of religion? Or, on the contrary, is my life split into two spheres of activity, religious and secular? In other words, do I conduct myself in chapel and during the spiritual exercises of the community in a manner becoming a religious, but during the rest of the day, at work or a recreation, is my behavior hardly, if at all, distinguishable from that of a secular person?

There is one sure test for discovering whether our religious personality is well guarded: the consolation we seek in time of trial. Every human being needs consolation and comfort. It is simply impossible for a man to stand absolutely alone when afflictions and sufferings weigh him down. But let us ask ourselves specifically: Where do I seek consolation? Do I have recourse first to creatures, or to the Creator? When I have been severely rebuked, when I am suffering an injustice or tormented by physical or mental pain, do I try to find consolation from God, or do I first go to my friends and take comfort in purely human understanding—perhaps even going so far as to unburden my soul to persons outside the community, revealing the private affairs of the community in the process?

Religious silence is one of the most important means of guarding the heart. Without silence the religious personality is bound to disintegrate. Saint Bonaventure says: "I dare say with certainty, that in vain does a religious boast the possession of virtue in his heart when he breaks down the discipline of silence

through the inquietude of loquacity."<sup>1</sup> Of course, silence as such, with further qualification, is not always a virtue. It is good to remind ourselves sometimes that Christ drove out a mute devil. Religious silence, however, is always a virtue, and it is absolutely necessary for progress in perfection since it is governed by love of God, by obedience, and by charity. Let us, therefore, ask ourselves: Do I appreciate religious silence as a means of guarding my heart and of keeping the presence of God? Or is silence for me only an irksome restriction of self-control imposed by the Rule I have bound myself to keep? Do I respect the religious silence of others, or do I begin and prolong useless conversations? Unless sound reasons and genuine charity demand it, do I avoid speaking during the time of silence? Do I refrain from making unnecessary noise and from disturbing the holy atmosphere of monastic tranquility?

Just as our churches and chapels and sacred vessels are, by their consecration and blessing, withdrawn from profane use and reserved for the service of God, so a religious by his profession is withdrawn from the world and consecrated to the Lord. Now the world, as created by God, is good; even the pleasures and entertainments sought by people in the world are not bad, so long as they remain within the limits of decency and moderation. But, what is allowed and perhaps even recommended for people in the world is not necessarily good and expedient for religious. Of course, no religious, not even our cloistered nuns, can live absolutely apart from the world. But contact with mundane affairs must always remain a potential danger to the interior life and to the religious personality. It is therefore well for us to ask: Do I avoid contact with the world in so far as sound reason, charity, and the regulations of my Institute permit? Do I allow myself to fall victim to that deplorable illusion that confuses worldliness with sound progress? Do I even go so far as to try to keep pace with the "progressiveness" of my secular friends in practically everything? A point that might well be considered here is whether, in the words of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, the world has an uncensored access to me through radio, cinema, and the like. When taking part in purely secular recreations, pleasures, and social affairs, do I always keep in mind what my state as a person consecrated to God requires of me? Do I always seek to draw spiritual values from such circumstances rather than worldly distractions or pleasures?

In similar fashion we must question ourselves concerning the more delicate relations with secular persons. True, it would not be even Christian to disregard the piety and gratitude we owe our parents and benefactors. On the other hand, our heart belongs to God. Hence we must ask ourselves: Do I guard my heart against inordinate attachment to any creature—to parents, relatives, friends?

<sup>1</sup> *De Perfectione Vitae c. IV, 1*

"inordinate" is meant such attachments as impair my religious life. Do I always give my heart first to God, to Whom I belong body and soul, and only secondly to Him and With Him to other persons?

These are a few thoughts about custody of the heart. To be practical, they should be expanded into more specific detail by the individual religious according to his own personal needs. For this was Saint Bonaventure's intention, that his plan for examination of conscience should be so fitted to the individual that it would help him to follow the exhortation of our Seraphic Father Francis to "Keep the spirit of prayer to which all other things must be subservient."

Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M. ✓

✙ ✙ ✙

WORDS OF MOTHER FRANCES SCHERVIER

✙ ✙ ✙

The practice of conformity to the Divine Will was of great profit to my soul.

✙ ✙ ✙

I found myself constantly in better dispositions; I was cheerful and happy and intent on keeping myself in the presence of God. Unpleasant happenings, such as occur at times in every household, disturbed me but little, or not at all; with a glance upward to God I was able to bear all in peace and joy.

✙ ✙ ✙

Let us love our Divine Savior with our whole heart, and be ready for every sacrifice. Let us never permit ourselves to become discouraged, or be held back by trifles.

✙ ✙ ✙

How sublime, how sacred, must be to us the smallest and most insignificant act done in the service of God our Creator!

# FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

AN OUTLINE AND SUMMARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER ON FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY BY THE MOST REVEREND FATHER PACIFICO M. PERANTONI, O. F. M., MINISTER GENERAL, MAY 21 - JUNE 4, 1950 (*Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, SEPT.-OCT., 1950, pp. 214-243).

*Introduction:* The *occasion* is the fifth centenary of the canonization of Bernardine of Siena, 1450, who is a model for us; likewise Holy Year of 1950, which should be for us a time of spiritual renovation.

- I. The fundamental *principles* of Franciscan spirituality.
  1. The *existence* of Franciscan spirituality. Franciscan spirituality is distinct from Christian spirituality but rather is a specification of Christian spirituality or a particular interpretation of the message of Jesus as expressed in the lives of St. Francis and his faithful followers as well as in the writings of the great Franciscan theologians especially St. Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus.
  2. The *sources* of Franciscan spirituality. They are three in number:
    - a. The *life* of our holy Father St. Francis, who reached the height of perfection and sanctity by seeking to imitate Christ as perfectly as possible and thus became a model for all his spiritual children.
    - b. The Franciscan *Rule*, which is "the book of life." By their profession Franciscans have bound themselves to observe the Rule and to live the kind of life it prescribes.
    - c. The Franciscan *tradition* for over seven hundred years, consisting of the example of numerous faithful followers of St. Francis who have been raised to the honors of the altar, and in the many spiritual works written by learned and saintly members of the Order.
  3. A *compendium* of Franciscan spirituality.
    - a. *Theory and practice.* St. Francis did not concern himself much with theory; he devoted himself directly to practice. This practice, however, has been analyzed by such holy doctors as St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, who formulated the theory or principle and found the essence of Franciscan spirituality to consist in Christocentrism.
    - b. *Doctrinal Christocentrism.* This is set forth in the encyclical letter on the Primacy and Kingship of Christ, issued by the Most Reverend Fr. Leonard M. Bello, O. F. M. Beginning, as did St. Francis,

cis, with the realization of the infinite goodness of God, who has made us His adopted children, the Franciscan theologians recognized Christ as the First-born of creatures, as our Universal King and necessary Mediator; and they pointed out that this consideration should fill our souls with confidence in God, love of God, fidelity in the service of Christ the King, and the effective desire of modelling our lives on that of Christ. Devotion to Our Lady and to the Angels follows naturally.

- c. *Practical Christocentrism.* Union of the soul with God, which is the aim of all spirituality, is attained in the Franciscan way by:
  - (1) the *evangelical life* or the observance of the Gospel;
  - (2) the unquestioning and literal carrying out of the *words of Christ*;
  - (3) the *imitation of Christ*, resulting from meditation particularly on the poverty and sufferings of Our Savior;
  - (4) *conformity with Christ*—becoming, as far as possible, "other Christs", as did St. Francis.
4. The *steps of advancement* in Franciscan spirituality. Christocentrism, in practice is the love of Christ, strong enough to effect a transformation of ourselves into Christ. In every spirituality, this transformation is accomplished negatively and positively. According to the Franciscan way, these two steps are principally the virtues of poverty and charity.
  - a. *Poverty*, meaning not merely the renunciation of temporal goods but detachment from creatures. Associated with this kind of poverty are the other so-called negative virtues; penance, chastity, obedience, diligence in work, recollection and love of solitude.
  - b. *Charity*, of love of God and conformity with Christ, including special devotion to the Humanity of Christ, the Sacred Heart, the Holy Eucharist, the Nativity and Passion of Christ, also to the Blessed Virgin, and reverence for the priesthood; likewise love of neighbor, especially the poor and oppressed, and apostolic zeal for the conversion of those outside the fold of Christ and for the salvation of all souls.
  - c. *Mysticism* is the third step. Franciscan spirituality naturally tends towards contemplation.
5. Special *characteristics* of Franciscan spirituality. These are: awareness of the Presence of God, spiritual joy and optimism, supremacy of the will over the intellect and of action over contemplation, prompt-



ness in carrying out what is recognized as good and useful, and spirit of liberty which leaves the individual's personality intact admits all kinds of characters and every field of activity.

## II. The *practice* of Franciscan spirituality in religious life.

Franciscan spirituality is intended not only for those who live in convents but for all walks and conditions of life; and even in the religious life spiritual progress is an eminently personal matter. However, in the external organization of the Franciscan Order, we have certain means and habits which foster the Franciscan spirit. The Franciscan leads a mixed life, aiming both at the attainment of personal sanctification by contemplation and at the good of our neighbor by apostolic activity.

### A. The spirituality of the contemplative phase of the religious life.

The religious life is a state of perfection, and requires that we strive for perfection. Each religious Order has its own regulations for this purpose, and these impart to it its peculiar character. We shall consider the nature and spiritual value of the following:

1. The Franciscan *vocation*. The vocation to the religious life is a gift of God. Vocation is what we are by nature and by grace. A good example of this is St. Francis himself. The increase of Franciscan vocations should be the concern of all. In the first place we must pray for vocations, and then put forth earnest effort to foster vocations. Even lay brothers who have contact with the outside world by reason of their work can do this. It is the special task of preachers and those to whom the work of promoting vocations has been assigned. Everyone who applies should not be admitted blindly, but on the other hand we should not demand too much of applicants. Defections from the Order are not the result so much of improper selection of candidates as of lack of training in the religious life.

2. The Franciscan *training*. At the beginning the Franciscan vocation is immature; it must be developed by proper training.

- a. *The Seraphic College*. In the Franciscan preparatory schools those who have not a true vocation should be eliminated. The teachers in these schools must take seriously their task of training the students along Franciscan lines, and prepare themselves daily for their work.

- b. *The Novitiate*. The training of the novices should be accomplished by presenting the Franciscan ideal to them; it should

not be achieved by force. Reverence for the individual's personality should be a dominant note. St. Francis set the example by the manner in which he trained his early disciples. The novitiate is a time of preparation for the religious life that lies ahead. Seraphic perfection is not attained in its fullness during the novitiate; that is the work of a lifetime.

- c. *The Clericate*. This is a period of preparation for solemn profession and for ordination to the priesthood. Care should be taken that the clerics do not merely observe the external obligations which are imposed on them, but that their souls and characters are trained with the Franciscan ideal in mind. During the study of philosophy, special instructions on Franciscan spirituality should be given with emphasis on the practical side, namely on the life of St. Francis, on the Franciscan Rule, and on Franciscan virtues. During the years of theology, the instructions should expound the theory and doctrine of Franciscan spirituality as set forth in the Franciscan school of theology.

- d. *The Lay Brothers*. During all the years before their solemn profession, the Brothers should receive similar and suitable training. This can hardly be done unless special Brothers' schools are established. During this period, therefore, they should remain in special friaries, and their religious as well as manual training should be kept up.

3. *The Community Life*. In the quest of the Franciscan ideal, living in a community with others who have the same objective in view is a great help.

- a. *Laws*. To those who have made the profession of the Franciscan Rule the juridical expression of the highest perfection, this Rule is not only a safe guide but also a necessary means in Franciscan spirituality. However, it is not sufficient to know and observe the letter of the Rule; we must also imbibe its spirit. Hence the explanation of the Rule should stress its character as a true aid for spiritual progress. The Constitutions and various special statutes are likewise of great importance and should be regarded in the same light. We should observe them faithfully, not because we must, but because we wish to do so.

- b. *Fraternal Relations.* We are all brothers in the world-wide Order of St. Francis, and should cherish a great love for the Order. In the particular community, where we happen to be stationed, each one must contribute his share to cheerfulness, brotherliness and mutual helpfulness. The spirit that prevailed in the early communities at the time of St. Francis offers an example. These virtues should prevail; genuine love towards all confrères, obedience to the wishes of superiors and on the part of superiors the spirit of service and understanding efforts to bring back wayward friars; likewise mutual reverence between priests and brothers, young and old, the healthy and the sick.
- c. *The Common Life.* All must cooperate to make the liturgical functions as exact as possible; and the other community exercises should be carried out with orderliness and serenity and happiness. The more holy each friar is, the more productive of spiritual profit will the community exercises be.
- d. *Retiros.* The retiro was dear to the heart of St. Francis and his most saintly sons. If the friars can retire occasionally to such places of silence and solitude, at least for a short time, these will be the source of fruitful external activity. Most Rev. Fr. Leonard M. Bello, O. F. M., has written a letter on this subject.

B. The spirituality of the *active phase* of the religious life.

1. *The Need.* External activity is required by the Franciscan vocation as was pointed out in the previous letter of the Most Rev. General published under the title, "Our Vocation." Ours is the task of defending and extending the Church. Still, the interior must come first. Without it, our activity will be like sounding brass; with it, our labors will be really fruitful.
2. *Ways and Means.* For the Franciscans, they are:
  - a. *Good example.* St. Francis preferred good example to every other kind of apostolic activity.
  - b. *The sacred ministry.* Every kind of priestly activity belongs to the Franciscan program.
  - c. *Charitable work,* including social work which aims at improving the living conditions of the down-trodden, the Franciscan in a special manner.

- d. *Studying and writing* is by no means foreign to the Franciscan tradition. The ministers provincial are urged to send suitable friars for higher studies.
- e. *Manual work.* Recall the example and exhortations of St. Francis. Performed in the right manner, manual work is something noble. It is the particular sphere of activity of the brothers; but priests too, including professors and preachers, can profitably engage in this kind of work at times.

The *teaching* of Franciscan spirituality. The teacher of Franciscan spirituality has the task of not only imparting the correct knowledge of what it is but also guiding souls in practicing it.

1. *Imparting* the Franciscan spirit. St. Francis educated his first disciples, and they in turn trained others. Now that we are so far removed from the age of St. Francis, those who have the Franciscan spirit have all the more reason to impart it to others.
2. *The obligation* of training the young. The Franciscan spirit can not be communicated to them by force; but teaching methods must be such that they show how attractive and desirable Franciscan spirituality is. This is the special task of those who have been appointed to train the young; but the others are not exempt from this task, for they must teach by example. The latter method will naturally win vocations for the Order.
3. *The teacher.* Not everyone who is engaged in teaching is a teacher of Franciscan spirituality. He must have a more thorough acquaintance with the principles, and should have a special or technical training in this subject.
4. *International college* for training teachers of Franciscan spirituality (including writers on the subject). Such a college has been established in the Friary of St. Anthony at Grottoferata, also for the benefit of those who do not belong to the Order. It aims at giving special training to teachers, writers, spiritual directors, preachers in Franciscan spirituality. The publication, *Vita Minorum*, is the official organ of the college. Similar publications, both popular and learned, issued in other parts of the world, will achieve much in diffusing the Franciscan spirit.

Louis

Fr. Marion Habig, O. F. M. ✓

## FRANCISCAN REVIEWS

IN THE SPIRIT OF SAINT FRANCIS

By Theodosius Foley, O. F. M.  
Paterson, N. J., St. Anthony Guild Press. 172 p. \$1.75

Add interest to the classical verities of unity, coherence and emphasis, have the writing done by an experienced retreat master, and then turn the author loose on the topic nearest to his heart. Unusual success is evident in these fourteen conferences on the characteristics of Franciscan life. Father Theodosius' earlier book, "Spiritual Conferences" was directed to his own confreres of the Capuchin branch. Word of their excellence got out, and now he favors the Franciscan family by issuing this book on the Rule common to all of us. Whether you are of the First Order, the Second, or one of the many communities of Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order, these are the things you should be thinking and saying in your own spiritual conversations.

The words of the Rule, the words and thinking actions of St. Francis, are our charter of life. As the life of our holy founder is a mirror of Christ, so the Mirror of Perfection is peculiarly our device for achieving at once the following of Francis and the following of Christ. In the first conference, Fr. Theodosius emphasizes our need to apply the methods of Franciscan spirituality if we are to approach perfection within our chosen state of life: religious in the Franciscan life. With this we agree, and for this purpose does "The Cord" exist to fulfill a long-felt need.

"Growing up with Christ" is what the author calls the process of spiritual assimilation during which the act of spiritual union with Christ first takes place, then is intensified. Although none of us presumes that he possesses the sanctity of Francis, yet each of us has chosen to mould his spiritual life in the same way. We are convinced that God wants us to be His servants in this Order. A necessary corollary is that we live up to our and His expectations. The things which tend to divert us from our vocation kill or weaken that determination of purpose. Then it is that the renewal of our act of love for Christ brings us back to the Franciscan pattern.

Conferences are these, but in such a handy form. For we can take them up at any time for meditation, finding on these pages a mood for the moment. That is because the Rule goes back to the Gospel, the Friar Minor always being a disciple of the Master. As the Lord was the Exemplar

of how to act in each situation that the heart of men, so He also has a soul in a way of grace for each of the problems of religious life. "This is the Rule and of the Friars Minor namely to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ." This observance of the Gospel is the essence of Franciscan perfection. What added to the Rule pertains to those facets of religious life which tend to bring perfection in its fullness, such as "living obedience, without property, and in chastity." The three vows form the means which we live the Gospel. Kept in the spirit of St. Francis and according to example, they are the manifestations of Franciscan perfection as projected by the Holy founder.

Poverty, chastity and obedience are the sole content of our life. Neither the remaining chapters. Charity and hospitality united are the heart of the Franciscan life, at home, or in the world, whether he is at work or at prayer. Guidance in prayer is always needed, for how many of us wander through wasted periods of meditation? In every century our Order produced its Saints and Blessed, people of splendid prayer and fruitful activity; alongside them has produced Franciscans who mix up activity and prayer in such a way that prayer loses. Work we must do—the mixed life is part of the Franciscan tradition—but to divorce prayer from work and think that we can choose one or the other well but certainly not both, is foreign to the reality as well as the ideal. Father Theodosius shows us how to avoid "extinguishing the holy spirit of prayer and devotion."

Not at the beginning, nor at the end but in the middle, the heart of the book is an essay on the Franciscan standard of living. In spite of modern conditions of poverty and simplicity of life are dictated for us. There is nothing elaborate about our manner of living. As nearly as possible we children of the Poverello try to live as he and the first brethren lived. In plain surroundings, with little ado about material matters, we try to emulate that "spirit of holy prayer and devotion" to which St. Francis says "all temporal things should be subservient." So it has been, and so it always will be.

Callicoon, N. Y. Fr. Anselm Hardy, O. F. M.

LETTER OF THE VERY REVEREND FATHER PACIFICUS  
PERANTONI, O. F. M., MINISTER GENERAL OF  
THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR, TO THE  
EDITOR OF THE CORD

IL MINISTRO GENERALE DEI FRATI MINORI

N. 129/51

Roma, Via Aurelia 139  
January 5, 1951

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.  
Editor, THE CORD  
Franciscan Institute  
Bonaventure University  
St. Bonaventure, N. Y.

Reverend and dear Father,

The publication of the first issue of THE CORD, under the auspices of the Franciscan Institute, demands that we give expression to our gratification and complete satisfaction with its truly seraphic apostolate of promoting the knowledge of ascetical and mystical ideals and practise of Franciscanism. We cannot but bestow our wholehearted approbation upon that which, in every respect, fulfills the long felt need as indicated by you, and so adequately evidences a model instrument for Franciscan indoctrination.

Throughout the centuries the motto of the entire Franciscan Order has ever been *In Sanctitate et Doctrina*. The relation between sanctity and doctrine is more than a mere formality. One can say that here is an interdependence. Every soul sanctifying itself acquires some kind of knowledge, whether it be by way of infusion or that of experience. The more grace in the soul, so much the more intense is that knowledge and the fullness thereof. It is in this sense that we claim a doctrine as underlying the fine simplicity of our holy Father Saint Francis. The very numbers of saints, canonized and uncanonized, who are followers of the Seraphic Patriarch, indicate how vast and profound the Franciscan doctrine has become. This is not to say that the doctrine of the Poverello has changed or is changing with the times, but rather that his sanctity has been so dynamic that the force thereof is ever operative in the minds and hearts of those who pledge themselves to follow the spirit and letter of his holy Rules.

Vol. 129/51

Doctrine without teachers to expound and inculcate it may be likened to the folly of stopping up the wells so that their location and use are lost to posterity and the terrain becomes barren. It is worth noting the way our holy Father Saint Francis with those whom he personally admitted into the profession. Not only do we have the historical record, but we also gain a feeling, of the sense of responsibility which he conveyed to his first followers in regard to the great doctrine he was giving them. They were to pass it on primarily by example, and eminently, in any way the Providence of God might grant. Manifestly enriched as the doctrine of Francis has since become, the obligation towards it is all the more sacred and therefore must prevail among the followers of the Seraphic Patriarch today. Only in this way can the apostolic Franciscanism approximate the high ideals of the "Herald of the Great

Often do we reflect upon our heavy responsibilities as Minister General towards the spiritual daughters of our holy Father Saint Francis, both of the Second and Third Orders. These sentiments in part are revealed in the encyclical letters it has been our privilege to address to the Franciscan family. It is of great solace to know that our Friars are equally conscious of their Franciscan heritage and are striving to emulate the glorious tradition of our beloved Order in assuming the direction of souls striving for perfection.

To our beloved Sisters who have the grace of the seraphic vocation, give encouragement to cherish the doctrine that is of our holy Founders. In this regard, one can almost say that the true followers of Francis and Clare—above their obligations—have the right of preferring Franciscan methods and methods of sanctification. Though certain features of other forms of spirituality objectively may seem better in some respects, they will have fostered and nourished the seraphic vocation in quite the same way Francis practised had already triumphantly achieved.

It is significant that the name of THE CORD should designate your publication. No other symbol of Franciscanism is more declarative of the unity among Franciscans. And where that unity is concentrated upon the ultimate goal of personal sanctification, we know and we can assure you that it will bind us to God.

Imparting the Seraphic Blessing upon all the readers and contributors of THE CORD, we are certain that it will bring the *Pax et Bonum* of the Franciscan message.

L. S.

Sincerely yours in Saint Francis  
(m. p.) Fr. Pacificus Maria Perantoni, O. F. M.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The month of February is dedicated to the Passion of Christ. The reason is so far to seek. This year, for example, the Sunday Quinquagesima and the three Sundays of Lent fall within the narrow frame of this month. In these words we are hurrying on towards the greatest solemnity of the Ecclesiastical Year, the festival of Easter; but before reaching Easter, we pass through the dark, silent and somber valley of Holy Week. Mother Church shows her maternal hand and, to be frank though not irreverent, she plays an ingenious game on her children by declaring eight full weeks as the preparation for the glorious Alleluja of Easter and in the same breath shrouding this entire period in the mourning garb of Prayer and Penance, to be lifted only at the vigil of the great feast itself.

Surely that is not the way we prepare for earthly celebrations; but then, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Is. 55, 8). The lesson is easy to gather and may be summed up in three sentences: first, *per crucem ad lucem*, which is the same as, "There is no crown without a battle"; the second, "On our present pilgrimage the way of the cross exceeds by far in merit the way of glory"; whence follows the third, "It behooves us, therefore, to meditate earnestly upon the Passion of Christ". The doctrine of the Cross," says Saint Paul, "is foolishness to those who perish, but to those who are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1, 18). These are mysterious words which require deep and prayerful thinking. Let us ask three questions: 1) What prompted God to choose the cross? 2) What should prompt us to carry our cross? 3) What is the meaning of the cross or, to speak more generally, what is the meaning of suffering to the Church and the world at large?

The first question is answered by our Lord Himself. "For God so loved the world," said He to Nicodemus, "that he gave his only-begotten Son" (John 3, 16). After the Tragedy on Calvary Saint Paul wrote these beautiful words to the Ephesians: "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor" (Eph. 5, 2). This truth needs no further proof; it is the A. B. C. of the New Testament writings. And even if we espouse the sublime teaching of Franciscan theologians, namely, that Christ would have come to earth even if Adam had not sinned, our thesis remains unaltered. In fact, assuming that He was to come as the King of Glory, and that because of humanity's dismal plight He exchanged the royal diadem for the Crown of Thorns, then in so doing He gave

us an even greater proof of His love for us. As it is, on Holy Saturday Mother Church rejoices, "O happy fault, which deserved to possess such and so great a Redeemer"; and the angelic choirs around the throne of God do not chant the ineffable hymn of Christ's Incarnation in a grand major key, as might have been intended, but in the mellow minor strains of the new canticle which was heard by Saint John on Patmos: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Apoc. 5, 12).

A pious medieval painter was asked to draw a picture of the eternal Trinity in heavenly glory. He obeyed. The Father was seated on the throne and with Him the Holy Spirit. But on the steps the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was kneeling, raising His hands in petition that He might descend to earth to redeem the human race. This may not be precise theology but the thought is beautiful, and if there was no inscription we would suggest the following: "And my delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8, 31).

To the children of Saint Francis, who are groomed in the school of the Saviour's love and have patterned their entire spiritual life after the seraphic love of our Holy Founder, it is no effort to see in Christ's bitter Passion "the very great love wherewith he has loved us" (Eph. 2, 4). This is the reason why the devotion to the Passion of Christ has asserted itself as the keynote of Franciscan spirituality. No Franciscan may boast of his name unless he loves Jesus Crucified.

Secondly, the straight and simple way to repay such love is to follow Jesus on the way of the Cross. In a certain Franciscan monastery, an ingenious superior had procured a set of beautiful chimes by whose sound the signal was given for all exercises. "See," remarked an old Friar, "our hardest tasks are made sweet by the call of heavenly music." It has often occurred to me that Mother Church uses the same method. The Preface is the most excellent canticle we have, says Saint Cyprian. Now, in the Preface of Lent Mother Church sings to us the advantages of fasting, and fasting may well be taken to comprise penitential exercises. "O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God," the Preface runs, "who by fasting of the body dost curb our vices, dost lift up our minds, dost give us strength and reward; through Christ our Lord." That is to say, penance or suffering for the sake of Christ purifies the soul, raises it to God and higher things, and adorns it with virtue and final reward. We have learned this truth ever since we entered the Order which Saint Francis wisely to establish as an Order of Penance; and no further comment is needed.

However, the practical issue which we are apt to miss is that in monastic life there is usually no need of looking about for unusual penances. They stare us in the face at every step and at every task. And because we overlook them, there arises the urge of seeking extraordinary penances and then allowing our daily work to gather the dust of common drudgery instead of lining it with the gold of salutary penance by a simple act of love and good intention. This makes for poor harmony in the life of a person who lives "in the courts of the King." In fact, there is no harmony at all, when we grumblingly rattle off, as it were, page after page of our daily assignment and then, in a solemn, mournful tone, start the *Miserere*. No, that is not the way of the saints and surely not the way of Saint Francis, who labored with his hands and suffered all for Christ's sake. In this way, as he confesses, "that which seemed bitter was turned into sweetness of soul and body for me." This is where Saint Paul's motto applies: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (II Cor. 3, 6).

Our greatest aim in religious life is to attain the likeness of Christ. We cannot be like to Him in His miracles, His doctrine, His transcending personality; we can get close to Him in His meek and humble life, especially in His suffering. This is why Saint Francis adopted for his pattern the almost boastful words of Saint Paul: "Gladly therefore I will glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me. Wherefore I am satisfied, for Christ's sake, with infirmities, with insults, with hardships, with persecutions, with distresses. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 12, 9-10)—strong, we may add, by the spirit of penance.

During this season we should try to put more fervor into our daily prayers, especially into the Way of the Cross, which is the Franciscan devotion *par excellence*. We should not make the Stations as they are printed in the book or painted in pictures, but as reflected in our own lives. Make the practice real, personal, pointed. Episodes in our past illustrate each Station. The three falls remind us of our own falls: the sins of our youth, the sins in religious life, the habitual and begetting sins that still hang on. I knew an old Brother who could not move beyond the fifth Station, because like Simon of Cyrene he had come so late. With the twelfth Station, with Jesus on the Cross, we prepare for our own death. Thus from the cradle to the coffin we bear "about in our body the dying of Jesus" (II Cor. 4, 10).

In the third place, we observe that "the doctrine of the Cross" unfolds itself more and more as time passes on and as the world gains a more perfect understanding of the Mystical Body of Christ. Saint Paul puts his finger on a

vital truth when he writes: "I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1, 24).

What does Saint Paul mean by saying that what is lacking of the suffering of Christ we must fill up in our flesh for his body, which is the Church? Surely the Passion of Christ was of infinite merit; it offered superabundant atonement to the Father. What the Apostle means is that the members of Christ's Mystical Body must render their share towards its perfection. This body consists of human beings, of sinful wayfarers. Christ atoned for all, but not all accept His grace. Hence the solemn charge lies upon all the members to offer prayer and penance for the erring brethren so that the hope of Christ be fulfilled, namely "that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5, 27).

This thought sets a new and glorious standard for all Christianity especially for Religious Orders. It is an invitation to participate in the work of Christ as the Head of the Mystical Body, which is the living Church or Kingdom of God. The nature of this participation is manifold and changes with the needs of the faithful, the specific aims of our vocation, and the varying moods of the Ecclesiastical Year, which is the expression of the mind and heart of the Church.

In order to appreciate our mission better let us go to Calvary's height where the Saviour breathes His last. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church explain to us that, as Eve was taken from the body of Adam in Paradise, even so did the Bride of Christ, our Holy Church, flow from the Saviour's bleeding side on Calvary. It is a beautiful simile which clearly indicates that our Holy Church must bear some of the marks and traits of her divine Founder. Let us and see how during that last agony seven words fall from His dying lips and how His precious blood trickles from His five wounds.

Prayer and Penance—these are the two marks that the Church has inherited from her Founder; that have characterized His Mystical Body for all the centuries. They are the two heavenly sisters which have beckoned to holy wise virgins, as the Prophet says, to "leave the cities and dwell in the rock like the dove that maketh her nest" (Jer. 48, 28)—and that rock is Christ. We kneel daily and hourly before the Eucharistic King present in the tabernacle; to atone by prayer and sacrifice for the world that strolls and staggers with heedlessly, helplessly, hopelessly.

Prayer and Penance: the former beseeches God to increase our love; the latter proves to God that we love Him. If prayer is the greatest power in the world to obtain God's love, then Penance is the strongest proof to the world that we possess God's love. Both have a long history; both stemmed from Calvary; and both have followed the Church in her path as she wended her way amid joy and sorrow, amid triumphs and defeats, through the long corridors of time.

In prayer the soul speaks to God; in Penance she surrenders her whole being, chiefly by her external senses, to God's will, in imitation of the five bleeding wounds of her Saviour. Why did the Master appear to Thomas with His open wounds? To show that these marks shall memorialize for all eternity His great love for mankind. They are the only things made by human hand in heavenly glory. He also bears them that they might be a constant reminder for His faithful servants on earth that, as He had done for them, so they must do for Him.

And here is the solution of the great mystery of evil, of pain, of suffering in this world. The philosophers of old sought to unravel this mystery, but they failed. Holy Job in beautiful rhythmic language seeks an answer but, because he had not a vision of Calvary, his answer comes in groping, hesitating accents. Saint Peter, our first Pontiff, has the true answer when he writes: "Unto this, indeed, you have been called, because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in his steps" (I Pet. 2, 21).

Like a golden thread this thought runs through the length and breadth of the history of the Church Militant, from Calvary to the present day. The Cross adorned with the brilliant rubies of the Saviour's blood is seen by the Christians in the arena, in the catacombs, on the dreary sands of the southland, among the lofty forests of the north, on every isle, in every clime where our missionaries have preached the Holy Gospel and shed their blood in its defense.

In these latter days devout people often ask the question: look at Europe, at Asia, behind the Iron Curtain, where thousands of innocent people, men, women and innocent children and even consecrated persons, are committed to the most inhuman tortures, to slave labor, to sufferings that defy all description: how is it that a just God permits these horrors? Has the Church no help or answer? Are the prayers of millions not heard? Where is Divine Providence? Saint Peter gave us the answer: Christ suffered "that you may follow in his steps"; and St. Paul adds, "for his body, which is the Church."

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.

from the "Chronicle" of Salimbene.

Blessed John of Parma was born of noble parents in that northern Italian city. Before entering the Franciscan Order he received university education, and afterwards taught theology in the Universities of Paris, Bologna and Naples. In 1247 he was elected Minister General and held that position until 1257 when he resigned, with the recommendation that Bonaventure of Bagnorea be elected in his place. For five years he lived in the hermitage of Greccio. He died in Camerino in the Apennines while on his second journey to Constantinople to attempt a reconciliation of the schismatic Greeks with Rome. During his life and after his death he was known alike for great learning and saintliness. Pope Pius VI beatified him in 1777; his feast is celebrated on March 20.

Salimbene di Adamo was not only a contemporary of John but also a fellow citizen of Parma, and, as he says, a most intimate friend. This interesting Friar spent his religious life in some of the most important convents of the Order. Since he kept a voluminous diary, which has come down to us as the *Chronicle of Salimbene*, he is a valuable source for early Franciscan history. He wrote his diary not for himself but, as he tells us, for his niece, Sister Agnes, a Poor Clare nun. It is in this familiar and personal narrative that we find some inspiring glimpses of the seventh Minister General of the Friars Minor.

#### THE APPEARANCE AND VIRTUES OF BLESSED JOHN OF PARMA

"He was of medium stature, tending more to shortness than to height. His limbs, were well formed; he had a good complexion, and he was sound and strong, able to bear the labors of walking and of study. His was an angelic countenance, gracious and ever cheerful. He was free and liberal, courtly and charitable, humble, meek, kind, patient; devoted to God, a man of prayer, pious, gentle, and compassionate. He celebrated Mass daily, and so devoutly that those who attended felt some of his own grace. He preached so fervently and well to the clergy and brethren that many of his hearers were moved to tears as I often witnessed. He was fluent in speech and never stumbled. His learning was very great, since he had been a good grammarian and a Master of Logic in the world; and in our Order he was a great theologian and disputant. He taught the *Sentences* in Paris and for many years was lector in the convents at Bologna and Naples. When he passed through Rome, the brethren were wont to make him

honor or dispute before the Cardinals, who considered him a great philosopher. He was a mirror and an example to all who saw him, for his life was full of holiness and saintliness, and of the highest morality. He was beloved of God and men.

#### HIS HUMILITY: THE PAPAL BED.

"Somewhat late in the evening at this place [a castle in Tarascon which the General and eleven Friars were visiting], when we had said Compline and the beds had been assigned to the guests to sleep in the same house with the General, he went out into the courtyard to pray. But the brethren feared to go to bed until the General had first come to his. When I saw their distress, for they were murmuring over the fact that they wished to go to bed and couldn't—because the bed-places were lighted brightly with tapers—I approached the General. He was well known to me and we were very intimate, because he was from my country and the closest of neighbors. When I found him praying in the courtyard, I said, 'Father, the brethren are wearied from the journey and wish to rest from their labor; but they fear to go to bed before you do.' Then he said to me, 'Go and tell them for me that they may sleep with the blessing of God.' And I did that. However I decided to wait for the General in order to show him his bed. When he came in from his prayers, I told him, 'Father, you are to lie in that bed over there which has been prepared for you.' And he said to me, 'Son, a Pope could sleep in that bed which you are pointing out to me; Brother John of Parma will by no means lie in it.' And he lay down in an empty bed that I was hoping to use. So I told him, 'Father, may God pardon you, because you have taken the bed which I had thought to use, since it has been assigned to me.' And he said, 'Son, *you* sleep in that Papal bed.' And when according to his own example I would have refused, he said to me, 'It is my firm wish that you lie there, and this do I command you.' And thus I had to do as he commanded.

#### NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

"On another occasion, when he was General and wished to take a moment of leisure, he came to the convent of Ferrara, where I had lived for seven years. And noticing that always the same brethren were invited to eat with him . . . he came to realize that the Guardian was a respecter of persons, and this displeased him. So when Brother John somewhat later was washing his hands for supper, the Brother who was to serve him asked the Guardian, 'Whom shall I invite?' The Guardian responded, 'Take Brother James of Pavia and Brother Avanzio and this one and that one.' Now these four had already

washed their hands and were standing ready behind the General's back, had clearly perceived from the first. Wherefore, in ardor of spirit and inspired by the Divine Spirit, he took up the parable and began to cry, 'Ye Take Brother James of Pavia, take Brother Avanzio, take this one, take one! *Take ten stripes for thyself.* That is a mere goose's song.' Those who had been invited were confounded and ashamed, and the Guardian no less so. He said to the Minister, 'Father, I was accustomed to invite these to be in company because I consider them to be more worthy.' But the Minister replied, 'Does not Scripture to the praise of God say that *He made the little and the great and takes equal care of all?* And does not the Lord say, *Let the children come to me?* And Saint James says that *God chose the poor in the world.* And the Lord Himself said in Luke 14, *When thou givest a dinner or supper, do not invite thy friends, or thy brethren, or thy relatives, or thy neighbors, lest perhaps they also invite thee in return, and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou givest a feast, invite the poor.*' (I heard all this because I was standing nearby.) Then the serving Brother asked, 'Whom shall I invite?' The Guardian replied, 'Invite whom the Minister shall direct you.' And the Minister said, 'Go call the simpler brethren of the convent, because this is an undertaking wherein all the brethren know how to bear the Minister's company.' The serving Brother therefore went to the refectory and said to the lowlier and simpler brethren who rarely ate outside the refectory, 'The Minister General invites you to supper; I command you in his name to go to him immediately.' And so it was done.

"For whenever Brother John of Parma, as Minister General, came to some new convent of the Friars Minor, he wished the lowlier brethren to eat with him, or that all eat together . . . Thus Brother John of Parma was no respecter of persons nor did he have a private love for any. He was most courteous and gracious at the table, so that if different types of good wine were placed on the table he would have equal portions poured for all, or he would have all the wine poured into one great cup that all might drink in common; and for this he was considered most courteous and kind.

#### HELPING IN COMMON TASKS.

"Whenever the bell sounded for the cleaning of vegetables and herbs, Brother John of Parma, Minister General though he was, would come to the workers of the convent and labor with the other brethren, as I often saw with my own eyes. And because we were good friends, I said to him, 'Father, you are doing what the Lord taught us in Luke 22, *Let him who is greatest among*

*become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant.*' 'So it becomes me to fulfill all justice,' he replied, 'that is, perfect humility.'

#### TAKING PART IN COMMUNITY EXERCISES.

"He was also accustomed to attend the Divine Office day and night and especially Matins and Vespers and the conventional Mass. Whatever the Chanter proposed upon him he immediately undertook, whether it was beginning the psalms, reading the lessons, singing responses, or saying the conventual Mass . . . On Holy Saturday the chanter imposed on him the last prophecy and he immediately went and sang it. What further shall I add? He was a man full of good works.

#### HIS WISDOM AND REPUTATION

"There were many who loved him. Among them was Master Peter the Spaniard, who became a Cardinal, and later became Pope John XXI. Being a great dialectician, logician, disputant, and theologian, he sent for Brother John of Parma, who had like qualities . . . The Pope wished therefore to have him with him at all times in the Curia, and thought of making him a Cardinal, but was prevented by death from carrying out his plan . . .

"Pope Innocent IV also loved Brother John as his own soul; and when Brother John went to him, the Pope received him with a kiss. And the Pope planned to make him a Cardinal, but death forestalled him.

"Likewise Vatatzes, Emperor of the Greeks, hearing of the sanctity of the Minister General, Brother John of Parma, sent to Pope Innocent IV asking that Brother John be sent to him, because he hoped that through him the Greeks would return to the precepts of the Roman Church. And while Brother John was there Vatatzes loved him so much that he wanted to give him many gifts. But Brother John, after the example of Daniel, refused them all . . . When Vatatzes saw that Brother John did not wish to receive anything he was impressed by his good example.

#### INCIDENTS AT GRECCIO

"But after his resignation Brother John went and dwelt in the hermitage at Greccio, where Saint Francis at Christmas had once made a replica of the crib. While he was living there, two wildfowl, somewhat like large geese, came and made their nest under the desk where he was continually engaged in study.



They laid their eggs there and raised their brood; and they lay nor did they become alarmed.

"Very early one morning Brother John called one of his pupils and he wished to say Mass. The pupil answered that he would go, but since he was very sleepy he fell asleep again. Afterward he was ashamed of his drowsiness. And coming he found Brother John at Mass and a student in surplice serving him. When Mass was over he left without a word. Now that same day Brother John said to him, 'I am blessed, son, because today you served reverently and well. I know God gave me much consolation in today's Mass because of you.' He told him, 'Father, forgive me, because, when you called me, I said that I could not come immediately; and when I did come I saw you serving you. I know that there is no stranger in the house; and I told the brethren whether he had served your Mass, and each said yes.' Brother John told him, 'I thought it was you. But whoever it was, he is blessed, and may our Creator be blessed for all his gifts.'

"Many other good deeds I saw and heard and know of Brother John of Parma, who was Minister General, and they would be well worth relating here I fall silent about them for brevity's sake, and because I have many matters that must be related, and because Scripture says in *Praise not any man before death.*"

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Geoffrey Br...*

✠ ✠ ✠

Love is not love

If it is not crucified.

*Bl. Cresc...*

## AND THE FRANCISCAN VOCATION

Too many in our days who want to seek wisdom and learning," Saint Bonaventure said to his Brothers, "that happy is he who out of love for the Lord makes himself ignorant and unlearned." Today many of us who are devoted to the pursuit of higher studies are prone to dwell with melancholy on these words of our Seraphic Father. At times we are troubled by problems and perplexities and conflicting obligations. I have attempted to echo the cry of Jacopone da Todi: "O Paris, thou hast made us suffer." Fundamentally of course, the difficulty for us lies not in whether we are Franciscans, *may study*—Rome settled that question many centuries ago—*but how we can reconcile our vocation of evangelical simplicity with the necessities and demands of modern education.*

Obviously, the task is not easy. There is even danger of developing a fanaticism toward study that can deprive us of great spiritual benefit. Some of us are devoted through a course of study with eyes fixed grimly on the vow of obedience and on nothing more. Others among us, spiritual descendants of Brother Francis, perhaps, take refuge in an attitude of suspicion or contempt for the secular knowledge we are obliged to acquire. Still others among us confess to a timorous indecision as to the ultimate end and value of it all, and a vague fear that secular studies may prove a hindrance to our spiritual progress. But all such attitudes, understandable though they are, must be recognized as basically incompatible with the spirit of love and reverence that has traditionally distinguished the highest Franciscan scholarship.

The Franciscan ideal of embracing the Holy Gospel knows but one goal—total surrender of self to God. Thus the one and ultimate end of all Franciscan striving for knowledge is union with God in love. Saint Bonaventure emphasized this point before an academic gathering at the University of Paris. In his beloved Bernard of Clairvaux, he defined the aim of all our learning:

There are those who wish to know only to know: and this is base curiosity.

There are those who learn and wish to know in order to be famous: and this is base vanity.

There are those who wish to know in order to vend their knowledge for money or honors: and this is base greed.

There are those who wish to know in order to flatter others, and this

There are those who wish to know in order to be edified; and this is prudence.

And to these words of Saint Bernard the Seraphic Doctor added:

Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. Therefore charity must be yoked with knowledge so that a man may have at the same time knowledge and charity, in order to fulfill the words of the Apostle: Being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and the breadth and the height and the depth, and to know the charity of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Divine love then is to be the goal of all our learning. For Bonaventure knowledge without love is reduced to insignificance. He is serenely unimpressed by those who extol learning for its own sake, or by those who glory in it for the honor of the human spirit, or by those who pursue it in the name of human progress. The Seraphic Doctor would qualify those who seek knowledge for such reasons simply as seekers of mere terrestrial wisdom.

Unquestionably Bonaventure loved knowledge and respected those who possessed it. Had not our Seraphic Father himself urged his Brothers to "honor and venerate all theologians . . . as those who minister to us spirit and life." Furthermore, Bonaventure clearly recognized the need of intellectual activity for the fullest development of the human personality. "As the body without nourishment loses its power, beauty, and health," he writes, "so the soul without insight into truth becomes dark, deformed, and unstable in everything. Hence it needs to be refreshed." On the other hand, he despised indulgence in the contemplation of truth merely for the sake of intellectual delectation. This Aristotelean ideal of speculation as an end in itself he found something not only despicable but downright pernicious. Commenting on Aristotle's remark that it is a great joy to know that the diameter is asymmetrical with the side of a square, Bonaventure remarks rather caustically: "The pleasure is to let him eat it;"<sup>2</sup> In fact, it is this very seeking of knowledge for its own sake that Bonaventure finds symbolized in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is this that leads the soul away from the Tree of Life—knowledge whose ultimate end is God—and from the true delights of divine contemplation to which knowledge, rightly directed, inevitably leads.

<sup>1</sup> *De donis Spiritus S.* Coll. IV, 23-24.

<sup>2</sup> *Hexaameron* XVII, 6-7

For to eat of the Tree of Life is to be refreshed by these illuminations, so that a man may seek nothing but the understanding of truth, the affectation of piety, the delight of sweetness, and the solace of contemplations. But when a man forgets these things and takes delight in curious searching, then he wants only to know. And from this arises the pride of vanity, since he despises others; and from this in turn follows contentious debate, for he believes himself despised whenever anyone proposes an objection; and always he is ready to strike against those who withstand him. Thus true life is taken away from a man.<sup>3</sup>

If this danger is avoided, however, there can be nothing to fear from the pursuit of learning. With the emphasis on unctio, on the affective transformation of speculation and knowledge into love, Saint Bonaventure is entirely in harmony with the spirit of our Seraphic Father.

There is little doubt that what displeased Francis in those of his Friars who desired to be learned was the pride of intelligence, the perversion of knowledge. He most vehemently did not wish his sons to cover themselves with the glory of learning so as to be sought for and esteemed by men. "For if you were so clever and wise," he admonished, "that you possessed all science, and if you knew how to interpret every form of language and to investigate heavenly things, you could not glory in all this, because one demon has known more of heavenly things and still knows more of earthly things than all men . . ."<sup>4</sup> But Francis also understood that to seek truth purely and simply in order to draw closer to God is also a cultivation of the spiritual life, and that pure seeking of truth must, by its very nature, exercise a strengthening and cleansing influence on man's entire moral being. A man ever in search of truth and ever disposed to accept it wholly will not easily fail to recognize the truth about himself; and self-knowledge is one of the first steps toward perfection. A mind open to all truth is a mind open to all good. If Saint Paul speaks of the "holiness of truth" it is because holiness in the will is a fruit of truth in the mind; because only the full disposition for truth is the full disposition for holiness. Bonaventure expressly states that Francis "wished the Friars to study, provided they first practice what they teach. For to know much and to taste little, what does it profit?"<sup>5</sup> Or, in the classic formula of Duns Scotus: "It would be of little value to contemplate God if, in contemplating Him, we did not also love Him."<sup>6</sup>

*Hexaameron* XVIII, 3.

*Admonitiones*, V

*Hexaameron* coll. XXII, 21.

*Op.* III, d. 18, 2. 3., n. 15.

It may be objected of course, and validly, that what has been said thus far in regard to learning has been limited in application to the sacred sciences. Our great Franciscan scholars would have no difficulty in assigning the same, if not the same degree, of value to modern secular studies as to sacred study. Truth is always truth. All true knowledge, according to Duns Scotus, which reaches the real intelligible is nothing less than a re-thinking of the divine thoughts, and, as such, a sharing in the divine knowledge. This is application of knowledge pertaining to every field of human learning, to all arts and sciences. For example, to know that a triangle has three angles because it shares in the divine and expresses in its way a perfection of God since it has this particular function in the universe—this is to know a triangle in a nobler way than to know it merely through its analysis as a triangle.<sup>7</sup> In the same way, with the same reverence and consciousness of God as the source of all truth, we may approach the study of a great literary masterpiece, a symphony, the structure and functions of the human body, a law of linguistics, a chemical formula. Even in those fields of study which have much to do with the vices and frailties of human nature, truth is still the goal of our searching, and truth is always God. To recognize truth wherever we find it, to accept it with reverence as a manifestation of divine perfections, is to form our mind according to the mind of Christ.

The reason, perhaps, why some of us are a little fearful of secular study is that we have difficulty in recognizing truth. "It comes to few to attain to eternal reasons," says Scotus, "because few have real understanding of truth in itself (*intellectiones per se*)."<sup>8</sup> There is a simile in Saint Augustine of a man standing on top of a mountain with fog below him and pure air above him. Scotus explains this simile as a man who grasps the quiddities not by superficial concepts but precisely as in themselves they really are. The man is on top of the mountain in so far as he knows truth in virtue of the uncreated intellect. Truth is above him; imperfect concepts of truth are the foggy air below him. This is a lofty height to which Scotus would lead us, and most difficult of attainment. Yet once we have learned at least to see all truth as coming from God and leading to God, or, in other words, once we have learned to think with the mind of Christ, we should find it no problem to turn our intellectual activities to the profit of our soul.

Saint Bonaventure himself so perfectly exemplified the ideals of the Franciscan spirit of study that it might be well to quote, in closing, these beautiful lines from his *De reductione artium ad theologian* (26):

<sup>7</sup> I Ox. 3, 4, 5, a. 23.

<sup>8</sup> I Ox. 3, 4, 5, a. 22.

And this is the fruit of all the sciences, that faith be built up in all, God be honored, the moral life be ordered, and consolations be drawn from the union of the spouse with her Beloved. This union takes place through charity, to whose attainment the whole purpose of Sacred Scripture and consequently every illumination descending from above are directed; for without charity all knowledge is vain.

(to be continued)

erson, N. J.

Sr. Frances Laughlin, S. M. I. C.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who does not regard himself as better when he is praised and extolled by man than when he is reputed as mean, simple, and contemptible: for what a man is in the sight of God, so much he is, and no more.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is that servant who is raised in dignity not by his own will and not always desires to be beneath the feet of others.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who bears discipline, accusation, and blame from others as patiently as if they came from himself.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who, when reproved, submits mildly, obeys modestly, confesses humbly, and satisfies willingly.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who is not prompt to excuse himself and who humbly accepts shame and reproof for sin when he is without fault.

*Admonitions of Saint Francis*

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

For a true Franciscan this earthly life is but a time of nostalgic longing waiting for eternity. In the spirit of our Holy Father Francis he listens to the admonition of Saint Peter: "Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims (I Pet., 2, 11), and his entire life is directed toward the final goal of existence—the possession of God forever. A man whose heart is filled with yearning for home keeps his mind set on reaching home as quickly as possible and he uses every available means to insure a safe journey. He has no time to waste in idleness and delaying entanglements. Whatever may jeopardize the speed and surety of his homeward journey he shuns as a potential hindrance to eternal happiness. Thomas of Celano says of our Seraphic Father Francis: "He hastened to leave this world, this exile of wandering."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, a Franciscan must avoid the danger of wasting time in any kind of idleness, which, besides being a proximate occasion of sin, is a hindrance to his homeward journey.

He must also be watchful of how he uses his time, avoiding whatever tends to suffocate the spirit of prayer and extinguish in his soul that beautiful virtue of homesickness for eternal life, which is an aspect of hope. Hence, the next point of our examination will be:

### NEGLIGENCE IN THE USE OF TIME.

Saint Bonaventure does not intend that we ask ourselves merely whether we have wasted time, but also whether we have made good use of it, whether we have disposed of it well. Therefore we should first ask ourselves:

Did I waste time? It is true, of course, that we are usually kept so busy with the assignments given us by our superiors that we have no time to waste in downright laziness. We should be grateful that this is so because it protects us from one of the worst enemies of the soul, the vice of idleness, "the cesspool of all vices." Nevertheless it is profitable to ask ourselves whether we have worked lazily or carelessly, or in a manner that approached idleness; whether we have wasted time in taking unnecessary rest, or in idle talking, or in being busy about nothing; whether we have been too much concerned about our health, perhaps even using a real or imaginary illness to avoid assignments we do not like.

<sup>1</sup> Celano, *Vita sec.*, p. II, c. 124 (165).

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Since time is so precious we must also examine ourselves as to how efficiently we have arranged and disposed of our time. There are some people who are very busy and concerned about many things and yet seldom, if ever, accomplish anything of value. They are like children, constantly changing their interests and occupations. Our daily routine is intended to be a safeguard against this disorder, and a certain regularity even within the performance of the tasks assigned to us will be of great help. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves as to whether we perform our regular duties—negligently, or efficiently and prayerfully? Have we slipped into the habit of postponing burdensome tasks until the last minute when it is impossible to do them well? We should, however, understand that adherence to order and regularity does not mean enslavement to routine. Obedience and charity will prevent our becoming petrified by an inhuman orderliness."

We must also be careful to distinguish between waste of time and abuse of time, for it is not uncommon to find a religious using time for everything but the one thing necessary. It is certainly an abuse of time for a religious to plunge indiscriminately into activities which, however important they may seem, have nothing to do with the ultimate goal of his vocation. To be sure, whatever we do in the name of the Lord and for His greater honor and glory is good, and the time spent in such activity is well used. But to deliberately engage in worldly pursuits, or to concern ourselves with the affairs of others under the pretext of working for the glory of God, is definitely an abuse of time. We must also be careful not to become so busy that we have no time to think of God, or so distracted that our spirit of prayer is seriously impaired. And if we are obliged by obedience to engage in purely worldly occupations, we must be careful to sanctify our work by the spirit of prayer.

On the other hand, we must avoid extremes. Some religious have an erroneous conscience on this point. For example, if a religious is told by his physician or by his superior to rest or to enjoy a period of relaxation, he is definitely not wasting time by doing so. On the contrary, he is fulfilling the will of God as expressed in the Fifth Commandment, and if he sanctifies his rest and relaxation, this time of inactivity is well spent for eternity. Besides, such periods of rest can be well used for prayer or spent in the company of Christ in meditation. If we are ever disturbed about such enforced "idleness," let us ask ourselves honestly *why* we are disturbed. Is it not, perhaps, because we fear the possible uncharitable judgments of others, or because our pride has enslaved us to work? For a religious, there should be no problem at all in realizing that the time of idleness or of convalescence is a time of grace and that in virtue

of submission to the divine will and to obedience such inactivity is as labor.

There is another aspect to be considered in regard to the use of time in our relations with our fellow-religious. As Franciscans, we should respect the time of others as well as our own and avoid anything that might cause them to waste it. Accordingly, we should examine ourselves as to whether we have disturbed others by unnecessary noise, by inopportune or prolonged conversation, by intrusions, by negligence in keeping appointments. One single religious can cause the entire community a great loss of time through carelessness or consideration. To cause another to lose time is moreover a serious sin against charity.

We must also consider our neighbor from the point of view of our own time. Do we make an honest effort always to have time for others? To spend time in the service of others, in acts of genuine charity, is certainly meritorious. How often do we say to those who ask us a favor: I have no time? It may perhaps become a habit for us to refuse requests on the pretext of being busy? It is a peculiar fact that usually the very persons who have no time for others, who repeatedly complain of having too much to do, are seldom standing examples of industry. Let us remember that our Lord always has time for each and every one of us. It is really a divine virtue to have time for others.

Superiors, especially, should bear in mind that they are not wasting their time when they listen to the needs and complaints and sorrows of their subjects. The seemingly little affairs that concern them. They have the splendid example of St. Bonaventure as a guide in this. Once, after having visited one of the houses of the Order, he was followed by a certain lay-brother who had been unable to see him. Bonaventure was already outside the city when the brother finally overtook him, but the Seraphic Doctor immediately sat down by the roadside and listened kindly and patiently to his long rambling talk. After the saint had comforted the brother, his impatient companions reproached him for having wasted so much time. Bonaventure however met their reproaches by quoting the rule which says that the minister must be the servant of all.

Time is precious, but to a Franciscan it can never be precious in a purely secular sense. Time is God's gift, to be gratefully received and wisely used in our pilgrimage to our Father's home.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

Francis is twofold: it consists in prayer on the one hand, and activity on the other. Prayer takes care of the inner man; activity controls his exterior. The happy blending of the two makes for perfection, for happiness, cheerfulness and peace. This writer recently saw a Sister sitting quietly in a dispensary. She was over eighty; her sight was dim, her hands feeble; but she was still able to put pills in a bottle. And, mind you, every pill was accompanied with a prayerful ejaculation. God bless her, and God bless those who may be cured by the sanctified pills.

The fourth petal is Charity. Without it, as we all know, our whole life with its meditations, aspirations, and resolutions is in vain. Love of God and charity towards our neighbor are like two parallel lines: if either one deviates, the whole system falls to pieces. Charity must always be our last resort when things go wrong and when our daily burden weighs heavily upon us. *Propter amorem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* (for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ)—that is the bright star in the distance which illuminates the path, no matter how dark, uneven, tortuous, distressful it may be. The convent is Christ's Mystical Body in miniature. Do not expect thanks, not even from those of your own household. If you do, you may be sorely disappointed, for you have forgotten the Householder who hired you and holds the key to your eternal reward.

The fifth and last petal is the spirit of prayer; in other words, the Good Intention. It puts our whole spiritual life in a nutshell. Make your work a constant prayer. If you fail to do this you are like the farmer who had spent hours and hours loading grain on his wagon. The wagon was loaded and it was time for the market, but the horse had gone astray and could not be found in time. Perhaps we should say the donkey had gone astray, for this animal would have proven a more suitable companion for the man who, like Saint Peter, had worked all day but gained nothing. Like Saint Peter, let us say before every task and at every stroke of the clock, "Upon thy word," that is, for the honor and glory of God, I shall do this work; and you will not forfeit a great reward.

May Saint Joseph, the sweet Patron of this month, teach us the sublime and noble art of sanctifying, consecrating, and dedicating our daily work, with all its burdens, hindrances, disappointments to the glory of God and in abiding loyalty to Christ our Head and Saviour.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M. ✓

New York

## THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE

Sacred Scripture tells little of the life of Saint Joseph. Our detailed knowledge of him may be put in a few words. He was a just man, the husband of Mary, the foster-father of Christ, reputed by the people of Nazareth to be the real father of God's Son. He was a carpenter, earning his bread by the sweat of his hands. More than this we do not know. These few data however have sufficient value to build up a figure of such heroic size that its shadow has lasted over centuries. The powerful figure of Saint Joseph looms up even now with the force which ages cannot wither; and in ages yet unborn, when humanity will have to solve other problems, and face other dangers, the life of Saint Joseph will convey a lesson and a solution.

The true greatness and dignity of Saint Joseph however is not expressed in Sacred Scripture. It is not primarily because he was a just man. Saint Joseph has a glorious place in heaven next to Mary, although the expression "just man", used by Saint Matthew is a rare compliment attributing a certain degree of honor. A just man was one whose life was spotless, who conformed to all the requirements of the Law; one who could be shown to be faithful in all his works, and yet who could under the promptings of grace conform to the apparent rigidity of the Law to the graceful rhythm of mercy.

Nor does the true greatness and dignity of Joseph stem from his pre-eminence in obeying the instructions of God in any particular instances. Given that he was a just man in all that the term implies, obedience to God is to be expected. Not that his obedience is the less heroic for all that, since he was put under a mental strain scarcely less than that of his Virgin wife; but the very fact that he was a just man would occasion him to accept suffering in the spirit of penitence and to show obedience to the divine commands however obscure their realization appeared to him. Obedience with Joseph was a matter of grace and voluntary habit; it was the foundation of his sanctity just as it is the basis for the slight advance in perfection of any Christian soul.

Nor does the true greatness and dignity of Joseph owe its origin to his guardianship of Jesus and Mary. This was the sweetest task he had to do in his life and beyond doubt his realization of this duty served to increase his humility and fire his zeal to sacrifice himself for them. The very fact that he was a just man would open his eyes to the wonderful purity and grace of the Virgin Mary and urge him to expend every last bit of energy in her protection; would give him too an inkling of the character of this foster-Son of his and prompt him

to deliver Jesus from the world with the garment of his life. He had here two precious treasures consigned to him by God, he knew the divine plan as it was revealed to him, and with a deep sense of humility and zeal for the things of God he devoted his whole being to his appointed task.

The greatness and dignity of Joseph depend primarily upon this, that he was the embodiment of the authority of the Living God. In him was placed a part of the authoritative power of God the Father to give him the strength to guide the destiny of the Holy Family from Bethlehem to Cana of Galilee. Upon his shoulders was placed the cloak of command to distinguish him as the leader of that little group enshrining the majesty and glory of heaven. He was the mouthpiece of God in as certain a sense as was the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, because as father and patriarch of that family group Joseph interpreted and carried into action the commands of God whispered into his heart.

That Jesus and Mary obeyed him is a corollary to the fact of his authority, and contributes no less equally to his greatness and dignity. Jesus of course was God and Mary the spouse of the Holy Ghost; either to Jesus or to Mary could the sceptre of God's authority have been given. And Jesus the King of the universe or Mary the Seat of Wisdom could have wielded it in full accordance with the will of the Father. But the fact remains that the Son of God and his Blessed Mother respected Joseph as the head of the house and obeyed him.

Without presuming to interpret the designs of God we may venture an explanation of this paradox, that a man ruled over God by the will of God. If the first rule of heaven is order, then it may be expected that the order established on earth by God would be respected. If the idea of heaven precludes all idea of disorder, for disorder implies lack of plan, uncertainty, confusion, then we may expect that an event happening on earth, so God-directed as the Incarnation and Redemption, would be patterned upon order. If it was God's design that the Holy Family should exist as a family, then it should exist upon the plan of a family. But from the beginning a family has had a head, the father, and subordinates, the mother and children. God willed that His divine Son and His Mother should be subordinate to Joseph to preserve the order inherent in the family, to remove from men's minds any temptation to scandal. That the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us has for its answering motif that He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. Jesus became like unto us in everything except sin. He became a subject because the people He came to redeem were subjects; He became a willing subject to teach the value of obedience.

Joseph is the outstanding example in the history of the world of who had a most difficult task to do and saw it through to the end. No other ever had so heavy a burden, or succession of burdens, laid upon his shoulders. He had to overcome a serious doubt upon the testimony of God; he had to bring the Child and Mother safely through the snares set by kings; he had to bring his family through an inhospitable desert to a land of strangers and live there as an alien and separated from all that he had known and loved; he had to support his family—and well he knew the responsibility—with the labor of his hands, and endure the chagrin of not being able to conquer the world for them, and the mountainous burden, that only a just man could face.

For a just man is one who freely and completely cooperates with the will of God. This Joseph did. All his success and all his sanctity had its beginning here. Without God's grace Joseph could not have moved a finger. But God does not impose burdens without giving the help necessary to carry them. And Joseph to perform the enormous tasks set for him he needed enormous grace. This was the secret of Joseph's ability—the grace of God first of all, and his whole-hearted co-operation with it.

In addition Joseph had four outstanding virtues. The first was the virtue of obedience. No matter what the command was that God gave him, he obeyed it instantly; he made no condition, he asked for no special reward. "Do not be afraid, Joseph," said the angel, "to take to thee Mary thy wife." And Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. "Arise," said the angel, "take the Child and His Mother and flee into Egypt, and remain there till I command thee." Joseph rose by night and started on his toilsome and perilous journey. What hardship and labors and what anxiety must he have undergone in that time of exile, in his efforts to support the Child and His Mother, and to shield them from the dangers that surrounded them, until the command was given for his return—and he "arose and went into the land of Israel." Saint Joseph's life was entirely devoted to one sacred purpose; in it no thought and no desire for place but the thought and desire of obedience to God's revealed will; no selfish feeling ever for a moment obscured his love and devotion to those whom God had given him to cherish.

The second outstanding virtue of Joseph was his purity. God had given him as destiny to live under the same roof with Him Whom the angels adore, with the future Queen of Creation. The angels were created by the Father to adore and serve His Son, and that their adoration and service might be unimpeded, with self-complacency God adorned them with the armor of purity, for

...dies all self-seeking. But Joseph was destined not only to adore and serve God, but also to rule these two whom the angels obey. The purity of Joseph outweighed that of the angels for he had a more noble duty than they. Would the angels, Who had beautified the angels for obedience, have neglected to adorn Joseph for dominion? The grace of the Holy Spirit had gradually burnt out from him all remnant of sinful nature, and added to the fullness of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit a special gift whereby he could fulfill his sublime trust with more than Seraphic purity and fervor and love.

The third outstanding virtue of Joseph was his humility. A lesser man, knowing the treasures committed to his care, realizing himself the vicegerent of God the Father, considering his almost illimitable power, would have exalted himself. But Joseph was protected from the temptation of the angels by his overwhelming humility. He advised and protected Mary, and bowed before her as a servant before his queen; he taught Jesus the craft of wood-working, the gentle musing skill of the artisan, and conducted himself as subject to king. He guided the Holy Family through the perils of hate and envy, and preserved the self-effacement of a lackey in an emperor's court. The guardianship of Jesus and His Blessed Mother was a duty of unspeakable dignity. The dominion of Galilee, the kingship of Judea were as nothing to it. The great offices of Rome under the Emperor cannot be compared to it. The very rule of Caesar Augustus himself is paltry beside the domestic rule of Joseph. But who knew of Joseph, cared for Joseph? At Bethlehem he seems to have been friendless, if not unknown. Joseph stayed in Egypt, but Jews in Egypt were very numerous, and the arrival of a Jewish family would arouse no comment. Of Joseph in himself and apart from Jesus and Mary we know nothing. Even the fact that Joseph was a carpenter is known to us only from the scoffing of the Jews at Jesus. As nothing is known of him except in its bearing on our Lord, so Joseph's whole life was directed to the honor and glory of God. He was content to live retired and unknown. His ambition was to spend his life in devotion to duty, in the care of the family entrusted to him, and by so doing to serve his God.

The fourth outstanding virtue of Joseph was his love of poverty. God conferred a great gift upon him by giving him the riches of heaven instead of the riches of the world. As he was unhampered by devotion to self through his crowning virtue of unassailable purity, so he was devoid of all ties to the world by his devotion to poverty. He was the freest of men. He could go down to Bethlehem with his wife because it was God's will, and not be troubled about the safety of his worldly goods; he could arise at night and take his family into the desert without a backward glance; when the time came he could die in the

arms of his foster-Son and in the peace of God, without regrets. He had what little food and shelter his family needed or asked for in the depths of his hands; the respect of his acquaintances and his dignity, in the depths of his wisdom. He was the bread-winner of the family; Jesus and Mary depended upon his efforts. His poverty was not absolute. There was no mean squalor in connection with the Holy Family. They owned a house and had a workshop. But though the Holy Family did not lack the necessities of life, neither did it enjoy prosperity and comfort. In the sweat of his brow Joseph earned bread for those he loved.

Such was Saint Joseph, poor, hard-working, humble and retired; one whom God elected from the sons of men to guide the destinies of the Holy Family and invested with the tremendous authority of God the Father to guide the Holy Family and armed with the virtues of obedience, purity, humility, and to guard himself. Joseph it is whom God "made like the saints in glory, glorified in the sight of kings, and sanctified in his faith and meekness. He chose out of all flesh, and gave a law of life and instruction, that he might teach Jacob his covenant and Israel his judgements."

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Columban Duffy, O. S. B.*



Recreations which violate charity are recreations of hell.

*Saint Leonard of Port Maurice*



From the first day that I began to exercise the apostolic ministry, I endeavored never to say a word which was not for the honor and glory of God and to this rule I owe what I possess of knowledge, eloquence, and authority.

*St. Bernardine of Siena*

## STUDY AND THE FRANCISCAN VOCATION

### II

In a previous article we attempted to point out how, in the Franciscan life, the pursuit of learning can be made not only to harmonize with our ideal of intellectual simplicity but even to lead us to a high degree of perfection. However, a life devoted to study can be fruitful of the highest supernatural good, if we follow Saint Bonaventure also insists that to obtain this good we must first cultivate in our soul certain specific virtues and regulate our life according to certain norms. His program is neither simple nor easy. In fact, it is based on the rather disconcerting fact that much will be demanded from those who have much. But the Seraphic Doctor is an experienced guide, and to those who wish to follow he offers clear direction.

According to Saint Bonaventure, seraphic piety is of prime and basic importance to the Franciscan ideal of learning. So integral a part of his own actual life was this virtue that it may be called the fundamental characteristic of all his works. Seraphic piety, however, is by no means to be equated with the vacuous type of pietism so frequently met with in the spiritually immature. According to Bonaventure,

Piety is nothing else than filial awareness, filial love, and filial submissiveness to the condescending, first, and highest Origin. Without piety it is impossible either to possess or to contemplate the Highest Good. All things in nature tend to return to their sources—stones fall to earth, fire rises, rivers run to the sea. A rational creature is made to the image of God, and able to return to the source of his being through memory, intellect, and will; nor is he pious unless he does return to this source.<sup>1</sup>

Franciscan piety, then, is filial reverence toward God, not simply an intellectual acknowledgement of the Divine Being, but a deep, reverential, and personal love of a child for its father. It is a kind of sense of the greatness of God, an awareness of the fact that He is infinitely good and infinitely desirable, and the Franciscan act of religion.

The practice of piety necessarily demands sanctity of life. To this end Saint Bonaventure proposes a two-fold discipline, scholastic and monastic; in other

<sup>1</sup> *donis Sp. S., III, 5.*



words, instruction of the intellect and formation of the moral character are necessary for the full development of the scholar because both are necessary for the comprehension of truth. Mental activity alone will never give a man wisdom, much less will it lead him to God. "For this reason," says Bonaventure, "the psalmist prays, *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge*. We cannot have knowledge unless we first have discipline; and we cannot have discipline unless we have goodness. Thus through goodness and discipline we come to the possession of true knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

To achieve this two-fold discipline of mind and moral character Bonaventure requires that we live a life of holy fear of God (*vita timorata*), a life of pure intention (*vita impolluta*), a life of religion (*vita religiosa*), and a life of edifying to others (*vita aedificatoria proximi*). To live in holy fear means to develop an attitude of deep reverence toward God and all His works. "It is the life of holy fear," explains Bonaventure, "that in whatever a man is engaged he always fears, whether going to Mass or to meals, whether standing or walking, for in all things it is possible to sin . . . Fear is the best sign; boldness is the worst; for the bold man can never be corrected." To live a pure life means to act only through pure motives. This requires a man "to do all things for love of God, not for love of anything else; because all love is suspect except love of God." In this restricted sense, to live a religious life means to live a life of mortification. The intellect becomes clearer as the sensual appetites are restrained and the mind becomes better disposed for contemplation as the tongue is kept in check. "Our life," says Bonaventure, "ought to be given to tears, not to tears of pain. To live a life edifying to others demands that a man be always ready to edify in the root sense of "build up" or "form"—those with whom he comes in contact, and to avoid whatever could tear down or cause scandal or bring upon him the censure of others."<sup>3</sup>

The spirit of piety further requires that intellectual activity be closely integrated with the spirit of prayer to which, for a Franciscan, all things must be subservient. It has been said that Bonaventure made prayer a propaedeutic of philosophic understanding, and it has also been said that he transformed every truth he comprehended into prayer. This quality of prayerful intellectual activity is common to all our great Franciscan scholars. It is the means through which they achieved not only profound learning but also and especially signal holiness of life.

<sup>2</sup> *Hexaemeron*, II, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Hexaemeron* XIX, 20.

Meekness in the pursuit of studies is still another requirement of the spirit of piety. The Seraphic Doctor defines this beautiful virtue, which he calls *metudo tractabilitatis*, as willingness to learn the truth without disputatiousness or offensive indulgence in argument for the satisfaction of exhibiting one's ability. "When the water is quiet," says Bonaventure, "a man sees his face clearly reflected; but when the water is rough nothing is reflected. Thus when a man is angry he cannot see truth. Contention impedes knowledge in himself and in others. An angry man may even stubbornly defend error."<sup>4</sup> Bonaventure does not mean to imply that truth may not be defended by argument, but it must not be defended in harshness or ill-will.

From the Franciscan scholar who is also a teacher the spirit of piety will demand the special virtue of fraternal benevolence. According to Bonaventure no man may presume to be a teacher of Sacred Scripture unless he be anointed with divine grace, grounded in pure obedience, and inflamed with fraternal charity. Since few of us would presume to be teachers of Scripture in the technical sense, we need not be unduly concerned about the first two qualities; but the third, fraternal charity, is essential to the Franciscan ideal itself. Bonaventure, following the Platonic and Pauline thought of education as a generative process, explains that to educate or edify (build up) is to develop the human personality; but this can be done only through love.

The teacher ought to be inflamed with fraternal benevolence . . . and this according to the example of Saint Paul who said of himself in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians: We became as little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her own children; so desirous of you with love that we would gladly impart unto you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls. For just as carnal offspring are begotten only through carnal love, so spiritual offspring are begotten only through spiritual benevolence.<sup>5</sup>

The teacher who has but intellect and will to manifest to his students is far removed from the Franciscan ideal of teaching through love; nor can he hope that his educational achievements, however brilliant and loudly applauded, will lead him to union with God.

Thus the spirit of seraphic piety is seen as the vivifying and sanctifying principle underlying all our intellectual activity. Piety is to inform our mind and

<sup>4</sup> *De donis Sp. S.*, VIII, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *In Lucam prooem.* 5.

our moral character and lead us to love our Creator in every manifestation of His infinite perfection. The life of study, if directed toward God through Himself, produces great benefits for the soul. A mind habitually disposed to recognize and embrace truth wherever it may be found will the more easily obtain true knowledge of self, and consequently true humility. A mind habitually seeking clarity of vision will the more eagerly strive for control of the passions which darken vision. A mind habitually concentrated on problems to be solved, on truths to be grasped, will the more firmly discipline the imagination and the memory. Desire for wisdom itself is a fruit of learning, and it directs all learning to God, Who is wholly desirable.<sup>6</sup>

At best, however, a life devoted to study is not easy. It is a life lived almost constant tension, and usually under difficulties of a nature rarely understood by others. Saint Bonaventure knew this quite well from his own personal experience. He lived in an age whose passion for learning has never been equalled. During his years of study at Paris, the great university was the scene of violent intellectual strife and rancor and the halls rang with the arguments of opposing schools of thought. In all this Bonaventure took a leading part until jealousy forced the temporary retirement of the Mendicants from the university. Elected minister general, he was faced not only with the discord of rival factions, but also with the opposition of many of the most faithful sons of Francis who felt that higher studies had no place in the Order of Friars Minor. "Our ship leaks and must sink," cried Giles, whom Bonaventure loved and admired, "let him flee who can leave Paris, thou ruinst Saint Francis' Order!"<sup>7</sup> Bonaventure, however, proved by his own life that learning was not destructive of the spirit of our Seraphic Father. When he left the lecture halls of Mount Genevieve for the seclusion of Alverna, the brilliant young Master of Paris did not unlearn his vast store of found learning. He brought it with him to the very place where Francis had once plunged into the mystery of the Crucifixion. There he came to understand that all human knowledge can be put to the service of the highest prayer, to the mystical rapture granted to the Seraphic Francis. And there he wrote his book on the pilgrimage of the mind to God. In this beautiful little book, *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, he has left us a guide to help us employ the truth we have acquired in a way that can lead us to the height of mystical union. It is a guide to the Franciscan way of transforming knowledge into wisdom. Bonaventure assures us that there is no science which cannot bring us

<sup>6</sup> *Hexameron* XIX, 24-27.

<sup>7</sup> *Anal. Franc.*, III.

in admiration and praise and exultation. Even metaphysics, the most abstract of all sciences, appears shortly before the soul takes its plunge into the mystery of the Trinity.

Before this can be affected, however, the tension between the Franciscan ideal of union in its fullest perfection and the taxing demands of the intellectual life must be absorbed by a synthesis of these two opposite strivings. The Seraphic Father describes this synthesis at the beginning of the *Itinerarium*. All intellectual activity must be preceded by prayer to Christ Crucified, through Whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of our vices. Then, let there be

No reading without unction,  
No speculating without reverence,  
No investigating without wonder,  
No observing without rejoicing,  
No zeal without submitting,  
No erudition without love,  
No understanding without humility,  
No aspiring apart from divine grace,  
No discernment apart from God-inspired wisdom.

This is the program Saint Bonaventure offers to those who wish to sanctify their life and make fruitful for eternity their life of study. That the plan is eminently practical, we know from the life of Bonaventure himself. That it is exceedingly difficult, we have but to try it to find out.

St. Francis, N. J.

Sr. Frances Laughlin, S. M. I. C. ✓



A tiny grain of love of God will make you find a thousand ways in which to sanctify yourself.

Saint Leonard of Port Maurice

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

As religious we are consecrated to God. When we pronounced our solemn and public declaration that we were thereafter to be considered the exclusive property of the Lord, that we belonged to ourselves no longer nor to any human creature. Thus our whole life took on a new direction toward God. Our entire physical and spiritual existence was to become a prayer, an act of worship offered to the God in Whom we live and move and have our being. This was to be our consecration, our holy vocation; and this objectively, what is meant by the term, "good intention".

It is our daily task to keep alive the flame of our consecration and to avoid anything that might cause it to burn less brightly. We must shun everything that might alter or shift the direction of our life away from God, everything that might cause us to act for reasons not ultimately related to His glory. To be consistently negligent in the things of God would mean that our consecration has become void and meaningless; it would mean that our whole spiritual life is disintegrating. With good reason, then, Saint Bonaventure urges us to ask, *I negligent about acting with the right intention?* In other words (and Saint Bonaventure himself clarifies the question) was I on my guard against acting out of impure motives? For we should not aim at the practically impossible of trying to elicit a proper act of good intention at every moment and before every trivial action. It is sufficient to have an habitual good intention; and this means simply to have the interior disposition or inclination to do everything for love of God, for His honor and glory, and for the salvation of our own soul and the souls of others. We must bear in mind also that having the right intention necessarily demands rejecting every contrary motive. In fact, it is toward the more negative aspect of acting through bad or imperfect motives that our attention should be concentrated.

Let us first ask ourselves the broad general question: why are we religious? Am I habitually conscious, for example, that I am a person whose whole life is consecrated to God, and that the purpose of my life is to devote myself entirely to God? Can I give a clear and unequivocal answer to the question: why am I a religious? Why am I living in a religious house? Am I really here because I love God and wish to render Him perfect love-service, because I wish to sanctify my soul through the perfect fulfilment of my religious vows? Or do I, perhaps, confess to other motives? Am I resigned to being a religious simply because I do not know what else I could be? Do I remain a religious out of fear of hurting those who love me and believe in me, or because I fear the censure

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Since Holy Week usually falls within the Month of April, and in the middle of this blessed week, namely, on Holy Thursday, our Divine Saviour instituted the Sacrament of His Love, therefore this Month is properly dedicated to the Holy Eucharist. No Christian heart will ever feel that this dedication detracts in any way from the significance of the other sacred events that occurred during the first Holy Week. Far from it. Somehow the Last Supper assembles all the wonderful things that Jesus did, all the beautiful words He spoke, and all the bitter pains He suffered from Palm Sunday to Easter Morn. They were stormy and dreadful and heart-rending days, but when the storm was over and the Tragedy of Calvary was history a period of peaceful serenity set in, a serenity that is with us to this day, and its source is the hushed silence of the Sanctuary: *Behold, I am with you all days* (Matt. 28, 20). The Holy Grail is a fascinating story of lovers of art and poetry; to the Christian and especially to Virgins consecrated to the Divine Spouse it is a perennial source of spiritual beauty, strength and love.

To the sons and daughters of Saint Francis the Holy Eucharist was a cherished theme in the very cradle songs of the Order. Saint Francis dwells on this mystery lovingly in both his Rule and his Testament. With up-lifted arms he would daily attend the Holy Sacrifice; on his shoulders he carried stones and boards to rebuild chapels and churches; with his hands he baked the hosts for the altar. Saint Clare fled the world to live with her Eucharistic Lord under the same roof; and boldly she threw back the Saracen with the ciborium in her hands. No wonder the See of Peter singled out a simple lay brother from our ranks to be the Patron of all Eucharistic leagues and societies—Saint Paschal Baylon who, it is narrated, reverently opened his eyes in his coffin when the Sacred Host was raised at the Consecration during his funeral Mass.

In this conference let us concentrate on the Sacrament of Love which our Saviour bequeathed to us on the first Holy Thursday. The memory of this day brings us face to face with the farewell banquet, the Last Supper of Jesus and His friends. The Upper Room where it took place was in an unadorned, gray-walled building which stood where Mount Sion gently slopes to the south into the gruesome Valley of Hinnom. To the north lies the Holy City. Tonight it is astir with commotion, for this is the preparation of Israel's greatest festival. The gates are crowded and in the narrow streets and

on the housetops the foreign accents of pilgrims mingle with the vendors and innkeepers. Only the holy temple in the north-west is wrapped in solemn silence. Somehow the serenity of this majestic edifice seems dimmed. Is it because of the noise of the motley multitude that surges up from the Mount of Olives, or is it because there still hovers in the heavy air a hushed echo of the words that fell from the Saviour's lips, a few days before when He wept over the city and said: *If thou hadst known, in this thy day, even thou, the things that are for thy peace* (Luke 19, 42)? Instinctively our eyes turn aside to the Mount of Olives at whose base the venerable olive trees in Gethsemane seem to blend their crowned heads, as if sorrowing over some great impending calamity.

Meanwhile the Apostles who reclined around the table in the Upper Room were oblivious to all this. Their minds and eyes were riveted upon the sad but loving countenance of their Master. There was high tension all around them. They knew that something momentous was at hand, but as yet "they understood none of these things." At last the Master broke the painful silence, slowly and feelingly He said: *With great longing have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer* (Luke 22, 15). Human language is a weak instrument when it carries the thought of God. And we doubt if any of the Apostles, except perhaps the Disciple whom Jesus loved and who reclined at His breast, fully realized that the longing of which the Master spoke had reached far back into the dark corridors of eternity, into the fathomless depths of the heart of God. That ineffable longing now at last found an outlet on this first Holy Thursday night. But perhaps the Apostles did sense, and Judas could not escape the mysterious impact, that at this moment the atmosphere of the Upper Room was charged with all the love that He holds.

Not without good reason did our fore-fathers call this sacred Maunday Thursday. For Maundy is derived from the Latin word *mandatum* which means a mandate, a command. *A new commandment I give you*, the Saviour had said only a while ago, *that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another* (John 13, 34). And again, *By this shall all men know that you are My Disciples, if you have love one for another* (John 13, 35).

It is this commandment of love that gives to Holy Thursday a unique position in the entire Ecclesiastical Year. True, it does not share the entrance

of Christmas Night, nor the jubilant Alleluias of Easter morning, nor the rousing wonders of the Feast of Pentecost. Rather, there is a hallowed solemnity about this day, a subdued joyfulness that hides away in the heart's recesses and dares not manifest itself, because a dear Friend bids us farewell, because this is Holy Week, and Holy Week means suffering, ignominy and a bitter death on Calvary.

Holy Thursday is the confluence of all the great rivers of God's love for man. It is the central point in God's own tapestry, where all the thousand threads that His love has woven meet together and write "finis" to the mystery that wafts to us from the everlasting hills: *My delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8, 31). But what mortal pen can describe for us the mystery of love divine? Let me ask you to watch our solar system in the heavens and see how the Almighty by the law of gravity makes all the planets gravitate towards the center. What the law of gravity is to the universe that is the law of love in the realm of the spirit. Again, observe your own body and see how your blood streams through the entire vascular system and courses back again to the heart. The heart in the spiritual kingdom of the Saviour is His infinite love for men. But tonight He reposes all this love in the Holy Eucharist, Which from now on functions as the Heart of His Mystical Body, for it is from the Tabernacle that His graces are continually diffused through the seven arteries of our Sacraments to every part and every branch of the living Vine that is Christ.

Holy Thursday—a day of mystery! It blends the mystery of divine love with the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. And, as the former baffles us by its immensity, even so the latter startles us by its simplicity. But such is the way of God. He teaches us great things in a simple way, lest the magnitude of the divine crush the frail intelligence of man. The mystery of Bread and Wine mirrors the mystery of divine love, but only he who looks into that mirror with simple faith may hope to comprehend, with the Great Saint Paul and *with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge* (Eph. 3, 18-19). It is hard to look straight at the midday sun for its effulgence blinds the naked eye. But let the solar orb reflect into a tiny glass of water and you can admire with ease its brightness, beauty and splendor.

But why is it, sternly asks Saint Paul in his Epistle, that *many among you are infirm and weak, and many sleep* (I Cor. 11, 30)? Is it the weakness of

doubt, or the sleep of indifference? Tell me: is man's life doomed to doubting and searching and shifting about? Is there no solid ground for his feet? No steady staff for his hands? Must every new fancy of some philosopher, every little atom that our scientists discover, make him change his whole philosophy of life every time he picks up the morning paper? Blessed is he, the Master warns, *who is not scandalized in Me* (Luke 7:33).

And shall we be scandalized because the Infinite God dwells in a host and in a few drops of wine? Why then are we not scandalized when He makes the wheat grow in our fields and the vine in our vineyards? Why are we not scandalized when we see that out of a little seed there grows forth the lordly oak tree; or that on some distant hill-side a groove as small as the palm of the hand there issues forth a spring which soon expands into a mighty river whose waves playfully balance the steamers as if they were nut-shells and threaten fortresses and cities on its shores; or that a pebble loosened by a little bird on an alpine peak rolls down through the snow and in seconds becomes a crashing avalanche which buries forests and valleys and the habitations of men, leaving only desolation in its track?

Poor little man, when will he learn to understand? When will he learn to be humble and small that he may grasp the things that are really great? Will he ever understand the prayer that was spoken by the Greatest of all? Who said: *I praise Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to the little ones* (Luke 10, 21).

At a time such as this, when all earthly greatness, when our scientific and educational heritage, are in jeopardy, it is well for us to be numbered among the "these little ones." It is well for us that we have clung to the little cenacle on the venerable Mount Zion. It is well for us that we have fallen heirs to the Master's words of that first Holy Thursday night: *Do this in remembrance of Me* (Luke 22, 19); for this command has proven the key to all "the glory and the wealth" in Our Father's house (Ps. 111, 3). It has proven the strength of our martyrs, virgins and confessors; the learning of our Fathers and Doctors; the inspiration of our glorious liturgy, which called into service the sciences, the Fine Arts and the entire galaxy of their immortal masters.

In that Upper Room the Catholic Priesthood was born, and be it so that it may live to the eternal credit of the priests of the Church that for these nineteen hundred

years they have guarded our sanctuaries and with adamant fortitude defended the original literal sense, which is the only true sense, of the Master's words: *This is My Body; this is My Blood*.

If Christianity has failed, it is because it has forsaken this "vein of living water" (Jer. 17, 13); it has rejected "this chalice of benediction" into which the Saviour had poured all the love that filled His Sacred Heart.

Was He mocking when He said on that sacred, solemn night: *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another*? Was that legacy just another scrap of paper, or was He not rather thinking in terms of a universal peace when He bequeathed to this dissolute world at least one outward sign and symbol of mutual love and peace and unity?

Did not the two disciples in the village of Emmaus on the very night of the Resurrection recognize their Risen Master "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24, 30-31)? Did not the Fathers who stood by the cradle of the Church impart to her the name of the Holy Eucharist when they fondly called her the *agápe*, which is "the bond or union of love"? For as the grains of wheat, so they explained, are gathered from the fields of the earth; as the grapes are gathered from our vineyards, to be assembled into this sacred Bread and this chalice, even so are we who daily partake of this banquet to be united in an intimate bond of love.

The gift of Holy Thursday to the world is the gift of love. Need we wonder then that "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof" the priests of our Church offer up every morning this "clean oblation," and that our Catholic people throughout the world hasten from their homes and workshops to receive this Bread of Angels? May this Sacred Host of love prove a bond of peace among all men of good will amid this terrific world struggle with all the hatred and jealousy and greed that go with it. Every word in that ancient Book on our altars, the Holy Missal, breathes forth the love of God and peace among men. It was Saint Gregory the Great who with his own hand inserted the prayer, *Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris*: grant peace, O Lord, in our days. The world was in turmoil then even as it is now. It is the eternal prayer of peace, the prayer of this sacrifice of love. It shall also be our prayer on this Holy Thursday and throughout the month of April.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.

## THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SOUL

(The De Regimine Animae of Saint Bonaventure)

ways of  
soul  
1. First of all, soul of mine, you should in your need have the most devoted and hallowed awareness of the God of all goodness by believing a firm faith, meditating with a fixed mind and considering Him wonder with the piercing insight of reason.

2. You will have this most lofty awareness of the God of all goodness going forth from yourself and returning within yourself and mounting yourself, you believe, wonder at and laud with a faithful, devoted and divine intuition! His unmeasured power in creating all things from nothing, maintaining them in existence, His infinite wisdom in directing and ordering all things, His boundless justice in judging, and requiting all things; then may truly sing that prophetic song: *The daughters of Juda rejoice because of thy judgments, O Lord, for thou art the most high Lord over all the earth: thou art exalted exceedingly above all gods* (Ps. 96, 8). You will have this awareness of the God of all goodness, if you marvel at, embrace and glorify His boundless mercy: His supremely gracious mercy in assuming our humanity, His supremely pitying mercy in enduring the cross and death, His supremely bountiful mercy in giving the Holy Spirit and instituting the Sacraments, since He most freely gives Himself in the Sacrament of the altar; you may sincerely sing this psalm: *The Lord is sweet to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works* (Ps. 144, 9). You will have the most hallowed awareness of the God of all goodness, if you heed, wonder at and laud His ineffable sanctity and chant with the Seraphim, *Holy, Holy, Holy* (Is. 6, 4). For He is *Holy* because He has sanctity in Himself so exquisitely and purely that He cannot possibly will or approve anything unless it is holy; secondly, He is *Holy* because He loves sanctity so perfectly in others that He cannot possibly withhold the gifts of grace from those who preserve true sanctity or deny them the rewards of glory; thirdly, He is *Holy* because He detests sanctity's opposites bitterly that He cannot possibly refrain from detesting sins or leaving them unpunished. But if you are aware of Him in this way, you will sing with the giver of laws: *God, faithful and unerring, God, holy and just!* (Deut. 32,

<sup>1</sup> As distinguished from intuition. Contuition is the knowledge of His invisible attributes which are clearly seen—His everlasting power also and divinity—being understood through the things that are made (Ro. 1, 20)

After this, turn your eyes to the law of God, that commands you to show the Highest a humble heart, the All-Merciful a devoted undefiled heart. You should show the All-Highest a humble heart through reverence in mind, through obedience in act, through honor in word and deed, that in accordance with the Apostolic rule and teaching *you may do all things in the glory of God* (I Cor. 10, 31). You should show the All-Merciful a devoted heart through the persistence of fervent prayers, through the tasting of spiritual sweetness, through the co-operating with manifold graces, so that your *continually goes up by the desert road towards God, erect as a column of smoke, all myrrh and incense* (Cant. 3, 6). You should show the All-Highest a undefiled heart, so that in you may reign no shoddy acclaim for earthly pleasure, neither in your senses nor in your consent, nor in your affections, no relish for earthly coveting, no love for interior diseases, so that, free of every stain of sin, you will be able to sing with the psalmist, *jealously let my heart observe thy bidding; let me not hope in vain* (Ps. 118, 80).

Give heed then in earnest and see if you have observed all these things from your youth. But if you should find it so in your conscience, lay it not to yourself but to the gift of God, and give thanks to Him. But if you should find that once or many times in one of these counsels or in many, or perchance in all, you have failed seriously or lightly, through weakness or through ignorance or with sure knowledge, then *with unutterable groanings* labor to be reconciled to God and take upon yourself the spirit of truth to show Him yourself cleansed, so that you can in truth sing this psalm with the penitent: *See, I bow before the lash, ever mindful of my wretchedness* (Ps. 37, 18).

Now soul-sorrow should have two companions in order to be cleansing for the soul and reconciling to God; these two attendants are fear of the divine judgment and the impatience of interior yearning, so that you may recover the humble heart by fearing, the devoted heart by yearning, the undefiled heart by grieving. Fear the divine judgments, which are a great *deep* (Ps. 35, 7). Fear, insist, mightily, lest perchance howsoever you may be repentant none the less you may even then be displeasing to God; fear more mightily, lest even afterwards you offend God once more; fear still more mightily, lest in the end you withdraw from God and forever lack the light, forever burn in fire, never to be free of the worm unless through true repentance you depart in final grace; then you may sing with the Prophet: *Overcome my whole being with the fear of thee; I am adread of thy judgments* (Ps. 118, 120).

6. And yet again, grieve and be troubled for sins committed. Grieve mightily for the destruction of every good divinely given you; grieve more mightily your assault upon Christ Who was born and crucified for you; grieve still mightily for your contempt of God, Whose laws you have dishonored in transgression, Whose truth you have denied, Whose goodness you have offended and Whose entire creation you have disgraced, disfigured, deflected, who opposing the divine law, decrees, judgments and all the creatures God for your service you have prostituted their natures, desecrated the Scriptures, fanned the judgments, abused the mercies and wasted the gratuitous gifts the promised rewards. After considering these things well, *as for an only make loud lament; day and night let thy tears stream down; never rest and never let that eye weary of its task* (Jer. 6, 26; Lamen. 2, 18).

7. *Desire for* None the less <sup>DESIRE</sup> strive for the divine gifts, mounting by the flame of divine love to God, Who so patiently endures you, the sinner, so long has awaited you, so mercifully has guided you back to repentance, by conceding you forbearance, infusing grace in you, promising you the crown; strive indeed for the divine gifts, provided however you pay back to Him—or rather receive from Him when you return to Him—the sacrifice of a broken spirit, a heart that is humbled, contrite (Ps. 50, 19) through bitter compunction, a true confession, a full satisfaction. <sup>DESIRE</sup> Strive, I repeat, mightily for acceptance by God through the abundant indwelling of the Holy Spirit, strive more mightily for conformity to God through the deliberate imitation of the Crucified Christ, strive still more mightily for understanding of God through an unclouded vision of the Eternal Father, so that in very truth you may sing with the prophet: *My soul thirsts for God, the strong, the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. 41, 3).

8. Furthermore, in order to preserve in your inmost self this spirit of sorrow and yearning, train your outer self in modesty in all things, in justice in all things, in piety in all things, so that according to the teaching of the Apostle, *rejecting ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live temperately, justly and piously in this world* (Tit. 2, 12). Train yourself in modesty in all things that according to the teaching of the Apostle *your moderation may be known to all men* (Phil. 4, 5). Train yourself in the moderation of frugality in food and dress, in sleeping and vigils, in resting and working, that you may be prodigal in nothing. Train yourself in the moderation of discipline through the wise observance of silence and speaking, of sadness and joy, of meekness and severity, according as the opportunity demands and right reason prompts. Train yourself in the modesty of repute through the regulating, ordering

adjusting of acts, movements, postures, dress and attire, members and senses, according as moral goodness and regular observance demands, so that you may fittingly be of that number to whom the Apostle speaks: *Let all things in you be done properly and in order* (I Cor. 14, 40).

Train yourself also in justice that this teaching may truly be applied to you: *Take thy crown, in the name of faithfulness, and mercy, and justice; thy own wonderful deeds shall be thy passport* (Ps. 44, 5). Train yourself in the whole of justice through a zeal for the divine honor, through obedience to the divine law, through desire for the salvation of your brother. Train yourself in an ordered justice through obedience to superiors, through sociability to equals, through correction to inferiors. Train yourself in perfect justice so that you assent to every truth, promote goodness, oppose evil in the mind as well as in word and deed, doing nothing to anyone that you do not wish to be done to yourself, denying nothing to anyone that you wish to be bestowed upon yourself; do these things so that you may be the perfect imitator of those to whom it is said that *unless your justice exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5, 20.).

Finally, train yourself in piety, because, as the Apostle says, *piety is profitable in all respects, since it has the promise of the present life, as well as of that which is to come* (I Tim. 4, 8). Train yourself in the piety of divine worship by discharging the canonical hours attentively, devoutly and reverently, by confessing and grieving for your daily sins, by receiving the Eucharistic Sacrament at the stated times, and by hearing Mass every day. Train yourself in the piety of salvation of souls, now by helping them through frequent prayers, now through oral teaching, now through the stimulus of example, so that *he who hears may say: come* (Apo. 22, 17). This should be done wisely in such a way that you do not incur the expense of your own salvation. Train yourself in the piety of relieving bodily need by patient ministration, friendly consolation, humble, cheerful and compassionate assistance, so that you may fulfill the divine law of which the Apostle speaks: *Bear the burdens of one another's failings; then you will be fulfilling the law of Christ* (Gal. 6, 2.).

I believe that the remembrance of the Crucified has above all the greatest power to accomplish all these things; then let your Beloved like a cluster of myrrh abide always between the breasts of thy soul (Cant. 1, 12). This may He deign to bestow upon thee, Who is blessed forever and ever. Amen.

## SAINT BENEDICT THE MOOR

The catholicity of the Church has been evident in all ages and among all people. The command of Christ to His Apostles, "Going forth teach all nations," has echoed and reechoed down the centuries throughout all lands. It is Divine Wisdom saying that Heaven is for all men—all men, whether they be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, black or white. The year 1807 gave tangible proof of the position of Christ's Church on the race question, for in that year Pope Pius VII amid the splendors of Saint Peter's announced to the whole world that one of its "little" ones is a saint. One whom the world considered "little" became "great" in the eyes of God. It was the canonization of a poor, unlearned, colored Franciscan lay brother, Saint Benedict the Moor. Here was the proof that sanctity knows no color line; that sanctity transcends worldly knowledge and that sanctity ignores riches. Class distinction, learning, wealth and all natural endowments melt in the brilliant sun of sanctity. Simply because an unlearned, colored man realized the truth that sanctity proves God's grace and made cooperation in that grace, we today can proudly boast of another Franciscan Saint. Because sanctity is what really counts, we can mention in the same breath with the eloquent and learned Doctors of the Church, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Anthony, the name of a simple and unlettered Saint Benedict the Moor.

The holy Negro, as Saint Benedict the Moor is often called, was born a slave on a farm in San Filadelfo, Sicily, in the year 1524. From a worldly viewpoint it would appear that Benedict had no glorious future in store for him. His parents certainly did not live as man and wife until their owner, Vincenzo Manasseri, promised that their first born would be free. Divine Providence was already at work for Benedict was to be slave of no one save God. Christopher and Diana, his parents, were deeply pious and Benedict was early instructed in the fundamental truths of the Faith. These truths were not only learned but also lived by the holy Negro. Benedict's industry in the field won for him a special friendship with the owner of the farm, who held him up as a model for the other workmen and slaves. This fact in addition to his black skin and evident holiness was to prove a trial to Benedict—a trial well borne and rewarded.

One day, Jerome Lanza, who had given up considerable wealth to lead the life of a hermit, happened upon Benedict and his fellow workers. As usual

## SAINT BENEDICT THE MOOR

11

Benedict was the butt for the derision of the others. As the taunts mounted the bronze Benedict merely smiled. Jerome was immediately impressed with the youth's patience, and turning to the mockers said, "You joke now with this big fellow but in a few years you will hear of his fame." And to Manasseri, the owner of the farm, he continued, "I recommend this young Benedict to you because he will join me and will become a religious". These words rang in Benedict's ears for he, as well as all the hearers, respected Jerome because of his reputation for sanctity.

The seed of Benedict's vocation had been planted. Who will ever know the thoughts of young Benedict as he trudged home to the humble hut of his parents that evening? Who will ever fully realize the prayer and meditation that nourished the divine seed of vocation? Jerome had uttered his prophecy and it was not too long before he was to see its fulfillment. It was only a few days later that Benedict took leave of all that was his. Having sold his pair of oxen and bid farewell to his parents, Benedict departed for Saint Dominica's to become a hermit in the community which Jerome Lanza had founded. This community of hermits obtained the permission of Pope Julius III to follow the Rule of Saint Francis to the letter and was allowed to take a fourth vow of perpetual Lenten fast. At the time that Saint Benedict entered, it was considered the strictest community in the Church. The austerity of the life seemed to agree with Benedict and he made great strides in sanctity. It was not long before the young novice was an exemplar for the rest of the small community. His confreres recognized his sanctity and looked upon him as an angel. After five years the youthful Negro took his solemn vows as a Franciscan hermit. It was then that the peace of the hermitage was interrupted; for through Benedict's intercession several miracles were performed. It was then a matter of time before the days of prayers and nights of meditation of the hermitage were disturbed by throngs of people seeking the good Saint's advice and help. The hermits were forced to move on in hopes of once again finding a solitude in which they could follow the original schedule of their life. Since they had practically no personal property, moving merely meant finding a new secluded location with some caves. Two by two the hermits filed from Saint Dominica's to Pineda, another solitary place. But here too, they were besieged by many visitors; some coming out of curiosity, others for help. Another location atop a bleak inaccessible mountain called Mancusa was decided upon. Because this locale was fifteen miles from Palermo and near the town of Carini the hermits felt assured that their mountain



top abode would bring them the solitude they required for their form of life. One day, however, Benedict was sent by Jerome on an errand to Carini. On his way he was approached by a woman of the town who pleaded with him to help her in her affliction. For years she had suffered from cancer which the doctors had declared incurable. At her request Benedict made the sign of the cross over her and she was instantly cured. There was nothing left to do but move on again! This time the small band of hermits moved to Mount Pellegrino, thirteen miles from Palermo. It was here that Jerome Lanza died and the task of superintending the community fell upon Benedict. Even though no one desired the retired life more than Benedict he could never find the heart to refuse those who sought him. His broad smile and kind word of consolation assured the poor and the afflicted that they were welcome for he realized that in helping them he was doing God's will.

In 1562, after having spent 17 years in rigorous penances and mortification as a hermit, Benedict obediently complied with the order of Pope Pius IV that the hermits join an approved Order of the Church and abandon the solitary life. His first thoughts were to do God's will and to ask the Blessed Mother's assistance. For this purpose he retired to the cathedral church of Palermo to pray. It was here, kneeling before a statue of the Blessed Virgin, that he was told by her to join the Reformed Franciscans. Thanking God and His Blessed Mother for this assistance Benedict set out for the Convent of Saint Mary of Jesus outside the city of Palermo.

The friars received him with open arms for they realized that with such a holy person as a member of their community God would surely bless their work. The first three years as a member of the Reformed Friars Benedict passed in the Convent of Saint Anna of Guiliana, a house of solitude and recollection. Here his life was a hidden one of penance. He was then called by his superior to the Convent of Saint Mary of Jesus where he was to spend the remainder of his life. The next twenty-four years found him serving in turn as cook, Guardian, Vicar, and Assistant Master of Novices. Of all the offices, Saint Benedict preferred that of cook and after serving his term as Guardian requested to be returned to the kitchen. Throughout the years in religion Benedict perfected himself in all the virtues.

At his profession Benedict nailed himself to the cross by means of the three holy vows. Into his right hand the golden nail of poverty was driven to make

him truly poor; into his left hand the crystal nail of chastity was forced to give up his entire body to God; into his feet the silver nail of obedience was pressed in order to return his will to God. The years he spent on the cross of religion saw those nails sinking ever deeper into his flesh so that by the time he was to be taken down from this cross at death, to rise gloriously to his place in Heaven, the nails had been completely driven in. In the meantime his heart had been pierced with love—the greatest wound of all. He had made the great sacrifice of a perfect religious and was now to receive the perfect reward.

True to his Franciscan heritage, Saint Benedict had a profound love for the virtue of poverty. It was his conscientious observance of poverty that made him truly a Franciscan. An incident which occurred while he was cook in the convent is worth relating. It was the custom of the convent that the clerics help with the dishes. The young clerics were chiefly concerned with getting the task finished as quickly as possible. In their haste they very often disregarded the morsels of food left on the plates and washed them off. To see this pained Benedict. He constantly reminded them not to throw the wastes away, for every scrap was the blood of those who had given the food to the friars on the quest. Many of the clerics were amused at what they considered a pious fancy and continued their practice. One day Benedict gathered them around the sink into which they had thrown the morsels and carefully gathered all the scraps into his work-worn hands. Gently he squeezed what he had gathered up and slow drops of blood trickled forth from the scraps! God had manifested His pleasure at Benedict's high regard for poverty!

Poverty made Saint Benedict truly happy. After working hard about the monastery during the day, in the evening he would slowly make his way to his cell. Here too was poverty. A sack of straw served as his bed and the only other furnishing in his room was a cross drawn on the wall in chalk. This was what Benedict often referred to as his *palazzo*. It was in this palace where Benedict, the humble Negro brother, conversed with God. It was here that Benedict recaptured the treasure of poverty that his father, Saint Francis, had discovered, for he found the poverty of the cross—a cross which he happily clung to all the days of his life.

The really poor man trusts in Divine Providence. On one occasion Benedict and three other friars were travelling to Girgenti and as usual relied on

Divine Providence to supply their needs while on the journey. After walking day the friars were exhausted and hungry. With little hope of food to still pangs of hunger the friars asked Benedict what they should do. Benedict smiled and told them to trust in God. At that moment a man on horseback approached the small group and proved to be a ministering angel in the person of Vito Polizzi. Noticing that the friars were weak and tired he offered biscuits and wine which they thankfully accepted. When they had eaten, he returned what little remained to Vito, who put them in a bag and continued his journey. When it came time for Vito to refresh himself he had little more than the scanty remains of the friars' repast. With a shrug of his shoulders, translated "It's better than nothing", Vito opened the bag and was amazed to find that instead of the few mere biscuits he had put there after the friars had eaten, it contained the full amount he had packed early that morning.

Although he loved the golden nail of poverty, Saint Benedict treated the crystal nail of chastity to such a degree that some were wont to call him scrupulous or prudish. Benedict always had a ready answer for this charge. "Even in what seems mere politeness, the devil always makes a gain for himself and often deceives a person." His advice to all was: "Temptations of the senses are not overcome by fighting but by flight". It is related that on occasions when grateful women wished to kiss his hands Benedict would let the sleeve of his habit fall over the hand so that they kissed the habit instead of the hand. In this way the appreciation and thankfulness was shown the habit of poverty instead of the person of Benedict.

It is perhaps the silver nail of obedience which merited for Saint Benedict the greatest earthly joy, for it was while practicing this virtue that Benedict received a privilege accorded only to the most perfect. One day while praying in the Church before an image of the Blessed Mother, Benedict received the privilege of holding in his coarse black hands the tender body of the Christ Child Himself. Tradition tells us that as he held the Infant the bell summoned the community to lunch and ever mindful of the *Vox Dei* Benedict handed the Infant back to His Blessed Mother. This tradition is today immortalized in stone in the Church of Saint Mary of Jesus, where a statue depicts the Child being held by the Virgin as though falling from her arms.

It was obedience that made Benedict take upon himself the task of superior.

It was obedience that made him abandon the life of a hermit and join an Order; it was obedience that made Benedict a true religious and eventually a Saint of the Church.

Benedict's life of penance and labor began to tell on his strength and he died in the 64th year of his life on April 4, 1589. Those whom Benedict had helped during life did not forget him but continued their prayers that through his intercession their requests might be answered. Numerous miracles were performed through him and devotion to him grew apace. Three years after his death his tomb was opened and his body was found to be incorrupt and gave off a heavenly fragrance. King Philip III of Spain provided a shrine for the body of Saint Benedict in which it was placed in 1611. The devotion had then already spread from Sicily to Spain, Portugal, and into the Spanish possessions in the New World, Mexico, South and Central America. He was beatified in 1743 by Pope Benedict XIV and the solemn declaration of canonization was issued by Pope Pius VII in 1807.

A colored man heard God's call to perfection and answered that call. A colored man joyfully fastened himself to the cross of religion with the nails of poverty, chastity, and obedience. A colored man loved God with his whole heart and mind. God looked down upon this whirling world and saw not black skin but the white soul of Benedict. That holy soul pleased God and was rewarded with eternal happiness. That infant born of slave parents made the greatest possible success of his life—he became a Saint!

Washington, D. C.

Fra. Kenneth Malone, O. F. M.



### CORRECTION

In the March issue of the *CORD* it was stated that the Sacred Congregation of Rites raised the Feasts of Saint Anthony and of Saint Bonaventure to the rank of double of the second class. This is an error. These two feasts are now doubles of the first class.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According To Saint Bonaventure*

It is impossible to live the religious life without prayer. "Indeed," Saint Bonaventure, "a religious who is tepid and weak in devotion, who does not pray assiduously, is not only wretched and useless but in the eyes of God is a dead soul in a living body." We know that the life of our Seraphic Father Francis was one continuous prayer, one uninterrupted act of loving and praising God. The solitudes into which he retired for prayer and contemplation were most dear to him, for he had learned from our Divine Master Himself to be in communion with God in the seclusion of mountain and desert. The life of prayer is synonymous with the life of sanctity. Hence it is absolutely imperative for us to keep alive in our soul at least an earnest desire for the life of prayer. It is necessary not only for our sanctification but even for our perseverance in the religious state. Saint Bonaventure, therefore, would have us ask ourselves:

### WAS I NEGLIGENT IN PRAYER?

We need not consider here the anomalous state of the religious who lives wholly without prayer; let us seriously examine our attitude toward prayer for example: Do I love prayer, both private and common? Am I really convinced that prayer is as necessary for my soul as breath is for my body? Do I long for the time of prayer as time spent in communion with the God I love and adore? On the contrary, do I discharge the duty of praying coldly, mechanically, distractedly? Do I regard prayer as a burdensome obligation imposed by my Rule? Do I seek to be excused from prayer on the slightest pretexts? If I am legitimately excused from attending a certain exercise, do I always try to make up for it privately?

In order to prevent scruples on this point, we must understand that a dispensation from a certain prayer may be complete; that is, it may do away entirely with the obligation of supplying for the prayer privately. There is, however, an obligation to make up certain prayers, for example, the Office, if the Constitutions or other sources of authority so require, even though a dispensation from attending the recitation in common has been granted. In the first case the prayers must not be made up; it would not be even an imperfection to omit them entirely. In the second case, however, there still remains the obligation of either making up the prayer privately or obtaining a dispensation from that obligation.

With this in mind, we may ask ourselves more specifically: Do I see dispensations from prayer only when there is real necessity—work that must be done, health, or some other cogent reason? Have I allowed myself to be misled by the false maxim that work always substitutes for prayer, and have I accordingly, omitted formal prayer on the pretext that work takes its place? Have I even gone so far as to maintain that work is more profitable than prayer? Have I neglected prayer because of study, unmindful of the warning of our Seraphic Father that study must never be allowed to diminish in us the spirit of prayer? Have I sought dispensations from prayer because of study, and yet found time for unnecessary conversations, entertainments, social affairs? Do I realize that study unaccompanied by prayer is dangerous? When I have been unavoidably absent from a community exercise, do I make serious efforts to find time during the day to supply those prayers? Is it really a cross for me when circumstances beyond my control necessitate dispensations from prayer? Do I pray for the true Franciscan spirit of prayer, the passion for prayer that makes saints?

Superiors should question themselves as to whether they provide those entrusted to their care with sufficient time for prayer. Are those who are prevented from their duty from attending the common exercises given time to make up these prayers? In the matter of granting dispensations from prayer, is the honor of God and welfare of the soul given first consideration, and only then the good of the community?

The second general point for our examen should concern our interior disposition for prayer. Here we should ask ourselves: Am I always in readiness for prayer? When the bell summons me to a community exercise, do I realize that God Himself is calling me? Do I respond to that call with the alacrity born of love? Do I prepare myself interiorly for the sublime act of worship I am about to perform? Do I try to keep in the presence of God?

A third general question might concern our exterior conduct during prayer. When we pray we are putting ourselves, so to speak, in the presence of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; we are addressing ourselves to the King of kings, the Lord of lords. But as Franciscans, we should also realize that we are in the presence of our loving Father. Hence we should avoid the two extremes of rigidity and carelessness. To conduct ourselves in a manner that smacks of a military academy would hardly be consistent with the ideal of loving God as our Father. On the other hand, an easy familiarity or slovenliness in prayer would be

contrary to the filial reverence we owe God. Let us, accordingly, ask ourselves: Does my exterior conduct reflect my interior disposition at prayer? Is my posture in itself an act of worship? Do I make every effort to preserve the beauty, order and regularity in performing the prescribed bows, in genuflecting, kneeling, in sitting and standing? In reciting the Office, do I strive for a pleasant tone of voice? Do I make an honest effort to maintain the given pitch? Do I try to pronounce the words clearly and correctly, and in unison with the others, so as to bring out the full grandeur of the sacred texts? Is my genuflection before the altar and before the exposed Blessed Sacrament really an act of adoration? Is it really a prayer when I bow my head at the name of Jesus? When I make the Sign of the Cross? When I take holy water? Or must I confess that these have become merely mechanical functions which I perform thoughtlessly?

Then there is the matter of distractions at prayer. In the realization that we are only human, weak and unstable creatures at best, we should not be greatly disturbed about distractions. They are practically unavoidable. With the aid of a special grace from God and until we have reached a high degree of prayer, it is humanly impossible to pray without distractions. Consequently, it is particularly enlightening to our confessor when we accuse ourselves of having been distracted at prayer. We should accuse ourselves only of wilful distraction or of negligence in guarding against, or of reluctance in banishing, alien thoughts. Our examen should include such questions as: Do I honestly try to avoid distractions by keeping my mind occupied, in so far as possible, with God and the things of God? Do I unnecessarily expose myself to distractions, for example, by listening to the radio or indulging in secular reading just before going to prayer? Do I wilfully and deliberately entertain distracting thoughts, or toy with them even after I have become aware of their presence? Do I make a good preparation for prayer by putting aside my plans, my work, my worries? Do I try to forget self and concentrate only on loving and worshipping God?

In regard to distractions we should also consider our neighbor. For example, we might ask ourselves: Do I avoid disturbing peculiarities in reciting the Office? Do I avoid unnecessary noises during community exercises? In reciting the Office, do I strive for uniformity with the others, or do I follow my own whims? Do I try to force others to follow my lead? Do I avoid giving offense to others by loud coughing, clearing the throat, and similar crudities? Am I

usually reverent? Even though for Franciscans, especially the novices, an occasional smile during the recitation of the Office could hardly be considered blameworthy, we should do well to ask ourselves whether we do not sometimes overstep the limits of reverence and propriety.

After considering these more general points, we should go on to examine our attitude toward particular devotions and prayers. For example: How do I assist at Mass? Do I unite the sacrifice of my life and everything that I am—all my acts, all my sufferings—with that of Christ in order that I may be sacrificed in Christ and sanctified through Him? When I approach the Table of the Lord, do I strive to make the best possible preparation? Do I receive the Body of Christ with all the reverence and love I am capable of? Do I try to make a fervent thanksgiving? The best possible preparation for Holy Communion, of course, is the Mass itself, and we should try to receive Communion during Mass if at all possible. If our duties are such that we have little or no time for preparation or thanksgiving, we should offer our work for this intention.

In regard to performing the liturgical functions, priests may well look into their manner of saying Mass. Do I, for example, strive to carry out the prescribed ceremonial not only with interior devotion but also with dignity, grace and reverence? Do I realize that my appearance at the altar has a definite effect on those present; that I can distract and scandalize, or stir and inspire them? Religious in general should examine themselves on other points, for instance: Do I pray with the Church? Do I live the liturgy? What do the ecclesiastical feasts mean to me? Do I really take part in the liturgical year, try to conform to its spirit? Do I try to enter fully into the practices prescribed for the holy seasons?

Finally, there are our private prayers to be considered. Some prayers are prescribed by our Constitutions or by our superiors, for example, the rosary. Others we are free to add. Prescribed prayers, however, always take precedence over private devotions. In regard to this point we may ask: Am I faithful in saying the rosary daily, as prescribed by the Church for all priests and religious? Do I faithfully observe the practice of certain prayers I have imposed upon myself? Have I kept up the practice of little prayers learned in the novitiate? Do I pray not only for myself but for others—for the Church, for our Order, for the whole world? But we must not exaggerate the duty of praying for others; that is, we need not say special prayers for every person or for every intention we wish to remember. A general memento suffices. Those especially

who have reached a high degree of contemplative prayer should not be too concerned about various private prayers for various intentions. Sister Constance, a saintly Capuchin nun (+ 1946), once complained to Our Lord: "My Lord, I cannot pray." She received the answer: "Tell me, what prayer could you pray more beautiful than this: 'Jesus, Mary, I love you; save souls!'" At another time she was told: "Do you know what Jesus in the Tabernacle does? He loves the Father and He loves souls. That is all. He does not know the beautiful words, nothing of that kind. There is only silence and love."

Let us strive to obtain this spirit of prayer.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.S.B.



The charity whereby Jesus Christ loved us drew Him from heaven to earth. His charity was the rope that held Him against the pillar when He was so severely scourged. He loved us more than He loved Himself because He willed that we might live, willed to be sold to redeem us from the devil's power. He gave His soul and His body for us. It is charity that shows whether one is a true disciple of Christ, for He said that *by this will all men know that I am the son of the Father, if you have love for one another*. It is charity that makes man the son and disciple of Christ.

Saint Bonaventure



That which is more contrary to the salvation of souls than all other things in the world, that which is the cause of all evils in the world, the cause of wars, of all plagues, of all sickness, of all sins men commit and of all the pain and harm that come upon souls and bodies, is ignorance. *Quia omnis peccatum ignorat*. All sinners are ignorant. What was to blame that Adam sinned? Ignorance. What caused the death of Christ? Ignorance. All the sins and evils that have ever happened in the world have come from ignorance. Therefore we shall use the strength to conquer this beast of ignorance; and, every day we shall give it a beating. We cannot give place to light, if we do not chase away ignorance. Then there will be light.

Saint Bernardine of Siena

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The oldest literary monuments of pagan antiquity bear witness that the inhabitants of this planet of ours have always welcomed and cherished the month of May as the springtime of life and of all that is beautiful, noble and uplifting. It seems that heaven is nearer the earth than at any other time during the natural year. The Christian Religion was quick to perceive that the forces of nature stem from the same divine Source as the gift of grace, and that the vivifying light that surrounds us in May time, even as *every good gift and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights* (James 1, 17). With this thought in mind Mother Church has skillfully set up the ancient "Ladder of Jacob" to teach her children that if they believe, they can bring heaven down to earth and can admire and enjoy the beauties of this earth and the work of Creation in the light and by the pages of the book of revelation.

And without a moment's hesitation all her children give vent with one voice to what is nearest to their heart, namely, to dedicate this beautiful month to the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope (Eccli. 24, 24), the Virgin Mother of our Savior, the Mother of all Christians, and in particular of the consecrated spouses of her Divine Son. It was indeed a happy thought the many Religious communities have adopted the custom of assigning to each Sister the middle name of Mary.

But when we speak of the devotion to Mary, of Marian cults and Marian festivities, the Order of Saint Francis boldly marches to the very front. Little Porziuncula near Assisi was the favorite spot that Saint Francis chose for his dwelling because it bore the title, "Saint Mary of the Angels." Devotion to the Mother of God was the cherished treasure that he bequeathed to all his spiritual children. His illustrious son, the Seraphic Doctor, was the first to order the ringing of the Angelus so that the world might never forget that Mary the Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world. Surely we are all aware of the fact that the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception was victoriously championed by the Franciscan School, in particular by the Venerable John Duns Scotus, known as the Subtle and Marian Doctor, whose early promotion to the rank of Blessed and Saints we are certain Mary Immaculate will bring about. And when recently our Holy Father saw fit to declare as a dogma of faith Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven, he singled out four great Franciscan teachers

No. 7 May 1950

in support of this doctrine: Alexander of Hales, the Irrefragable Doctor; Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor; Saint Anthony of Padua, the Doctor of the Holy Gospel; and Saint Bernardine of Siena, the Champion of the Holy of Jesus.

In the fifteenth century the vigorous pulpit orator, Saint John Capistrano, spread the devotion of the Rosary of the Seven Joys, which is known as the Franciscan Crown. Franciscan preachers also introduced the last invocation of the *Holy Mary: pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*. The faithful lost no time to grasp at these heart-warming words, and soon it became the common practice. Furthermore, the Franciscan Order introduced the Feast of the Visitation into our Liturgy and, to crown these efforts, bring a little cheer into both choir and community, they were the first to celebrate the Espousals of Mary and Joseph.

It seems quite proper that on this occasion we should turn to the feast of the Assumption and read for our meditation the text of the Missal. The words, I daresay, though full of charm and power and excelling poetic beauty, nevertheless make many of our Sisters wonder just what they signify and what practical lesson they may afford them.

The Gospel is easy to understand. It tells the story of Martha and Mary at Bethany, the former busy with her pots and not slightly angry because her sister fails to help her set the table for the Guest of honor, the latter calm and motionless at the feet of Jesus, Who utters that wonderful word which applies in such a marked degree both to His Own Mother and to all her children in the cloister: *Mary has chosen the best part, and it will not be taken away from her* (Lk. 10, 42).

It is the Epistle that causes puzzlement and perplexity to many a daughter of the Assumption and to some theologians as well. Many a Sister, listening on the feast of the Assumption to this sublime passage from the Book of Ecclesiasticus (24, 11-23), may have wondered whether she was in church or in a botanical garden, while in the next pew the Sister who teaches Biology or Botany in high school looked down on the rest with a knowing, if not superior, smile.

Here we should realize that many texts of Sacred Scripture, especially those from the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament, have a double meaning,

both literal and the spiritual; and that often Mother Church accommodates these texts; that is, she applies them to special occasions in order to convey a spiritual message. The Wise Men of Israel desired to inculcate the divine Gift of Wisdom to the people; in doing so, they frequently point out that Wisdom stems from the all-wise God; in fact, it is an attribute of the Infinite God. And since the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is *the wisdom of God* (I Cor., 1, 24) Holy Mother Church, following the examples of some of the Fathers and theologians, especially those of the Franciscan School, frequently applies these texts to the Word Incarnate, especially in those passages where Divine Wisdom rises to the dignity of a personality and speaks words of eternal wisdom. This is an instance where the glory of the Head redounds to all the members of the Mystical Body and primarily, so Mother Church argues, to the Immaculate Mother who brought the Word Incarnate into the world. Thus it is that on many feasts of the Blessed Mother we are permitted to read these texts of exquisite poetic charm and beauty and apply them, as the poet says, to "our painted nature's solitary boast."

Truly *Mary has chosen the best part*, you will say as you read the first lines of the Epistle, taken verbally from Ecclesiasticus 24, 11-23. And as you continue it will dawn on you that you too have chosen the best part, for what happened to Mary at Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem has also become your lot in the sacred seclusion of the cloister as a Bride of Christ. You too *sought rest and found it in the inheritance of the Lord*, in the holy Rule of your Order. From eternity the Creator *commanded* when He appointed your holy vocation, so that your Savior might rest *in the tabernacle* of your heart. From the day of your profession your *dwelling was in Jacob*, and your inheritance in Israel, and you took root among God's elect.

Here you will observe a transition from earth to heaven; from grace to glory. For by a holy life you will forever be *established in Sion*. You will find eternal rest *in the holy city* and your power will be *in Jerusalem*. Forevermore you will be assembled with *an honorable people*; you will enjoy *the portion* of your inheritance with God; your abode is in the full assembly of saints.

And now a sweet aroma fills the air; we are transported to the Garden of God, to witness the Glories of Mary our Mother and the lessons they bear for all her children.

*I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus.* Have you ever seen the cedar of Libanus—that mighty, lordly, majestic tree, planted by the hand of God Himself? It spreads its large branches of evergreen as if to shelter sheep and shepherds, yea, the whole world around. This is a symbol of woman's dignity, courage, conviction, such as the drama of the stage has never devised nor the drama of the world ever witnessed. Look upon Mary beneath the Cross, as the Franciscan poet Jacopone da Todi describes her, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. Not a sound came from the lips of the Sorrowful Mother, but her silence is like thunder. She must stand upright in this war-torn, wilful and wanton world with its sensuality and its craving for lustful and unholy gratification. In these days Religious Sisterhoods stand up as an invincible proof of the divinity of the holy Faith, betrothed as they are to the King of the Universe; dedicated to His service, the ring on their fingers attesting their unfailing loyalty and devotion.

*And as a cypress tree on Mount Sion.* Wrapt in a mantle of green the gentle cypress stands in the holy place, faintly recalling that she also spent her maidenhood days within these hallowed precincts. As the cedar reminds us of our God-likeness, even so does the cypress suggest the beauty of Godliness or piety, which is the filial relationship between child and parent. It was that intimate affection which elicited from the lips of the dear Son the unforgettable words, *Son, behold thy mother* (John 19, 27). The feeling urged Saint Paul to say, *My dear children, with whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you* (Gal. 4, 19). May this thought inspire our Sisters as they attend to their charges in school, in the hospital, or where obedience may call them.

*I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades.* The straight and sturdy stem of the palm tree commands like a sentinel the spacious wasteland around Cades. A picture of firmness, stability and strength in this wavering world of groping unsteadily for new ideologies, and ending its weary days with distracted heart and empty hands, while the palm holds her ripe fruit aloft in the shelter of foliage of her crown. Even the Virgin of Nazareth knew how to be firm, even severe. *Son, she demanded when she found Jesus among the doctors, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, in sorrow thy father and I have been seeking thee* (Lk. 2, 48). On that occasion she exemplified the part of the "valiant woman." *Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her*, exclaimed the Wise Man of old (Prov. 31, 10). If he lived today he would find it among our Religious who daily perform their duties in loyalty to the King; pre-

their holy vows; caring for the least of Christ's brethren with impartiality and a sense of unwavering responsibility.

*And as a rose-plant in Jericho.* The rose stands for charity, love, kindness and all those beautiful qualities which win the human heart and assuage human sorrows. They have woven Mary's traits into her lovable title, *Mater Amabilis* (Mother most amiable). They should also adorn those souls of the feminine sex who minister to the weaker members of Christ's Mystical Body, and perform those humble duties which require a woman's hand and a woman's heart. Firmness and kindness, justice and charity, truth and peace, go hand in hand. That is the lesson of the palm tree in Cades and the rose-plant in Jericho. That is the meaning of the words of the psalmist we hear on Christmas night: *Mercy and fidelity shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss* (Ps. 84, 11).

*As a fair olive tree in the plains.* The figure of the fair olive tree brings to mind one of Mary's most appropriate names, *Regina Pacis* (Queen of Peace). The fruit of her life, her love and her labors, her part in the Mystery of our Redemption brought down to earth man's most cherished possession, peace. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that the precious fruit of the olive tree has the qualities of light, food and medicine. In a spiritual sense this means light in mental darkness, food for the weary soul, medicine for spiritual ills. This is the import of the heavenly gift of Peace to the hearts and homes of Religious. Let us all be apostles of Peace and avoid those little griefs and grievances that are apt to disturb life in the convent, which should be a home of Peace.

*And as a plane tree by the waters in the street I was exalted.* This brings us down to earth, to the drudgery of our daily tasks. But mark you, Mary was exalted in her menial home work. The only title she claimed for herself was "The handmaid of the Lord." In our last conference we dwelled upon the significance of holy Obedience in the cloister. Let us never forget that our exaltation consists in the prayer that should knit together like a golden thread all daily tasks into a piece of celestial embroidery: *Be it done unto me according to Thy Will*.

*I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm; I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh.* These two verses should not be separated, for by blending the two we shall be *beloved of God and men* (Eccli. 45, 1). It is the sublime art of blending the bitter and the sweet. Cinnamon, balsam and myrrh,

all yield a sweet, pleasing odor, but the taste of myrrh is bitter. We are reminded of the words of Noemi, which Mother Church often applies to Mary: *Call me not Noemi (that is, beautiful) but call me Mara (that is, bitter), for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness* (Ruth 1, 20). Life is a succession of triumphs and failures, of victories and defeats, of joys and sorrows. We have our Thabor and our Calvary. In behalf of ourselves and of those in keeping we must practice the art of resignation in sorrow and of moderation in joy. Every Religious is bound by her holy vocation to set this example in cloister, at her work and before the world, for *Verbum sonat; exemplum facit* (the word sounds; example thunders).

This is the message the Feast of Mary's Assumption brings to us as we commemorate our glorious Mother in the beautiful month of May.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.



I shall hide myself in the caverns of His wounds and there be more concealed; He will be unable to find me outside of Himself. It will not behoove Him to make me go forth because He said that *him who comes to me I will cast out*. And so He could not disappoint me unless He would want to embarrass Himself. Or, I shall cast myself at the feet of His mother and, because it is on account of sinners that she became the mother of God, I shall send her on the errand and ask her to pray forbearance for me. I could not possibly suffer repulse from her because she is acclaimed by all the source of clemency. She knows not how to withhold mercy and never did learn how to be severe with beggars; and I don't think she wants to learn a new lesson on my account.

James of Milan, O. F. M. (c. 1250)



For the sake of a quiet conscience, despise no one.

Brother Giles

## MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

### I

#### *Adoramus Te*

Standing on the peak of a mountain, watching the surrounding range of mountains with their rugged crests piercing the blue sky, the downrushing green slopes, and the swift streams like threads of white silk in the distant valleys, a man feels keenly his insignificance in this vast world. The greatness, the wisdom and the power of the Creator seem to press in upon him from all sides.

This is but a faint image of the attitude of the soul of Christ in the presence of His Almighty Father. It was truly an attitude of complete submission and humble adoration of the greatness of God. It was an attitude begotten of the most perfect knowledge of the divine majesty, and of the most humble submission of His human will to that majesty.

*Just Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee* (Jo. 17, 25). Yes, Christ did know the Father in a sense in which no ordinary man could. First of all, in the natural order Jesus possessed an intellect superior to that of any other man or angel. Only the connoisseur can appreciate fully the work of art. Only the expert mathematician comprehends the theory of relativity. So likewise only the superior mind of Christ possessed a grasp of the infinite perfection of God that was worthy of the same knowledge. Secondly, in the supernatural order Christ enjoyed the beatific vision all the days of His life. Not only analogically but also directly He gazed into the depths of the divine perfections of the Godhead.

The realization of God's adorable majesty strikes the created soul like a hammer on a bell. Like a cracked or faulty bell the soul of the sinner echoes the hollow sound, the raucous cry of the proud Lucifer, "I will not serve." But the good and humble soul rings true, sending forth peals of praise and adoration.

So it was in an eminent degree with the soul of Christ. *I praise Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth*, He cried (Lk. 10, 21). With the glory of the Father before His eyes He said quite simply, *No one is good but God only* (Lk. 18, 19). The best way to express adoration is to annihilate oneself before God, to offer oneself to God, to submit wholly to His will. This our Savior did



when He humbly gave up His life on the Cross as a sacrifice of praise and adoration to the Triune God.

*Do this in remembrance of me* (Lk. 22, 20). It is our Lord's wish that we priests should offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a spirit of adoration. Years of study and meditation, of prayer and spiritual labors, have given us a keener insight into the wonders of God, His Providence and His divinity. Few should be more struck with the immensity of God's greatness than we, priests. Does our own response ring true? Is the Mass truly an eloquent expression of our spirit of praise and adoration?

So many of the phrases used in Holy Mass are redolent of praise and adoration. They speak of God's infinite perfections in terms of awestruck admiration: *Omnipotens, sempiterna Deus. Domine sancte, pater omnipotens, aeternus. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis . . . laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.*

So many of the actions and ceremonies of the Mass express sentiments of profound reverence and adoration. The lifting up of the eyes to God on the bowing low before the majesty of the Lord, the reverently folded hands—all these—are they really the true expressions of our adoring spirit?

Above all, the priest must unite himself with Christ as he offers up the Mass. God his entire being, body and soul, mind, heart and will, as a holocaust of praise and adoration. *Adoramus te.*

## II

### *Tibi Gratias Agens*

Gratitude, they say, is a mark of a noble soul. Certainly then it is a characteristic of the soul of Christ, the noblest of men. Moreover our Lord had no reason for gratitude than anyone else.

To no other human nature was given that greatest possible privilege of being hypostatically united to the Son of God. *For to which of the angels has God ever said, 'Thou art My Son, I this day have begotten Thee'?* (Heb. 1, 5). In addition to the gift of divinity Christ received the fullness of created nature. *For it has pleased God the Father that in Him all His fullness should dwell* (Col. 1, 19). *And we saw His glory — glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth* (Jo. 1, 14). Having thus set up Christ as

the greatest of all creatures, God also gave Him a kingdom consisting of all creation. *Et ego constitui regem meum super Sion* (Ps. 2). *And Him He gave as head of the Church, which indeed is His Body* (Eph. 1, 22-23).

Touched by such living beneficence on the part of the Father, the truly humble soul of Christ responded in acts of heart-felt gratitude. Saint Paul pictures Him as saying gratefully, *Behold, I and My children whom God has given Me* (Heb. 2, 13). And Saint John records the high-priestly prayer of thanks: *They were Thine, and Thou has given them to Me* (Jo. 17, 6). Also at the tomb of Lazarus the Savior spoke: *Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me* (Jo. 11, 41).

But no more perfect form of thanksgiving can be found than the gift of Himself. It was therefore as an expression of gratitude also, that our Lord offered Himself to the Father upon the cross and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The very name of Eucharist that we use signifies a thanksgiving offering. And so the evangelist, in describing the institution of the first Holy Mass, says of Christ that *taking a cup He gave thanks* (Matt. 26, 27). *Tibi gratias agens.*

*Do this, says our Lord, in remembrance of Me* (Lk. 22, 20). It is not hard to see the parallel between us and Christ. Though in a smaller way and only by adoption we too are the sons of God, we are enriched by divine grace; we are a *kingly priesthood* with a kingdom at our disposal: *all things are yours.* Therefore we too have a debt of gratitude to the Father.

But the point for us to remember is that all these blessings have come to us through Christ. *And of His fullness we have all received* (Jo. 1, 16). God has been good to us, not as to scattered individuals, but as to members of the Mystical Body, as to branches on the Vine. *God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high in Christ . . . adopted us through Jesus Christ as His sons . . . unto the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He has favored us in His beloved Son* (Eph. 1, 3-6). The ritual of the Mass expresses this admirably when it says, *Per quem haec omnia, Domine, semper bona creas, sanctificas, vivificas, benedicis, et praestas nobis.*

Since we receive all graces and blessings through our Lord Jesus Christ it is only right and fitting that we should join with Him in celebrating the Holy Sacrifice and through Him offer to God our heart-felt thanks. *Per ipsum et*

*cum ipso et in ipso est tibi . . . omnis honor et gloria.* Let us recall to Christ's own spirit of gratitude: *tibi gratias agens*. Then let us blend our soul with His as we offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice. *Do this*, he says, *in remembrance of me*.

## III

*Pro Innumerabilibus Peccatis*

In the words of the Creed, Jesus Christ came down upon this earth "for our salvation". Truly His Blood was *shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins* (Matt. 26, 28). Yes, our Lord offered His sacrifice for sin out of His compassion for His erring brethren. But we must not overlook the fact that He also offered up that sacrifice to satisfy God's justice, in the spirit of reparation for the sins of men. It is easy enough to remember that Christ was thinking of our pitiable state of sinfulness and misery when He died on the Cross in love of us. But it is so easy to forget that He was also thinking of God's glory when He rendered up His human soul into the hands of the Father.

Men generally can so easily be oblivious to what sin is in the sight of God. But for our Savior that is impossible. Christ, in His human nature, sees Himself as the center and author of the universe. By virtue of the beatific vision He beheld while on earth the ineffable beauty and power and majesty of the Father, the high God. Knowing the Father as He did, He could not but realize what He means to offend God by sin. What a terrible derangement of the right order of things! Spurning and insulting the Creator Himself! The mind of Christ recoils in horror at the very thought.

To understand well our Lord's attitude toward sin we must plunge into the depths of the Sacred Heart. There we see how the sinfulness of men is in striking contrast with His own beautiful relations with the Father. The sinner seeks his own honor, riches and pleasure; but Christ says, *I seek not My glory* (Jo. 8, 50). The sinner wilfully disobeys God; whereas Jesus says, *I always do the things that are pleasing to Him* (Jo. 8, 29). The sinner insults the Creator and Lord; but the Son of Man tells us, *I honor My Father* (Jo. 8, 49). Yes, the sinner's heart is a den of hatred for God; whilst the Heart of Christ breathes forth the words, *I love the Father* (Jo. 14, 31).

What sorrow therefore must have been in the Heart of Christ, when He recalled the sins of men! And what a desire to make reparation for those sins

That longing to make reparation He fulfilled when He instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass and offered the Sacrifice of the Cross. It was the perfect Sacrifice, completely and amply satisfying the majesty of God for the injury wrought by sinful mankind.

As the priest grows daily in the likeness of Christ, he begins to feel more and more the wickedness of sin. He realizes ever more vividly the holiness and majesty of God. He feels ever more keenly the need of reparation. In our daily Mass the Savior reaches out over the nineteen centuries to join hands with us as we lift up the immaculate Host and the chalice of His Blood to make satisfaction to the outraged majesty of God. Let us join our hearts with His Heart also, doing it in remembrance of Him. The *Confiteor* will remind us of our sins and those of the people. The prayer at the Offertory, *Suscipe, SANCTE Pater . . . pro innumerabilibus peccatis*, will beautifully express our desires for reparation. And the words of Consecration, *in remissionem peccatorum*, fulfill those desires. Such a Mass will be in obedience to our Lord's Command to *do this in remembrance of Me* (Lk. 22, 20). It will also be the beginning of an entire daily life of reparation for the sins of men.



Where there is charity and wisdom there is neither fear nor ignorance.

*Admonitions of St. Francis*



My dearest ones, your heart must needs be either a brothel of the devil or a holy Temple of the Son of God; there is no third possibility. Should not a young girl, betrothed to a man of wondrous beauty and about to marry him, who would go into a lepers' brothel, be killed and with her nostrils pierced be thrown into a cess-pool? The same must be said of a soul, about to be espoused to Christ, that makes itself a devil's brothel; it is a wonder that the earth doesn't swallow it up, that it doesn't go down living into hell.

*Saint Bonaventure:*

*Sermon on the Purification*

## THE ABBESS OF BORGO SAN PIETRO

Philippa Mareri has been called the first saint of the Franciscan Order. Her father was Philip, Baron of Mareri, a descendant of the Counts of Marsi who boasted the blood of the French kings. Her mother sprang from the Counts of Alba. Philippa herself was foundress of the first monastery of Clares in the medieval kingdom of Naples. Yet she was unknown in the principal sources of Franciscan history before the 16th century. This is explained by the fact that Borgo San Pietro, where she founded her monastery, remained isolated by its geographical position in the ancient Siculo or Cicolano Valley. The town of Mareri, taking its name from the Castle, was a hamlet of 200 inhabitants situated halfway up the side of a mountain and accessible only by a mule path.

Philippa was the third of five children. She had two brothers, Thomas and Gentile, who were older than she, and a sister and a younger brother. As she grew up, all who knew her admired her modest composure and serious nature and felt that she was destined for higher things. At an early age she attained a reasonable mastery of Latin and began the study of Sacred Scripture according to the capacity of her young mind. In this study she took advantage of the assistance offered her by the priests and monks who stopped at the Castle. She taught her how to interpret what she read and how to apply it to her own life.

It happened that Cicolano Valley was a favorite retreat for Saint Francis and his companions. At Greccio he built the prototype of the crib now found in every Catholic church at Christmas. At Fonte Colombo near Rieti he wrote the Rule of 1223 which we now observe. And these good friars were hospitably received by Philippa's pious parents at the Castle of the Mareri. Philippa, in the full bloom of womanhood when Francis first preached at Mareri, beneath her beauty of face and form he recognized the deep spirituality of her soul. From the beginning of their acquaintance he overlooked no opportunity to foster her intimate piety and disregard of riches and pleasures. He told her how Clare of Assisi, another noblewoman like herself, left her paternal home on the night of Palm Sunday, 1212, established the Monastery of San Damiano and became the mother of the Franciscan movement for women. At length inspired by the words and life of this holy man and his confreres, she resolved to follow Clare's example.

But carrying out his resolve was another matter. Her beauty and the position of her family brought her many worthy suitors, and since she was now about 20 years old her family was insistent that she marry one of them. To get away from the troublesome pleas of her suitors she retired to a remote room of the Castle, turned it into a kind of oratory where she might devote her time to the Divine Spouse she had chosen, and would admit to it no one but her family and necessary servants. Even here she found no peace—her brother Thomas continued to persuade her to marry. When she realized that could not hope to remain unmolested at home, she decided on a complete break with her family. One night she and three other young women who were of the same mind left their homes secretly and made their way to a cavern about a mile above Mareri. There they cut off one another's hair, changed their dress to the garb of poor women, and entered upon a life of prayer that God might show them His holy will in their regard.

After discovering their hideout and trying unsuccessfully to compel his sister to return home, Thomas relented and offered them the church of San Pietro di Molito, of which he had the right of patronage, and the adjoining Villa Casardita. And he promised to restore the villa to a habitable condition so that they could live more decently the monastic life in God's service they had chosen. Philippa accepted the gift as an answer to their prayers, but only on condition that it be freed from all patronage or other servitude to the family. Thomas agreed, and as soon as a domicile was ready for them Philippa and her companions came down from the mountain to take possession of the property and begin the life Saint Francis had prescribed for Saint Clare and her sisters. From that time Villa Casardita was Borgo San Pietro and she its Abbess, as papal documents and other evidence indicate.

Their immediate problem was to put both church and monastery into condition for a permanent foundation. Using their dowries and Philippa's patrimony to hire workmen and obtain materials, they restored the existing buildings, provided the church with decent furniture and the other necessities for the worthy conduct of divine services, and turned their habitation into a real monastery. Then they built workshops and other outhouses and surrounded the whole with a wall that would give them full enclosure. The account leads us to believe that the nuns themselves did all the interior work and helped considerably with the heavier construction.

Meanwhile their evident high purpose and practical sanctity began to draw new recruits to them. Among the first were Philippa's own sister and a sister of the Imperatrice, both of whom had already been promised in marriage. Soon other young women, relatives and friends of the original group, and others invited by the many gifts of God's blessing on the institute, came to ask admission. Bringing with them not only their dowries—very welcome in the many needs, but also willing hands and hearts to continue the great work so soon begun. Seeing such promise in their labors, Philippa set about to obtain official status for their institute. Two documents attest that her appeal for it was granted: the one a rescript from Pope Gregory IX, dated July 21st, 1231, recognizing the monastery and its possessions under apostolic protection, the other a bull from Rinaldo, Bishop of Rieti, exempting the church of San Pietro di Marone from his jurisdiction. There is a tradition that the Pope himself came to Borgo San Pietro to approve the establishment and to receive the obedience of the Abbess and her nuns. Considering his love for the Poor Clares and the prominence of the Mareri, this is not improbable.

In her own life Philippa was determined to give her sisters a worthy example of virtue. In her humility she would not permit them to serve her in any way greater than they. On the contrary, in the true Franciscan spirit she was their servant, ministering to their needs and performing the most common duties of the monastery with alacrity. No one was more amiable than she, none more diligent in the good offices of charity, none more ready to obey the precepts of the Church and of their Rule, or the counsels of their spiritual director, Friar Roger. Because sin came into the world through eating fruit which was forbidden, she set herself a rigorous regimen of fasting. There were many times when her body had hardly enough strength to support its own weight. Infirmity, brought on by her labors and penances, caused her frequent suffering. But she accepted the rack of pain as just another means God was giving her to do penance and perfect her soul in patience.

In the exercise of her spiritual authority she showed herself a true mother to her daughters in religion. God seems to have given her light to look into the depths of their souls. To those who let their minds wander into vain or improper thoughts, or who harbored anger or hatred, she revealed their fault and tried to correct them with a kindly admonition. If they persisted in these hidden sins, she some times revealed them to others to recall the erring to repentance. Her confidences seemed to emanate from the Holy Spirit Himself. They were large

work because in them she made excellent use of the knowledge of Sacred Scripture she had acquired. Her sisters appreciated them as a sweet balm of consolation amidst the rigor of their lives.

Her external charity was directed to the poor and to sinners. Herself a child of poverty, she abhorred the accumulation of earthly goods. She taught her sisters to leave the morrow to Divine Providence and to distribute to the poor whatever came to them over and above their own needs. When the poor asked for alms for the love of God she would say to her assistants, "How sweet is that voice. It is like the voice of Christ soliciting and fervently exhorting us to fraternal charity." Towards those in dire distress of mind and spirit she had the tenderest compassion. If she could not help them, she commended them to the Heart of our Savior. She gave the deepest thought to bringing the erring to a better life. If she knew of anyone who was in serious sin, she would use every means at her disposal—prayer, counsel, having Holy Mass said for him—to bring the sinner back to God. The proud and arrogant were her special target. She sometimes confounded them by repeating quietly the text, *God resists the proud, but He gives His grace to the humble*. There were few indeed who had the privilege of conversing with her but were the better for it.

Three days before her death she told her community that she was to go, and in all motherly affection she exhorted them to persevere in divine love. One of the nuns in tears said to her, "Good Mother, why must you desert us? To whom will you leave us?" In a gentle voice she answered, "Weep not over me, my beloved daughters; the bosom of Abraham will receive me. Behold, I see what I have desired; that for which I have hoped and have loved on earth with all devotion is already mine. But you be strengthened in the Lord and the patience of His virtue; for God will render strictly to each of you a reward in keeping with your merits. Persevere in the service of Him, who commends not the beginning but a good end, and with unspeakable affluence gives a crown of glory to those who conquer vice and sin. May you carry on what we have here begun; may your humility be the condiment of your virtues; and may the peace of the Lord, which surpasses all understanding, keep your minds and your hearts in His service." Shortly after midnight she passed happily to that heaven which three days before she had seen her Savior opening to her.

The Abbess of Borgo San Pietro has never been formally canonized; hence her liturgical title is 'Blessed'. But the people of Cicolano Valley and of Sulmona

persist in calling her a saint. A letter of Innocent IV, dated June 27th, and addressed to the Abbess of San Pietro di Molito, reads in part: "The desiring that your church be frequented with becoming honor, to all truly repentant and having confessed their sins, visit this church on the feast of Blessed Peter and Paul, of Saints Philip and James and of Saint Philip mercifully relax forty days of the penance imposed on them." On the wall of the old church of San Pietro there was the inscription: *Ad honorem et gloriam Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli et Sanctae Philippae Mareriae Virginitatis*. The urns of her relics carry the same qualification: *Cor et praecordia Sanctae Philippae Mareriae. Corpus Sanctae Philippae Mareriae*. However in the Breviary of the Friars Minor Conventual (1888) and in their calendar appended July 22nd, 1950, she is still designated 'Blessed'. While we await greater light for her here on earth we may admire her constancy in carrying out her duty, resolve, and we feel confident that God has rendered to her too a reward in keeping with her great merits.

Washington, D. C.

Very Rev. Denis Gallagher, O. F. M.



*He that made me rested in my tabernacle.* The Creator of all things rested in the tabernacle on the virginal womb because there He set up for Himself a nuptial couch in order to become our Brother, bedecked a royal throne in order to become our Prince, put on the priestly attire in order to become our High Priest. Because of the nuptial couch the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God; because of the royal throne she is the Queen of Heaven; because of the priestly attire she is the Advocate of the human race. The Virgin Mary was deeply deserving of all these honors since she is of the human race, of a royal race, of a priestly race. Let our most beloved Virgin Mary then *He that made me rested in my tabernacle.*

*Saint Bonaventure:*

*Sermon on the Annunciation*

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### *According to Saint Bonaventure*

Our spiritual life, rooted in Christ and kept alive in the constant sacramental communication with Christ, is daily refreshed by the spiritual breath of a life of prayer. Yet the prayer that we need, as the Seraphic Doctor points out, is not merely that which enkindles in us a burning desire but that which produces light and gives us an insight into divine things. Our desire should tend not so much toward lofty speculation in such things; but we should seek to realize their value, what they mean to us. In one word the relation between God and our soul is our prime concern. We are ever in danger of deviating from the right path or even of heading in an entirely wrong direction, if we remain in ignorance. We have need then to be refreshed and fortified by the spiritual food of religious instruction. Our spiritual life must be guided by the light, the inspired word that tells us about God and our relation to Him. This sacred word comes to us in many ways, mainly through meditation, reading and listening to the word of God. All this is summed up when Saint Bonaventure asks us to examine ourselves concerning

### NEGLIGENCE IN SPIRITUAL READING

Following Saint Bonaventure we shall consider three main points. The first concerns spiritual reading in the narrower sense, namely, as distinct from meditation.

The main goal of this spiritual reading is information, instruction, light for our intellect. Since our profession is to live a religious life, we have to know about this life, and hence we have the duty of obtaining the correct information and instruction. Therefore let us ask, Did I neglect spiritual reading altogether? Am I more interested in secular books, newspapers, magazines, novels, and so forth, than in solid spiritual books and literature? In particular, do I love to read Holy Scripture regularly? Do I read the Holy Gospels as a Franciscan should, having in mind that herein is the ideal form of life I am to lead?

If we have the good practice of reading spiritual books, then there is the important question to be asked, Am I discerning in the type of spiritual literature I choose? Do I prefer what is good and solid food, works of proved value? Or am I more interested in facile literature which appeals more to my aesthetic sense and is little concerned with sound instruction or light for my soul? Am I perhaps indulging in a wanton, uncontrolled and unguided reading

of mystical writers, so much that I can no longer stomach the staple recommended authors? Mystical writers can do much good but they can harm the beginner and the immature religious. The same applies to the type of religious literature which deals too much with the extraordinary visions and apparitions, or lays undue stress on certain practices and disciplines.

A remark of caution is called for. We know how much Saint Francis loved to read Holy Scripture. Once he even took apart a copy of the Holy Gospel for his many brethren when but one copy was to be found. But we know that towards the end of his life he no longer cared for spiritual reading. So was his mind with divine things that he had no need to read more. His concern was to apply what he had learned. For us too the time may come when reading becomes a kind of distraction. Guided by our confessor we are certainly allowed to follow the higher call, as did Saint Francis. For souls who have reached this stage there will be but one book left, as there was for Saint Francis—Christ. This suffices.

The second group of questions concerns spiritual instructions, sermons, conferences, etc. In reading, the dead letter must be brought to life. In religious conferences of any kind it is the living word that comes to us directly. He who speaks is really the *minister of the word* (Prologue to the Gospel according to Saint Luke). He brings us the word of God. Hence there is always something sacred about listening to the minister of the word of God. Let us therefore ask: Do I always listen to a sermon or conference with the right attitude and disposition? Do I look more for the word of God than for the word of man? I should be very honest on this point. What do I really expect from a preacher? Something pleasing to my ear or something for my heart and life? Why does one sermon appeal to me and another displease me? Why were the words of a priest lost? Because of his deficiency, or mine? It is not easy for a preacher to talk to an audience which lacks the right disposition. As Saint Bonaventure reminds us, sometimes the tongue of a teacher sticks to the roof of his mouth because of the indisposition of the audience.<sup>1</sup> What a preacher should not do as an excuse for himself, can be a very good rule for us: that even the most modest sermon or conference always contains something for us as long as we are about religion at all, as long as we are eager to listen to the word of God and not to the poetry of human emotions. Did I follow this rule?

The third group of questions concerns that kind of spiritual reading which Saint Bonaventure certainly meant when he asked about negligent reading, i. e., meditation in the modern sense of the word. We know

that important meditation is and that the Church through our constitutions demands daily meditation. In a sense it is true that no progress in religious life can be made without meditation; for meditation is the most active of all our prayers. What reading, as such, or listening to the word of God has not achieved, meditation should accomplish. It should transform a truth that is known and understood into a living truth. It should make it our own. Through meditation the truth not only becomes a thing of the mind but also of the heart. According to Saint Bonaventure meditation comprises not only human works (what we have done; what we must do; what is the moving power behind our works) but also the divine works (how much God has given us; how much He has done for us; how we should treat the things He has promised to us). It embraces God and the soul and the manner and extent of their union. (*De Triplici Via*, I, 18). It leads to the experience of truth, to understanding and wisdom.

And now let us ask, Do I perhaps neglect my meditation? Do I easily find an excuse to be dispensed from meditation? If I am really prevented by certain duties from being present at the appointed time, do I make it up later? Since meditation is so important, superiors and subjects have the obligation to provide the necessary time for it.

If we are faithful to the time of meditation, then we should examine ourselves further on the fruitfulness of our meditation. How did I make use of the time of meditation? The least God can expect from me is that I make an honest effort to meditate and to avoid any voluntary distractions. I may be unable to meditate at certain times because of physical conditions, but I can always make a genuine effort. Let us especially examine ourselves on whether we tried to get into the right disposition, whether we made use of little helps to keep our mind on the subject of the meditation. At the beginning of religious life it is certainly of great help to follow the strict method. Did I at least try it? And when I felt too tired, or when I realized my mind was beginning to wander, did I make an effort to check myself and force my mind into a definite path of thought? For instance, by saying the rosary in a meditative fashion, or by slowly following the scenes of the Passion of our Lord, or by concentrating on Christ on the cross? Or did I use the liberty granted me to read a spiritual book slowly and thoughtfully?

There is no doubt that meditation is a most individual form of prayer, and will and should have a personal character. But every meditation should have this in common: it should culminate in an act of complete surrender to God.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

<sup>1</sup> Et aliquando propter indispositionem auditorum facit Dominus linguam adherere palato. (*Hexaem.*, coll. I, 9).

## FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Among its summer courses, the Franciscan Institute also offers tific studies in Franciscan Spirituality. These courses are part of a that cover the nature of the Franciscan way of life as well as the so development and influence of Franciscanism upon the intellectual and tional life of the Church. Special attention is also given to Catholic and to the social interests and tasks of the Third Order Secular. Teachers, preachers, missionaries, directors of souls, novice masters and mist and all who are charged with the education and spiritual formation of ful religious or of the faithful in general should find these courses a help in understanding more fully the richness of their Franciscan he and in imparting the Franciscan message to others.

The attention of those interested in Franciscan Spirituality is call pecially to the following courses

Sources of Franciscan Spirituality  
The *Itinerarium* of Saint Bonaventure  
Readings from David of Augsburg  
History of the Franciscan Order  
Third Order Workshop



These courses may be audited or taken for graduate c leading to the degree of Master of Arts. The complete schedu the Franciscan Institute Summer Session, beginning July 3 ending August 9, is as follows:

725	History of Franciscan Theology.	
	Part III: Duns Scotus.	2 cr
	Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M.	
630	Franciscan Spirituality. Part II: Sources of Franciscan Spirituality. Life and writings of St. Francis	2 cr
	Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M.	
630a	Readings from David of Augsburg	1 cr
	Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M.	
605	History of Franciscan Philosophy.	
	Part II: Duns Scotus	2 cr
	Allan Wolter, O.F.M.	
605a	Readings from Duns Scotus	1 cr
	Allan Wolter, O.F.M.	
540	History of the Franciscan Order. Part 1	2 cr
535	Third Order Workshop. Nature, aim and importance of the Third Order Secular, spirit and activities of the Tertiary apostolate, mutual relations of the Third Order and other Catholic organizations; international coordination of Tertiary forces	2 cr
	Gerard Fitzsimmons, O.F.M.	
518a and b	Latin Palaeography of the 13th to 15th centuries	2 cr
	Gaudens Mohan, O.F.M.	
505a	The <i>Itinerarium</i> of Saint Bonaventure	2 cr
	Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.	
	For further information address FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE St. Bonaventure University St. Bonaventure, N. Y.	

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

As the rose gradually unfolds under the light of the warm sun, even so does the beautiful teaching bequeathed by our divine Savior to His Church gradually bring forth blossoms and flowers of ineffable delight and entrancing charm. This is what our Savior meant when he said: *But when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will teach you all truth* (John 16, 13). The Holy Spirit is the spiritual Sun, the divine Agent, Who teaches all truth in His Own good time, as the faithful need new life, new courage and new nourishment in the vale of tears, on the long and oft-times dreary and dismal way to eternity. Theologians call this the Development of Doctrine. It conveys nothing new, but only revives, elucidates and renders palatable the truths that were committed to the Deposit of Faith at the time when Jesus taught the Twelve in the hamlets and fields of Palestine.

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart is nothing new. It was the one and, we might say, only devotion of the Blessed Mother to her Divine Child; and it increased as the thirty-three years rolled by and as the seven words, one after the other, pierced her own immaculate heart. It seems that our Lord Himself did not wish to leave this earth until He had given an irresistible stimulant to this Devotion. This happened when the sword of Longinus pierced His Heart on Calvary, and again when He bade Saint Thomas place his hand in His Sacred Side. Thus the start was made and the further development of the Devotion was left to loving souls among the flock of Christ.

It is significant that we find these loving souls among womankind in particular. This is a beautiful tribute and well deserved. When the Apostles, all except Saint John, had fled, the holy women stood guard beneath the Cross. Again on Easter morning, when Saint Peter and the other Apostles were still asleep, the holy women made their way to the sepulcher, and Mary Magdalen hurriedly awakened the sleepers. For this reason she bears the honorable title of *Apostola Apostolorum*. That may be the reason why in the course of Christianity the first to be illumined on the Mystery of the Sacred Heart were the holy nuns, Saint Gertrude and Saint Mechtilde. Needless to add, we are of course aware of the remarkable revelations that were made by the Sacred Heart of our Savior to another holy woman, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, on June 16, 1675; she may therefore be called the chief champion of this Devotion.

Meanwhile the Order of Saint Francis had always evinced a keen interest in the spread of this Devotion. It could not be otherwise when we recall the

leading part our great scholars, missionaries and saints exercised in the Mysteries of our Divine Savior, such as the Crib, the Holy Eucharist, Kingship, the Holy Name, and especially the sacred Passion. Saint became the Herald of Divine Love when, as the Church says, "the world was growing cold." The Seraphic Doctor wrote most eloquently on the Sacred Side. In consequence he is frequently called the Doctor of the Sacred Heart. His Office on Christ's Passion is an armory of striking and illustrations of the Love of the Savior's Heart. The writings of the Discalced Mystics abound in similar sayings and expressions.

It is most appropriate that the month of June, which is frequently the Month of Roses, should be dedicated to the Sacred Heart. The feast is celebrated after the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi; in fact it is a continuation of this Feast, because Our Savior's Love for mankind still lives and pulsates in our tabernacles. As the human heart gathers, feels and expands and sometimes buries within itself man's entire nature and all its open and inmost sensations, so does the Feast of the Sacred Heart assemble the mysteries and meanings of the other Feasts of Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Thus it recalls to us Bethlehem and Epiphany, Nazareth and the roads around Jerusalem, of Palestine, the Cenacle, and above all, Calvary.

For what do we really understand by the Devotion of the Sacred Heart? It is all contained in the one word, love; the love of God for His creature. God's love is infinite and its first object must be His infinite Self. The Mystery of the Blessed Trinity is a mystery of infinite love. This mystery is so deep and glorious, so ineffable and incomprehensible, that human language cannot describe, nor human intelligence grasp it. We often wonder what we shall be doing on the long day of eternity. Here is the answer. If you have listened to beautiful opera, you have at least a very faint idea. But remember there will be no hard seats, no cold feet, no ushers running around with trays of soft drinks, no babies crying, no people yawning, no one snoring. No. It will be heavenly bliss and unspeakable joy over what God will then reveal to those who love him. And let us hope that we shall all be there, at least in the rear seat. We shall be there if, while we have time, we seek to understand the immense love of the Sacred Heart and endeavor to return this love in our prayers and in our daily tasks.

Our Lord revealed a solemn and sacred truth when He said to Nicodemus, who was a teacher in Israel and came to him by night: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him*

*shall not perish but may have life everlasting* (John 3, 16). This is what the Sacred Heart means to us. It is not the statue or the picture that we venerate, but the Love of God, which is here represented, and which was contained, as it were, in the Heart that throbbed in the Savior's breast as He walked among us, which was pierced by the lance, which is still with us in the prisons of our tabernacles. Listen to what Saint Paul has to say on the love of the Redeemer's Heart: *Yes, O my brethren, the very least of all saints, there was given this grace, to announce among the Gentiles the good tidings of the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men as to what is the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God.* You must read the whole passage which concludes in these solemn words: *That He may grant you from His glorious riches to be strengthened with power through His Spirit unto the progress of the inner man; and to have Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts so that, being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God* (Eph. 3, 8-19).

Reading these beautiful lines you will appreciate better and feel more intimately the beautiful invocations that have been assembled in the Litany of the Sacred Heart, and the many other prayers that come from the inspired *fullness of God* (Eph. 3, 8 . . . 19).

And what does it all mean? It means exactly what Jesus said to the Doctor of the law: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Matt. 22, 37-39). This declaration is so sweeping that it leaves no room for anything but the love of God. The doctors of the Law and the Pharisees knew these words by heart and frequently would rattle them off as children do in school. But coming from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth these words carried with them a special significance and a power hitherto unknown. We too know them by heart; but try and speak them slowly before the tabernacle, not once but again and again, and you will find in them the answer to the question you may have often asked yourself: How must I love God? It is not so difficult after all. God has given you a free will and a heart that can love. True love does not consist in feelings or sensations, in tears and other sensible manifestations; and certainly not in visions or revelations. It is in the will, and God frequently wants it to stay there. But it needs exercise, daily



and hourly. Do you recall that Jesus asked Peter three times the same question and only the third time, when Peter in his humility begged that Jesus answer Himself, Jesus seemed satisfied. But as Peter found out later, he had to give proof of his love.

How do we give proof of our love? If we fulfill the second commandment which is like to the first. And here is where the shoe pinches. It is easy that we love God, but listen to Saint John: *If any one says, I love God but hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can he who does not love his brother whom he sees, love God whom he does not see?* (I John 4, 20). Would you have believed that the gentle Saint John could use such language? But he did, and he is very much in earnest; in fact he makes the law of love rather complicated.

The spiritual life really has some tricks in it. First of all we are told that we must love our neighbor as ourselves; which is a very high and unimpeachable standard; in fact we carry it all the time with us. Then, we are told that if we do not love our neighbor we cannot love God. All of which means that the love of our neighbor is commanded by God and that this love is the measure of our love for God. There is no way out. Surely we would love all our neighbors if we did not see them. But here is trouble; we see them, we live with them; we pray with them, we talk to them, we work with them and eat with them. They are always at our elbows, and, try as we may, we cannot avoid them. Their manners displease us, their words hurt us, their very presence makes us nervous.

But this is the cross in monastic life, and in this cross we shall find our salvation. The best way to start the process is to begin with yourself. Some people have said, "The more I see of other people, the more I like myself." Just turn it around and tell the truth. "The more I watch my own frills and fringes, my freaks and fancies, my frivolities and foolishness, the more I am beginning to appreciate the good that is in my neighbor." This brings us back to the biblical yardstick: *Love thy neighbor as thyself.*

But what is the use of speculating and theorizing about charity when we have that sublime and unspeakably beautiful and eminently practical Canon on Charity by Saint Paul the Apostle. Mother Church reads it for us on Quinquagesima Sunday, just when Lent begins. If we wish to test our memory let us learn this unsurpassed classic by heart. We find it in the thirteen chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The present writer used to make all

theologians learn the whole chapter by heart. On a certain day one of them had occasion to stop a controversy among a group of travellers by reciting the whole chapter. A certain gentleman, who probably had never read the Holy Bible, was so struck by its beauty and power that he handed the young man a handsome check — which he did not turn over to me. To us the devout and frequent meditation on this text may mean the solution of all our spiritual problems.

Yes, says Saint Paul, if I do not have charity, *I have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.* And then he goes on to enumerate the properties of this divine virtue. *Charity is patient, is kind.* These are the two basic qualities. Then there follow nine negative and five positive characteristics. Every one drives home and penetrates deep into our hidden self. And mind you, every one hits one of the seven capital sins squarely on the head, so that charity will not only serve you as a stimulant for all virtue, but as a large broom wherewith to clean out God's temple within you. For *the greatest of these is charity.*

And here is another powerful text; one that will rejoice your Franciscan heart, for it was written by the seraphic pen of Saint Bonaventure. We priests say it after Mass, and all Religious should say it after Holy Communion. Mark the beginning and you will want to read it to the end. "O most sweet Lord Jesus, pierce through the marrow and inmost parts of my soul with the wound of thy love, sweet and strong above measure; with a love that is true, serene, apostolic and most holy; so that my soul may ever languish and be dissolved by naught else but the love and longing for Thee." This is a feeble effort to return to the Sacred Heart the love wherewith He has loved us.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.



*Let thy priests go clad in the vesture of innocence, thy faithful cry aloud with rejoicing (Ps. 131, 9).* Now see why the prophet says this. Under the Law the priests offered victims which could justify no one; but after the Blessed Virgin carried to the Temple a living victim, a holy victim, a victim pleasing to God, namely, her Blessed Son, then could the priests go clad in the vesture of innocence because they can offer a sanctifying and justifying victim; and because of this the faithful who understand can cry aloud with rejoicing.

Saint Bonaventure:

*Sermon on the Purification*

## MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

### IV

#### *I Pray For Them*

Saint Paul tells us that the priesthood of Christ differs from that of the Old Testament. *For He (Christ) does not need to offer sacrifices daily for His Own sins, and then for the sins of the people* (Heb. 7, 27). The entire priesthood of Christ, with its prayers and sacrifice, was directed toward the salvation and sanctification of His fellow men. And because our Lord is the sinless Son of Man and the divine Son of God, His sacrifice was especially pleasing to God on high. He was indeed a worthy intercessor for the human race. *It was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and become higher than the heavens* (Heb. 26).

Our Lord never lost sight of the fact that He was a priest, a mediator between God and man, *appointed for men in the things pertaining to God* (Heb. 5, 1). *I pray for them . . .*, He would say; *sanctify them in truth and for them I sanctify Myself* (John 17, 9 . . . 19). The sacrifice of the Mass, which our Redeemer offered was for the benefit of the human race, for *He died for all men*. Always our Lord was thinking of others, working for them, praying for them, and giving His life as a sacrifice for them. That is why, He instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, He did so with the words, *My blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many* (Mk. 14, 24).

The Catholic priest is not perfectly sinless like Christ, the *Son who is ever perfect* (Heb. 7, 28). Therefore in the Holy Mass he does have to offer sacrifice *first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people*. This is indicated in the very words of the Mass: *Ego indignus famulus tuus . . . propter multitudinem peccatis et offensionibus, et negligentiam meis*.

Yet the liturgy of the Mass itself also indicates quite clearly that we, the Catholic priests of Jesus Christ, are to imitate Him in this, that we exercise our priesthood and offer the sacrifice in behalf of our fellow men. *Et pro omnibus circumstantibus, sed et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis vivis et defunctis*. Or again: *Offerimus tibi . . . pro nostra et totius mundi salute*. The exhortation: *Orate fratres: ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat*. The memento of the living and also that of the departed directly call to mind the priest's office of mediator, whereas the entire Mass Liturgy with its words

## MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

147

*Offerimus, Offerimus, Rogamus, Nobis*, etc., indirectly remind the priest that he is praying and sacrificing for the people.

The more the priest realizes his position as mediator between God and man, the better will he pray. Reading the daily papers he cannot be ignorant of the *tribulationes plebium, pericula populorum, captivorum gemitus, miserias orphanorum*, as Saint Ambrose calls them. His own contacts with souls reveals the *necessitates peregrinorum, inopiam debilium, desperationes languentium, affectus senum, suspiria juvenum, vota virginum, lamenta viduarum*. Each new sorrow of the Church, seen and sympathized with, serves to enlarge his priestly heart and enrich his priestly prayer. The love and compassion of a son praying for his mother will be manifest in the prayer of the priest for the Church as he offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

*I have chosen you and appointed you*, says our Lord. Yes, *appointed FOR MEN in the things that pertain to God*. That is why we must offer the Mass in His spirit of love for men. *Do this*, He commands, *in remembrance of me*.

### V

#### *A Body Thou Has Fitted to Me*

Nowadays it sometimes happens that a blind person receives the gift of sight through a skillful operation. Such a person truly appreciates the wonderful faculty of sight. But the average man does not. His bodily senses and powers are simply taken for granted until accident or disease assails them.

The God-Man, Jesus Christ, on the other hand, had a keen and perfect appreciation of His bodily gifts. He realized what it means to be a creature; to have come from absolutely nothing into bodily existence. To see the green of Nazarene pastures, to feel the cool breeze of Lake Genesareth on His cheek, to scent the fragrant flowers plucked by Mary, to taste the daily bread given by the Father. All these things were gratefully received and used by the Son of Man. *A body thou hast fitted to me* (Heb. 10, 5).

All through His life Christ acknowledged that His body had been given by God. Of course, His sinless body bore the yoke of the Ten Commandments. But in addition it yielded up its powers to the service and glory of God. Our Savior fasted in the desert, spent sleepless nights in prayer, plodded wearily through the Palestinian roads and preached continuously the Kingdom of God. Last of all, He took bread and wine and said to His Apostles: *This is My Body*;

*This is My Blood.* And on the following day He offered up His body and blood for the human life in the Sacrifice of the Cross. This is the manner in which He uses His body.

We know that our Lord wants us to imitate His life and virtues. Consequently we should strive to assimilate His attitude toward the human body and use it as He himself did.

Nowhere, however, is the imitation of Christ more obligatory or opportune than at the time of Holy Mass. *Do THIS*, He says, *in remembrance of Me* (Lk. 22, 20). Here in the Mass we can and should truly glorify God with our body. Here our bodily powers truly serve their Creator in the most perfect manner.

The tongue, so often the instrument of sin, here at least blesses God and utters the solemn words of Consecration. The eyes, so easily led away by idle or sinful curiosity, here are fixed intently on the most Blessed Sacrament. The mind, often occupied with the chaff of secular magazine and newspaper literature, now fastens on the kernel of God's word and the sublime prayer of the Missal. The hands, man's chief instrument of crime, now carry out the sacred actions for which they were anointed. All the bodily powers, no longer intent on self-indulgence, are alert and poised for the beautiful drama that is the Mass. We frail humans live so much in the body and by the body that here in the Mass the priest can make the body worthy of its existence. He comes closest to Christ, whose life was a serving of God with His human nature.

*Children have blood and flesh in common*, says Saint Paul. Now we are the brothers of Christ. Therefore we can say with Him, *A body Thou hast fitted for me*. And we shall also imitate His perfect use of the body, if we begin to celebrate Holy Mass in His spirit. For the norm and inspiration of our life is to be found in the Sacrifice of the Mass. *Do this in remembrance of Me*.

(to be continued)

Columbus, Nebr.

Fr. Martin Wolter, O.S.A.



Where there is fear of the Lord to guard the house the enemy cannot find a way to enter.

Admonitions of St. Francis

## THE GENERAL ABSOLUTION FOR RELIGIOUS AND TERTIARIES

General absolution is a highly valued adjunct to the sources of spiritual help that are needed in the lives of religious and tertiaries. This article is an attempt to present some basic ideas on the nature of general absolution and an outline of practical rules gathered from various authors and from papal documents. The arrangement and order will follow for the most part that of an article recently published by Father Joseph Sirna O.F.M. Conv.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. HISTORICAL ORIGIN

General absolution is a benefit conceded by the Roman Pontiffs to religious with the intention of assisting them in the way of perfection, by removing obstacles and difficulties which arise from the past life or from the religious life itself.

The first appearance of this absolution cannot be determined easily. Historically, the origin seems to rest in a gradual development of the idea, and to some extent a separate development of various parts. The Constitution *Virtute conspicuos* of Clement IV, July 21, 1265, granted the Franciscans a faculty quite similar to general absolution. This Constitution speaks of absolution and dispensation being given to those who need it for cases that occurred before or after their entrance into the Order. There is some doubt whether the faculty given in this Constitution could be used outside the sacrament of Penance or not.

Gregory XIV in his Constitution, *Illius, qui gregis Domini*, September 21, 1591, granted to the General Prefect of the *Clerics Regular for the Care of the Sick* the faculty of absolving their subjects in a manner and to an extent that closely resembles the modern general absolution. An important difference from the modern idea is found in the clause: "the faculty of absolving . . . in the forum of conscience only", without the additional phrase: "and of the penitential [forum]." During this period the general absolution was restricted to absolution in the sacrament only when the full clause "the faculty of absolving in the forum of conscience and the penitential forum only" was used. Hence at this stage, the absolution could also be given outside the sacrament of Penance.

The limitation of the imparting of this absolution to certain feasts of the year was apparently first determined by Clement VIII in his Constitution

<sup>1</sup>Miscellanea Francescana, Vol. 50 (1950, Apr.-Jun.), pp. 213-230.

*Infirmi aevi conditio*, April 20, 1592, to the Brethren of the Blessed Mary of Mercy. This Constitution notes that the Brethren give the absolution on days when other religious organizations usually do it, advises that based only on a tradition in the Order, and confirms and re-grants the absolution. Apparently other Orders had this same faculty either by direct grant or communication of privileges.

## 2. THE NATURE OF GENERAL ABSOLUTION

General absolution is given to religious only on stated days. It is not in the form of a sacrament, since there are many points lacking in it which are required for absolution in the sacrament of Penance. General absolution can be classified as a blessing, i. e., as one of the *sacramentals*. This blessing, granted by the Holy See, is endowed with the specific benefits of a plenary indulgence and an absolution from censures and from transgressions of the Rule.

In the formula *Ne reminiscaris* there are two essential parts: 1) the absolution from censures; 2) the plenary indulgence.

### 1) The absolution from censures

The formula for this absolution consists in: a) the prayer of petition to Christ, that He absolve those present; b) the general declaration of power to the one granting the absolution, who acts, not in his own name, but in the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Apostles, etc.; c) the effect of granting of the absolution follows: *ab omni vinculo excommunicationis suspensionis et interdicti*, i. e., "from every bond of excommunication, suspension and interdict." A secondary effect of this absolution is the reconciliation with the Church, which the person may have lost through censures.

The days on which the general absolution may be imparted must be determined from the lists as found in the Rituals of the various Orders.

It is not very clear just how far this absolution from censures extends. However, we may safely consider it as a precautionary absolution, to remit censures that were contracted with some ignorance or that were forgotten. At any rate, considering the present regulations of the Code of Canon Law, the censures that can be remitted by the general absolution are few in number. They can be remitted by other methods that are more available and expedient.

Hence the important part of the general absolution is the plenary indulgence, which will now be considered.

### 2) The plenary indulgence

The last section of the absolution formula deals with the plenary indulgence. It goes into some detail, which we might consider here in passing.

First of all there is an absolution from the punishment due to violations of the religious life. These violations can be "of the vows and the rule, of the constitutions, ordinations and admonitions of our superiors." Then follows the absolution from "forgotten or even neglected penances"; and since this is a plenary indulgence, the absolution must pertain not only to penances inflicted by religious superiors as such, but also by confessors in the sacrament of Penance. Finally, there is a "remission and indulgence of all sins . . . already confessed." The traditional interpretation of this phraseology is that the punishment due to sin is fully remitted, that is, a plenary indulgence is granted. Mortal sin cannot be remitted by this absolution, but only by the sacrament of Penance, or, outside of the sacrament, by perfect contrition with the intention of confessing sacramentally. With regard to venial sin, the sacramentals, of which general absolution is one, remit venial sins at least indirectly, by exciting a sense of contrition and charity in the soul. But after the remission of any sin, there is frequently some temporal punishment due to sin that must be atoned for either in this life or the next. The Church offers a means of making the due satisfaction in this life through the general absolution. Of course, the dispositions of the recipient will determine whether the remission is plenary or not; if the recipient still has some unremitted venial sins, or has some attachment to sin, the indulgence can be only partial.

By a grant of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on June 7, 1919, when religious of the First or Second Order cannot conveniently receive general absolution in the formula *Ne reminiscaris* (intended for them), but receive the absolution in a church or oratory where it is publicly given to tertiary seculars in the formula *Intret*, they receive not only the plenary indulgence, as do the tertiaries, but also the absolution from censures.

Question A: Is the absolution from censures valid for both the internal and external forum, or only for the internal?

The solution of this question is important, since, if the absolution is valid for the internal forum only, the censure can be urged in the external forum if

it is notorious; on the contrary, if the absolution is extended to the external forum, the censured person is completely absolved, and all juridical effects of punishment cease. But, as mentioned already in this article, the absolution is more precautionary in nature, and for the purpose of remitting censures were contracted with some ignorance or forgotten. For various reasons it is difficult to maintain that general absolution goes beyond this. The two cases mentioned, forgotten censures, or those contracted in ignorance, must appear to be limited to those only that have not gone beyond the internal forum. The conclusion here offered is that the general absolution applies only to the internal forum.

Question B: Is the general absolution a sacramental or an authoritative absolution?

All references in the general absolution are to be taken as references to punishment due to sin. This is apparently common usage in Papal Bulls and Jubilees. The absolution for such punishment can be given without sacramental confession, and when so done is an authoritative absolution. This is no different else than the granting of an indulgence, through the proper use of a sacramental absolution formula, which is the case in the general absolution.

### 3. THE ACTIVE SUBJECT

The one imparting the absolution must be a priest. The faculty of granting the general absolution is committed mediately to the superiors, to be imparted on the days assigned, subject to particular privileges and indults. The superior, even local superiors, can, in places where they have jurisdiction, delegate to priests.

The following points should be noted:

- 1) For nuns (i. e., in communities with solemn vows) subject to him, the local Ordinary may appoint a suitable priest, even though he is not appointed for hearing their confessions.
- 2) The confessor of sick nuns of the Poor Clares can impart the absolution within the octave of the feast to which it is assigned, when he enters the cloister under conditions laid down in law for the confessions of sick nuns.
- 3) General absolution may be imparted to tertiaries by either the Minister General or the Provincial or the local superior of a convent of the First or Third Order Regular, or by someone delegated or subdelegated by the same.

- 4) The Director of tertiaries can impart this absolution to tertiaries. It seems that he can also delegate this faculty to others by reason of his office.

These distinctions should be kept in mind: a) if the general absolution is imparted to tertiaries in their own churches, only a priest of the Order can be delegated, though he might not be approved for confessions; b) if the absolution is to be imparted in a church not pertaining to the tertiaries, only priests approved for confessions can be delegated. If a priest satisfying these conditions cannot be had, any confessor whether regular or secular can, by indult, be delegated.

Can *chaplains* of religious women impart the absolution without delegation? In practice they do give it, though they often are neither superiors nor confessors of religious women, nor religious, nor simple confessors of the faithful. It seems that they are entitled to impart the absolution in virtue of their acting as chaplains of religious women, by considering their functions as parallel to those of Rectors of churches, who are prohibited by Canon Law from carrying out only parochial functions. General absolution is not a parochial function.

One could object that delegation for these chaplains is lacking inasmuch as the faculty is reserved to the superiors of the Order, and delegation is required. However the contrary custom is common and has never been objected to by authorities. Such a practice, which is so common, can be explained only by some privilege or a custom beyond the law. The practice is also reasonable, in the meaning of canon 27, especially since the cessation of that practice would deprive many religious women of the absolution.

The formula of absolution is now the same for all Regulars, and is the only valid formula, by a Constitution of Leo XIII, July 7, 1882. For nuns and for tertiaries living in common and professing simple vows, the formula is *Ne reminiscaris*, omitting the word, *suspensionis*. In order to bring this formula into agreement with the penal code in Canon law, the words, *majoris, vel minoris*, have been omitted from this formula, as will be seen from examining the Roman Ritual as published after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon law in 1917.<sup>2</sup> For the rest, the word of the post-Code formula is identical with the pre-Code formula. In the confessional a shorter form, which is given in the Roman

<sup>2</sup>The Capuchins received a reply from the Sacred Congregation for Religious, dated June 7, 1919, that the words *majoris, vel minoris* should no longer be kept in the formula. Cf. *Acta O.F.M.*, 38 (1919), 230.

Ritual, may be used not only for secular tertiaries, but also for religious tertiaries. This was granted from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, March 22, 1905.

An unusual aspect of the plenary indulgence acquired in the absolution is that it is applicable not only to the dead but also to the living.

#### 4. THE ABSOLUTION GIVEN IN CHAPTERS

The absolution applies only to those present at the Chapter. A limitation previously mentioned should be kept in mind, that the absolution applies at least to censures contracted with some ignorance or forgetfulness. The absolution would not apply to simony, because this is completed essentially after the election, and as such could not be affected by the absolution which is given before the election.

The absolution is relative rather than absolute. That is, the absolution is valid for the censures as noted above, only in reference to the election, for the purpose of removing disqualifications of the voters and candidates. The safer opinion holds that the censures will revive, once the election has been completed. If a member of the chapter recalls, after the election, that he was under some censure or irregularity, he should consider himself as still under that censure or irregularity, and apply for absolution or dispensation, respectively, through the normal canonical channels.

#### 5. GENERAL ABSOLUTION OF SECULAR TERTIARIES

The general absolution given to secular tertiaries (also termed lay tertiaries) differs in several respects from that for Regulars. The chief difference is in the formula. For tertiaries, the absolution contains a blessing with the annexed plenary indulgence; for those in religious Orders, there is the added absolution for all censures.

The formulae are also different. For regulars and tertiaries living a community life, it is the *Ne reminiscaris* formula. For secular tertiaries it is the *Intret oratio mea* formula. It is to be noted that if the absolution is given by the confessor, though confession at that time is not required, the absolution must be given in the place destined for hearing confessions, or immediately after confession. In the confessional, the short formula is to be used, whether for tertiaries or regulars receive the absolution.

An important privilege was granted to tertiaries (Sacred Congregation of Rites, June 7, 1919), by which secular tertiaries, when present in choir or in church or oratory where members of the First or Second Order are publicly imparted the absolution under the formula *Ne reminiscaris*, also acquire the plenary indulgence, and (by extraordinary grant for this case) an absolution from all censures.

Whether the general absolution is given in or outside the sacrament of Penance, the priest imparting it gains the benefit of the same absolution, provided he is qualified in law to receive it. If the priest is a religious, qualified in law to receive absolution from censures under the formula *Ne reminiscaris*, he cannot at the time conveniently receive it under that formula, he receives the added benefit when he imparts the absolution to secular tertiaries under the formula *Intret oratio mea*.

By papal indult, tertiaries of various branches of the Franciscan Order can receive both the papal blessing and general absolution from a Director of a branch of the Order not their own.

The list of assigned days for general absolution for secular tertiaries is omitted here, because of variations in the different grants.

Tertiaries can receive general absolution publicly or privately on the day assigned, from midnight to midnight, or on any day within the octave connected with the assigned day. If the sacramental confession has already been made, it can be given privately to an individual on the day preceding, even in the morning. In this case it is required that 1) the penitent be in the state of grace; 2) the absolution be imparted in the confessional, or a place properly designated for the hearing of confessions. However, it may be imparted at a place distinct from that of the confession.

When a legitimately assigned priest is not available, all tertiaries, both regular and secular, male and female members of any branch of the Franciscans, can receive general absolution in common (not individually) from any priest who has been approved for hearing confessions. This priest, as was stated above, receives himself the general absolution in this case also, if he is qualified by law to receive it.

#### 6. CONDITIONS FOR ACQUIRING THE INDULGENCE

The conditions are confession, communion and prayer according to the

intention of the Holy Father. But it is not necessary that these conditions be fulfilled immediately before or on the day of reception of the general absolution. It suffices to meet these conditions within the eight-day periods prior or following the day to which the absolution is annexed. The prayer according to the intention of the Holy Father has not been determined; but it is vocal, not mental. In general when, for the acquiring of indulgences, prayer is required, it suffices to say one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory. In some cases, a specified prayer has been determined for an indulgence, but such is not the case here. It is more in conformity with the mind of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences that the required Prayer be said on the day of reception of the sacraments of Confession and Communion.

For communities receiving the general absolution as a group, the required prayers are, by a fairly prevalent custom, taken care of by the priest in common with the community at the end of the absolution. Rituals and Manuals of Prayer for religious indicate, at the end of the formula, that this is to be done.

The effect of the general absolution takes place only when all the conditions have been fulfilled, and not necessarily when the word *impertior* in the formula is pronounced by the priest. Of course, if the prescribed conditions have been fulfilled before the pronouncing of the formula, the effect would be the same as if the formula were pronounced.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Roch Knopke O.S.A.



Because we have once come to the Heart of the sweetest Lord Jesus, *it is good for us to be here*, let us not easily be torn away from Him of Whom it is written that *the men who swerve from Thee will be names written in the book of the living*. What then will be the fate of those who approach Thee? It is written that *those who shall draw near to Thee and be glad and rejoice in Thee, remembering Thy Heart. Behold how good and how pleasant it is to dwell in this Heart!* A treasure, a priceless pearl, is Thy Heart, good Jesus, which we find in the ploughed field of Thy Body. Who is there who would cast this pearl as a stone? Nay, rather, I shall give all pearls, barter all my thoughts and loves, and account myself that one pearl, *casting the burden of my thoughts into the Heart of the good Jesus, and it will without deceit sustain me.*

Saint Bonaventure

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

If reading and meditation nourish us with spiritual food and prayer, they make us live in the refreshing atmosphere of union with God, our spiritual growth develops with the grace of God in the performance of good works. Through good works Christ, Who lives in us, will manifest Himself, will appear as He did in Palestine, *bona faciendo*. Hence, to neglect good works would not only retard our spiritual growth; it would mean that Christ is no longer manifest in us, and that we are practically dead in consequence. Our Lord had no use for a barren tree; we know how He cursed the fig tree that bore no fruit. Let us then examine ourselves in

### NEGLIGENCE IN DOING GOOD WORKS.

At first sight this subject appears too vast to be restricted to a single point in our examination of conscience. After all, everything that a religious person must do is in one sense a good work. However there seems little doubt that what the Seraphic Doctor means by good works are those deeds in which our dear Savior excelled, the positive works of charity. As Saint Paul informs us, it is by such works that we grow in Christ. *Rather are we to practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in Him Who is the head, Christ. For from Him the whole body . . . derives its increase to the building up of itself in love*; for in this way we shall attain to the perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4, 15-16 and 13). In this examination therefore we shall not ask ourselves about negligence in our daily duties as commanded by God and by our Rule and constitutions, but restrict ourselves to the positive works of charity. Their practice is diametrically opposed to our selfishness. Through good works we shall eradicate from our souls the worst obstacle to religious perfection, inordinate self-love.

One way of conducting such an examination would be to follow the sequence of the corporal or spiritual works of mercy. For the benefit of those who wish to follow this procedure we can list the corporal works according to the time-honored Latin verse:

*Visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo.*

A similar verse expresses the sequence of the spiritual works of mercy:

*Consule, carpe, doce, solare, remitte, fer, ora.*

Let us present the same commands in another form. First, let us ask whether

we are negligent in doing good in our own community. This question is first, for unfortunately it sometimes happens that religious reserve their charity almost exclusively for outsiders while the members of their own community suffer. If one will pardon the cliché, charity begins at home even if one should not stay there. Consequently, let us ask, Do I try to be of help to my fellow religious count on me as far as the corporal and spiritual needs and mercy are concerned? Am I alert to their needs? Is it self-love or pride that determines my willingness to help? Superiors, in particular, should examine themselves on this.

Am I sympathetic to the suffering of others? Can Saint Paul's charity be applied to my community, that when one member suffers all others sympathize? Do I show consideration and understanding toward those who suffer? Or don't I care to be bothered? In general it is not difficult to be sympathetic with others. At times an understanding silence or a few considerate words suffice to bring about great consolation especially if it is in the case of spiritual suffering or one in which the individual has been involved in a serious sin.

Do I rejoice with others? Do I make their happiness my own? This is much more difficult than sympathetic charity. How do I react to the joys of others in my community? Am I genuinely pleased? Are my congratulations sincere? Do I try to make recreation pleasant for all? I must remember that joy is an outstanding feature of the sons and daughters of Saint Francis. Sadness is infectious, so too is joy.

Have I practiced the charity of *bearing with others*? Here we strike a severe blow to self-love. To bear in patience is one of the highest virtues of charity. It is in this sense, as Saint Paul puts it, that *charity bears with all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*. How do I put up with the peculiarities of others? How do I bear with those who really do give me no nerves? Does my charity go so far as to trust their good will, or am I full of suspicion? Do I hope for them even against hope, even when everything seems to the opposite? Superiors will have a vast field for self-examination concerning this patient charity, which is trusting and full of hope. They must imitate the good work of their Father in heaven, Who lets His sun shine upon the just and unjust alike. What wonders can be done by the patience and understanding and trust of superiors in particular.

The second part of our examination should be directed toward the tasks which have been assigned to us. If they are performed out of obedience

and have the blessing of the superiors, they are good works in any case. Was I faithful to the specific tasks assigned to me? Do I have the zeal that should be expected from me? In the care of souls? In teaching and nursing? In working for the community in various ways? Or must I blame myself for negligence? Have my activities in these fields really been *good works*?

The third part of our examination should be concerned with those outside the community. To radiate charity, especially joy in the Lord—to bring joy to others—this is a distinguishing mark of the Franciscan family. How have I fulfilled my Franciscan vocation? Have I been good to everyone? Saint Francis could not stand for it when one of his brethren refused to do good to a robber, for after all, argued Francis, was he not a *brother* robber? In my good works am I guided more by human prudence and caution than by the desire to share in the radiance of the love and goodness of God Himself? Are our convent doors really a refuge for people in bodily and spiritual misery? How much good can be done by a brother or a sister who attends the poor. What beautiful example do we have in the Saint, Brother Conrad of Parzham. Even if we cannot help materially, do we give spiritual help at least? Do we bring a little sunshine into the lives of these unfortunates? And what about the alms of good example? We Franciscans should certainly not remain aloof from the ordinary people; at the same time we should not demean ourselves. We spring from a noble race, children of the Great King. Was I kind and patient and understanding and condescending with everyone? In regard to this Saint Francis admonishes us:

*I counsel, admonish and exhort my Friars in the Lord Jesus Christ that when they go through the world they neither quarrel nor contend in words, nor judge others; but let them be gentle, peaceful and modest, meek and humble, speaking uprightly to all, as it becometh.*

And the new Third Order Rule:

*Let the conduct of the Brothers and Sisters be such that they may edify all by word and example, remembering that our Lord said, So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 5, 16). Let them approach everybody with the humble and pious greeting of peace, and bear peace with them not only on their lips but also in their hearts.*



## FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Among its summer courses, the Franciscan Institute also offers scientific studies in Franciscan Spirituality. These courses are part of a series that cover the nature of the Franciscan way of life as well as the sources, development and influence of Franciscanism upon the intellectual and devotional life of the Church. Special attention is also given to Catholic Action and to the social interests and tasks of the Third Order Secular. Teachers are preachers, missionaries, directors of souls, novice masters and mistresses, and all who are charged with the education and spiritual formation of young religious or of the faithful in general should find these courses a great help in understanding more fully the richness of their Franciscan heritage and in imparting the Franciscan message to others.

The attention of those interested in Franciscan Spirituality is called especially to the following courses

Sources of Franciscan Spirituality  
The *Itinerarium* of Saint Bonaventure  
Readings from David of Augsburg  
History of the Franciscan Order  
Third Order Workshop



These courses may be audited or taken for graduate credit leading to the degree of Master of Arts. The complete schedule of the Franciscan Institute Summer Session, beginning July 3 and ending August 9, is as follows:

725	History of Franciscan Theology. Part III: Duns Scotus. . . . .	2 credits
	Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M.	
630	Franciscan Spirituality. Part II: Sources of Franciscan Spirituality. Life and writings of St. Francis . . . . .	2 credits
	Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M.	
630a	Readings from David of Augsburg . . . . .	1 credit
	Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M.	
605	History of Franciscan Philosophy. Part II: Duns Scotus . . . . .	2 credits
	Allan Wolter, O.F.M.	
605a	Readings from Duns Scotus . . . . .	1 credit
	Allan Wolter, O.F.M.	
540	History of the Franciscan Order. Part 1 . . . . .	2 credits
535	Third Order Workshop. Nature, aim and importance of the Third Order Secular, spirit and activities of the Tertiary apostolate, mutual relations of the Third Order and other Catholic organizations; in- ternational coordination of Tertiary forces . . . . .	2 credits
	Gerard Fitzsimmons, O.F.M.	
518a and b	Latin Palaeography of the 13th to 15th centuries . . . . .	2 credits
	Gaudens Mohan, O.F.M.	
505a	The <i>Itinerarium</i> of Saint Bonaventure . . . . .	2 credits
	Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.	
	For further information address FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE St. Bonaventure University St. Bonaventure, N. Y.	

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Is it not strange that, while heaven and earth cannot contain the Almighty Who holds the universe in the palm of His hand, the earthly life of the same Eternal God should be completed in thirty-three short years, and that the course of this life should be contained within a few chapters written down by the four Evangelists? Written down, we might add, in a simple, plain-spoken, popular manner. But there is the Finger of God, which knows how to draw greatness out of smallness, grandeur and glory out of simplicity. For these nineteen hundred years Mother Church has pondered over these unadorned and unpretentious pages of the Holy Gospel, and, behold, what an overwhelming array of festivals, rites and devotions she has set up for the entire course of the ecclesiastical year. We are made to think of a small basket filled with greens and flowers, and lo, late in the day, busy and skilful hands have emptied the basket and made the altar look like an object of entrancing beauty. The basket is the Gospel; the altar, the calendar of the Church.

Being written for human beings, this ecclesiastical calendar concentrates primarily on those events and objects in the life of the God-Man that offer a special appeal to the human mind and heart. The Christmas cycle dwells lovingly on His birth of Mary the Virgin. Eastertide shows forth the struggle between death and life. Calvary recalls His bitter death. Pentecost, His life's work, the Church. His authority is featured in the Feast of Christ's Kingship. Our daily bread, the chief means of human subsistence, plays its part in the Holy Eucharist. Motherhood, so close to man's life and love, is revered in the numerous feasts of the Mother of God. The heart, the source of human weal and woe alike, comes to the fore in the devotion to our Saviour's Sacred Heart. And last of all, there is the blood in our veins, the life-spring, as it were, of our existence. No wonder that Mother Church throughout the ages should have instilled into the hearts of her children a fond love and devotion to the Precious Blood of our Lord, and that the beautiful Month of July should have been dedicated to this Devotion.

Blood is indeed an outstanding factor not only in the physical and moral life of the individual, but in all the history of the human race as well, from the most ancient monuments of primitive human script to the mountains of journals and literature that day after day fill our streets and homes. And since from the earliest dawn of human history blood has been looked upon as the fountain and sign of life, as the visible test of the noblest in man when he possesses it, even as his greatest calamity when he loses it, therefore, blood has



There is nothing so wholesome and uplifting in the spiritual life as abiding sorrow for our sins. It cleanses the soul; it strengthens all our spiritual faculties; it mellows our harsh and proud nature; it checks our temper in our passions; it evens the way to true sanctity. It is not necessary, and may be harmful, to remember individual or specific sins. In fact, Father Ignace remarks rather humorously that happy are those souls who have a poor memory because they can forget their sins. Be that as it may, we cannot afford to forget that we are sinners. Saint Matthew was a publican, that is, a sinner by the parlance of the day and, mind you, he kept this title to the end as if he were in this dubitable distinction.

But suppose God in His mercy has kept us from grievous sins all our lives. In that case we have all the more reason to meditate on the heinousness and enormity of sins because they caused bitter and excruciating pains to the Good Lord Who has sheltered us under the blood-stained mantle that Pontius Pilate placed upon Him. Then we have all the more reason to say the most exquisitely beautiful prayer with its soul-stirring invocations, which was composed by one of the early Franciscan Saints and adopted by Saint Ignace of Loyola as the prayer of his choice. *Anima Christi, sanctifica me . . .* "So sanctify me, O Christ, sanctify me; Blood of Christ, inebriate me . . ."

With our left hand we beg for alms. May the Wound in Christ's left hand bestir us to the prayer of petition. For what shall I ask? Behold, the whole world is before you with all its iniquities, its evils, its needs and its manifold woes, both hidden and open. Ask for your own progress in sanctity, for the conversion of sinners and heathens, for the Church and its leaders and priests, for the afflicted and those in despair; for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Remember that the Lamb of God was slain for all, and that you, being washed in the blood of the Lamb should share His divine intentions and ring the bell of the voice of your supplications to the far-flung corners of Christ's vast Empire. It is a wholesome practice at meditation, when you feel drowsy, distracted, weary, to look around in God's wide world and pray for each and every creature that comes to mind. It is time well spent.

Man starts his day's work on the right foot, for movement indicates the will to do, and the will to make sacrifices. Sacrifice means self-conquest through suffering, and therefore it is the noblest word in the monastic dictionary. Sacrifice and prayer the Religious makes up what is wanting in the efforts of the countless lagging and lukewarm members of Christ's Mystical Body. Meanwhile each act of sacrifice is a proof of our love for the Crucified. Oppor-

unities for sacrifice surround us day and night; they are never far to seek. The worldling hates and shuns them; he submits to all manner of self-imposed restraints and sometimes tortures, to avoid a small discomfiture or to bask for an hour in the sunlight of social glory. Society ladies, I assume without knowing, must spend hours and days of artificial torment in preparation for a social event, to make themselves appear what they are not. How happy our Religious, who always appear in state, who always take things as they come, who always deny themselves for the sake of Him who suffered for us. The spirit of sacrifice is the philosophical basis for our peace and contentment. This is what Saint Paul had in mind when he wrote: *For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter* (Rom. 8, 36). From this Pauline hyperbole we should extract the kernel, which is to have always before us the Lamb of God Who takes away our sins.

When we look upon the Wound in the Savior's left foot, we think of that blissful state of mind which is called Resignation. It is one thing to bear self-imposed sacrifices; it is quite another, and far superior in merit, to accept with grace and love what God may send us. In fact, this perfect conformity with God's Will brings us up to the highest rung on the ladder of perfection. It is the state of a passive abandonment to the divine Will, and most acceptable to our Savior carrying the cross to Calvary. His life may be written in the words, Conformity to His Father's Will. He Himself coined the classical text: *I do always the things that are pleasing to him* (John 8, 29), which may serve as the surest way to perfection.

The Wound in the Savior's side opens an avenue to the unfathomable storehouse of ineffable spiritual riches, for it is the way to His Sacred Heart. It is difficult to choose among so much heavenly wealth. Let us single out the brightest gem, holy zeal. *The zeal for thy house*, we hear our Savior say, *has eaten me up* (Ps. 68, 10). But His language waxes stronger as He exclaims, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled* (Lk. 12, 49). This is the fire of zeal, and we must all be enkindled by its flames. We must become, each in his own way, apostles of zeal. "He who has no zeal has no love," says Saint Ambrose. For if love is the queen among the virtues, holy zeal is her crown. "What is the heart of an apostle?" asks the celebrated Cassiodorus. "It is," he continues, "a tiny tool; but it carries the world within; it reaches to heaven above; it comprises the entire universe." For the sake of the Precious Blood of our divine Master, let us become apostles of zeal.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

## MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

### VI

#### *Recolitur Memoria Passionis Ejus*

*Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles suas.* It was on the eve of His passion and death that our Lord instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass. On the night before their execution criminals are customarily treated to a good banquet. So also on the eve of His death our Lord partook of a meal, the Paschal supper. But it was not good food that comforted the Heart of Christ as the gloom of His sufferings cast their shadows before Him. No, it was rather the presence round that table of loyal and loving friends. Jesus took heart in the knowledge that tonight He was leaving them a means of His death, a means during the years to come of calling to mind His redemptive sufferings — and not only for these disciples but for generations to come. That is why He closed the celebration of His First Mass with the same command, *Do this in remembrance of me* (Lk. 22, 20).

The Mass is truly a beautiful reminder of our Lord's suffering and death. In it we see the bread and wine separated, picturing for us the separation of Christ's Blood from His Body when He died on the Cross. At the Offertory when we raise up the chalice (as well as several other times), we must be reminded of Christ on the Cross. Frequently the Sign of the Cross is made during the Sacrifice. And at the Consecration those significant words are repeated, *pridie quam pateretur . . .* Surely the priest cannot easily forget the passion of His Savior during Holy Mass. And surely our hearts must fill with sorrow and tender compassion for those sufferings. Neither will there be boundless gratitude for that Divine Lover, Who gave up His life that we might live unto God.

But the Mass, as every Catholic knows, is more than just a memorial supper calling to mind the passion and death of Christ. It is actually a renewal, in different form, of the same death on the Cross. For we have the same priest, namely, our High Priest, Jesus Christ. And He offers the same Victim, Which is His Sacred Humanity. Only this is an unbloody offering. The Mass is the prolongation through time and space of the redemptive death of Christ on the Cross. It is the means by which the faithful of the twentieth century can participate in the sacrifice which Christ offers in His name. It is the great means by which the blessings and graces of the Sac-

## MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

of the Cross are brought to the people of today. No priest should ever forget that he is helping our Lord to renew the awesome Sacrifice of the Cross.

The Sacrifice of the Cross was the important climax to a life of labor and sacrifice for the salvation of men. The preaching and miracles, fasting and prayer, were preludes to this great Sacrifice. So also with the priest. All his labors and prayers must center around the Mass. His preaching and instruction ultimately tend to make Catholics, who will believe in Christ and come to participate in the Christian Sacrifice of the New Law. Children must be baptized before they can really assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Sinners must be absolved before they dare partake of the Communion of the Mass. The Gospel must be explained and molded into the practical life of the faithful, else the grace of the Mass remains sterile. It will require sacrifices on the part of the priest, therefore, to make the Mass the powerhouse of good that it must be for the people. These sacrifices he will make willingly, saying with Saint Paul, *I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for His body . . . the Church* (Col. 1, 24). Yes, the priest will make those sacrifices gladly, if his morning Mass recalls vividly the Sacrifice made by Christ. *Do this in remembrance of me.*

### VII

#### *A Pattern to the Flock*

Saint Luke relates an occasion in our Lord's life when *it came to pass as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'* (Lk. 11, 1). What reverence and devotion, what loving joy must have radiated from the praying Jesus to have prompted that spontaneous desire for imitation! Saint John the Evangelist also records for our instruction a significant phrase of Jesus concerning His audible prayer at the raising of Lazarus: *Because of the people who stand around, I spoke* (Jo. 11, 42).

These passages from the Gospels call our attention to a phase of our Lord's life and character that might easily be overlooked. Jesus prayed frequently and devoutly and with becoming gestures in order to give a good example to His followers. He really wishes to edify and inspire others to pray like Him. Of course, He warned us against those hypocrites who pray only *in order that they may be seen by men* (Matt. 5, 5). He wants us all to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth* (Jo. 4, 23). But, presupposing our prayer to be sincere and

genuine in the sight of God, Christ wants it to be also a source of edification to our neighbor.

Our Lord, therefore, put His greatest prayer, the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, into external form. In instituting it, He raised His eyes to heaven, broke and distributed the bread, saying: *This is My Body . . . do this in remembrance of me.*

Yes, *do this in remembrance of Me.* Our Savior does want us priests to offer the Holy Sacrifice with the same intentions He had. We must *have the mind of Christ* in this matter also. Thus the audible prayers, the visible rites and ceremonies that make up the Mass of the Roman rite, all become means for fulfilling our Lord's command, *Do this in remembrance of me.* They are divinely approved symbols by which we teach holy truths to human beings. They are bright flags by which the priest signals his message to the assembled multitude. They are beams of light by which the spirit of prayer and devotion reaches itself to countless onlookers.

No priest should deceive himself into thinking that he is not worthy while he celebrates Holy Mass, or that the laity do not observe the manner in which he does it. That is precisely what he is there for — to be their leader and guide in the worship to God. How often the people remark about a priest's manner of celebrating Holy Mass. "He says Mass like an angel." "The manner of him inspires me with reverence." That is what they should be able to say concerning every priest.

It does require effort and attention to fulfill this high purpose of the Holy Sacrifice. To study the rubrics carefully, to practise them diligently, to do so for ourselves often, does not come easy. Yet it is only by precision in the rubrics, by reverence and devotion in our attitude at Mass, that we can hope to be to ourselves a *pattern to the flock* (1 Pet. 5, 4). Our attitude at prayer, especially at the community worship of Holy Mass must be such as will inspire the faithful to pray with us in spirit and in truth.

*I am the Vine, you are the branches* (Jo. 15, 5). Yes, at Mass even more than elsewhere we must be branches on the vine of Christ. We must bear fruit like His. We must live and pray as *other Christs*. Which means that we must celebrate Holy Mass in a manner that will inspire reverence and devotion in others. *Do this,* He says, *in remembrance of me.*

Columbus, Nebr.

Fr. Martin Wolter, O.F.M.

## THE FRANCISCAN LITTLE FLOWER

In the great medieval struggle between the Papacy and the Empire, Viterbo was no minor battlefield. Alternately ruled by the Ghibellines, under the patronage of the Emperors and the Teutonic nobles, and by the Guelphs, who were the common people loyal to the Holy See through their communes, it was in a constant state of political turmoil. Into the chaotic social environment that was the necessary concomitant of this condition was thrust a little peasant girl who might have lived and died a half-starved, forgotten victim of man's greed for power, had not God chosen her for a special mission.

She was born in the spring of 1234. Her parents were John and Catherine — her earliest biographers give them no family name; and when she was baptised in the little parish church of Santa Maria in Poggio they gave her the name, Rose.

Almost from infancy, this child showed signs of loving God very much. When quite young she would often be found in some out-of-the-way place, praying, as she said, that God would help her to live for Him and do no wrong. As she grew older, she seldom took part in the activities of other children. While they played their little games, she would find her way into some church, most often the church of San Francesco, and there assist at divine services or kneel in silent prayer. It is said that in these early years she was very fond of the birds, and they of her. They would fly down to light on her head or shoulders or in her lap, and contentedly eat out of her hands the crumbs or other food she could find for them. She was happy in the company of these little brothers of the air; and they would trill their sweet songs in response to her laughter. Innocence found her playmates in these innocent, trusting little creatures of God.

But even as a child her concern for her poor townspeople was evident. In the sieges that Frederick II laid to Viterbo, his army devastated the fields so that the Viterbans had very little grain except what they could obtain elsewhere. As a consequence, the poor of the city were starving, and Rose frequently went without her own meals to give her food to hungry children. As the need increased, she gave more and more of her time to feed the poor. Although her parents were of the common people, they owned their own home and seemed to be a little better off than the average of their class. Rose did not hesitate to beg food from her mother and the neighboring women; and, when this did not suffice, she even took secretly what she did not think was needed in her home that she might be able to help those in such dire need.

In Viterbo the sons of Saint Francis were welcomed in the church of Giovanni Batista. But, shortly after their coming, Pope Gregory IX gave the site near the Piazza della Rocca where they built the beautiful church of San Francesco. This is the church to which Rose frequently found her way. These friars came to preach penance, as they had throughout the whole of Italy. They did it so effectively that all who would listen to them were brought to realize that penitential practices in satisfaction for sin were a necessity of Christian living. Little Rose took this doctrine to heart. She not only fasted but she might have food to give poor children, but she wore a hair shirt and scourged herself and submitted to other penances to satisfy God's anger for the sins of those who were trying to pervert the good people of Viterbo.

It must be remembered that Rose was hardly six years old when Viterbo again surrendered to Frederick II in 1240. The Ghibellines of the city called him back when he was already disposed to take refuge in Puglia to leave the States of the Church alone. And with him came the heretical Patari, a sect who rejected the sacraments, preached against the sacredness of marriage and family life and were infamous for destroying shrines and pillaging churches. The influence of these Patari was soon felt, not only in the upper classes who welcomed any excuse for throwing off the Church's restraint on their licentious lives, but even among the poorer, less instructed classes. And Rose, with her precocious mind and the extraordinary grace God gave her, was long in realizing what was happening to her people.

When she was seven years of age her parents permitted her to turn her room into a little oratory. There, for two or three years, she lived her life in prayer and penance, until her slender body could stand it no longer and she fell into serious illness. For fifteen months intermittent fever racked her frame. But through her long drawn-out days and sleepless nights she never heard to utter a complaint. The smile that constantly lighted her features was the wonder of all who saw her. She had evidently taken her sickness too much for part of the price she must pay before God would hear her prayers. Finally a few days before the feast of Saint John the Baptist, she came to such a pass that her family and neighbors gathered about her bed to pray for the end.

But the soul of the emaciated little girl seemed to be immersed in God and presently she began to speak to someone she was evidently seeing in vision. As she afterward related, she spoke to one of the virgins who were the forerunners of the great apparition she was about to enjoy. Soon she exclaimed

to those near her bed, "Behold, the Mother of God comes to her handmaid. Tell us go to meet her." And, springing from her bed, she fell on her knees to receive the Most Holy Virgin with humble reverence. Our Lady raised Rose up in a tender embrace that completely cured her illness. Then she told her why she had come: "Put on your best dress, and make a pilgrimage to the churches of San Giovanni Batista, Santa Maria in Poggio, and San Francesco. There you shall be received into the Third Order of Saint Francis. After this, return to your room and pray, awaiting the call of God. When it comes go out into the highways and preach penance. Freely and boldly reprehend all vice; confirm in their Catholic faith those who are wavering; lead the misguided back to obedience to the Holy Father; defend with all your strength and at any cost the rights of the Church against the attacks and fury of the heretics." This was the mission for which God had brought her into the world and now preserved her from death, and He sent the Queen of Heaven to tell her of it: to be a lay apostle, to work always and perseveringly for the cause of our Catholic faith no matter what trials and tribulations might befall her.

To don the garb of the Third Order in those early days meant to assume a life of real penance, a life of self-sacrifice for one's own sins and the sins of others. But to take this step by such an explicit command of our Blessed Lady meant that Rose was destined to give the rest of her poor little life without reserve for her people. When the Guardian of San Francesco clothed her in the rough habit and cord of penance, the eyes of those who witnessed it were wet with tears. No longer did they see a little peasant girl in her festive dress. They saw in that coarse robe a figure filled with a great purpose, whose eyes shone with holy determination. The realization of the arduous task that had been entrusted to her had in truth transformed her soul.

In her own small way she had prepared for this. Ever since she had been able to find her way to the church of San Francesco, she had listened attentively to the sermons and instruction of the sons of Saint Francis. Her soul had been inflamed by their words; her memory had retained their words with clearness and tenacity. Even in these early years, she had tried to communicate to other children, to her family, to neighbors and friends the light and warmth with which her own soul was suffused. And she spoke with such earnestness that the hearts of her hearers were often moved; speaking to them, she seemed more like an angel than a mere child.

But now the hour had struck. Crucifix in hand, she went boldly into the streets and plazas of the city. Her clear voice soon drew a crowd about

to hear what she had to say. Like the Franciscan Friars themselves, whom were then not priests, she made no pretense of learning or oratory. Baring her own soul's love for God and for them, she spoke to them in terms of "vices and virtues, punishment and glory", of our Lord's suffering and death, the beauty of our faith, the fatherhood of Christ's Vicar on earth. With these themes she fascinated her hearers and conquered their obstinacy. Converting many of the most stubborn heretics and the most hardened. The more people heard from her, the more enthusiastic they became. They were confirmed in their virtuous lives; the weak took courage against heretics who were trying to pervert them; the churches were again crossed by factions that had been set against each other in the strife between Church and State were brought to peace. That one simple little girl of the common people could have effected such a change, was surely a sign that God was with her.

It was this very success, however, that brought persecution upon her. The Patareni began their war against the little missionary by spreading rumors intended to spread hatred of her among the people. Soon, under the indifferent eyes of the imperial authorities, they broke out in hostile demonstrations, heckling her and creating clamorous disturbances among her auditors. But the saintly girl carried on her mission without fear, answering them charitably when she felt it her bounden duty, but more often paying no attention to them. Seeing that their tactics were of no avail, the Patareni went to the governor and told him that all the people were following this simple maid and, if something were not done to stop her preaching, the imperial authorities would be overthrown and driven from the city. The governor decided that the only way to prevent such a revolt was to get rid of Rose, and wrote to the Emperor asking confirmation of this decision. Frederick, enraged that a girl of the common people should defy his authority, ordered that she and her family be exiled from Viterbo. When this order came the governor lost no time in executing it. In spite of her father's plea that without shelter or resources they could easily perish, a band of soldiers escorted them to the city gate that very night, before the people could learn of it and rise up in their defense, and told them that if they attempted to return, or to comfort their friends in the city, their punishment would be more severe than it was.

Once out of the city they turned their faces toward Soriano, ten or twelve miles away through the foothills of Monte Cimino. The Pope ruled there, surely they would find some good souls ready to shelter and help them. Yet the parents were fearful of the outcome, not so much for themselves as for

the girl; stumbling along the road in her bare feet at night with no clothing but her rough habit, she might find the journey disastrous. But Rose proved a consoling angel, encouraging them to trust in the Lord who would not abandon them. As they began to climb into the mountains, the road became more difficult. It was winter, and in some places snow completely covered the ground. At last they could go no farther; they had to huddle together in what shelter they could find and pray for the light of another day. At dawn they plodded on to Soriano. At first the townspeople took them for pilgrims caught in the storm and left in the mountains. But when they learned that Rose was the girl of whom they had heard such great things, they gladly found them shelter and food.

As soon as they were settled, Rose resumed her apostolate of good. Her words, as ever full of spirit and conviction, aroused a great wave of religious enthusiasm. Faith became stronger, piety deeper; and with it love for the Church and for the Holy Father. Some who had been misled by the Ghibellines and were suspected of heresy acknowledged their errors, moved to the truth by the simple, clear arguments and the modest penitential life of this amiable girl. From Soriano she returned as far as Vitorchiano, whose people had also heard of her great work and received her with every sign of joy and veneration. Here she found that, because of its nearness to the city, the heretical ideas of the Patareni had infiltrated into many families. She attacked their heresies as she had at Viterbo itself, and succeeded in bringing a good many of the common people to realize their mistake and become again obedient children of the Church. But there were certain partisans of the Emperor who stubbornly refused to give up their false notions. They were led by a bold, crafty old hag with a wily tongue in her head, seemingly inspired by the devil himself. Rose reasoned with her and treated her with the utmost kindness, trying to get her to repent her sins and turn back to a decent Catholic way of life, but to no avail. In the end she submitted to the ordeal of fire, had the villagers build a great bonfire in the plaza, into which she walked without harm; and from the midst of the flames she exhorted the old lady to renounce her infidelity and accept the saving faith of Christ. At this the poor old soul was moved. She abjured her heresy and turned back to the Church as did many of her followers overcome by this evidence of divine intervention.

On December 13th, 1250, Frederick II died. Almost immediately, the power of the Ghibellines in Viterbo was overthrown, the imperial officials and soldiery were driven out and the heretical Patareni with them. The way thus being cleared, Rose and her family decided to return. When the Viterbo



heard of this they were filled with joy, for they had grieved deeply in exile. On the day they were to come, the people turned out in crowds to meet her at the city gate, and with shouts of exultation they led her through the strewn streets to her home. She and her family had been driven from their home in disgrace like common criminals; she returned to it in triumph as a conqueror. Yet all this applause only confused the poor girl. God had given her a mission. In carrying it out as best she could she felt that she had only done her honest duty. Now the mission was over, and she was glad to get back to the privacy of her little room to resume her life of prayer and penance.

Gradually a great dream was born. She came to realize that a virgin could live much more securely in the cloister under obedience to a superior than she can in the world following her own will. There was a monastery of Poor Clares in the city, that of Santa Maria delle Rose, where she could find peace striving for the ideals of Saint Francis which had always inspired her. She went to the abbess and asked to be admitted, but the abbess did not agree with her plan. She told Rose that she had too many nuns now and her room to receive any more. Rose must have been disappointed at this refusal, but she accepted it calmly, and with a wry smile remarked prophetically, "you are not pleased to take me into your community alive, it may not disappoint you to seek me for it dead."

She took this rebuff with the same patience she had shown in her refusal to return to her little room, no longer a divine oracle to her countrymen but only a young girl trying to live out her life as she thought God would have her live it. The next year or more was spent in prayer, while she helped her mother with the household duties and did what good she could among her relatives, neighbors and friends. Finally, however, the rigorous penances she continued to practice so weakened her already overworked body that she fell seriously ill. This time it was the end for which she had longed and prayed, and she knew it. With a song of gratitude in her heart she prepared herself for the Last Sacraments. After they had been administered, she joined as best she could in the prayers for the dying. In the midst of them she gently closed her eyes and started out on that last great journey to the true and blessed home of her Spouse in heaven.

From the day of her death, divine favors began to shower from heaven through her intercession, like the falling petals of the rose. Devotion to her increased until her words to the Abbess of Santa Maria delle Rose came true: the good nuns sincerely repented of having rejected her and wished with

in their heart that they now had her body in their monastery. Strangely, Rose in heaven was as eager as they that their wish be fulfilled, but the time to effect the transfer was slow in coming. At length, in March, 1257, five years after her death, Pope Alexander IV came to Viterbo to establish his residence. One night he had what he thought was a dream. Our Little Flower appeared and said to him: "Just as it has mercifully pleased the Divine Goodness to give me a place among His faithful handmaids in heaven, so it is now His will that the pious desires of those on earth be fulfilled. He has commanded me to tell you, His Vicar on earth, know that my body is to rest among the Poor Clares, with whom in life I had so eagerly desired to live."

She appeared to him a second and a third time before he became convinced that the transfer of her body was God's will. He notified the Poor Clares to have a suitable tomb prepared. They received his order with the greatest jubilation and set about complying with it immediately. And in due time, with the approval of four cardinals of the Papal Court, several bishops and other prelates, and all the clergy of the city, he went to the graveyard of Santa Maria in Poggio and had her body reverently exhumed and carried in solemn procession to the monastery of Santa Maria delle Rose. There it was enshrined in a beautifully ornate tomb, a fitting resting place for the remains, still incorrupt, of this wonderful Little Flower who in life could find no rest, not even among these consecrated virgins. It was September 4th, 1257, the day on which we now keep the feast of Saint Rose of Viterbo.

*The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong; that no flesh should glory in His sight.* The monastery where human prudence could find no room for Rose alive opened wide its arms to receive her dead. She gave a permanence to that monastery which it might never have had without her. As soon as she was canonized its very name was changed to that of Saint Rose. And, from the time of her transfer, her tomb became a shrine not only for Viterbo but for all of Italy. This Franciscan Little Flower really has coruscated with miracles, many, varied and great. Few indeed who have invoked her worthily have not been heard. Through the centuries her fame has spread throughout the whole Catholic world. Such is the little peasant girl who, had she not answered God's call, might have lived and died a forgotten victim of man's greed for power. May her petals fall on many another good pious Catholic girl inclined to give her life to God.

Washington, D. C.

Very. Rev. Denis Gallagher, O.F.M. Conv.



## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

All members of the Franciscan family profess a life of penance. The Rule of the Third Order Regular expressly states that the "brothers and sisters of this fraternity are called the Order of Penance," and that "they should carry the cross of mortification, as becomes true penitents." It is therefore in harmony with the Franciscan spirit that Saint Bonaventure should place penance a special point in his examination of conscience. Every true follower of the Seraphic Francis should frequently ask himself the question:

WAS I NEGLIGENT IN DOING PENANCE?

We know from the words of our Savior that without penance there is no hope of salvation. If penance is demanded of every Christian, still more so of a religious and above all of a Franciscan. But in order to understand clearly in what particular manner we are obliged to do penance, we must first consider the meaning of the word, which, unfortunately or otherwise, admits of several interpretations. For our present purpose it will suffice to consider but two of these interpretations; penance as conversion, and penance as mortification.

The basic religious meaning of penance is conversion. It is the equivalent of the Greek word of the Gospels, *metanoia*, usually, though somewhat inaccurately, rendered by the word, repentance. In any case, it means a change of mind and heart, a turning of the whole man in a new direction, to God and the things of the spirit, away from the former life of sin and worldliness. It means a fundamental revision of the judgments of the old man concerning himself and his deeds, and the outlook of the new man in Christ. It means sincere regret for having offended the paternal heart of God and a firm determination to arise, with the prodigal son, and return to the father's home, saying: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee* (Luke 15, 18). It means a complete break with the past and a new start in and with Christ. It means, especially for the children of Saint Francis, a clean break with the worldly life of the past and the beginning of a new life according to the teaching based on the Holy Gospel.

With this in mind, let us ask ourselves the following questions: When I entered the Order, did I really make a clean break with the past and begin a new life in Christ? Did I wholly and radically turn away from the world with all its promises, blandishments, and pleasures, and did I give myself utterly — mind, body, heart, my whole personality — entirely to the Lord?

Must I admit that my so-called religious life is in reality only the continuation of my former life in the world, transparently disguised by the religious garb and by the exterior observance of a few religious forms? This is certainly the case if we are trying to live an easy life in the Order; if we are making no effort to adjust ourselves to the ideals of our community; if we are indifferent toward the perfect fulfillment of the promises of our religious profession; if we are careful to avoid doing any more than is strictly required of us; or, worst of all, if we continue in the religious state for purely selfish reasons, such as security, or prestige, or natural advantages. This lack of penance or conversion, however, may be present in the soul in less easily recognizable forms. The most dangerous and most subtle of these forms is a kind of spiritual slumber in which no appreciable effort is made toward beginning a new life. This, sad to say, is the case with many a religious. They have never made or attempted to make a real break with the past, either during the novitiate or at any time thereafter. If we are victims of this noxious lethargy, let us beg God to send us the means whereby we can be aroused and awakened and converted to Him, that we may really begin to live in Him. Recall the conversion of Saint Francis. He tells us in his Testament: "The Lord granted me to begin my conversion in this wise; that, whilst I was in sin, it was exceedingly bitter to me to see lepers. But the Lord took me among them and I exercised mercy toward them. And that which had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of body and soul." Francis broke with the past when he won the greatest victory a man can win — the victory over himself. Francis encountered Christ when he kissed the leper's hand. Let us ask ourselves if we, too, have not encountered Christ at some time in our life, and how we responded to that encounter. Did He come to us in the silence of the novitiate? during a painful illness? while at prayer, or while making a retreat? through the reading of an inspiring book? If we can truly say that once we met Christ and answered His call to follow Him to a new life, can we also say that we have continued in that life of penance? Or must we confess that we became negligent and fell back into that dangerous somnolence of worldliness and easy living?

Intimately connected with penance in the sense of conversion is penance in the sense of sorrow for sin. We are all obliged to repent of our sins; yet we must also firmly believe in the forgiveness of sins duly submitted to the sacred tribunal. In the life of most religious there are relatively few grave sins — sins of such malice and vileness that contrition must be inevitable. Mediocrity, even in sin, is our common characteristic. Consequently, it is easy for our slumbering soul to forget that we have offended God in the past, to be unaware that

we are still most shamefully abusing His goodness and love. Our Father Francis could never forget his sins. The thought of his past and present failures caused him to weep bitter tears of repentance. We, as religious, as children of our Seraphic Father, should have a deeper and clearer knowledge of the malice of sin, of the terrible injustices we commit against God, our Creator and our loving Father. Let us then ask ourselves: Do I sincerely detest my past sins, and do I at times recall them, not to become frightened by them (scrupulous persons, who are forbidden by their confessor to recall past sins, must strictly obey), but to be humbled by them and moved to do penance? Do I do this for this express purpose — to urge the soul to humble repentance — that Bonaventure formulated his plan for examination of conscience. For how can we begin to comprehend the mercy of God and His infinite love, if we do not realize how much we have offended Him?

And this leads us finally to the Sacrament of Penance. Primarily, it is the Sacrament of the forgiveness of sin, but it is also the sacrament of constantly renewed conversion. Here we may ask: What does confession mean to me? Is each confession a new start, or only a matter of weekly routine? Do I approach the confessional with the deep conviction that I am a poor sinner, that I need the mercy of God, and that I must do my utmost in order to amend my life? Do I make sincere efforts to arouse deep contrition of heart, or at least contrition in mind and will?

The second principal meaning of penance is mortification, which, in spiritual life, is closely related to the idea of conversion. Atonement for sin is a necessary consequence of *metanoia*, of putting off the old man; and, in religious striving for perfection, it is of basic importance. Christian mortification has four primary purposes: to atone for sin; to strengthen the will; to gain self-control by a severe discipline of the passions and inclinations; to make sacrifices for others in order to atone vicariously for their transgressions and obtain for them the grace of God; and, finally and principally, to participate in the Passion of Christ and thus supply in the Mystical Body what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ.

In order to avoid possible confusion, let it be understood that we are now considering extraordinary works of penance. Although a good religious will not consider extraordinary mortifications as totally out of place in his life, he will always submit such practices to the judgment of his superior or confessor. Extraordinary penances performed without the sanction of obedience may prove worthless and even harmful. Here, however, let us consider

those ordinary kinds of mortification, which are so easily overlooked and yet are so salutary because they are so seldom, if ever, vitiated by pride or self-love.

The perfect observance of the vows offers the basic form of mortification for the religious. There is ample scope here for penance in every degree of rigor, and we should never fail to include the penitential aspect of the vows in our examination of conscience. We may ask ourselves such questions as these: Was I negligent in making use of the opportunities of mortification offered by the vow of poverty? Am I always satisfied with whatever is allotted to me, or am I demanding, insistent, querulous, until I get what I want? Do I give way to childish whining or sarcastic murmuring when faced with the hardships and privations of poverty? In the refectory of a certain monastery I once read the beautiful verse: *Si non est satis, memento paupertatis*. (If it is not enough, remember poverty.) Let us ask ourselves: Does the remembrance of my vow make me content with little, even if the little is not quite enough to satisfy the demands of nature? Does the remembrance of poverty urge me to voluntary self-denial? Do I practice the mortification of poverty in regard to my room, my clothing, my food? In regard to using things? to saving things? How many opportunities for self-denial are offered by the vow of obedience. Do I obey promptly, even in slight matters, without criticizing, protesting, rebelling? Do I make of obedience a sacrifice pleasing to God? Concerning the vow of chastity, do I gladly sacrifice the urge for affectionate companionship and natural love without seeking cheap compensations? Do I willingly bear the cross of loneliness consequent upon the life of celibacy?

Acts of self-denial can be grouped in a similar way upon the various aspects of community life. Many saints have confessed that their greatest penance was to live in a community, and few of us would ask why. We do not select our companions in the religious life; we have to bear with all our confreres — persons of different character, different ambitions, afflicted with various faults quite different from our own. Our fellow-religious, even the saintliest, can hurt us and wound us severely, though perhaps unconsciously or unwillingly. To practice patience under the trying circumstances of community life is certainly one of the most meritorious works of penance, better far than any laceration of the body. In fact, to fulfill the law of Christ means just this — to bear with others and to suffer them patiently for love of Him. (Gal. 6, 2) Let us, therefore, ask ourselves if we willingly accept the cross of living with others in charity, or if we are careless about the feelings of others, too sensitive about our own; if we shun those we dislike; if we give way to impatience by words, looks, or actions.

There are certain acts of self-denial, such as those we have mentioned above, that we can never be dispensed from so long as we live the religious life. There are others, however, from which we may be dispensed if there is a valid reason. These are chiefly the physical mortifications commanded by the Church or by our Rule and Constitutions. It is true that in mortifying the body we must also be guided by the Fifth Commandment, and for that reason we may lawfully seek dispensations when there is question of endangering health. But we must always be on guard against the tendency of our nature to seek sensual gratification under the cloak of physical weakness or ill health. We may, therefore, profitably look into the reasons for our dispensations, and ask ourselves: Have I been too lenient with myself in seeking dispensations? If I am not able to perform the prescribed penances, such as fasting, do I zealously mortify my body in other ways? Do I use opportunities to mortify myself in little things at table? Do I keep custody of the eyes? Do I correct my posture? Have I sought dispensations not because I was physically unable to perform the prescribed penances, but simply because I did not like them? In case of doubt regarding the legitimacy of seeking a certain dispensation, we may always abide by the decision of our confessor or superior. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

We should also carefully examine ourselves in regard to the special mortifications imposed or recommended by our Constitutions and Customs. Among these are the little practices, such as asking for penance for minor transgressions; following the daily routine; rising promptly in the morning and retiring in the evening at the appointed time; punctuality; joyful and prompt response to the call of the bell; joining the Community in prayer and singing rather than following private devotions; taking part when the entire Community is asked to share in some common project of work or recreation. All these are little things, to be sure, but, if the true spirit of penance animates us, that spirit flowing from love of God and desire to do something for Christ and to suffer with Him, we will find countless opportunities for meritorious self-denial.

We must keep in mind, however, that it is not the act of penance as such that is of value, but rather the spirit of love that animates us in performing it. To be negligent in the spirit of penance is equivalent to being negligent in the very essence of our religious vocation.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *The Immaculate Heart of Mary*

*My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God, because I have joyed in thy salvation* (I Kings 2, 1). With these words begins the Canticle of Anna, which this proud mother spoke when she offered her son Samuel at the altar of the Lord, as it is recorded in the First Book of Kings. In setting up the new Office for the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother Church turned back the pages of Sacred Scripture until her finger rested on this beautiful sentence, which seems so admirably to express the sentiments of Mary's heart at the moment when she found herself to be mother, not merely of a great prophet of Israel but of the Son of the Most High God. In fact, if we compare the stately lines of Anna's venerable canticle with the joyous tones of Mary's Magnificat, sung amid the palms and presses that encircled the home of Zachary and Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea, we shall observe a remarkable similarity. The minor key of the former bells into rousing major harmonies on the lips of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Queen of Heaven and the mother of men. On that day her heart rejoiced in the Lord with a joy ineffable, the horn of her spiritual dignity was exalted in the Almighty. To her, salvation signified the salvation of all of Adam's children.

The exalted dignity of Mary's Immaculate Heart is set forth in the official prayer of her Feast, which reveals to us that "the Eternal God prepared for Mary's Heart a worthy tabernacle of the Holy Spirit." In the lessons of the Feast of Saint Bernardine of Siena, one of the earliest promoters of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Saint speaks in glowing terms of Mary's relation to the Most Blessed Trinity. "Who of us mortals," he exclaims, "dares with polluted lips to speak the smallest thing or the greatest thing of the true Mother of God and of man, unless he is inspired by God — of her, whom the Father of God had chosen as His Mother, whom the Holy Spirit had fitted out as the shrine of every grace." How can I, this great lover of Mary continues, give expression with my humble tongue to the noble motives and sentiments that adorned Mary's virginal Heart, for which even the tongues of all the celestial angels fail to give worthy expression? For nine months, the Saint of Siena tells us, Mary harbored the Son of God in her Heart and Womb. What better name then, he asks, may we give to Mary's Heart than a "burning furnace" of Divine Love?

Vol. 1 no 10 Aug 1951

It is well for us to ponder over this beautiful truth. *God is charity*. Saint John, the Beloved Disciple. The Franciscan Order has adopted as its brief definition of the Triune God as the underlying and all-embracing of all spirituality. The God of Love became man, and made Mary's Heart a storehouse, the earthly treasury, the burning furnace of this infinite divine love.

In his inimitable manner Saint Bernardine proceeds to set forth that Mary's Heart should be called a burning furnace of divine love. From this furnace, he explains, sprang forth seven sparks that shed luster over her life and illumined in a brilliant manner the way that her children should follow.

These sparks are the Seven Words that Mary spoke. Mary, a Saint of Siena with a twinkle in his eye, spoke only seven times. We feel certain that when he made this remark from the pulpit in Siena he paused with a knowing look surveyed the ranks of the Sienese ladies before him. No, there was none to be found among those, nor, we may safely add, among the ranks of all woman folk that ever trod this earth, who spoke only seven words — a day, an hour, or less, not to say during her lifetime. Perhaps religious women are different; although there is no evidence at hand. However, this example may well serve as a stimulus to Religious to keep the rule of silence.

Be that as it may, Mary spoke twice to the Angel; twice to Elizabeth; twice to her Divine Son — in the Temple and at the Marriage Feast at Cana. Once to the servants. Her words were brief and direct. Only once, in her conversation with God at Elisabeth's home, did her heart expand into the glorious Magnificat.

Seven sparks of divine Love! How shall we understand this? The Annunciation of the Archangel that she was to be a mother disturbed her for she had vowed her virginity to the God of Love. Hence her brave question: *How shall this happen since I do not know man?* (Lk. 1, 34). To her the fulfillment of her virginal vocation meant the forfeiture of God's love. Her heart was broken. The Maiden of Nazareth stood her ground steadfastly in the face of a command from heaven, until the latter explained that she would retain her virginity inviolate in spite of her motherhood. Only then did she give her consent to that immortal act of obedience to the divine command: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Lk. 1, 38). There is a parallel in history where a maiden's heart was made to overflow with the joy of inviolate virginity and divine motherhood. Only Infinite Love could create this marvel within the small compass of a human heart. The lily of purity was encased with the gold of divine motherhood.

Mary's third word is enshrined in the brief remark that she *saluted Elizabeth*, her cousin (Lk. 1, 40). It was a mark of friendship — a friendship flowing from the love of God, by which the hearts of these two holy women were knit together. And forthwith this love burst forth into the most beautiful canticle ever sung by human tongue, the glorious Magnificat. Origen sums up the wealth of its content when he declares that in this one instant a human heart had the courage to magnify God's infinite glory, as if such were possible for human tongues.

We wonder if Mary foresaw that her gentle rebuke to her divine Son, when after three days she found him in the Temple among the doctors, was to serve as the highest standard of Christian education for all days to come. *Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have been seeking thee sorrowing* (Lk. 2, 48). Here we find a mother's love conveyed in words that reveal the two essential rules of pedagogy — firmness and kindness, both flowing from divine love.

To the inspired pen of Saint John we owe Mary's two last words. The wedding feast at Cana was the occasion. Amid the hustle and bustle of the festivity the mother of Jesus observed the embarrassment of the young couple, and she whispered to her Son: *They have no wine* (Jo. 2, 4). Mountains of books have been written on this remark, and the Lord's answer to His mother, but all the learning in the world cannot overshadow this eloquent act of genuine sympathy and unfeigned charity. *Charity believes all things*, says Saint Paul (I Cor. 13, 7), and Mary believed that her Son would answer her prayer. Therefore she immediately turned to the waiters: *Do whatever he tells you* (Jo. 2, 5). By doing what her Divine Son tells us we cannot go wrong; we cannot depart from Charity's ways.

Mary spoke only seven times; and these seven words are the seven sparks that allow us to look deep into her Immaculate Heart and that are most apt to fit and fashion the heart of every Religious after the sublime pattern of the Heart of our heavenly mother. All of which makes us appreciate more and more why the Holy Father has surrounded Mary's pure Heart with such festal glory.

This conference might be extended over pages and pages. However, there will be another occasion when we shall dwell on Mary's Heart as the source and fountainhead of apostolic tradition, namely, of those teachings and reminiscences that were not committed to the inspired writings of the Bible.



the two sisters, and dragged Agnes out by the hair. It seems he had all hopes of getting Clare back. The frail fourteen year old girl was unable to withstand the brute force of her irate uncle, cried out for him to come to her rescue. But Clare knelt in prayer while Agnes was being dragged down the mountain side. Her uncle meant to keep his word and bring her back home dead, if not alive. Suddenly Agnes became aware of the heavy the combined strength of her relatives could move her not withstanding his insane wrath the uncle raised his sword to strike Agnes, but his arm was paralyzed. In spite of his anger he could not but recognize the divine intervention of God in favor of his niece. Overcome with fear and remorse his companions desisted. While Agnes prayed, the power of his arm was broken but he had no further desire now to take her back home. He acknowledged himself vanquished by a higher power and left Agnes to return to Clare. Clare and her companions were henceforth left unmolested in their untiring zeal for greater perfection. Saint Francis must have felt a great joy indeed when he heard of the success of Clare and the strength of purpose of the two little foundresses of her Order. It had been much like the battle he had fought and won on Mount Alverna when he stood before the bishop of Assisi with the folds of the episcopal vestments thrown about his naked shoulders and exclaimed in ecstatic joy, "Now I truly say, 'Our Father Who are in heaven.'" Did Francis at that time already realize that Clare was indeed the strong woman, who was to fulfill the prophesy of an earlier day, when standing on the walls of San Damiano he declared there would one day dwell there holy women whose lives would glorify God throughout Holy Church? In any case he seems to have been taken for granted that he would need Clare more than she would need him for we know how much he looked to her for comfort and advice.

Saint Clare's influence on our Seraphic Father and his infant Order was greater than we shall ever know; greater, perhaps, than that of any of his companions. Did anyone understand Saint Francis' message more clearly, did any heart more fully that message, so pregnant with the spirit of the Gospel, than the seraphic heart of the Poverello was endeavoring to save from extinction? Did the youthful eager heart of Clare? Theirs was an age when politics and worldly ambition too much into the offices of the Church; and a worldly-minded, insufficiently instructed clergy needed to be brought back to the spirit of the Gospel. How often the words "the Gospel" occur in the Rules of Saint Francis and Clare, and how large a field of observance do they cover in the lives of their followers.

Much as has been written of Saint Francis through the centuries, the literature on Saint Clare has been exceedingly meager. One wonders why she is not mentioned in the many biographies of Saint Francis for the most part only in passing. Yet, she fully imbibed his spirit from its initial inception and passionately clung to it without faltering. While there arose in the ranks of his Order disagreements and misunderstanding, we know his "Little Plant" had her roots deeply and firmly established in that spirit which she never doubted but embraced with a loving instinct. That light led her and her daughters in the path Saint Francis trod and in which he invited his sons to follow. She never doubted wherein lay the spirit of his Order.

Saint Clare and her daughters were dear to the heart of Saint Francis and no others. Though Brother Leo, "God's Little Sheep," was indeed his confidant, yet the Lady Clare held heart-secrets of Francis which no one else shared. He had the heart of a contemplative, as did she; and no one can doubt that the secrets of their union with the Bridegroom of their souls was the topic never new of their converse. Can we forget the light that seemed to set all Portiuncula ablaze during that one memorable conversation of which we know, that has been chronicled merely as "speaking of God" and "forgetting their meal"?

As time went on and the Order of Saint Francis grew, spreading itself out into all the countries of Europe, his visits to Saint Clare and San Damiano came more seldom; and she complained to him that he left his daughters for long intervals without the encouragement of his presence and the comfort of his burning words of love for God. But when his emaciated body had been consecrated by his Beloved, and the stigmata glowed like bloody rubies on his hands and feet and side, he mistrusted no longer his gallant heart's love for his first and dearest daughter, as he had in the earlier years. His love for her was now a white flame gloriously brilliant, and he hesitated not to spend hours in her company. Clare's love for her Divine Spouse was a brighter flame in Francis' presence and they could speak of it now that his life was slowly ebbing. How well we can see Clare bending low at Francis' feet when she was making and fitting the little slippers which were to give comfort to his feet, stinging with the pain of the nails. We can see her very carefully fitting them in order to ease the pressure of the pain. He who carefully hid even from his Brothers the secret of the great and singular favor God had bestowed upon him freely permitted Clare to bend over those pierced feet. With tender tears she must often have kissed them.

Clare lived on for nearly twenty-five years after the departure of her Father and Guide. With a heart as tender and as loving as his she must remain unceasingly for His Order and its consolidation. We can see Clare at the moment when the body of Saint Francis was brought to San Damiano for its burial, as she bent over it in a last farewell. She sent her messages to her Beloved through him and consented to live on for her own daughters and his brethren. Saint Francis' sons loved the Lady Clare and depended much on her wise counsel through the years after their beloved Father died from them.

Saint Clare loved the Church after the example of her Seraphic Father and took a deep interest in its welfare and propagation, as well as the good of her own beloved Italy. The humble convent of San Damiano which Saint Clare and her community stood as a silent sentinel outside Assisi's walls. When Frederick's armies of Saracens invaded Italy and were about to pass Assisi they would first attack that sentinel which seemed frail and weak enough. Those blood-thirsty Saracens did not reckon with the God of Peace within and the strong heart of His virgin bride. She would plead protection and safety for herself and her daughters from Him and not from any human being, and He did not betray her trust. She would go out and meet the enemy already scaling San Damiano's walls. But she was not alone. She carried in her hands her God, and facing them she held aloft the lowly pix containing her Divine Spouse under the mystic veils of His Sacrament of Love. Terrified they fled, as we all know, and a small voice from the Sacred Vessel in her hands spoke, saying: "I will always protect you!" The inhabitants of Assisi to this day claim Saint Clare as their protectress and have erected in honor a bronze statue in gratitude for this miracle which saved their city.

When Saint Clare had fled her father's castle that ever memorable night of 1212 and divested herself of everything, she understood her spiritual Father and grasped his love for Lady Poverty more fully than any other. She was wedded to this love as was he. She strove ceaselessly for the idea so often understood even in the ranks of his sons. As she lay dying forty years later clasped to her heart the Papal Bull granting her and her daughters what she had so bravely fought for, namely, the privilege of highest Poverty, her faltering heart-throbs consecrated that privilege. Her eyes were dimming with death, but her spiritual sight, grown keener after the death of her beloved Father, discerned more clearly his ideal and the legacy bequeathed to her by him to his sons. Innocent IV would have absolved her and her daughters from

the vow Saint Clare esteemed and prized, but brought fear to the heart of the Pontiff. The Poor Ladies were cloistered away from the world, and at some future time they might suffer dire want. Clare, in deep humility, craved absolution and forgiveness of her sins but not from the vow of absolute poverty, and for seven centuries her daughters have continued to live on alms. Who can doubt but that her vision at that supreme moment looked down through the centuries and saw her Order holding firmly to Seraphic Poverty, and never consented to sever its alliance with Saint Francis and his Bride. Clare won the battle and died still clasping the precious Bull to her heart.

The influence of Saint Clare on her century, hidden and cloistered as she was, can never be fully calculated. It has come down in the Church even to the twentieth century. Can the emancipated woman of our day, who steps out before the public, hope to do what Saint Clare did and continues to do? Hidden within their cloister walls as in the days of their holy Foundress, the daughters of Saint Clare are still pleading for a world grown more worldly and more sinful, hating God and His Church with a more organized and diabolical hatred than ever in the Church's history. After the example of their holy Foundress, her daughters still endeavor to humbly raise supplicating hands for His mercy, content to be the lightning rods that catch the wrath of God's justice and save the world from His just vengeance.

Vocations to the Order of Saint Clare have never been numerous, though the Order has quietly spread throughout the world into every civilized country. It has been said that as Saint Francis was the saint most like to Christ, so Saint Clare is most like to our Blessed Mother. In her hiddenness and powerful influence she surely was. Her Order has never been publicised and consequently is little known. But the Holy Spirit, whose inspirations of grace know where to find generous souls, still inspires young hearts to follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis and Saint Clare.

Even though the standard of values has changed vastly in our age, there are still souls who would go the whole way with God and not compromise. In this modern age, when a scientific persecution of the Church makes martyrs not only of the bodies but even of the minds and wills of God's heroes, there is a need greater than ever of the life of complete self-abnegation which Saint Clare has provided for the Church in the observance of the Rule she has handed down to her daughters.

*Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mother M. Immaculata, P.C., Abbess  
Roswell, New Mexico*



## NOTES ON THE PORTIUNCULA INDULGENCE

Regular tertiaries with simple vows, aggregated to the First Order, can gain the Portiuncula Indulgence in the churches and public chapels of the three Orders, provided the church or public chapel actually belongs to the given Institute. Regular Tertiaries can also gain the Indulgence in the convent chapel, subject to the following conditions: 1) In Franciscan churches of all three Orders, without a church or public chapel, the Indulgence attached to churches (and hence the Portiuncula) may be gained by the principal oratory of the house. The usual convent chapel will meet the requirement of "principal oratory"; 2) Not all religious Institutes legitimately aggregated to our Order enjoy the privilege of the Portiuncula Indulgence; hence neither do their churches or public oratories; but only those Institutes legitimately aggregated, which enjoy the title of Tertiaries. Such Institutes which lack the title of Tertiaries should, if they wish, request the privilege of the Portiuncula Indulgence from the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiaria, or the commendation of the Ordinary. (*Acta OFM*, LXIX (1950), 123).

During the time appointed for gaining the Portiuncula Indulgence, there must be exposed a picture or a statue of Saint Francis or of the Queen of Angels, or a picture of the Holy Father, invocation of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Francis, the Litany of All Saints, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The pastor or the rector of the privileged church or oratory is obliged to carry out these latter provisions. But the omission of some or even all of these provisions would not invalidate the indulgence.

Personal conditions for the Indulgence: confession must be made on the feast day, or in the week preceding or following the feast. Communion must be received on the feast day, the day preceding, or in the week following the feast day. A visit must be made to a qualified church or chapel, and at each visit *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glories* must be recited for the intention of the Holy Father. These prayers are essential; prayers of equivalent length may be substituted.

If the privilege of the Portiuncula is transferred for just reasons to the following Sunday, by the qualified Ordinary, pastor, or rector of the church or chapel, the time reckoning for Confession and Communion is based on the date of the Sunday. The same person can gain the Portiuncula Indulgence on both days.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Roch Knopke, O.F.M.

## IN PRAISE OF POVERTY

(From the letters of our holy Mother Saint Clare to  
Blessed Agnes of Prague)

Agnes of Prague was born in 1205, the daughter of King Ottocar, of Bohemia. Although betrothed to the Emperor Frederick II, of Germany, she determined to retract her promise of marriage and follow the example of Clare of Assisi. This she did in 1234 by entering the religious life in the monastery of the Holy Savior, which she herself had built. Saint Clare wrote her four letters, describing her own delight that Agnes had chosen the heavenly Spouse, and extolling the life of poverty. Agnes was the daughter of the late king and the sister of the reigning one; this accounts for the dry irony of some of the Seraphic Mother's remarks.

When I heard the news of thy holy conversion and the glory of thy spotless life, news that has not only come to us but already has penetrated almost the whole world, I had deep rejoicing and joy in the Lord; and not only myself but all those who do, and want to do, the will of Jesus Christ, and show him service. For it is well known how you, above all others, could have had worldly honor and glory, namely, by wedding the Most August Emperor, as had been agreed upon by yourself and His Majesty; but in the entire love and deep service of your heart you chose the far holier poverty and mortification of the flesh by choosing in marriage a far more noble Spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He will guard your uninjured and unstained virginity forever inviolate; when you love Him, you remain forever chaste; when you touch Him, you become the purer; when you receive Him, a virgin you remain. His power is stronger than all power; His comeliness, more lovely; His presence, more beautiful than that of any other; His love, unparalleled, surpassing all delights. Thou art the chosen one for the embrace of this Spouse, who has adorned thy breast with a precious stone and thy ears with pearls of matchless price; He has girded thy whole being with chrysolite and crowned thee with a golden crown stamped with the sign of holiness. Wherefore, beloved Sister, Reverend Lady rather, for thou art the bride and the mother and the sister of my Lord Jesus Christ, adorned gloriously with the banner of uninjured virginity and holy poverty, be strong in the sacred bondage thou hast in burning desire begun after the example of the poor Jesus Crucified, Who, suffering in dire torment on the cross for us all, snatched us from the power of the prince of darkness, by whom we were held captive because of the sin of our first parents, and

reconciled us with God the Father. O blessed poverty, that bestows riches upon those who love thee, embrace thee, and kiss thee! O holy to whose possessors the kingdom of heaven is promised and eternal without doubt a life of blessedness is given to them! O lovable poverty the Lord Jesus embraced so particularly, Who governed and governed heaven and the earth, Who spoke and all things were made! For He said that *the foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man, that is, Christ, has nowhere to lay His head, and bowing Himself on the cross, He gave up His spirit.* For this did so worthy and great enter the most pure Virgin's womb and will to come into this world without want and in poverty, so that men who are in poverty and want of the heavenly food might become rich in Him and lords of the heavenly kingdom. Then thou shalt then and exult exceedingly and be filled with spiritual joy. Seeing that thou hast chosen this world's contempt rather than honor, and poverty rather than temporal riches, and preferred the treasures in heaven to those on earth, thou art worthy to be considered the sister, bride, and mother of the Most High God and of the glorious Virgin Mary. I am sure thou believest and keep with the strongest faith that the kingdom of heaven is promised only to the poor, nor will it be bestowed by the Lord upon any others except the poor. While the possessions of this world are being loved, the fruit of love is lost. We cannot serve God and mammon, for either we shall love the one and despise the other, or serve the one and despise the other. Thou knowest too that he who has donned a robe cannot meet with one who is naked, nor is one who has donned a rich vesture able to give battle to the world, because he who has nothing whereby he may be dragged down will be dashed to the ground by the one who gives battle. It is a difficult thing to live magnificently in this world and to be the next world to reign with Christ, for a camel will pass through an eye of needle easier than a rich man will enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, if thou hast cast aside thy vesture, that is, the world's riches, so that, having struggled with its deceits, thou mayest conquer mightily and enter the heavenly kingdom through the narrow way. It is surely a happy bargain and worth every praise to spend worldly riches for eternal ones, to buy heavenly treasures for mundane ones, to receive a hundred for one, to possess a life of happiness without end. Wherefore, I have resolved to entreat thy Highness and Holiness in the humblest of prayer and in the Heart of Jesus Christ to grow strong in His holy service and advance ever from the good to the better, from virtue to virtue, that He Whom thou servest in the love of thy heart may deign to adorn thee with His unstinted grace . . .

I give thanks to the Giver of grace, from Whom we believe comes every blessing and every perfect gift, Who has adorned thee to this perfection, that, becoming a worthy imitator of the Father's perfection, thou shouldst become perfect, lest His eyes view in thee anything at fault. This is the perfection wherewith the heavenly King will bind thee to Himself in eternal delight, where thou shalt sit in glory upon a throne of stars. Thou, who hast despised a lofty kingdom of the world and rejected wedded bliss with the Emperor, hast become the mistress of holy poverty and followed in Jesus' footsteps in the spirit of great humility and loving service, and art found worthy to join Him in marriage.

And because I know thee to be quite full of all virtue, I do not wish to burden thee overmuch with words, although perhaps nothing will seem to thee uncalled for in these things out of which some solace could arise. One word only would I impart, because it is necessary. I exhort thee through love of Him, to Whom thou hast offered thyself in a sacrifice of sweet odor, that thou rememberest thy calling, as another Rachel, looking ever to a beginning. What thou already hast, grasp firmly; what thou doest, do; nor ever stand still, but on swift course, in meek imitation, with flying feet lest thy going gather the smallest dust, surely and happily go forward in the way of this happiness; believing no one, consenting to no one, who would snatch thee from thy intent and place of hindrance in the way of thy running; run in that perfection to which the Spirit of God has called thee, that in it thou mayest fulfill thy promises to the Most High and walk the more surely the way of God's commandments . . .

Consider, O high-born Queen, that thy Spouse, *beautiful beyond the sons of men*, was made the most disfigured among men for thy salvation, His whole body torn by the whips, His life breathed out on the cross amid the most exquisite pain. Burn in thy whole love to imitate Him. If thou shouldst suffer, thou shalt likewise be glorified with Him; if thou shouldst grieve with Him, thou shalt rejoice with Him; if thou shouldst stay upon the cross with Him, thou shalt obtain with Him a heavenly home in the light of the Saints. Thy name, made glorious forever, shall be written in the book of life. Instead of the passing things of this world, thou shalt possess eternal blessings and live in happiness without end . . .

O most beloved virgin in Christ, the joy of Angels and the crown of Sisters! Place thy mind before the mirror of eternity, place thy soul in the splendor of glory, place thy heart in the image of the Divine substance; and through the

contemplation of God change thy entire and very self into the image of Godhead, so that thou mayest experience what His friends experience, the sweet secrets that the Almighty God has hidden from the beginning for those who love Him — as well as for all those who, living in this deceitful world, that beguiles its blind lovers, have abandoned Him. With thy whole heart love Him Who offered His whole being for love of thee. The sun and moon stand in awe of His beauty. The greatness and lavishness of His reward is endless. Cling, I say, to this Most High Son of God, Whom a Virgin bore and remained a virgin after His birth. Cling to His sweetest mother, who gave birth to such a Son Whom the heavens could not contain; but she carried Him in the tender womb of her own little body, and He rested on the Virginal

Now, through God's grace I am certain that the most worthy creature is the soul of a faithful man and that it is greater than heaven, because it cannot contain the Creator Himself with other creatures, but one faithful man is His home and throne, and that because of charity which the wicked cannot possess. For Truth Itself has said: *He who loves me will be loved by the Father, and I will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.* Now, in the same way in which the glorious Virgin of virgins conceived God and true man in her virginal womb, so thou canst always carry the Lord spiritually by imitating Him in humility and poverty, containing Him in thyself. Whom all things are contained; and then thou and other women who are the queens of this world fail in this, although their pride rises to the heavens and their heads touch the skies; none the less, in the end they perish like dung.

O Mother and Daughter, Bride of the King of all ages! That I have not written to thee with that frequency hoped for by my soul and thine, do not wonder, and do not convince thyself that the fire of love, with which I burn towards thee, is in any way lessened; for just as the heart of thy mother loved thee, so do I love thee. There is this one and only obstacle, the scarcity of messengers and the great perils on the roads. Now, however, I seize the opportunity of writing to thy love. With thee I exult exceedingly, with thee I rejoice in the joy of the Holy Spirit, O Bride of Christ; for in the way in which the first Saint Agnes was united with the Immaculate Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world, so art thou; and to thee, O happy one, it is given to enter the heavenly union of this alliance before which the heavenly hosts stand amazed. Desire for Him draws all mankind to Him, the remembrance of Him is content, His goodness satiates with every sweetness, His perfume raises

the dead to life, the glorious sight of Him makes blessed all the citizens of Jerusalem above the heavens, a vision that is the splendor of glory, the light of eternal light, the mirror without flaw. Look into this mirror daily, O Queen, Bride of Jesus Christ, and in it contemplate thy face often, that within and without thou mayest so adorn thyself with the beauty of the most married flowers, so dress thyself in those garments, which best befit a daughter and bride of the heavenly King. O most beloved, while looking into this mirror thou art free to take delight in a hallowed loveliness. Come, and see first of all in this mirror Jesus lying in a manger, in the greatest poverty, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the poor. What wondrous humility! What amazing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is lying in a manger. In the depths of this mirror look upon the blessed poverty of holy humility, because of which He suffered the greatest distress for the redemption of the human race. Within the borders of the mirror gaze upon the unspeakable love that made Him suffer upon the wood of the cross and there withal die a vile death. This Mirror lying upon the wood of the cross calls out to those passing by and says: *O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.* As this mirror calls and groans, let us answer it in a single voice and spirit: *I will be mindful and remember thee, and my spirit is in anguish within me.* Burn, O Queen, with this fire of love, and remember too the ineffable delights of the heavenly King, His eternal riches and dignities; in a sigh of overwhelming longing cry out in thy heart's love: *Draw me after thee, I will run in the odor of thy ointments, O heavenly Spouse; I will run, nor shall I stop until thou bringest me into the cellar of wine, until thy left hand is under my head, and thy right hand in rapture embraces me; kiss me with the kiss of thy mouth.*

In the midst of these considerations, remember thy poor mother, and know that I have written thy sweet memory indelibly upon the tablets of my heart since I esteem thee the most beloved of all. What more can I say? Let my bodily tongue fall silent in loving thee and give place to the tongue of my spirit, O blessed daughter, for the love I have for thee a tongue of flesh cannot express. Graciously and kindly, then, receive these matters I have so poorly written, and in any case heed the motherly love for thee and thy daughters with which I am consumed daily. Sincerely commend in the Lord, most esteemed Agnes our Sister, myself and my daughters to thy daughters. Farewell, most beloved, thou and thy daughters, until we meet at the glorious throne of the great God; pray for us to Him . . .

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Columban Duffy, O.F.M. (trans.)

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

This life is not only a pilgrimage; it is also a state of trial and probation. Here God wills to test us, to prove the sincerity of our love for Him, our submission of our will to His. He wills to force us to make clear decisions for or against Him. We must either surrender ourselves completely to Him, or purify our heart of all affection for the blandishments of the world, and of ourselves conquered by the tempter. God wills us to merit our share of glory by resisting the impulses of the lower man who is in constant rebellion against the law of the spirit. And, finally, God wills that we defend our own and His rights against the powers of darkness. Our life here upon earth is a pilgrimage, probation, and ceaseless battle.

Accordingly, we should not be surprised that we are made to undergo temptations. After all, was not Christ Himself led by the Spirit into the wilderness expressly to be tempted? Has it not always been the lot, or rather the privilege, of the saints to experience severe temptations of all kinds? Our exemplars, Saint Francis and Saint Clare, were not spared. Can we then, as followers of Christ, professing to live the holy Gospel according to the Rule of Saint Francis, expect to be purified in any way other than in the furnace of temptation? For this reason Saint Bonaventure makes this a special point in our examination of conscience when he would have us ask:

### WAS I NEGLIGENT IN RESISTING TEMPTATIONS?

Before we can answer this question for ourselves, a few points may be clarified. First, we must bear in mind that temptation is not sin, but something that seeks to lure us into sin. A temptation is not even an imperfection; not even the most violent and humiliating temptation is an imperfection. For that reason temptations suffered by a religious do not indicate lack of holiness; on the contrary, if they are directed against his vocation they presuppose his vocation, for there would be no purpose in a temptation against something which does not exist. Temptations, therefore, should never cause us the least anxiety. Since they are neither sins nor imperfections they are not to be considered matter for confession, and we should never *accuse* ourselves of temptations. For the sake of humility, however, and to obtain help and advice, it is good to manifest certain temptations to our confessor. We should remember, too, that temptations are the work of darkness and usually vanish when exposed to the clear light of sincere and humble manifestation.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

197

Since temptations are directed toward luring us away from God and into sin, it is obvious that we must be on the alert, that we must be watchful and use every means of avoiding and resisting them. With good reason the Lord warns us: *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation* (Matth. 26, 41); that is, into a temptation too strong for us.

Let us first consider temptation in general. Am I habitually alert to the danger of temptation, or do I frequently slip into an attitude of foolish overconfidence? Do I believe that I am not capable of certain sins, that they are beneath me, or that of myself — through my own will-power and judgment and prudence — I can resist any and all temptations? In regard to the so-called attractive sins, is my resistance weak and half-hearted, or prompt and resolute? Do I allow myself to toy with such temptations? Do I blindly and stupidly try to convince myself that, because temptation is not sin, I can allow myself to take pleasure in the excitement these temptations produce? In the case of prolonged temptation, do I resist valiantly for a time, then capitulate under the barrage of repeated attack? Do I sometimes deliberately close my eyes to the fact that a certain person, thought, or situation is, or can be, the source of temptation and that I must avoid or resist it? Do I pray for strength? Do I really and with conviction pray: *And lead us not into temptation*? Do I yield to a false sense of security? There is, of course, a right sense of security in God. We should have boundless trust in Him Who is the rock of our security, and be confident that with His grace we may hope to overcome every temptation.

For a more detailed examen, we shall select here only the "diabolical temptations" (*diabolica tentamenta*), as Saint Bonaventure calls them, and leave the temptations of the world and the flesh to a later discussion. The diabolical temptations are those which Christ Himself had to suffer.

The first temptation suffered by our Blessed Lord concerned the right order of the physical and spiritual life. What is meant here is aptly expressed by Saint Bonaventure when he says: "We do not preach in order to eat, but we eat in order to preach." This temptation is unquestionably subtle, slow-working, and dangerous. Its aim is to make us forget that our one and only goal in life is the salvation of our souls for the glory of God, and tries to convince us that our bodily welfare is of prime importance. We may well ask ourselves: Am I convinced, not only intellectually but practically, that the monastic life is a life of penance and mortification and not of physical comfort? Do I, unconsciously perhaps, seek an easy life? Do I give way to complaints when faced

with little hardships and privations? Am I inclined to criticize, without reason, such things as food, clothing, living quarters? Do I groan about too much work, not enough rest, insufficient recreation? Am I unwilling to up or curtail legitimate pleasure for the work proper to my state in life? Do I indulge in worldly pleasures?

The second temptation — to vain-glory — strives to attack the purpose of our religious vocation. We are led to abuse the religious state in order to puff up our own ego and to display our good works before men. Let us ask ourselves: Is my whole religious life centered around God, or around self? Do I make every effort to be a good religious to please my own self, or to win the praise of men? Why am I so painstaking in my work, in my charitable activities, in my profession? Why do I so assiduously avoid whatever may give scandal or occasion for unsavory gossip. Why do I avoid doing whatever may cause me to shine brightly in the eyes of men? Am I more concerned with my own reputation than that of my community than with the honor of God? It may not be beside the point to ask why we record our good works in statistics and reports and publish them. Is it really only *that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven* (Matth. 5, 16)? Why do we expose our people to our churches, to special exercises and devotions, to sermons and conferences and missions, even to the liturgical functions? We should indeed, and pray that we do not enter into this diabolical temptation to spiritual glory.

The third temptation concerns the will to power in religious life. This temptation leads us to throw off authority and subjection and be our own master, to have all for ourselves at the expense of others. To be sure, temptations do not usually attack us in so obvious and straightforward manner; the approach is much more subtle. But we may well ask ourselves: I honestly prefer being a subject to being a superior? Even if I can truly say I have no desire for authority over others, do I nevertheless, as a subject, use devious means of securing my own will? Do I tyrannize over others? If humiliated, does the devil to flight, pride and the urge to dominate offer him the easiest way? This evil is found not only in individuals but in entire communities and in religious orders. How much harm has been done in the Church of God by the scandalous competition among religious orders. It is a sad fact that while we may say: "All for the honor and glory of God!" we are really pleased with good works done in the Church only if they are done by us or by our order. Do we resist this temptation to jealousy in all its hateful ramifications? Let us watch and pray most earnestly that we do not yield to this dangerous tempta-

It is generally understood that the words: *And when the devil had tried him for forty days and forty nights, he departed from him for a while* (Luke 4, 13), refer to the first temptation of Christ in His passion. Here the religious will find the supreme temptation which is aimed at his very vocation. There is no doubt that the higher the religious has advanced in the spiritual life, the more will the seducer strive to ruin that life, to strike at its very vitals.

Christ, in His supreme sacrifice and ultimate surrender to God in the passion, was tempted to bitterness. His disciples had abandoned him; one denied Him, another betrayed Him. The people cried for His blood. Yet He remained the embodiment of consummate charity to His last breath on the cross. How do we act when tempted to bitterness? It is natural to feel pain when we are betrayed by those we love, when we are disappointed in persons we trusted, when we are unjustly accused or condemned. But if we feel the pain, do we resist the consequent temptation to bitterness and cynicism? More specifically, we may ask: When hurt, do I remain resentful? Do I allow bitter thoughts to return again and again and keep my soul in turmoil and misery? Can I really forgive and forget? Can I, as Christ did, forgive betrayal and denial and desertion and receive the offender back into the former intimacy of my friendship? Or do I remain hard and embittered? If there is anything of this kind in our souls, let us recognize it as a temptation, and reveal the festering wounds to the healing eyes of Christ in the confessional. Then let us surrender our pain completely to our Lord and unite it with His sacrifice.

The most bitter temptation Christ had to suffer was despair and the agony of desertion by God and by man. This is the supreme temptation in our religious life, and usually befalls souls who are close to God. It may occur in slight, intermittent attacks of discouragement, in long periods of desolation, and in severe attacks of despair. A few pertinent questions will help us to recognize this temptation: Do I easily yield to discouragement when I realize my faults and failures? Or do I humble myself in all simplicity, displaying my misery and poverty before the Lord? Do I use confession in this manner? Do I say, with our holy Father Francis, that up to now I have done nothing, but now I will begin? Do I grow weary of beginning again? Do I lose fervor and zeal when I no longer experience the nearness of Christ? Do I accept spiritual dryness as my just desert and put my whole trust in God? Do I give way to doubts as to whether I am in the state of grace, as to whether my sins are forgiven or duly confessed? Do I always abide by the word of my confessor and blindly believe him? Those religious especially who have advanced far in the

spiritual life should beware of this temptation to despair. It is truly diabolical. Despair aims at destroying our childlike attitude toward God whom we have a right and a duty to trust as our Father. It ruins our life. If we have to suffer with Christ the supreme loneliness which forced from Him the cry: *My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?* we must blindly fight the temptation to final despair and hold fast to Christ, our only hope, our only security.

Let us always keep in mind that temptations resisted and conquered are not only be as so many victories adding to the glory of our immortal crown but likewise the means of thwarting the tempter and bringing us very close to the heart of our blessed Lord.

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.*



## FRANCISCAN BRIEF

The world's newest "San Damiano" is in the Southwest. A community of Poor Clare Sisters has been founded in New Mexico in the city of Roswell, best known for its New Mexico Military Institute and its large air base for the training of United States Airmen. There is little more to say about Roswell, except that it has forty-three churches of various denominations (including a church of Jehovah's Witnesses), but it has only two Catholic churches. Into this very non-Catholic town a small colony of Poor Clares came in the Fall of 1948 and established a miniature monastery and chapel. They remodeled an old twelve-room farmhouse, and in the past three years have added several rooms, starting a novitiate. While most of Roswell's Catholics were decidedly pleased at the privilege of having the Poor Clares in their midst, the non-Catholics wondered, inquired, or were afraid of what would happen to themselves with these cloistered nuns in the city. But, having watched the little extern Sister in her tours through the city, they too have learned to love and esteem the Sisters. The community lives

on alms, as have all Poor Clares during the past seven centuries, and, though Roswell does not yet entirely support her Poor Clares, the citizens in time will understand and do so, since already the Sisters have generous friends there. Roswell is not on the beaten path and the new foundation is as yet unknown. The monastery stands a good two city blocks from the highway and just outside the northern city limits. Inside the enclosure wall two acres of land are cultivated. The cloistered Sisters care for this garden; and, though all of them were city girls, they have made quite a success of their farming. The community has the nine original professed Sisters who came from Chicago, and two postulants. They have daily holy Mass by a Franciscan Father from Saint Peter's Church. The Sisters enjoy the privilege of private Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, day and night. They also chant the Divine Office during the day and night, and the people have come to appreciate the hours of prayer spent by the Community of Sisters in their midst.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

There are many reasons why the month of September should salute Mary the Queen of Martyrs. The calendar for this month is studded with numerous saints, of the old Church and the new, who have shed their blood for our holy Faith. Conspicuous among them is the glorious band of Jesuit martyrs, Saint Isaac Jogues and his companions, who planted the cross in the Northland of this nation and sealed it with their blood. Into this picture of palms and crowns of glowing red are set, mosaic-like, the feasts of our Blessed Mother: her Nativity, her Holy Name, Our Lady of Ransom; but most significant of all is the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, right in the center, on September fifteenth.

Our Blessed Mother a martyr? At first the title may seem strange. Did she not die a natural death, perhaps in the arms of Saint John, the Beloved Disciple? Recently, on the occasion of the solemn definition of her Assumption into heaven, this question was warmly discussed. The best answer given was, we believe, that of the Venerable Duns Scotus, who claims that Mary died by the martyrdom of love. This bears out what Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said of her: that Mary was a *martyr in anima*, a martyr in soul, or desire. Numerous arguments, illustrations and sayings of saints might be adduced to prove this thesis of Mary's martyrdom of love and desire—as if it really needed proof in view of the Seven Swords that pierced her Immaculate Heart. The present writer heard this topic discussed by a group of venerable friars. One of them, who seemed to have the least to say, yet said the most by constantly repeating in a subdued tone: "The suffering of Jesus was the suffering of His mother." No more need be said.

We are all familiar with the Seven Sorrows of Mary; in fact, we meditate on them as the beads of the Crown of the Seven Sorrows glide through our fingers. But the mere meditation is hardly effective unless it produce in our souls the stimulus of imitation. The great mistake that Religious often make is that they fail to apply to themselves the pearls of practical wisdom that their prayers contain. Prayer brings us nearer to God in thought and affection, but affection is a fleeting and flitting thing unless it be sustained by strenuous action. Let us keep this in mind as we proceed.

The story of Mary's *First Sorrow* is given in her own words, as recorded by Saint Luke (2, 25-35). Well may we imagine how her eyes gleamed with holy

joy as the aged Simeon held her Child in his arms and pronounced the imprecious canticle, *Nunc Dimittis*. But then, like a thunderbolt came the prophecy from his trembling lips, *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*. No human being, aside from the Sorrowful Mother herself, has ever fully understood, we daresay, the tremendous import of this prophecy. She did understand, and she tasted the chalice to its bitter bottom. Perhaps, by pondering over these words, we too may understand in a measure, the thoughts of our own hearts may be revealed, if we see our own lives in the mirror of Mary's sorrow.

That sorrow might well fit the days of our budding vocation, our immature, our holy profession. It was a strenuous fight between the world and the cloister, between the realistic past and the idealistic future. The struggle ably lasted long, and bitter tears were shed, some in seclusion, others in the open. We never understood it all, not even to this day; and perhaps we still feel the smarting of that wound. But we conquered; we conquered *propter amorem Domini nostri Jesu Christi* — because of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And is it not significant that Mary's story dismisses Simeon after he said those words? The scene breaks off abruptly; but you may be sure that after Simeon had thrust the first sword into her heart, she clasped the Child into her arms, while her lips uttered these words: "Return to me, O my Child; gladly will I bear all sorrow for Thy sake." Such was the answer of this valiant woman, and such should be your answer when doubts regarding your vocation and the life you have freely chosen beset you.

Then, in the dark night came the *Second Sorrow*, the flight into Egypt. Mary was a child of her day, of lovely Nazareth; and proud Jerusalem was the ancestral seat of her forebears. The *Magnificat* reveals her noble patriotism. And now, the bare desert; and beyond is mystic Egypt with its idols and idolaters. Did she feel the pangs of homesickness? There is no question about it; even as there can be no question that all Religious must feel the loss of what is most intimate and most deeply ingrained in the human heart. But Joseph and Mary hurried on through the dark night into a foreign, heathen land. Let those Religious whom Obedience has ordered to distant countries, far away from a happy home, surrounded by disappointments, misunderstandings, often confronted by disregard for their most sacred feelings, or, what is more abominable, by slurs upon their nationality — let them not be dismayed, but watch the Sorrowful Mother as she presses the divine Child to her bosom. For in Him she has lost all; in Him she recovered all; yes, far more than she had free-

sorsaken. And meanwhile the memory of her home and fatherland remained enshrined in her heart.

Mary's *Third Sorrow* bids us look at our spiritual life. She had lost the Child Jesus and for three days sought Him sorrowing. In our soul's innermost recesses there are days of bitter dryness — a foretaste, perhaps, of the "Dark Night of the Soul" of which the Mystics tell us. There is no apparent progress, no joy, no fervor; it seems that God has forsaken us, and we become fearful of our salvation; all is dark and gloomy. That is the time we must practise patience, confidence and abandonment to God's holy Will. When Saint Teresa was troubled thus, our Lord assured her that while she suffered and pined He was in her heart. Even so the divine Child gave His mother the gentle rebuke, *How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?* (Lk. 2, 49). Stick to your Father's business. Do your work, say your prayers, and confide in the Spouse of your soul.

But we must hasten and be brief, or the editor will cut some of these paragraphs off. That would be a disappointment after having spent the midnight oil. Yes, how to bear disappointment in our work is the lesson we face in Mary's *Fourth Sorrow*. She meets her divine Son on the way to Calvary — the Sorrowful Way, the Way that all Religious must walk. In the Way there are stones and ruts and all manner of hindrances. But the Savior walks on carrying the heavy cross, while blood streams from His sacred wounds and His mother, grief-stricken, meets His blood-stained countenance. What a difference between the night at Bethlehem — the angels singing, the shepherds adoring — and this dreary day! What a difference between the morning of our profession and the drudgery that is our present lot! In school with restless youngsters, in the hospital with impatient patients, in the convent with all manner of criticism, foolish gossip and unfair reprimands. But never you mind; never mind. Christ carries His cross; slowly He moves away; and His Mother follows Him with tearful eyes and a heart bursting with unfailing love. When you were a novice, you thought you might be a superior some day; but they didn't want you. You tried your hand in school, but the youngsters wouldn't mind you. In the hospital you couldn't stand the constant bickering of the nurses. And now that you handle the pot and the broom, the whole community rises up against you. And you say: *O, if I had wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest* (Ps. 54. 6). No, don't fly away. Keep on your Way, the Way of the cross; your Lord and Savior walks before you and His Sorrowful Mother at your side.



The *Fifth Sorrow* will not detain us long, because it is so hard to because it is the hour *when the thoughts of many hearts are revealed*. A flash of lightning the figure of the Son of God, raised on the cross, about the universe and lays bare the inmost depths of the hearts of all men. And what do we behold? A spark of love here and there, but for the most part a conglomerate of passion, crime and vice; of pride, sensuality and greed, of hatred and unbelief. Why did the Son of God die? Is His Death so meaningless, so bare of holy and noble fruit? The Mother must have seen this in the Son's distressed countenance. That is why a sword pierced her heart. That is why our hearts should be pierced by the sins of the world, by the hatred and unbelief that stalk rampant through this world of ours, this vale of tears.

But the *Sixth Sorrow* turns the spotlight upon ourselves, into our own hearts. The lance pierces the Savior's Sacred Heart. It also pierced His mother's heart which was without sin; it should pierce our hearts which are filled with sins, sins of the distant past, sins of our cloister days, carelessnesses, negligences, unfaithfulness to our vows, sins against charity, sins of omission and commission. There is no end to them, and confusion overwhelms us. True, they are forgiven; yet our Master's Heart was wounded and the wound remains as a perpetual reminder that our hearts must ever harbor an abiding sorrow for our sins.

In her *Seventh Sorrow* Mary takes us with her to the sepulcher of her Master. Death is bitter and we all must face it. Mary died with Jesus the Son of love, and she lived in the hope that soon she would join Him in His Father's glory. The noisy crowds had dispersed from Calvary's heights. A small group of women silently, reverently, lovingly lowered the Sacred Body from the cross and, as pious tradition tells us, placed it in the arms of His mother. None of the Evangelists describes the scene for us; we are left to our imagination, even to our own death should be a matter of our daily imagination and meditation. This was Mary's seventh and final sorrow, and, as the sun was gradually setting behind the western sky, a serene calmness seemed to settle over Jerusalem: the bitterness of death mingled with the sweetness of its prize. Who would dare reveal the thoughts in Mary's heart at that moment? Perhaps she mused over the words her grandsire David had spoken; we recite them every morning at Prime: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Ps. 115, 15). Christ's death was the price paid for our life. This is what made Saint Francis invent the beautiful name, "Sister Death".

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

## THE SEAL OF CHRIST

(From Chapter XIII of the *Legenda Maior of Saint Bonaventure*)

The angelic Francis was not accustomed to be at leisure from good, but rather, like the celestial spirits on the ladder of Jacob, would either ascend to God or descend to his neighbor; for he had so prudently learned to dole out the time granted to him for merit that he would spend some of it striving for his neighbor's gain, and some of it he would devote to the raptures of contemplation. Accordingly, when he had condescended to attend to the welfare of another according to the demands of places and times, he would take leave of the crowd's din and seek a secret aloneness and a place of quiet, the more freely to give himself to God and shake off whatever dust might have clung to him from his association with men.

Two years before he surrendered his soul to heaven, after numberless toilsome strivings he was brought by the guidance of divine providence into a high place apart, which is called the Mount of Alverna. Now, when he had begun to keep his accustomed forty-day fast there in honor of Saint Michael the Archangel, he was flooded more abundantly than usual by the sweetness of heavenly contemplation and devoured by a more ardent flame of heavenly yearning, so that he entered upon a more intense experiencing of heavenly gifts. He was caught up, indeed, on high, not as a *searcher of majesty, to be overwhelmed by glory*, but like a *faithful and prudent servant* searching out the good pleasure of God, to Whom with impatient eagerness he longed to conform himself in all things.

Then by a divine revelation he came to realize that in the opening of the book of the Gospels there would be revealed to him by Christ what would be most acceptable to God in him and concerning him. Accordingly, after praying with great devotion, he had a companion, a holy man completely devoted to God, open in the name of the Holy Trinity a book of the Gospels taken from the altar. Now, when a three-fold opening of the book revealed each time the Passion of the Lord, this God-intoxicated man knew that as he had copied Christ in the acts of His life so he must needs be conformed to Him in the distress and pain of His Passion before he should *pass out of this world*. And although his body was already frail and weak because of the great austerity of his past life and constant carrying of the Lord's cross, he was in no way overcome by fear but was quickened with a mightier courage to suffer martyrdom. There blazed up in him an unconquerable fire of love for the good.

in *embers of fire and flames*, so that many waters had no power to quench the glowing love.

Then, as he was being caught up on high towards God by the seraphic fervor of his desires and in the sweetness of compassion was being transformed into Him Who *by reason of His very great love* wished to be crucified, on a certain morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was praying on the mountain side, he saw a Seraph with six bright and flaming wings coming down from the heights of the heavens. When the Seraph in his flight had come near the man of God and was hovering in the air before him, there appeared amid the wings the likeness of a crucified man, hands and feet stretched out in the form of, and affixed to, a cross. Two wings were raised above this figure, two were extended in flight, and two veiled the whole body. At this sight he became crushed with wonder, and joy commingled with grief engulfed his heart. For he was gladdened in the indulgent sight whereby Christ decreed that He should be viewed under the guise of a Seraph, but the crucifixion *pierced his soul with the sword* of ruthless grief. He wondered greatly at the sight of so unfathomable a vision, knowing that the bitterness of suffering in no way harmonized with the immortality of a Seraphic spirit. At length he thereby understood, because the Lord revealed it, that this vision was given to his sight by divine providence so that this lover of Christ would foreknow that he must be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ Crucified, not by martyrdom of the flesh but through the searing of his soul. Then, in disappearing, the vision left a wondrous fervor in his heart; but it impressed a no less wondrous visible likeness in his flesh; for immediately his hands and feet began to appear the signs of the nails, as a short time before he had seen them in the likeness of the crucified man. His hands and feet were seen transfixed by nails in their very centers, the heads of the nails showing in the palms of the hands and the insteps of the feet, the points of the nails protruding from the opposite sides; the nail-heads in the hands and feet were round and black, and the points, rather long and bent back as though hammered down, protruded from the very flesh and were raised above it. In addition, his right side was gashed by a red wound, as though pierced by a lance, and this wound often oozed a sacred blood that stained his tunic and underclothing.

Perceiving that the stigmata, so clearly stamped upon his body, could not be concealed from his close companions, but fearing none the less to reveal the secret from the Lord, the servant of Christ was in the throes of uncertainty whether he should speak of what he saw, or remain silent. Therefore, he called some of the brethren and in general terms laid his doubt before them

asked their advice. One of the brethren, Illuminatus by name and illuminated by grace, knowing that he had viewed things full of wonder because he seemed to be full of wonder himself, said to the holy man: "Brother, you should know that divine secrets are at times shown to you not only for your own sake but also for that of others. Evidently, then, you should be afraid of being held responsible for the *hidden talent*, if you conceal what you have received for the advantage of the many." Although the holy man was accustomed on other occasions to say, *My secret to myself*, now he was moved by the Brother's words, and in great fear related the story of his vision, adding that he who had appeared to him had spoken of some things that he could never in this life reveal to any man. It must be believed, in fact, that these words of the holy Seraph, miraculously revealed upon a cross, were so *secret that man may not speak* them.

Now after this true lover of Christ had been *transformed into the very image* of the Loved One and the forty days completed, which he had set for himself, upon the feast of the Archangel Michael that angelic man, Francis, *came down from the mountain*, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, not hewn by craftman's hand upon tablets of stone or wood but drawn in his bodily members by the finger of the living God. And since *it is good to hide the secrets of a king*, this man who partook of a kingly secret kept hidden as well as he could those sacred seals. But, because God is wont to make known for His own glory the wonders He performs, the Lord Himself, Who had in secret imprinted these signs, openly showed that through them certain miracles occurred, in order that the hidden and wonderful power of the stigmata might become known through the evident fame of the signs. . . .

Although Francis strove in great earnest to hide this *treasure found in a field*, nevertheless it could not lie concealed without some seeing the stigmata on his hands and feet, even though he had his hands almost always covered and from that time on walked with slippered feet. While he was living, very many of the brethren saw them, who, although worthy of all belief in view of their outstanding sanctity, but in order to set aside all doubt, swore upon oath and the relics of the saints that these signs were as described and that they had seen them. Furthermore, some cardinals, who had been on terms of intimacy with the holy man, saw the stigmata, and, truthfully including praise for them in prose works and hymns and antiphons which they published in his honor, have *borne witness to the truth* both in speech and writing. Moreover, the Supreme Pontiff, the Lord Alexander, preaching to the people before many of the brethren and myself, affirmed that during the saint's life he had

in *embers of fire and flames*, so that many waters had no power to quench glowing love.

Then, as he was being caught up on high towards God by the fervor of his desires and in the sweetness of compassion was being transferred into Him Who by reason of His very great love wished to be crucified, certain morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, when he was praying on the mountain side, he saw a Seraph with six bright and fiery wings coming down from the heights of the heavens. When the Seraph in flight had come near the man of God and was hovering in the air before him there appeared amid the wings the likeness of a crucified man, hands and feet stretched out in the form of, and affixed to, a cross. Two wings were above this figure, two were extended in flight, and two veiled the whole. At this sight he became crushed with wonder, and joy commingled with grief engulfed his heart. For he was gladdened in the indulgent sight whereby God decreed that He should be viewed under the guise of a Seraph, but the crucifixion pierced his soul with the sword of ruthless grief. He was moved greatly at the sight of so unfathomable a vision, knowing that the bitterness of suffering in no way harmonized with the immortality of a Seraphic being. At length he thereby understood, because the Lord revealed it, that this vision was given to his sight by divine providence so that this lover of Christ might foreknow that he must be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ Crucified, not by martyrdom of the flesh but through the searing of his body. Then, in disappearing, the vision left a wondrous fervor in his heart; but it also impressed a no less wondrous visible likeness in his flesh; for immediately his hands and feet began to appear the signs of the nails, as a short time before he had seen them in the likeness of the crucified man. His hands and feet were seen transfixed by nails in their very centers, the heads of the nails showing the palms of the hands and the insteps of the feet, the points of the nails protruding from the opposite sides; the nail-heads in the hands and feet were round and black, and the points, rather long and bent back as though hammered down, protruded from the very flesh and were raised above it. In addition, the right side was gashed by a red wound, as though pierced by a lance, and this wound often oozed a sacred blood that stained his tunic and underclothing.

Perceiving that the stigmata, so clearly stamped upon his body, could not be concealed from his close companions, but fearing none the less to reveal the secret from the Lord, the servant of Christ was in the throes of uncertainty whether he should speak of what he saw, or remain silent. Therefore, he consulted some of the brethren and in general terms laid his doubt before them

and asked their advice. One of the brethren, Illuminatus by name and illuminated by grace, knowing that he had viewed things full of wonder because he seemed to be full of wonder himself, said to the holy man: "Brother, you should know that divine secrets are at times shown to you not only for your own sake but also for that of others. Evidently, then, you should be afraid of being held responsible for the *hidden talent*, if you conceal what you have received for the advantage of the many." Although the holy man was accustomed on other occasions to say, *My secret to myself*, now he was moved by the Brother's words, and in great fear related the story of his vision, adding that he who had appeared to him had spoken of some things that he could never in this life reveal to any man. It must be believed, in fact, that these words of the holy Seraph, miraculously revealed upon a cross, were so *secret that man may not speak* them.

Now after this true lover of Christ had been transformed into the very image of the Loved One and the forty days completed, which he had set for himself, upon the feast of the Archangel Michael that angelic man, Francis, came down from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, not hewn by a craftsman's hand upon tablets of stone or wood but drawn in his bodily members by the finger of the living God. And since it is good to hide the secrets of a king, this man who partook of a kingly secret kept hidden as well as he could those sacred seals. But, because God is wont to make known for His own glory the wonders He performs, the Lord Himself, Who had in secret imprinted these signs, openly showed that through them certain miracles occurred, in order that the hidden and wonderful power of the stigmata might become known through the evident fame of the signs. . . .

Although Francis strove in great earnest to hide this treasure found in a field, nevertheless it could not lie concealed without some seeing the stigmata on his hands and feet, even though he had his hands almost always covered and from that time on walked with slippered feet. While he was living, very many of the brethren saw them, who, although worthy of all belief in view of their outstanding sanctity, but in order to set aside all doubt, swore upon oath and the relics of the saints that these signs were as described and that they had seen them. Furthermore, some cardinals, who had been on terms of intimacy with the holy man, saw the stigmata, and, truthfully including praise for them in prose works and hymns and antiphons which they published in his honor, have borne witness to the truth both in speech and writing. Moreover, the Supreme Pontiff, the Lord Alexander, preaching to the people before many of the brethren and myself, affirmed that during the saint's life he had seen

these holy stigmata with his own eyes. More than fifty friars and the Clare, who was wholly devoted to God, together with her Sisters and innumerable lay-people saw them upon the saint's dead body; among these were many . . . who kissed these wounds out of devotion and touched repeatedly, and these serve to lend weight to the testimony.

So carefully did he hide the wound in his side that while he lived he could gaze upon it unless by stealth. Now when a certain Brother, whose custom it was to minister to him, had induced him by a pious stratagem to pull off his tunic so that it might be cleaned, he saw the wound opened to his attentive gaze and, touching it lightly with three fingers, avowed to its extent by sight and touch. By means of a like stratagem the Brother who was vicar at that time viewed the wound. A companion Brother of great simplicity, happening to touch his shoulders which were bowed in pain, accidentally thrust his hand under the saint's hood and touched the sacred wound which caused the saint great agony. From this time the saint wore underclothing so made that it came up to the arm-pits in order to cover the wound on his side. The brethren also, who used to wash the underclothing or clean the arms at times, were convinced of the existence of the sacred wound beyond all doubt since they would find the saint's clothing reddened by blood, and afterwards it was revealed to them face to face and they together with many others gazed upon it and gave it veneration.

Come now, valiant soldier of Christ, take up the arms of the all-conquering Leader with which thou art so mightily armored; thou wilt overcome every enemy. Raise up the banner of the most high King, at sight of which all warriors of the divine army are quickened. Bear openly the seal of Christ, the High Priest, in virtue of which thy words and deeds, blameless and gentle, will be received by all, and rightly so. For now at last, because of the mark of the Lord Jesus which thou bearest in thy body, no man must give thee trouble; rather, every servant of Christ is bound to be love-struck in everything. At last, in these undoubted signs the testimonies of God in thee and through thee, having become exceedingly credible not by two or three witnesses but by the sufficiency of proof but by as many as possible unto an excess of proof, by every pretense of excuse by the unfaithful while strengthening believers in faith, elevating them with the confidence of hope, and setting them on fire with the flame of love. . . .

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Columban Duffy, O.F.M. (trans.)

## TOWARD A FRANCISCAN CONCEPT OF WORK

Work is for man as personal an obligation as living. A sign of ignominy to the pagan, it acquired a certain dignity with the coming of Christ, Who spent the greater part of his thirty-year retreat at Nazareth as a carpenter. Little wonder then, that the Gospel-minded Francis of Assisi should have chosen to devote an entire chapter of his brief, twelve-chapter rule to the discussion of work as commanded by Divine-Natural law, exemplified by the God-Man on earth, and interpreted through the simple genius of the Seraphic Saint himself.

Francis begins the chapter on work with the words: "Those friars to whom the Lord has given the grace of working." Behold Francis' ideal of work. What was despicable in the eyes of the pagan was looked upon by Francis as a grace. Francis here shows his followers how to turn, in the words of the poet, the common dust of servile opportunity into gold, i.e. how to turn the meaningless things of life into a source of merit for heaven.

Yet, before proceeding further, we might ask ourselves: What is work? Pope Pius XI gave us a good definition of it in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, when he defined it to be the "application of one's forces of soul and body to the gifts of nature for the development of one's powers by their means." Notice, he does not limit his definition to manual work, and he furthermore shows us that all work must have some perfecting influence upon the worker. We shall distinguish for ourselves, three classes of work: spiritual, intellectual, and manual work, and proceed in the following paragraphs to analyze the nature of each.

**SPIRITUAL WORK.** There are two types of spiritual work, namely, that which we commonly call "striving for perfection" and which is incumbent upon every human being, and that which has as its object the perfection of others.

The former type of spiritual work concerns itself with the progressive development of the soul-life of the individual Christian, terminating in union of the soul with God, the end of all human endeavour. As Religious we are bound in a special way to this type of work in virtue of our Religious Profession. Now this type of work is distinguished from all the other types in that it demands of us: *personal effort*, i.e., we cannot delegate others to perform this work for us — it is a question of our individual relations with our Creator;

*progressive activity*, which is a sign of a healthy spiritual life, and the absence of which is an indication of spiritual stagnation, or retardation; *constancy* does not permit us to be swaying to and fro as the reed in the wind but of us unrelenting progress toward our eternal goal.

The second type of spiritual activity is principally that of the Franciscan priest. He is the shepherd placed over the flock; he it is who must seek the lost sheep and bring them back safely into the fold. Whatever task the lot of the Franciscan priests, be it in the pulpit, or in the classroom, home or foreign missions, he must teach the word of God both by word and personal example, in season and out of season. His must be the motto of Saint John the Baptist set forth when Christ began His public mission, *For I increase, I must decrease*. We might compare the Franciscan priest to a candle burning itself out with energy for the sake of forming Christ in human

In both types of work we have an example given us; we have our Lord as Model. In our striving for perfection we have the example of our Lord who taught us how to pray and showed us also that in all that we do we strive to do the *Will of the Father*. The Franciscan priest will likewise have Christ his Model. He sees first of all Christ the Savior, Who had come for the multitudes, Christ the Preacher and Teacher, Christ the divine Physician and Christ the Judge of Man. Christ is the Eternal Sun whose rays continually focused upon a miserable creature whom God has raised up to the dignity of an *alter Christus*, and it is left only for the priest to allow the light to penetrate into his innermost self that he may learn to give both self and life to those whom he serves.

**INTELLECTUAL WORK.** Here would be placed all those whose work, though not entirely excluding manual work, nevertheless requires greater use of the intellective faculties. Franciscan priests would again be placed under this heading for we find them teaching in the halls of learning, and even an ordinary parish priest must read much in order to get new ideas for his sermons, etc. Our clerics, seminarians, teaching Sisters, hospital Sisters, etc. are also included under this heading as well as those Third Order members who are engaged in professional work.

Though this type of work is not as inspiring as the former, it is nevertheless, a medium for our personal sanctification and must be considered as such — we must consider it, as Saint Francis does, a "grace". And just as in the former type of work Christ was portrayed as our Model, He is also

our Model in this sphere of human activity. Are you a teacher? Then consider Christ the Divine Teacher, and as you stand before your pupils imitate the Divine Pedagogue. Or perhaps you are a Doctor? Very well, look to Christ the Divine Physician, and may His constant trust in His Father's help inspire you with hope as you make your rounds in the hospital wards from day to day. Are you a lawyer? Here too Christ stands out as your Model, Christ the Divine Lawgiver; think of Him expounding the meaning of the law to the Doctors of the Temple, look to Him for guidance and inspiration. Yes, Christ is the source of all knowledge — He is our Divine Model; imitating Him we cannot err.

**MANUAL WORK.** This type of work is the exact opposite of that which we have just considered, for it requires greater physical exertion under the direction of the intellect. Here would be classified our Franciscan Lay-brothers and Lay-sisters and the greater portion of the human race, known as "The Working Class". Their condition, despised by the worldly wise, is nobler than a thousand worlds because of the graces it is capable of procuring. The multi-millionaire with all his riches cannot be compared to one of these humble servants of the Almighty.

In the former types of work we have referred to the potentialities each contains for personal sanctification. What shall we say concerning manual work? Actions speak louder than words, and biographies are silent witnesses to God's heroes. Pick up any volume containing biographies of Franciscan saints and you will see there the number of those who have reached the highest honors in the Church by merely performing the humblest tasks about the cloister, home or factory.

After an analysis of the various types of work, another question enters our mind: Why should Saint Francis call working a "grace". I am sure our Holy Father would not object to a few conjectures on this point. Sanctifying our daily tasks is one of the more powerful means of attaining to the heights of sanctity. Few of us are privileged to spend the day before our Eucharistic Lord, speaking with Him, contemplating His numberless Attributes, but we are all able to commune with Him through our work — indeed, every movement of the working hand can become an individual act of love which angels carry to our heavenly home and place at the Throne of Almighty God in our stead. Again, the person who works finds in his tasks an opportunity of imitating one or the other of the Divine Attributes, e.g. Goodness, Justice, Charity. And, lastly, while work at first sight seems to be a punishment inflicted upon man-

kind by God, the spiritual-minded person will find out before long that it is rather an act of God's infinite Mercy than it is of Justice; for in giving the opportunity to work, Almighty God permits him to atone for the sins he has committed against him, and, if directed by a good intention, our work is not one of lessening our stay in the prison of purgatory. Viewed in this light, even from morning till night will become for us an act of penance and in conformity with the original plans of Saint Francis who was wont to tell his followers: "The Penitents of Assisi".

After having given the nature of work, Francis of Assisi tells us that work must be performed "faithfully and devoutly." These are the qualities of all truly Franciscan work. Faithful work implies a sufficient knowledge of the object before us (we might call it conscientiousness), but, above all, it implies a continual, incessant praise of Almighty God, in remembrance of the words of the Apostle: *Not serving to the eye as pleasers of men, but in singleness of heart from fear of the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it from the heart as to the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance of your reward* (Col. 3, 22-24). The Franciscan is not so much concerned with whether his superior is watching him or not; on the contrary, he is interested in making each task he performs an individual act of reparation and an act of love of God. In practice, the Franciscan who works faithfully must have a sense of personal responsibility: a watchful care of articles given to his use; a sense of thrift and economy. Moreover, he will do all he can to overcome self-will and murmuring.

And yet "faithful" work is not enough for the Franciscan. If his work is to have any value before God, it must be performed in a spirit of devotion. Now, by devotion we must not understand the sensible feeling of piety which religious persons often have in mind. Devotion is rather a reasoned and deliberate act of the will whereby one's intellect and will have nothing else in view but the will and glory of God; the end is mind in union with God, as Saint Augustine the Great expresses it so beautifully: "... through a good will, that you may be mentally united with God within yourself." (*De Adharendo Deo*). Thus, work performed with devotion becomes a *rationabile obsequium*, a homage of reason, raises even the most menial task to a supernatural level and makes of it a source of merit. No Franciscan, therefore, can justly complain: "I have not time for prayer"; for his very work is ordained to be prayer.

Now, the end of all Franciscan work is to banish "idleness, the enemy of the soul". This was Francis' way of telling his brethren what the Apostle

Paul the Apostle meant when he said: *Brethren, be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord* (I Cor. 15, 58). There is no place in the world where time can be more easily wasted than in religious life, and yet there is no other place where even the most insignificant action can become the source of greater merit. Founders of Religious Orders without exception have always censured the spirit of idleness in their followers, and, mindful of the words of the Apostle, that their followers should *abound in the work of the Lord*, most of them in the manner of Saint Francis of Assisi have recommended a spirit of industry as its remedy. Idleness together with ignorance are the two greatest enemies of the Franciscan life, for, as Father Cajetan of Bergamo remarks, the Franciscan Order has suffered more from these two vices than from any other evil.

But all that has been previously stated by Saint Francis in the fifth chapter of the Rule was merely directed towards one supreme thought in his mind: that all work, whatever it may be, should never be allowed to "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other temporal things must be subservient." An eminent authority on Franciscan spirituality in this country, Father Philibert Ramstetter, has rightly remarked that in these few words is contained the Franciscan's "recipe for success". Commenting on these words, Father Philibert remarks that "here in black and white we have a recipe for success in any kind of Franciscan activity. Nothing a Franciscan may legitimately be engaged in is to be excluded from the spirit of prayer and devotion; indeed—and here we behold once more the daring genius of our saintly Founder—each and every thing in this life and world must serve, must contribute its meed to, that spirit of holy prayer and devotion which is more important than all other temporal matters."

Every Franciscan, therefore, must consider work in the light in which it has been outlined in the preceding pages, if he or she wishes to remain faithful to the Franciscan vocation. He must regard work as another opportunity of gaining merit, and, above all, he must abhor idleness, since it is the arch-enemy of his own soul and of the Seraphic Order. Finally, in all the things he does he must never let this principle escape his attention, that nothing he does may ever be permitted to "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other temporal things must be subservient."

Washington, D. C.

Fr. [Name] Faddish, O.F.M.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

When Saint Bonaventure urges us to look into ourselves to whether we are making due progress in religious perfection, he does not mean that we should try to discover how perfect we are. Such an attempt is not only un-Franciscan but even un-Christian; in fact, it would be utterly un-Christian. The spiritual life has its own laws and measurements, and they are not the terrible paradox that he who would save his life must lose it.

It requires a pretty naive imagination to form the concept of progress as a weeding and planting process. Unfortunately, however, the reading of certain spiritual books seems to have given many religious the idea of that concept. They proceed on the happy assurance that progress in perfection consists in uprooting the weeds of vice one after another, and implanting the flowers of the opposite virtue until the soul becomes a flourishing garden of beautiful blossoms with never a weed to mar its loveliness. While it is unquestionably true that if every year we would rid ourselves of one vice we would soon become perfect men, the sober fact is that our spiritual life simply does not develop in that way. If it did, it would expose us to the danger of Pharisaism, leading us to enjoy the beauty of our own perfection and to dissociate it from God. True progress, on the contrary, is measured — if indeed it can be measured at all — by the extent to which we realize the depths of our sinful misery. For the closer a man comes to God the more clearly does he realize the brightness of the divine perfections, and in the light of his love for God his own utter wretchedness.

Thus it is that Saint Bonaventure would not have us ask: Have I made progress in perfection, but:

### HAVE I BEEN NEGLIGENT IN MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

Negligence in making spiritual progress can be understood only in the sense of negligence in using the means and opportunities God has provided for our sanctification. This negligence can arise from three possible sources: weariness and discouragement in the face of repeated failure; a distorted concept of religious perfection; or a disregard for those practices which help us to attain perfection.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

215

In considering the first source of negligence, discouragement, we must distinguish between the case of the worldly religious who has never really striven for closer union with God and consequently regards the obligations of his state as wearisome restrictions on his liberty, and the case of the sincere religious who through human weakness has fallen into disillusionment or dissatisfaction. Obviously, the problem of the worldly religious need not be considered here; but the sincere religious may well ask himself whether or not there has been a slackening in his efforts. It is quite natural for all of us to become discouraged when we realize how far we are from our ideal, how slowly and painfully we advance, how crippled we are by our daily falls into sin and imperfection, how tightly bound we are by our pet faults and bad habits. But if this feeling is natural, it is none the less dangerous, and we must fight against it. There is, however, a healthy dissatisfaction with ourselves, and this, rightly directed, can be a powerful incentive to greater efforts, for it has its source in our love for God. Let us ask ourselves honestly if we are dissatisfied with the state of our soul for God's sake — because we do not love Him and do not live for Him as we ought. Or are we dissatisfied for our own sake — because we cannot take complacency in our own perfection?

The second source of negligence arises from an erroneous concept of religious perfection itself. In this regard we may examine ourselves on some of the following points: Is my justice that of the Pharisees, the externalism so severely condemned by Christ? Do I try to convince myself that my progress is indicated by a multiplication of formal prayers, by an increase in physical mortifications, or by a cultivation of external mannerisms which I feel enhance my religious personality? Do I equate perfection with the sensible pleasure I derive from certain devotions, or from a purely affective and emotional approach to God? Do I expect as my just deserts the grace of mystical experience? Do I allow myself to imagine that I actually receive such favors? Do I seek in prayer the sweetness of God instead of the God of all sweetness? Am I restless and discontented when I suffer spiritual dryness?

If God has blessed me with an abundance of natural virtues, do I take pride in them as if I had acquired them by my own efforts? Do I believe that popularity with my fellow-religious and with outsiders is an accurate gauge of my spiritual progress? Do I think that being the perfect lady or gentleman, sociable, helpful, interested, is sufficient to make me beloved of God and men? Or do I realize that whatever naturally attractive qualities God has given me must be supernaturalized lest they drag me down into the abyss of vanity and



pride and spiritual blindness? Must it be said of me, as it was once said of ancient pagans, that my virtues are splendid vices?

Do I feel that I am making progress as I increase in docility toward superiors and toward those with whom I associate? Am I satisfied with myself because I have the knack of avoiding conflicts with others, because I know that others like me, that I mean something to them? For that reason do I strive to remain in the sun of their good graces? A religious should strive to make every effort to be an agreeable subject and confrere, but for superior motives. We should all ponder, and ponder deeply, the words of a spiritual writer: "The most agreeable subjects are not always the best ones."

The third source of negligence lies in our misuse of the means of advancing in perfection. If humility is the basis of our spiritual life, we ought to use of every opportunity to practice it. Let us, then, ask ourselves: Do I avoid humiliations, preferring instead the easy road of escape into mediocrity? When I cannot avoid a humiliation, do I at least take it in the right spirit? Do I always seek to excuse or defend myself? Do I have the unenviable reputation of being a person who cannot be corrected without violent reaction? Does my conduct actually force my superiors and confreres to refrain from correcting me and am I consequently left in culpable ignorance of my faults? Do I defend others or condemn them, failing to understand that in condemning others I condemn myself? Do I make use of the Sacrament of Penance as a means of deepening my humility? Am I convinced that of myself I can do nothing but for the grace of God I would be the greatest sinner? Unless, like the Seraphic Father, we grow daily more contemptible in our own eyes, we dare not call ourselves his children.

If our spiritual life is based on humility, it thrives and flourishes in charity. Hence, if we are negligent in practicing charity, we are neglecting utilizing an essential means of advancing in perfection. We must understand, however, that we are not making real progress so long as our charity remains on a purely human or natural level. Here we may ask ourselves not only *whether*, but also and especially *why* we practice fraternal charity. Is it because of higher motives? Because we know we ourselves need the mercy of God for that reason try to be kind and mild and understanding toward others? Do we strive to see in our neighbor a child of God, a fellow member of the Mystical Body of Christ? More particularly, let us ask ourselves: Am I to be the servant of all because Christ made Himself a servant for us? Did He taught us by His example? Does my charity rise above the level of pu-

human relationships and sympathies (for even the pagans can love on a natural level), and am I ready to make personal sacrifices for others, even for those who are naturally repugnant to me? Do I forgive and forget in the spirit of Christ? Do I complain when others fail to return my kindness? Do I bear with those who dislike me and oppose me and exhibit ill-feeling toward me? Can I give up my opinion graciously when charity demands it? Do I strive to fulfill the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others? There are innumerable points on which we could examine ourselves in regard to charity, but the one essential point to keep in mind is this: We must practice charity for love of God, not for love of ourselves or of any other creature.

Saint James assures us that the man who does not offend with his tongue is a perfect man (James 3, 2); and in this point we have an excellent means of determining something of the true state of our soul. Our words reflect our thoughts. If the instrument of speech, the tongue, is a symbol of the divine love which descended upon the Apostles, and if the words we utter are symbols of the divine Word, our speech must be holy, and we are neglecting a means of sanctification if we neglect to bridle our tongue. It goes without saying, of course, that a religious who uses blasphemous, equivocal, or off-color expressions is a monstrosity. But this is the extreme. Let us rather consider whether we make serious efforts to sanctify our tongue. For most of us the danger lies not in positively sinful speech but in careless, worldly, uninspiring or useless speech. We may ask ourselves, for example: Does my conversation habitually and exclusively center around mundane topics — politics, sports, news items, local gossip, and the like? While it is true that a religious should be well-informed on secular affairs, and be prepared to make intelligent and ethical judgments whenever an occasion presents itself, to make such matters the sole topic of conversation indicates a lack of the true religious spirit. The same holds for our professional activity. We are obliged to keep well-informed, and an interest in our work is natural and praiseworthy; but let us ask ourselves: Do I constantly "talk shop", even to the point of boring others? Do I find myself unable to take part in conversations dealing with matters of a higher intellectual or spiritual content? If so, why? How does my speech reflect the charity in my heart? Do I refrain from carping criticism, from talking about the faults of others, or about their peculiarities? Do I allow myself the dubious pleasure of indulging in witticisms at the expense of others?

Together with the practice of the above-mentioned virtues, the prayers and spiritual exercises prescribed for religious are basic and necessary means of



advancing in perfection. Since, however, we have already covered these in previous exams, we shall select for brief discussion here only the examinations of conscience.

In order to make progress we must know ourselves as thoroughly as possible. For this reason we have the obligation of fidelity to the daily examination of conscience. We should do well to ask ourselves: Do I honestly try to do away my faults and weaknesses during the time allotted to the general and particular exams? Or do I spend the time carelessly, running through a routine form indifferently and superficially? Do I perhaps waste the time in day-dreaming or in voluntary distraction? Do I seek to discover not only my faults but the motives behind them? It is often more important for us to know *why* we have fallen into sin than to know we have sinned; and we should always make it the motive to our confessor or spiritual director.

Let us never permit ourselves to fall into the state of spiritual sloth, neglecting the means God has given us to draw us closer to Him. Let us keep ourselves spiritually alive and youthful, and repeat with Saint Francis: "My brothers, let us begin today, for up to now we have done nothing."

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.



That the Church might be formed from the side of the dying Christ, the cross and the Scripture fulfilled, which said that *they looked upon Whom they have pierced*, the divine decree permitted one of the soldiers to pierce that sacred side with a lance so that in the flow of blood and water, the price of our salvation would pour out, which would bestow from its source from that hidden Heart, a rich might to the Sacraments of the Church for the conferring of a life of grace, and so that the living might even now have from Christ a drink from *the fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting*. Behold, now, the lance of Saul's treachery—of the forsaken Jewish people *fastened in the wall*, by the divine mercy *balked of its aim*, made a cleft in the rock and a cranny in the wall like a dove-cote. Arise, then, thou lover of Christ, be like the dove *building her nest on the cave's lip*; there, as a sparrow *finds a home*, cease not to hold vigil; there, as a turtle-dove of chaste love, hide thy brood; there open thy lips to *drink deep from the fountains of the Spirit*. For He is *the river going out from the midst of paradise*, which, *divided into four heads* and pouring into devoted hearts, nourishes and waters the whole earth.

Saint Bonaventure

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### OUR HOLY FATHER PLEADS FOR GREATER UNITY IN THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

On the Wednesday before the Feast of Corpus Christi this year, the members of the General Chapter of the Friars Minor were received in private audience by our Holy Father. In the course of his address, which was carried in *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO* the next evening, His Holiness pointed out the necessity for greater union in spirit and work among the various branches of the Franciscan family.

"It is a characteristic of love to excuse rather than to accuse," His Holiness said, "and if love is sincere and genuine, it is eager only to tear out the roots of bitter discord, to strengthen the bonds of unity, to bend the proud neck under the yoke of obedience. In regard to this point we propose something worthy of your consideration and examination. For various reasons, as history records, the Franciscan foundation has produced many branches. We leave to the judgment of history the separations and opposing opinions that have come between them in the past; but is it not most salutary and desirable that, while retaining their autonomy, the individual branches of the Franciscan family be closely united in the bonds of friendship and carry out in common plans and undertakings of greater significance?"

If our Holy Father so strongly urges closer cooperation among the members of the Franciscan family, we should indeed give the matter serious and prayerful consideration.



### GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH OF THE THIRD ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS

This year the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Third Order of Saint Francis are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the founding of their congregation.

In 1901 Mother Mary Felicia and Mother Mary Clara, under the guidance of the Reverend Luke Pescinski, founded the congregation to care for the Polish Catholics in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. On July 1, 1901, forty-six sisters left the motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters in Milwaukee to establish a new and independent religious community.

During the fifty years of its existence the congregation has done excellent work, especially among Polish-speaking groups in the Middle West, and now includes three provinces: Stevens Point, Cleveland, and Chicago. The sisters engage chiefly in education and nursing.

May God continue to bless the congregation and all its undertakings.



### THE FRANCISCANS CAME FIRST

Fanchon Royer. Paterson, New Jersey: Saint Anthony Guild Press, 1951. Pp. 208, with 16 illustrations and an end map. \$2.50.

Despite its rather unpleasantly prodromic title, *THE FRANCISCANS CAME FIRST* is an interesting little volume dealing with early Spanish Franciscan mission history. It contains biographical sketches of nine great missionaries who, according to the author's chapter headings, have the added distinction of being on the list of "Franciscan Firsts." The biographies are arranged chronologically, beginning with "The First Schoolteacher: Pedro de Gante" and concluding with "The First Californian: Junipero Serra."

Although by no means to be rated as either literature or history, the book is well written on a comfortable level and the events are presented with sufficient accuracy for the average reader. It could be recommended as supplementary reading for secondary schools.

The author has included a glossary of Spanish and Nahuatl terms, a bibliography and extensive illustrations.

THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF SISTER MARY OF THE HOLY TRINITY. Edited by Silvere Ven Den Broek, O.F.M. Translated from the French. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950. Pp. 364. \$3.50.

Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity (Louisa Jaques) was born in Pretoria, Transvaal, of Swiss-French parents. After a series of long and painful trials, God led her to the Catholic Church, and a few years later, after further trials, to the Poor Clares in Jerusalem where He drew her to Himself in the intimate union of mystical contemplation. Sister Mary died in 1942, two years after her religious profession.

The first part of the SPIRITUAL LEGACY — about one-third — deals with the story of Sister Mary's conversion and of her strange vocation to the religious life. The second part of the book contains her account of about six hundred communications from Our Lord. These communications have been carefully annotated by her confessor, the late Father Silvere Van Den Broek, O.F.M., a man of deep spirituality and wide experience in the guidance of souls.

There is much more in the SPIRITUAL LEGACY than the rapturous exclamation of the mystic in love; there is the voice of Christ, the Master and Teacher of the spiritual life, the compelling re-statement of the doctrine of the Gospel delicately adjusted to the needs of our own era. The theme of the LEGACY resolves itself into a plea for greater faith and love. Throughout the history of God's dealings with man, faith, as the expression and proof of love, has been demanded. God does not change; He still seeks souls whose love for Him will urge them on to total self-surrender, to blind abandonment, in faith. "Love does not doubt," Our Lord said to Sister Mary (p. 264) and a plea for greater confidence is the constantly recurring motif of the communications. "Ah, how

convents would flourish if they had spirit of faith and poverty which I ask" (p. 91). Significantly, Our Lord asks for greater confidence in the power of the priesthood, for confidence would develop a healthier spiritual life in both priest and penitent. "My priest would be more conscious of their mission if they met more living souls humble enough to ask for the help needed which they can give." (p. 155).

It is impossible to read the LEGACY thoughtfully and prayerfully without being stirred to a deeper realization of the fact that God speaks to all souls that He desires all souls to reach union with Him in contemplation through the use of the natural faculties. Contemplation is the natural culmination of Christian life; God gives the necessary graces, but He demands on our part both total surrender of the will in love and total concentration of all our faculties on the effort to reach Him. "Concentrate all the effort of your mind on arriving at a true understanding of who I am, of what I desire, of what I value so as to choose as I choose, so as to judge all things in the sense that I judge . . . It means work; false ideas must be got rid of, the evidence of right understanding must be sought within you, you must listen to Me, look at Me, never leave Me . . . I do not tell you what you should know — I only tell you a tiny part; you must find out and understand for yourself; that is life. Oh, if you knew how much I need your cooperation." (pp. 154-55).

THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY is valuable not only as a guide to a fuller and deeper supernatural life but also as an inspiration and stimulus to more serious striving. It offers excellent material for meditative spiritual reading both for the beginner in the spiritual life and for the more advanced.

The translation is good, despite a few awkward mechanics, and there is a useful index.

## TRANSITUS

Because October languishes with love,  
Flinging quick beauty down like words,  
Sighing out leaves through the night  
For her beautiful Lover,

Because October walks unshod,  
Is wounded entirely with purple loneliness,  
Has no defenses for her incredible dreams,  
This was your hour.

This was your hour, with the blood that once  
Scorched this whole arteried map with riotous flame,  
Seeping like sighs from five most perfect wounds.  
This was your hour, and your eyes that owned  
The universe once, like dollars, now exchange  
The Umbrian hills, the spread of stars on sky,  
For penury of blindness.

Will they stand  
Around you, Francis, weeping?—Let song split  
The stones, and tear the hearts out of the trees,  
For Christ has kissed you dead!

No other hour  
Is yours, none knows your soul except October  
When the whole earth is dreaming of her Lover  
And the air waits all day and night, like a woman.

O great, dark mystery, cleave me flesh from bone!  
How Christ shall kiss me dead  
When I am blind.

Poor Clare Monastery of  
Our Lady of Guadalupe,  
Roswell, New Mexico

Sr. M.

## ✓ OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The fact that our Guardian Angel meets us at the very entrance of (Oct. 2) offers food for reflection. On a certain occasion the present took two gentlemen with him to an audience with the Holy Father. After he waited for their reactions; and to his amazement one of the two had looked at the small white figure of the Father of Christendom, for his attention was riveted upon the gorgeous, glamorous figure of an angel officer with flashing helmet, sword, spangles and spurs. I repressed my indignation but again I too sometimes feel that we are paying too little attention to the celestial choirs who surround the Throne of God, and who are fervently interested in the welfare of humankind. The angels of God are closer to us than we seem to know—the angels of God, Who *makest the winds thy messengers, thy ministers a blazing fire* (Ps. 103, 4). That one of those angelic messengers was given to each of us as a guide, custodian and constant comforter is the ancient and unwavering belief of the Church. Too often we forget; and if there be any regret when we shall see God face to face, it will be this, that we have paid too little attention to our Guardian Angel who stands on our side in strife and struggle, in joy and glee, in misery and affliction, and who has brought us to our heavenly home.

And what armor did our Guardian Angel wear in the days of our sorrow here below? It was none other than the Rosary of our Blessed Mother. The Rosary is our Lady's crown or chaplet (originally meaning headdress or wreath) and it seems to have been woven by angels' hands. Watch and meditate on the fifteen decades and you will observe in each scene of mystery angelic messengers of every class and rank moving about as faithful attendants. The beautiful paintings of medieval artists should serve us as a lesson.

Nuns and rosaries are almost synonymous. And why not? A nun without her rosary is like a soldier without a sword. The danger is that by the constant use of this tool its significance may wear off. It does not seem right when sisters are constantly on the lookout for new medals, new leaflets, new relics and novenas, while they forget the greatest and most beautiful devotion, the Holy Rosary. On the other hand, I have no confidence in that good sister who has a dozen rosaries suspended from her cord, and naively imagined that she satisfies

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

223

all twelve by one recitation. I take it that as a child she must have watched her father going to the horse-races and betting on every horse. But he had failed to tell her that only one of them won the prize and that he was money out.

The subject matter of the rosary is such as to command our most profound reverence and confidence. The fifteen mysteries are taken bodily, so to speak, from our chief sources of Faith: Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture. In fact, they are a beautiful synthesis of the truths that have come down to us both by word of mouth from apostolic days and in writing from the pages of Holy Writ. With dramatic ingenuity the various scenes were picked from these sources, and are presented to us for devout meditation. While the fingers are busy counting the beads, the mind is fixed upon the passing scenes, and the heart is in communion with the persons who move before the imagination. At the Joyous Mysteries Saint Luke describes to us what he learned at the feet of the Blessed Mother. At the Sorrowful Mysteries we listen to the joint account of all four Evangelists. At the Glorious Mysteries we pass on from the Gospel story to the early days of the infant Church.

Meanwhile, our lips recite over and over again the prayer that Jesus taught us, the salutations of the Angel and Elizabeth, and the stirring invocation of the Church Universal. Nor should we forget that the words, "at the hour of our death", have been reverently added by the Franciscan preachers of the fifteenth century, Saints Bernardine and Capistran, and their co-workers.

While these mysteries are taken from the New Testament, the framework of the rosary is borrowed from the Old. It is most significant that David's Psalter, the hundred and fifty psalms written by the royal prophet, Mary's illustrious forebear, should have determined the number of Hail Marys. This brings the rosary in line with early Christianity, when priests and monks were accustomed to recite, day and night, the entire Psalter of David.

Hence the rosary is to religious and the laity what the Divine Office is to the clergy. But, more than this, the rosary also reviews for us the entire calendar of the ecclesiastical year. The sweet serenity of the Christmas cycle greets us in the Joyous Mysteries, the sad and mournful Passiontide is rehearsed in the Sorrowful Mysteries, while Easter and Pentecost with their stirring and joyful Alleluias are brought before us in the Glorious Mysteries. Thus in the rosary we re-live with Christ and His Blessed Mother their earthly sojourn.

little Nazareth on the hill to the Mount of Ascension, and far beyond "everlasting hills".

All this enhances the dignity, the antiquity, the sublime power and inviolable charm of the prayer that is so dear to our hearts. Let us never be ashamed of our rosary. If unbelievers should dare to scoff or belittle this honorable prayer, let us ask them if their scientific machinery, their artificial culture, their sciences and shells, and all their crafts and craftiness have furnished them a better way to live in than have the sacred mysteries that make up our daily bread. To Protestants we calmly reply that when we say the rosary we do not only rehearse in heart and memory those very truths and wonders that they find written in their Holy Book. They may be Bible-readers by name and profit, but we are Bible-devotees in *spirit and truth*. And those who would smile at our naive simplicity in telling the same Hail Mary over and over again, should think of the little child in the cradle. All it can say is "mother", and it calls out this name over and over all day long; and mother hears it, and loves to hear its name. Listen to the words of the Master: *I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and reveal them to little ones* (Matt. 11, 25).

And what does the rosary mean in my own life? The application is simple, and it requires a simple, direct and practical method of absorbing and assimilating the spiritual wealth and power hidden in this unique approach to the presence of God. Our lives are made up of joys and sorrows, while the crown is awarded. This crown will not be ours unless we know how to blend the former two; we accept our joys with moderation and our sorrows with resignation. The lives of Jesus and Mary are our own lives. They run in parallel lines. It was the same earth, the same people, with the same sad and joyful days. The geographical distance measures a few thousand miles; the chronological distance not more than two thousand years. The story of the rosary unwinds itself before our own eyes, and we should weave it into our own daily experiences.

We too had our Nazareth, our visit at Elizabeth's home, our Bethlehem, our first day in the Temple, our sessions among those who taught there. Let us be practical and compare and take something with us on the way. Such comparisons are not distractions. God provided them all, and if He thought of them, then why should we not reflect on them now in the mirror of the Joyful Mysteries, and transplant such joy into our own lives with spiritual fruit and

blessing. We also had our agonies, our sorrowful ways, our Calvaries. They lacked the intensity, the infinite grief of the Sorrowful Mysteries; but because we were weak in love we shall find strength as the beads glide through our fingers. And what are we waiting for? What, to be truthful, is worth waiting for in this vale of tears? The Glorious Mysteries have the answer, and the answer gives meaning and wisdom and power to our earthly existence. *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who thirsts come; and he who wishes, let him receive the water of life freely* (Apoc. 22, 17).

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M. ✓



*Before this Temple, before this Holy of Holies, before this Ark of the Covenant, I shall bow down and sing in praise of God's name in David's words: I have found my Heart to pray my God. For my part I have found the Heart of my King and God, my Brother and Friend, the Heart of the most gracious Jesus. Shall I not pray then? Assuredly, I shall pray without failing. For His Heart is even my heart. I say it boldly. If, indeed because, my head is Christ, how can what belongs to my head not be mine? As my eyes are truly of my bodily head, so the Heart of my Spiritual Head is my heart. All is well with me then, for, behold, I have one Heart with Jesus. And no wonder; because there was one heart in all the company of believers. Therefore, most sweet Jesus, having found this Heart of Thine and mine, I shall pray Thee, my God. Receive my prayers in the Chapel of Bestowal; yes, draw my whole being into Thy Heart. Although the deformity of my sins shackles me, none the less—since Thy Heart is enlarged and dilated by an ineffable love and Thou, Who alone hast being, can cleanse what was born of tainted stock—none the less, O Most Beauteous One of all, wash me clean, cleaner yet, from my guilt, purge me of my sin, that, purified through Thee, I may draw near to Thee, the Purest One, and deserve to dwell in Thy Heart all the days of my life, to see and do Thy Will.*

Saint Bonaventure

## CHRISTO-CENTRIC REFLECTIONS

### *Thoughts on Christian Perfection*

#### INTRODUCTION

These Christo-centric Reflections are intended as a brief explanation of the essential means to Christian Perfection. The title of this essay suggests the Christian center his thoughts, deeds and life around the life of Christ. The entire Christian life draws its spirit from the life of Christ. *He that follows me, walketh not in darkness* (Jo. 8, 12). By these words of our Lord we are admonished to imitate His life in our daily activities.

The Christo-centric thoughts herein expressed should give courage to the Christian who is interested in striving after perfection. The life of grace and union with Christ is the most important characteristic of such a Christian. Thomas A. Kempis, in the *Imitation of Christ*, says: "Indeed a humble hearted man that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher, who, neglecting himself, considers the course of the heavens."

The counsel of perfection was addressed to every Christian: *Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. 5, 48). It is our sincere hope that the thoughts on Christian Perfection contained herein will help to explain the source, the path, the means, and the goal of such perfection.

#### THE INTERIOR LIFE

Man has in common with the brute animal corporeal life, organic and exterior operation. He is, however, distinguished from the animal by a spiritual and interior life. Lacking that life, man would be no better off than an animal; he would be worse off than they since brutes are rightly directed by instinct, but man was created free in order that he might govern his instincts by reason and spirit. If he were destitute of this control given him by his spirit, a great disturbance of order in his unruly appetites would result. The spiritual life of man is centered in his soul. It is fostered first by a withdrawal from external objects which are first perceived by him and then directed inward trend through reflection, prayer and contemplation. Saint Bonaventure speaks of the threefold manner of exercising this spiritual life, namely, spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer (contemplation).

The above mentioned points are best illustrated by the examples of the saints. We shall choose the life of Saint Francis of Assisi for our purpose because it typifies the life of a worldly individual who realized the vanity of external things and turned to the interior or spiritual life for complete peace of soul. At first, Saint Francis was much inclined toward external things and became enveloped in the delights and illusions of life. Having experienced the vanity of all mundane things and their interior emptiness, he finally entered into himself. He began to meditate upon the vanity of this world and to listen to the inner voice of his soul which cried to God as to the source of life and happiness. In order to acquire this pearl—peace of soul—he decided to abandon the world. And so was born in him the love of poverty and self denial in order that he might conform himself to Christ in perfect joy.

This should be the path of all Christians. Once they recognize the vanity of mundane things, they should return to the interior life by reflection and meditation. In the interior life they will love Christ and live a mortified life. The first step of the interior life is to turn from exterior things to the interior by reflection and meditation. This step is, however, still very imperfect, for meditation can also be merely natural and philosophical. This type of meditation places the superiority of the spiritual life above the corporeal, but it does not elevate man above himself. Therefore there is a second step of interior life called "prayer," which is the elevation of the mind and heart to God by adoration, thanksgiving, and petition. Finally, the highest form of interior life, which transcends any multiplicity of words and approaches to divine simplicity, is found in contemplation. This form of interior life is a simple intellectual intuition of the love of God. Herein one finds the sublimity of the interior and spiritual life, whereby man is lifted above mundane things and communicates with divine things. Yes, by such means man identifies himself with Christ, the Mediator between God and man.

#### THE DEGREES OF INTERIOR LIFE

The way of man's elevation to God, as we know from Sacred Scripture and from the lives of the saints, consists in identification with Christ. But this identification, which is a life according to Christ and in Christ, presupposes our own "death", because no one finds his life in Christ unless first he loses his own life. Christ Himself says: *He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake, will find it* (Matt. 10, 39). The first step of Christian perfection consists in the renunciation of all sins, desires and passions, so that

Christian may adhere to Christ. This adherence is brought about by imitation and communion of love, which effects a transformation and identification. The latter two points belong to the second step of Christian perfection. The first and second steps of Christian perfection are considered in Ascetics.

Christian ascetics is the exercise through which man flees from himself, denies himself, in order that he might live according to Christ and in communion with Him, namely, in the supernatural life.

#### ASCETICISM AND MYSTICISM

Asceticism and Mysticism differ from each other, for although ascetical exercises should have the divine principle as the motivating principle, nevertheless they proceed in a psychological manner and more or less by man's own efforts, because the divine motion is not yet clearly perceived and the soul is not yet docile to the influence of grace. But a mystical soul, since it is advanced in the interior life and in its identification with Christ, and is perfectly dead to itself, senses a divine impulse and works under the influence of the same. Thus the difference between asceticism and mysticism, together, comprise the spiritual life, consists in this, that *Asceticism* is essentially a personal activity, while *Mysticism* on the contrary denotes passivity under a divine influence. It is evident then that there is no conflict between the two: Christian asceticism is moved by divine love and not simply by reason, and under this aspect it is a part of mysticism. It is, however, the active part, where its own effort has the more eminent part in the psychological operation, since passivity has not yet been effected. Mysticism, on the other hand, indicates essentially a passivity under the divine influence, although the activity of man is by no means excluded. Man's activity is elevated to a more active participation in the divine operation. This activity is called "passive" because it is rooted in a passive elevation of the powers of the soul and its operation under the influence of a divine motion, which it really experiences. Mysticism can be defined as follows: the experience of grace or of the divine operation of the soul, the passive activity under the influence of grace. For grace is the basis of all Christian perfection. An ascetic only believes that the experience of grace is his and he hopes for it. A mystic actually experiences it and from that experience is moved to act. In fact, the mystic senses that God acts in him and he does not act by his own powers.

#### CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

The ascetical and mystical life constitute the totality of Christian perfection, which is the perfect exercise of the Gospel in imitation of Christ. Asceticism is then the removal of all those things which obstruct this adherence to Christ. It is the exercise of His virtues in imitation of, and in communion with, His life. Mysticism is our life in Christ, or, better still, the life of Christ in us, which is lived in grace and influenced by the Holy Spirit.

In order properly to understand the meaning of true Christian perfection, it is necessary first to root out all false notions concerning the true nature of the ascetical and mystical life. Often many people measure Christian perfection by the number of vocal prayers and external practices of piety, such as pilgrimages, novenas, etc.; or according to the degree of external mortifications and poverty, or according to other signs of an austere life. When Christian perfection is viewed in this light it appears next to impossible to attain, so that many are deterred from it. Such an attitude toward Christian perfection may convince one that it is reserved for those chosen by God for this purpose. It seems so extraordinary that many are not the least interested in it.

The enemy of the soul is astute and knows that the best means of frustrating people in their attainment of Christian perfection is to point out that such perfection is impossible for the ordinary Christian. Mediocrity in religion follows, and then eventually leads to laxity and even sin. Christ Himself tells us: *The kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force* (Matt. 11, 12).

Surely, there is no Christian perfection without asceticism. Christ said to his disciples: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* (Matt. 16, 24). But this self denial of oneself and of all things, which is a prerequisite for a truly Christian life, is nothing else but asceticism. There is no true Christian who is not an ascetic. In fact no human life can exist without some degree of asceticism, for man composed of body and soul does not live according to the order of his proper nature if he does not mortify the flesh, so that the spirit might be strengthened and the soul might dominate the flesh. But this requires renunciation and self denial, which in reality is asceticism. Therefore one is not truly a rational creature of God unless he is ascetical and, more so, a true Christian.

Asceticism is the path and means to sanctity, but it does not constitute sanctity. Asceticism does not effect sanctity, neither do the number of prayers, mortifications, nor austerity of life. From this we should not conclude that ascetic works or external practices of piety and religion are to be spurned. We should not consider such things merely in themselves, since they are a means to an end and not the end in themselves. Such practices receive their value from the end itself, Who is Christ. If practiced for one's own satisfaction, they produce illusions of sanctity and nourish vanity and pride.

Asceticism is not Christian unless it is ordained by divine love and is terminated in Christ and is a complete adherence to Him. Saint Francis was not holy simply because of his poverty, his fasts or other corporal mortifications. There are others who have excelled him in these things, for example the Oriental monks and Buddhists. Francis was truly a saint because he loved Christ so intensely and was united to Him in a union of love. And, *per se* Francis did not love Christ because he was poor, but Francis became a saint because he loved Him. One does not love Christ if he loves other things more. Love is the source and reason of Christian asceticism. Charity is the form of Christian perfection, in so far as it is the form of union with Christ through Him, of the supernatural and divine elevation. Merely natural human charity does not elevate man above this world. Therefore Christian asceticism is not contrary to nature but above nature; it is not excessive, nor inhuman, nor repugnant to nature, but lovable. It elevates man and his soul with delights. For it is culminated in the embrace of the Spouse, in union with His life in mystical love.

(to be continued)

Washington, D. C.

Fr. Method C. Billy, O. F. M.

✠ ✠ ✠

Where there is patience and humility there is neither anger nor pride.

✠ ✠ ✠

Where there is poverty and joy there is neither greed nor avarice.

Admonitions of St. Francis

## THE TRANSITUS OF OUR HOLY FATHER SAINT FRANCIS

(Chapter XIV of the *Legenda Maior of Saint Bonaventure*)

Now after Francis had been nailed to the cross with Christ in body and soul, he burned with seraphic love for God and with Christ Crucified thirsted after the great number of those to be saved. Since he could not walk because of the nails growing out of his feet, he had his dying body carried from city to city and town to town in order to inspire others to bear the cross of Christ. He would say to the brethren: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord our God, because up to now we have accomplished little." He was possessed by an overwhelming desire to return to the beginning of his humility and minister to the lepers as he had at first, summoning his body, already worn out from his labors, to its original slavery. He would set vast things for himself to do under Christ's guidance, and, his members becoming heavy in exhaustion, would hope anew in the strength and fervor of his spirit for victory in his battle over the enemy. Languor and idleness have no place where love's incitement harasses to ever greater tasks. So great was the harmony of his body and soul and the readiness of his obedience that in his endeavors to attain to every aspect of sanctity not only would he embrace these greater tasks but even try to surpass them.

So that a great accumulation of merit would grow for this man of God—all of which is truly consummated in patience—he began to suffer from so many and grievous infirmities that hardly any of his members remained without its own exquisite pain. To such a pass was he brought by his long and constant suffering that his flesh being consumed only his skin clinged to his bones. When he lay in agony because of the grinding pains of his body, he would not call his afflictions "punishments", but "sisters". Once when he convulsed with more acute agony than usual, a certain naive brother said to him: "Brother, pray God to deal more gently with you, for seemingly His hand is heavier upon you than you deserve." At this, the holy man, keening loudly, exclaimed: "If I had not known you to be guileless and sincere, I should reject your company from now on, for you dare to judge as faulty the divine judgments upon me." And though worn away by his persistent and grievous illness he threw himself upon the ground, bruising his enfeebled bones by the violent fall. Kissing the ground he said: "I thank Thee, Lord God, for all these sufferings of mine, and I

Thee, my Lord, to add to them a hundred-fold if it please Thee; for it is more acceptable to me *that afflicting me with sorrow thou sparest not*, because of the fulfillment of Thy holy will is to me the richest consolation." Because of this he seemed to the brethren like another Job, whose strength of soul grew fleshly anguish increased. Now Francis foreknew his death long before, when the day of his transitus drew near he told the brethren that *the putting off of his tabernacle was at hand*, as it had been revealed to him by Christ.

In consequence, after he had been hewn square by the many crucial strokes of his maladies, like a stone set in the building of the celestial Jerusalem, manifold anguish hammered out to a fine perfection like a pliant masterpiece during the two years following the impression of the sacred stigmata in the twentieth year of his conversion, he caused himself to be carried to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula so as to surrender the breath of life where he had received the breath of grace. When he had been brought thither, in that illness so acute that it included every torment he, inspired by grace, stretched himself completely naked upon the ground in order to show by following the example of Truth Itself that he and the world had nothing in common and to come out naked with a naked adversary in the last hour when the enemy could still come against him. Lying so upon the ground, stripped of his poor garments, he turned his face to heaven, as it was his manner to do, and with his gaze intent on glory he covered the wound in his right side with his left hand so that it was not be seen; and he said to the brethren: "*That which was my part I have done; may Christ teach you yours.*"

While the saint's companions, who were wondrously pierced by the sight of compassion, were weeping, one of them whom the man of God used to call his guardian, realizing his desire by a divine inspiration, hastened to arise and brought the poverello of Christ a tunic with a cord and underclothing. Then he gave to the saint, saying: "I lend these to you as to a pauper; accept them under the command of holy obedience." Upon this, the holy man rejoiced and cried aloud for his joy of heart, because he saw himself true to Lady Poverty even at the very end; he raised his hands to heaven and glorified his Christ, being unburdened of all things and coming, a free man, to Him. He did these things out of zeal for poverty so that he did not wish even to have a thing unless it was loaned to him by some one else. It was his will, assuredly, to be like Christ Crucified in all things, and Christ was poor and suffering and when He hung upon the cross. Because of this, at the beginning of his conversion

he stripped himself naked before the bishop; because of this at the end of his life he wanted to go forth naked from the world, and he commanded the brethren who were with him in the subservience of charity that as soon as they saw that he was dead they were to leave him lying naked upon the ground for the space of time it would take to walk a mile slowly. O truest follower of Christ! While living, while dying, and when dead, he sought to be in perfect conformity with the living, the dying, and the dead Christ, and merited to be beautified by the impressed likeness.

When the hour of his transitus drew near, he had all the brethren in that locality summoned, and consoling them for his death with paternal affection urged them to the love of God. He spoke them a sermon about observing patience and poverty and holding to the faith of the Holy Roman Church, extolling the holy Gospel above all other legislation. With the brethren round him, he stretched out his hands above them in the form of a cross, with arms extended, for this was a sign he always used to hold in love, and by the power and in the name of the Crucified One he blessed all the present and absent brethren. And he added these words: "All my sons, farewell in the fear of the Lord; remain in it forever. Future temptations and trials will come, but happy are they who will persevere in these things they have begun. I hasten to the Lord; to his condescension I commend you all." After this gentle admonition, this man who was most dear to God had the book of the Gospels brought to him and that part of the Gospel according to Saint John read for him, which begins with the words: *Before the feast of the Passover*. But he burst forth as triumphantly as he could in the psalm, *I cried to the Lord with my voice: with my voice I made supplication to the Lord*; he pursued it to the end. *The just wait for me*, he said, *until thou reward me*.

Now, finally were the mysteries fulfilled in him and this holiest of souls was released from the flesh and engulfed in the abyss of divine light. The holy man *fell asleep in the Lord*.

One of his brethren and disciples saw that holy soul under the appearance of a shining star, borne up on a white cloud over a tumult of waters and carried on high directly into heaven, as though glowing splendidly with an other-worldly white holiness, as though replete with heavenly wisdom and fecund grace where the sainted man won the land of light and peace where he rests forever Christ. The minister of the brethren in the province of Massa e Carrara



## DO I PRACTICE FRANCISCAN TEMPERANCE IN EATING AND DRINKING?

There are three main points to consider in our examen on Franciscan temperance: the quantity of our food and drink, its quality, and the manner of partaking. With regard to quantity we may ask ourselves: Do I know the amount of food and drink that is sufficient for me? Do I keep strictly to that amount? Or am I capricious at table, consuming vast quantities when the food is palatable but scarcely eating when it is not? Do I habitually eat to surfeit, or do I always leave the refectory with the physically and spiritually wholesome feeling I could have eaten more? Do I perhaps fail by over-abstemiousness, even to the point of impairing my health? Do I neglect to take proper nourishment because I am too engrossed in my work, or because of vanity (the body beautiful!) because of a desire to be esteemed as ascetic and above the things of the flesh? Am I content with eating at the regular times, or do I make frequent excursions to the refectory or kitchen for off-schedule snacks? Do I seek dispensations from fasting, or excuses for eating, simply because I do not like to curb my appetite? On fast days am I careful to keep within the prescribed quantity? Those in charge of a community should ask themselves whether they have provided for sufficient food and drink without being wasteful; those who prepare the food must always keep in mind that Franciscan reverence requires them to respect the good things God has given us and not allow them to spoil or go to waste.

Generally, religious fail less seriously in regard to quantity than in regard to quality of food—no doubt because the former is more conspicuous and is more likely to arouse the disgust and censure of others. No religious really enjoys being rated as a downright glutton. But if the religious gourmand is thoroughly objectionable even to food-loving seculars, the religious gourmet, unfortunately, is not. Refinement and delicacy of taste, in fact, is sometimes even considered a mark of superior culture—the mark of a lady or a gentleman. Be that as it may, the cold fact remains that for Franciscans the standards of quality in food and drink, like the standards of quantity, must be the standards of the poor. The way we like or dislike certain foods is natural, of course, and can never be entirely a matter of imperfection. Real danger enters in only when we allow our sense of taste to dominate and enslave us. This domination and enslavement can be quite common and yet so subtle that we are hardly aware of it. Perhaps we have never seriously considered to what irregularities our unmortified palate leads us. Let us ask ourselves a few pertinent questions: Am I notably fussy at table, so much so that I am always given the best to avoid disturbances? Do I grab for the

or, less offensively, do I maneuver for the best? Do I openly reveal my likes and dislikes, my scorn for the more common foods? Do I complain when the meals are unvaried, unimaginative, unattractive? How do I react when the food is not cooked to my taste; when the soup is lukewarm; when the coffee is too strong or too weak? Do I even go so far as to forget myself in public and give scandal by complaining about the food or the service or both? Do I keep delicacies given me by relatives or friends, conceal them in private places where I may eat them at will? Do I desire and try to have expensive foods or delicacies? Do I simply forget at table that I am a child of Saint Francis, the father of the poor, and that poor people cannot have the best? Do I realize that the poor eat to live, and not to indulge their sense of taste?

Religious who are ill, especially those who suffer from gastric disorders, are obviously obliged to be careful about their food and drink. But the obligation to refrain from what is harmful by no means implies the license to pick and choose according to our taste. We must always be on guard lest physical debility lead us into enslavement to our senses; and, on the contrary, we must be equally on guard lest pride and the fear of losing the esteem of others lead us to refuse necessary exceptions. It may be well to add here, in passing, that no religious has the right to judge or comment on a confrere's diet.

There are some religious who make it a point of honor never to let a meal pass without sarcastic observations about the food. Am I one of these? Do I realize that although such remarks may be amusing and even to the point, they reveal a shallow mind and scant appreciation for the gifts of God and for the efforts of others? If I have good reason to complain about the food or the service, am I careful to complain to the proper persons and at the proper time? Do I understand that food can hardly be considered a fit topic of conversation for religious, especially during recreation at table? Do I commit the impropriety of expressing delight or disgust while eating? It is well to remember, however, that occasionally to express satisfaction with a meal well prepared is an act of common courtesy; indeed, charity demands that we voice our gratitude to our confreres who labor to serve us.

There still remains to be considered the duty of cooks and dieticians. Here some of the following points may be helpful: Do I try my best to please the community, keeping in mind that it is better to do personal penance than to impose penance upon others through my own fault? Do I keep the kitchen, refrigerators, and storerooms clean and sanitary? Do I personally maintain

crisp and orderly appearance that should distinguish persons assigned to culinary work? If the monastic kitchen is unsanitary and the religious who work in it slovenly, the community cannot be blamed for lack of appetite nor even seeking opportunities to eat elsewhere.

The children of Saint Francis know that their holy Father, in accord with the Gospel, as he expressly said, set no restrictions in regard to food. He bade his brethren eat what was placed before them—and this, incidentally, a small penance if strictly adhered to, especially for missionaries and for visitors—but he also bade them deny themselves for love of the Crucified. To abstain from favorite foods under certain circumstances, for love of God and for the ideal of poverty, is also entirely in keeping with the Franciscan spirit. Indeed, can it be at all justified that when occasion offers we indulge in eating and drinking wholly according to our heart's desire? Let us ask ourselves: Am I mindful of my state of poverty when left free to order my own meals, for instance when travelling? When visiting at home or with friends, do I unabashedly announce my preferences? It is quite different, of course, if charity toward others comes into question, or if the demands of fellowship are to be met. We have the beautiful example of our father Francis who ate with a poor hungry man to ease his embarrassment. But simply to enjoy good food and drink outside the monastery is definitely not Franciscan. To draw a line in this regard is not easy, for it will vary according to country, custom, and circumstances. But to positively sin and fail against our vocation if we do not admit of any line at all is another matter.

In connection with food and drink, there are also the sense pleasures of alcohol and nicotine to be considered. Although there is no essential imperfection in enjoying alcoholic beverages and tobacco in its various forms, and although it is certainly un-Franciscan to qualify the temperate use of these things with *cum gratiarum actione*—as bad, there are absolute limits, and for Franciscans special limits, beyond which sin enters in. No man has the right to injure his health by an excessive use of narcotics in any form. We shall not even countenance here the terrible crime of drunkenness which, according to the Apostle, excludes from heaven. We must, however, ask ourselves in all honesty whether we indulge in these pleasures of drinking and smoking in a moderate way, as to both quantity and quality. Do I, perhaps, make a mockery of my religious garb—of my Franciscan habit—by drinking or smoking too much, especially in places where the seculars could be scandalized? Am I particular about the brands, even making boast that we Franciscans take only the best? Do I realize that milk-bar products may be as harmful to my religious spirit as alcohol and nicotine? The "whole"

some" religious who shrinks from brandy but imbibes unlimited milk-shakes—where is his virtue? The religious who refuses a cigarette but blithely consumes a carton of chocolate bars—where with shall he be crowned? Let us be sober in these matters. We know that Saint Francis asked Brother Giacomo to bring to his deathbed the little cakes he liked so well. But we must not forget that Saint Francis was also a model of renunciation, and his request was made more for Giacomo's consolation than for his own gratification. As Franciscans, we do not sin by indulging in sense pleasures in a temperate way; but it is precisely as Franciscans that we sin by forgetting our ideal of poverty and our need for self-control when we do indulge.

Finally, let us consider the manner of eating and drinking. In every country there are certain accepted standards of good manners at table. They are aimed at lifting to the human level something we must do in common with brute animals. In a religious community there are not only the requirements of civilized society to be observed but also the additional forms which try to make of animal eating a religious exercise. Do I observe these rules, both the cultural and the religious? Are my manners refined and without affectation? Do I consider my neighbor when eating and drinking? Do I behave as I should in civilized company? Do I study and adopt the customs of the country or locality in which I live? Or do I perhaps disgust others by my bad manners, even disgrace my companions when eating in public? It is well to keep in mind, in this regard, that the truly mortified religious, the truly Franciscan religious, will naturally be a polite and well-mannered and welcome companion at table—and the opposite is equally true.

We must not take these matters of food and drink too lightly. There is a tendency among modern religious to forget that gluttony is one of the seven capital sins; that it has many degrees and various aspects—some repulsive, others less so, but all definitely pernicious. The medieval man was much more conscious of its threat to holiness than we are. Saint Bonaventure, like his contemporaries, realized that gluttony and lust are twin sins, that the chastity of the religious who fails to control his appetite for food and drink must be suspect. Human nature has not changed. It behooves us to be watchful.

As a final thought, let us always remember what Saint Francis asked of us: not to judge others in this regard, but to judge and condemn only ourselves.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

Cyrillus Rudolphus Jarre, O.F.M., et Li Ki-jen, TENTAMEN SENSUM CODICIS IURIS CANONICI LITTERIS SINICIS REDDENDI, Typis Missionis Catholicae Tsinan, Shantung, 1943. Pp. 622.

Just at the time when the foreign clergy is being expelled from Red China and the ranks of the Chinese clergy decimated, the need of a translation of the CODEX JURIS CANONICI is more pressing than ever before. It is with pride and gratitude and renewed hope for the future that the publication of the first Chinese translation of the CODEX is announced.

The translation has been done by Cyril Rudolph Jarre, O.F.M., Archbishop of Tsinan, Shantung, with the assistance of the eminent Chinese jurist, Li Ki-jen. It was providential, in the face of the many problems and difficulties involved in the work, that Dr. Li was able to assist the Archbishop. During the Japanese occupation Dr. Li retired from the courts rather than cooperate with the enemy in legal affairs, and took up his residence at the Franciscan monastery in Tsinan. There he spent three years in close collaboration with Archbishop Jarre. Although a pagan and therefore unfamiliar with much of the ecclesiastical terminology of the CODEX, Dr. Li's wide learning and penetrating insight enabled him to give invaluable assistance in supplying exact Chinese equivalents, and, where equivalents were lacking, in coining new phrases which would become acceptable standard

additions to the body of nology.

Besides Dr. Li, many Chinese both Franciscan and secular helped to the Archbishop. The Fu-jen University and their Canon Law gave them a standing of many points secure to the pagan Dr. Li. The foreign Archbishop Jarre.

The late Msgr. Mario Apostolic Delegate for China, interested in this project, personally secured permission from Rome.

The translation of the CODEX took three years; the actual printing took three years. It is published in a volume of 622 pages, with title in red and black. The typography is formally excellent. To Brother Wessels, O.F.M., the highest credit is due for the beauty and clarity of the Chinese characters as well as the Roman type. There is a double volume, in Latin and in Chinese. The Chinese is arranged according to the new radical system.

Unquestionably, in the near future Chinese theology students will have a work of great value, especially in view of the fact that foreign professors of Canon Law will be difficult to obtain. This work will also serve to build up a standard ecclesiastical technical terminology in the Chinese language.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins* (II Mach. 12, 46). At a time of stress and struggle, the human soul is apt to reach into the lowest depths and explore the loftiest heights. In this the soul is activated by the desire for relief and the innate urge to force the hand of the Almighty, as it were, and render witness to the undying Christ in the Lord Who rules over heaven and earth.

The Machabean period was the most turbulent epoch in the history of Israel. There was strife within and struggle without. The heroic up-rising of the aged Mathathias and his stalwart sons bears a close resemblance to the days of our War of Independence, of our own national self-assertion. *Everyone that loveth the law and maintaineth the testament, let him follow me* (I Mach. 2, 27). This was the call of that mighty warrior, and the sons of Israel proved worthy of such a leader.

Thanks be to God that Mother Church has saved the two books of the Machabees from among the mass of apocryphal writings; for the sentence quoted at the beginning of the first paragraph above condenses in a few words a belief that undoubtedly reached back to the earliest days of divine revelation, namely, that the prayers of the faithful on earth are certain to benefit the souls of the departed. To this belief the infant Church, in the days of the apostles and the first martyrs, fell heir; and in the course of time this same belief became formulated into the explicit doctrine of Purgatory, under the infallible guidance of the living Church. The scant fragments of early Christian writings as well as the simple prayers scribbled by the persecuted believers on the walls of the catacombs bear ample witness to this ancient and, we may add, much cherished belief.

It is a matter of course that the belief in Purgatory should appeal to the first Christians even as it has appealed to the Christians of the world at large in every age and clime. The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and its concomitant doctrine of the Communion of Saints were so deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of the faithful that any other notion would have seemed unnatural, unreasonable and completely at variance with the entire range of Catholic dogma. God is just; but He is also merciful, and *His mercy endureth forever*. It is readily seen that justice demands the punishment of those who have wilfully separated themselves from God and died impenitent in the consciousness of mortal offense; but it is equally clear that divine mercy will extend itself to those souls who had not completely severed themselves from God's friendship, even though they could not be afforded the sublime vision of the Beatific Vision until they should be purified from every stain.

again vindicates its claim as a *reasonable service* (Rom. 12, 1), when it declares that Christ's vast kingdom embraces within its confines three large divisions, the Church Triumphant, the Church Militant, and Church Suffering.

There is a wholesome gesture in our ecclesiastical calendar in that All Souls Day follows All Hallows, or the Feast of All Saints. In her motherly concern the Holy Church plays on the moods of her children; it is joy today and sorrow tomorrow. Today you may rejoice with the saints in glory; tomorrow you may weep with the souls in Purgatory. Somehow we should prefer to call the latter Poor Souls rather than Holy Souls. Although holiness is to be their certain reward, at this moment they are still confined to the most intense suffering. In fact, there are those who assert that these sufferings differ but little from the sufferings sustained in hell-fire. Suffice to say that whatever these sufferings may be they are alleviated immeasurably by the certainty that some day the light of God will shine upon them, and they will be relieved of what is now their greatest pang: their inability to *see God face to face*.

There are many things in revelation and creation that we do not understand. Our books on theology fail to give the answer, and the catechism just smiles at our inquisitiveness. And yet, when all is said and done, we cannot but exclaim with the people of Palestine when they marveled at the miracles of Jesus, *He has done all things well* (Mk. 7, 37). For is it not wonderful, and does it not prove the vision and wisdom of Divine Providence, that while the Poor Souls are suffering in their confinement the souls living on earth should possess all their human feelings, their sympathy and charity, and above all the power to come to the rescue of the souls in Purgatory and hasten their return to the God of their love?

Do we realize that this is our big chance, our glorious opportunity, to help those whom we loved on earth, and by doing so enhance, enrich and expand the House of God above? It is sad but true that our present world picture resembles the turbulent, busy and reckless days of the Machabean period. In spite of our multitudinous and often meaningless worries within, and still more onerous and pressing duties without, let us listen to the soft, appealing and soothing voice of the Book of Machabees: *It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins*.

Someone may ask, why do not the saints in heaven look after the Poor Souls? Well, that is a question for which we do not have an adequate answer. For we know, the saints in heaven do not forget their suffering brethren. However, it would seem that we are in a far more advantageous position to help them; and besides, our help will profit not only them but ourselves as well. Again, the destiny of the Poor Souls is secure, while ours is still very uncertain. It would

seem that Saints Peter and Paul and all the angels and saints are far more concerned about the safety of the poor prodigal, still wending his way over the crags and crevices of this stony way, than about the early release of the prisoners of the Lord. To put it plainly, the saints in heaven are having a good and glorious time, the souls in Purgatory are serving released time, whereas our time is just a haphazard guess between worn-out clocks, belated trains, broken-down buses, and devious paths. We do need help and direction. The saints are ever ready, to be sure; but the Poor Souls are anxious, for in their case and ours the need is mutual. Ask those elderly religious, who for many years *have borne the burden of the day's heat*, and I assure you that with one accord they will tell you: "Help the Poor Souls and they will help you." Perhaps this is one angle in your daily life and work that you have missed completely.

There are so many ties that bind you to the suffering souls. There are your parents, relatives, numberless friends. They were good to you and oftentimes you were inappreciative of their kindnesses. This is the time for restitution. God has given you a memory, a human heart; this is the time to search deep and make good what you perhaps neglected in your early years when you were thoughtless, forgetful, and probably ungrateful. Who knows but that the prayerful remembrance of the Poor Souls may be the one thing that we have missed in our spiritual life, the one thing that may prove to serve as a powerful aid to our progress in perfection. Our prayer for the Poor Souls is so genuinely human and at the same time so completely in harmony with the divine plan, that a religious cannot afford to treat it lightly. In fact, our whole religious life seems defective without a strenuous effort in this direction, especially during the month of November.

Our Founders have well provided that we do not forget the departed members of our communities. Let a new zeal, a new enthusiasm, and a new love permeate our hearts at the *De Profundis*, the *Miserere*, the *Pater's* and *Ave's* that abound in our daily routine. Then there is the Holy Sacrifice, the Stations of the Cross, and numerous other devotions that may be applied to the Poor Souls. In the matter of indulgences Mother Church seems to be extravagant when there is question of helping the Poor Souls. This is not merely a hint; no, it is a challenge, which our generosity and charity should meet to the utmost. These are indeed the least of Christ's brethren. But let us remember, we are still lesser than the least, and there is not more salutary meditation on our own happy death, as we trust, than the *Requiem Aeternam* said or sung for our departed brothers and sisters.

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas F.

## A MAP OF LIFE

*(The Sermon De Modo Vivendi of Saint Bonaventure)*

Whoever you may be, if you wish through faith, hope, and charity to attain to salvation, you must strive for perfection in three ways: by devout prayer, by pious living, and worthy confession. The Prophet Micheas has said as much: *I will show, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: to do judgment, by confessing truthfully, and to love mercy, by living in a good manner with others, and to walk solicitously with your God, by persevering steadfastly in prayer* (Micheas 6, 8).

First, before all else, because we can do no good of ourselves, we must pray to God. *Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice* (Matt. 6, 33). Prayer must be offered to God in a twofold manner, vocally and mentally, in keeping with the twofold make-up of man. The Psalmist tells us: *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God* (Ps. 83, 3); and the Apostle writes: *Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord* (Eph. 5, 19).

Vocal prayer must be offered to God distinctly, attentively, and devoutly, not mixing up the words; attentively, not allowing the mind to wander to other things; devoutly, allowing the mind to delight in the praises of God. Vocal prayer should be had seven times in the day according to the prescription of the Church and the words of David, who said: *Seven times in the day I have praised you* (Ps. 118, 164). By doing this we merit the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost.

Furthermore, mental prayer must be offered to God, concerning which the Apostle Paul said to Timothy: *I wish that the men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands, without wrath and contention, to God* (I Tim. 2, 8). He thus indicates that in all our needs, our heart must take refuge in God, our first and foremost Helper. This is done by raising pure and affectionate sighs of the heart to Him. Saint Gregory tells us: "True prayer is to resound with the groans of compunction and not with many formulae of words." Now, if it is necessary that this prayer be frequently offered to God, it should be especially undertaken on solemn days and feasts, for such is their purpose, and on other days, at definite hours, especially in the morning and evening. Thus we shall receive the morning and evening dew: our morning prayer bringing us the grace that will direct us in the day, and our night prayer, God's correction and cleansing grace.

This prayer must have two companions, one preceding it and the other following. Meditation must go before, as the Wise Man says: *Before prayer*

*prepare your heart* (Ecclus. 18, 23), and this preparation is had through meditation. The Psalmist also speaks of this: *In my meditation a fire shall burst forth* (Ps. 38, 4), which is the fervor of desire, without which no sacrifice of devout prayer can nor should be offered.

Thanksgiving must follow, as the Church teaches by ending every prayer with the words *Deo gratias*. So too the Apostle exhorts: *Be assiduous in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving* (Coloss. 4, 2). Thanksgiving must take up the greater part of our prayer, but should not consist in many words, but in affections. This affective character of both prayer and thanksgiving arises from an intent and constant meditation on our miseries and God's mercies, both those of the whole human race and the misery of each of us and God's special care of each soul. For no one ardently asks for something, unless he is convinced that he needs that for which he asks, and unless he has confidence that his prayer will be heard. Nor does any one return thanks to God, unless he realizes the greatness of the divine gift and the lack of merit on his part. This sacrifice of mental prayer is greatly acceptable and pleasing to God, as our Lord told us in Saint John: *The Father seeks such as worship Him in spirit and truth* (4, 23).

On the ladder of Jacob there is no place to stand, but only to ascend and descend; therefore, we must give ourselves not only to devout prayer, but also to a holy and virtuous way of life. This holiness of life consists in two things, in directing our life according to true justice and in practising severe self-discipline.

We map our life according to justice when the will is so directed as to give to everyone his due: to superiors, obedience and reverence; to equals, harmony and good will; to inferiors, thoughtfulness and care; *because each must administer the grace which he has received to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God* (I Pet. 4, 10). This is done when help is given to the needy, instruction to the ignorant, correction to the delinquent, tolerance to those of ill-will, comfort to the afflicted, support to the falling, compassion to all who are miserable, and peace and charity to all men. In this is the fulfillment of the whole law and justice. *Who loves his neighbor fulfills the law* (Rom. 13, 8). And Saint Paul especially exhorts us to fulfill this obligation, when he said: *Owe no man anything except to love one another*. For if we fulfill this obligation, all other obligations are taken care of, especially when we love our neighbor not only in word or with the tongue but also in deed and truth (I John 3, 18), when there is an opportunity. But when there is no opportunity the good will takes the place of the deed, as Saint Gregory said: "The hand is never empty if the will is the coffer of the heart is filled with good will." And he adds:

good if we are concerned over another's calamities as though over our own, if we rejoice over the prosperity of another as over our own advancement, if we consider another's losses as our own, and reckon others' gains our own, if we love a friend not because of the world, but for God's sake, if we bear with an enemy loving him, if we do to no one what we do not want done to ourselves, if we do no one what we ourselves justly demand, if we bring aid to the needs of a neighbor, not only according to our strength, but even try to help him beyond what we are able." This is a correct description of a good will, in which the rectitude of justice, which cannot be without the sweetness of mercy.

But to acquire, increase, and preserve this good will strict self-discipline is necessary, the purpose of which is to subject the spirit of our mind to the norm and rule of holiness in both the inner and outer man. Exterior discipline consists in guarding the senses and all those things connected with them; the interior, in guarding the passions and thoughts.

The first step in subjecting oneself to the task of self-discipline is to control the sense of touch by the strong bond of chastity; the sense of taste, by the rule of sobriety; the sense of smell, by flight from those things that arouse the flesh by giving desires for fine food or luxury; the sense of hearing, by flight from worldly song and pleasing sounds and all vain speech, especially that which detracts or flatters; the sense of sight, finally, must be kept from what might arouse desires, since as Saint Gregory says: "One should not look at what one cannot desire." This then is the first step of self-discipline; to restrain the five senses. These are like five windows *through which death enters* (Jer. 9, 21) unless we offer resistance by vigilant self-control.

Besides this custody of the senses, it is necessary to discipline oneself against those things which are connected with the senses. First, our talk or speech must be freed from any undisciplined word, whether of detraction, or flattery, or complaining, suggestiveness, filthiness, cursing, insults, swearing, lying, and every idle word for which account must be given on the day of judgment (Matt. 5, 36). Let us recognize too that such words are expressed not only in speech, but also in sign or gesture. The clothing of the body must also be so regulated that it will be neither superfluous nor soft and rich, nor greatly decorated. Laughter and especially boisterousness, must be checked. One's manner of walking must also be controlled so that it is not loose or sloppy. All gestures of the body and any familiarity must be curtailed that could in any way give offense to oneself or another, as the Apostle Paul warns us: *Keep yourself from every kind of* (I Thess. 5, 22).

Add to this a close watch on the affections; in particular, the passion of concupiscence, lest the spirit seek the delights of the flesh, or embrace passing goods, or human praise, all of which make up the threefold concupiscence of the world. One must shun the passion of anger, lest his heart be disturbed against anyone; our anger, if aroused lawfully, should be directed against the vice and not against the person. Also the inclination to lukewarmness or sadness must be avoided, which is wont to come from human respect or spiritual weariness. But one cannot perfectly avoid this in the midst of the evils of this present life, unless he rejoice in the Holy Ghost.

Lastly, our thoughts must be brought under the law of self-discipline; so that the mind is kept from vain thoughts, filthy thoughts, spiteful thoughts. I call vain the day-dreams of human ambition; filthy, thoughts of carnal pleasure; spiteful, thoughts of suspicion or harmful planning against our neighbor.

We cannot carry out this fourfold discipline unless the body is worn down by fasts, vigils, and hard work, the hands exercised in humble and fruitful labors or tasks; the tongue, in the praises of God; the ears, in hearing the words of God; the eyes, in good and holy readings; and the heart, in good and holy meditation. But because it is most difficult to keep the heart centered on one thing, God has given it many good things on every side upon which it might think: above, heavenly things, that is, our heavenly homeland; below, eternal punishments; in front, the examples of the saints; behind, our sins; to the right, the divine gifts; to the left, the divine judgments; and everywhere, the divine commandments which command us on every side, and which our heart must keep before itself wherever it turn. Thus the Psalmist says about the just man that *day and night* he must meditate on the divine law (Ps. 1, 2); and the Wise Man: *Whatever the Lord commands you, ponder always on those things* (Eccli. 3, 22).

But since there is no one who so pursues discipline or justice that he does not neglect or omit something, one must have recourse to a worthy confession. In this the penitent must lay bare his defects wholly, truthfully, and purely without any covering of excuse or concealment or coloring. He will do this, in the first place, by confessing his omissions in the things that pertain to God, especially in prayer, both mental and vocal. Then he must confess faults in the observance of justice as regards his neighbor; after this, omissions which come from poor custody of the senses and the appetites and thoughts connected with sensible things, according to the fourfold description of self-discipline set forth above.

Confession must have two companions, contrition and satisfaction. The penitent should be sorry for all his offenses, not only the venial, but the mortal. The

little ones, taking heed of the warning: *He that contemneth small things, fall by little and little* (Eccli. 19, 1). Being sorry, let him avoid repeating fault; more, let him try to cut away the cause and occasion of sinning since attached to them through perverse love. Such is the teaching of our Lord: *eye that is an occasion of sin must be plucked out* (Matt. 5, 29). This is understood to mean the member of our body, but the occasion of sin, even the cause of sin seems to be as precious to the sinner as the eye is precious to the whole body.

The truth of a pure confession depends on the purity of our prayer vice-versa, because the closer one approaches a light, the more one sees what is deformed; and the more deformity he removes from his power of sight, the more sweetly he enjoys the light. Therefore, a pure confession leads to prayer, just as dawn follows the night. Prayer, in its turn, leads to the light of contemplation as to the midday, wherein every holy soul wishes to rest in Christ her spouse, here in the present through grace, until God is seen in glory, to which may He lead us, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Detroit, Mich.

Fr. Florentine Rayes, O.F.M. (t)



Whilst Francis was at Greccio and in its environs, Peter of Catania, first vicar-general, died in the convent of Saint Mary of the Angels, on the 2d day of March, 1224. As soon as he was in the tomb, God bore witness to his merit by many miracles. The people crowded to his grave, and left votive offerings, which greatly disturbed the quiet of the Religious, and caused much uneasiness on account of their strict poverty. Francis, having been informed of it, went to the tomb, and, moved by holy zeal, he addressed the dead in a commanding tone, which God alone could have inspired him with: "Brother Peter, whilst you were living, you always obeyed me punctually: I command you to obey me similarly now. Those who come to your grave are very troublesome to us. Our poverty is offended, and our quiet infringed on, so that our discipline becomes relaxed; thus, I command you, by your vow of obedience, to refrain from performing any more miracles." His order was obeyed. From that time no more miracles were performed on the tomb of Brother Peter . . . After having directed the body of Brother Peter to be removed sometime after, it was found that it was turned and kneeling, the head bowed down, in the posture of one who obeys a command given him.

Candide Chalippe, O. F. M.

## CHRISTO-CENTRIC REFLECTIONS (II)

### *Thoughts on Christian Perfection*

#### THE TRUE CONCEPT OF THE MYSTICAL LIFE

If false notions of asceticism can deter one from the ascetical life the more so is it true of the mystical life. Some have associated the mystical life with extraordinary states of mind, even with a pathological condition. It has been taught, and still is by some, that the mystical life is something to be shunned since it is filled with danger, or at least as if it were reserved only for privileged souls. According to this doctrine, to tend to the mystical life would be the same as exposing oneself to great illusions and lessening Christian humility, since it would mean the abandonment of the ordinary way of Christian perfection. For such, the mystical life is the extraordinary way to Christian perfection and to aspire to it smacks of pride.

Therefore, to understand correctly the Christian journey of the soul, one must have the true concept of the mystical life. The ascetical life of Christocentric spirituality is not placed in some psychological exercise proper to an initiate, *per se*, nor in one's own efforts of intellect and will, but from the very beginning it draws its motivating reason from on high. Its motive is the love of Christ and God in the Mystical Union. The entire ascetical life of this spirituality is rightly called mystical on account of its formal principle.

The mystical life does not consist in extraordinary phenomena, such as visions, hearing of voices, levitations, ecstasies, and prophecies. These are either illusions and pathological states, or they may be graces freely given which are not necessary for *one's own sanctification*. Such phenomena are not so much to be sought as shunned.

Christian mysticism is something entirely different, since it is a life fully supernatural in grace. In mystical contemplation Saint Bonaventure tells us that "God is beheld in the effect of grace and the experience of His sweetness through the mystical union." Surely all souls in sanctifying grace possess the principle of the supernatural life. But it is one thing to possess grace and another thing to live according to it and by it. A person can possess grace and still lead a merely natural life, either corporeal or psychological, so that his own manner of acting or living differs little from that of the pagan. A mystic, however, experiences and lives the grace by which he works; and because of this the actions of his life become supernatural and divine on account of his operation in the Mystical Christ. A mystic acts more easily and more perfectly since he acts with docility to the conscious inspirations of the Holy Spirit. *The mystic can lead a perfectly human life*, since he is able to act spiritually and to his



elevated capacities which participate in the operations of the divine will and intellect. The mystic *lives and experiences* the riches of grace and of the Christian religion, which others recognize only imperfectly in the cold abstractions of speculative theology. *Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.*

#### ALL ARE CALLED TO THE MYSTICAL LIFE

The mystical life is the expression of the life of grace, which is the source of the entire spiritual life from baptism to the beatific vision. Saint Thomas says that "Grace is the beginning of glory in us." And since all are called to grace, so all are called to the mystical life which is the life of grace in us. It is the supernatural life through grace and according to grace, for it does not suffice to possess the principle of the supernatural life and nevertheless live in a manner thoroughly natural, as if grace did not exist!

*Mystical life is the life of Christ and according to the elevation of the powers of the soul. But all men are called to that life which is perfectly human and Christian. Therefore, all men are called to the mystical life.*

Lest anyone say: "I intend to enjoy that supernatural life in heaven; now, the ordinary life suffices for me." This fallacy stems from the evil spirit who wishes to deter one from Christian perfection. This perfect submission and conformity to the influence of grace cannot be experienced except in the mystical state, where the soul feels the influence of the Holy Spirit and follows it. It is evident that if all are called to grace and in it to Christian perfection, therefore, all are called as well to the mystical life.

The mystical life is not a sort of egotistical enjoyment of God, since it is the life of perfect charity. This virtue concerns itself with the love of God and also with the love of neighbor. A mystic is no less active than contemplative for he lives within himself the life of Christ. With Him he adores the Father and prays for sinners who have abandoned God. With Him he suffers and dies daily for the redemption of the world. With Christ he speaks to men and carries on all the works of the apostolate. This apostolate is more fruitful the more the mystic is united with Christ. The Holy Spirit speaks and works in him. This is the reason why the good example and simple sermons of the humble saints of God converted more men to God than the profoundest words of human oratory. Thus it is evident that if all are called to the mystical life, this does not mean that they are called to the selfish enjoyment of God, but rather to a very high and fruitful activity for God and men, in perfect love of benevolence. This is the way to sanctification, which is not merely seeking one's own satisfaction but the fulfillment of the will of God: *For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*

The ultimate end cannot be anything else but God. Man, moreover, does not attain this end except through his own sanctification, in which he also finds his own beatitude.

#### THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he will take away; and every branch that bears fruit he will cleanse, that it may bear more fruit. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.* In this text of Saint John is contained the entire doctrine of our supernatural life, which is the life of Christ in us. What else is the life of any branch except the life flowing from the vine? The same life animates and vivifies all the branches and produces a unity of the vine. By the strength of the vine the branches bear their fruit, while by themselves they would remain sterile, cast off and worthless, fit only to be used as fuel for the fire.

The same holds true in the supernatural life wherein of ourselves we can do nothing. The supernatural life is divine which cannot proceed except from a divine principle. That principle is Christ in us; Christ to Whom we are ingrafted through Baptism and Who becomes for us the principle of our every act produced in union with Him. As the branches of the vine bear fruit when they adhere to it, so the baptized bear the fruit of Christ when they adhere to Christ by grace and intention.

*Conditions required for Supernaturality.* There are two conditions required in order that our acts may be supernatural: 1. *Grace*, since it is the principle of that union with Christ without which we can do nothing supernatural. 2. *Intention* is also required because, although through grace man is united with Christ and elevated to the supernatural order, still he retains his nature and so he can act naturally only if he does not act without an actual (or at least virtual) intention in union with Christ living in him.

The supernatural operation is indeed performed by us but only in so far as we are ennobled and made one with the Mystical Christ. He is the principle of supernatural being and so the principle of the supernatural operation. The fruit is certainly from the branch but in virtue of the vine, from Whom it receives life and nourishment. Although man may be united with Christ by grace and participation in His divinity connoted in sanctifying grace, and by radical freedom, he can act outside that union.



This he does when he intentionally acts for a natural end only, not ordering his acts unto Christ. Thus we can see the importance of good intention in our works, which are vitiated by a natural or bad end and so lack merit and supernatural value. The work which does not arise from a supernatural end cannot be a work of Christ, Who always intends the will of His heavenly Father. *Of myself I can do nothing . . . because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me.*

*The nature of the union with Christ.* The intention by which we are united with Christ in our acts seems to pertain to the moral order. Nevertheless, the union of intention cannot come about unless first there is a union of being. This union was mentioned specifically by Christ in the parable of the vine and the branches. This union, however, belongs to the physical order.

Just as we admit the physical union between the branches and the vine, so we must admit the union between the Christian and Christ. For as Christ is one and all Christians share in the one life of Christ, so also they are made one in Him. It is evident that here we are dealing with the supernatural order and hence with the physical union and unity only in that order, for the physical distinction and multiplicity of individuals will remain by reason of the nature and person, which are ennobled but not destroyed in this union with Christ.

The supernatural order is essentially the elevation of nature. If the nature would not remain, then neither would the multiplicity nor the personality, and we would have annihilation and not elevation. This elevation, moreover, is possible in itself by reason of the intellectual nature, which possesses a desire and potency extended to the infinite; then to the co-participation of the divine nature and operation. This co-participation can be realized only by God, and is realized in fact in so far as the Word assumed to Himself human nature and so potentially all men. When men are actually united with Christ, namely by the mystical Incarnation of the Word in them, they become partakers in Him of the divine life of the Most Holy Trinity. The elevation, therefore, to the supernatural order indicates the informing of the activity of a subject by the divine principle in a participation of the divine nature, since in God action and being are identified. This elevation, moreover, infinitely surpassing human forces, cannot be effected except by a union with Christ through which humanity is elevated in grace to the divine level.

#### THE LIFE OF GRACE

From the concrete consideration of our elevation in Christ Jesus, it becomes evident what that wonderful gift of God is, which we call "sanctifying grace,"

and what the life of grace is, "the beginning of glory in us." It is the life of Christ in us and our life in Christ. It is the habit of our union with Christ and through Him and in Him, with God the Father in the Holy Spirit. Thus it is the participation in the ineffable divine life of understanding and love of the Most Holy Trinity.

How much would our life be changed, if we often meditated upon the wonderful life of grace in us! How much more should we endeavour to increase it, especially by a more intimate union with Christ in life and action. How much more should we strive to flee sin, which precipitates us from this wonderful divine life into the most miserable state of reprobation. Finally, how much more should we yearn for the happy life of the mystic, where the life of grace progresses to light; where man experiences the sweetness of the divine embrace of Christ, and in Him the delights of the elevation to the Father in the light and love of the Holy Spirit!

The habit of grace is something created in us, but it takes its profound reality from our union with the Mystical Christ. By this union we are partakers of the life of the Word in the Most Holy Trinity. With Him and in Him there is a return to the Creator and Father, in a reciprocal procession of love of the Holy Spirit. We participate in this life in Christ through our intellect and will: *If any one love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.*

By our adherence to the Mystical Christ we become partakers of the life of the Word and our supernatural life is inseparable from the life of Christ on account of the hypostatic union, which union is the exemplary cause of our union with the life of the Word and of the Most Holy Trinity: *That all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.* This is effected through grace, or through the union with Christ: *I in them and thou in me; that they may be perfected in unity.*

Our conformity to Christ ought to be as intimate as that substantial union of the branch with the vine. For as the branches live from the substance of the vine, so also the Christian lives from the life of Christ with Whom he becomes one in grace. The Christian becomes one in the supernatural life, which is the participation of the divine nature and of the life in Christ Jesus, in the Man-God. O great mystery of the spiritual life which is the divine life! O great foolishness of those who desert the magnificence of the divine life and relinquish Christ to take up again the misery of vanity and the natural life of the flesh—follow their own will and the evil desires of the body. For no one can follow Christ

unless by the union of intention and love, and by the abnegation of his own will in order that he may embrace the will of Christ, which is the will of His heavenly Father.

#### THE MYSTICAL UNION

The supernatural union of man with Christ is likened by Sacred Scripture to the union of the Son to the Father; of the body to the head; of the branch to the vine; all of which seem to indicate a formal union. Nevertheless this union is simply supernatural in essence and in activity while the human person remains with his own natural principles. This union, therefore, is not substantial except insofar as it is supernatural, for man's own nature, with his individual personality, remains. Neither is it then hypostatic, as the union in Christ of the two natures in one person. It is a union of the individual person of man with the divine person of Christ. It is a union of the human soul with its mystical Spouse, Christ the Word, and in Him and through Him, with God, in the unity of a supernatural operation.

Since man in the supernatural order is united to the Word in Christ he becomes "another Christ." Therefore, St. Augustine could proclaim: "Let us rejoice and give thanks; not only have we been made Christians, but we have been made Christ . . . Rejoice!"

Since the faithful are united in one and the same Christ, so all in Christ effect one body of which Christ is the head and the faithful are the members and this body of Christ is called the Church. The unity of the Church in the unity of the body of Christ is a consequence of the doctrine of the elevation of man in Christ. Just as anyone who receives the Eucharistic Communion receives the whole Christ, and still Christ is one, so all who adhere to the mystical Christ in the Word possess Him entirely. Each and every soul receives its Spouse and yet the body of Christ remains one; one Church, one Communion, one Spouse in the unity of Christ.

In Him all effect one body and form one Church, since *all things have been created through and unto him, and he is before all creatures, and in him all things hold together*. That is true even in the natural order, but in a divine manner in the supernatural order of man's elevation united to Christ.

Since the faithful in grace commune with God and Christ in the innermost reaches of their heart, they accordingly comprise one body in virtue of this intimate union. Christ the head of this body diffuses His life to the members, and this vivifying life is the Holy Spirit. *Again, he is the head of his body, the Church; he, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the first place.*

The Word works through the Holy Spirit, and so He is called the principle of our union with Christ and the principle of the unity of the Church in Christ, because the root of union is love, and the Spirit vivifies and unifies this love. The entire spiritual life consists in grace, namely, in the participation of the life of the Most Holy Trinity in the unity of God. The principle of the divine unity in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, namely the mutual love of the Father and the Word to Whom we ourselves should be joined in grace and in a mystical union. But since the Church cannot be anything else except the unity of all the members of Christ, therefore the principle of the life of each and every one in Christ is the principle of the life of the entire body. And hence the Holy Spirit is said to be the soul of the body of Christ, the Church, as He is said to be the principle of the life of grace in each and every member.

Washington, D. C.

Fr. Method C. Billy, O.F.M. Conv.



So powerful, so demanding of attention, so productive of grace is the Mystery of the Most Holy Passion, that if the human mind contemplates it and really enters into the experiencing of it, co-suffering from the heart with the suffering Christ, it will be so inflamed and transformed into love of Him that as it comes to realize that Christ died for love of it, so it will be prepared not only to shrink from all guilt for Him but also to undergo every pain of death.

Saint Bernardine of Siena



There is a great difference between pondering upon Christ Jesus, knowing about Him, and being of the same mind with Him (Phil. 2, 5). Some few have investigated Him deeply and acquired a profound knowledge of Him; but fewer still are of the same mind with Him, have experienced Him at first hand. This last comes about only by a complete conformation of the mind to Christ by means of the most ardent love.

Saint Bernardine of Siena

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### *According to Saint Bonaventure*

Closely related to inordinate desire for the pleasures of eating and drinking is inordinate desire for gratifying the sense of touch. Love of softness and ease, of creature comforts, has come to be regarded in modern times as something quite normal and not at all to be worried about. But in the middle ages this love of softness was regarded with fear and loathing as one of the greatest enemies to our sanctification. While sense pleasures, as we have already pointed out, are by no means forbidden to us, nevertheless as Franciscans dedicated to the ideal of poverty and penance we must recognize definite limits. It is not so much the real excesses, the grave sins of sensuality, that require our attention here, but rather the fine and sometimes very subtle contradictions between our ideal of evangelical simplicity and our actual living of that ideal. Because this desire for physical well-being is so integral a part of our nature (for the body instinctively seeks protection as well as nourishment), and because, if uncontrolled, it can become so destructive of the spirit of our Order, Saint Bonaventure would have us ask ourselves:

#### DO I SEEK INORDINATE PLEASURE IN APPAREL AND IN PHYSICAL COMFORTS?

In general, of course, our Rule and Constitutions prescribe the quality and quantity of our clothing, and the first point of our examen should concern our fidelity to these prescriptions. More specifically we may ask: Am I content with the clothing allotted to me by my superiors, or do I seek to obtain better or more comfortable clothing from other sources? Do I secretly try to have my preferences in regard to material and style of clothing satisfied through family or friends? or through nagging my superiors into allowing me these exceptions? or through independent purchase? Do I gladly wear the coarser and less comfortable kind of underclothing, or do I consider nothing but the finest and softest garments fit for contact with my body? Am I content with a variety of clothing sufficient for seasonal needs, or do I accumulate little storehouses "just in case?"

The Franciscan ideal in regard to clothing requires that we avoid the extreme of luxury and the extreme of poverty, for both extremes attract not only the attention but also the just censure of the world. If we are to preach by our appearance, as our Seraphic Father wished, we must aim at his standard—which was also the standard of Christ—of poverty combined with decency. Anything more or less, for Franciscans, is definitely objectionable. Here, then, we may ask ourselves: Am I overly concerned about my appearance? Do I insist, for

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

257

example, that my habit be without spot or wrinkle? that my trousers be creased to a knife-edge sharpness? that my wimple fall in just the right folds? The smartly groomed and highly polished look is an asset for secular persons, but it is painfully unbecoming for religious. On the other hand, the unclean and untidy look is equally offensive. Saint Francis said that with the blessing of God we should not be ashamed to wear decently patched and mended clothing; he did not suggest that the blessing of God is attached to the wearing of torn or ragged or dirty clothing. Our ideal in regard to clothing lies in the way of the ordinary.

This leads to another point: Do I realize that my habit protects both soul and body, that I must respect it accordingly? Am I faithful in wearing it as the Church and my Constitutions prescribe? Do I keep in mind that the Franciscan habit is the habit of penance, and that I should gladly endure whatever discomfort it causes? Or do I tend to dispense with certain parts of the habit merely for the sake of ease and convenience?

Do my secular clothes also reflect Franciscan poverty? Or must it be said of me that I outdo even the secular clergy in elegance of attire? Am I inclined to blossom out in flashy or expensive sport clothes and to take pride in having the newest and best in sport equipment? Am I duly cautious about appearing in public in completely non-clerical garb, and when I must do so, am I careful to avoid anything that might cause unfavorable comment?

It sometimes happens that while the clothing of a religious may be in harmony with Franciscan poverty, his accessories are not. This is understandable in view of the custom prevailing among religious of receiving such objects as gifts. Loving parents and friends are very often guided—or misguided—by the conviction that only the best is good enough for us, and we all too frequently encourage them in their error. In the last analysis the guilt lies with us, for we have a serious obligation to make known to relatives and friends that whatever we use must be in harmony with the poverty we have vowed. Let us, then, honestly ask ourselves: What about my accessories? Must I have the latest style in shoes, hosiery, gloves? Am I content with the ordinary, or do I prefer my things to be just a little different? What about such articles as umbrellas, luggage, handbags? What about watches, glasses, fountain pens, cigarette cases and lighters? It is an odd sight indeed to find a son or daughter of the Poverello exhibiting accouterments so elegant that they cannot be distinguished from those of fashionable lay persons. To be sure it is natural for all of us—and especially for the young—to like nice things. But we must realize that herein lies a very subtle danger. The splendour, the nice things, a form which can easily undermine and destroy the poverty we have vowed.

ideal but the entire structure of our spiritual life. If we wish to reduce the virile beauty of our form of life to a state of spineless effeminacy, there is no better way than that of softness and fastidiousness in dress. Softness and sanctity are at opposite poles.

Besides the sense satisfaction connected with *molliora vestimenta et colorata*, Saint Bonaventure also warns us against the sense satisfaction derived from too comfortable living quarters. The room of a religious is a cell, a sanctuary, a place where he may pray, work, and rest. If in furnishings and arrangement our cell does not reflect our religious ideal, it is a dangerous incongruity. We may therefore do well to ask ourselves: Is my room pleasant and comfortable according to Franciscan standards? Am I content with the room allotted to me by obedience, even though it may lack certain conveniences? Or do I insist on the best room in the house, and rationalize my insistence on the grounds of imaginary needs? ("My health is delicate; I must have plenty of fresh air and sunshine." "My work requires concentration; I must have absolute quiet.") Hardly any room in a modern monastery could compare with Rivo Torto, or for that matter with the cells of any of the early friars and nuns. Such extreme rigor, of course, is not expected of us pampered children of the twentieth century; but what is very much expected of us is the *sense* of Franciscan poverty. In this regard we may ask ourselves whether we have retained at least some semblance of monastic austerity in our rooms. More specifically: What about my bed? Is it so soft and comfortable that it satisfies my love of ease rather than my obligation to penance? What about my chairs? My desk? Must I have soft and luxurious rugs? Handsome drapes? Expensive pictures, statues, curios? Can it be said in justice that my room looks more like an art gallery, or a clubroom, or a lady's boudoir—or even a pet shop—than the cell of a poor Franciscan? Or do I perhaps fall into the opposite extreme of clinging to the disreputably threadbare and unsightly in the name of poverty? Do I neglect order and cleanliness under the pretext of holy indifference to surroundings? Our Holy Father Francis was in love with poverty—more deeply in love than any of us can ever hope to be; but he was always controlled by a fine sense of order, a feeling for the fitness of things. The poverty of Francis was never sloppy poverty.

In matters of clothing and furniture, of course, a heavy responsibility lies with superiors, for subjects may not have or use things without legitimate permission. Superiors would therefore do well to ask themselves: In granting permissions, do I keep the Franciscan ideal in mind? Have I had to grant permission for unwarranted exceptions because my own example did not allow me to refuse?

Have I provided necessary things for my subjects, taking due regard to both quantity and quality? According to the example of Saint Francis, do I check the needs of my subjects without waiting for them to ask? Do I realize how much harm can be done to the spirit of the Order if I fail in these points?

Finally, we may look into the matter of our houses in general. Most of us, it is true, have little to say about what kind of monastery we live in (architecturally speaking); but there are some points that do concern us. For example: Do I help maintain high standards of cleanliness, sanitation, and order in the monastery? Do I strive, in so far as I can, to promote true artistic beauty in the chapel, in the community rooms, and in the grounds and gardens? This is really more important than may seem at first blush; for while it is true that beauty, both in nature and in art, appeals to the senses, its ultimate effects are in the soul. If we are forced to live in ugly surroundings we can, of course, make a virtue of necessity and accept it as penance; but we should be very careful not to deliberately cultivate or sanction ugliness in the name of poverty. In general, Franciscan houses and churches should always manifest the spirit of our Order—the spirit of poverty and humility. If this were always kept in mind by those concerned, much scandal would be averted.

By way of final emphasis, let us repeat once more that Franciscanism is not asceticism or total denial of sense pleasures. A completely negative asceticism is foreign to the Franciscan ideal. Without charity, mortification is useless; without simple trust in God, poverty is soulless. It is the spirit that vivifies, and it is the spirit that is to be applied in the mortification of the senses. Saint Francis himself had scant affection for rigid rules and precise regulations. In fact he admonished superiors to take special care of the sick brethren and to see that all the friars were suitably clothed according to season and locality: *secundum loca et tempora, et frigidas regiones*. We should therefore refrain from comparing our standards with those of our brothers and sisters in other countries. There are needs in one country which are unknown in another; customs and points of view differ widely. Let us instead remember that the Franciscan ideal is not a definite set of rules nor even a clear-cut formula, but a way of life based on evangelical <sup>1</sup>ty. And let us also remember that the Franciscan ideal is not a license <sup>2</sup>tion. There are indeed limitations, but they are defined and

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### NEW OFFICE AND MASS FOR CHINA'S MARTYRS

The Office and Mass for the Feast of BB. Gregory Grassi, Francis Fogolla, Anthony Fantosati, Bishops, and their Companion Martyrs of the First and Third Orders, was approved February 9, 1951. The Feast is to be celebrated July 4.

These twenty-nine martyrs of China were put to death during the Boxer Rebellion. Among them were three bishops, four priests, one lay brother of the First Order, seven sisters of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mary, five seminarians, and nine lay associates.



### INTRODUCTION OF THE CAUSE OF LOUIS NECCHI VILLA

Among the members of the Third Order Secular who have reached heroic perfection in their state of life, the most recent is the eminent Italian physician and educator, Louis Necchi Villa. His life proves again that the Rule of the Third Order, if observed fully and faithfully, is one of the greatest powers in the Church for the personal sanctification of the laity, for the correcting of social evils, and for the effective combatting of godless materialism.

Louis Necchi lived in the world according to the Rule of the Third Order, practised medicine, fulfilled perfectly the duties of husband and father, and strove to promote the development of a Catholic intellectual elite in Italy.

Born in Milan, November 19, 1876, the Servant of God was first instructed in the faith by two devout women relatives, and later by the Jesuits. He became a brilliant young theologian, able to withstand the arguments of keen and mature adversaries.

His many intellectual gifts as well as a compelling personality easily enabled to influence his school fellows. By example and tactful exhortation he led many to the practise of high virtue; by his insistence he brought the wayward sense of duty; with remarkable kindness and prudence he gave help to all in need.

Louis Necchi became an outstanding successful doctor, but the majority of cures, especially during the time he was attached to the army, were wrought by prayer than by human skill. He was particularly successful in treating nervous diseases and mental disorders, where his holy serenity and never-failing patience stored tranquility to tortured minds. He was a victim of apparently incurable psychoses which were completely cured by him. He was heroically self-sacrificing in the care of the sick, never disdaining to perform the least services for his patients. He brought consolation to the suffering, and prepared the dying by prudent admonition and exhortation.

Louis Necchi was a model husband and father, living to the full the obligations of the married state. He regarded his wife and children as precious treasures committed to him by God, and he cherished them with a tender and holy love. In spite of his innumerable activities, he was most diligent in watching over the education of his children.

As co-founder of the Catholic University of Milan, Necchi not only gave himself to his wealth to the cause of Catholic education and higher learning, but also, through his prestige and ceaseless efforts, influenced others to do likewise. His task was difficult for at that time Catholic education in Italy was in official disfavor.

Attacked by a fatal illness, the Holy Father died January 10, 1930, in Milan. His cause was introduced January 7, 1951.

Third Order directors will find the life of Louis Necchi Villa rich in inspiration and encouragement. It is to be hoped that the devotion to him will become more widespread among American Tertiaries, especially among professional people.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *The Holy Infancy*

When the beautiful Christmas Season draws near, we always have a feeling of sadness and sympathy for that vast multitude of people who "do not understand." Surely, they celebrate Christmas; they exchange gifts and greetings; they engage in holiday visits and perhaps revelries; they may even attend midnight Mass; but they fail to grasp the deeper meaning of it all. Christmas means no more to them than does the Fourth of July or Washington's Birthday—if it means as much.

And here is another reflection. What would this world be without Christmas? Snowballs, sleigh-rides, winter sports would continue as usual, but the whole season's luminous highspot would be missing, and all joy and glamour would fade away into drab and dreary everyday monotony. And the children! They need sunshine and joy and cheer, even as the little plants and flowers need the light and warmth of the sun. What a vagueness would be in their lives, if there were no Santa Claus, no Christmas tree, and, above all, no Christmas crib. Somehow these very names carry with them a glistening sheen, a silvery sound, which must surely originate above the clouds.

And so it is. But this busy, bustling world no longer remembers. It has forgotten that Christmas originally signified "Christ-Mass," a time when our forefathers devoutly gathered round the altar, in those gray, weather-beaten churches or cathedrals to welcome and worship the Christ Child in the little white Host and chant those immortal carols whose melodies still thrill the ears, but often fail to enter the heart. It has forgotten that Santa's real name was Saint Nicholas, who on the sixth of December would visit Christian homes to distribute sweets and nuts to good children who were able to say the *Our Father* faultlessly. Even our modern dictionaries seem to get mixed up when they confuse good old Santa with Kriss Kringle; for the latter term is nothing but a corruption of the German *Christkindl*—really the Babe of Bethlehem. In the good old days either Saint Nicholas with mitre and staff, or the Christchild, followed by a donkey and a bulging little cart, would go round on Christmas Night and hang cookies and candies on the Christmas Tree, which would greet the children as they entered the bright, candle-lit sitting room on Christmas morning. That was real Christmas joy.

What then constitutes the real Christmas joy? Saint John, the Beloved Disciple, tells us in one word: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son* (John 3, 16). For many years the Blessed Mother was Saint John's companion; and I venture the opinion that she had kept this word with so many

others in her heart and communicated them to the Evangelist. They bespeak both the Eternal Father's infinite love and the virginal Mother's tender affection for the Holy Child in the manger at Bethlehem.

At Bethlehem, heaven and earth meet in a marvellous union for which the world had yearned and prayed, but could not achieve. At last the Psalmist's prophecy had come true: *Mercy and fidelity shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss* (Ps. 84, 11). Divine Mercy has burst through the clouds to prove that the Almighty is faithful to His promise. Divine Justice has placed the olive branch of peace on its unbending scales. This explains the full meaning of the hymn chanted by the celestial choirs over the stable of Bethlehem:

*Glory to God in the highest,  
And peace on earth among men of good will.*

Do not be misguided by some versions which turn this perfect doublet into the meaningless triplet, "Glory to God—peace on earth—to men of good will." The original is a perfect double Hebraic parallelism which contrasts Glory with Peace, God with Men, and *in the highest* with *on earth*. The phrase, *of good will*, merely describes what sort of men may be worthy of such heavenly peace; it is not an independent member. Hebrew parallelism consists of two or more independent members, each having an equal number, not of accents or words, but of thoughts or ideas, so that the different members form a perfect balance and rhythm. Hence it would be a shame to distort this beautiful rhythmic structure of so meaningful a verse, which broke the age-old silence on that glorious Christmas night.

The four Sundays of Advent are a worthy and most telling introduction to the Christmas festivity; we hear the Eternal Father's voice: *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. Read the missal carefully and you will discover that the first Sunday fills you with filial fear, the second with holy hope, the third with serene joy, and the fourth with jubilant glory. The Epistles and Gospels as well as the intervening prayers and anthems must be put together so as to make a perfect picture. Meanwhile you will find yourself face to face with that sturdy and stalwart figure of John the Baptist. "What a man!" you will exclaim when you study his features, his words and actions. There is nothing soft, sensuous or servile about him. The Savior said of him: *He was the lamp, burning and shining* (Jo. 5, 35). On the second Sunday, the Master renders testimony of His disciple; on the third, the disciple reciprocates by rendering testimony of his Master; on the fourth, John's glorious apostolate is set forth. We may be justly filled with envy, when we hear that magnificent recommenda-

tion Jesus gives of His disciple: *What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? . . . A man clothed in soft garments? . . . No; for "he shall make ready thy way before thee"* (Matt. 11, 8 . . . 10). That is the testimony or recommendation any Religious would and should like to hear on the Day of Profession, or at least on the day *when the bridegroom comes*.

Strange as it may seem, the Blessed Mother hardly enters the picture during this entire season. Of course, Mother Church has ingeniously set the date of her Immaculate Conception on the eighth of December. That was to make up, I assume, for past neglect. However, at the Offertory of the fourth Sunday there is hushed silence when Mary, as if walking quietly from the sacristy, is greeted with the sweet salutation: *Ave Maria, gratia plena*. Yes, the Blessed Mother has more to do with the entire Christmas story than even Christians seem to realize. In fact, if our adversaries knew the real story, they would mete out unending praise to the Mother of Jesus for having *kept all these things in her heart* and having committed them to the pens of Saint Luke and the other Evangelists. For the first two chapters of Saint Luke's Gospel unmistakably reveal a woman's touch, nay a mother's touch. The Christmas Gospel is, in fact, Mary's Gospel.

At her side—and, lest the men feel slighted, let us call in Saint John and, by all means, Saint Joseph—at her side we should enter upon the sacred Christmas Season. There is one thought that should guide and inspire us. In his inimitable way Saint Paul suggests it when he writes: *The goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared* (Titus 3, 4). That is what happened at Bethlehem. And why did it happen thus? Ask our Lord, and He will answer with force and conviction: *Amen I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 18, 3). That is the real lesson of Christmastide.

So then lay aside your books for a while and forget your arguments from Theology, Philosophy and History. It is all true; Mother Church has taken care of that. You, however, submit in simple, childlike faith to the story of Bethlehem. There is a time for argument, and a time for prayer, meditation and simple faith. Watch Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds, the sheep and the ox and the ass. From them learn simplicity, humility, genuine faith and pure love. That is the secret of Saint Francis, the Lord's happy troubadour, the builder of the first Christmas crib, the man, as Celano says, who went singing into the kingdom of heaven.

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

## THE COUNSEL OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF SAINT ANTHONY

Men of today make a serious mistake. They are constantly under the impression that they themselves have the complete ordering of their lives, the responsibility of straightening out difficulties and perhaps calling upon God in prayer of petition to see to it that everything materializes as planned by themselves. Let it transpire that God deigns not to hear their prayer and disposes otherwise, what disappointment there is over what was expected of God! It is precisely this that constitutes the error of the times. In predetermining the will of God according to our own human interests and concerns, nothing so clearly evidences how trifling we have made the knowledge and art of recognizing the Hand of God in our lives as the life of Saint Anthony, whom the present Pope, Father Pius XII elevated to the rank of a Doctor of the Church on January 19, 1946.

Three thousand brethren of Francis attended the Chapter of Mats at Portiuncula in 1221, the last time they assembled together before being divided into the several provinces throughout the Order. Just as the final group, destined for the northern Italian province of Romagna, were getting on their way, a secretary and unknown Friar—to all appearances rather sickly too—was found to have been completely overlooked. He was invited to come along with them. Eventually they counted him as one of their own and assigned him to the hermitage at Forli. There he was left to pray and help out in the kitchen with the washing of dishes. Had not this unidentified person—actually Saint Anthony—gone too far in his trust of Divine Providence and done too little with regard to taking his own destiny in hand? Who in Italy would come to know of his noble birth? Who would divine that his father had been in the service of Don Alfonso I of Portugal? Who among them would recognize that once he had been an Augustinian at Lisbon and Coimbra, possessing a knowledge of Holy Writ and the Fathers excelling that of the most learned scholars of his day? Even if his immediate brethren had surmised this, they were compelled rather to judge his life up to this point one of instability, since after being transferred from an Augustinian from Lisbon to Coimbra he allied himself with the poor sons of Saint Francis upon sight of the bodies of the Franciscan Protomartyrs brought to Coimbra, he set out for the mission in Africa and fell sick there, still quite unknown he proceeded to Sicily and thence to the Chapter of Mats, and eventually he ended up in an abandoned hermitage. Indeed, he had become a light under a bushel. Yet had he not let their ignorance of his ability get too much out of hand? These are questions we might have asked ourselves were we in his

## COUNSEL OF GOD, SAINT ANTHONY

265

place. The thought never occurred to Anthony, as the record reveals, owing to the fact that he had "his trust wholly anchored in God and left everything to His Divine Providence," recognizing that God had brought him to this place of retirement, and in the pleasure of His Wisdom God would find another place for him. That moment arrived in the spring of 1222. Franciscans and Dominicans were at Forli for an ordination being held there. Someone was expected to give a sermon on the priesthood, yet none would acquiesce under the challenge of being unprepared. The lot finally fell to Anthony, though not too much confidence was shown him. And then Anthony spoke. The long pent-up fullness of the kingdom he had built up from within, fruit of study and meditation at Coimbra, came to light all at once; what a natural talent for preaching and deep theological training did not produce, the Spirit of God accomplished at this hour. What wonder then that all present felt as though lightning had struck? In its brilliance each one became aware of a fact: here once again God made the last become the first, set the light wonderfully upon the candlestick. With the mandate of his superiors the twenty-six-year-old Friar went out as a preacher into the cities and villages of northern Italy, at that time imperiled by heresy and offering him an opportunity for bringing back lost sheep, strengthening the weak, and encouraging the faithful. Scarcely two years later he was in southern France, where the heretics were numerically strongest, and then again he returned to Italy to his beloved Padua. In his sermons in every place Anthony made it a point to introduce his brethren and, if needful, founded friaries that his work might survive. Exceptional charity was shown sinners, those distraught with temptation, the sorely oppressed, with the consequence that in his lifetime he came to be known as the Friend of the People, ever ready to give them a hearing. In order to accomplish fully the apostolate so marvelously entrusted to him by God, he availed himself of every opportunity for giving his sermons, carrying on his instructions, and composing his writings. It is evident today—and the Saint himself was duly aware of it—that God had allowed him but ten years for his work. This explains why the Saint put all his energy into it, so completely taxing his health that by his thirty-sixth year he was exhausted. He died in 1231.

In the brief span of a decade, then, Anthony realized the mission Divine Providence had confided to him. What would have come to pass had Anthony failed to let God direct him, and sought rather to determine his own place in life quite in the way we seek to do it? As an Augustinian of aristocratic background, it is possible that he might have been named to a bishopric, not only in virtue of his noble birth but for his deep culture as well. It is within speculation that the Augustinians may have given him a professorial chair or bestowed high office in



their Order upon one who so graciously welded virtue and knowledge in his personality. It is not beyond thought that he could have been a martyr and sealed his faith in his own blood, sacrificing his life in Africa in the way the Protomartyrs of the Franciscan Order had done, to whom he owed his vocation in the Order. Yet it is more than certain that he would not be the great saint we honor today in our churches as Champion of the Faith, Hammer of Heretics, profound Scholar of Holy Scripture, youngest Doctor of the Church. In the light of his saintly life we are forced to ask ourselves the question: what would become of our life if in our shortsightedness we should rely upon our own plans alone, fulfilling the Will of God only when it is in conformity with our own will and doing all in our power to have God see it our way once things fail to be in line with our wishes? Perhaps we may for a time claim some passing success, perchance achieve a better position, possibly realize one or the other of our plans; yet all these are shrill hypotheses and precarious suppositions. One thing alone is certain; the most important plan of all is that which God will realize in us; and for its realization—frustrated though it may be due to human narrow-mindedness or at best because only partially perfect—the individual must adapt himself to the Will of God.

"A life based upon the Counsel of God," is justly descriptive of the life of the Saint of Padua, inasmuch as he allowed the Hand of God to direct him in the place God had put him, in the conditions into which God had led him, with the goal of unreservedly fulfilling the Will of God. Not our plans in life but the Plan of God, is the lesson we should take from him, to pray for inspiration from God to guide us and our response thereto, to sacrifice every wish of ours and be subject to the Will of God. When our will finds itself in conflict with the Will of God and on the downward path of evil, we should strive to bring it under control in order to accomplish the Will of God that can but lead us to God. The Wonder-Worker of Padua first put this truth into practise for himself, and then preached it to others in these words: "As long as the soul is submissive to the Will of God, it is strong and will be readily lifted on high. Equally so, while it is under the yoke of obedience, it will find itself borne aloft."

Munchen/Gladbach, Germany

Fr. Sophronius Clasen, O.F.M.



When real love for God intoxicates the soul so that it experiences nothing in itself unless in Christ and the things that are Christ's—so that it is entirely transformed into Him—that is the gift of a higher order which the Apostle claimed he had and experienced, when he said, *I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me.*

Saint Bernardine of Siena

## THE FIVE FEASTS OF THE CHILD JESUS (I)

(*The Quinque Festivitatibus Pueri Jesu of Saint Bonaventure*)

### PROLOGUE

It is the opinion and the teaching of revered men whom, of all those in the Church of God, the divine light has illuminated more generously and a devotion to heavenly things has stimulated more intensely, that meditation on the sweet Jesus and devout contemplation of the Incarnate Word delights the mind with a sweetness surpassing that of honey and all the odors of fragrant ointments, intoxicates the mind with greater delight, tenders a more perfect solace and comfort. Hence it is that I withdrew myself for a little while from the tumult of problems of minor importance and in quiet aloneness was pondering upon what I should review in my mind during this time about the divine Incarnation, from which I might take some spiritual comfort and there find as in a mirror a taste of divine sweetness *in this vale of tears*, so that having tasted ever so little I might disdain the more thoroughly the fantasy of worldly consolation. In my solitude it occurred to my mind that a soul devoted to God might be able by the power of the Most High and with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit spiritually to conceive, give birth to, and name the blessed Word of God the Father, the only-begotten Son, seek Him out with the blessed Wise Men and adore, then in gladness present Him in the Temple to God the Father according to the Law of Moses; thus like a real disciple of the Christian Religion the soul could have the ability to celebrate with a devout mind and in all reverence the five feasts that the Church observes in honor of the Child Jesus.

And so, just as I had conceived this idea in humility I have written it down in humble words, omitting for the sake of brevity the lists of authorities. If anyone reading this humble little homily and meditating upon its content should conceive a small degree of devotion to the most sweet Jesus, he should praise, if anyone derives nothing from it, let him blame me for not having written glorify and bless Jesus as the Author, Source and Beginning of all good things; adequately or worthily enough—or perhaps he may blame himself for not reading it with devotion and humility.

### THE FIRST FEAST

*How Jesus Christ, the Son of God, may be spiritually conceived by the devout mind.*

First of all, after we have cleansed the intellect in the laver of contrition and ignited and elevated the affection with the spark of love, we must consider in



innocent meditation and devout reflections how this blessed Son of God, Christ Jesus, may be spiritually conceived by the devout mind.

When the devout soul is moved and goaded by the hope of heavenly reward, or by the fear of everlasting torment, or by disgust at tarrying so long in *this vale of tears*, it is visited by new inspirations, inflamed by holy affections, and tormented by considerations of heavenly things. At length, the old defects and early desires are cast aside in disdain; the soul is impregnated spiritually by the spirit of grace with a new design for living from *the Father of Lights, from Whom is every good gift and every perfect gift*. What else is this but the *covering-over by the power of the Most High and the overshadowing* of heavenly refreshment—which lessens the concupiscences of the flesh and strengthens and helps the eyes of the soul to see—and the Heavenly Father impregnating and fructifying the soul with what may be called the divine seed?

After this most holy conception, the soul grows wan through true humility in its conversation, it becomes squeamish of food and drink in its complete contempt and renunciation of mundane things, its affection is tossed from one desire to another because of its striving after the many good things proposed to it; even at times it becomes dispirited and falls sick as its own will wastes away. Now it lives in grief and confusion because of the old sins it has committed, because it has lost the time given it, because of its association and conversation even now with men living in the world after the manner of the world. Now little by little all the things outside itself and all the things discerned outside itself begin to be burdensome and disgusting, since they are judged to be displeasing to that which is interiorly perceived and felt.

O fruitful conception, which results in such a contempt for the world and such a desire for heavenly workings and divine seizures! Now in this travail "the flesh is insipid at the taste of the spirit," however little that taste may be; now the soul begins to go up into the hill country with Mary, because after this conception the world becomes despicable and heaven and eternity are yearned for. Now the soul begins to shun the society of those who *mind the things of the earth* and is drawn to the companionship of those who desire heaven. Now it begins to attend upon Elizabeth, who is a type of those whom divine wisdom illuminates and divine grace inflames more fully through love. It is important to note this, for it is necessary for the information of many, that the more they withdraw themselves from the world, the more intimately they become the friends and servants of good men; the result is that the more completely the fellowship of evil men fills them with disgust, the more delightfully does honest association

with good and spiritual men touch and inflame their affection, "because," as Blessed Gregory says, "he who associates closely with a holy man receives something for himself, so that from his singleness of vision, habitual conversation, and the example gained from the association he is afired for the love of truth, flees the darkness of sin, and glows with love for the divine light." And Isidore writes: "Seek the society of the good; for it will happen that, if you have been a companion in his converse, you will also become his associate in his virtue."

Here it is well for the faithful soul to consider how chaste, how holy and how devout were the discourses of those saints, how God-like and salutary their advice, how wonderfully holy and closely united in fellowship their deeds, so long as each one spurred on the other to better things by word and example.

You too, O devout soul, may do in like manner if you are sensible of having conceived by the Holy Spirit new desires for the celestial life. Avoid the companionship of evil men, go up with Mary, search out the advice of spiritual men, concentrate on walking in the footsteps of the perfect, pondering upon the words of the good, upon their deeds and example too. Shun the poisonous counsels of the wicked, that ever seek destruction and strive after confusion; these counsels are never weary of tearing to shreds the new desires from the Holy Spirit, and very often they impart the virus of impious tepidity under the guise of piety; for these counsellors will say: "That is too great a thing you are beginning; what you intend to do is too difficult; you are undertaking something beyond your strength, your powers will fail you; your natural abilities will grow weak, you will have head-aches, eye-troubles; various kinds of ills will appear, consumption, paralysis, kidneystones, vertigo, spots before the eyes, sensory deterioration, weakening of the intellect, and loss of virility. You will be subject to all of these, unless you cry quits to what you have begun and give more heed to bodily comfort. These things are not seemly to your state; they lessen whatever respect and reverence is due to you."

You will perceive that he who knows neither how to regulate his own habits nor how to care for his own mental deficiencies is now become a prefect of discipline and a general practitioner! Alas, the number and viciousness of these damned wordly counsels they have disseminated, and thus killed off the Son of God conceived in these souls through the Holy Spirit! This devilish persuasion is a foul and deadly potion which hinders spiritual conception in many souls, slays and annihilates in all too many a conception already realized by intention or consummated by vow.

But there are other souls that seem to be good and religious—and they are; but, with all deference to the reverence due them, they are not heeding that *the Lord's hand can reach as far as ever to bring down* nor considering that the providence of the Most High has not yet to the extent that He does not wish or may not be able to help them *have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*, so long as they men from the works of perfection because of a compassion for bodily or perhaps out of fear of natural weakness. Then, too, they see others fastly doing what they themselves have long since judged as good and none the less have not dared to commence. They advise against surpasses the ordinary conditions of living, they destroy the holy counsel inspired by God, and the danger lurking in their advice, focussed varies as the authority behind it.

Sometimes they cannily advance objections based upon an inveterate old enemy, and say that, if you should do such and such a thing, you will be considered a holy and good religious and a devout one. But since you have not yet what others will consider you to be, in the sight of the Highest, Who knows your great, serious and frightful sins, you will be a counterfeit; you will lose the merit of your act and be judged a liar and hypocrite. Counsellers of this kind, so they say, belong to those who have done no evil, who have holiness and innocence of life, who have forsaken all things for Christ, who have stayed closely to God for the whole time of life. But avoid the counsellors also, O beloved soul devoted to God; go up the mountain where Paul had lived not without sin and not for very long had he served Christ. He was caught up to the third heaven and gazed upon God, seeing His face. Mary Magdalen was completely given over to pride and wholly intent upon the vanities of the world, and submissive to the flesh; but not long afterwards she sat among the holy Apostles and of Jesus and listened intently to the bewitching doctrine of perfection. For a short while she was the first of all to merit seeing God and to deliver others time and again the words of truth. God is not a respecter of persons. He does not consider nobility of race nor duration of time nor the number of works, but the more abundant fervor and the greater love of heart. He takes no account of what you have sometime been, but of what you have lately begun to be. Hence, the advice of these counsellors is most reprehensible, if they were not excused by their fatuity; none of us must not give approval to their counsels.

Therefore, if you cannot be saved through innocence, try to be saved through penance; if you cannot be a Catherine or a Cecelia, do not esteem it of little worth to be a Mary Magdalen or a Mary of Egypt. Consequently, if you feel that in your holy intention you have conceived the most sweet Son of God, hasten to flee from these deadly poisons I have mentioned; yearn and strive like a woman in labor to attain to a happy delivery.

### THE SECOND FEAST

*How the Son of God may be born in the devout mind.*

In the second place, heed and consider how this blessed Son of God, already spiritually conceived, is spiritually born in the mind. He is born when after sound counsel, after mature deliberation, after praying for the protection of God, the holy design is guided towards its accomplishment; when now the soul commences to perfect in act what it has for so long pondered in mind, but nevertheless was always dreading to begin because it feared failure. For this most blessed birth the angels rejoice, give glory to God and prophesy peace, because when what has been conceived for a long time in the mind is accomplished in a good work the peace of the interior man takes form. Divine peace does not rest well in the kingdom of the soul when the flesh struggles with the spirit and the spirit with the flesh; when the spirit pines for solitude and the flesh for the multitude; when Christ delights the soul and the world delights the flesh; when the spirit seeks contemplative rest with God and the flesh yearns for the honor of prelaty in the world. On the other hand, when the flesh is subject to the spirit, after the good work which for a long time was hindered by the flesh is guided to its accomplishment, peace and interior joy take form. How blessed is this birth that is followed by so much delight among angels and men! "How full of sweetness and pleasure would it be to act in accordance with nature, if our madness would permit, if our folly were cured and immediately nature would smile upon the natural man!" Now that Gospel saying is proved to be true which commands: *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart*; and the sequel: *And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light*.

But it should be noted here, O devout soul, that if this happy birth gives you delight you should be a Mary first of all. Now the name of Mary means "Bitter Sea" and "Illuminatrix" and "Mistress." Become therefore a bitter sea through the contrition of tears, so that you may grieve most bitterly for sins committed, so that you may sigh from the depths of your heart for the good deeds

omitted, so that you may scourge yourself incessantly for the lost and neglected days. Become an illuminatrix through honest conversation, through virtuous conduct and zeal for the enlightening of others. Become the mistress over the senses, over carnal desires, of all your works, so that you may pronounce judgment on all actions according to right reason and in all circumstances seek your own salvation, the edification of your neighbor and the praise and glory of God.

This is the happy Mary, who grieves and sighs at the thought of sins perpetrated, who glitters and shines with virtue, who dominates over carnal pleasures. From this Mary Jesus Christ did not disdain to be born of the Holy Spirit, with joy and without grief or pain. After this happy birth, she came to know and tasted *how sweet is the Lord Jesus*. He is sweet indeed, when He is suckled with holy meditations, when He is bathed in the font of warm and devoted tears, when He is wrapped in the swaddling-clothes of chaste desires, carried in the embrace of holy love, kissed with the repeated tendernesses of devotion, and caressed upon the inner breast of the mind. Thus is the Child born spiritually.

(to be continued)

Christ the King Seminary

Fr. Columban Duffy, O.F.M. (trans.)

✙ ✙ ✙

It is impossible for virtue to be acquired without solicitude and toil.

Brother Giles

✙ ✙ ✙

"O residents of Siena, when the Angelus rings this evening, from that moment on make up your minds to kneel in honour of Her, bowing your heads out of love for Her, and beseeching Her to grant that of which we have need. I beg of you to show Her this reverence publicly just in the way you would do it at home. And I mean to include the women as well as the men; see to it that the name of Mary is held in esteem and cultivated with devotion . . . And you will soon come to realize that She does not let your greeting go unheeded, even though you are not endowed with powers of seeing Her turn towards you in the act of accepting your words in the sentiment you give them. If devoutness and faith prompts your prayers, can you imagine what She will do? *Astitit Regina a dextris tuis*. Queen that She is, the Mother of God stands on the right hand interceding for you."

Saint Bernardine of Siena

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

According to Saint Bonaventure

If our natural impulses to nourish and protect the body are hindrances to our spiritual growth, even more so are the impulses connected with procreation. As religious, of course, we hardly need concern ourselves with the grosser aspects of sexual impurity; but we shall perhaps find much to correct in ourselves if we consider the degree of chastity that should and must be ours if we would be true children of our Seraphic Father. It was said of Francis that "next to humility, which is the foundation of all virtues, the Saint loved and esteemed in his brothers especially the virtue of chastity in all its purity and beauty." And Francis was concerned not only with the actual personal purity of his children, but with their reputation for it as well.

As Franciscans, we should have great reverence for the human body, created by God, sanctified by the Divine Indwelling, and dignified beyond comprehension by the Incarnation. This means we should realize that the body, with all its faculties and functions, all its impulses and urges, is intrinsically good. If at times the flesh rebels against the discipline of the spirit, we must accept that rebellion as a natural consequence of our twofold fate of being man and not angel and of having been born in original sin. To accept, however, does not mean to succumb. Quite the contrary. Our religious life would degenerate into a hideous caricature if our control of the sex impulses were allowed to relax. We have to face a life-long struggle against it—a struggle from which we shall never be entirely free (unless God grants us that very special and very rarely given grace), and in which defeat may prove totally disastrous. But we should not on that account bewail our sad condition and try to seek safety, ostrich-like, by burying our head in the sand of ignorant prudery. The best means of controlling our unruly impulses is to understand their nature and causes, to accept them calmly as part of the physical make-up designed for us by our Creator, and to deal with them at all times kindly but firmly.

It is in the spirit of our Seraphic Father, therefore, the spirit of reverence and understanding, that Saint Bonaventure would have us ask ourselves:

*Do I seek inordinate pleasures of the flesh?*

Our examination in regard to chastity should cover two main points: purity of mind and heart, and purity of body. To keep our body chaste, we must first of all keep our mind and heart chaste. *For out of the heart come evil thoughts,*

*murders, adulteries, immorality . . .* (Matth. 15, 19). For this reason Saint Bonaventure warns us: "Watch over your heart with great care, and let it be engrossed in spiritual things. Tolerate no images of created things within it, so that, aloof from creatures, it may give itself without hindrance to the Creator of all things."

First, then, in general, we may ask: Have I retained, or at least regained, a delicate abhorrence of everything even remotely connected with impurity? Even if my lower nature has a strong inclination toward it, is my mind and heart firmly set against it? Do I strive sedulously to cultivate the *virtue* of chastity? What is my motive in shunning sins of impurity? Is it love of God, the desire to preserve unsullied the beauty of the virginity which I have consecrated to Him? Or is it fear of consequences—of punishment, perhaps, or scandal, or infamy? Do I realize that without humble prayer and the grace of God I cannot hope to control this most tyrannical of passions?

More specifically, let us look into the matter of impure desires. Do I realize that such desires are natural and that even when accompanied by physical pleasure are not in themselves sinful so long as I will to resist them? Do I try to endure them in the spirit of penance and try to see in them a source of merit? When seized by such desires do I remain calm and try to remedy the situation in a reasonable way—changing posture, seeking companionship, engaging in physical work, exercise, or sport? Do I abstain from, or use with moderation, food and drink that I know from experience may stimulate such desires? Do I avoid softness and idleness, mindful that an enervated and especially a lazy body is easy prey to impurity? Am I half-hearted in my combat against unchaste thoughts and imaginings, excusing my laxity on the grounds that these images are caused by physiological conditions beyond my control? Do I fight impure thoughts by turning away from them immediately, calmly but resolutely, and applying my mind to other things? Do I keep strict custody of my thoughts, or do I indulge in day-dreaming and idle, sentimental reverie?

If we find ourselves continually plagued by impure thoughts, we should do well to look for causes other than the purely physiological. In other words, we should look into the kind of food our mind feeds on. In this regard, custody of the eyes is of primary importance. The religious with a roving eye is not only ludicrous and contemptible to others, but he exposes himself to the danger of sinning against chastity. Here we ask ourselves: Do I keep a reasonable control over my eyes or do I grant them any and every liberty? Do I avoid looking at

whatver may arouse my passion? Do I, in all humility, admit my weakness and conduct myself accordingly, or do I display the overconfidence of the foolish? While it is true that there is no fault in looking at another person with interest and admiration, it is equally true that most of us are at least somewhat susceptible to beauty which emphasizes the difference in sex. To be sure, we are not expected to emulate Saint Aloysius who did not even look at his mother; but can we say that we are not expected to exercise prudent and becoming restraint? We must be especially careful in public places, where religious and clergy are usually the object of a close and sometimes hostile scrutiny. If we so forget ourselves in public as to gaze with open and unabashed delight at persons of the opposite sex, we may confidently expect appropriate comment from onlookers.

What about pictures? Do I perhaps subscribe to magazines that feature lush illustrations, just for the pleasure of looking at them? There is no question here of obscene pictures; pornography is forbidden by the natural law. But do I avoid looking at suggestive pictures if I know that they may arouse impure desires or return later to clutter my mind with disturbing images? What about movies, theatricals, television shows? If I find that these things cause disturbing sensations or thoughts, do I avoid them or at least take the necessary precautions?

What about reading? Educators are naturally expected to be familiar with current literature, but if the mind is given a steady and almost exclusive diet of smart periodicals, popular weeklies, and best sellers, chastity is bound to suffer in some way.

What about my speech? Do I indulge in off-color witticisms, ribald comments, and similar vulgarities? Do I habitually use the idiom of the locker-room? It is sad indeed to hear a religious devoted to the praises of God desecrate his tongue by improper jokes or equivocal or immodest words. Here again the fault lies in the heart; if the heart is clean, the mouth will be clean.

The second point to consider is chastity of the body. In general: Do I always and everywhere treat my body with the reverence due to the temple of the Holy Spirit? More specifically: Do I keep myself scrupulously clean, mindful that an unwashed and malodorous body, besides being socially offensive, is prone to impurity and may even arouse impure emotions in others? When I have to touch or expose my body, do I observe the rules of modesty, even when alone? If I have to expose my body to others, partly or entirely, do I behave like an adult, with naturalness and reserve, or do I create difficulties by acting like a badly brought up child? How do I submit to treatment from physicians and

nurses? How do I conduct myself towards my patients or those entrusted to me for care? Do I let them suffer rather than perform services that I fear might sully my chastity? If I really believe before God that I dare not perform such services, do I at least find another competent person to take care of the matter?

Most of the great tragedies in life, most of the sins committed, are the result of ignorance. This is especially true in regard to sex. Here above all we must realize that ignorance is not innocence, but that, on the contrary, knowledge is one of the greatest helps to innocence. Hence: Do I strive to gain thorough comprehension of the nature and function of sex in order to help myself and to guide others entrusted to me? Do I have sufficient understanding of these things to distinguish between the carnal and the merely natural, between the impure and the merely vulgar? Do I have a sane and balanced attitude toward the problems of young people? Do I inspire their confidence, or do I, by a misguided show of prudery or downright ignorance, force them into harmful reticence, furtiveness, or curiosity? Religious who deal with young people, especially in schools and orphanages, have a grave obligation in this regard, and it is a point in which religious women especially all too frequently fail.

Finally, our relations with other persons should be examined. Here, some of the following considerations may be helpful. Is my conduct toward others in harmony with my dignity as a religious? Do I stoop to gushy sentimentality, emotionalism, over-enthusiasm? Do I maintain the proper reserve in dealing with children, or do I refuse to distinguish between genuine tenderness and affection and veiled sensuality? What about my friendships? Do I practise the virtue of friendship in the manner of the saints—loving my friends in Christ and for Christ, and striving to make my friendships sources of sanctification for myself and for those I love? Or do I, perhaps, indulge in that queer perversion known as particular friendship? Am I so attached to any person that I sacrifice the interests of God and my own soul—even though only in slight matters—for the sake of that person?

Are my friendships with persons of the opposite sex always kept on the proper plane, open and above-board, and duly approved by my superiors? Do I carry on clandestine friendships? In the case of friendships that veer toward the romantic, do I always adopt the necessary austerity and reserve? Do I enjoy wallowing in sentiment? Do I allow myself too ardent expressions of affection—even to the point of losing control and betraying passion? Do I promptly break off friendships that cannot be controlled or that can be controlled only with great difficulty?

God has so created us that men and women, even in religion, have mutual need of each other. This in itself is good and entirely in the natural order of things. But if we wish to avoid complications, we must always apply the proper restrictions in our relations with persons of the opposite sex. Here we may ask ourselves: Do I inordinately seek the company of persons of the opposite sex? While this may seem a harmless and purely natural gratification, it is potentially dangerous, and to deny ourselves this pleasure is an excellent kind of self-denial. Do I indulge in prolonged conversations, in banter that smacks of flirtation? Do I avoid anything that might cause onlookers to draw the wrong—or perhaps the right—conclusions? Do I observe the regulations of my Rule and Constitutions and the ordinances of my superiors which aim to protect my purity and the reputation of the Order? Do I realize the grave obligation that binds me to guard the honor of the Order? No matter how strong we may feel or actually be, we must always remember that sharp eyes are watching us and malicious tongues are ready to wag against us; and there is also the danger of scandal to the weak and to the young.

It may be well to add here a few words of caution. We should keep in mind that chastity is a very personal matter. What is dangerous for one may well be perfectly safe for another. Then, too, some persons possess a higher degree of imperviousness than others. Ardent love of God and unremitting efforts in the way of perfection may lead to such mastery of the senses that the sex impulse is hardly ever aroused. Education, experience, cultural and social background, mature habits of mind—all these have a decided effect on the chastity of the individual. There is also the physiological fact that in some persons the sex impulse is less strong than in others, that it differs with age, race, and other factors. These individual differences sometimes give rise to annoying problems in community life. The solution, of course, lies in understanding, tact, and sincere charity. If our chastity is so fragile that we see impurity everywhere, that the slightest provocation sets the fire of concupiscence aflame in us, it is our own personal problem and we must cope with it according to our conscience and the advice of our confessor. We must not, however, expect others to be bound by the restrictions that may be necessary for us. Conversely, if our chastity is of a more robust kind, we must not brand as prudish those who dare not allow themselves the liberty that may safely be ours. It is also well to remember that normally women are chaste by nature, men by grace; and when a man loses control the fault usually lies with the woman.

In general, over-sensitiveness in regard to chastity can hardly be recommend-

ed to anyone, much less to the active religious of today. Occasions confront us at every turn. We would have to be out of this world—literally—to avoid them. In sheer self-defense we must harden ourselves. And it is good to call to mind occasionally that "to the pure all things are pure," and that if we are truly Christlike in our outlook on life, we shall be able to face any situation with calm and composure. Above all, let us refrain from judging the chastity of others. If we wish to obtain that degree of chastity that marks the true Franciscan, we shall have all we can do, and for the whole time of our life, to take care of our own virtue. It would be much more to our profit to ponder the beautiful exhortation of Saint Bonaventure:

"Bring all your affections and your desires into conformity with the will of God. Seek edification from everything and take scandal from nothing in this world, enriched as you are with the purity and innocence which God gave you. Be not unduly disturbed by the defects of others, for thus you would only add sin to sin by letting yourself be stained with their evil; and in your efforts to free others from the abyss you would become more deeply immersed in it yourself. Rather should you cover with the holy mantle of charity what you cannot change without doing harm: leaving all to that Supreme Wisdom which knows how to draw good out of evil. Thus with the grace of God you may derive spiritual advantage from evil and from good."

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.*



A Mediator can achieve reconciliation for an individual by having penalties removed which are profitless to the individual and letting penalties remain that will be helpful. Original sin would have been anything but advantageous to Mary; temporal punishments were, however, because through them she gained merit.

*Duns Scotus*



See, O man, what thou lovest and for what thou lovest—heaven or earth, the Creator or the creature, light or darkness, the carnal or the spiritual, good or evil; and afterward thou shalt be the better able to separate good from bad and to see what things are to be loved and what to be hated.

*Brother Giles*

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

MEDITATIONS ADAPTED FOR THE USE OF THE FRIARS MINOR CAPUCHIN, Bernardine Goebel, O.F.M. Cap., translated from the German by Berchmans Bittle, O.F.M. Cap. Published by the Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order, Detroit, Michigan. No date. In four vols. Vol. I, \$4.25; vols. II-IV, \$2.50 each.

These four volumes of meditations are arranged according to the liturgical seasons: Advent to Ash Wednesday, Ash Wednesday to Easter, the Easter season, and the Pentecost season. Since they are specifically intended for the Capuchins, the Capuchin mode of life in particular rather than the Franciscan in general is interwoven with the liturgical sequences. This by no means renders the meditations unsuitable for other religious—the considerations are general enough—but it may tend to restrict their appeal.

The author has divided the meditations according to the usual pattern: summary of the meditation; subject; first point—consideration and application; second point—consideration and application; and concluding prayer. Not everyone may like this method of arranging a meditation, nor may the somewhat exclamatory style find wholehearted favor. On the whole, however, these four volumes are well done and they do supply a definite need. The only real objection that could be made is to their length, which makes them a little difficult for communal reading.

THE CATHOLIC SHRINES OF THE HOLY LAND. Text by Paschal Kinsel, O.F.M., and Leonard Henry, O.F.M., with photographs by Alfred Wagg. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1951. Pp. 198, with 150 photographs and 8 pages of full color. \$5.00.

This is a beautiful volume presenting in chronological order the great shrines of the Holy Land, together with interesting scenes of modern life in Israel. Fathers Paschal and Leonard know the Holy Land intimately from many years of residence there, and they have written an informative text to accompany the excellent photographs done by Alfred Wagg.

SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES FOR RELIGIOUS BASED ON THE FRANCISCAN IDEAL, Theodosius Foley, O.F.M., Cap. Mil-

waukee, Wisconsin: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951. Pp. 386. \$5.00.

"What we need today more than ever before," writes Father Theodosius, "is to get back to the ideal of the Order, as far as possible, and this, as it should affect our way of thinking and acting. . . . Unless we think the old thoughts, we shall not live the old way. This settles the matter once and for all" (pp. 201-202).

The whole purpose and direction of the SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES is precisely this—to help Franciscans BE Franciscan in true spirit and life. Basing his seventy conferences on crucial problems of modern religious and on the answer to these problems found in the doctrine of Christ and exemplified in the life of our Seraphic Father, the author has provided us with an excellent book for meditation and examination of conscience.

Practically every aspect of the Franciscan way of life is treated, and in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt as to what is demanded of us. Although he addresses himself to the friars (the meditations were originally written as monthly conferences for the Capuchins), and naturally writes from the point of view of the male religious, Father Theodosius has much to say to all members of the Franciscan family. There are chapters, for example, on living the Rule, on promoting vocations, on formalism and vocational grace, on Franciscan reverence, on the religious superiorate, on seraphic prayer, on the vows and virtues. Each chapter is developed according to the pattern of theory and explanation, practical application in modern life, and pertinent questions for the reader to answer for himself.

Father Theodosius has admirably suited his style to the subject. He writes with dignity and simplicity, and combines both with the easy familiarity of conversation.

The recent death of Father Theodosius has deprived us of one of the best of our very few American spiritual writers. His wide experience, especially during his terms as Provincial Superior, and his own ardent love for the Franciscan ideal, gave him a penetrating insight into the problems of American Franciscans which foreign writers, however excellent in themselves, cannot possess. From the human point of view, his death is to be deeply regretted.

LA SIERVA DE DIOS M. ANGELES SORAZU: ESTUDIO MISTICO DE SU VIDA. P. Luis Villasante Cortabitarte, O.F.M. PP. Franciscanos de Aranzazu, Onate; Ediciones Desclee e Brouwer, Bilbao, 1950-1951. In 2 vols., pp. 450 and 260, with illustrations. Paper. 50 ptas.

The writings of the Spanish Franciscan Conceptionist nun, Madre Angeles Sorazu (1873-1921), have long been recognized in Spain and in continental Europe as possessing qualities unique among mystical and ascetical works. While continuing the tradition of the great descriptive mystics, especially John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Madre Angeles differs from them both in doctrine and in approach, and to a certain extent supplements them.

The present study is the result of Father Luis Villasante's detailed and extended examination of Madre Angeles' published and unpublished writings as well as testimonials and reports concerning her, together with a profound and scholarly analysis of her progress in the mystical life. The first volume is largely biographical and analytical; the second volume contains selections from Madre Angeles' own writings relating to the three ways of mystical prayer—purgative, illuminative, and unitive. Both volumes are well indexed; there is a general bibliography in the first volume and a preface by Eusebio Hernandez, S.J.

Madre Angeles herself gave as the principal purpose of her writings (undertaken in obedience to her spiritual director) "to inspire in souls love for the mysteries of the life of Jesus and the practise of the Marian life" (VIDA, p. 10), or "... to point out to souls ... that the only road to union with God is the imitation and love of Christ, and that this road is to be entered upon through true devotion to Mary" (ibid., p. 12).

Thoroughly Franciscan, the spirituality of Madre Angeles centers upon the Sacred Humanity of Christ. Madre Angeles began her own mystical life by striving for a conformity as perfect and complete as possible with the life of Christ, meditating on the Passion, consoling her suffering Savior with tender and compassionate love. It was revealed to her, she says, that the grace of the mystical marriage was granted her soul as a reward for her perfect imitation of Christ—that is, for perfect conformity to His will through pure love, constant, humble, ardent, and utterly selfless. Not even in the rapture of union with the Blessed Trinity did

the Sacred Humanity cease to be the object of her most intense desire.

A natural consequence of Madre Angeles' devotion to Christ is her insistence on the necessity of a Marian life. God favors certain souls, she explains, before introducing them into the purgatory of the spiritual life, by inspiring them with a singular devotion to Our Lady. These souls, under the impulse of grace, consecrate themselves entirely to Mary and identify themselves with her by the practise of the Marian life, which consists in imitating her and in doing all things in union with her. Devotion to Mary runs like a golden thread through every stage of Madre Angeles' mystical experience.

It is impossible to give in a few words an adequate idea of the richness and originality of Madre Angeles' writings. Something of the nature of her doctrine, however, may be suggested by comparing her description of the stages of mystical prayer with that of the traditional mystics. The traditional sequence is: 1) Night of the senses, 2) Quietude, 3) Union, 4) Ecstasy, 5) Night of the spirit, 6) Mystical marriage. Madre Angeles holds the following: 1) Desert, or night of the senses, 2) Purgatory, or night of the spirit, 3) Abandonment to God, also called incomplete or truncated marriage, 4) Long periods devoted to the contemplation of the mysteries of Christ, with the help of infused light, 5) Second night of the spirit, 6) Mystical marriage, perfect and definite. This is divided into two stages: 1) Simple contemplation of the divinity, which in turn is divided into two periods: a) life of the soul in God, b) life of God in the soul; II) Mixed contemplation, which is also divided into two periods: a) life of the soul in Jesus Christ, b) life of Jesus in the soul. This last period culminates with the soul's participation in the Passion shortly before death.

Father Villasante has made an excellent presentation of Madre Angeles' life and mystical doctrine. It is learned without being technical, lofty without being unintelligible to the average reader. While it is of value particularly to contemplative religious and to directors of contemplatives, treating as it does of the higher states of mystical prayer, it nevertheless offers a wealth of inspiration and practical guidance to all who are striving for the perfection of their state.

It is regrettable that Madre Angeles' works have not yet appeared in English. To those who read Spanish, however, Father Villasante's study is highly recommended.