

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *The Little Plant of Saint Francis*

Frederick Ozanam says somewhere that there seems no great movement in the Church of God in which a woman does not share. How true this is even a momentary reflection on history will convince us. Our Lady was given to share in the task of our Redemption, as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix. Scholastica inspired Benedict; John of the Cross worked with Teresa of Avila; Catherine of Siena was to effect the return of the Popes to Rome. And, in the Franciscan movement, Clare was to be the coadjutrix of Francis.

In her own oft-repeated words, Clare was "the little plant" of Saint Francis: he the founder, the planter, the support, she and her sisters his little plants on which he spent such care (*Testament*). Planted by him in the "garden" of San Damiano, she fast became the purest expression of his ideal, his greatest rival in the pursuit of Gospel perfection (*Mirror of Perfection*). All her life was a struggle to hold fast to that holiness of life and highest poverty which he had taught and had, at the end, exhorted in his "final will" for the Poor Ladies; and when Clare died on August 11, 1253, the world lost its purest witness to the true spirit of Saint Francis.

We may know her story; yet in this centennial year we must rehearse it again for ourselves, not to know the facts, but to love and to imitate the example of the virgin of Assisi. Unless we imitate what we celebrate, our festivity has a hollow ring and is without purpose. To know and love Clare, to imitate her, we must know what Francis meant for her and what therefore he means for us. She must be our teacher in the ways of Saint Francis, our model in our approach to, and our imitation of, the Seraphic Patriarch.

### *Her Vocation*

When Clare lay dying in the first days of August 1253, her agony intensified by her inability to take food, Brother Reynaldo (perhaps her confessor) approached to exhort her to patience in the midst of such sufferings. Clare answered his kind words quite pointedly: "Dearest Brother, from the time that I learned of the grace of God through His servant Saint Francis, no suffering has ever troubled me, no penance has been too

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hard, no infirmity too great." One divines that on her bed of pain her thoughts had gone back to those early days when God had given her the grace of her vocation through Francis, for it was in that vocation that she found strength to bear her sickness.

Such a remark reveals to us the role Francis played in her vocation: he was the channel whence it came from God. She had heard him preach at Assisi's cathedral of San Rufino, and the good ground of her heart opened to receive his words. She had gone to him at Portiuncula, and revealed what God had already inspired in her, a desire to serve Him alone. As the bridesman of Christ, Francis was quick to react (we are paraphrasing Celano's Life here, 5-6), exhorting her to contempt of the world, showing her in vivid words the emptiness of earthly hopes and the deceptiveness of earthly beauty, portraying for her the sweet espousals of Christ, persuading her to keep the pearl of her maidenly purity for that blessed Bridegroom Whom love had made Man. As she consented, God gave her a glimpse of heavenly joys, and earthly delights paled into insignificance, while her heart became afire with longing for the wedding of the Lamb.

Forthwith she committed herself wholly to the guidance of Francis, taking him to be, after God, the director, or, as the Latin says, the charioteer, of her new life. Henceforth her soul was guided by his holy teachings, and with warm and ready heart she took to herself whatever he told her of the good Jesus.

How she carried out their mutual plan, fleeing from home and being received at Portiuncula and installed at last at San Damiano with Saint Agnes (who followed her in death in November 1253), we know full well. But, on our part, can we truly say that we have known and received the grace of our vocation through Saint Francis? When we entered the Order, was it under the inspiration received from the Poverello and with the conscious desire to follow what he taught by example and word of the imitation of Christ? Or did we "just happen" to join the sons and daughters of the Seraph? Does he now occupy such a place in our thoughts and desires that we constantly turn to him for instruction in our way of life, searching his Rule and Admonitions and other writings for the pattern we must follow? Do we above all turn to him in prayer, to thank him for our vocation, to ask him to be for us the charioteer of our way, to lead us most sure in the footsteps of Christ?

### *Her Father and Model*

Again, toward the end of her life, before her final illness, Clare looked back over the forty or more years of her life of poverty and sacrifice, and penned her *Testament*. Francis had been dead for a quarter of a century, long since inscribed in the canon of the Saints and buried deep down beneath the great Basilica that crowned Assisi. Yet, for her he lived, lived in her mind and her heart and her life. Whatever she had done, was done through him. "The Son of God has made Himself our Way; and that Way our Blessed Father Francis, His true lover and follower, showed and taught us by word and example."

Then, like Francis in his *Testament*, Clare delineates the growth of the Poor Ladies, always under the guarding eye and guiding hand of the blessed Father. "His holy life and teachings . . . his exhortations to poverty . . . his example . . ." led on "the little flock which the Most High has brought forth in His Church" through Francis, "our support, our only consolation, our helper after God Himself." What she thus learned from him on the Way, the path of Christ, she would pass on to others, and in the end warn, admonish, and exhort them to follow: "Strive to follow the way of simplicity, humility and poverty, that upright and holy pattern of life, as we were taught from the beginning of our conversion to Christ through our blessed Father Francis:" to love one another as members of one household, to have always the spirit of prayer and devotion, to pursue poverty to the extreme, to live in unity and community: superiors (neither Clare nor Francis use such a high-sounding word!), those who lead, fulfilling their office by virtue and example before all else, knowing they are appointed or elected not for the dignity but for the burden, the good of others; subjects (this word they will use!), remembering that for God's sake they have given up their own wills.

This, very briefly, without laboring the details, was the pattern of life which Francis had given his sons and through Clare his daughters. For Clare, as later for Bonaventure, the grace of God our Savior had appeared in Francis to all truly humble and lovers of holy Poverty, for these are taught by his example to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, to live conformed to Christ, and to thirst with unwearied desire for the blessed hope held out to them. God raised him up to be a true follower, leader, and herald of Gospel perfection, a light to them that believed, that he might prepare for the Lord the way of light and peace in the hearts of the faithful.

*Saint Clare our Model*

In the Providence of God, every Founder gives to his little flock a certain way of following Christ, a certain *nota* or character Pius XI called it, which must be impressed on the community. Therefore, the same Pontiff declares, Religious must look to their Father and Founder as their model and example and imbibe his spirit if they would be faithful and would partake abundantly of the graces which flow from their vocation. Need we then stress the obvious: that this is precisely what Saint Clare tried to impress on her own daughters, that for them Francis was their model and example in the footsteps of Christ, so that they must look to him if they would be faithful to the graces of their vocation? Is she not, then, our teacher also, showing us how we are to approach Saint Francis and what we are to find in him to imitate?

Following her lead, let us make the following practical conclusions on the basis of her approach:

First, do not let Saint Francis be a hazy figure of the distant past. There is always a danger that we think of him, as indeed of Our Lord Himself, as an historical figure of long ago, and not as someone alive and present and important in our life, our daily life! Of course, seven hundred years separate us, whereas Clare knew him face to face and had to live but twenty-five years apart from him. Nineteen hundred years separate us from the earthly sojourn of our King and Lord. God grant we do not look on the Gospels and the Gospel life as ancient history! Christ is timeless, as is His teaching and His example; and so must Saint Francis, in his own human way, be alive for us today, our teacher, leader, herald of the perfection of the Holy Gospel, our channel, our mirror of Christ.

Secondly, stay close to the path pointed out by our Father. Do not neglect this fountain of life for other sources of spirituality. While indeed there is basically but one Way, with no substantial differences, there are, in the providence of God, diverse schools of spirituality based on particular approaches to Christian piety. These are often embodied in the spirit of an Order, its Rule and customs, its spiritual writers, its general outlook—and these incorporate the spirit of the Founder. Yet, how often, unfortunately for the individual and the community, do Religious look elsewhere for guidance. Such was Dom Marmion's complaint: "There are many Religious who but wear the habit of their Order and do not know its spirit, its history, its asceticism! They leave aside the magnificent works written by the Founder and the Saints of the Order to form

their subjects, and instead draw their whole interior life from other sources" (*Union à Dieu*).

Thirdly, with Saint Clare, hang on the words of Saint Francis! It is all well and good to read the life of Saint Francis, provided we do not use some superficial, slanted version. But it is much better, more enriching and more rewarding to read and re-read, to ponder and to "chew" (as the medievals often said) the writings, the words of Saint Francis himself. Here we go straight to the clear fountain, not to the rivulets. And if our reading is preceded and accompanied by devotion and prayer to our Father, his words cannot fail to take hold and shape our lives.

Lastly, during her seventh centenary, have a greater devotion to Saint Clare, a love and appreciation of her as the little plant of our Seraphic Father, the purest mirror of his ideals. May she help us to be little but vigorous and flowering plants of our God-given gardener!

*Detroit, Mich.*

*Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.*

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Jesus was my only thought, my only love, the soul of my life, the life of my soul. All my perfection and extraordinary merit consisted in the imitation of Christ, in repeating His works, in transporting His virtues to my soul. I relived His life faithfully, the mysteries from the Incarnation to the triumphal Ascension into heaven, which are completed in the Rosary. In this my life was formed, my intelligence and all my energies occupied. My fidelity in the practise of the imitation of Jesus brought me the riches that I possess in the order of grace and of glory, the highest participation that I possessed in the life of my son, my sanctity, my glory, my true greatness. It is in this sense that the Rosary is the expression of my life.

*Words of Our Lady to Madre Angeles Sorazu*

## THE THIRD LIGHT

Juvenile delinquency is not a problem peculiar to our modern times. It is a situation that must be met in each and every generation, and one wonders if the people of the thirteenth century were as reluctant to face the real source of the trouble as are the people of this generation: perhaps not so reluctant to face it, but judging from history, certainly no more anxious to apply the remedy than are those who train the young today. The early life of Margaret of Cortona, who is known to us as the Franciscan Magdalene, is an outstanding example of this issue in which cause and effect are easily evident, at least to us, since we have the advantage of distance in viewing it.

Margaret was born in 1247, of parents who were poor but respected peasants, in the little village of Laviano, not far from Cortona in Tuscany. From the time of her birth until she was seven years old, she was reared both carefully and lovingly. She was a very attractive child, lively, a bit frivolous, yet having a lovable disposition. Her mother, who was a truly pious woman, was most vigilant in her training, and always surrounded Margaret with genuine maternal tenderness and affection. Then suddenly, she was a confused child in a life totally devoid of the tenderness to which she had become accustomed. Her mother died when Margaret was just seven years of age, and the child was neglected by a father grown careless. When, two years later, her father remarried, she who had so recently been accustomed to only the affectionate ways of a loving mother could not adapt herself to the harsh ways of her stepmother. Margaret resented the very manner of her stepmother, refused to obey her, and completely ignored her corrections. Margaret was one of those natures who crave affection, she became a problem-child and a flighty teen-ager when she did not get it. The tension and ill-feeling in the home increased with the years and progressed to such a point that Margaret's constant thought and study was to marry and escape it. Far from checking her very flagrant flirting and her manner of dress, which was a far cry from the peasant dress of the time, her father seemed scarcely to notice them. Instead of being firm on a point which very obviously called for firmness, he passed up completely the responsibility inherent in his parental state, just as he passed by so completely her need of understanding and affection. As a result of these light manners and winning ways she became very popular with the youth

of the district and eventually became involved with a young nobleman with whom she went to live in his castle at Montepulciano. It is not quite certain whether she simply went off with him or whether he made arrangements with her parents to have her as a servant. There was, however, no doubt as to her status after she was with him a short time. She was his mistress, and this for nine years, always hoping that he would make good his promise to marry her, a promise he never fulfilled. Even the birth of their son failed to persuade him. Much as she wanted and tried to set things right, yet she seemed to delight in defying public opinion by riding before the townspeople, mounted on a thoroughbred horse, attired in costly clothes, and decked with the many jeweled gifts of her paramour.

Hardened though she appeared at this time, the early training of her pious mother was not without its fruit. Margaret never lost that faith so deeply planted by her mother, although she lost just about everything else at Montepulciano—innocence, dignity, honor, peace. Throughout this period of her life she frequently sought out places where she could be alone, places where she could dream of a life of virtue; for although Margaret was fully conscious of her sin, of the degradation into which she had fallen, she lacked the strength necessary to break away from this life of ease and affection.

And then, suddenly, as He so often does, God dealt a blow which bowed her head and heart in sorrow, forced her to her knees, but set her free from her life of sin. She was twenty-seven years old, when one day her lover left the castle to inspect some of his land. When he did not return that evening, nor yet the next day, Margaret became alarmed and sent the servants out in search of him. Late in the day, the dog, who always accompanied him, returned without the nobleman, and with unusual whining and tugging at her skirt convinced Margaret that something was definitely amiss. She followed and, just about a mile from Montepulciano, the dog led her off the road into the forest. There, digging into the earth with its paws at the foot of an old oak, the animal uncovered a part of a blood-stained corpse. When Margaret hurried to uncover the rest and recognized her lover, murdered with club and sword, she fainted at the horrible sight. But the very intensity of her emotions revived her. Intermingled with her grief and sense of loss were thoughts of the judgment of God, of her life and sinning. Memories of her mother and her very happy childhood with her, along with her great sense of repentance, made her resolve to make amends at all costs. That same day she returned to Montepulciano, yielded to the relatives of her nobleman all the jewels

and property that he had given her, and, taking only her little son, set out to return to the house of her parents. Her father really wanted to take her in—she could at least help with the work—but her stepmother vehemently protested and declared that if Margaret remained, she herself would leave. Thus driven away, with nowhere to turn, she was strongly tempted to give up her good resolves and to trade once more upon her beauty; but the persuasion of grace was too strong. She was drawn to pray, and in that prayer she seemed to hear an inner voice that bade her go to Cortona and place herself under the care of the Franciscans there. It was while she was on her way that she encountered the two countesses, ladies of noble birth and of Christian virtue, who, noticing how grief-stricken she appeared, very sympathetically offered her their assistance. Touched by their compassion, Margaret confided to them the whole sordid story of her life, convincing them by the sincerity of her manner that her intention of amendment and reparation was genuine. These ladies took both Margaret and her son into their home and in every way provided for them. Not only did her benefactors supply her with all the necessities for physical living, but they were also much concerned about her spiritual life. They introduced her to the Friars Minor with whom they were very closely connected and to whom Margaret had been advised to entrust herself.

Ready as the Friars were to assume her spiritual direction, they very wisely insisted on a period of probation to test her sincerity before granting her urgent plea for the habit of the Third Order; for since she was still very young, with her beauty by no means diminished, and still in the throes of a great grief, they wanted to be certain that this was not just an emotional decision. Father Giunta Bevegnati was assigned as her director, and her extremely earnest general confession to him began for Margaret the life that has set her apart these many centuries. She began to practice most austere penances. Her fasts were so rigorous that never at any time did she eat fleshmeat. Had it not been for the wise counsel of the Friars, she would probably have gone to extremes, for she certainly realized that with her great physical vitality and natural attraction to the world, severe mortification and self-discipline were for her a necessity.

As a penitent, Margaret adopted for her special patron Saint Mary Magdalene, and constantly begged both this saint and Saint Francis to obtain for her a complete sorrow for her sins—a sorrow that would be effective. The better to bring herself to the dispositions which the Friars required of her before they would admit her to the Third Order, she

decided to leave the home of her benefactors and to seek some hovel where she might be less in the sight of man. At Father Giunta's urgings, the countesses consented to let her go, but only when she accepted a small hut close enough that they could continue to supply her wants. However, Margaret's determination to perform the severest penance sent her begging her bread. From door to door she went, in such an attitude that she met not the ridicule she honestly sought, but a veneration and generosity that made her uneasy. Therefore, having obtained the consent of her confessor to supply her needs by her own labor, she found employment in a shop of linen and woollen weavers; and to prevent herself from becoming too absorbed in the work, and thus distracted from her contemplation of God, she worked for only as long as was necessary to earn sufficient to supply the meager daily needs of herself and her son.

In 1277, after three years of probation, a period of really severe testing, Margaret was admitted into the Third Order of Saint Francis, and received the habit from the Guardian of Arezzo, Father Rainald. On that very day, too, her two benefactors made known to her their intention of providing for the education of her son at Arezzo; and with this last claim of the world removed, Margaret was at last free to give herself wholly and completely to her life of reparation. She was not unfeeling about her boy, but she knew that he had been prepared for this separation. During her three-year period of trial, Margaret had kept her son with her and trained him to share her life of penance and mortification, to be self-reliant, to get along without her care, so that now, knowing this arrangement to be best for both of them, she did not hesitate. After her boy was sent to school—he later entered the friary at Cortona, became a priest, and lived and died in a holy manner within the Order—since the hut in which she had been living stood in the very center of the town and was too easy of access for the crowds who claimed her time and attention, she abandoned it and went to one just a few steps away from the Franciscan Church of Saint Basil. Here, in this Church, in 1277, while she was prostrate at the foot of the Crucified, began the revelations which are the outstanding feature of her story. The visions began with the words, "What is thy wish, poverella?" To which she replied, "I seek naught, my Jesus, but Thyself." Among other things that day, Christ told Margaret that He had destined her as an example to sinners, that they might better understand how quickly God gives graces to those who prepare themselves to receive them, just as He had given them to her. He also revealed to her the deep affection with which He cherished the Friars Minor, and promised that the esteem

in which the world held the Franciscan Order would be greatly increased by virtue of their care of her salvation.

After her acceptance into the Third Order, it was almost incredible to what lengths Margaret went in her penances and mortification. Her food was almost exclusively bread, raw vegetables, and nuts; her only drink was water; she scourged herself severely and made use of very coarse hair-shirts. Her nights were spent almost entirely in prayer, with just a few hours allotted for sleep, taken on the bare ground. Her uncommon beauty of face so worried her that, had it not been for the restraining influence of Father Giunta, she would have deliberately mutilated it. These penances lasted all her life. As at one time in her life her body had overcome her, so now Margaret was determined to overcome it to the very end.

The life of this Franciscan Magdalene so approached perfection that Satan's attacks against her were inevitable. When he was unable, by use of every wile and snare, to bring about a relapse from her penitential way, he changed his tactics and, disguised as an angel, offered her false sympathy. Margaret again being more than a match for him, he resorted to horrible visions in which he assumed the forms of terrifying animals; but all to no avail. Finally, he tried vainly to fill her with a sense of despair, then presumption, but Margaret, in her unlimited confidence in the assistance of her Lord, was able to defeat his satanic efforts every time.

In accord with Christ's own suggestion to her, Margaret went to confession and Holy Communion every day; yet it was always with a certain hesitancy in the remembrance of the many sins of her past life. She feared to displease her Lord in receiving Him into a heart that had been stained so grievously, but Jesus told her in no uncertain terms that He desired this communion, and often. In fact, most of Margaret's ecstasies—and they were numerous—took place after her reception of the Eucharist. At one time, on the feast of Saint Catherine, Our Lord revealed to her that, because of her great penances and love of chastity, He had placed her among the virgins. On another occasion He declared her to be His beloved spouse. She was permitted more than once to experience the sufferings of Mary on Calvary. Her Savior, in still another revelation, warned her that, as long as she lived, she would be afflicted with great tribulations. There were revelations concerning the Wounds of Christ, His Sacred Heart, and His Most Holy Name. At one time in the midst of an ecstasy, she was conducted to the very throne of the Mother of God; she spoke with the angels, with the saints, and especially with Saint Francis.

How the heart of every Franciscan must swell with pride and joy at the things revealed to Margaret concerning Saint Francis and his Order! Jesus told Margaret that to imitate Francis was to please Him; that He had seated Francis, in magnificent glory, on the splendid throne left vacant by Lucifer; that among all the families of religious He finds His greatest delight in the Friars Minor; that nowhere else as in the Franciscan Order is there such a beautiful school of divine love; that the Friars Minor are the shields of souls; and that in the last days they will be called to fight against the anti-Christ. It was in one of these divine conversations concerning Francis and his Order that Christ called her the Third Light of the Franciscans: Francis was the first, in the Order of Friars Minor; Clare, the second, in the Order of Sisters; and Margaret, the third, in the Order of Penance.

One might easily expect that Margaret, in the midst of all these mystic happenings, would become so absorbed in them as to be oblivious of the conditions existing around her; but such was not the case. Though she came closer and closer to living the life of a recluse, never did she forget the service of others. All through her life her naturally affectionate nature had ever inclined her to be especially solicitous of the poor, and eager to relieve their wants. She was known to give away every single bit of furniture with which her benefactors had outfitted the hut in which she lived, keeping not even a vessel in which to boil water nor a board on which to lie. Once in the midst of winter she even gave away some of the rafters of her roof to a poor shivering creature who came begging for fire-wood, for by that time she had already dispensed her own supply to others.

And when she exhausted all possible avenues of human help for her poor and suffering, Margaret exercised her power over the Heart of God through prayer, for He had promised her that all she would ask the Father in His Name would be granted her. She restored life, drove out demons, healed the sick. Her great love for the afflicted inspired her to establish for them a shelter where they might be nursed properly. Together with a very wealthy woman, with the Mayor of Cortona, and with several interested families, she founded a hospital for the sick poor. In this hospice, called Our Lady of Mercy, she herself worked both as a nurse and as a servant to the poor; and the example of her whole-hearted service so attracted others that before very long she found it necessary to organize them. Naturally, it was by the Rule of the Third Order of Saint Francis that she bound them together. The constitution which she drew up for her

little community was filled, as one might expect of her, with common sense as well as with spiritual inspiration. The people of Cortona truly appreciated these Tertiary Sisters and affectionately called them "The Little Poor Sisters". All this was in the year 1286. In the same year she established a Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy, the members of which were pledged to support the hospital and to seek out and bring relief to the poor in their city, with the sick among the Friars Minor to be given particular attention.

As the years went by, her ever-present fear of sinning, her distrust of self, made her long for the security of heaven more and more. Several times in her frequent converse with Jesus, this longing for heaven prompted Margaret to plead to be taken out of this life, to be united with Him, and to be removed from her constant uncertainty. On the Sunday following the Epiphany, a year before her death, He assured her that her entrance into Heaven was very near at hand, and that, in the final months of her life, she would more fully than ever before partake of the martyrdom of His Passion. And it was so. Every part of her body was racked with the most exquisite pain. All that year the devil fought with the greatest audacity to have her in his power, and, crafty creature that he is, when all his other wiles failed with Margaret, he referred to her old faults hoping to urge her to despair. But her Savior came in Person to her cell to rid her of these diabolical visits and tell her of her coming end. He told her to prepare to leave this world, and even revealed to her the very day, the very hour of her death. And that was all her love needed. Her soul soared. It was to be that very month—in just seventeen days; days which for Margaret were most certainly days of "making ready". No bodily nourishment concerned her—her yearning was for Heaven—and those last seventeen days she existed, one might say, on Love, for she lived entirely on the Bread of the Eucharist. At dawn, on the longed-for day, she received Viaticum and, with It still in her breast, went to the dawn of her heavenly life. It was just day-break of February 22 in the year 1298, the fiftieth year of her earthly life and the twenty-third year of her life of penance.

In death, the countenance of Margaret of Cortona was cheerful and smiling—she had died smiling, this penitent who for twenty-three years did constant violence to herself. She, if anyone, was certainly a living proof of the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn." She who all her earthly life mourned her sins and failings had found her Comfort at last. Her body was clothed in her beloved Tertiary habit and, after a magnificent

funeral, was buried in the Church of Saint Basil, the scene of so many of her favors. The miracles worked there, almost immediately, were so numerous that her tomb soon became a famous shrine.

Although she was honored as a beata right from the time of her death, it was not until 1728 that Margaret of Cortona was canonized by Pope Benedict XIII. Then in 1877 her remains were transferred to the modern basilica built in her honor. And after all these years—very close to seven hundred of them—every time her tomb is opened there is a very pleasing fragrance emitted by her body which is still incorrupt. Even thus does God choose to give evidence that once again, as in the case of Mary Magdalene, "many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sr. Maura, O. S. F.

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The Church's prayer always ascends to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, the Church has received her divine dignity; from Jesus she incessantly receives the divine fruitfulness which she manifests in souls; and through Jesus she invariably turns to the fountain of all life both in heaven and on earth, the celestial Father. She needs her Bridegroom as her divine plenitude and supplement, since He is her Head just as she is His fulness and His Mystical Body. In praying, the Church prays with Jesus and through Jesus. She empties her supplications into the heart of her Bridegroom in order that He may pour them into the merciful bosom of the heavenly Father.

Luis Colomer, O. F. M.

## EXPLANATION OF RULE OF THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XI)

### *The Tenth Article*

TEXT: *They must attend Mass daily unless they are legitimately prevented; and they must see to it that they have a pious priest approved by the Ordinary to preach the word of God to them on certain days and instruct them in penance and virtue.*

If the Divine Office is the public prayer of the Church, the Mass is its official sacrifice. Indeed, the Office and the Conventual Mass at least could be considered as two parts of one and the same liturgical prayer. For wherever the obligation to recite the Divine Office in choir exists, "a Mass corresponding to the Office of the day according to the rubrics must also be celebrated in institutes of men and even, where possible, in institutes of women." (Can. 610, par. 2) And even where there is no strict obligation of a Conventual Mass, as is the case, for instance, with Franciscan sisterhoods who recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, if the Religious have their own community Mass, the commendable custom exists of following the Franciscan calendar in the spirit of the liturgy.

But, whatever be the ferial or feast commemorated, every Mass is a perfect prayer. As the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary, the most important happening in the history of the human race, Mass is without doubt the most significant event in the day of a religious. No wonder then that Canon Law enjoins superiors to take care that all the members of the community "daily assist at Mass unless legitimately impeded" (Can. 595). Only some lawful reason like sickness or necessary travel, etc., would excuse a religious from attendance at the daily sacrifice.

As Franciscans, we do well to recall the example of the Poverello recorded by Celano. "Every fiber of the heart of Francis," he writes, "was aglow with love for the Sacrament of the Body of Christ, and with exceeding great admiration he marveled at the loving condescension and condescending love of the Lord. He regarded it as an unpardonable act of negligence not to attend Mass each day whenever possible. If illness kept him from church, he would ask a priest to celebrate Mass for him in the sick room. If this also were not possible, he would have the Gospel of the day read to him from the missal, and in this way assist at Mass spiritually.

For he said: "If I cannot be present at Mass, I adore the body of Christ in meditation and with the eyes of the soul, in like manner as if I were present at Mass. He communicated often and with such devotion that he enkindled the hearts of others. Because he revered the Most Holy Sacrament with all his heart, he offered Him the sacrifice of all his members, and whenever he received the sweet and spotless Lamb, he surrendered his very soul to Him with that flaming ardor which ever glowed on the altar of his heart" (*Legenda Secunda*).

For Francis, then, the Mass was the heart of his prayer-life, the highlight of each day. If he could not attend it in person, he retired to the inner sanctuary of his soul, and there before the altar of his heart he would re-dramatize with his mind's eye the sacrifice of the Mass. Spiritual communion for Francis was not enough. It must be coupled with a spiritual sharing in the Mass. For unless a host be consecrated through an act of immolation, there can be no eucharistic communion.

This spiritual attendance at Mass seems to have been something unique. The very manner in which Francis carried it out is significant, for it tells us what Mass must have meant to him. It was not so much an event as a person — the Son of God, "the sweet and spotless Lamb," bodily present on the altar sacrificing Himself anew as a clean oblation. In his Mass, Francis found Christ — Christ the teacher, Christ the Victim, Christ the highpriest, Christ the lover. And because Francis would be one with Christ, in mind, in body, in soul and in heart, he focused his devotion on the Mass. At the Gospel he drank in the words of Christ, at the Offertory he presented Him with "the sacrifice of all his members", in the moments that followed the Consecration he "adored the body of Christ" and "surrendered his very soul to Him" at the reception of Communion.

For Francis, the first part of the liturgy up to the Offertory was not a matter of minor moment as some would consider it today, a kind of vestigial organ shrunk to a mere shadow of its former self as the ceremonies of the Mass evolved in the course of centuries. The "Mass of the catechumens" was still a thing of significance. It was still the "Mass of Christ the teacher," for did it not contain the Gospel? And what Gospel text however brief did not speak volumes to Francis? To know the Gospel was to know Christ. Through it Christ taught Francis with parables, thrilled him with miracles, guided him by the example of His Own life. Here Francis learned the mind of Christ. And if he did not understand the meaning of the passage read at Mass, he would ask the priest afterwards to explain it and hasten forth joyously to put its message into practice.



In view of this, it is not at all unfitting that the present article of the Rule links two kindred obligations: attendance at Mass with instruction in the word of God, in a life of penance—which for Francis meant a life according to the Gospel—and in virtue. These conferences enjoined on Tertiary religious are as much a continuation of the “Mass of the catechumens” as were the further explanations Francis received from the priest when his Mass was over.

Regarding this injunction of the Rule, we might note that Canon Law requires “local superiors to see to it that twice a month catechetical instructions are given to lay religious and to domestic servants, adapted to the needs of their conditions of life and that, in laical institutes, pious exhortations are addressed to all the members of the community” (Can. 509). Commentators on the Code point out that, if need be, the parish clergy may be asked to give the instructions or conferences. And if the convent has no chaplain, the domestic servants should attend the sermons at the parochial Mass if possible, while the exhortations to the community may be given by the superior. The Third Order Rule, however, requires that in lay congregations the superior make a serious effort to have some priest approved by the Ordinary, whether diocesan or religious, give the conferences from time to time at least. Indeed, where the diocese is well ordered, the Ordinary appoints priests for regular conferences to Sisters. This would satisfy the obligation of the Rule. For the sake of the peace of conscience of superiors, it should be kept in mind that neither the above Canon nor this article of the Rule obliges anyone to attempt the impossible. Where no priests are available for this task, a religious superior would be justified in occasionally omitting such instructions if he or she cannot give them personally.

For the rest, every Franciscan religious should strive to participate in the Mass with something of the sentiments of their holy Founder. This official sacrifice of the Mystical Christ should be the central event of their day, the integrating factor in their ascetical life. Did we not say above (*Article Six*) that our whole purpose and aim as Christians, as religious, as Franciscans was to grow in love or charity? Now Franciscan theologians tell us that sanctifying grace and the virtue of charity are one and the same thing, the Christ-life in our souls. As sanctifying grace, this gift of God transforms the very substance of the soul, making it a supernature, a principle of super-life. So pleasing does it make us to God that we become His children, capable of sharing in His own inner life in heaven. As charity, grace elevates our human will, giving this facul-

ty the power of loving God in such a way that all eternity is not long enough to reward it. For each act of our will that proceeds under the influence of this grace-life or charity, be it even so insignificant as a glass of cold water given in Christ's name, brings an increase in the grace-life itself, and with each increase in the perfection of this supernature we are enabled to share more intimately and fully in the family life of the Blessed Trinity someday in heaven. This sanctifying grace or charity we also call the Christ-life in us, and indeed it is, for it is something that spilled over, as it were, from His human soul into ours. For inasmuch as Christ had a human soul and a human will, it could be supernaturalized by grace, a grace that could increase and grow through the exercise of acts of love until it reached maturity. Only there was this difference. At the first moment of the Incarnation, Christ's supernature was spiritually mature, for His soul was full of sanctifying grace, like a chalice filled to the brim. What did this mean? No matter how perfectly He prayed with a human mind and heart, no matter how much He suffered in His human body, no matter how much He surrendered His human will in love of God, this grace-life or supernature could not grow or expand as it does in us. Did this mean that only in Christ sanctifying grace could merit no increase of grace, this divine life could not grow or produce new life? No, it only meant that God had to fashion for His divine Son a new, a mystical, body in whose members this grace-life might flow. Christ's whole life on earth was a sacrifice, a loving surrender of His human will to the divine Will of His Father. This lifelong act of perfect love that Saint Paul calls obedience reached its visible climax on Calvary, an “obedience unto the death of the cross.” At that moment, Christ by reason of His human nature was the new Adam, the representative, the highpriest of the whole human race, offering His own Body and Blood as an external symbol of the loving submission of His human will, a submission made in the name of all mankind. That act of love, so perfect, so complete, merited an increase in sanctifying grace so tremendous that the souls of all human beings that ever lived or would live could never exhaust it. But, because His own soul was filled to overflowing, this grace-life brimmed up, spilling over into the members of His mystical body, so that we who were spiritually dead through sin were born to life. And so it was that Saint John could write: *Of his fullness we have all received, grace for grace.* (Jo. 1, 16)

Our Christ-life, our power to love God in a supernatural manner, was purchased on Calvary. The more intimately we share in that continuation of Calvary we call the Mass, the more does that Christ-life grow in us; and the more this supernatural life-principle matures, the more we are

transformed into the likeness of Christ, that perfect personality that Paul tells us must be formed within us. And since this is the end-all and be-all of our life here below as a Christian, a Religious, a Franciscan, the Mass should be the focal point towards which all our daily acts of love converge, there to be merged with the love of Christ's human heart and will, and offered up to God. This very act of love itself brings an increase of spiritual life. And even greater is this influx of new grace-life if we communicate eucharistically with its very source. Not without design has God connected the greatest of all the sacraments, the Eucharist, with the sacrifice of the Mass. For a communion host, we know, can be consecrated only by an act of immolation that is itself the essence of the sacrifice. This is God's way of telling us that the source of all our Christ-life is to be found ultimately in Calvary and the Mass.

Seen through Francis's eyes of faith, our daily Mass takes on new meaning. In the Gospel, we too discover Christ the teacher. The very perfection He demands of us reminds us forcibly of how far we have yet to go. And this very recognition of our imperfection prompts us to plead with Christ to help us pray. We beg to see things through His eyes, to value things by His standards, to walk always in His light; in short, to have the mind of Christ. And with this desire to be more completely His is born the need for sacrifice, for the symbolic immolation of ourselves before our Creator.

And so we hasten to the Offertory to meet our Victim-Christ, bringing our little gifts to Him, our crosses, our acts of self-denial, our good works. For, after all, are they not really His? Whatever good is in them is the fruit of His grace-life in us. Our only sorrow is that they are so wafer-thin when they might have been so great. Even our special offertory gift, our three religious vows, seem so insignificant. How many acts of self-will, self-indulgence, of desire for earthly trifles, have marred the beauty of our holocaust?

In confusion, we turn to Christ the priest and ask Him to substitute Himself for what we have to offer. Through the act of Consecration may He transform not only our gifts but transubstantiate our very being. "Let the externals, the appearances remain. But Lord, take the inside of me, my heart, my soul, the real me. Transform this into yourself. Change my weakness into your strength, my blindness into your understanding, my coldness into your burning love. Let me say with St. Paul: *It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2, 20).

As we plead with Christ for perfect immolation, He answers us as only Christ the lover can. Through His eucharistic embrace He imprints on our mortal flesh the kiss of immortality (Jo. 6, 59). It is His Own sacred pledge that if we but continue to love, He will glorify our body. No longer will it be weak, unruly, prone to sin. Instead it will become a perfect instrument of love. With that pledge, like Francis, we can offer Him the complete "surrender of our soul," the "sacrifice of all our members."

When Christ's eucharistic embrace is over, His spiritual presence still remains (Jo. 14, 23). The grace-life He leaves behind contains the germ of what we can become. If we but let this Christ-life motivate each action of our day, we shall be gathering new gifts for the morrow's sacrifice.

So it was with Francis. His spiritual Mass had no *Ite missa est*, for the fruit of the Communion of one Mass became the Offertory of the next. So the Christ-life within his soul continued to grow until it burst the seams of his mortal body and the splendor of his inner crucifixion was revealed for all the world to see. Only then was the sacrifice of his Mass complete.

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Fr. Allan Wolter, O. F. M.

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If men would understand and justly estimate the unspeakable gifts which the priest has in store for them, certainly they would seek him as the infirm do the health springs, as captives look toward the door to liberty, as the afflicted seek the heart which can console them. They would seek him as the divine healer of their spiritual miseries, as the provident hand that knows how to fill the soul with divine gifts, as the best foundation of order and well-being upon earth, since it is one providentially established by heaven itself. They would seek and reverence him above all human greatness. So sublime and divine, so holy and beneficent, is the priests personal dignity and his priestly activity.

Luis Colomer, O. F. M.

## THE HOUSE OF GOD (II)

(Saint Bonaventure's Sermo II in Epiphania Domini)

And now, let us consider the third point. After the house of conscience has been built, guarded and maintained, the Lord Jesus is found in it if He is sought after in the proper way. He is found if He is sought with the right intention, according to that verse in the first chapter of Wisdom: *He is found by them that tempt him not*; and, a little farther on: *Seek him in simplicity of heart*. The heart derives simplicity through a right intention. Again, He is found if He is sought in keen advertence, as in the third chapter of the Canticle of Canticles: *In my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loveth. The watchmen who keep the city found me: Have you seen him, whom my soul loveth?* And, later on *When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and I will not let him go*. He is found, likewise, if He is sought in eager inquiry, as in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: *They that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me*. He is found, too, if He is sought with a special affection, according to that verse in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, where the Lord says: *The kingdom of heaven is like a pearl and a treasure*, for either of which all that is had is given.

All of these necessary dispositions are mentioned together in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, in the story beginning: *What woman, having ten drachmas . . .* Here these four conditions are expressly cited which are necessary to one wishing to find Christ in the house of conscience. The expression, *she lights a lamp*, is a figure of the right intention, for *the lamp of thy body is thy eye*. The words, *she sweeps the house*, symbolizes the order followed by keen advertence, which examines and investigates each and every thing. The subjoined, *she searches carefully until she finds it*, refers evidently to keen, unrelenting inquiry. The concluding part, *and when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that was lost,"* refers to the sense of thankfulness arising from a special affection.

In this way he who enters into the house of conscience will beyond any doubt find Christ, and in finding Christ he will find life and every good, according to that verse in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: *He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall derive salvation from the Lord*.

## Jesus' Sacramental House

The house in which He is found sacramentally is the house of the Church, and of this house can be understood that verse in the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy: *I write these things to thee that thou mayest know how to conduct thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of truth*. Regarding this house, three things are to be considered: first of all, how it has to be built; secondly, how one ought to conduct one's self in it; thirdly, how the Child can be found in it.

Know, then, that for the building of this house four components enter spiritually into combination: the foundation, the super-structure, the support, and the door.

The foundation is Christ, Who is the corner stone, as in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis: *This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven. And he took the stone, which he had laid under his head, and set it up for a title*. By the stone, Christ is symbolized, as in the third chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians: *Other foundation no other can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus*. The super-structure is the Church herself, that is, her mystical members. This is the meaning expressed in the second chapter of the first epistle of Peter: *Drawing near to him, a living stone, you yourselves are built thereon, a spiritual house*; and in the third chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians: *You are God's building*. The support is sacramental grace, which is multiplied through seven divers ways. The ninth chapter of Proverbs speaks of this in the words: *Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn out seven pillars*. By these seven pillars, the seven sacraments are reasonably symbolized. The door is the teaching of the Gospel, as in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel: *Lifting up their wings, the cherubim hovered in the east gate of the house of the Lord*. By these four creatures, full of eyes, are understood the four evangelists and the four Gospels.

In the second place, we must consider how one ought to conduct one's self in this house. Now, you must know that he who wishes to conduct himself correctly in the house of the Church must live in it with voluntary subjection, as the Psalm states: *I have chosen to be abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners*. This is why the eighteenth chapter of Luke, in speaking of the publican, says that because of his humiliation of self *he went back to his house justified*. And Christ also referred to this when He said in the Psalm that *he that worketh*

*pride shall not dwell in the midst of my house, because the proud ought not to be reckoned among the true servants of Christ.*

Then, again, he must live there with a mutual love, for the Psalm says that it is *God Who maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house, and, in another place, that in the house of God we walked with consent; while, to point out the opposite, the twelfth chapter of Matthew states that every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. And on this account the tenth chapter of Matthew commands: As you enter the house, salute it, saying, "Peace to this house", and this, because his place is constituted in peace.*

Furthermore, he must live there with a holy ambition, according to the verse in the Psalm referring to the holy soul: *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up. In this connection, the thirteenth chapter of Zacharias asks: What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And he shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me; and, again, the twelfth chapter of Jeremias: I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance, I have given up my dear soul, because, as the last chapter of the Canticle of Canticles says, if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.*

Finally, he must live there in devout prayer, for the twenty-first chapter of Matthew says that *my house shall be called a house of prayer; and, therefore, the Psalm states that I shall come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple, in thy fear; and, in the first chapter of Aggeus: My house is desolate, and you make haste every man to his own house.*

In this house He is found by those who enter, provided they enter through the door, that is, through the observance of the Gospel teaching; for the tenth chapter of John says that *he who enters by the door into the sheepfold shall go in and out, and shall find pastures. This teaching is fulfilled perfectly in the observance of the counsels, as in the Psalm: The oath he swore to the Lord, the vow he made to the God of Jacob: Never will I come beneath the roof of my house, or climb up into the bed that is strewn for me; never shall these eyes have sleep, these eyelids close, thine brow take any rest, until I find the Lord a home, the God of Jacob a dwelling place. And now, at Ephrata, we have heard tidings of what we looked for; we have found it in the woodland plains.*

### *Jesus' Eternal House*

The house in which He is found eternally is the house of the heavenly court, and of this can be understood that verse of the Psalm which says that *they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, shall praise thee for ever and ever.* This house answers to man's yearning because of four reasons. First, because it is a house on high, as in the fourth chapter of Micheas: *It shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared in the top of mountains and high above the hills.* Secondly, because it is a house of magnificence, as in the third chapter of Baruch: *O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his possession! It is great and hath no end, it is high and immense; and, in the fourteenth chapter of John: In my Father's house there are many mansions.* Thirdly, because it is a house of refreshment, as in the Psalm: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and, in the third chapter of Joel: It shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk. And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord.* Fourthly, because it is an eternal house, as in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes: *Because man shall go into the house of his eternity; and, in the Psalm: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.* It was this that the Prophet was asking when he said: *One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*

In this house the Lord is found by those who search with perseverance, according to that verse in the seventh chapter of Matthew: *Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.* Hence, it was this that holy Job was seeking and desiring when he asked: *Who will grant me that I might know and find him and come even to his throne?* It was this that Moses was seeking when, in the thirty-third chapter of Exodus, he said: *If I have found favor in thy sight, show me thy face, that I may know thee and find grace before thy eyes.* To prayer should mercy be joined, or alms-giving which aids mercy. This is why the twelfth chapter of Tobias says that *prayer, fasting, and alms here is better treasure to lay up than any store of gold; and, a little later: It is the winning of life eternal.* Likewise, the twenty-first chapter of Proverbs says that *he that followeth justice and mercy shall find life, justice and glory.* This may Jesus Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, grant us, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### *Franciscan Peace*

Peace, like poverty, is one of the characteristics of Franciscan spirituality. We do not need the spurious "peace-prayer of Saint Francis" to illustrate this point; we have enough in the fact that our Seraphic Father tells us in his *Testament*: "The Lord revealed to me that we should speak this greeting: May the Lord give you peace," and that he admonishes his brethren to use this salutation of peace: "Into whatever house they enter, let them first say: Peace to this house."

We should certainly misunderstand Saint Francis, however, were we to see in this greeting nothing more than a form of pious courtesy. No less should we misunderstand him were we to think of him as wishing men peace of mind in the modern sense of freedom from worry or preaching the universal brotherhood of man as a purely humanitarian ideal. To all such attitudes he was a total stranger. The peace he wished was not of this world; it was the "true peace from above"—the peace that came down from heaven in Christ and which is daily realized through the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. For it is through this "most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom whatever there is in heaven and on earth has been appeased and reconciled (Col. 1, 20) that God almighty."

For Saint Francis, peace meant order. It meant that all things would be where God wanted them to be, that the disorder of sin would be banished, and that the order of charity, which is the order of the will of God, would be restored, that the world would be reconciled in Christ. Whence is our peace, and that every man would find in Him peace with God, and through Him and with Him peace with all men. Peace meant that fullness of love in which the soul finds rest in union of will and heart with Christ crucified. "This message of peace our Father Francis ever repeated, announcing peace at the beginning and at the end of every sermon, making every greeting a wish for peace, every prayer a sighing for ecstatic peace. . . (St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*).

And now let us turn to our Father's description of the truly peaceful man:

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. They are truly peaceful who, no matter what they suffer in this world, preserve peace of body and soul, within and without, for love of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Our Seraphic Father is not concerned—and this cannot be over-emphasized—with the positive disturbance of peace. Those who disturb peace, either in themselves or in others, are not even mentioned, for they have definitely put themselves outside the Franciscan family. They belong to that group which the meek and humble Francis cursed as destroying and tearing down what other brethren are building up. On the other hand, neither does Francis have in mind religious who do not disturb peace simply because they are too good-natured or too lethargic to disturb anything at all. We cannot say that such peacefulness is bad, or that a natural virtue is no virtue—it is still God's gift; but it is not blessed by Saint Francis nor is it covered by his explanation of the blessing, at least not necessarily.

Now let us look into ourselves. First, exterior peace, or peace with our neighbor, should claim our attention. Do I consider myself a true lover of peace because I manage to get along with everyone, cleverly side-step difficulties, have enough sense to know when I am not wanted, and avoid getting on other people's nerves? Do I consider myself a true peacemaker because I go about radiating friendliness and charm, because I smile upon everyone and express ecstatic delight over everything? While there is assuredly nothing reprehensible in having a pleasant and sunny disposition, there is still no reason to presume that it carries with it the blessing of Saint Francis. We may be peaceable for very natural reasons. It may very well be that we want peace, our own peace, because we have a natural aversion for its opposite. Or it may be that we are distressed by trouble of any kind, that we are pained by criticism or dissatisfaction, or that we are thrown into a panic at the sight of violence between brethren. Our peace-making activities may indeed be a blessing to our community, but they do not entitle us to the blessing of Saint Francis unless they proceed from the "love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Assuming that we have supernaturalized our love for peace, let us now ask ourselves how strong our love is, how far it is able to carry us. What does peace in my community mean to me? Does it mean so much that I can suffer anything and everything to preserve or to restore it? For example: Can I submit to rough and hostile treatment with perfect

equanimity? Can I ignore the petty malice of those who consider me a dunce and a fool and deal with me accordingly? Do I refrain from defending myself against the back-biters, the scandal-mongers, and the tale-bearers of the community? Do I gladly accept the company of the more difficult and irritating brethren, especially if others try to avoid them? If my loving confreres wish to make me the community mule by turning over to me all the disagreeable jobs that come their way, do I accept the burden willingly? Am I capable of enduring contempt, abuse, and injustice or of becoming the victim of another's irresponsibility, for the sake of peace? Let us keep in mind, however, that here is no question of obligation. Humanly speaking, and according to moral theology, we have the right to defend ourselves and to curb the malice and selfishness of others. But, would it be the ideal of perfection our Seraphic Father holds up to us? Unless love of Christ clearly dictates otherwise, the perfection of Franciscan peace demands that we endure all things with cheerful composure and equanimity. On the other hand, we must also keep in mind that the supine passivity of the door-mat personality cannot be considered Franciscan in any respect, unless it is sublimated and sanctified by love. Again let us repeat, we do not question the value of a naturally peace-loving disposition; we only question its Franciscan inspiration. And finally we must reject as positively un-Franciscan any purely aesthetic or subjective or sentimental approach to peace. To shun the evils of dissensions and hostilities in the name of Franciscan peace is well and good; but, unless in so doing we are motivated by the overwhelming love of Christ that appeared in Francis on Mount Alverna, we are making a mere travesty of the Franciscan ideal.

There is one more point for us to consider in regard to exterior peace—its manifestation in our physical appearance. Saint Francis expressly insists on "peace of body and soul, within and without." Not obviously, a person who is habitually tense and irritable and temperamental cannot be in possession of interior peace; a rightly ordered interior life is always evidenced by exterior peace and composure. The truly peaceful man is relaxed. No matter how great the pressure of work or responsibility, no matter how painful the affliction or how bitter the failure, he will remain calm and even-tempered. Seldom, if ever, will he allow any provocation to betray him into sharp or offensive words, impatient gestures, or outbursts of anger. Nor will he betray the fluttery instability of the sentimentalist nor the over-exuberance of the enthusiast, for these are also disorders of the soul and destructive of true peace. Making all due

allowances for the physical and temperamental differences of individuals, it is safe to believe that exterior composure is one of the best indications of interior order. There are no "nervous" saints.

But this is not yet the complete picture. Self-control is indeed a virtue in which few achieve mastery; but it is not enough of itself to entitle us to the blessing of Franciscan peace. To complete the picture we must turn our attention to interior peace, which is order in our relations with God.

The thought that we are to submit ourselves to be molded as God wills, and that our sins have rendered us unworthy of any consideration, should help us to maintain peace with our neighbor. Interior peace, however, more directly touches upon our relations with God, and is the result of our absorption into Christ crucified, Who is Himself our peace. Here we may ask ourselves: Can I truly say that I find my happiness in suffering with Christ? Do I eagerly seek opportunities to deny myself for love of Him? Do I respond with joyful alacrity to the inspirations of grace, no matter how painful to nature? If I am totally absorbed in my crucified Saviour, I will easily subject all things to the right order of love, and nothing will be able to disturb my peace. The true lover, moreover, is never wholly out of touch with the beloved. Do I make a sincere effort to keep in the presence of God dwelling within me? Do I keep the eyes of my soul directed upon the countenance of Christ, my ears attentive to His voice, so that I may order all my thoughts and actions rightly, in harmony with the divine will? If my relations with God are not well ordered—that is, if I refuse to follow the voice of conscience, or the inspirations of grace, or the guidance of my spiritual director—I cannot have the perfect joy of Saint Francis nor the peace he wished to men. Do I, then, fully realize that even the slightest infidelity to grace—the refusal to banish a distracting thought, for example, to suppress an unnecessary word, to admit an error—will disturb the order of peace in my soul? God is a jealous lover; He demands total surrender.

But love, as the Apostle tells us, casts out fear; and therefore our love for Christ, although demanding total surrender of self, leaves us free and unhampered. Do I keep in mind that true love is never constrained? Am I careful to avoid the disorders of fear, timidity, narrowness, scrupulosity? Or do I perhaps torture myself with vain efforts to observe the letter of the law and forget the spirit? Is my will firmly set on loving God above all things and for His own sake alone? Do I keep my natural

affections in the right order, permitting myself to love nothing equally with God, or more than God, or contrary to God? Do I love my neighbor as myself, and do I keep my self-love well ordered? The quickest way to lose peace is to give way to disordered affections; and the quickest way to gain peace is to order our affections rightly.

As we have said before, the Beatitudes are to be considered the perfections of the spiritual life. For most of us, perhaps, it seems more appropriate to pray for this holy peace than to ask ourselves how far we have advanced toward it, or how well we are preserving it. Actually the peace that Saint Francis calls blessed is that peace which transcends all understanding, that peace he yearned for so ardently that it was granted him with the stigmata. Therefore Saint Bonaventure, with his clear understanding of the mind and spirit of Francis, assures us that the peace of the mystical union can be reached after much purification, only through a burning desire for martyrdom (*De Triplici Via*). Describing the road to this peace, the Seraphic Doctor writes:

"The road to this peace is none other than that of a most ardent love of the Crucified, the love which transformed Paul so completely into Christ when he was rapt to the third heaven that he declared: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*. And this love so absorbed the soul of Francis that his soul shone through his flesh the last two years of his life, when he bore the most holy marks of the Passion on his body" (*Itinerarium*).

We may close this discussion of Franciscan peace by recalling that part of the Beatitudes which our Seraphic Father passed over without comment since it is self-explanatory: peacemakers are children of God. They are truly of a divine race.

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Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

Those who come should possess a good stock of patience and charity. Then their stay will be one of delight for them. It will enable them to amass riches—a wealth of suffering. But what becomes of the ox that does not plough? And without ploughing, can there be a harvest?

Junipero Serra, O. F. M.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *The Good Ground of the Word of God*

Lent is almost upon us. The Church has already changed her vestments from white and green to somber violet, to warn us to prepare for the renewal of Lent; and in the first Sundays of this month her Masses will turn our thoughts toward that deepening of the Christian life, the Christ-life within us, which is the true purpose and goal of this holy season. That our life here below is a contest, a race for the prize, is the burden of Septuagesima: a prize that is given us, the Gospel shows, only because of the goodness of God and not for any merit of ours. Only God, through His human agents, has sown in us the seed of His word which we must accept on faith, the foundation of our Christian life (Sexagesima). Christ alone can give us new sight, the vision of faith, which will lead us through the Passion of Christ to the consummation in charity (Quinquagesima). One should study and meditate on these Sunday Masses, as a preparation for Lent, to begin now to make the soul good ground for the word of God that will be sown so liberally in the liturgy of Lent.

In particular, Religious should find in the season of Lent itself a time of grace in which to deepen and renew their religious vocation, their religious fervor. We have already left the world by accepting the Franciscan way of life. Hence, says Saint Francis, "we have nothing else to do but to be solicitous to follow the will of the Lord and to please Him." But it is striking that he immediately proceeds to warn us: "Let us take great care that we be not ground by the wayside, or ground that is stony or full of thorns," thus indicating that despite our vocation, our profession, we may yet be poor ground for the word of God that comes to us constantly throughout our religious life. Here Saint Clare can teach us a much-needed lesson.

### *The Good Ground*

To use her only simile, Francis was the gardener and Clare and her Order the little plants he had set in the garden of the Lord and watered with his prayers, nourished with his instructions and protected by his

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care. She became an exquisite flower of ineffable fragrance (says Saint Bonaventure)—but only because she had been good ground that had received with a right and good heart the word of Gospel-perfection and held it fast, to bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. Since the Lent of 1211, that gardener of Christ had been at his work directing Clare, speaking to her of the good Jesus, implanting in her a great desire for the nuptials of the Lamb. And in the Lent of 1212 he judged the time had come for her to bring forth the first fruits of the word she had received, to show to the world by her flight to the cloister the Gospel-seed he had sown.

What had made her such good ground for the word of God? Certainly, to judge from the witnesses at her canonization and the subsequent Legend of Celano, everything that was in her by nature and by grace. All who had known her in maidenhood spoke of the nobility of her nature, the holiness of her life within her father's house. After forty-two years they still vividly remembered the fragrance of Christ diffused throughout Assisi by the eighteen year old daughter of Favorone and Ortolana. She was noble by nature and race, but more noble by grace. Little wonder that the Blessed Francis, who would never call her by name, was wont when speaking to her or of her to salute her as *Christiana*, true Christian woman.

This was Clare, the good ground of the Gospel-word. Nature and supernature worked together to make her of right and good heart to hear the invitation of Christ and bring forth much fruit.

It is a dictum of theology that grace does not destroy nature but supposes and perfects it. This had been borne out in the vocation of Saint Francis. For every good quality, every natural virtue, every natural longing that he possessed had been made use of by the Spirit of God in calling him to the Gospel-life. His charm and nobility, his chivalrous ideals, his natural courtesy, his magnanimity and sympathy for all men: in short his whole romantic temperament had been part of the good ground in which was sown a new life. So also in Clare. Her natural good traits, her gentle and gay heart, her benignity and mildness, her strength of will, all combined with the supernatural graces and virtues God had wrought in her to furnish the well-prepared soil into which, through His gardener Saint Francis, the Spirit was to put new seed.

Plainly, we sometimes tend to forget the place of the natural in the supernatural life of grace. We may misinterpret the Gospel parable and think that the natural, one's own temperament, talents of intellect

strength of will are so many stones that can dry up the ground and cause the seed to wither away, or so many thorns that might choke off the fruit of grace. As a result, we adopt an asceticism that is at odds with good theology and Franciscan tradition. Or, as educators and directors, we might think that all candidates for the Order, novices, clerics, must be forced into one and the same mold or cut precisely to the same pattern, without regard for the traits and talents of the individual. The Franciscan tradition is rather to make supernatural use of the natural—a new note perhaps (in the thirteenth century) in the history of asceticism.

### *Clearing The Ground*

This is indeed one of the paradoxes of the Franciscan way, that, while it considers human means as nothing in comparison with the divine, natural virtues as naught when contrasted with the supernatural, it will yet use those natural good qualities which the world considers its own.

Before these can be used, however, in the service of God—to follow the parable—very often many stones must be removed and thorns cleared away and burned. But given this eradication, the ground itself is still good. In other words, the natural is not abandoned or despised or forgotten, but purged and cleansed, revaluated and elevated by grace, and thus made good ground for our vocation. Or, to change the analogy, the natural must undergo a purification in what we might call the crucible of poverty of spirit. There the dross of self is purged away, all self-love, self-glory, self-seeking. What remains is the pure essence of the natural gift of God which can and must be used in the following of Christ.

This is not an easy process, but it is absolutely necessary. Let no one imagine that Franciscanism advocates simply "being one's self" beneath the habit and cowl. Saint Francis would be the first to decry such a thought! Our greatest enemy is within: our body, our fallen nature, poor Brother Ass, and we must keep that enemy under chains. Yet, neither does Saint Francis deny the natural gifts of God or their place in the service of God.

Suppose that a Franciscan is gay and joyous by nature, or strong of will, of gifted intellectuality. Are these gifts of God, for such indeed they are, to be eradicated as so many impediments to our growth in Christ? No; yet neither are they to be retained "as is". They must

undergo purification and elevation and then can be used as aids, and sometimes powerful aids, in the spiritual life.

### *Bearing Good Fruit*

Once these natural gifts and capacities have undergone such purge, however, they form, together with the supernatural virtues, part of the good ground. They are no longer purely of the natural order but integrated into the higher life, taking on new vigor and new meaning.

Thus, the natural gaiety of Francis was transformed by grace into joy of spirit, which he called the most potent defence against the attack and tricks of the enemy. His natural love of the beautiful, which had faded and been almost lost in his early illness, now becomes a means of seeing God in all things. Clare's natural firmness of will becomes supernatural stubbornness in resisting the threats and physical violence of her kinsman who tried to drag her, and later her sister Agnes, away from their new life; it made her unafraid and trustful in God when the Saracens attacked San Damiano; and it helped her resist all attempts to deprive her of perfect poverty.

Such a change can and must take place in us also. If a strong will but offer itself up in the sacrifice of obedience and become as a corpse it can thereafter retain and exercise all the strength and firmness that belong to it by nature: for it takes a strong will to be a good unresisting corpse! Talent of intellect, if sought and exercised for itself, makes man proud and indocile; but if a man, says Francis, yield up his learning in poverty of spirit and offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified, such a one will go forth to a true ministry of the Word—in pulpit or classroom—because he has got rid of that which would make him boast with pride.

Therefore, to be good ground that will bear much fruit, we must get rid of the rocks of self that would dry up the seed of God within us. We must get rid of the thorns, the selfish "cares and riches and pleasures" of a natural and unmortified life, our vices and sins, our pride and vain-glory, the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh. At the same time the good qualities in everyone must be considered the gift of God and not passed over and denied in His service. But they must be purged of self and then returned to God. "And let us render back all good things to the Lord God most high and great, and acknowledge that all good

things belong to Him, and give thanks for all things to Him from whom all good things do come" (Rule I, c. 17).

If in true poverty of spirit we thus say *No* to self and creatures and in true Seraphic charity say *Yes* to God, the whole man will be good ground that will bear much fruit for God. We can blend the natural and the supernatural into the simple, integrated, unified way of the new man and under the pleasing showers of the grace of God produce the beautiful fruit of the true and ideal Franciscan. For the true child of Francis has the firmness of Clare, the loyalty of Bernard, the simplicity and purity of Leo, the courtesy and benignity of Angelo, the gracious mien and refinement of Masseo ("the gentleman of God," someone has called him), the contemplative mind of Giles, the constant prayerfulness of Rufino, the patience of Juniper, the bodily and spiritual strength of John de Lodi ("the Florentine boxer," Francis nicknamed him), the careful concern of Lucido, the magnanimity and gentleness of Francis himself (*Spec. Perf.* 85). The result will be a man or woman of virtue, devout toward God, pleasing to the Saints, gracious and attractive to all men: on such the Order and Saint Francis do rest! (I Cel., n. 102).

*Detroit, Mich.*

*Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.*

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Fervent persons are occasionally found who would wish to imitate the fastings and other austerities of the saints, but this is presumption, unless they are called thereto by God, and that this vocation has been well sounded and approved by legitimate authority. The general and safe maxim, in cases of austerities, is not to undertake anything extraordinary, without the consent of superiors and confessors. It is often found that those who solicit extraordinary penances, neglect those which are ordinary and common, and who, in mortifying their bodies, do not take sufficient pains to purify their hearts, to become humble, obedient, mild, and charitable.

*Candide Chalippe, O. F. M.*

## SOLI DEO GLORIA

Angela Merici was a destined soul. She was so sheltered and shown by grace that it is not only apparent to us in retrospect, but it was more appreciated by her contemporaries, that God had set her apart for a special work, that He meant to show the attractiveness of virtue to a world grown indifferent to it, to a world that despised piety. From the time of her birth until the moment of her death, her life is a study of the efficacy of divine grace, of grace corresponded with, of course.

This favored one was born on March 21, 1474, in a little town in Italy called Desenzano, not far distant from Brescia. She was most fortunate in her parents. Both her father, John Merici, and her mother were not only of noble extraction but, far more important, were of noble character. They were parents who took seriously the task given them by the Almighty of training for life and for heaven the children entrusted to them. Theirs was a happy home where the virtuous life of the parents was reflected in the lives of the children. They realized fully that the most effective way to impress lessons of piety and of reverence for God's law on the minds and hearts of their children was in their own daily life and example, and they ordered their lives and their home accordingly. Every morning and every evening there was a family gathering for prayer followed by pious readings, sometimes from the Scriptures, again from the lives of the Saints, so that Angela had her lessons in sanctity quite early, when she should have had them, and from those best equipped to teach them to her.

Besides her parents, she was also blessed in her sister, with whom she had a complete congeniality of spirit; for between Angela and this older sister, who was her constant companion, there seemed to be a pleasant sort of rivalry. They vied with each other in the practice of virtue, in the choice of mortifications; while the other children of the town were eagerly joining in games and amusements, these two were busily erecting little oratories and arranging tiny altars where they prayed and imitated the ceremonies of the Church. The ordinary innocent pastimes of children held no attraction for them; theirs was a precocious inclination for the holy, and in all these practices, Angela, the younger, was the leader. It was Angela who possessed the childish charm and winsomeness that

and with her goodness, especially won the hearts and admiration of the townspeople. They called her a little saint, the holy maid of Desenzano.

When John Merici was overtaken by a painful disease and died very young, after, at the early age of forty, the whole family seemed inconsolable. To Angela fell the task of comforting her brothers and sister, and especially her mother. However, not even the gentle compassion and passionate love of her saintly child could calm the widow's grief, and it was not long till she followed her loved husband.

The care of the two girls was undertaken by an uncle, a man of virtue and of wealth, who dearly loved his two nieces. Although his home at Salo, like their own at Desenzano, was a home where piety was the accepted thing, he, too, was inspired by the abstinences and austerities that the little girls practiced. In just a short time the lavish care with which they were surrounded in his home seemed to Angela to be so contrary to the lessons taught them by their parents that she decided they would run away from it all. One morning they went off to hear Mass at the parish church, as usual; but after the Holy Sacrifice was ended, instead of going back home, they hurried to a hermitage outside of town and there they hid, hoping their absence would be overlooked. They were going to pass their life in intimate union with God alone. Fortunately, in the case of the Almighty, good will is meritorious, for such a flight could not long escape their uncle's vigilance. He went to all the churches; he went to all the houses where he thought they might be. Then, recalling the many conversations he had overheard between the girls about trying to live a life apart from the rest of the world, he had the country outside the town searched thoroughly. Finally, after many inquiries and false leads, he found their retreat and brought the runaways back to Salo. He realized the solid piety upon which their desire was founded, and, far from preventing them in their quest for solitude, he allowed them to fix up a narrow cell for themselves in the most retired part of his house. Here, Angela and her sister lead a life so close to perfection for two children, the older scarcely fourteen, that the choice of God was evident, and His enveloping grace was easily discernible; He was appropriating them for Himself in a special manner, and that fact became more apparent as the days passed.

Then death took even this companion from Angela, this sister with whom she truly formed but one heart and soul. Yet, though her grief was painful to the extreme, though she felt crushed and alone, her

resignation left nothing to be desired. God willed it, and for Angela that was reason enough. But she was greatly concerned about the fact that her much-loved companion had died without having received the Holy Eucharist. Because theirs was an age in which the people were very ignorant in regard to the reception of the Eucharist, neither Angela nor her sister had as yet made their first Holy Communion.

To distract her from this grieving and preoccupation over the salvation of her sister, Angela's uncle sent her into the country to supervise his reapers. One day, while on the way through the estate, taking her lunch to the workers at noon, she happened to glance up and saw a strange cloud hovering over her way. As she was wondering at the sight, suddenly she beheld within it the Queen of Heaven surrounded by a multitude of angels and maidens among whom she recognized her sister of her heart, who urged her to persevere in the kind of life she was now living, promising Angela a share in the glory she herself was now enjoying. How this vision set her mind at ease; and how it fortified her in the path she had chosen!

Almost at once, Angela began to beg and entreat both her uncle and the parish priest to allow her to make her first Holy Communion. Finally, when she had just passed her thirteenth birthday, they acceded to her request, and she received, for the first time, the Bread of Life. Her ardor was indescribable. The yearning which had filled her soul since her most from infancy was so sated that she needed no earthly food for herself. Her soul's life was centered around the Tabernacle, and, in order that she might receive frequently without causing comment, she deemed it well to join some religious body. While attending one of the meetings of the Third Order of Saint Francis, she was so impressed by the piety and sincerity of its members, by the manner of life they lived, and by their love for the Eucharist, that she felt called to join them. This maid thirteen years old was so well known for her piety, for the purity of her life, for the practice of virtue, that the usual year of probation was shortened, and after only six months of a novitiate, she was permitted to pronounce her vows and take the name of Sister Angela.

Her director satisfied her zeal for frequent Communion and allowed her to receive daily. She thought solely now of establishing the kingdom of God in her heart which was truly dead to the world. She observed the simple vow of poverty so exactly that she would have nothing as her own. She had no furniture whatever in her cell. Her clothes, the very essence of modesty, covered a hair cloth which she always wore, day and night.

Angela fasted habitually, and in Lent ate only on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and then only a little bread and a few chestnuts. In itself, it seems almost a miracle that, notwithstanding all this fasting, a growing child in her teens lived. This was the life she led as a Tertiary in her uncle's home until she was twenty. Then her uncle died. Another separation! Since the only relatives she had left in Salo were very distant ones, she decided to return to the Merician home in her native town. There, driven by the conviction that the most logical way to cure the almost general corruption of the age was the proper and religious education of the young, especially of the young girls who were to be the future mothers, she began gathering all the little girls in Desenzano to teach them the fundamentals of Christianity, hoping thus to lay the foundation for Christian homes. Angela was able to persuade four others of her Third Order friends to her conviction of the necessity of this work, and they joined her in her attempt to stem the tide of indifference which had crept into even the best of homes. It was a dark period in the history of the Church; a heavy cloud of spiritual darkness had begun to lower over the souls of men, but Angela and her little band of four were confident that theirs was the only way for them to pierce the cloud. They not only taught the children, but also used every opportunity for checking evil among the elders. And it was Angela who was definitely the soul of the project. She had long before won the admiration of the people by her piety; now, her charming gaiety, blended with the bit of shyness which forever remained an essential part of her make-up, won their minds and hearts, so that what she said to them impressed them the more for her way of saying it. She never hesitated to go out of her way to help others onto the path of virtue; her influence over even the rudest of men was remarkable, and to such a degree that she eventually won the esteem and respect of even the derelicts of society.

One day she and the other four Tertiaries had gone for a walk in the country, and, as they came upon a little hermitage, they stopped to say their beads. When they had finished, her sisters decided to continue their walk into the country, while Angela wanted to stay and pray a while longer. The others had scarcely gone, when Angela became very conscious of the presence of God; she begged Him to let her know if this work of hers, this teaching the Christian way of life to the children, was pleasing to Him. Was it what He wanted of her? In His loving kindness, the Almighty heeded her prayer at once. Looking toward the heaven, she perceived, reaching up into the sky, a ladder upon whose rungs were seated alternately a group of virgins crowned with jeweled diadems,

and a group of harp-playing angels, filling the air with their melodies. "Angela, thou shalt not leave this world without founding a society of virgins like those that have just appeared to thee," were the words in which her Lord made the vision clear to Angela, and gave complete approval to the work in which she was then engaged. She, of course, was completely overawed at the revelation; but the thought of the magnanimity of God to her, coupled with her almost innate humility, guided her to acquiescence to Providence. She uttered her *fiat*; and, no sooner had she done so, than her companions returned, to be told of God's approval of their work, and, after a natural hesitancy, of the revelation concerning herself.

However, notwithstanding her blind confidence, both she and the others realized the impossibility of such an establishment at the moment; yet they determined to spend the ensuing time in preparation for the foundation. They continued their work of teaching the young, and added classes for adults, who came in crowds; they visited the poor and the sick, often distributing to them the alms that were intended for themselves; they went into the workshops to give instructions to the workmen. It was Angela who was especially successful in these works; none had such success as she with men well versed in vice. Naturally, she was tempted to pride. All her life she fought against satisfaction in accomplishment. To prevent sentiments of self-love from gaining a foothold, she continuously kept before her mind, and repeated so frequently that it practically became a breath, "All for the glory of God."

So widespread did her reputation for holiness and zeal become that people came from all the surrounding country, even from Brescia, to consult her and to solicit her prayers; men felt themselves honored by just a few moment's conversation with her. She was their Saint; she was their pride. Since Angela was still living on alms, they used this as a pretext for inviting her to their homes for a meal. These invitations were not accepted indiscriminately, but only when she hoped to effect some good in a particular family; and her conversation in such an instance, though it invariably turned on the hideousness of sin and the attractiveness of virtue, was always so prudent and charming that it never wearied or embarrassed them.

Toward the end of 1516 Angela made the move to Brescia, impelled by what she considered a clear indication of the will of God. A wealthy and devout couple of Brescia, Signor Pentegoli and his wife, very dear friends of hers, lost within a very short time their two daughters, so

heiresses of their fortunes. Despite their piety, nothing could assuage the grief of the parents; and they seemed on a point of parting with life themselves, when in answer to their entreaty, Angela joined them at their home in Brescia. By her tender compassion and sympathy, by her gracious presence, by her conversation, she led them gradually to the resignation which until then they could not achieve. But the task of comforting did not divert her thoughts from the work given her—the subject of her vision. She prayed to have her mind freed from indecision; she was constantly torn between the desire to return to her Tertiary companions in Densenzano and the desire to fulfill her destiny, which she believed to be a foundation in Brescia. And before very long God let it be known to her that it was His plan that she should now think about establishing the congregation and that it was to be in Brescia, not in Densenzano.

After four months Angela left the home of the Pentegolis for an apartment provided by a retired merchant, Mark Anthony Romano, because she felt that its seclusion was better adapted to the fulfillment of her engagement with God. Here her life can best be described by the word angelic, and it was as an angel from heaven that she was regarded by all those with whom she came in contact, although any hint of this attitude to Angela only drove her to new and greater austerities; and the more she humbled herself, the more God displayed through her His glory and power. What a delightful instrument she must have proved, judging from the gifts! She was given an unusual understanding of the most difficult passages of the Scriptures; she was able to discuss with precision the most intricate points of both dogmatic and moral theology; without ever having studied Latin, she understood it perfectly and translated into Italian many of the official prayers of the Church. Hearing of her gifts, educated men flocked to her, to discuss with her their problems. Many consulted her about the surest means of salvation, and the advice she frequently gave them was "to do every day of your life, what you would wish to have done at the moment of your death."

In the year 1522, with Romano, who during these years acted as a sort of patron-chaperon, and some ladies who wished to accompany her, she made a pilgrimage to Mantua, to the tomb of Mother Hosanna Andreasy. Angela had known Mother Hosanna by reputation and, when reports of striking miracles reached her, she was anxious to show her veneration for the precious remains. What food for thought it must have been for the other pilgrims to watch the homage paid by a living saint to the lifeless body of another! On the journey back to Brescia, she accepted

the invitation of prince Aloysius Gonzaga to visit him at Solfarino, meeting at which virtue paid tribute to virtue. As a departure gift to show his esteem for Angela, the prince granted her the pardon of a criminal who had just been condemned to banishment.

For years, the desire of visiting the Holy Land had been growing in Angela. In the year 1524, after Romano, along with the Pentegoli had made all the necessary arrangements, they set out from Venice for the Holy Land. On the way, they put in on the Isle of Crete, where Angela hastened to the Cathedral. There, while praying before the crucifix, without any previous warning she was stricken with total blindness. Romano and the others considered it a sign that God did not wish her to visit the Holy Places, but not so Angela. She considered the affliction a punishment for her sins, but still she might at least touch with her hands and lips the places where the dear Lord had labored and suffered and her friends were too appreciative of her sanctity to prevent her. In Jerusalem, her visits to the places made sacred by Christ were so soul-satisfying that she would have dwelt there forever; she found it necessary to tear herself away to return to Brescia. On the return journey, they stopped again at the Cathedral in Crete; and, while praying before the same crucifix, she had her sight suddenly and marvelously restored. Upon arrival at Venice, the magistrates of the Republic attempted to persuade her to remain with them as a sort of general superintendent of all the charitable institutions of Venice; but Angela, knowing that Brescia was to be her field of action, persuaded Romano to depart that very night for the home-city. In these later years, as the time for her foundation drew closer, she seemed always to be avoiding the danger of being persuaded into other projects than the one assigned to her by Providence. Her mission was more than ever before her eyes. She had been commanded by God to found a society in Brescia, and not even His Holiness, Clement VII, could make her swerve from her purpose of carrying out that order—and his offer was enticing. It was in the year 1525, when she had come to Rome to gain the indulgences, that the Pope, having heard of her great holiness and her extraordinary success as a religious teacher of young girls, invited her to remain in Rome to take charge of the teaching institutions and of the hospitals of the city. When she explained to His Holiness, in the shy, gracious way that mirrored her humility, about the establishment for which she had been commissioned by God, the Sovereign Pontiff by divine inspiration understood that in Brescia lay the work for which she was destined, and he urged her to the execution of it. He blessed both Angela and her undertaking.

At this time, the whole country had been invaded by the military forces of the Emperor Charles V, which shortly after her return were reported to be advancing on Brescia. Angela became alarmed and fled with the Pentegoli and Romano to Cremona. It was quite a blow for our Saint to endure, for she thought that progress had been made toward a speedy establishment of her institute. Saint Ursula had already appeared to her to encourage her; Angela took this as an indication of the Saint's interest and resolved to give the name of Ursula to the religious congregation. However, at Cremona she yielded to the force of circumstances and gave herself over completely to a life of prayer and penance. She seemed to forget herself in her eagerness to further love for God among men. The rigor of her abstinences and labors was so strenuous to a body already weakened by other mortifications that her life was imperiled. She was seized with a fever so malignant that the physician simply abandoned her to her pain. Holy Viaticum had been given her, and, just as she seemed to be drawing her last breath, she suddenly rose up, miraculously restored to health, and sent the Signora Pentegoli for her clothes so that they might set off at once to the Holy Hill of Verallo, a much revered place of pilgrimage in Upper Italy. Here she poured forth her soul in tears and ardent supplication, beseeching God to give peace to Italy and to His Church. It is believed that Our Lord appeared to her in person, giving the desired answer to her prayer, for very shortly peace was finally achieved between the Empire, the Republic of Venice, and the Duke of Milan. Her stay at Cremona had lasted three years, and, just as soon as hostilities ceased, Angela hastened back to Brescia, to lead an even more solitary life than before. Renouncing the generous hospitality of Romano, she moved to a house near the Church of the Cistercian monks in the parish of Saint Clement. Here, she attended Mass daily and one day during the Holy Sacrifice she was publicly rapt in ecstasy, her body remaining raised from the floor for quite some time. Those who were present told those who were not; and, when it happened a second time in another Church, the whole town was talking about the miraculous happenings; but public interest and astonishment were really aroused when it became known that the spirit of God possessed her—that she was vouchsafed the knowledge of future things, that she was able to penetrate the hidden secrets of the human heart. Their Angela was truly a chosen soul!

She had now passed the age of sixty and, in spite of her desire of extending God's glory, was still holding back, prevented possibly by her deep-rooted humility. Finally her director advised her to submit to the orders of heaven. A noble lady, Isabella de Prata, gave Angela a house

near the Church of Saint Afra to be used for her work. While praying one night in her Oratory there, she was visited by an angelic messenger who chided her for her delay in carrying out God's designs; and immediately after, the Divine Master Himself stood before her and upbraided her for her lack of courage. She could put it off no longer. This twofold vision forced Angela to hasten the inauguration of the institute in the year 1535. On November 25, Angela, with the twelve young girls that she had chosen and trained, having assisted at Mass at Saint Afra's and received the Holy Eucharist, proceeded to their own Oratory, and there, in the presence of the proper authorities, the solemn formalities required for the canonical institution of the Order were carried out. On the same morning fifteen others asked to be admitted, so that in all twenty-eight maidens celebrated their divine espousals. Angela organized them after the fashion of the Third Order. They remained in their own homes and went out to their labors from there, ready for every spiritual and corporal work of mercy. Angela was their superior and directed them up until her death five years later.

It is recorded that, early in January 1540, Angela had special warning from God of the day and hour of her approaching death. She was ill and suffering intensely; as the time drew near, she told the Sisters that she was soon going to leave them, and appointed the Sister who was to succeed her as their superior. She asked for Holy Viaticum; and, as she received It, the Sisters kneeling around saw her absorbed in a transport of love. Yet, mother that she was, she knew that they would have parting words from her, and she gave them. She urged them to the love and practice of virtue, to the faithful observance of the rule, to a spirit of poverty, to a joyful love and holy fear of God. To the end, it was the spirit of the Third Order that she strove to instill. Then she asked her weeping daughters to clothe her in her habit of the Third Order of Saint Francis, and from that moment her thoughts were but for heaven. She suffered violent convulsions; her features became almost unrecognizable; every nerve in her body quivered; yet her soul preserved the same tranquility. Then it all seemed to pass; her features grew calm but animated as by an interior light; and finally, with a countenance suffused with joy, she broke forth in the words of the dying Christ: *Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit*. Then, her blessed spirit went peacefully to the heavenly place prepared for it, for this earthly angel who breathed but for God. It was the night of the twenty-seventh of January, 1540.

The mourning in Brescia was general; the whole city talked of their grief; disputes arose over the resting place for her remains, which were placed temporarily in a crypt of Saint Afra's. There she was laid out and exposed for the veneration of the people for thirty days, and during the whole time there was no sign of corruption in the body which retained the appearance of a living body with perfect flexibility in every limb. For three consecutive nights, there was an extraordinary light observed in midair, hovering over the subterranean chapel where the body lay. Everybody saw it, and everybody accepted its origin and significance. They called her Blessed. Finally, the diocesan court decided that the body of Angela should be interred in the crypt of Saint Afra's, and the funeral was solemnized the following day by the parish priests.

Her home town of Desenzano was the first to adopt her as patron; the City Council built a Chapel in her honor on the Merician estate and placed the town under her protection. It was Clement XIII who beatified Angela in 1761 and Pius VII who canonized her in 1807, thus putting the official stamp of the Church on a life that can best be characterized by her motto, *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sr. Maura, O. S. F.

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In the prayer of the Church, faith in the Trinity and the gravitation of love towards this great mystery is a continual, living reality, never obscured, never forgotten. If souls desire to find the real path of prayer as sons of God, they have only to follow the majestic course of the Church's prayer. They will reach the depths of the Spirit who animates the Church and they will rest amid the eternal flowers of the heavenly Father in the ineffable society of the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Luis Colomer, O. F. M.



## THE ORDO CARITATIS OF DUNS SCOTUS

It is not an exaggeration to say that the tragic disruptions and wars among nations, the evils that threaten home and society, the misfortune of the individual, are in large measure the results of offenses against love. Nothing in the world today is more talked about than love, yet nothing is so little understood or so grossly abused. If something has gone wrong with love in modern living, it is because we have lost our compass—the knowledge of the true nature of love and of its order.

The importance of love in the life of every man is simply beyond question. It is the motive (though perhaps the unconscious motive) of all our acts; it is the end toward which we strive and the attainment of which we call happiness. Trouble begins when appetitive motives are mistaken for love instead of being recognized for what they are. Perhaps I love others more or less for what I can get out of them; perhaps I love God for His gifts rather than for Himself. It is no easy problem to distinguish genuine love from spurious, just as it is not easy to distinguish pure gold from base metal intermixed with it. And what of "oblique love", or self-centered egoism under the label of love, involving the disequilibrium of sin? Then disorderly love turns to hate.

Genuine love is priceless. However, it is not to be confused with supernatural charity. The latter, by making us participate in the very life of God Who is love itself, the Source of all love, does not destroy but transforms the former, as it shapes our eternal destiny.

No one, it would seem, has spread more light on this great problem of love than has Blessed John Duns Scotus. With extraordinary vision, discrimination, and depth, Scotus has succeeded perfectly in setting forth the dignity and order of love.

The basis of love, says Scotus, is the integrity of nature: "*naturaliter manent integra*." This means that despite the handicap of original sin, we are so constituted by the Creator as to be morally able to reach the heights of heroic self-sacrifice for God and for neighbor. The integrity of human nature was also the favorite theme of Saint Leo the Great, who uttered this stern warning: "*Non sit vilis homo homini nec in quoquam despiciatur illa natura quam rerum Conditor suam fecit* (Let not man be vile

man, nor that nature which the Creator made His own be despised in any respect)."

But, at the same time, God demands that our natural capacity for loving be supernaturally ordered; it is, therefore, of vital importance that we acquire the right notion of love.

To begin with, Scotus inexorably separates love from its satellites, concupiscence and delectation. Love is not cut out on the human pattern, but on the divine; for the source of all love is God alone. But God is a pure spirit and absolute perfection; love, therefore, is a thing of the spirit, an act of perfection, whereas concupiscence is a passion and as such is imperfect. Nor has love anything to do with the instinct which inevitably governs animal life, because love is essentially free and for this reason bears a specifically moral character which is clearly seen if we consider not the object willed (*volitum*) but the object that ought to be willed (*volendum*). Love must also be distinguished from delectation. The ecstatic pleasures which merely serve to intensify and reward love are non-essentials. Supernaturally, the saints reveal heroic charity (love of God) amidst the most excruciating trials. Saint John of the Cross, an authority on spiritual love, writes: "If in some way the will can comprehend God and be united to Him, this cannot be by feelings but by love only—for the operation of the will is very different from sentiment."

What, then, is love? Scotus describes love as the noblest act of the spirit, the operation of an essentially intelligent free will, prompted by the highest sense of justice. And since God is the Singular Being, the Personal God, the end of love can never be a vague universal good, but must be this or that particular good which, equally with love itself, is particular, concrete, alive, and personal. It is not by chance that Scotus chooses to call love *fruitio* (enjoyment), a term combining the notion of delight and of finality. "*Frui nihil dicit nisi actum inhaerendi objecto propter se* (To enjoy means nothing else than the act of adhering to an object for its own sake)." In modern terminology, this amounts to saying that love is an objective, disinterested will to promote the good of the beloved for his own sake and to be happy over it. "To give others the very best of yourselves," our Lord once explained to a Poor Clare, "happy if they claim it as their own to adorn themselves therewith—such is love." In reference to God, our love retains the same essentials. God is loved for Himself—*propter se ipsum*. "Let love cease to be love," says Charmot, "if it is not the answer of the heart to the perfection of another being."



Therefore, the keynote of love is liberality. Averse to any form of egoistic dominancy, essentially free, love, being the most formal justice, is the most creative liberality. Indeed, it is this theme of creative liberality that pervades the eternal designs of God. If love knows jealousy, it can be but the jealousy of zeal. This is especially true in the spiritual life of union with God. Then, according to the Scriptures, *love is strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell* (Cant. 8, 6).

At its highest perfection, genuine love is a practical ecstasy, a sort of voluntary tidal flux and reflux of selflessness and otherness. By selflessness, love banishes egoism, leaving the soul in the nakedness of its poverty and humility, even to the point of emptiness. It was this selflessness that Christ meant when He taught that the grain of wheat falling into the ground must die in order to bring forth much fruit (Jo. 12, 14-25). By otherness, the lover immerses himself in the beloved, so to speak, and comes to fathom the perfections of the beloved, reaching thereby, with ecstatic delight or ecstatic pain, the goal of love—union.

Since God is love and the Source whence all love flows, the selflessness and otherness of love characterized by liberality, without imperfection, must constitute God's very life, perfection, and happiness. Scotus states this in several daring steps.

"*Dico igitur sic: primo Deus diligit Se* (Therefore I say that God loves Himself first of all)." Because God is Infinite Being, Intelligence, and Free Will, He loves Himself; and, because there can be no mutation in the immutable God, by this operative act of knowing and loving Himself, in the singleness of His love, He lacks nothing in Himself to diminish His happiness. God is perfectly happy, *perfectus beatus*. In this His essential life consists: "In the first instant of origin, the Father loves Himself with an essential, not a notional, love (*In primo instanti originis pater diligit Se dilectione essentiali; sed non notionali*)."<sup>1</sup> Scotus teaches us here that the trinitarian life of God consisting in the production of the Divine Persons is, as it were, commanded by the superabundant love of His essential life: "*ex plenitudine perfectionis ipsius producentis* (from the fullness of perfection of the producing principle itself)." In this love and happiness consists the life of God quite apart from that love that the Father gives to the Son in the Holy Spirit. Overflowing as love is, in reference to God it is liberality itself. God could not be the absolutely perfect agent and not act out of liberality-love, or superabundant perfection. Liberality-love, therefore, is the clue to plurality in God's unity. Moreover, the absolutely perfect God cannot be perfected, nor obtain anything

in return by producing the Divine Persons. *Non expectans retributionem*. And, although love in God is a natural necessary act because God is infinitely loveable, yet it is a free voluntary act because love is of the will, which is essentially free. "There is no non-voluntary there, and so the generation of the Son is not non-voluntary (*Nihil est ibi involuntarium et ideo generatio Filii non est involuntaria*)."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, God could not possibly beget His Son if He did not love Himself and also love to beget the Son. God, therefore, communicates His essence and happiness to the Divine Persons out of sheer liberality-love. The three Divine Persons are thus rightly referred to as the "Subsistent Altruism of God" in the unity of circumincession.

Duns Scotus now turns his attention toward liberality-love as it overflows and embraces external contingent beings, and deciphers the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations (Col. 1, 26).

"*Secundo, diligit Se aliis, et iste amor castus* (Secondly, He loves Himself in others, and this love is chaste)." Because love is gloriously free, God can be expected to perform an unexpected merciful folly. Because love is creative, He can and does create. Because love is liberal, He can and does share His divine life and happiness with His creatures. Because love is creative, He can and does create. Because love is liberal, jective and disinterested, not adding one cubit to His intrinsic glory, yet adding to His extrinsic glory the happiness and glory of His creatures.

"*Tertio, vult Se diligere ab alio qui potest Eum summe diligere* (Thirdly, He wills Himself to be loved by another who can love Him in the highest degree)." God, Who knows that love is ruled by equality, knows also the unfathomable abyss that yawns between Him and His creatures created *ex nihilo*; so the infinite Wisdom chooses to be supremely loved by One Who alone can span the abyss: the God-Man, Christ. There is something of a challenge here on God's part, and, since love is a conquest, the Incarnate Son of God is the victor. Now it becomes apparent that Duns Scotus does away with the tricky design which holds that the Incarnation was decided upon to repair the sin of Adam. With Sacred Scripture to support him, he proclaims the Primacy and Kingship of Christ as first, meritorious, and final Cause of men and angels. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways; I was set up from eternity* (Prov. 8, 22-23). In His public prayer after the Last Supper, Jesus asserted this truth: *Father, . . . in order that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, because thou has loved me before the creation of the world. . .* (Jo. 17, 24). From Saint Paul's epistles to the Colossians and to the He-

brews, we learn that all things were created for Christ Who is the Head of the Body, the Church, because in Him it has well pleased the Father that all His fullness should dwell.

Jesus Christ's response to God's liberality-love is complete. The glorification of His Father comes foremost in His life. Simultaneously with the Virgin's loving fiat, Jesus glorifies His Father in the womb of His mother. *Behold, I come. . . that I should do thy will, O my God* (Ps. 39, 8-9). The Gospel relates how love of His Father was indeed Christ's chief business throughout His earthly life until He gasped out His consummation on the cross: *Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit* (Lk. 23, 46).

"Quarto, Deus praevidit unionem illius naturae quae debet Eum summe diligere (fourthly, God foresees a union of that nature which must love Him in the highest degree)." Christ fully responds to God's love-challenge by a like return of love; but in virtue of our incorporation into the Mystical Body we share in this response. God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight in love (Eph. 1, 4). Accordingly, Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren (Ro. 8, 29). Indeed, we are so closely incorporated into Christ, so intimately associated with Him, that our Lord Himself compares this union to that of branches and vine. *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit* (Jo. 15, 5).

May one dare speak of identification? Yes; and in more than a moral sense. When sanctifying grace takes possession of the soul in Baptism, says Scotus, the soul is espoused by God. "In Baptism, a kind of spiritual marriage is contracted, because the soul is espoused by God (*In baptismo contrahitur quoddam matrimonium spirituale, quia anima desponsatur Deo*). It is as if the seal of Christ marks it out for His own. *You are Christ's and Christ is God's* (1 Cor. 3, 23). Then, when the soul, united to the will of God, partakes of the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in Holy Communion, a gradual transformation takes place and identification is effected. *I live because of the Father, and he who eats me, he also shall live because of me* (Jo. 6, 58). Consequently, inasmuch as we are Christ, in God's sight we are loveable.

Christ, of course, was predestined impassible and glorious. Nevertheless, *ex liberalitate* He freely chose in passible flesh to suffer His ignominious Passion and Crucifixion in order to grant us participation in God's

life, by Him, through Him, and in Him, *Who for the joy set before him, endured a cross* (Heb. 12, 2). Heaven being now open to us by the superabundant merits of our Savior, we sinners, though members of Christ, must do our share. The warning is pertinent: *He who does not carry his cross and follow me, cannot be my disciple* (Lk. 14, 27). Therefore, we are called upon to *fill up what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ* (Col. 1, 24). There is no escape. *Aut vitis, aut ignis!* The reason for this is one of condescension; for, as Scotus points out, the Passion of Christ does not take away our guilt, but it is the meritorious cause of our forgiveness: "*Passio Christi non delet culpam nostram nisi ut causa meritoria*." Intelligent and free willed members of Christ, we too, thanks to Him, are challenged to the conquest of love!

It is a fact that love, whether natural or supernatural, unquestionably holds the primacy; for experience proves that whereas error does not in itself defile the conscience of men, sin always does. Hence the quality and degree of our love is highly important. Not everyone, in regard to love, stands in the highest degree of perfection. As the lover gives less or more or all of himself, the degree of his love is indicated correspondingly. On supernatural grounds, the Pauline plea cannot be reversed: *If I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing* (1 Cor. 13, 3).

But what if, ignoring the true nature of love and its order, we conceive of it as sentiment, passionate desire, sexual gratification, narcissism, or the like? To reach the goal of eternal bliss, we must first be able to detect within ourselves the real motives of our actions, thoughts, desires, likes and dislikes, even—or rather especially—the most secret ones. Yet, it is quite obvious that the surest means of attaining a true judgment of our motives is proper knowledge of what love really is. When one is aware, at least in abstracto, that love is the noblest act of an essentially free will, and not a passion nor a sentiment, and that the sexual union is only a carnal expression of love, it becomes less arduous, not to say less hopeless, to ascend the heights of liberality-love. For the same reason, the gross misconceptions which confuse orthodox mysticism with erotic hedonism in mystic guise are clearly untenable in the light of Scotus' *ordo caritatis*, so perfectly in harmony with the teachings of the Gospel. In the words of Christ Himself: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the spirit is spirit* (Jo. 3, 6). Then again, souls who might be tempted in the life of prayer to prefer "the consolations of God to the God of consolation" and who, when thwarted in their greedy desire,

choose mediocrity, need but remember that the *propter se ipsum* of selflessness and otherness alone can lighten the burden that weighs them down.

Christ calls us all to the love challenge: *I have come to cast fire on the earth and what will I but that it be kindled?* (Lk. 12, 49). The first condition to our catching fire is to break with our narrow conceptions of divine things by faithful cooperation with grace. "The heart must be rent open," said Our Lord to a Poor Clare, "so that My love may penetrate it, if you are to get a glimpse of the destiny you are called to; otherwise, you remain a closed garden with feelings and thoughts of your own within your own narrow horizon." More sensitive to human dignity than any of us, Christ requests our free response to the gift of His love. "My child, give Me thy heart." Because love depends on the will which is essentially free, God needs our gracious pleasure in this affair, for indeed there is something that may perhaps never be His—the hell-fire of hate proves it—something indispensable to love: our own free willing consent.

When the selflessness of mystical death is rewarded in the dawn of mystical life, then it is that the otherness of charity-love gradually sets the heart aflame. Our Lord's own words: *Greater love than this no man has, that one lay down his life for his friends* (Jo. 15, 13), are then understood with a heretofore unknown savor, as the soul ardently desires to carry them into effect. This is matured charity-love experienced by the heroes of divine love—the saints and martyrs. In our own measure of grace, we also are called to the same achievement.

Unicity is the characteristic quality of theological charity-love. Scotus declares this in the final step: "*Habitus caritatis fit unus* (The virtue of charity makes for oneness)." "God alone," says Scotus, "is the first one loved, and loved directly for Himself, *propter se ipsum*." Reflexively, we also love self and neighbor through love of God; and this love increases as our love of God grows more intense, the two loves being now inseparable, and through both of which the soul adheres to the Infinite Good Who is God." Little Therese meant this when she wrote; "Because I loved God *solely*, my heart gradually expanded to the point of loving my dear ones with a tenderness incomparably deeper than had I concentrated my heart upon a selfish and fruitless affection."

The force with which this mightiest of all powers, when set in order, results in unicity is that which Christ spoke of: *That all may be one even*

*as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us* (Jo. 17, 21-23). Now the theological virtue of hope, although a legitimate desire for one's eternal happiness, finds its sustenance in charity-love. Set in order, hope becomes a thirst for God's glory: "Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done!" Its wings are those of a burning seraph. Faith also partakes of the spiritual love-banquet; touched by the flame of love, it yields the most perfect trust and self-surrender to the Beloved.

The *Ordo caritatis* of Duns Scotus is a charter of love in which we learn that at its source in the Triune God, in Christ and in His members, the sole motivation of love is liberality.

Trois Rivières, Que.

Beraud de Saint-Maurice

### On Reading Saint Peter Alcantara's "Prayer for Love"

No weary journey must I make  
This wondrous silent night  
Throughout the world in search of Thee,  
O Rose of Love, my Heart's Delight;  
Nor yet attain to heaven above  
To breathe Thee in, O Fragrance Sweet,  
O Rose of Love.

O Rose of Love, Thou art within.  
Spouse emblossomed, honeyed, sweet!  
Adoringly I sing Thy Name again, again  
With each heart beat,  
With every breath I breathe.

Ravish me and hold my spirit fast,  
Hide me in Thyself, O God most dear,  
And let me know at last  
My rest in here,  
Beloved, Beloved, Beloved.

Detroit, Michigan

Sister M. Charlita, I. H. M.

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- Perantoni, Most Rev. Pacific M., O. F. M.  
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*Franciscan Spirituality*. Herald Press.
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- Da Salo, Mattia Bellintani, O. F. M. Cap.  
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- Dobbins, Dunstan, O. F. M. Cap.  
*They that are Christ's*. South Wales, Ouseley Ltd., 1936. 189p.
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## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

PSYCHIATRY AND CATHOLICISM, James H. Vander Veldt O. F. M. Ph. D. and Robert P. Oldenwald. M. D., F. A. P. A. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1952 Pp. 433. \$6.00.

Father James VanderVeldt and Doctor Robert Oldenwald, both of the Department of Psychology and Psychiatry of the Catholic University of America, have worked together to produce a book of considerable value. PSYCHIATRY AND CATHOLICISM, as the title suggests, is aimed primarily at breaking down the prejudice against psychiatry that exists in so many Catholic—especially clerical—circles, and at making available to pastors and counselors the findings and methods of modern psychiatry. The authors themselves state their purpose tactfully, yet none the less effectively. Among those who directly or indirectly come in contact with the mentally ill are the Catholic clergy. Since priests are not only moral theologians but moral psychologists, they ought to have an understanding of the various classes of mental diseases and the theories attempting to explain them. One objective of the present book is to impart this knowledge. In presenting a description of the main forms of mental disorder, the authors have tried to show what pastors and other nonpsychiatric counselors, when confronted with mental cases, can do and what they should avoid. For the same reason, the counseling procedure and symptomatic methods of psychotherapy have been discussed in some detail because these can—*suppositis supponendis*—more readily be applied by advisers who are not psychiatrically trained than other methods of treatment.

"The second objective of this book is to point out the principles which, according to Catholic philosophy and theology, should govern the theoretical and practical approach to the problem of mental disease."

A third, but apparently secondary, purpose of the authors is to oppose to the fallacies of some modern schools the principles of Christian ethics.

In line with their expressed purpose, the authors have devoted the first half of their book to a summary of general principles and methods of psychiatry and to an evaluation of these from the standpoint of Catholic theology. Such topics as the role of the priest and social worker in helping the mentally ill, the relation between religion and psychiatry, the value of psychoanalysis, are included in the first section.

The second half of the book gives a summary description of the various types of mental illnesses, their nature and treatment. To each chapter is appended a discussion of the moral guilt of such patients and of the pastoral problems involved.

Since *Psychiatry and Catholicism* is primarily addressed to the nonprofessional reader, some of the sections may seem rather thin from the medical point of view. The thinness, however, is amply compensated for by adequate notes and references at the end of every chapter.

This is a book that can be highly and unreservedly recommended.

THE FRIENDS OF SAINT FRANCIS, Sidney F. Wicks. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1952. Pp. 164. \$2.50

As the title suggests, THE FRIENDS OF SAINT FRANCIS is a collection of short essays on the friends of the Poverello, together with an analysis of the qualities that enabled him to inspire friendship in others. The approach is not new, but the manner is lively and provocative. It is a decided relief to find an author with an obviously poetic turn of mind deeply Franciscan enough to see in our Seraphic Father something more than a romantic lover of birds and flowers.



The following is a translation of the handwritten letter of the Supreme Pontiff to the Most Reverend Ministers General of the four Franciscan Families, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the reception of His Holiness into the Third Order of Saint Francis. (*Acta OFM*, LXXI, 201-202)

To My Beloved Sons

Augustine Sepinski  
Minister General of the Friars Minor

Bede M. Hess  
Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventual

Benignus of Saint Hilary  
Minister General of the Friars Minor Capuchin

John Boccella  
Minister General of the Third Order Regular  
Beloved Sons, I, Pius XII, wish you health and

Apostolic Benediction

The gracious letters received respectively from each of you on this occasion recall to Us the memory of a dearly-cherished event; for fifty years ago, while still among the newly ordained, We most willingly enrolled in the ranks of the Third Order of the Patriarch of Assisi, and We entered the highly-esteemed Franciscan Family with supreme spiritual happiness. For even from the flower of Our youth We were well aware how valuable would be this institute of your Founding Father, and how timely, not only for the state of human affairs in the Middle Ages but even for our own time, which is no less tormented by mental care, civil strife, and by international discord and disturbances. We further realize that those evils which are threatening public and private moral standards as well as undermining subversively the very basis of human society can have only one remedy—a return to Christ, Whose Image your Seraphic Father wonderfully mirrored in the activity of his daily life and represented vitally in his own body. In his burning desire to revive and conform to the Christian law, he founded his twin Order for religious men and women who, bound by solemn vows, would professedly strive to live according to the Gospel. But being unable to receive everyone into his religious cloister, his glowing zeal urged him to lead others to their heavenly home in another way. He took counsel and revealed a plan whereby those harassed by the cares of this world could find a path to Christian perfection suited to their state. And so he founded an Order of Tertiaries whom he wished to stamp with singular zeal for penance for their own sins and for the sins of others. He wanted them

endowed with the zeal of fraternal charity, with a longing for domestic and money, and above all with a burning love for God, which would not only away from their wanton vices but also from the enticements of an allusion and from an uncontrolled avarice. Truly he knew full well that the seeming desire for possessing and the insatiable thirst for pleasures gain entrance into the hearts of many. And he realized that from these evils discords arise, disagreements and hatred are ignited, which continually alarm the human race and bring evil destruction upon it. The Apostle bears witness to this fact: *Wars and quarrels come among you? Is it not from this, from your passions, from the wars and quarrels come among you? Is it not from this, from your passions, from the wars and quarrels come among you?*

Even as in the time of Saint Francis, so too in these our times, the Institute of the Third Order can undoubtedly offer supreme support in this regard. For the same evils arise, although they may be cloaked in other garb, yet, granted the same remedies can be applied. Therefore Tertiaries should strive for the perfect fulfillment of the purpose which their Founder kept ever in mind. With an unflagging zeal for all the virtues, they should spread far and wide the love of Christ.

Beloved Sons, we ardently desire that this memorial of our own private life should cede first place to the good of souls. And We will that it may more contribute to the arousing of those seraphic spirits and to their solidification of these evangelical virtues wherein the poor Francis so richly excelled. We are pleased with your information that many Third Order Members, enrolled in the ranks of Catholic Action, are fighting valiantly and often take leading roles. If the united forces become solidly stronger, this Order will do its best and most if it joins a helping hand to this kind of social action; just as the enemies of the Christian are uniting to ward off the efforts of all the good.

Meanwhile, seizing our opportunity from the recent solemnities so devoutly and heartily, We renew our vows to God and recommend to Him in our prayers the Franciscan Third Order, richly endowed by the Catholic Church, may enjoy more widespread growth and may blossom with more abundant fruits of holiness. By way of fostering these salutary benefits, may our Apostolic Blessing be granted to Our Paternal approval. With an overflowing charity, beloved Sons, We impart our Blessing upon every one of you, as well as upon all the members of the Third Order.

Given at Saint Peter's in Rome on the fifteenth of August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year nineteen hundred and fifty-four, the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

Pope Pius XII

Fr. Owen Anthony Colligan, O. F. M.  
St. Bonaventure University

endowed with the zeal of fraternal charity, with a longing for domestic and civil mony, and above all with a burning love for God, which would not only draw away from their wanton vices but also from the enticements of an alluring world and from an uncontrolled avarice. Truly he knew full well that the seemingly insatiable desire for possessing and the insatiable thirst for pleasures gain entrance into the hearts of many. And he realized that from these evils discords arise, disagreements grow, arguments and hatred are ignited, which continually alarm the human community and bring evil destruction upon it. The Apostle bears witness to this fact: *Where wars and quarrels come among you? Is it not from this, from your passions which wage war in your members?*

Even as in the time of Saint Francis, so too in these our times, the Institute of the Third Order can undoubtedly offer supreme support in this regard. For, when the same evils arise, although they may be cloaked in other garb, yet, granted the opportunities, the same remedies can be applied. Therefore Tertiaries should strive toward perfect fulfillment of the purpose which their Founder kept ever in mind and close unflagging zeal for all the virtues, they should spread far and wide the fragrance of Christ.

Beloved Sons, we ardently desire that this memorial of our own private anniversary should cede first place to the good of souls. And We will that it may more contribute to the arousing of those seraphic spirits and to their solid growth in these evangelical virtues wherein the poor Francis so richly excelled. We are greatly pleased with your information that many Third Order Members, enrolled in the ranks of Catholic Action, are fighting valiantly and often take leading roles therein. Should our united forces become solidly stronger, this Order will do its best and most timely work if it joins a helping hand to this kind of social action; just as the enemies of the new Christian are uniting to ward off the efforts of all the good.

Meanwhile, seizing our opportunity from the recent solemnities to thank you heartily, We renew our vows to God and recommend to Him in our prayers that the Franciscan Third Order, richly endowed by the Catholic Church, may enjoy daily more widespread growth and may blossom with more abundant fruits of grace. And by way of fostering these salutary benefits, may our Apostolic Blessing bear witness to Our Paternal approval. With an overflowing charity, beloved Sons, We bestow Our Blessing upon every one of you, as well as upon all the members of the Third Order.

Given at Saint Peter's in Rome on the fifteenth of August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year nineteen hundred and fifty-two, in the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

Pope Pius XII

Fr. Owen Anthony Colligan, O. F. M. (translator)  
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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*We will walk in His paths (Is. 2, 3)*

*Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty (Ps. 44, 11-12).* All through her life these words seemed to Saint Clare to ring in her ears. They were the invitation the Bride and Queen received to come to the Messiah-King, the Church to Christ. They are also the pressing invitation given every soul that is called to higher things, to become the spouse of the King. When Clare opened her soul to the Blessed Agnes of Prague to urge the latter on in her own vocation, she thereby revealed how deep an impression that invitation, received through Christ's bridesman, Saint Francis, had made on her. The life she had chosen, the life she described to Agnes, is that of the bride who has forgotten her people and abandoned her father's house that she may be drawn to her Beloved and run to the sweet fragrance of His ointments.

In March, the month in which Clare fled to her Lover, in Lent when we must renew our Christian life, our religious life (which is but a deepening and perfecting of the Christian life), contemplation of Clare's acceptance of the call of Christ will help us to learn more how *we ought to walk to please God, and to make even greater progress*, that we may fulfill the will of God, our sanctification (Epistle, Second Sunday of Lent). With the Lady Clare we must realize that our vocation is the abandonment of the elements of the world and the adoption of new standards of life; above all, that it is the acceptance of a new "path" or "way" on which to walk: not the three vows alone, but a whole form or pattern of life to which we must dedicate ourselves if we would mount to Thabor and the delights of the Lamb.

*Palm Sunday, 1212*

Saint Francis was not without a sense of the dramatic, which he used

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in order to emphasize the change our vocation demands. In all Francis can drama (which is reality and not a stage-play), next to his own symbolic act before the Bishop of Assisi, the scenes of Palm Sunday, 1212, are among the most powerful. In the morning, Clare is the prima donna before all the people in the Cathedral; in the evening, she steals away into the shadows to meet the Bridegroom and dedicate herself to Him. The Troubadour had taught her to sing a new song to the Beloved.

In the morning, as Saint Francis had bidden her, Clare put on her finery and her jewels and betook herself across the piazza to the Cathedral. There, "radiant in festive attire" among the women of Assisi, she assisted at the blessing of the palms. Yet, when the others went forward to receive their palms, Clare hesitated, out of modesty or perhaps because she was rapt in thought. Suddenly the Bishop himself came down to her place to give her the palm; a mark, no doubt, of his approval of her plans. That night, still dressed in her finery and bedecked with her jewels, she departed from her father's house.

Who shall say that she too did not have a sense of symbolism? Practically, perhaps to escape detection, she did not leave by the usual door, but, symbolically, by the "door of the dead", reserved for the removal of corpses. This, Celano says, she found blocked with heavy beams and stones, and had to open with her own hands and a strength that astonished her. Then she hastened to the Portiuncula, where she was shorn of her tresses as she removed her ornaments. Clothed in a rough tunic and veil, she made profession of the Gospel-life into the hands of Saint Francis.

God gives us our Saints that their lives may teach us as well as edify us. Few of us leave our people and forget our father's house under circumstances as dramatic as these. Yet, inwardly, religious life calls for a like departure from the world. Like Clare, we must "put off the dregs of Babylon and give the world a bill of divorce" (*Legend*, n. 8). Like her, we must forget the ways of the world, its thinking, its standards of judgment, its scale of values. Even many things that are allowed in the life of an ordinary Christian must be foregone or cleansed and elevated in the new life we accept by profession.

By that profession, Saint Francis says, we have set our hand to the plow, and we must not look back to the world we have left behind to the standards of the worldling or even of our father's house. Our eyes

be fixed ahead, to make sure the furrow will be straight and our eyes will not be diverted or damaged by the stones that may lie across the path.

But our enemy is subtle, and the world insidious, and our flesh weak. We find it too easy to make a good beginning yet later, after profession, to lapse into our old ways of thinking, our old standards of judgment. That is why we must be ever on the alert against the cancer of worldliness which, like bodily cancer, can creep upon us unawares and not be discovered until the damage is done and cure impossible. The monthly collection has as one of its purposes such a constant check on our standards and our scale of values. Let us make sure we use well such an opportunity of grace for an examination of conscience such as is proposed in a recent book of that title.

#### *San Paolo. . . San Damiano*

"When Clare had received the livery of holy penance before the altar of the Blessed Mary and as a humble handmaid had been espoused to Christ. . . Saint Francis straightway led her to the Church (the Benedictine nunnery) of San Paolo where she was to remain until the Most High should provide otherwise" (*Legend*, n. 8). It was there that she had to face her kinsfolk who in misguided affection demanded that she return home. Symbolically, she ran to the church, laid hold of the altar-cloths, and showed them her tonsured head, declaring that she would under no circumstances be separated from the service of Christ. Then, after a few days, she withdrew to another nunnery, San Angelo di Panzo, further removed from Assisi.

Yet in neither place "was her soul fully at rest," and only when she came at last to San Damiano could she "fix the anchor of her soul on solid ground" (n. 10). It is very significant that Clare felt at home and in peace only in the little church outside the walls of Assisi, in solitude, loneliness, poverty. Her coming fulfilled the prophecy Francis had made in the spirit of God, that here a community of Ladies was to dwell and serve God; therefore this was the place God had destined for her. Above all, now she could begin to live in earnest that Gospel-life of which she had made profession. True, the Benedictine nunneries had provided her with a religious life—yet she was conscious that hers was to be, with that



of Francis, a new way of life in the Church, and until she could begin that way her soul was not at rest.

Clare, her sister Agnes, and her kinswoman Pacifica of Guelfuc made up the little plant of Saint Francis which was now to flourish in the soil of Saint Damian's. "Though frail in body," Clare describes the group, "neither want nor poverty, travail, tribulation, ignominy nor the world's contempt, had any power to turn them back" from their resolve to follow Christ in Gospel-perfection, in Gospel-poverty. In rejoicing in the Lord at such a sight, Saint Francis soon gave them the *formula vitae*, a "pattern of Life," as he had done for his first Friars. Like the primitive Rule of the latter, this form of life must have been composed mostly of Gospel texts and a few regulations for communal life. But over and above this was the living Rule, Saint Francis himself and after him Saint Clare.

Now, while this early Rule was rudimentary in character and was to be overlaid with later legislation until Saint Clare wrote her own Rule (1247-52) approved by Innocent IV (August 9, 1253), it provided the essentials of the Franciscan way, the Franciscan form of life. This was the point for emphasis. When Clare and her companions made profession it was in the consciousness of accepting not only the three vows but the whole manner of life, a definite *modus vivendi*. Undoubtedly, all religious Institutes suppose that Profession includes, besides the vows made to God, the acceptance also, by a "contract" between the religious and the institute, of a definite form or way of religious life. Yet it would seem (to the author, at least) that this latter element is stressed more in the older mediaeval Orders than in modern institutes. It was very definitely set down by Saint Benedict; it is of practical import for Saint Francis and Saint Clare—and if we appreciate their viewpoint, the Franciscan Rule (of each of the three Orders) takes on more vividly the character of being a path and a pattern of life; it becomes for the Spirit and Life, a basic source of our own inner life.

### *Spirit and Life*

The whole Rule of Saint Benedict implies that it is a way of life, a *via vitae* (Prol.); and, when the novice is to make profession, the Rule is read to him and he is told: "Behold the law under which

we are to serve as God's soldier" (c. 58). For Saint Francis the Rule is the book of life, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection; a host of bread made of Gospel-crumbs which we must eat as such. And the first advice being professed is to promise to "observe this life and rule".

This viewpoint is reflected in the formula of profession that dates back to the thirteenth century and is used today, with proper changes, by all three Orders: "I vow and promise. . . to observe the Rule. . . by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity." Not indeed, as the Spirituals claimed despite Papal reprobation, that the Rule or the Gospel as such is vowed; but, as Saint Bonaventure explained and the Popes have clarified, we accept by Profession a whole way of life set forth and embraced in the vows, the precepts of the Rule (or the Constitutions of the Third Order), and the admonitions or exhortations. In the great Latin formula, there are *vovenda*, the things vowed to God before the authority of the Church; *observanda*, things to be obeyed because set down in the Rule or Constitutions; and the *desideranda*, the exhortations (which are not optional counsels but norms of conduct that make for the perfection of the Franciscan!): all three form for us the pattern of Franciscan living.

Therefore the Rule, says Saint Bonaventure, as the word itself means, is a norm, a guide, a help. It "regulates" the Franciscan in due order to God, his final End, and in his relations to the world, himself and his brethren. The Rule, he says again, is truly a strong city, a fortress, that guards us on all sides and protects us while we do within "the house of wisdom and virtue" the work of the Lord in prayer and study, in labor and in the apostolate.

Keep the Rule, our way of Life, and it will keep you. It is a narrow way, perhaps, but it leads to the gate of Life, for it is the path of the Lord. Each day we must renew our love and loyalty to it, each day resolve to keep it anew and find in it the norm of our whole existence. Is it not striking and most fitting that the Order celebrates the Feast of All Seraphic Saints on the day when the first Franciscan Rule received formal and written approbation from the Holy See? They became Saints by cleaving to the Rule and drinking from it their Franciscan spirit and life and daily living it as their guide on the path of perfection. Let us in turn have great devotion to the Rule, which shows us how we ought to walk in the paths of the Lord; and that devotion will help us to make even greater progress and so fulfill the will of God, our sanctification.

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.

## MOTHER OF MOLOKAI (1)

Just as a study of the part played by Saint Clare in the Franciscan story is an absolute necessity for an over-all picture of Francis of Assisi and his conquest of the world, in much the same manner the tale of Mother Marianne and her achievements among the lepers are fundamental to a more than superficial evaluation of Damien and his work on Molokai. The study of the woman and her part in the leper mission is doubly intriguing in the knowledge that not only was she an American Franciscan, but an American Franciscan quite close to our own day; in fact, it was just a little over a century ago on January 23, 1836, that she was born into the Kopp family, who were then living in Heppenheim, a small town of Germany. At her baptism the very next day, this little one, the fifth child of a second marriage, was given the name Barbara, her mother's name, and even before she was two years old, the family caught up in a spirit of adventure, emigrated to America, where almost immediately they established themselves in Utica, N. Y. They brought with them a strong feeling of family solidarity, and when her mother died, leaving Peter Kopp a widower for the second time, Barbara, though still a very young girl, undertook to keep the family together by assuming the management of the home as though it were the most natural thing in the world. Had she been the eldest, this assumption of the responsibility would have been easily understandable, but she was far from the eldest. Although the eight children of the first marriage had all died by this time, there were still her own two brothers and the four girls, of which she was the second youngest; yet because she was such a dependable child, with a cheery courage and a natural buoyancy of disposition, the whole family seemed automatically to turn to her as to a sure support. The old saying that the child is father to the man is strikingly exemplified in Barbara Kopp, for all the qualities that later characterized her contacts with the lepers and with her fellow workers very early appeared in her relations with her family and their problems. The fortitude, patience, foresight, and judgment, that were so outstandingly a part of Mother Marianne were very much in evidence

Barbara, and the experience of raising a family while still such a child herself must have done much to mature her mind and develop in her a skill in dealing with people which was admittedly a distinctive trait of her personality.

Barbara was almost twenty-six years old before she felt satisfied that she had done justice to the task bequeathed by her mother, the accomplishment of which left her free to carry out a long-time conviction that there was another family awaiting her ministrations, the family of Jesus Christ with its little ones and its aged, those needing to be trained and educated, and those needing care in trouble and in sickness. From early childhood the idea of becoming a Religious had appealed to her; as she grew older, the carrying out of that idea was something merely postponed until the completion of her first commission of foster motherhood. The children were already grown and, for the most part, leading lives of their own when Peter Kopp died. The latter part of his life had been spent as an invalid, and, although her father was not opposed to her entrance into Religion, Barbara was reluctant to relinquish her beloved burden, a trait which was later to try the patience of Damien, when he considered his need for her on Molokai more urgent than the work she was doing. At her Father's death, however, she finally laid claim to her place in the great family of Religious. There must have been much of the pioneer about her, for it was to an infant community that she made application, and, for the most part, the rest of her life was taken up with beginnings or near-beginnings. These Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis had been in New York for only two years and were still very much in a struggling stage when Barbara Kopp sought admission among them. She had had ample opportunity to observe them, both in Saint Joseph Parish in Utica and at the Church of the Assumption in Syracuse, and she liked what she saw. Their spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty was exactly the one that would appeal to her whose life until then had been one of utter unselfishness; she joined their ranks, and on November 19, 1862, Barbara became Sister Marianne. It was the Commissary General of the Order of Saint Francis in America, the Very Reverend Father Leopold Moszymski, who invested her with the Franciscan habit in Saint Mary's Church in Syracuse, because the Sisters had not yet acquired a Motherhouse. Their central headquarters for the time being was the Convent of the Assumption Parish, and it was here that, under the guidance of Mother M. Antonia Eulenstein, Sister Marianne made her novitiate,

and a very devout one, to be sure, if the words of the students of the Religious Life are applicable in reverse—that as the novice so the Religious; for there can be no doubt that as a Religious Sister Marianne bore good fruit. The following year, on November 19, 1863, in the same Church of the Assumption she pronounced the vows which were her official enrollment in her new family.

One marvels, in studying the next years of her life, at the comprehensive training which Divine Providence afforded for her all-embracing work among the lepers. She was teacher, local superior, directress of hospital, Mistress of novices, Provincial Superior, all within the comparatively short period of eighteen years. Sister Marianne began her rather short career as a teacher in the school of the Assumption Parish immediately after her profession; but, from the beginning, that intangible something which distinguishes the born leader, along with her ability to obtain cooperation and good will, and her magnetic personality were strikingly evident to her superiors, who appointed her temporary superior at Rome, N. Y., only two years after her profession. She was a natural administrator, her ability being so pronounced that, from her first post as superior, hers was a series of administrative appointments. In August of the same year she was made principal and superior of Saint Teresa's Convent, a new mission in Oswego; in August 1868, she was appointed superior at Saint Clare's Convent in Utica; in November 1869, she returned to take charge at Saint Teresa's until June 1871, when she was transferred as superior to St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, an institution which her Community had founded just the year before and which once more made a great demand upon her pioneering spirit. In all beginnings there is a period of challenge, and Sister Marianne's courage never failed to meet that challenge; she spared neither her strength nor her feelings—one might almost say that she forced circumstances to line up for success. That her qualities were not only of the external variety is highlighted by the fact that on December 28, 1871, she was chosen to be the Mistress of novices, than which, in regard to personal virtue, there is no more demanding office in a Community, except possibly, that of Mother Superior—and a little later on that office, it was to be given her. She had the faculty of stimulating the young in their zealous ardor; she could keep them on their noble course in spite of discouragement and seemingly insurmountable difficulties; yet, after only a few months as Mistress, she was recalled to the superiorship of Saint Joseph's Hospital, where she served until December 1874, at which

time she was again elected Novice Mistress and Secretary of the Order. This office she held until April 1875, when, at the order of the Mother Superior, she went a third time to Saint Joseph's Hospital. Finally, the Provincial Chapter of December 1877, realizing that she was fitted by experience as well as by nature for the trying duties of the post, elected her Superior of the Community; Mother Marianne had come into her title!

She bore her authority simply and unconsciously; yet there was in her that unyielding firmness so characteristic of the nation of her birth. She exacted absolute, unquestioning obedience in the smallest detail. If Mother had designated a detail, be it ever so minute, no one would venture to change or even modify it. She had a discerning eye which took in a situation at a glance and which, had it not been for her understanding sympathy and unfailing kindness, might so easily have appeared harsh. However, at the Provincial Chapter of July 1881, she was reelected by a unanimous vote; what higher tribute could a Community pay? Then came the summons to the work that was to mark the third stage in the development of her role of Mother.

Because of the spectacular heroism of the warrior-souled Damien, not only the Hawaiian government, but the world at large, was made vividly conscious of the desperate conditions of the lepers on their barren, rugged island in the South Seas. In the first years of his work among them, this young Belgian was carpenter, grave-digger, nurse, doctor, and priest. His work was unending and he himself was untiring; but, since no man alone could possibly fulfill for long all the demands made upon him, it became his dream and daily prayer that Sisters might someday come to assist in his work on Molokai. This cry for Sisters was echoed also by Mr. Walter Gibson, the president of the Board of Health in the kingdom of Hawaii, who exerted great influence over the king, and at whose instigation His Majesty urgently requested the bishop to make an appeal in the United States and Canada for Sisters who would be able and willing to minister to the needs of the lepers, both in Honolulu and in Molokai. Bishop Herman Koeckemann, Bishop of Olba, true to the all-embracing spirit of the Church, dispatched, in quest of the much-needed help, Father Leonor, a fellow missionary of Father Damien.

In the summer of 1883, this emissary had already appealed in vain to more than fifty American Communities who found it impossible to

meet the need, for they were scarcely able to provide the Sisters necessary for the work they had already undertaken. Finally, weary and disheartened, he happened to hear of this small group of Franciscan Sisters in Syracuse, N. Y., and made his way to Saint Anthony's Convent, their Motherhouse. Mother Marianne's instant reaction to his plea—the first lift his flagging spirits had been given in the entire trip from coast to coast. What prompted her immediate personal acceptance of the mission is not known. Perhaps she saw in it an opportunity for coming more like her Seraphic Father, who spent so much of his life in the love and care of the lepers. Whatever her reason, it was a warm response that she gave to the plea, and a brilliant ray of hope that she gave to Father Leonor.

With her heart set on accepting this call to the leper mission, realizing that Father Leonor would make a much more effective advocate than she herself would, she summoned the Community and had him describe for them the more than urgent need for Sisters to aid in the care of the lepers. Not only did they agree as a body, to assume the work, but when the call for volunteers was issued, twenty-four of the Sisters, and, characteristically, nearly all the novices, wrote their names on the list. However, it was obvious that, even with the best of intentions and the most self-sacrificing of spirits, and with added burdens should be to those left behind, only a very few could be spared. The request had been made for twenty-five Sisters; only six were appointed. However, Mother Marianne insisted that as Superior it was her duty to accompany them, for she was unwilling to have the others undertake so venturesome a mission without her. The Community was willing that she should go with the little pioneer band, but only on condition that she return as soon as the Sisters were well established, a condition with which she had every intention of complying.

Early in the morning of October 23, 1883, the little group of volunteers accompanied by Mother Marianne bade farewell to the Sisters, on whose faces they read, mingled with the sadness of all farewells, a family pride in their tremendous sacrifice. Only a few hours after the train had departed, the door of the convent opened and there stood Mother Marianne with a quaint little grin on her face, saying to the astonished Sisters, "I have come back, you see—and now I'll take my purse and go again." She had fulfilled her promise to return! Laughing at their amazement, she hurried to her room, procured the forgo-

cketbook and, almost before they had quite grasped her implication, was off again on the next train, to rejoin her companions at Buffalo the following day.

In San Francisco, after a few days wait, they boarded a small steamship, the *Mariposa*, for the final stage of their journey. Much to the surprise of all who knew her, Mother Marianne was sick during the entire voyage, while the others, after the first day or two, were really able to enjoy the sea air.

Their arrival in Honolulu was heralded by all the bells of the city. The first lady in state to Queen Kapiolani bade them welcome—since the Queen herself was indisposed at the time—and escorted them in royal carriages to the Cathedral, where Bishop Koeckemann, with many of his clergy, greeted and blessed these much needed Sisters of Saint Francis.

They had arrived on November 8, 1883, and already on January 11, 1884, they began their work in the Branch Hospital at Kakaako, just outside the city. It was a hospital exclusively for the lepers, both for the mild cases and for those awaiting deportation to Molokai. The building and its surroundings were deplorably inadequate, much more comparable to a rather poor prison than to a hospital; the attendants were low characters better suited to the office of jailers; the conditions under which the lepers were living were just short of being impossible; and this, added to a natural despondency often concomitant with the disease, made the task of the Sisters overwhelming, and very like the conditions which Father Damien had met when he first went to Molokai. They cleaned; they scrubbed; they fumigated, striving in every way to bring some semblance of cleanliness into the lives of their despairing patients before attacking the other serious problems confronting them, problems both of morals and morale. Had Mother not been the calmly determined person that she was, the outcome might have been disastrous, for so there were several outbreaks of violence which made great demands on her intrepid courage; but she withstood rebellious lepers and enraged caretakers alike.

In the midst of it all came a request from the Queen and from the Board of Health that the Sisters open a new hospital on the Island of Oahu; and, although they certainly could not be conveniently spared from the Branch Hospital, Mother selected two of the six Sisters and set

off with them, after having appointed one of those remaining to charge of the Branch Hospital in her absence. On the trip they met about every adversity possible: a difficult voyage, a hurricane just as they were about to land, a complete drenching with rain and wind while landing, and a very slow horse-drawn carriage ride over stones, roots and holes. On their arrival at their destination the two Sisters were taken seriously sick; in fact, one of them never did get entirely well again; but Mother, after her usual bout of sea-sickness, was apparently none the worse for all the exposure. On April 24, 1884, they took charge of the new Malulani Hospital, an institution for all non-contagious sicknesses, and opened a grade school nearby for native children. Scarcely had these two projects been organized when the Bishop asked Mother Marianne to return to the Branch Hospital, where she was badly needed. During Mother's absence, the Sister in charge had found it difficult to enforce her authority; and there occurred such a serious rebellion on the part of the lepers against the Superintendent, Van Gieson, that, upon the return of Mother, he was removed from the hospital and Mother Marianne was put in charge. She was a woman of few words who always accepted conditions as she found them, and such time as she could effect a change; but, true diplomat that she was, when opportunity came she acted immediately. Now, freed from the overbearing interference of Van Gieson, she made a great many changes. Because she was utterly without fear, or so it seemed, the lepers trusted her instinctively; and she won them to almost complete docility by her kindness and genuine good will.

Queen Kapiolani had for her the greatest respect, and on one occasion when she had summoned Mother in order to express her gratitude for the work of the Sisters, she voiced a sympathy for them because of the hardships which they were called upon to endure; but, true to character, Mother Marianne answered by telling her that to do God's work was never a hardship. When Mother was leaving, the Queen left a crisp note in her hand; and although Mother Marianne was ever practical as well as holy, and realized that the donation would buy cots and for repairs, yet she prized above all the intelligent understanding of the lepers that she had been seeking and had now received.

Shortly after Christmas, trouble flared up again, this time with a half-native policeman named Tom Burch. He had been right-hand man to Van Gieson and was a man of most violent temper. This night

all an attractive little sixteen year old girl was missing, and a native policeman told Mother that Burch had taken her to his room. Mother Marianne was indignant and determined, for it was a situation that had to be met at once. She knocked at his door and demanded that it be opened, speaking in such a tone that not even Burch dared disobey. He opened the door and stood there, a huge man, towering over Mother, looking like a maddened beast. When, without wavering, she demanded the keys, telling him that he could no longer be their policeman, furious to the point of madness, he threw the keys out the window into the ocean; and, after a moment spent, he stalked off, while Mother calmly led the little leper girl back to her ward. A triumph of courage over brawn!

The need for such courage being fully appreciated by Bishop Koeke, he wrote on February 12, 1885, to the Minister Provincial, Mr. Joseph Lessen, asking for Mother Marianne's release from the custody of Mother Provincial. To his plea was added that of the Hawaiian Government, the Minister of Health, as well as the royal rulers, for all of whom were convinced that Mother was a necessity in Hawaii. On August 1, 1885, the request was granted by the Provincial Chapter, and Mother Marianne made the first Commissary General of the Franciscan missions in Hawaii.

For a long time now, the Queen and Mr. Gibson, the president of the Board of Health, had hoped to gather together the children of leprosy parents and put them into a home where they would be cared for, kept free from contact with the disease, and given the proper schooling. With the customary foresight which went directly to the heart of the problem, Mother Marianne suggested that such a home might be built near the Sisters' residence in Honolulu. The Queen herself supplied the funds for the building; and, three more Sisters having arrived from Syracuse, Mother Marianne, making no concession to difficulties, except to limit her attendance to the girl children of leper parents, accepted this new charge. The home was opened on November 9, 1885, and on that day King David Kalakaua decorated Mother with the Order of Kapiolani, an order established by him to reward acts of benevolence in behalf of his people.

The girls themselves and some of their parents resented this interference and made things difficult—there was even a murder, in protest, when the uninfected children were being separated from their leprosy parents and brought to the Kapiolani Home. The girls ranged in age from

five to thirteen and had been positively unruly; they were little rebels and openly revolted against any regulation which interfered with their freedom—the sort of freedom which they had had on the Isle. As Mother of this Home, Mother Marianne certainly had to exercise her ingenuity and while she was still attempting to discipline and civilize her problem children, Damien came, much against his will, to submit to a series of treatments then being given by a Japanese Doctor at the Branch Hospital. It seems, however, that his leprosy was much too far advanced for the treatments to have been successful, and he was far too impatient to be back at work on Molokai ever to stay for the entire series. Nevertheless, to the Sisters, his visit was a spiritual treatment, for Damien was their hero; his example had drawn them across a continent, and they rejoiced to be able to render him even the slightest service.

To Mother Marianne, the visit was even more significant. For a long time she had been thinking in terms of Molokai; for quite a while it had been her firm conviction that her real life work lay on that little island. Her response was a foregone conclusion when Father Damien, his mind teeming with plans, his body fast wasting away, in the course of his conversations with her reiterated his plea that he had made so often to the Board of Health, but which they had consistently ignored because they had so many other plans for the Sisters.

Father Damien had not been in Honolulu even two weeks when he was back on the steamer bound for Molokai, and Mother Marianne was waving her farewell from the wharf, reassuring him of her intention to send Sisters to Molokai very soon. "Hurry," he cried, as the ship pulled away, "there is not much time, you know." As she looked at Damien for the moment seeing just the man, so wasted and disfigured by his dread disease, she realized that he did not exaggerate, and she was thankful for his timely visit. It had been a meeting of kindred spirits, of two strong minds with but a single thought of service, of two wills determined that even these least brethren in the household should be led by the means within their power to the mansions of their Father. And as the boat receded, her conviction became a determination that not only would there be a Damien of Molokai; there would be Sisters of Saint Francis on the Isle, and there would be a Mother Marianne of Molokai.

(to be continued)

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sr. Maura, O. S. F.

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XII)

### *The Eleventh Article*

**TEXT:** *They should also daily examine themselves before God on what they have done, said and thought, that is, examine their conscience, humbly seeking pardon for their faults, and offering and commending to God their purpose of amendment.*

The two previous articles of this chapter on the relations of Tertiary Regulars to God stressed the love of adoration. The present article is concerned with another form of love, that awakened by the sense of one's sinfulness, misery and need—the repentant love of a wayward child.

### *Before God...*

Indeed, this "thinking over" (*cogitare*), as the Latin text puts it, of what one has "done, said and thought" is not simply a personal self-analysis. It is rather a mutual affair "between oneself and God" (*intra se et Deum*). Like the meeting of the Prodigal Son with his father, even before we begin to confess our guilt in words we feel the arms of God embracing us and the divine kiss of forgiveness on our protesting lips.

The important role the examination of conscience plays in the spiritual life is sometimes overlooked not only by neophytes but also by those who have spent many years in the convent. Because religious are not conscious of any serious sin or even deliberate venial sin, they tend to acquire a sense of complacency and spiritual well-being that may well be the prelude to, if not the sign of, incipient lukewarmness. *Thou sayest 'I am rich and have grown wealthy and have need of nothing,' and dost not know that thou art the wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked one* (Apoc. 3, 17). *For if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us* (1 Jo. 1, 8). What a con-

trast between this attitude of complacency and that of Francis, who in all sincerity continually protested he was the "greatest of sinners."

Indeed, this sense of sin, this pressing need to seek pardon and forgiveness of God for even trifling faults is one of the striking characteristics of souls far advanced in the love of God. It is but one aspect of a more general frame of mind that could be called "poverty of spirit", to use Christ's own designation. To understand better the significance of this article of the Rule, then, a digression on the meaning of the first beatitude may not be out of place.

If the Sermon on the Mount can be called the "Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven", the eight beatitudes are not inaptly termed its "preamble". As expressed by Saint Matthew, they indicate the inner dispositions of anyone who would belong to Christ, especially as His apostle or His bride.

"Poverty of spirit" in the first beatitude apparently refers only indirectly at most to detachment from worldly goods. Even that ardent lover of poverty, Francis, did not interpret the beatitude in this narrow sense (*Admonitions*, n. 14). In its primary meaning, the poor in spirit are those who lack the self-conceit and pride that so generally characterized the Pharisees. The latter considered themselves spiritually rich. As "sons of Abraham" they had no need of John's baptism of penance or of Christ who came to save sinners.

Now, nothing shuts the floodgates of God's mercy so quickly and effectively as pride, for *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (James 4, 6). Or as Mary, whose humility was proportionate to her sanctity, phrased it: God regards the *lowliness of his handmaid*. He has *scattered the proud, put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly*.

God himself enunciated this same truth of the spiritual life in other words when he told Saint Paul: *Strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12, 9). Not only does God manifest his power in the weak but makes them the special objects of His love. As He told his chosen bride Saint Margaret Mary, to whom he revealed the intimate love of His Sacred Heart, "If I had been able to find a creature more miserable than you, I should have chosen her." It is the lost sheep that provokes compassion in the Divine Shepherd. No wonder then that Paul declared

*gladly therefore I will glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me* (2 Cor. 12, 9).

Some might try to explain this by saying that divine love also is blind. But, as one psychologist puts it, love only seems to be blind. Actually, it possesses a keener vision, for it sees the potential as actual. That is to say, love sees not only what we are but what we can become. Certainly, this seems true of the God whom Saint John calls "Love". After all, this is not surprising, for true love is not a self-seeking but a self-giving movement, not a movement inward but outward, not an acquisition but a communication. That paradoxically is why God is attracted not by what we are but by what we are not. For that reason, being loved by God is at once an exalting and humbling experience.

Once this profound truth is grasped, the attitude of the saints becomes understandable. Their meticulous self-scrutiny, their ferreting out the slightest faults, their sense of their own sinfulness, is itself a living commentary on the first beatitude. The Kingdom of heaven is only for the spiritually poor.

*They should daily examine themselves...*

It is not surprising, then, that the Rule wisely prescribes daily examination of conscience for those who by their profession have the obligation to strive for perfection. Formerly, the Rule of the Tertiaries Regular specified that this examen should take place at the close of the day. The present Rule leaves the designation of the time to the constitutions of the respective institutes. In most Franciscan communities, however, sanctioned either by custom or the constitutions, a practice exists of assigning the general examination of the conscience to the evening and devoting a short period before the noonday meal to the particular examen. Already in Saint Bonaventure's *Regula Novitiarum*, we seem to have a hint of this latter practice.

*On what they have done, said and thought...*

The time of the day devoted to self-examination, however, is not so important as the manner of conducting it. The above words of the rule imply it should cover every aspect of our life, not only our external words or deeds but the internal thoughts and sentiments of our soul. But the idea is not simply to make a complete inventory of the sins we

may have committed, or the good resolutions we have failed to carry out. Far more important is the discovery of the underlying motives behind our actions. It is through the study of the latter that we come to know our fundamental weakness, our deep-seated defects of character, our tremendous potentialities for sin. And it is here that we find the true basis for the humility that all spiritual writers claim is the foundation of the virtue of the spiritual life.

Indeed, in its own way humility is as blind, or, if you will, as keen vision as is love. If charity sees potential virtues as actual, humility does the same with vices or sin. Perhaps this more than anything else explains why the saints so often see themselves as the greatest of sinners. Saint Philip Neri, for instance, seeing a criminal led to execution exclaimed, "There but for the grace of God goes Philip." His was a vastly different attitude than that of the Pharisee who thanked God he was not like the publican. Philip felt himself weak; the Pharisee believed himself strong. The Jew prided himself upon the positive perfection he thought he possessed, the sins he had avoided, the vices he had not contracted. The saint, on the contrary, saw the sins of the other as something he might well commit if exposed to the same or even lesser temptations. Both the Pharisee and Philip thanked God, the former for the strength he considered he had received, the latter because God in his mercy had spared him his weakness.

It is through a continual and rigorous self-analysis that religious come to know the unflattering side of their character. It is here that the faithful use of the particular examen is of special value. The general examination of conscience, on the other hand, like the weekly Confession of devotion prescribed by Canon Law for religious, reminds us in a more general way of our spiritual poverty, our tremendous need of God.

#### *Humbly seeking pardon...*

Both the examination of conscience and confession, the sacrament of the poor in spirit, have the very practical purpose of keeping religious humble, ever conscious of the tendencies to sin that lie dormant in their soul. Where this humility born of self-knowledge is present, dangerous habits will never mature, and serious or even deliberate venial sins will rarely, if ever, appear. The religious who daily avert to

their inherent weaknesses will not lightly expose themselves to the temptations of sin.

Perhaps the spiritual fruits of this daily examination of conscience and the poverty of spirit it engenders are best expressed in terms of the four subsequent beatitudes. *Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the earth.* Who can be truly humble and not be meek? As Francis puts it, "He who is truly poor in spirit, hates himself and loves those who strike him on the cheek" (*Admonitions*, n. 14). Recognizing our utter unworthiness, we meekly accept the injustices of others, the trials and burdens that are ours. These are the price we must pay to possess the promised land. As we know from Psalm 36, from which this beatitude is taken, God's grace will eventually triumph over sin and its effects—even in our own soul. In the present life, however, we shall know something of the anguish of Paul. *Who will deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. 7, 24). Ours will be the one great sorrow, that of not being a saint. *Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.* And "comforted", in its etymological meaning, implies that God himself shall be "with us" as our "strength" our "consolation". This sense of sin, this law in our members warring against the law of our mind (Rom. 7, 23) should awaken in us a fierce hunger and thirst after justice or spiritual perfection; for only to those blest with such a hunger has Christ promised satiety. And finally, what is so important if life in a religious community is to be humanly possible, we shall be understanding and forgiving of the faults and defects of others. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Only then dare we pray: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others.*

#### *Offering to God their purpose of amendment...*

Far from depressing the soul, this growth in the knowledge of its weakness, its spiritual poverty, should serve to goad it to greater efforts. We should say, as Francis did towards the close of his saintly life, "Let us begin to do good, for until now we have done nothing." Even the recurrence of the same faults week after week despite our best efforts will not engender a "what's-the-use" attitude that could paralyze all effort towards improvement. Instead, we shall use this very proof of our spiritual poverty as a claim for God's merciful help, and ask once more for his sacramental absolution upon our past.



If Franciscan religious use confession and examination of conscience in this way, they will begin to see why this article of the Rule is an integral part of the chapter devoted to the love of God. The parable of the Prodigal will be more than a graphic bit of fiction to illustrate the mercy of God. It will be the story of their own life. Paradoxically, it is the sense of sin, real or potential, rather than the consciousness of virtue that draws saintly souls to God. Like the misery of the Prodigal Son, their spiritual poverty will turn their thoughts towards their everlasting home. Like Paul, wearied with the struggle with self, they will long to be dissolved and to be with Christ. But the mere unburdening of one's misery before God in this fashion itself produces a wonderful peace. Like the wayward son, religious will find that their Father is not content to wait for them at the door of heaven. He comes down the road, as it were, to meet them. In an embrace that is at once a confession of guilt and a kiss of love, they will find the strength and courage to walk arm in arm with God to the threshold of their Father's house.

(to be continued)

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Fr. Allan Wolter, O. F. M.



Even though he had already laid up abundant treasures of merit in the store-house of the Lord, this man (Francis) was *always new*, always eager for the things of the spirit. Not to be doing something good he considered a grave offense; not to be always advancing was, he judged, to go backward.

Thomas of Celano

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Saint Francis is loved by the world because the world thinks itself loved by him. Catholics and non-Catholics, even non-Christians, admire him for his open mind and heart. He despised no one, saw danger in nothing, but, on the contrary, loved and was loved in return by all men. He walked through this world with childlike unconcern, drinking in the beauty of creation, listening and talking to the birds, taming the ferocity of the wolf, captivating by the charm of his personality everyone from pope to robber. At last the world had its saint, the saint of the world! "Everybody's Saint Francis!" At last evangelical perfection and true sanctity had been made easy! Yet, what the world admires in Saint Francis is but an effect, the cause of which is conveniently overlooked. The world sees only that somehow Francis regained the lost Paradise, but gives little thought as to how he regained it. In order to attain the marvellous immediacy of his approach to creatures and to the Creator, Francis had to undergo a complete and excruciating conversion, or rather, a complete death to self and to all creatures. His new life, his "naturalness", was the effect of his death to this world, the effect of the purification that resulted when he had lost all things to regain them again in God. Thus it is simply the experience of his own life that he explains when he tells us what he means by purity of heart:

*Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God* (Mt. 5, 8).  
Of pure heart are those who despise earthly things and seek heavenly things, and cease not therefore always to adore and to see the living and true God with a pure heart and mind.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now measure our own life against our Seraphic Father's standard of a pure heart. To the worldly-minded, this standard is harsh,

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Missal occur frequently in the writings of Saint Francis. For the above text cf. the Postcommunion for the Second Sunday of Advent: ... *placeas nos terrena despiciere et amare caelestia*; and the Canon, Commemoration of the living: ... *aeterno Deo, vivo et vero*.

even brutal, just as the words of Christ are hard. But it is the standard of perfection, and perfection is attained only through violence to self.

According to Saint Francis, a pure heart is a sound heart, a healthy heart, a heart in its natural state untouched by anything strange or foreign, its beauty unmarred by any blot or stain. It is a heart that is simple and innocent. It loves nothing that it should not love, nor does it love in any way that it should not love. The heart of man was created by God; it is His and He wants to possess it totally. Any love that does not find its beginning and end in Him is foreign to our heart and makes it impure. Saint Francis knew he could not divide that little heart of his; he was called to love the great God, the Father in heaven. Could he do less than offer his poor finite heart with its total capacity for love in return for the infinite love of God?

With this in mind we can understand that our heart can be pure only if it loves God with a pure and undivided love, if God alone matters and nothing else. Without God all created things lose their value. Not only do they lose value, but they assume the ridiculous role of a substitute, of an *Ersatz*, for that one love and that one satisfaction that really matters. Let us think of this seriously for a moment. All that is beautiful and desirable and noble in this world—the great achievement of human genius in art, science, and industry; the cultural and political glory of nations, the splendor of the human spirit of adventure, enterprise, sacrifice; the nobility of friendship; the tenderness of human loves, even the most sacred—all these, if they are considered apart from God, become as so much worthless refuse. And if we set our heart on any of these things for their own sake alone, we are setting our heart on a dung-hill. This is the meaning of Saint Paul when he says: *I count everything as loss for the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them but as dung that I may gain Christ* (Phil. 3, 8). And now let us scrutinize our heart and judge whether or not it is pure according to the standard of Saint Francis.

### 1. Do I despise all earthly things?

Certainly, we will answer, we do realize that all earthly things are vain, that they cannot fill our heart. Did we not renounce all things, even the most highly valued, when we took our vows? Did we not will to for-

go a promising career, a life of success and achievement in the world? Does it not follow, then, that we despised these things? Perhaps, but not necessarily; for it is not unusual to find religious who have indeed vowed to observe poverty, chastity, and obedience according to the Rule of Saint Francis, and who yet cling tenaciously to many things that are not of God. It may be well, then, for us to ask ourselves in all honesty: Have I cleansed my heart from all attachment to the things of earth? Do I really consider created things in their infinite worthlessness in the sight of the infinite God? Or do I, on the contrary, feel that our Seraphic Father is a little too radical in his demands, that his is a *hard saying, and who can hear it* (Jo. 6, 61)? If we should ever feel that our holy Father is asking too much of us, we need only to turn to the Gospels and hear the voice of Christ Himself: *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother. . . yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple* (Lk. 14, 26).

It is precisely as Franciscans that we are called to the radicalism of the Gospel, and the Gospel makes it clear that it demands our spiritual death—death, that is, to everything that is of this world. Can I truly say that I have died this death? Have I given up everything completely, as Saint Francis did? Francis began to die when he embraced the leper—the one thing he thought he could never do. Is there perhaps something in my life that I feel I cannot give up—a person, a place, a position? Am I so attached to my work or to my talents that I cannot bear the thought of being deprived of them? Sometimes it is a very small thing that stands between us and perfect purity of heart—perhaps merely a little souvenir. Do I protest or rebel when I am threatened or actually faced with the loss of these things I so foolishly cherish? If so, we cannot consider ourselves clean of heart.

And what about the so-called honors of titles and learning and positions of authority? Do I really consider these things as mere garbage, as utterly worthless in themselves apart from God? Why, then, am I so painfully hurt when I am relieved of a high office, or why do I hanker after offices to which I am not assigned? Why do I so proudly display my gift for brilliant talk? Why do I insist so much on my own opinion, why am I so convinced of my infallibility? If we are so much in need of the praise of men, how can we say that we despise the things of the world?

When Saint Francis laid his clothing at the feet of his angry father and cried out: "Now I can truly say: Our Father who art in heaven!" he

began to die to all natural loves. Have I, too, begun to die this death, despising my relatives and friends? It is certainly not an easy matter to despise our parents and our dearest friends, to regard them as mere creatures and therefore of no value in themselves as far as we are concerned. Yet this is what Saint Francis requires of us; it is what Christ Himself requires of every Christian. We know the Gospel account of a man who wished to follow Jesus, but asked leave first to bury his father. Christ answered: *Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but do thou go and proclaim the kingdom of God* (Lk. 9, 60). These words of our Divine Master may shock us a little, but we must learn to realize that the light of the infinite love of God, all human loves, even the most sacred, are but darkness. Dare we ask ourselves, then, if we are ready to sacrifice any of our natural loves if they are clearly obstacles to us attaining to purity of heart? Or do we perhaps fail to see, or refuse to believe, that they really are obstacles? If we find ourselves becoming entangled in the worldly affairs of others, or if love for others leads us to violate our duty to God and to our vocation, let us have the courage to recognize these loves as impurities and to cleanse our heart of them.

We must understand, of course, that there is no question here of sinful love. It is simply a question of loving without the least attachment to the beloved—of loving all things purely, freely, and solely because of God. No doubt there are but few of us who have reached such purity of heart, such total detachment from all creatures. But let us at least begin for this purity, let us pray and strive for it daily, and let it be our deepest sorrow that we have not yet attained it. For those who have gained the purity of heart have gained the liberty of the children of God.

## 2. Do I seek heavenly things?

The human heart is made for love; it cannot help loving. To let it die to all earthly love, to free it from every impurity and admixture of created things, can never mean to let it die to love itself. It can only mean that the heart turns toward another direction, away from earthly things to heavenly things; from things for which it was not made to things for which it was made. One for Whom it was made. Thus the second characteristic of purity of heart mentioned by Saint Francis is the reverse of the first. To seek heavenly things means to turn all our love to God, to our Father in heaven.

What does this mean to us? In order to make this question as concrete as possible, let us limit ourselves to a consideration of our vocation. For, after all, we entered religion not to seek the things of earth but to seek the things of heaven. Let us, then, ask ourselves: How do I value my vocation? We will not ask whether we regret having entered the religious life, but rather if that life is really dear to us. Do I regard the Rule, the Constitutions, the customs and daily routine, as of the greatest value to me because they help me to purity of heart? Or do I, on the contrary, regard them lightly and easily seek excuses and dispensations? Do I perhaps criticize the rules that control my life, not for the sake of improvement or reasonable adjustment, but because they hurt my love for earthly things? Do I have a taste for, and a real understanding of, the religious exercises, common and private prayer, the liturgical life, sermons and conferences, spiritual conversation and reading? Or have I allowed a certain impurity, in a sense more dangerous than impurity of the body, to take hold of my heart and weaken love for my vocation? How sad the religious who has lost his first love. What was the cause? Did he perhaps allow himself to become too much occupied with earthly things—work, study, research, the care of others, even the care of souls—so that he lost the spirit of prayer? Did he perhaps try to be respectable in the eyes of men and forget to be respectable in the eyes of God? If we must be busy about many things, well and good; but let us never forget that we can attain and preserve purity of heart only if we seek first and always the kingdom of heaven.

If our religious life is the constant striving for heavenly things, it can never be taken as an end in itself. Do I realize that the ultimate purpose of my religious vocation is to lead me to my eternal home, and that death is but the gateway to my real life? Hence, must not my entire religious life be but the preparation for my death? Applying this thought to a practical point: do I plan and think of the future always with death in mind? Or am I like those superficial and earthly-minded people who cannot bear to be reminded of death? Do I perhaps believe that if I cannot work I am useless to the community, forgetting that my one real task in the religious life is to prepare myself for a happy death? If I live united to Christ in His sufferings, then I should have no fear of dying united with Him in His death—for through death we enter with Him into His glory.

3. *Do I always adore and see the living and true God  
with a pure heart and mind?*

Although these words of our holy Father may seem somewhat redundant—"of pure heart are those who . . . always adore and see God with a pure heart"—on closer consideration we find his meaning clear. Once our heart is pure, once we have centered all our love on God alone, then our purified heart will not be able to do anything else than adore and adore the Creator in all His creatures. This is the secret of the Seraphic Father's love for the world. To his pure heart and mind everything about him spoke of God. He saw the footsteps of the Lord in the natural world; he saw the image and likeness of the Lord in the souls of men. The ardor of his love for God simply overflowed upon the world and covered all creation with an aura of divine splendor. Never could our holy Father regard the world as a place of evil, nor the beauty of the world as a snare to his soul. To him all creation was a vast mirror, reflecting in its finite loveliness the infinite beauty of the God who possesses his heart.

Franciscan love of the world is a result, not a cause; it is not to be the first step in our spiritual life, but the final reward of generous and radical denial. It is the worst kind of foolishness to equate Franciscan spirituality with a sentimental love for the creature world. Let us ask ourselves honestly if our love for created things, for our fellow-men, is the effect of our having first died to them in order to find them again made worthy of love, in God.

No doubt we all have far to go before we possess the purity of heart that Saint Francis calls blessed. But we can at least pray, and we can pray our own beautiful prayer for purity:

"O my God, grant that the fiery and sweet strength of Thy love may absorb my soul from all things under heaven, that I may one day be found worthy to die for love of Thy love, as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love."

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## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

SAINT BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE, Agnes De la Gorce, translated by Rosemary Sheed. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952. Pp. 213, with frontispiece. \$3.00.

This is one of the most charming studies of a saint that has appeared in many months; and strangely enough, it is a study of that most difficult and generally unappealing saint, Benedict Joseph Labre. Dirty, verminous, useless to society, a beggar making endless pilgrimages to the great shrines of Europe, Benedict Joseph is as much a challenge to the materialism of our society as he was to the perfumed rationalism of his own eighteenth century.

Benedict Joseph wore the cord of Saint Francis, and perhaps no other saint in modern history has come closer to the spirit of the Seraphic Francis than this strange young man whose spiritual life was influenced by the sixteenth-century rigorist, Pere Le Jeune, who longed to be a Trappist, and who died in the house of a Roman butcher. Like Saint Francis, Benedict Joseph followed the Gospel literally, and in so doing he became a sign of contradiction to an age of contradictions. It was the Gospel paradox of losing one's life to find it that drove him to become a nameless beggar on the roads. It was love for the suffering Christ, for the Son of God Who for love of us became a worm and no man, despised and reputed with the wicked, that drove him to the abyss of humiliation and self-annihilation. Only when understood as a literal following of Christ—the suffering Christ—does the meaning of Benedict Joseph's life become clear to us.

Agnes De la Gorce has written a beautiful and penetrating study of Saint Benedict Joseph. She has sketched for us the forces that influenced his spiritual development; the conditions, social, political, and ecclesiastical, that make up the background for his life; and she has told the story of his life—as much as is known of it—with unusual skill and understanding. Rosemary Sheed's translation is very good.



From the General Secretariat of the Franciscan Missions comes the following account of Father Fortunatus Tiberi's imprisonment by the Reds. This is a fair example of what our missionaries are suffering under the Red regime in China.

Father Fortunatus Tiberi was held in a Soviet prison in Peking from September 1951, to June 6, 1952. On October 20 he was confined to a very small and dark cell. Every day from then on, he was subjected to long and frequent interrogations, during which he had to remain standing. One such interrogation lasted thirteen hours straight.

On November his hands were bound behind his back in "ordinary" chains. The

next day the "ordinary" chains were replaced by "special" chains, which meant that arms were bound so tightly to his back that his shoulders were almost dislocated. The soldiers had to help to apply the chains. After they had bound him in this way, forced him to roll on the floor or to sit on his heels so that he kept falling, suffering great pain in his arms and shoulders. Whenever he fell to the floor, two soldiers kicked and beat him until he managed to rise. Then he had to sit on his heels again, and went on until finally he was too exhausted to get up. They helped him to his feet after that he had to remain standing. When the soldiers brought him food they did not remove the chains, so they put the food on the floor and made him eat from a bowl like an animal. The next day the "special" chains were removed and the "ordinary" chains were put on; but on the following day he was again bound in "special" chains. Then for days and nights he had to stand looking at an electric light. At the end of the day he was permitted to sit on the floor, but upright and without the least support. Still bound, he was forced to remain in this position for the next thirty-four days. he was not permitted to sleep or even close his eyes or to move his lips in prayer. Whenever his eyelids closed or his lips moved, the soldiers struck him. For a total of forty days he had no sleep, yet in this state of exhaustion he was forced to undergo examinations and questionings. Finally he was ordered to appear before the judge. He had to climb more than forty steps, and that in bare feet (it was midwinter) but sooner did he stand before the judge than he was ordered to go back down to his cell. Soon as he reached his cell he was told to go upstairs again. He was forced to go up and down the stairs more than ten times, and in his pitiful condition, bound, broken, nearly perishing with hunger, he finally collapsed. After that he was allowed to lie on the floor and sleep. The first night he slept well, but the following nights he could not sleep because of the terrible pain in his arms and shoulders.

On December 18, he was transferred to another prison and treated less inhumanely. There he had to study Communist doctrine, and along with the course of study he had to write the story of his life in minute detail. Every day, too, he had to write what he had been thinking about from morning till night.

On May 29, he was "absolved" from his sins and his thoughts, and was then given better treatment. Every effort was made to conceal the evidence of the torture he had undergone so it would not be too apparent when he left China. On June 1, he was sentenced to expulsion from China on account of his crimes. The "crimes"—which he really deserved death—were the organizing of the Legion of Mary and the giving of secret information to the Imperialist Riberi (the Apostolic Internuncio). He was taken to Tientsin under guard and placed on a ship that brought him to Hong Kong and freedom.

MEMORANDUM FOR OUR FATHER FRANCIS:  
APRIL 16

*come and help me in the building of this Monastery of Saint Damien;  
or, in time to come, there will dwell therein ladies, by whose marvellous  
and holy living the Lord will be glorified throughout His Holy Church  
(Words of Saint Francis as told in the Testament of Saint Clare).*

Because a curious dream ruined your heart  
And your ambition melted into songs,  
We shall all take up candles  
Today, and love like clouds.

The day Christ gashed your hands and feet and side,  
We stirred in deep folds of eternity;  
And down some secret avenue of Being,  
Our uncreated voices called you: Father!

We rouse the night with antiphons, and blame  
Our sleep with psalmody. Because you wept  
Your own eyes pure as blindness, we shall keep  
An everlasting vigil of your dreams,

Intruding on your glory for a witness  
How, when you dragged protesting stones one season,  
Talking of ladies and of holy living,  
Our cloister sprang up on the floor of Heaven.

What unremembered bird, I wonder, listened  
Down seven centuries the day your vows  
Robbed Lucifer's throne of loneliness, and heard us  
Singing, by rumor, here among these trees.

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

Sr. Mary Francis, P.C.

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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*Be rooted in Him and built up on Him (Col. 2, 7)*

The Allelujas of Easter break upon our ears; the joys of Easter fill our hearts. *Resurrexit sicut dixit!* Christ has died for us, but He is risen again triumphant over sin and death. His resurrection is the proof of His work, the Father's seal of acceptance. But His resurrection is our new life in Him. For as Christ died and rose again, so we by Baptism were buried with Him into death and thus have received newness of life. And as Christ now lives unto God, so the Christian, dead to sin, must be alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6, 4-11). Therefore, we must be a leaven of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5, 7). Above all, we must seek and mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth (Col. 3, 1-2). How vividly we experience new life if we have had the glad opportunity of participating in the Easter Vigil, lighting our candle from the new Light which is Christ, renewing our pledge to live with Him unto God.

This is the meaning of Easter for all Christians, a renewal of life in Christ, a re-awakening to the conscious appreciation that Christian life is in reality the Christ-life in us. Now, inasmuch as religious life is a higher and deeper form of the Christian life, of Christ-life, the lesson of Easter has even greater significance for us. It should make us realize more than ever that our whole Franciscan life is nothing but the sharing of Christ's life; that every element thereof is primarily intended to foster our imitation of Christ. Only when we see that truth, can we grasp the meaning of many little things in life; only thus can we keep from getting lost in a maze of details.

### *The Imitation of Christ*

Religious life, our religious life, is the more perfect following of Christ. Our life, says Saint Francis, is to follow the teaching and footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rule I, 1). That, for him, is

Alpha and the Omega of Franciscan life: to follow the poverty and simplicity and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rule II, 12). At the risk of seeming naive, let us ask ourselves if we truly understand what is meant by the imitation of Christ!

It surely means more than an external copying of Christ, a slavish, apish imitation. We have only to recall the story of the simple Brother John, who attempted to mimic in all sincerity every action of Saint Francis in the hope of being a good friar, to know that this is not precisely our aim. On the other hand, it does mean indeed a reflection in our external actions of those acts and virtues of Christ which are humanly imitable: but it is a reflection based on the internal imitation which is primary.

Let us put it this way: the Christian vocation and, *a fortiori*, the religious life, means to be by grace what Christ was by nature, the Son, the Child, of God. Therefore, the first and basic imitation is by participation and incorporation into Christ by grace: divine sonship by adoption. Baptism brought this to us, and every increase of sanctifying grace adds to it. But we become sons and heirs by grace, other Christs, as is often said, that thereby we may live the Christ-life. Life is exercised and manifested in action. So the life of grace, the Christ-life within us, calls for action: yet not external action first, but internal. That is, after the basic imitation of Christ by grace there must follow internal imitation in heart and mind and will. We must think and judge, will and love, as Christ did: or, as Saint Paul puts it, we must have the *sensus Christi*, the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2, 16). It should be immediately evident to a religious how all-important and primary is this internal imitation: to have the attitude of Christ, the approach of Christ, the desire of Christ, is the first form of our imitation.

We need not labor what was and is first in the mind, heart, and will of Christ: the Will of His Father. *Ecce Venio!* Behold, I come to do Thy Will, O God! From first to last, His meat was to do the Will of the Father who sent Him, to do always the things that pleased Him. This, therefore, is the most basic form our imitation must take, "to be solicitous to follow the will of the Lord and to please Him" and "to take great care not under any pretext of reward or work or advantage we let our mind and our heart stray or be withdrawn from the Lord" (Rule I, 22).

A God-centered heart and mind, then, is the first imitation of Christ:

to live unto God in Christ (Rom. 6, 11). A consequence of this will be our external imitation according to the measure of Christ's best (Eph. 4, 8). Not every Christian can follow Christ externally in the same degree. Not every Religious Institute can or will imitate fully the one-sided perfection of Christ. But each and all will strive, as Saint Bonaventure says, according to the measure of grace given to follow Christ externally as well as interiorly.

Everything, therefore, every detail in our Franciscan life must be seen as part of our way of following Christ, and as having meaning in relation to such a goal. Besides, every action of our life ought to be influenced by the conscious thought: this is my way of following Christ. Were we frequently to ask ourselves: Do I have the mind of Christ in such and such a matter; or, what action, what virtue of Christ am I imitating, our approach would be more that of Saint Francis, and progress more rapid!

#### *Follow in His Steps*

Our Profession-formula shows us that the observance of the Gospel and the Rule, and therefore the following of Christ, finds its primary external expression in the three vows. They are the first means whereby we become Christ-like in our actions.

A medieval adversary of religious life had once asked rather maliciously how the vows made Religious conformed to Christ Who took no vows. Saint Bonaventure's answer is full of meaning for us. And good, he said, Christ did not take vows, but in Him there was something higher and better than any vow: the constant and strong desire to seek His Father's Will in all things. On our part, we must imitate this desire; and since the vows bind and strengthen our resolution that it follows that the vows render us conformed to Christ, even though we took no actual vows. Our profession, in other words, parallels the Gospel: *Venio*, Christ's constant will to be a living sacrifice and holocaust to His Father. ]

Moreover, if we examine deeply into Franciscan thought and action, we shall discover that a Franciscan accepts poverty, chastity, obedience not out of reasoned conviction that they represent means for removing obstacles to perfection but primarily and immediately be-

cause Christ was poor, Christ was chaste, Christ was obedient. It is not poverty that we embrace, but the Poor Christ, that with Him we may live only unto God. It is not a negation or denial that we seek in chastity, but the Chaste Christ, that with Him we may be *concerned with the things of the Lord, how we may please God* (I Cor. 7, 32) and give ourselves to Him. And the holocaust of obedience is the participation in the sacrifice of Him Who was obedient even unto death.

Would that we were more conscious of the vows as positive means of following Christ, as positive ways of being Christ. Then sins and faults against the vows or against their accompanying virtues would be seen in their true light, as un-Christlike actions and offences. Will we or will we not live unto God in Christ Jesus?

In like manner, if the mind of Christ is in us it will reveal to us that the other elements of our Franciscan living are so many ways of walking as Christ walked, so many steps we are to take in His footsteps.

If the Rule is indeed the marrow of the Gospel, then Francis intended it to embody for us in all its details his way of following Christ. The precepts and admonitions are not so many regulations for mere external observance. They are ways of being Christ-like. Whether it is the attention of the Divine Office, of fasting and penance, of the virtues required of us as we go through the world; or again, of clothing, of working, of the spirit of prayer; of brotherly equality and true love; of service on the part of superiors, and obedience on our part; of preaching and mission-labor in any form—Christ is all and in all these things. If the Constitutions seem sometimes to contain prescriptions that in our limited judgment appear antiquated or needless and even meaningless, let us at least find in the obedience of Christ their reason and sense. Somehow, they contribute to our following of the Gospel.

For every detail of our life, then, let us find our norm in Christ, the model shown us on the mount of Calvary! *For other foundation no one can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus* (I Cor. 3, 11). On that foundation, that Rock, let us as wise men build the house of our eternal life! And if our work abides which we have built thereon, we shall receive the reward.



*Look into this Mirror*

Do not think that we have forgotten Saint Clare in all this. On the contrary, with Saint Francis, she has been our inspiration, for her writings reveal throughout how Christo-centric was her thinking and Christiform her virtues. "The Son of God became for us the Way; that Way our Blessed Father Francis, His true lover and imitator, shown and taught us by word and example" (*Testament*). The footprints of Christ! The way of holy simplicity, humility and poverty! The way to the Lord!

The richness and depth of her thought is best seen, perhaps, in her Letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague. There it is constantly Christ that she sets before Agnes as the Spouse she has chosen and the Model she must imitate. "As a poor virgin embrace the Poor Christ . . . Behold Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, desire to imitate Him" (Ep. 1). "Thou dost make up what is wanting in me in the following of the footsteps of the poor and humble Jesus" (III). Above all, she proposes Christ as the mirror into which we must look to discover what we are, what we should be and wherein we fail:

"Look into that Mirror daily and study thy face therein, that thou mayest be adorned with all virtues . . . In that Mirror are reflected blessed poverty, holy humility, and ineffable charity . . . Behold the beginning of this mirror, Him who was placed in a manger. O marvelous humility! O astounding poverty! In the middle of the mirror consider the humility and blessed poverty, the untold labors and burdens which He sustained for the redemption of the human race. In the end of the same mirror contemplate the unspeakable charity with which He willed to suffer on the tree of the Cross and to die thereon the most shameful death . . . Contemplate further His delights, His eternal riches and honors, and sigh after them with great desire and love of heart, crying to Him: *Draw me after Thee: we will run to the odor of Thy ointment*" (IV).

This was Clare's last letter, written in the early months of 1253. She had studied that Blessed Mirror of Perfection for over forty years and had found therein the knowledge of her Spouse, the Way she had followed to the heights of Gospel perfection. Rooted in Him and built up in Him, "the little plant" had become (as the Bull of Canonization was

a noble and lofty tree bearing the sweet fruit of sanctity in the field of the Church.

Let us learn from her consciously and constantly to center our life on Christ, within and without, and to recognize that from greatest to smallest everything in our Franciscan life is aimed at forming Christ in us. Thus we too, being rooted in Him and built up on Him, shall grow up in all things in Him who is the head, Christ (Eph. 4, 15).

Troit Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.



## VILLANELLE

(*Jesu, dulcis memoria*)

Jesus, Thy Name is melody,  
With sweetness beyond all uttering.  
It floods the heart with ecstasy.

Thy Name's beloved propinquity  
Is sweeter than any honeyed thing.  
Jesus, Thy Name is melody.

Than Thine, the Name of God's decree,  
None lovelier on earth we sing—  
It floods the heart with ecstasy.

This Name transcends the jubilee  
That seraphim are carolling.  
Jesus Thy Name is melody.

None dearer to the mind can we  
Embrace with fond imagining;  
It floods the heart with ecstasy.

O Son of God, Who set us free,  
We sing Thy praise, Almighty King.  
Jesus, Thy Name is melody,  
It floods the heart with ecstasy.

## MOTHER OF MOLOKAI (II)

When the little steamer *Lehua* set out for the leper isle on November 13, 1888, bearing some twenty women who were confirmed cases of leprosy, it carried the fulfillment of one of Damien's dreams, an easing of one of his worries—for among its passengers were three Franciscan Sisters. There was gay and charming Sister Leopoldina; there was staid and dependable Sister Vincent; and, of course, there was Mother Maria. At dawn of the following morning they landed on the almost beachy shore where they were greeted by a delighted Father Damien and a number of lepers, among whom they recognized quite a few of their former patients from the Branch Hospital. Not least among the experiences that were to mark their initiation to the life of the Isle was a destructive water system which certainly complicated daily existence for a time. A severe storm a few days previous to their arrival had swept away the reservoir and a great part of the system of pipes. Until repairs could be made, water had to be carted in large casks from a distant stream.

Their home was in Kalaupapa—the Sisters called it Saint Elizabeth's Convent, but it was commonly referred to as the Bishop Home, in recognition of the man who had given the money for its construction. At the time of the Sisters' arrival, Father Damien was no longer able to take care of the church at Kalaupapa which had been turned over to Father Werner in Moeller, while Father Conrardy assisted Damien in the work at Kalaupapa. It was not duty, but the gratitude and satisfaction he felt at having the Sisters on Molokai that prompted his many visits to them, even though the wagon-ride over and back must have been pure torture for him. He never would enter the buildings, however, but preferred to remain installed at the edge of the veranda while he talked to the Sisters.

Just a few days after taking over the Bishop Home, the Sisters established a clinic for the lepers who were still able to come in for their dressings, but went to the homes of those who could no longer walk, in order to do what they could to relieve the poor sufferers. To insure against contagion, Mother Marianne compiled a list of rules—really just practical precautions with cleanliness as an underlying motive—which she

insisted that the Sisters observe to the letter. It was one of these regulations that occasioned a flare-up of the impetuous, autocratic side of Damien at the first visit which the Sisters paid him. Anxious to express in some concrete way his happiness at their coming, Father Damien had his leper cook prepare a meal for the visitors; and when they hesitated to partake of it, he urgently insisted. Mr. Dutton had taken Mother Marianne to inspect some construction work at a distance, and the two Sisters were in a dilemma—disobey Mother, or to offend Father? They explained that Mother Marianne had forbidden them ever to partake of anything either prepared or served by a leper, but Damien impulsively overrode their objections and commanded them to eat what had been set before them. They did eat a little, hesitantly, and undoubtedly they did not enjoy it. Mother was really perturbed when, on the ride back, the Sisters told her what had taken place in her absence. They were so upset, however, by the whole affair that she simply reminded them very emphatically that Father's orders were orders, then let it go at that—or so she thought. At an early hour the next morning, Father Damien was over at the Bishop Home begging Mother to forgive him for having urged the Sisters to transgress. How Damien-likel

Mother herself had no fear of leprosy, for her faith knew no bounds; but Sister Leopoldina at one time spoke of the danger of contracting the disease, since it was she to whom fell most of the actual work of dressing the lepers' sores, and some of the doctors with whom she had worked were alarmists. She had just finished attending a particularly repulsive case, when she casually asked Mother what would be done with her if she suddenly became a leper. Without hesitation, Mother Marianne told her that God had undoubtedly called them to the work, and if they did their duty He would protect them; then she paused, as if considering, and continued with a deliberate confidence, "Child, remember, you will never be a leper, nor will any Sister of our Order";—a remarkable statement and a brave one; a statement no doctor would venture to make. Yet time has proved that she was right.

One day in January of 1889, Father Damien sent his wagon over for Mother and the Sisters. He wanted them to come to inspect his new church, the completion of which marked another plan fulfilled; and it was on this occasion that he told Mother about the new building that was to be put up for the boys and men of the settlement. He confided that, in this project, Mother Marianne must determine all the details, for

she was to be in charge at the end of his time which was just about over. He told her how overjoyed he was at the goodness of God in sending someone to take his place: there had come two priests, Mother and her Sisters, and Mr. Dutton, or Brother Joseph, as Damien called him. He told how most of his plans for Molokai had materialized except for the failure with the children, whom he felt had been neglected. Try as he might, he could not double for a mother. He was grateful for the labors of the priests, of the Sisters, of Brother Dutton, and truly valued their association; but he knew that it was the spirit and love and compassion of a mother that was needed to instill the soul, the life of permanence in his work. Mother Marianne understood what he was trying so hard to tell her; these two spoke from a common love—each recognized the magnanimity inherent in the soul of the other.

The three-mile ride back to Kalaupapa was truly a meditative journey for Mother, occupied with thoughts and emotions about the going of Damien and its significance in their lives on the island. And Father Damien did go the following April—quietly, peacefully, and contentedly. His time for labor had ended and it was up to Mother Marianne to continue on. This responsibility, with all her other concerns, proved a task of unbelievable proportions at times. There were the affairs to be dealt with in Honolulu—the Receiving Station had gone to pieces, thereby giving the Sisters still more work in an already overcrowded day; there were the problems of the Kapiolani Home, and the difficulty of making provision for the grown girls; there was the Malulani Hospital with the adjoining school; and there was the Bishop Home; now she must include Damien's boys and men. Each place posed its own problems; yet all of them were naturally taken to Mother. When troubling situations arose—situations that should have been taken care of by others—she was very sparing in her criticisms and comments, preferring to make the best of existing conditions until they could be amended. To complain when there was no solution simply seemed to go against the grain.

In May of 1889, two additional Sisters came from Honolulu to assist in the work of the leper colony; and on the same boat came a very distinguished visitor, Robert Louis Stevenson. Having come to visit and to study the Isle and its lepers, he spent a great deal of his time in going with the leper children. Nevertheless, he found time each day for conversation with Mother Marianne, for he recognized her for the brilliant person that she was. Hearing her philosophy of service from this woman who had voluntarily come to a settlement of outcasts, because of a

service which grew out of her spiritual convictions, leaving behind all worldly ambitions, fascinated Stevenson, himself a student of human life and a psychologist of no little repute. He left Molokai much impressed and perhaps a little helped, giving Mother a literary tribute that will last forever:

To see the infinite pity of this place,  
The mangled limb, the devastated face,  
The innocent sufferers smiling at the rod,  
A fool were tempted to deny his God.

He sees, and shrinks; but if he look again,  
Lo, beauty springing from the breast of pain!—  
He marks the Sisters on the painful shores,  
And even a fool is silent and adores.

Mother had promised Damien that she would try to care for the motherless children of his parish, and she meant to keep her word regardless of obstacles, one of which was the distance between the two villages. The Board of Health did provide her with a horse and carriage, which she persuaded a neighboring Portuguese man to drive, but every trip was a nightmare. The horse was wild, the driver vain of his driving, and the road filled with stones and rocks and holes. Yet she and her companion went at every opportunity to tend the sick of Damien's parish, as well as the children, and all began to love her; for they were aware of that same sincerity in her that had characterized their Father Damien. In every possible way they tried to please her, for they knew that the rest of her life belonged to Molokai. With the invaluable help, spiritual as well as physical, of Brother Joseph Dutton, the Sisters worked among these leper boys and men at Kalawao for six years, until, at Mother Marianne's request, the Board of Health obtained from Europe four Brothers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary to take over the work at the Baldwin Home, as the new building had been called.

One morning about a year after the death of Father Damien, King Kalakaua came to Molokai with several English officers to choose a site for the monument to be erected in the priest's honor. At noon, after having spent the whole morning searching for a suitable location, they came to the convent parlor and asked Mother to tell them her choice of a place for the Damien memorial. With a characteristic graciousness she pointed out to the sovereign a site which she had often, during the past

year, considered as the ideal spot on which to set a monument to Apostle of the Lepers. In satisfied agreement, the King assured her it would be done as she wished.

To the smuggler, to the drug addicts, to the gamblers, to the more depraved, Mother Marianne was a menace. Once a case within her jurisdiction was brought to her attention, there was no delay or dallying in her part in dealing with it. She had no fear of man, for she was sure in her knowledge that hers was God's work. Many times she had occasion to refuse to allow her girls to marry men who were in the advanced stages of leprosy, and the men resented her opposition. One day a group of them, led by a native leper whom she had crossed in his attempt to seduce one of her charges, laid rather elaborate plans for kidnapping Mother and doing away with her. Fortunately, a girl who had formerly lived in the Home heard of the plot. Such was the love and loyalty which Mother Marianne inspired, that the young girl organized all those in the Home who were able to be about. They took matters into their own hands and, without Mother's knowledge, made their plans for a defense. There were, however, no battle and no bloodshed—although one of the women in her preparations had sharpened her hatchet for a kill if necessary; the cunning would-be kidnappers noticed some of her preparations that could not be concealed and were warned off.

There were times during the passing years when Mother's companions wondered at her versatility. Anything that might bring a bit of beauty into the lives of the lepers had her whole-hearted support. To some of the girls she taught lace-making, and besides satisfying a craving for dainty things, this task sometimes provided them with a bit of money for the people living on the property adjoining the Sisters' often bought their products from them. To a sun-baked and barren island, Mother brought the loveliness of trees and shrubs and flowers, a transformation which served a two-fold purpose; beautification of their surroundings as well as employment and interest—she was ever the psychologist. She imported date palms which she planted on both sides of the road leading to the Home. From friends in the tropics and elsewhere, she gathered many rare and splendid specimens of shrubs. From others she begged flowers that would bloom on her rocky-soiled Isle. As a result, the grounds of Bishop Home became a thing of beauty in a desolate spot. When the lepers in the Settlement saw her success, they were stimulated to try the same beautifying process for the grounds around their own huts, with soul-satisfying results for Mother. Unfortunately, the Home grounds

attracted the attention and envy of one of the resident government officials, who very blandly informed Mother Marianne that he wanted the best of her plants and shrubs for his own property. Although amazed at his effrontery, she said that he might have some. He sent his men the next day to take them, and they left Mother's gardens looking as though a typhoon had passed that way. The obvious truth that a great deal of time, expense, and labor had gone into the collection and planting of the trees and gardens was not considered, nor was the fact admitted that they were private property. Merely because the man was an official he took what he wanted. Yet Mother Marianne refused to fuss or quarrel about it. She remained her calm serene self before petty officials just as she had before men who had threatened her life. Her days were thus so filled that all her reports and letters had to be written at night between ten and one o'clock, when quiet had come to the Home.

Mother Marianne had never been quite well since the day in 1903 when she went on a nine mile hike with a group of her girls, because there was no one else to accompany them. Although this exertion in an unusual and terrific heat made all of them a little sick and completely exhausted, for Mother it was really the beginning of the end. Since that day she had repeatedly suffered from pulmonary hemorrhages and a cough which seemed to indicate tuberculosis; yet, although that disease took its toll of her strength and vitality, it was dropsy that eventually took her life. In her letters to Syracuse in 1911, she began to admit a physical weakness and tiredness; yet, in spite of her severe cough and the hemorrhages she managed to attend to all her duties. When she wrote to her General Superior in 1914, she could not do much, she said, but direct and assist the Sisters—she was close to eighty years old then—but it was shortly after this letter that she really began to fail. The Sisters tried to get her to take a little rest at times during the day, for she seldom slept more than three or four hours during the night. Occasionally she would go off to get her "forty winks", as she said, but would scarcely have been gone more than a few minutes when some leper youngster came calling for Mother, and calling insistently. While the Sisters tried to quiet the disturbance and coaxed to be allowed to satisfy the child's wants—it was invariably some trifle that was desired—out would come Mother, as she always did, at the call of one of her poor lepers, her "forty winks" forgotten.

In September 1916, Sister Benedicta was summoned to Molokai at the request of Mother Marianne to take charge of the Bishop Home;

for, although Mother was still able to be about, she knew she could not do justice to the tasks required of her, and, great-souled woman that she was, she gave place to one who could. Then, when Sister Benedicta took over and the need for driving herself beyond her strength was removed, she suddenly grew very feeble, and had to be taken from place to place in a wheel chair. For almost two years, both the Sisters and the patients vied with one another for the privilege of wheeling Mother about the buildings and yard. Then one evening she asked to be taken to the veranda to watch the setting sun. As it sank below the horizon leaving behind a blaze of glory, with a sigh as if having taken leave of something very dear—Molokai had been her home and the lepers her people for thirty years—Mother turned to Sister Leopoldina and indicated that she was ready to be taken in. Over the Convent hung an air peculiar to sad departures as her Sisters gathered round her bed. She lay so quietly that only a very slight movement of the shoulders gave notice of her passing at a few minutes past eleven o'clock that night of August 8, 1918. The funeral the following afternoon was a procession of unmasked grief, for the dear old Sister the lepers were burying was a beloved celebrity. How truly could they lay her to rest with the words, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant*. . . They had wanted to bury her close to Father Damien's Monument; but, since the ground was so rocky it would have entailed blasting and a certain danger to the memorial, they buried her at the foot of a hill which was covered with orange trees—another fruit of her labors.

Like Damien's, her sacrifice had been prompted by love—love of God and love of humanity—and it was the overflowing of this love into the lives of the lepers on Molokai that made her truly their mother, and gave her a second claim to the title.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sr. Maura, O. S. F.



No one can be perfectly united with God, who has his affections bound up with or inclined to some creature.

James of Milan, O. F. M.

## SPIRITUAL READING AND FRANCISCANS

Saint Gregory calls the soul of the spiritual man, the mystic, an instrument played by the Holy Spirit: *organum pulsatum a Spiritu Sancto*. He goes on to say that the Holy Spirit draws from this instrument harmonies and melodies of which reason and the will of man alone could never even dream. On the well-tuned strings of a religious, much discretion and delicacy of soul is required to produce the special harmonies which make a person a saint. However, in order to reach the summit of evangelical perfection and attain to the life of God, the soul must make use of all available means of sanctification which are offered. Spiritual reading is one of these.

Error, heresy and immorality are spread from evil books, but "the reading of Sacred Letters," as Saint Ambrose tells us, "is the life of the soul." Christ Himself declared this when He said: *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life* (John 6, 14). Thus, from Sacred Scripture which has God for its Author we may derive the fruits of the living teaching of Christ; teachings which contain for us the special graces which incline us to imitate His meekness, patience and heroic love of the Cross. In fine, new lights and added strength are always to be found in Sacred Scripture.

Added to this, lives of the saints which contain alluring examples of heroic virtue are always admirable and often imitable. Their deeds were performed by men and women with a nature like ours who in the beginning had their weaknesses and defects, but in whom grace and charity gradually dominated nature by healing it, elevating it and vivifying it. It is consoling to realize that grace does not destroy nature in so far as it is good, but rather perfects it. Indeed, in the saints we perceive the true harmony of nature and grace which is possible and actually necessary as a normal prelude of eternal glory.

All of us do spiritual reading, but how much of it is Franciscan? This is something for us to think about. Fortunately, we can do something about it too. Recently our attention has been drawn to a good source and interesting variety of Franciscan publications, that of the Conventual Franciscans of Saint Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, New York. These are sponsored by the Immaculate Conception Province under the

guidance of The Very Reverend Francis Edic, Minister Provincial of this Province.

We are told that their primary purpose is to fill the needs of Catholic ventual Franciscans in the English-speaking countries as well as the needs of the Third Order, both regular and secular, under their care. However, many of their publications are intended for all Franciscans since they have a general Franciscan appeal. Moreover, they are beginning to branch out into the general field of publications on things Catholic, making use of the wealth of material in Saint Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Veuthey and others. These will appear in booklet form.

Another main idea behind their project is to give an outlet to the literary ability of all Friars and Sisters of Saint Francis. Therefore, if God has given any of you a flair for writing or the ability to produce special harmonies on the keyboard of your soul, you are asked to submit your manuscripts to these zealous Friars who will use them for the greater honor and glory of God.

As one Franciscan to another, why not aid them in their noble work by reading and distributing to others their stimulating biographies, educational and popular pamphlets, liturgical booklets and Third Order literature? A brief summary of a few of these may give us a better idea of their worth.

We shall begin with the life of Father Maximilian Kolbe, one of their own Friars, entitled *The Knight Of the Immaculate*, written by Father Jeremiah J. Smith, O. F. M. Conv. Within sixty-five pages of inspiring reading, we become familiar with a saintly priest who had volunteered to die in a concentration camp in the place of a young father of a family. It happened on the vigil of the Assumption, August 14, 1941, when the prison doctor of the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) concentration camp entered the underground bunker of Block 13, that Father Maximilian heroically extended his arm for the carbolic acid injection which would kill him. Of the ten men who were to die of starvation, it is strange that this frail little priest was one of the four who had not yet died. But again it is not so strange, because his life as a prisoner had become a fruitful apostolate. However, as in the lives of all the saints, the groundwork of this harvest had been prepared by many years of virtuous living. Thus, in order to gain souls for His kingdom, God permitted the fire of life and love to burn brightly in the tortured body of Father Maximilian Kolbe.

Today, his cause for beatification has been introduced in Pa-

Italy; Nagasaki, Japan; and in Warsaw, Poland. Much may be gained by reading the life of this saintly follower of Saint Francis.

Another inspiring biography is that of Blessed Francis Anthony Fasani, O. F. M. Conv., who was beatified April 15, 1951. Within sixty-one pages authored by P. Gaetano M. Stano, O. F. M. Conv., and translated by a Rensselaer Friar, Father Raphael M. Huber, we view as through a speculum the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit in a man who cooperated fully with the graces which God gave him.

The name and memory of Blessed Francis Anthony Fasani (1681-1742) have remained alive and as of yesterday in the little city of Lucera in northern Apulia, Italy. There the common people (the proletariat) have seen the son of the ordinary people raised to the honor of the altar. Furthermore, this saintly Friar was ever a friend of the common people among whom he lived, preached and died.

The dominant theme throughout this short biography is that of humility. His own words exemplify this: "I must always learn from others; unfortunately, I have never been able to learn enough." Thus spoke one who as a reward for his fruitful and scholastic activities had merited from his Major Superiors the juridical recognition of the Magisterium in Sacred Theology; this was reserved only for those who had obtained the Doctorate and had given definite proof of intellectual accomplishments and exemplary conduct.

"He loves the Lord," says Saint Thomas, "who bears a particularly tender affection towards those things which God loves most, and these are threefold: the Sacred Scriptures, the Saints, and the Poor." Blessed Francis Anthony became the living exemplar of these words of Saint Thomas. Chapter after chapter in his biography narrate these specific trends in his apostolate. Thus, all of us may profit by reading this interesting life of a priest whom one needed only to approach to discover his burning zeal for the salvation of souls. In fact, in Lucera, his first biographer attests it was the current talk of the people: "If you want to know how Saint Francis looked in life, come and see our Father Maestro."

As Franciscans, we too have tasted the sweetness of the love of God, but do we have the seraphic ardor of charity which we should have? Reading the life of Blessed Francis Fasani provides his method of attaining this great grace. Furthermore, it is fascinating reading.

Another publication which is pertinent to our times concerns the

misconstrued American separation of church and state. This twenty-page booklet by Jeffery Keefe, O. F. M. Conv., entitled *American Separation of Church and State: Who Stretched the Principle?* of concise information which could well serve as a rebuttal to those who maintain the policy of complete separation. From it we learn that the First Amendment to our Constitution which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof," is actually the yardstick for measuring United States separation of Church and State.

Unfortunately, through clever propaganda, secularists have substituted their favorite metaphor "the wall of separation between Church and State", for the original meaning of the Founding Fathers. This phrase originated with Thomas Jefferson. However, the duty of justice, Americanism is to carry out the intention of the Founding Fathers, the private interpretations of Jefferson, of Frankfurter, nor of Brandeis. Indeed their "spacious conception" becomes specious when it begins to oppose the mind of the framers.

Today, a hydra-headed secularism is divorcing morality from everyday living, and has managed to build a national educational system which ignores God entirely. Thus, it is the duty of Franciscan educators to expose the futility of systems which have brought about the catastrophe of our times. Truth is the only thread which will repair the rents in the social fabric of today. Reading Father Jeffrey Keefe's pamphlet will provide some strong thread with which to begin.

Finally, why not send for the folder put out by the Conventual of Rensselaer, New York? Many of their publications may have a greater appeal for you than the few which have been mentioned.

Bolivar, N. Y.

Sr. Mary of the Angels, O. S. F.



Woe to the religious who has been raised by the rest to an honored post, and who has not the inclination to descend from it.

Candida Chalippe, O. S. F.

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XIII)

### *The Twelfth Article*

TEXT: *All should try by frequent meditation on the Passion of Christ to nourish and increase day by day the fervor of their devotion; to follow and imitate their Seraphic Father, so that also they can say with Saint Paul "With Christ I am nailed to the cross." "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 19-20).*

Repentant love ripens naturally into a desire to atone for sin. It is this latter phase of the love of God that inspires the present article of the Rule as well as the one which follows.

Unlike the three preceding articles, this one has no analogue in the earlier Rule of Leo X. Yet the idea expressed is something so completely Franciscan that we recognize this as another instance in which the present rule has captured more of the personality of the Poverello, or, as Pius XI puts it, "is more thoroughly pervaded with the Franciscan spirit."

### *Meditation on the Passion*

Not that meditation on the Passion is something uniquely Franciscan, for there are many viewpoints from which Christ's sufferings could be considered. We could view them, for instance, as primarily the work of sin and man. For the Passion of Christ is indeed a poignant reminder that human sin has cosmic consequences. There is no such thing as a purely personal or private offense. Each violation of the law of God initiates a chain reaction for evil that leaves its scars not only upon the character of the individual but upon every other human being whose course of life he directly or indirectly influences. Consequently, even apart from the supernatural retroactive character of sin upon the sufferings of Christ, we can say that literally sin crucified the Savior. For what is the story of Christ's career on earth but the case history of the inter-

action between a perfect human nature and an environment tainted with sin? Not that the Jewish nation of Christ's day was particularly degenerate. Quite the contrary, the Jews had been specially favored by God. Taught by His prophets, enlightened by His Law, protected by His providence, they possessed an enviable standard of morality that set them above any pagan civilization of their day. Yet the shadow of original and actual sin also blighted their race. Their mental outlook, their moral behavior, their vices and virtues reflected the influence of the sins of the parents, grandparents, and great grandparents all the way back to man's first defection in the Garden of Eden. Sin, we might say, created the culture-loving Sadducees, the warped spirituality of the Pharisees, the misinterpretations of the Rabbis, the school system of the Scribes. It gave us the weakling Pilate, the greedy Judas, the brutal temple guard. It produced Caiaphas, that parody on the priesthood. It turned the Sanhedrin court of justice into a living lie. Sin plaited the crown of thorns, knotted the bloody scourge, and hewed the beams of the cross. Here was the milieu created by sin. And into this world, God sent His beloved Son, a perfect man. And what happened? The devilish logic of sin pushed on to its inevitable conclusion. It nailed Christ to the cross. This is the terrible, frightening lesson of the Passion. In the anguished mind, the tortured soul, the broken heart, the disfigured body of Christ we read what sin does, yes, our sin—does and is still doing, ravaging the Mystical Body of Christ. *To nourish and increase the fervor of devotion*

But the Passion cannot be explained simply as the work of sin alone, of man. It is also the work of God and of love. Theologically speaking, every act of the Son of Man had a morally infinite value in the eyes of His heavenly Father. One glistening tear in the eye of the Babe of Bethlehem was worth a world's ransom. One drop of sweat of the carpenter King could have bought every grace we needed. A single sigh, a whispered prayer, a plea for forgiveness would have sufficed to redeem us. But that would have hardly proved Christ's love. For love is tested by sacrifice, and greater love than this hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend. That men might know something of the mystery of the tremendous love of their God, Christ chose the supreme test—the awful agony in the garden, the cruel crown of thorns, the flaying at the pillar, the nightmare way of the cross, the choking pain as He hung suspended for three hours between heaven and earth. And because He knew we might wonder if in the grip of pain He ever regretted His action, He deliberately pushed aside the wine mixed with myrrh that could have anesthetized

His senses and robbed His sacrifice of some of its perfection. Sin indeed might nail Christ to the cross but only love could keep Him there.

It is this phase of the Passion that appealed to the Poverello, and it is this aspect of the Savior's sufferings that the present article of the Rule declares to be a stimulus to the fervor of devotion or love. Like Saint John, we cannot witness this spectacle without our heart crying out: *Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us* (1 Jo. 4,19).

So important for Franciscan progress in perfection is devotion to the Crucified that Bonaventure included an entire chapter on the subject in his *Holiness of Life for Sisters*. "Since the fervor of devotion," he writes there, "is nourished and preserved in man by frequent meditation on the Passion, anyone who desires to keep alive this devotion must frequently, yea continually, picture with the eyes of love Christ dying on the cross. That is why the Lord says in Leviticus: *The fire on (my) altar shall always burn and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day*. The altar of God is your heart, where the fire of fervent devotion should ever be burning. Each day you should feed this flame with the wood of Christ's cross and the memory of His Passion. This Isaias has in mind when he says: *You shall draw water with joy out of the Savior's fountains*, as if to say: Whoever desires from God the waters of grace, of devotion, and of tears may draw them from the fount of the Savior, from the five wounds of Jesus Christ.

"With loving steps, then, draw near to your wounded Jesus, to your thorn-crowned Jesus, to your Jesus nailed to the gibbet of the cross. Come with the apostle Saint Thomas not merely to behold in his hands the print of the nails, or to put your fingers into the place of the nails and your hand into His side, but enter completely into the wound in His side, pressing on to the very Heart of Jesus. There, let your ardent love for the Crucified transform you into Christ. Fastened by the nails of the fear of God, transfixed by the lance of affectionate love, pierced by the sword of tenderest compassion, seek nothing else, wish for nothing else; look for consolation in nothing else but to die on the cross with Christ. Then will you cry out with the apostle Paul: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross; and I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (*De Perfectione Vitae ad Sorores*, c. 8)

*To follow and imitate their Seraphic Father*

In these moving lines which might well have been the inspiration



of this article of the Rule, Bonaventure has caught the spirit of the Seraphic Father. For if we can but believe his early biography of Francis' "entire public and private life centered about the cross of the Lord; and from the first moment in which he became a knight of the service of the Crucified, the various mysteries of the cross were revealed in him (Celano, *Tractatus de miraculis*, n. 2)

Saint Bonaventure himself bears this out. Hardly had Francis begun to withdraw from the world and converse with God than his crucified Lord appeared. "At the sight," writes the Saint, "his whole heart seemed to melt away; and so deeply was the memory of Christ's Passion impressed on his heart that it pierced even to the marrow of his bones. From that hour on, whenever his thoughts dwelt upon the Passion of Christ, he could hardly keep back his tears and sighs" (*Legenda Major*, c.1, n.5). And so it is not surprising that two years later when God officially commissioned Francis to restore His Church, we find the saint lost in contemplation before the crucifix at San Damiano. The very garb that he and his followers would wear in accomplishing their mission was to be a symbol of the Savior's cross. The crucifix, too, symbolized by the sacred T, became the official seal with which Francis signed his letters and the walls of his cell. And he was always admonishing his friars to reverence this sacred sign wherever they should find it.

It was this devotion to the suffering Christ that set his heart aflame. The inner fire of his soul was so ardent that at times, so to say, it would burn its way through his flesh, and his companions would see a shining cross upon his brow, or would behold the Crucified materialize before Francis' transfixed gaze. And when, with the passing of years, this inward transformation into Christ was complete, God stamped the visible signs of His wounds upon Francis' flesh that the whole world might know that love had nailed him to the cross.

#### *Day by day*

The Tertiary Regular will hardly find a better way of fulfilling the precept of the Rule than by the daily exercise of the Way of the Cross. This devotional practice, an outgrowth of that love of the Passion that Francis bequeathed his followers, would have delighted the soul of the saint who recognized man's need of visual aids and who himself created the Christmas crib of Greccio. But lest *quotidiana vilescent*, religious exercises find it helpful to adapt this spiritual exercise to their daily moods and

needs. By varying the emphasis on the different stations from time to time, they can make their Way of the Cross center now about one station, now about another. If human respect, for instance, threatens the performance of some duty, the religious might stress the first station, reflecting throughout the remaining stations on the consequences of Pilate's first act of weakness. When discouraged by past falls from their high resolve and oppressed by the recognition of their weakness, they will find consolation in Christ's triple fall and be encouraged to rise once more and push on with Him. When their cross is particularly heavy, they will learn from Simon of Cyrene that they have lightened the load of Christ. When their heart is cold they will ask Christ to rest His head for a moment on their breast and leave behind the impression of His Sacred countenance as He did for Veronica. On Marian feasts the fourth and thirteenth stations will have special significance, for the final payment on every great joy and privilege Mary received was made on that first Good Friday. And so we might go through the other stations; each highlights a new phase of the Passion: each has special significance for some aspect of our own life.

#### *With Christ I am nailed to the cross.*

This daily practice will not only give us new strength for the burden of the day. It can also raise the soul to those heights of heroism that caused Francis to pray: "O Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I ask of Thee before I die; the first, that in my lifetime I may feel, as far as possible, both in my soul and body, that pain which Thou, sweet Lord, didst endure in the hour of Thy most bitter Passion; the second, that I may feel in my heart as much as possible that excess of love by which Thou, O Son of God, wast inflamed to suffer so cruel a Passion for us sinners" (*Fioretti*, "On the Stigmata", 3)

Yes, to feel something of His pain, to know something of His love! This is the goal envisaged by this article of the Rule, for not until we are "nailed to His cross" will Christ really "live in us".

(to be continued)

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.

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## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*Admonition XVII: The Humble Servant of God*

It is often said of Saint Francis that he considered himself a slave of the heavenly Father. This is undeniably true, but we must add that he felt himself a child of God with the deepest reverence, as one who knows he is a mere creature of dust and ashes, formed by the almighty hand of his Creator. Utter humility, the conviction of his own nothingness and worthlessness, was the basis of his filial piety. It is the humble Francis who addresses us, saying:

*Blessed is that servant who is not more elated over the good that the Lord says and does through him than over that which he says and does through another. That man sins who is willing to receive from his neighbor rather than he who is unwilling to give of himself to the Lord God.*

The humble Francis praises the humility of a servant, or, to be exact, the humility of a servant of God who realizes that he is but an instrument.

Are we not slaves of God? Surely we cannot deny that our Creator owns us completely. We are literally his property, not only because He formed us out of nothing but also because He redeemed us and purchased us at a great price. Doubly, therefore, we are God's property, for by right of creation and by right of redemption we belong to Him.

If this is so, then we have no rights. And this is the point which Francis wishes to make. The slave owns nothing. Whatever he is and does belongs to his master. He cannot demand anything, since nothing can be done to a slave; he can only beg, and the master gives only by grace. No injury can be done to a slave; he has no right to complain. He cannot gain from his servitude, nor can he do as he pleases; he is bound to do what his master commands. A slave, therefore, is little better than an instrument which can be used by his master, but he can do nothing of his own. Since the master works through the slave, the slave does not work for himself.

work belongs entirely to his master. He can expect no remuneration, no reward, no praise. Whatever he earns goes to the master. Not even thanks are due to him.

Here, as in all his writings, Francis reveals the influence of the Gospel. Apparently, he has in mind the almost shocking text of Saint Luke (17, 7-10). When the servant comes home after having toiled and labored in the fields, he cannot expect to rest and refresh himself and to be thanked by his master for all he has done. No, first he must prepare his master's supper and serve him. Only when the master is satisfied may the servant sit at and drink. And Christ asked His disciples: *Does he thank that servant for doing what he commanded him? I do not think so. Even so you also, when you have done everything that was commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'*

This conviction that we are unprofitable servants should prove to be a very profitable meditation on Franciscan humility. When we have done something good, do we ever stop to ask if it is really we ourselves who have done it? Do we ever realize that we are only the instruments through which God chooses to act? If we have said a kind word to somebody, if we have given good advice, instructed children, preached the word of God, we deserve no credit, for we were only the instrument through which God spoke. If we have helped the poor and the weak, nursed the sick, performed the good works imposed upon us by obedience, we must admit that without God we could have done none of these things.

But if we truly understand this and realize that without God we can do nothing, how dare we attribute anything to ourselves? How can we boast about anything we have said or done? And especially, how can we be more elated about that which the Lord effects through us than about what He effects through our neighbor? It is true that God willed to act through us and not through another. But why? Because we merited His favor? Because our goodness drew Him to choose us? No, but rather because God is infinitely powerful, He selects the poorest and weakest instruments to accomplish His designs. *For power is made perfect in infirmity* (II Cor. 12, 9). Why, then, should we boast? *But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord* (II Cor. 10, 17).

It is so natural for us to rejoice when we are successful, because we assume that of ourselves we have achieved something. But this is exactly where we are wrong. We can prove our error for ourselves by applying the test suggested by our holy Father Francis. Let us ask ourselves honest-

ly: Do I rejoice, am I sincerely glad and happy about the good the I accomplishes through my fellow religious? Am I truly as happy about as if it had been done through me? This would be the perfection of Franciscan humility. Most of us, however, think we do well not to be jealous and envious of the success of others. But not to be more pleased at what is done through us than through our neighbor seems almost beyond our power. Why do we feel ourselves unable to reach this depth of humility? Is it not because we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are something, whereas we are nothing (Gal. 6, 3)?

Only when we have arrived at the firm conviction that we are instruments of God, His servants and slaves, can we understand what Saint Francis says that a man sins more by desiring to receive praise from others than by being unwilling to give himself wholly to God. For a slave who is reluctant to put forth his best efforts, who is unwilling to devote himself whole-heartedly to the service of his Lord, is merely an unprofitable servant. But the slave who dares to take for himself what belongs to his master is a thief, a criminal, and deserving of severe punishment. To refuse to give ourselves totally to God is a lesser evil than to desire and to take for ourselves the honor that can in justice belong to the Lord God.

Whenever we feel inclined to glory in our own achievements, whenever we feel a hankering after the praise and thanks of others, let us consider that we are all slaves of God. We all have the same divine Lord and Master, Who is also our Creator. Whatever a fellow slave could do, we would be taken away unjustly from the Master, and he would be guilty of sin. For us to accept praise and honor from any creature would mean to deprive the Creator of His own property, and we would be guilty of sin. Whatever good is accomplished through others, and whatever is accomplished through ourselves, must be returned to the source and fountain of all goodness, our Lord and God. For this reason Saint Francis admonishes us to strive after that perfection of the Gospel ideal whereby we can live truthfully, habitually, and sincerely: I am an unprofitable servant.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.



By study we search for God, by meditation we find Him.

Padre Pio

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

To the question: Are Chinese Catholics remaining faithful? the General Secretariat of the Franciscan Missions offers the following items by way of answer.

### 1. Excerpts from Letters

1) *From a Chinese Sister*: "I was driven out of our convent and now I wander about the villages and countryside peddling shoes, soap, combs, and such. But I have one great consolation: I always carry with me the good Jesus and secretly give Holy Communion to the sick and to the aged—and to myself."

2) *From a Chinese priest to the Holy Father*: "Sanctissime Pater, ubi Roma, ibi cor nostrum" (Most holy Father, where Rome is, there is our heart).

3) *From several Chinese Sisters to their Superior General*: "Thanks be to God Who gives us this opportunity of sending news and our love to you. So far we are still living together. We eat what we earn by our work. For now it is good enough; the future we commend to the Lord."

"Dear Mother and all our Sisters, do not forget us. We wish to remain faithful daughters of Holy Church and of our Seraphic Father Francis even unto death. Dear Mother, we beg to have one Holy Mass said every year for each of us, so that like the three boys in the fiery furnace we may not be consumed by the flames. We have news from our Sisters in X. . . . ; they are living in underground cells, but still as a community. They say they will conquer even if they are not in the convent. Our love is joined to our words. Although we, your poorest ones, are not able to write (they wrote in Italian but with many errors), we hope, dear Mother, that we have expressed to you all the thoughts of our heart."

4) *From a community of Chinese Sisters to their Provincial Superior*: "May the infinite and inscrutable designs of God be praised forever! We ought to accept them with a tranquil heart and exhort ourselves to do the divine will."

"The union among us is now stronger than ever before. We truly love one another. We have unanimously resolved that for as long as we can, no matter what the sacrifice or the burden, we will observe the common life, nor will we ever of our own will leave the religious house. Dear Mother, this most firm resolution of ours needs your prayers and the prayers of all the Sisters; pray that the merciful Lord may give each one of us the grace of fortitude necessary to enable us to keep the Faith."

5) *From a certain young girl*: "By the time you receive this letter I shall have already been imprisoned. How sad was our last greeting. Now nothing is left but only heaven. They have already questioned me several times. The first interrogation lasted nine hours. I beg you to pray for me. Many of my friends have betrayed me. Pray and suffer for them. My greatest sorrow is my family. When my parents saw my name in the paper they came to me at once and implored me on their knees to apostatize. My God! For the first time in my life I have learned what it means to suffer. Having death before my eyes, I prefer martyrdom to eternal death; I shall live and die for my Faith. Pray for me and sing with me: Alleluia!"

## II. Our Chinese Martyrs

1) *Francis Wang, T.O.R.* Last year (1952) Reverend Francis Wang, T.O.R., was in prison. He was born in 1917. Because of the Sino-Japanese War he was unable to follow his Franciscan vocation, but in 1946 he was ordained to the secular priesthood. He labored with extraordinary zeal for souls among his own people until his arrest two years ago. Because he had hidden in his house certain persons who were being persecuted by the Reds, he was imprisoned, put in chains, and sentenced to hard labor. Although put to every torture, he refused to deny the Faith or to accept Communist doctrine. Apparently, after two years of incredibly harsh imprisonment, he was so weakened by hard labor that he gave back his soul to his Creator and won the palm of martyrdom.

2) *Doctor Peter Tang.* While he was still a pagan and a student in the city of Shanghai, Doctor Peter Tang used to make frequent visits to the Catholic Church but without any intention of embracing the Faith. After becoming a doctor he worked in a hospital in Japan, but after three years he was afflicted with tuberculosis and returned home. In 1926 he joined the Communist movement. After the Communists were conquered and dispersed, he continued to live in the rectory of the Catholic Church. Upon his return, a missionary found him, and two months later, when he was at the point of death, he baptized him. He then asked for Holy Communion, and the fervor and devotion of the man made a deep impression on the Christians. Against all hope he regained his health, and from then on when he gave himself to the care of the sick he did not neglect their souls. With his own money he built and operated two hospitals, and none of the patients in these hospitals died without baptism.

Because of jealousy he was falsely accused, but while he was in prison he preached the Faith to his fellow prisoners and baptized the dying. At the time of the Japanese invasion he gave the hospitality of his own home to four missionaries, seven Sisters, and eighteen orphans who had been forced to flee from their own mission. He provided for all of them out of his own funds.

In 1951 the Communists finally seized all his wealth, and having pressed him for a sum of \$28,000,000 in paper money, he was put in prison. He wrote to the missionaries: "Reverend Father, be at ease; never will I accept the new church. Often for many hours I have to remain kneeling before my accusers who continually threaten to kill me. They say they will set me at liberty as soon as I pay them the twenty-eight million. Each day I preach to the prisoners and baptize the dying, and every day I say thirteen rosaries. Doctor Tang tried to borrow money from his friends, and when finally this huge sum had been raised he was killed because he would not join the new National Church because he was rich."

3) *Peter Liu, Catechist.* The Catechist Peter Liu gave a wonderful example of courage while he was in prison. An ex-seminarian, this fervent Catechist labored every day for the Faith. When in 1951 the Communists introduced the new independent National Church, to whom they knew to have great prestige among the Christians, was urged in every way to take over as head of the new church. His firm refusal led him to prison. There he fortified himself with continuous prayer. From his prison cell he wrote to the missionaries: "I have taken firm counsel: whatever happens, I am prepared to go to death for the love of God and in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I fear nothing because in prison I am not alone but Jesus Christ will be with me. To me death is glorious. If I have offended any of the Fathers or Sisters I ask pardon. Praised be Jesus Christ! Pray for me."

*Notitiae Franciscanae Missionariae* II, (1952)

## TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Because Your tongue of Fire  
Scorched all my sins by name,  
My heart went up in smoke. My favorite dreams  
Crumbled like cinders down my chromium thoughts.  
And I fled away to my icy justifications.

But when Your breath came curving  
Across my mind in irrefutable gales,  
All the petals of words blew off my songs;  
And I sat, afraid, in the stark trees stripped of music,  
While my reflections bent to a glorious dust.

When Your quite perfect Light  
Leaned out of Heaven,  
I searched in vain for saving shade, some shadow,  
But all my veils went up in a cellophane blaze;  
And I dropped down in the center of my blindness.

O Fire and Wind and Light! O sweet Destroyer!  
O Brand and Gale and Torch! O perfect Sword  
Wounding all subterfuge to the quick of candor!  
I said: I will go and die in my confusion.

And then the Everlasting Arms, world-banding,  
Dwindled to fit my heart. Stripped and alone  
Now, this exquisite moment, I discover  
My one pure claim on Love whose final Name  
After the Flame and Storm and white Light gleaming  
Is: Father of all the poor, Father of me.

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

*Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.*

*Nov 30 May 1952*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *Poverty: The Root of Perfection*

The symbolism of the Middle Ages is not always familiar to the modern practical mind. But when Thomas of Celano salutes the Clare as the Footprint of the Mother of God, a moment's thought reveals the deep implications of such an expression. A footprint signifies that someone has passed that way, and from the footprint we gather some knowledge of that person. Our Lady had walked that path of perfection, following the path of her Son in her womanly fashion, and Clare, because she reflected the virtues of Mary, is like a mother's footprint which her Mother and ours has left behind. Through Clare the virtues of Mary were revealed once more to the world, and the desire was aroused in human hearts to walk the path of Mary in imitation of her perfections.

Of all the virtues of Our Lady, however, the one that seems singled out by Clare for imitation was her poverty. Certainly her virginity, obedience and submission, kindliness and love of neighbor, were reflected in the Lady Clare. Yet, from first to last, poverty seems to hold the primacy. Espoused to Christ before the poor altar of the Lady of the Angels, Clare laid hold not only of the Poor Christ of the Poor Virgin Mother as well. Whenever poverty is mentioned is to include the poverty of Mary. For here was "the little flock which Our Lord and Father had begotten in His Church by the word and example of the blessed Father Francis, who followed the poverty and humility of His beloved Son and of the glorious Virgin, His Mother" (*Testament*). The Rule opens with Cardinal Rainaldo's approval of Clare's desire to follow Christ and Mary; it closes with the firm purpose of observing "the poverty and humility of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy Mother." To Blessed Agnes, Clare writes that she may carry Christ spiritually as Mary carried Him in her body, "if thou followest the steps of her humility and especially of her poverty" (Ep. III, 3).

### *Material Poverty*

Undoubtedly, in Clare's mind as in our own, this poverty was first and foremost in material things. Only then would the community be pleasing to God when it was rich in poverty; only when fortified by the strong example of poverty would it stand firm. That she might continue as she had begun, she obtained from Innocent III and Gregory IX the Privilege of Seraphic Poverty. Her model was truly the Holy Family, for "she exhorted the Sisters to be conformed in their little nest of poverty to the poor Christ whom His poor little Mother had laid as a Babe in the manger." Contemplation of Bethlehem and Nazareth, perhaps, led her to forbid more land than was necessary, while "for the love of the all-holy and most dear Babe . . . and of His most holy Mother" she begged the Sisters to wear only poor garments.

The material poverty of Christ in His birth, life and death, and that of our Lady, became the traditional motive of the Franciscan order in accepting privation of material possessions. Never poverty for its own sake, as an end in itself; but poverty as part and parcel of our conformity to Christ and our imitation of Him: that poverty, as Saint Bonaventure says, which is begotten of justice. It must be a poverty *quae est cum cruce*: which is part of the Cross, and has conjoined to it the Gospel-life of penance, holiness, simplicity, humility and all kindness: this is the poverty which like the furnace of the Three Children (Dan. 3, 92) purges and proves the elect of God.

That Franciscan poverty, and all voluntary poverty indeed, finds its explanation only within the imitation of Christ and Mary, points to a truth that is often underestimated in the spiritual life: that poverty of spirit is more basic than actual material poverty. The latter, indeed, usually first in point of time; we learn and practice external poverty and its accompanying spirit of poverty from the days of our novitiate. Only later do we come to see, by the grace of God, that poverty of spirit is more fundamental, more important and far-reaching in its effects. External poverty, which is at once the safeguard and the fruit of interior poverty, will differ from age to age, and even from person to person. (We leave aside the question of community poverty regulated by the Rule, etc.). All must truly be pilgrims and strangers in this world, leaving the Lord in material poverty and, like pilgrims hastening to their homeland, using material things as though they belonged to some-

one else. Yet the tasks we are given, the duties obedience lays on us, will of necessity vary our own material use of things. Much also is in Franciscan tradition, to the zeal of the individual, provided that or she does not become singular or a critical zealot thereby. In material poverty is not the only thing that really matters despite Spiritualists and the Joachimites and the modern non-Franciscan interpretation of Franciscanism.

### *The Primacy of Poverty of Spirit*

In the following of Christ, as our former Conference showed, in imitation, in thought, heart and will, must precede and inspire external imitation. We must have first the mind and spirit of Christ to be centered on the will of God, as He was from the first moment of His earthly existence: *In coming into the world, He says . . . But I come (in the head of the book it is written of Me) to do The Will of My Father in Heaven (John 6, 38).* *O God (Hebr. 10, 5..7).*

Could we but penetrate a little more into the mystery of the incarnation, into the heart of Mary at the Annunciation as she yielded herself as the handmaid of the Lord to do His will, into the inner positions of the Word made flesh, we would taste and see the meaning of poverty of spirit. The Word of God, the eternal Son of the Father becoming Man "did not abhor the Virgin's womb" (*Te Deum*) "emptied Himself" of all external signs of His Godhead, "humbled Himself" by taking the nature of a slave, by becoming obedient unto death (Phil. 2, 7-8). At the same time, the human soul of Christ, clothed in justice and holiness and endowed with the beatific vision, beholding the will of His Father and, caught up in an ecstasy of love, offered up the whole nature of the God-man, to do his Father's will. This is utmost self-abnegation, deepest abasement, complete self-surrender. Man had offended God and sin had entered the world through disobedience and self-will. From the very moment, on the other hand, that Mary had emptied herself and yielded herself to God and so had pre-echoed, so to speak, the *Ecce Venio*, the Word made flesh within her had offered the Father His humiliation, His obedience, His will. He poured Himself forth in complete sacrifice, and unto God. He was henceforth to do only as the Father had commanded Him.

Poverty of spirit, to which few mortals ever fully attain, is the true poverty, the reflection of the self-oblation of the Son of God, of the abasement, too, of Our Lady as the Handmaid of her Lord. This is the Seraphic Poverty which by the fire of charity leads to complete mortification and self-forgetfulness and self-dedication in all things.

Despite interpretations to the contrary, this is the true Lady Poverty that Francis wooed and espoused with an everlasting love. Material poverty was but the natural sign and expression of his love. Let us not forget that his theology was like an eagle soaring, while ours creeps along the ground! Let us not forget those long hours of deep prayer that were his from the beginning of his conversion, wherein the Crucified Lord showed him the secrets of His Divine Heart, so that henceforth Francis carried in his own heart the marks of the Passion while his one desire was to make the inner man the dwelling place of Jesus Christ. The Gospel-life, not mere external poverty, was the beautiful lady whom, as he told his companions, he was to wed. Material poverty, to the extreme, was the first manifestation of his nuptials.

When, as the loyal bridesman, he won Clare for Christ, the heart of his teaching must have been the true meaning of poverty, as seen in Our Lord and Our Lady. To her he addressed the words of the Gospel: "thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast: keep nothing for thyself, nor desire anything henceforth but to come, follow Christ in His humility, in His self-abnegation and surrender. Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Him who is the one foundation of all perfection."

### *The Root of Perfection*

Later, Francis was to teach that same divine secret to his followers: "Know, my brothers, that poverty is a special way of salvation, the source of humility, the root of perfection; and its fruits, though hidden, are manifold. For this is the treasure hidden in the field of the Gospel, to buy which we must sell all, and to obtain which we must spurn what we cannot sell." He called Gospel poverty the foundation of his Order, for the whole structure of our religious life so rests on it that if it is secure all is safe, but if it is destroyed the whole edifice tumbles. But this Poverty is poverty of spirit before all else!

What then shall we say of the controversy over the fundamental

virtue that animates, shapes, informs Franciscan life? Some would claim it is poverty, others seraphic charity; and both find support in medieval sources. Yet, truly, both virtues are necessary and must be joined together. In fact, they may be considered as two aspects of the same virtue, charity. They are both elements of the soul's journey to God. As sin is a turning away from God and a turning to self and creature, so its opposite, our ascent to God, includes a turning from creature to self and a conversion upward to God. Poverty, true poverty of spirit, is that whereby we say *No* to self and the world; and Charity, that which says *Yes* to Christ and the Father. We are to be emptied of self (Franciscan asceticism) that we may be filled with God (Franciscan mysticism). Poverty and charity are the concave and the convex of the same seraphic love.

Poverty of spirit, then, is that side of divine love which puts us in proper relationship to self and creatures. Hence, in the mind of Francis, it is our special way of salvation and the root of perfection. Perhaps we need not take this expression so literally as to say that all virtues spring from poverty. But at least such is its relation to the other virtues of religious life that truly the sublimity of the highest poverty makes the heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, poor in goods but exalted in virtue.

Thus, without poverty of spirit, that imitation of and participation in the "emptying" of Christ, *material poverty* would lack motive and meaning and spirit. It was through his deep poverty that Francis acquired *humility*, for it taught him to think himself as of less account than others, and to acknowledge that whatever good is found in man is from God alone. Poverty it was that produced the *simplicity* of the Poverello, for it taught him to place God first . . . and that is the Franciscan simplicity, "which is content with its God and counts itself else as mean" (II Cel. 189). The perfectly *obedient* man is likened to a corpse because by poverty of spirit he has died to self with Christ. The Franciscan *brotherhood*, in unity and equality and deepest spiritual love, is achieved only when one is truly a Lesser Brother: Lesser, *because* he has emptied himself of self-interest. And finally, without exhausting the list, our *apostolate* is vitally dependent on the degree to which we have forgotten self that we may radiate Christ.

Detroit, Michigan

Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.

## AFTER FIFTY YEARS

by Johannes Joergensen

(From San Francesco Vivo, by Fr. Felix Rossetti, O.F.M. Conv.)

On August 22, 1952, I commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of my first visit to the Basilica of Saint Francis, that triumphant exultation of the saint who sleeps there these seven centuries, in the crypt, in his coffin of stone.

I have no longer the strength of fifty years ago when I used to run through the winding paths of Assisi with the quickness and bravado of a young writer dreaming of worldly fame. Then, I used to climb the steep streets and, without realizing it, I would find myself buried in the perfume of the cloisters of Franciscan joy. I used to stop and admire the lovely Madonnas, those sweet sentinels at every turn of the road; I would pause before the paintings of Francis and Clare; and those streets opening on to the horizon never failed to fascinate me.

Now, no more; life loses its vigor at eighty-five; eyes no longer see; they rejoice only in the splendid visions of long ago.

And yet, twice, on the twenty-second of August, without assistance, from my home built at the foot of the Rocca—that solid witness of medieval strife—I wandered to the Basilica of the Saint.

I passed over the narrow streets, those same streets I had traversed so many, many times before; the stones, now worn by time, were kinder to my feet as though respectful of my age. This people, it seems I always knew them; they were good people, peaceful, industrious, smiling, always ready to greet me if only with a nod.

And then, I am in front of the Church, in front of the Gothic rose window, the two doors, one of which only is open—everything is as it used to be. There, from under the arcs of the door, looking into the interior, I see the great pillar on the top of which the font of holy water is resting on its twisted mosaic pedestal; and across in the recess of a side chapel, the wonderful stained glass windows glisten like a plate of silver touched with amethyst, sapphires, emeralds, rubies, and topaz.

I take off my hat and enter the Church. It is almost pitch black in

the vast low nave; the windows dance all the more merrily in the symphony of colors, blue, violet, golden yellow, rose, and green.

I proceed to the front of the Church where the high altar is. There, as always, a lay-brother, dressed in that black habit I have seen so well, goes patiently about his cleaning; but my slow and unsteady steps in the shadows arrests the attention of a Father in the Basilica. He approaches, takes my hand with fraternal affection and leads me to the bench in front of the altar of the Poverello. While he leads me, I look at the walls to assure myself that the frescoes are still there, that everything, everything is there. And there, too, is the door to the crypt. It is open, and I see the dark vestment closets of oak cut by the hands of the Perugian. All is the same as it was fifty years ago. And yet everything seems unreal as if I were in a dream, a beautiful dream from which I feared I would awaken any moment.

Then I go down the dark flight of stairs which lead to the crypt. I walk cautiously, feeling my way until I find at last, in the darkness, the gate leading to the Saint's last resting place. Behind the heavy iron grating, many candles, already half spent, play upon the walls with their unsteady glow. I move deep into this place of profound darkness and silence, where I hear nothing save the flickering of the noise of the flames murmuring behind their prison of red.

And here, finally, that veil of unreality leaves me. Yes, I am here, at the feet of Brother Francis; there behind the gate, there where the candles burn, Saint Francis is resting, the Poverello, my dearly loved Saint Francis!

I withdraw into the darkness of a corner. I kneel down on the prie-dieu. Pilgrims from every land pass me, but they do not disturb me; perhaps they do not even know that I am here. I am happy in my solitude alone with my thoughts.

Fifty years ago I was there for the first time! It was then I turned from the Protestant labyrinth into the true fold of Jesus Christ. I entered the Church with the assistance of a holy Franciscan, Father Spee, of Bois-le-Duc, Holland, a Friar Minor Conventual, with whom I became acquainted on my first visit to the tomb of the Poverello. A good Father Felix, to whom I dedicated the work, *Saint Francis*, was the instrument of Providence which led me into the Catholic Church. It was a Franciscan who showed me the light; it was Saint Francis at work

it was the Poverello who dissipated the clouds of doubt, of darkness, and of heresy from my soul.

From that day, I have known no other way than that of the Saint. I have followed with the Poverello over all the paths made by him. I rested in the places made holy by his prayers, by his abstinence and mortification. I came to establish my residence here in his city, to sleep next to him, to hear yet again his sweet voice. Francis, Catholic and wholly apostolic, has given health to my soul.

Fifty years from my first visit to his tomb! I have traveled much, but my journey was peaceful with him as my companion.

Fifty years ago I walked into the Church with these eyes full open, but the spirit was not yet wholly enlightened with his light. Today, at fifty-five years old, I have re-entered the same Church, these eyes of flesh, weary, darkened, almost blind—like the Saint at the end of his life—but I have re-entered with a far greater vision. And this, because of him, because of Brother Francis, the magnificent fool of Christ.

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O blessed poverty! to those who love and embrace her she bestows eternal riches. O holy poverty! to those who possess and desire her God promises the kingdom of heaven and in truth bestows eternal glory and the blessed life.

*Saint Clare of Assisi*



## HUMILITY

Perfection, in the opinion of Saint Bonaventure, is made up of elements: *grace, justice and wisdom*. The relation of humility to the very striking and shows how important it is in the spiritual edifice. Humility is the *door of wisdom, the foundation of justice, and the door of grace*.

No one will ever enter into the room of wisdom except through the door of humility, whose portal is quite low. Only he is wise who knows his own and others' nothingness as contrasted with the sublimity of God. *If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself* (Gal. 6, 3).

To give to everyone what belongs to him, that is justice. When speaking of what "belongs to him", "what is his own", we must begin with God. In the first place, honor and reverence are due to Him. It is humility chiefly which disposes us to render this honor and reverence to God. *For great is the power of God alone, and he is honored by the humble* (Ecclus. 3, 21).

No less is humility the dwelling-place of grace. It is grace that makes us pleasing to God. We have to realize how much of a condescension God has made in letting us share His Own divine life. There will be no realization except on the part of the one who looks closely at his unworthiness to live the life of God. Such a one is truly humble; the grace of the Holy Spirit rests on the humble only. *To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* (Isaias, 66, 2).

Because of the tremendous importance of the virtue of humility, the Seraphic Doctor often treats of it in his writings. But lest some (unreligious!) might imagine that humility is just a matter of the heart and mind and need never show itself in action, the Saint spends the entire first part of his *De Perfectione Evangelica*, speaking of humility in external action. To drive home the necessity of actually lowering ourselves, if we would be genuinely humble, it is part of the Seraphic Doc-

trine method to offering many objections—fifteen in all—against self-vilification. His answers to these objections are enlightening and have a way of spurring the heart on to a closer practice of humility. But let the reader judge for himself from the following adaptation of some of these objections and the answers to them.

**Objection:** If we were to discover the religious who liked being put aside by the superior, forgotten, obscured by others less capable, and, who, on the other hand, disliked being in any wise commended for work well-done, or promoted according to merit and fidelity to duty, we would say that this was the find of the century, for we naturally hate being overlooked and we desire remuneration. Lowering or demeaning oneself is contrary to the dictates of our nature and does not harmonize with right reason. It follows then that the virtue of humility cannot demand of us to appear foolish or lowered in the sight of others.

**Answer:** An external act of humility does seem to clash with human nature. But this clash is really only with the instinct of our nature—and we must remember that it is a fallen nature—and not with reason. Truth and right reason find no repugnance on the part of our nature to self-vilification. To perform external acts of humility is for the most part quite agreeable to our make-up and for these reasons:

1. The fact that our human nature is made from nothing, it is defective; it fairly shouts out that it is defective and far from perfect. Surely if one demeans himself he is not in any way spoiling what is perfect.
2. When we examine our nature closely, we discover that it is preserved and kept intact for the simple reason that with all its might it keeps unity in all its elements and parts; and so far as it can, it quickly expels any foreign body that would serve to disrupt this unity.
3. Our nature advances and develops because it looks for influences from a higher nature. So as to find completion of itself, it desires to be subject to something better. Because it is the mark of humility to recognize nature as defective and to reduce oneself to a certain unitive smallness, the better to repel the spirit of pride and arrogance as agents that scatter and corrupt this unity, offering oneself to the influence of divine grace and being subject to it—so it is that self-humiliation is actually in line with truth and in harmony with our best natural instincts.

*Objection:* We are told that "virtue is the order of love." Should a superior subject himself to an inferior, thinking that it is humility to act that way, he is perverting right order and consequently this subjection is not a work of virtue—it is not humility.

*Answer:* There quickly comes to mind that Saint Francis once said he would be quite willing, for the love of God, to be subject to a man for but one hour. When we speak of an *order of love* in virtue we must remember that this means mainly, radically and essentially that God is to be preferred to creatures. Every other order must lead to this order to the principal one. As Saint Augustine says, "it is quite proper that the creature grow small in his own sight, so that the Creator might grow great and sweet in his heart." But how can we better grow small in our estimation than by being subject to others for God's sake and by esteeming them better than ourselves? Such self-demeaning preserves a proper order of virtue. Dignity, such as that arising from ecclesiastical rank, does not suffer thereby. True humility does not pervert, neglect, nor diminish this dignity; rather, humility saves it, since in this case the humility remains within, in the heart, and, exteriorly, authority is maintained according to one's rank.

*Objection:* Virtue consists in moderation, but when a person values himself he is going to an extreme and thereby fails to act virtuously.

*Answer:* The difficulty, if there be one, lies in the word "moderation." This word has to be understood correctly. Moderation does not mean striking a mean in the amount of the object at hand, which in this case is a virtue. It does not mean, in other words, that I will practice just so much humility and no more, lest I be accused of being an extremist; it means holding to a middle path, so as to keep one's distance from what is a defect and also from what is an excess, because each of these is an evil. So it is that to lower oneself is a virtuous act in between timidity on the one hand and arrogance on the other. Both of these are vices. Self-vilification may seem to go to an extreme but it actually leads to a middle course. Besides, self-vilification is not only an act of valuing but it also repairs our (fallen) nature; it has about it more of a medicinal than a complete character; and since the sickness which is specially ruinous to the human race is arrogant pride, a counteracting medicine must be found.

*Objection:* How can a really good and just person consider him-

self lower and baser than others? After all, there is a substratum of truth in every virtue; virtues cannot exist where truth is lacking. The just man is really judging falsely when he reposes himself lower, for example, than the criminal recently sentenced to life-imprisonment for murder. Such a thought on his part is opposed to the truth and it necessarily follows that it is also opposed to virtue.

*Answer:* It is true, of course, that every virtue has a foundation in truth and this holds good also in the case of humility. The very truth of the divine law demands that each of us is to feel more humbly about himself than about others. As everyone naturally feels his own sickness and afflictions more than those of someone else, so everyone is to recognize his own defectiveness more certainly and intimately and frequently; for this reason he should judge himself viler than others, not because he is more certain about his own vanity and vileness than he is of another's. That is why it appears that demeaning oneself is not based on falsehood, but on truth, on the experimental knowledge of our own defects.

*Objection:* Among all creatures, man is the noblest and consequently should be the most honored and esteemed; for that reason, whoever lowers himself is throwing a law of creation out of order.

*Answer:* It is true that man is the noblest of creatures and must be given preference over all others by reason of his *deiformity*, his being the image of God; yet he is on par with other creatures in the matter of the defectibility and nothingness that he shares with them; going further and seeing the *deformity* arising from vice, we understand that he loses his esteemed position and takes the lowest place of all; witness the wicked in hell! Since we are all sinners, humility is a very fitting quality of soul, giving us the basis of various virtues and a remedy for moral failings.

*Objection:* The soul is the image of God and was created for no other reason than to become like to Him; now God is good, wise and majestic and the desire to reach His excellence fits right in with remaking the image of our soul. It is self-vilification that hinders this work.

*Answer:* There are certain qualities belonging to the Divine Excellence which would make us like Lucifer were we to desire to have them to the extent that God possesses them, such as divine judgment, revenge, and honor. Other qualities God willingly shares with us, like goodness, truth and virtue. When one conquers himself, it is these virtues that

shine out; so it does not follow that to humiliate oneself will harm image of God in the soul.

*Objection:* Every virtue and virtuous act has its exemplar in God. Since God, though, in no way demeans Himself—there is no place for anything like that in Him—how can we claim that self-vilification is consonant with the perfection we must look for in God as our model?

*Answer:* There is need for a distinction here. Humility has its exemplar in God if by it we understand something so complete in itself that it does not go beyond its bounds; but if by it we understand something that is defective, implying subjection to another, then it does not have its exemplar in God who is in no way defective and has no superior. That man would not neglect to humble himself for lack of an example: God was pleased to assume the *form of a slave*, and in it to be humiliated, despised, debased and in that wise to inflame others with the desire for perfect self-contempt.

From the above answers, one can see with what insistence the Seraphic Doctor teaches the need for exterior as well as interior humility. It is quite clear that external humility is as important as interior smallness, but he would be among the very first to proclaim that there is never true humility without at least the desire of making oneself small in the sight of others, always for the motive of imitating Christ our Lord. In many words he states that the sum of all Christian perfection rests in humility, whose act is an *interior* and *exterior* vilification of oneself. This great Mystical Theologian knew how to live humbly. To choose a well-known instance of this truth, he was found scrubbing pots and pans in the kitchen when the Pope's legates came offering him the Cardinal's hat! For Saint Bonaventure, a true and correct knowledge of self brings one to a full knowledge of God; but no one really knows himself who does not care to grasp the fact of his own nothingness, for *if a man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself* (Gal. 6, 3).

Paterson, N. J.

Fr. Leonard D. Perotti, O. F. M.



## SOME POINTERS ON FRANCISCAN EDUCATION

On the eighteenth of October, 1952, at the opening of the school year at the Apostolic College of Grottoferraro, the Minister General of the Friars Minor, Father Augustine Sépinski, in a few brief and simple words made some pointed remarks on Franciscan education:

The great mission of the College (to train masters of the spiritual life and to form teachers for the Order) prompts me to use this solemn occasion to emphasize and repeat the conclusions drawn just now by your Very Reverend President in his masterly talk:

### 1. In your own formation, avoid religious formalism

Our Franciscan life is the result of two elements which are providentially bound together: the call of God to a state of higher perfection, and the free adherence of our will to that call. This free acceptance of a grace so great and precious for us must lead us to a joyful fidelity to all the obligations of our state, a fidelity that springs from a deep conviction of the sanctity of the religious state, which is based on the love that indissolubly unites God to the soul and the soul to God.

And as all Rules, Constitutions, ordinances, the will of superiors, etc., lead us to greater attachment to God because they demand a renunciation of self and our evil inclinations, it is evident that all these must be observed with conviction, with love and enthusiasm; for we must see in each regulation, however small, a means of advancing in the way of perfection.

Such a concept of religious life causes us to follow on our own initiative, without force, whatever is prescribed, because we are profoundly convinced that we are doing what is pleasing to God and beneficial to our soul.

On the other hand, religious formalism consists in a mechanical observance of laws, either to avoid conflict with superiors or for some

other human motive, but without conviction of the holiness of calling or without supernatural outlook and spirit. Too often, however, religious think they are condemning formalism when they condemn certain prescriptions that do not please them or when they speak lightly of them and do their best to avoid them. Such overlook the formative purpose and intent of that sacred inheritance of laws which are the fruit of age-long experience.

Hence we must condemn and avoid both that observance which keeps our laws only out of convenience and that attitude of mind which makes light of our Rules and regulations. I leave it to the Masters and directors to translate these ideas into practice, but to all I urge that we carry out with faith and holy enthusiasm the faithful observance of all that has been commanded us.

## 2. In forming others, respect the individuality and talents of each

All our Religious must observe our holy laws: this is a fundamental principle to which all must subscribe. Nevertheless, in the process of spiritual formation and progress in virtue it will not be possible that all be able to follow the same method or reach the same degree of perfection though all follow the same path. The great figures of our Saints show this to us: Saint Francis and Saint Peter of Alcantara, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Didacus, Saint Bernardine of Siena and Saint Leonard, to mention only a few. All were Franciscans, yet quite evidently each had his own particular character.

Hence, it is necessary in the direction of souls, especially of those consecrated to God, to take into account the temperament of each, his individual qualities and capabilities, home background, etc. Every Religious has needs and aspirations peculiar to himself which must be respected, hence we must help him develop his talents, his abilities, direct to good purpose the inclinations proper to him. This is not to say that the educator can allow any lack of observance of our Rules and way of life; but it does mean that he must study the character of each that he may the better develop in each one those natural qualities which will dispose and help the student to direct all his aspirations and actions to the ideal of holiness. If such norms are well followed in practice, there should result a religious community that

is united in like observance of the same Rule and yet is most varied in the generous realization of individual abilities and talents.

## 3. Whole-hearted Submission to Authority

This third point is indeed implicit in the two foregoing. Yet I should like to speak of it more at length since today it is too easy to have a superficial concept of the vow of obedience.

All authority comes from God: this is a very general yet very basic concept. But we Religious, who have freely chosen a life, a mode of living which is covered by very definite laws, too often lose sight of that concept. By solemn vows before the altar of God we have promised to obey in all things that are not against the Rule and our conscience. We have freely yielded our will and our liberty to the will of our superiors. It is indeed a great sacrifice which we have made; yet to that sacrifice is attached a still greater reward on the part of God.

Our religious must be convinced of this great truth, so that they will obey under the influence of such a profound conviction and their obedience be total, generous, and joyful.

The Religious, on the other hand, who obeys without a supernatural spirit, out of force, or for some other mere human end, is an unhappy Religious: his life is burdensome and lacking in that joy and lightness which calms the mind even in the midst of great renunciations. Only a true Franciscan appreciation of this most difficult of the vows can render our burden sweet and light. We must have the vision which inspired those words so dear to our Seraphic Father: We have promised great things, still greater are promised to us . . . suffering is slight, glory is infinite!

These are the thoughts which, in simple words, I would propose to you on this occasion. Generously model your own life on such formative principles and study how you may impart them later to the hearts and souls of those whom you will be called on to teach and to train in the years to come. (*Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, LXXI, 1952, 288-290).

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (trans.)

## SALUTE TO CLARE OF ASSISI

The beauty and wonder of an unacted play written in free may exist largely in the reader's beholding eye. Perhaps the touches a nerve in his own experience or plucks a chord of memory vibration of which is confused with the melody of the words reading. While scanning the lines, his inner ear may be listening to he has heard elsewhere.

When the editor of this review gave me a copy of *Candle in Umbria* a four-act play written by a Poor Clare of the Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, New Mexico, this cautious meditation on the perils of subjectivity came unbidden to mind. Because Saint Clare, our Franciscan sister, any Friar is always happy to read everything that is written about her. He is seeing his own family praised in it. He is predisposed to approach the subject with his heart instead of his head.

Forget all that. Anyone with an ear for beauty can approach the play with his eyes, ears, and intellect working at full tilt and he will undergo a profoundly moving and rewarding experience. Here is a play of love and insight of deft and unerring craftsmanship and glowing inspiration. *Candle in Umbria* is as clear and beautiful as the theme it celebrates.

The plot is historical. Since it tells the history of a soul as well as a body, it spans both the realm of spirit and the world of sense. In the play, things happen which Clare's contemporaries saw happening, of which the rest of us may read in a hundred books; but what these things meant to Clare herself are visible only to other Clares. Or, if they have, they have now told us.

The spirit and soul of this composition are of more importance than its body or plot, although its corporeal side is a superb dramatic presentation of the red-letter events of Saint Clare's unusual life from the time she joined Saint Francis until her death. A good skeleton of plot, strong enough to support an historical novel, has had its bare bones of inci-

hed with living tissue. This play *lives*. And, like all intelligent life, its vitality is rooted in spirit. In this instance it is the spirit of Saint Francis.

The play begins, and on the instant you are transported to Assisi, to her home, and a company already familiar. The atmosphere is not so much constructed as evoked, for the author has an unerring sense of place and character. The rhythm of the lines is too natural to be noticed. There is no march of events, but a smooth, even, unhurried progress. It flows like a river. Every image is appropriate. Each one is lived vividly and concretely. There is no unclarity anywhere.

In the prologue Ortolana Scefi feels "the whole world's music" packed in her, for Clare is yet unborn.

*"What manner of child is this astir in me  
Whose flesh and bone are mine though yet unseen,  
But kindles song at once and fear in me!"*

The child Clare is comely and loved. She could be a heroine on any stage, although her love is not the kind that Broadway is accustomed to applaud:

*"How shall I tell you how I love the shades  
Of morning when the fields are half-awake  
And God's breath is the scent upon the day!  
When every blossom does Him homage, I  
Reach an ambition wilder than their own:  
To bloom a while, then die upon His Heart,  
Giving Him back the perfume He has poured  
Down all my veins and flooded in my heart."*

From the day Saint Francis planted this flower to bloom awhile until the day she died upon God's Heart, Clare lived a divine romance packed with drama. In a soft Umbrian night while Assisi is sleeping, Clare and her cousin Pacifica slip from the Scefi home and go to Saint Mary of the Angels where the friars with lighted torches are gathered around Saint Francis.

*"They should be coming soon, good Father. Listen  
How the small noises of the night grow quiet,  
Waiting the footsteps of the Lady Clare!"*

And Francis speaks:

*"My brothers, hear and remember what I tell you  
This night, though do not press me for a gloss  
Upon it! There will come a day when only  
One woman's loyalty will buoy me up  
In a great raging sea of desolation  
And bring our brotherhood from storm to port."*

He tells Clare to

*"cast down the sandals  
From off your feet, and the more swiftly run  
Down the sweet tanglewood of penance into  
The everlasting arms of Christ Our Lord."*

The second act opens with a scene in the Assisi marketplace where there is much talk of the Saracens "testing their bows and sharpening their arrows" for an attack on the city where terror stalks and shadows the walls "like knuckles of Belial". When the blow falls, Clare, who has never felt "the hard drag of fear" upon her heart (for in Christ she finds a breath of fear), tells her Lord,

*"We cast our quivering lives upon Your Power  
And lean our women's trembling on Your Arm."*

The tumult increases with the approach of the Saracen host. As her Sisters sing the *Jesu Tibi Vivo*, Clare holds the Blessed Sacrament aloft and the Saracens are felled by the power of God.

In the fourth act Clare sees "the King's bright court" which is now entering. At her request, the friars sing *The Canticle of the Sun* and she is commanded by Our Lady to

*"leave at last the secret cloister  
And walk the shining acres of His Love."*

In the whole work there is not one line of sticky sentimentality or one piece of pietism. It is all authentic Franciscana, redolent of Umbria and aglow with the heart-warming fervor of the Poverello.

Nowhere in this piece does the author make the lines yield to thought or does the thought constrain the lines. The two are one. The message is the method. No excursions into moralizing impede the

moralizing interrupts the thought. It is all done so honestly and naturally that you seem simply to have been privileged and blessed with a visit from some visitor who tells you what happened in Assisi many years ago.

Everything about this play seems inevitable; you would want nothing else, for to do so would falsify fact. The stamp of reality is here, of actual reality. It seems not to have been contrived but only to have happened. You have read some plays and witnessed others where your mind was caught in a web of the author's weaving and from which he could extricate you by the solution of the plot. *Candle in Umbria* is a whole world and heaven apart from that sort of writing. When Our Lady appears, you know she could not have remained away from that particular scene; when the Voice is heard, your ear is not the least bit surprised.

There is properly no great complication of plot, because this play is with the biography of a dedicated human soul. Clare's mind was simple; her path to God was straight. It was not so much a path as a fact. Obstacles are of the earth and are no hindrance to her. This very fact is the source of the play's pervading lyric quality. Its single causal event is not an event at all in the usual sense, but the fulfillment of a vocation heralded at the play's beginning and confirmed at its close.

"The more unity a thing has," says Thomas Aquinas, "the more perfect is its goodness and power." There is so much unity here that each act could stand alone, and yet there is no redundancy, for its unity is of the mind and spirit and not something contrived by the playwright's artfulness. It is a clear draught from a deep well of spirituality, an expanded thought from a mind integrated by seraphic living, and that is why it registers with the impact and authority of truth, for, as Aquinas says again, "the higher a nature is, the more closely related to it is that which emanates from it."

What I hope I am saying is that *Candle in Umbria* is something more than high art. It is that, too; but it is also an effect beyond the usual power of mere artfulness, and resembling less a literary and dramatic composition than a breath of love, a prayer, an offering to one's Father in God. As such, it is a worthy oblation and a timely one in this year of Saint Clare's Centenary.

The images and actions get off to no false starts. They flow like tributaries tributary to the larger river of the theme, which at the end surges

in a beautiful poetic peroration fresh from the heart and of the author. This final chorus of the epilogue with its to the atomic age, its insight into the true psychology of clear as the spirit of Clare and as simple as the love of Fr

Something in the author must have wanted to say this long time, and in this play she has said them incomparably. Clare, she finds the world too small a place for her heart. The uncloistered playgoers, who think their immediate very large thing, may easily become staggered by the spirit of this play. They may easily get lost in the dimensions which the play is written.

The author has drawn the inner truth of the soul. This is an anatomy of light. This is a love story; but many a not suspect that it is. Those who appreciated *Oklahoma!* of the soil, may fail to appreciate *Candle in Umbria*, which the soul.

It should not be irrelevant to ask the question: "Is Would it go?" Yes, to the first part; and Who Knows, to much of the stuff that currently passes for theater is done by who have slavishly mastered a pattern and can now stand tin pieces of Standard Brands plots that it is quite beyond or not the real thing would sustain public interest. So beautiful play goes on in the sphere of the spirit that a general goers who confuse the non-sensible with the nonsensical amused.

If a play is vexatious enough, or timely enough, or if it tosses verbal custard-pies into the faces of the gods or beguiles the external senses and lets the mind of the audience alone, it has chance of success; but even with all these elements theatrical predictions are still precarious. A piece of brittle, brilliant quality of T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party* devoted audience; but the rule to be observed is that the plot and discourse must never rise above the upland. Our audiences will not strain to catch a glimpse of the

The theater-goer, absorbed in matter, blinded by the things, and deafened by the din of the world, will not see is going on in a play like this one. He may think it at

the verge of the real world if indeed it exists anywhere or at all. We will either disbelieve it entirely or regard it as myth. Yet confirmed secularist will not remain unmoved by the strength of the play's action or by the imponderables that make it even an opportunity, the glow that comes from this small Umbria could light the moral and aesthetic darkness of the play.

Umbrian girl who fell in love with Christ is no pale plaster warm human being with a heart of fire. The fire lit a candle to Umbria seven hundred years ago. In its light, the author's pen from its flame her own heart has caught fire. That is why the this play is a wonderfully warming and enlightening human

one require the eye of faith to see into this play? I think so. majestic scene as the one in which Clare repulses the Saracen aloft the Blessed Sacrament could be construed as empty. The dynamic behind the plot and action is the Franciscan without it the piece would be pointless.

was clearer than light, as the author and the breviary tells intimacy of her love for God is fully intelligible only to those selves love Him. Death was the supreme union towards which stened. Even religious persons, who somewhere along the road light of the fact that the happiest life is one that is totally ad-God, will be only half-appreciative of *Candle in Umbria*. strays a Saint in action, it will not delineate a universal ex- is steeped in Franciscan thought and love, and these are not ingredients of contemporary society.

author's own deep insight into the spirit and character of Clare her being one of those who

ing their gleaming hair away like laughter  
turn their faces toward a nameless spring,  
ing! because one small light flickered, faithful,  
the Clare-candle lights the weary world!"

Seminary

Fr. Rudolf Harvey, O. F. M.



## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XIV)

### *The Thirteenth Article*

TEXT: *Besides the fasts and abstinences to which all the faithful are obliged, they should observe those which are prescribed in their respective Constitutions, notably on the vigils of the Immaculate Conception and of their Seraphic Father Francis.*

The present article forms a natural unit with the preceding and is an expression of that form of love of God known as atonement or penance. Mortification and Penance are frequently spoken of in the same breath and one and the same act of love may pertain to both categories. Though a technical difference exists between the two, penance and mortification are kindred notions in the sense that both involve doing violence to self-love or self-indulgence inasmuch as inordinate love of self is the root cause of all sin. Penance, however, looks to the past; mortification to the future. Penance includes detestation or sincere sorrow for (our own or others') coupled with the intention of atonement. The latter is a desire to erase, as it were, the effects of sin and ingratitude by means of a more fervent act of love. And since all sin is a form of selfishness, all penance is a crucifixion of self and selfish impulses. As much as such an immolation is a manifest expression of the uniqueness that should characterize the most perfect love of God. But penance stresses more the positive element of love manifested through the medium of self-denial, mortification stresses the denial or sacrifice of self as a precaution against any future defection from the love of God.

The Franciscan inspiration for both penance and mortification alike is to be found in the Passion. Frequent meditation on the sufferings of Christ should inflame the heart of the Franciscan religious with commiseration for the Crucified. This love in turn begets a genuine sorrow for sin . . . which is already a *cosuffering*, a *compassion*. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross* . . . and secondly, the desire

to atone for what we and others have done to Christ. This "at-one-ment", if you will, with the Savior through self-crucifixion permits us to say with Saint Paul, *It is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.*

If we consider further that the only specific penance Francis imposed upon his followers was fasting, which in his day included abstinence as an integral part, we can more readily understand why the present article not only follows that prescribing meditation on the Passion, but how it is in a sense symbolical of the whole penitential practice Francis expected of his followers. To appreciate this fully, however, we should consider not only the wording of the present article but its whole historical and present context. This would involve a consideration not merely of the earlier Rule of Leo X but also of the subsequent article of the present Rule. Since the latter belongs to the following chapter, which deals with the control of self, we shall postpone discussing the Franciscan concept of penance for the moment and limit ourself for the present to the article on fasting. *Besides the fasts to which all the faithful are obliged . . .*

In itself, the meaning of these words is clear enough. The Rule simply confirms the general practice of the Church without adding any further obligations. On the other hand, perhaps we are not reading too much into this article if we see here another instance of that essential characteristic of Franciscanism mentioned earlier (Art. 2), submission to the holy Roman Church and its fundamental practices. The fasts and abstinences imposed by general ecclesiastical law are to be observed in the manner required of the rest of the faithful. The religious, therefore, may adopt such legitimate practices customary in the locality and participate in the dispensations granted by the bishop of his diocese (Can. 620).

*They should observe those prescribed by their Constitutions. . .*

The earlier Rule of Leo X prescribed a great number of additional fast and abstinence days. Many of the Tertiary Regular Congregations, however, found it necessary to seek some mitigation of these prescriptions by way of papal dispensation or through their special Congregations, since the ordinary type of apostolic work in which they were engaged made it either impossible or imprudent to insist on these penitential practices in full. The present Rule is more flexible and permits the individual Congregations through their Constitutions to retain or adopt



such additional fasts or abstinences as are deemed feasible and commendable in view of their specific aim and function. Thus, for instance, religious institutions have retained the Friday fast found in the Rule.

These additional fasts proper to the Tertiary Congregation may be observed like ordinary Church fasts. Consequently, where customs as the so-called "relative fast," the use of milk as a pure beverage, so on prevail, religious may follow such conventions in regard to fasts prescribed by their Rule. Similarly, the latter do not oblige religious under twenty-one or those who have begun their sixtieth year.

One important difference between the fasts imposed by the Rule of the Constitutions and those by general ecclesiastical legislation is the manner in which they oblige. The Church laws bind as such under penalty of grave sin though they may admit of a lightness of matter. The fasts and abstinences imposed by the religious Order or Congregation, however, oblige only after the manner of the other precepts of the Rule of the Constitutions, and therefore do not of themselves bind under penalty of either mortal or venial sin. However, a Tertiary religious who chooses to ignore them without a valid reason would hardly be excused entirely from sin, not indeed because of the binding force of the Rule itself but because of the dispositions of mind and heart that prompt the disobedience.

Furthermore, religious superiors can usually dispense their subjects from the observance of the Order fasts or abstinences according to the norm of their respective Constitutions, but, unless they are superiors of exempt clerical congregations, they cannot dispense from the Church law, but they and their subjects must have recourse to the bishop, the local pastor, or to other priests (e.g., confessors) to whom the bishop has given faculties to dispense from fast and abstinence.

If the bishop gives a general dispensation on a day where the fast or abstinence of the Church and the religious Congregation happen to coincide, the religious may not make use of the dispensation unless the superior also dispense from the Rule or Constitutions. Should the superior neglect or refuse to do so, however, the religious who violate the precept would fail only against the Rule or Constitutions and not against the general Church law since the obligation of the latter is suspended by episcopal indult.

On the vigils of the Immaculate Conception and of their Seraphic Father

These two feasts are singled out for special consideration because they are, so to speak, the two principal feasts of the Franciscan Order. The fast prescribed for the vigil of Saint Francis (Oct. 3) is readily understood. That of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, perhaps, requires a word of explanation. Not that this special devotion of Franciscans to our Blessed Lady should provoke any wonder, especially if we recall that Francis "honored the Mother of Jesus with a love so great it cannot be expressed in words" (Celano, *Legenda Prima*, n.198). But why this particular feast of Our Lady?

The answer is to be found in the history of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the glorious role played by all three Orders of the Franciscan family in the long and stormy controversy that preceded the definition of the dogma by the Franciscan Tertiary, Pope Pius IX on Dec. 8, 1854.

The feast itself grew out of an earlier feast known as the Conception of Mary (also called the Conception of Saint Ann) that was celebrated as early as the seventh century in Palestine. In the years that followed this feast was gradually introduced into the West. It spread throughout England, Germany and France during the eleventh century, and in 1263 at the General Chapter of the Franciscan Order held at Pisa it was decreed that the feast should be adopted by the entire Order. But while the feast implied that Mary's conception in the womb of Saint Ann was a holy event, theologians still raised the question whether Mary was immaculately conceived or whether there was not at least an instant preceding her sanctification during which her soul contracted the stain of original sin. Even great saints and doctors of the Church like Saint Bernard, Saint Albert the Great, or Saint Thomas could not see their way clear to accepting the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Even Saint Bonaventure, after reviewing the theological arguments for both sides, confessed that the one favoring Mary's sinless conception was less probable. It was the famed and saintly Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus (d.1308), who turned the tide in favor of the Immaculate Conception by his brilliant solution of these theological difficulties. From that time on, while that other great mendicant order, the Order of Preachers, defining the position of Saint Thomas, opposed both the doctrine and the celebration of the

feast of the Conception, the Franciscans took up the cause of Mary. During the fourteenth century, many learned Franciscans defended Mary's honor in the classroom, in public theological debate and in popular sermons, sometimes even despite calumny, persecution and imprisonment. In the following century, Saint Bernadine of Siena, Saint John Capistran, Pope Sixtus IV are but a few of the prominent Franciscan champions of Mary's prerogative. Indeed, during these years of controversy, the Franciscans, who had pledged themselves by oath to teach and defend this doctrine in public and private, were undoubtedly the greatest single factor in silencing the opposition and changing the general attitude so that eventually the doctrine was universally accepted.

Thus the love for the Mother of Jesus which Francis bequeathed to his followers crystallized, as it were, in this defense of the Immaculate Conception, and the feast itself became the symbol of the deep reverence and devotion of all three Franciscan Orders to Mary, the Mother of God. Today it is their special patronal feast with a privileged status and is celebrated not only by the Third Order Regular but also by the Third Order Secular, which was an effective instrument in spreading the devotion among the faithful during the years of controversy.

The observance of these two vigils follows the general practice of the Church. Consequently, when October 3rd or December 8th falls on Sunday, the liturgical celebration is transferred to the preceding Saturday but the fast and abstinence are not.

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.*

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God can reject everything in a creature that was conceived in sin and that carries the unfortunate mark of sin inherited from Adam. He is absolutely unable to reject our sincere wish to love Him.

*Padre Pio*

feast of the Conception, the Franciscans took up the banner. During the fourteenth century, many learned Franciscans defended Mary's honor in the classroom, in public theological disputations, popular sermons, sometimes even despite calumny, imprisonment. In the following century, Saint Bernard, Saint John Capistran, Pope Sixtus IV are but a few of the Franciscan champions of Mary's prerogative. Indeed, during years of controversy, the Franciscans, who had pledged an oath to teach and defend this doctrine in public and in private, undoubtedly the greatest single factor in silencing the detractors, changing the general attitude so that eventually the doctrine was universally accepted.

Thus the love for the Mother of Jesus which Francis instilled in his followers crystallized, as it were, in this defense of the feast of the Conception, and the feast itself became the symbol of the love and devotion of all three Franciscan Orders to Mary, Mother of God. Today it is their special patronal feast with a prayer of thanksgiving and is celebrated not only by the Third Order Regular and the Third Order Secular, which was an effective instrument of spreading the devotion among the faithful during the years of conflict.

The observance of these two vigils follows the general custom of the Church. Consequently, when October 3rd or 4th falls on Sunday, the liturgical celebration is transferred to Saturday but the fast and abstinence are not.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan Wolter

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God can reject everything in a creature that was created by Him and that carries the unfortunate mark of sin inherited from Adam. He is absolutely unable to reject our sincere wish to love Him. Padre Pio

# the CORD

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Cum permissu superiorum.

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## CHILDREN OF FRANCIS: 1953

Where shall the diaphanous dreams find spaces  
For drifting now, I wonder, when the thoughts  
Of men leap up like tenements, and commerce  
Hawks cruel canticide on every street?

The treaty-tables smirk like chromium  
Where lands of paunch and pinstripes prate of peace.  
The vases of the universe are brightly  
Jammed with paper flowers, and the old  
Songs roll like tears down liberation's drains.

Still, in the bustling forums, sandalled strangers  
Threaten the bombers with their: "Pax et bonum!"  
And wilt some cannons with a Cantic.

Who shall devise a torture to defeat them?—  
These men whose Father's hands and feet were torn!  
What clever engineer shall murder singing  
Out of the Seraph's daughters in their cloister?

The ancient smile of Francis arches over  
Buckets of anxious sand at every door,  
The waiting hoses, and the triple-chamber  
For rinsing poisons from the bewildered air.

Learn new prostrations gay humility never  
Dreamed of (on stomach, not on heart), poor world,  
Not guessing how you roll in all your worried  
Quick convolutions in the Hand of God.

But let the heirs of an incredible vision,  
Heavy with Francis' dreams, light with his songs,  
Keep their fantastic certainties for glowing  
Candles in the sucking swamps of fear.

And still, in the bustling forums, sandalled strangers  
Threaten the bombers with their: "Pax et bonum!"  
Wilting the cannons with a Cantic.

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

*Sr. Mary Francis*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*From the heart, a pattern to the flock (I Peter 5, 3)*

He and the same Spirit of God, said the dying Francis, had led  
the Poor Ladies from this present world. The same ideals,  
the spirituality, the same poverty of spirit and its many fruits,  
therefore inspire all the sons and daughters of the Seraphic Father.  
Completely Clare, his oldest daughter, his little plant, understood  
and made it real in her own life and her own Order, is abundantly  
from her Legend and writings.

As we proceed to talk of Franciscan obedience and of the relation  
between superiors and subjects (modern terms!), we shall not hesitate  
to see her as a living example of the ideals that must inspire Francis-  
"brotherhood", as Saint Francis so aptly called our common life.  
In all, she embodies the concept, the office, the virtues of a Francis-  
superior. Since obedience includes both the one who commands  
and the one who obeys, we shall study Clare first as the model of su-  
perior, and then (in a later conference) as the ideal of the obedient  
Franciscan.

### *The concept of superior*

If Clare became the "abbess of the monastery of San Damiano" and  
was so saluted in official documents, the office and the title were none  
the less doing—except her own obedience. During the first three years of  
her new life "she declined the name and office of abbess, humbly wishing  
to be under rather than over others, and more willing to serve than to  
be served among the handmaids of Christ" (*Legend*, n. 12). Finally, at  
the urging of Saint Francis and apparently in obedience to the canons  
of the Lateran Council of 1215, she undertook the ruling of the Poor  
Ladies.

Her reluctance came in part from her humility, but more from her fear of what the title of abbess stood for in her day, and from her sensitive appreciation of what a Franciscan superior should be. She had some experience with monastic life in the few months before she came to San Damiano, and that had made her more conscious of the vast difference between the two forms of religious life.

In the monastic way of life, the authority or ruling power is concentrated in the abbot or abbess. Great dignity is attached to the office; a sacramental blessing accompanies the election; and the power is conferred and usually held for life in some ways indefinite and unlimited in scope. The Rule is, as it were, an instrument in the hands of the abbot, who is to judge what is more salutary and needful for the rest are to obey. The monks are completely subject, and when they enter into the monastic family ("togetherness" becomes the touchstone) the family composed of a father and his spiritual sons. From what Saint Francis tells us of medieval abbeyes, the abbot or abbess was often a powerful person indeed.

Only gradually did the contrast between the monastic and mendicant ways become fully apparent to the world. Yet Clare from the beginning seems to have shared with Francis a deep appreciation of the difference. There was to be no great stability, no possessions, no vast houses. A family, indeed, and close bonds of union between brothers (or Ladies), all "willingly serving and obeying one another through the charity of the Spirit" (Rule I, 5), "reverencing and loving one another" (I, 7); yet, truly, more a brotherhood, a family of equals. Leaders of some kind there would have to be, for authority must be founded on law and authority, and Francis would be expected to uphold the central place of obedience. Yet it was to be an authority with a difference: the Rule is above the authority, and the Pope above the Rule, and all must obey both; an authority that will be not a law but a service, not for life but for a time only.

See the technical words Francis adopts, and we appreciate the concept. The Franciscan superior for him is a *frater praelatus*, one who is set up temporarily to guide and rule his brethren, himself remaining a friar as much as ever. The Franciscan subject is a *subditus* (not a subject) one who has yielded himself (*sub-do*) to obedience, who "for God's sake has renounced his own will" (Rule II, 10). Both are equally bound by the Rule, for it transcends them both.

### *The office of superior*

In keeping with such equality and fraternity (and a certain liberty of spirit), Francis refused to give the *frater praelatus* any title of dignity. Even the name of prior was to be his, much less that of abbot, or superior: but "let them all alike be called Lesser Brothers" (Rule I, 6). The names he does give, or usage has added, show the true office of the Franciscan superior: minister, custos, guardian; names that denote service, honor, dignity or superiority, but service! "All you are brothers . . . and he that is greatest among you shall be your servant (minister)" (Rule I, 23, 9-11; Rule I, 5). All are prelates indeed, but lifted up not for their own convenience and glory, but for "the service and common good of the Friars" (Rule II, 8). To them especially apply the words of Saint Francis: "Each pupil shall receive his reward not according to the authority he holds, but the labor he has performed" (II Cel. 146).

Think not, however, that Francis meant any lessening of the authority of the prelate or of obedience on the part of the "subject"! At the same time, we are received to obedience (Rule II, 2), to obey in all things which we have promised the Lord to observe and are not against his will and our Rule (II, 10). He himself protested to his dying day: "I firmly wish to obey the Minister General and any Guardian whom it may please him to give me. And I wish to be so captive in his hands, that I cannot take a step or make a move beyond obedience or his command" (Testament).

But what he did abhor was the sight of some prelates making their office a matter of self-glory. Too many, he complained, possessed an ambition to be over others, and sought after prelacies. Such were not the Friars Minor, but forgetful of their calling. Others took it ill when they were removed from office, since they were seeking not the service but the honor. *In praelatione casus*: only when a man is lifted up is he in danger of falling (II Cel. 145). The prelate he desired was one who was thought in the care of others not his own glory but the will of God in all things; one who sought his own salvation before all, and looked not for the applause of his subjects but for their spiritual progress; who did not desire a position of authority and felt humbled when it was bestowed; who rejoiced when it was removed (I Cel. 104).

It was the thought of God, Clare grasped much of this before it had even been expounded by Saint Francis to his brethren. She would have refused

the office save for obedience. When accepted, "it caused fear, not in her heart, and increased not liberty but service and subjection; more she was raised up in the eyes of others by outward dignity, more lowly she was in her own estimation, the more ready to come, the more thoughtful of the needs of others, the more striving to rule others more by her virtues and holy manner than the authority given her: from the heart a pattern to her flock.

### *The virtues of a superior*

What were the virtues of Clare that made her the ideal superior? The same which Saint Francis wishes to find in any Franciscan superior up in authority—the foundations of which one lays while he or she is a subject!

First and above all, there must be the foundation of all Franciscan virtue: charity and poverty of spirit, saying *Yes* to God and *No* to creatures taken purely as creatures. Therefore, the Franciscan superior will seek God in his or her office, not self, not personal comfort or liberty. The office will be seen as a trust for souls, the office of others, an onus rather than an honor. Poverty of spirit will be expressed in what is perhaps the first specific virtue of a superior: humility and detachment from the office.

"Those who are set over others," said Saint Francis, "should be in this only as much as they would glory if appointed to wash the feet of the brethren. And if they are more perturbed over removal from prelacy than they would be if removed from the office of the feet, they are laying up 'treasure' to the peril of their soul." Clare carried this to the extreme, for she considered it part of her office to wash the feet of externs and to do the menial tasks connected with the sick. A Franciscan in office ought at least always to remember he is but a *praelatus*, still a Friar Minor and bound to humility, but lifted up in time for the good of others; and feel nothing but relief when called to relinquish the onus.

Another form of humility in a prelate, says Saint Bonaventure, is affability, which we might translate into the words of Clare's successor: "Let her be so kind and approachable that Sisters may

have their necessities without fear and have recourse to her at any time with all confidence" (*Testament*, 19). Both Saints are echoing the thought of Francis, that those in authority receive their subjects charitably and kindly and show them *familiaritas*, a real family spirit of brotherhood.

Woe to that superior who is as a lion in his house, terrifying those in his household (Ecclus. 4, 35), unapproachable, inclined to coldness and indifference. Woe to him that is prone to anger or perturbation, especially in little things (unless it is anger according to charity), for anger is "impeding charity" in himself and in those under him (*Rule II*, 1) and charity must have the primacy. Blessed the community whose prelate is *like-minded, compassionate, a lover of the brethren, merciful, humble* (I Peter 3, 8).

But no one is going to possess such composure and show such affability unless he is patient; patient with himself first of all and the duties of his office as they crowd upon him; patient with others, their slow progress, their thoughtlessness and ingratitude, their imperfections. On the other hand, impatience and brusqueness of speech stand next to anger in impeding charity and in turning away others to seek help or consolation elsewhere. If a prelate possess true patience, as Saint Bonaventure remarks, his very office and its demands will prove a help to his own spiritual perfection. He will thereby do penance for his own sins; he will be kept from the *tumor superbiae*, the tumor of pride (getting a "big head"); and so will multiply his own merits. Did not Saint Francis tell a certain Minister that patience and long-suffering charity toward the errant would be far more meritorious to him than flight to the quiet of a hermitage?

The patience and forbearance of Saint Clare seem to have become a by-word among her Sisters. But above all they found in her the model of their own life, even as Francis wished the Ministers and prelates to be such that their life would be a *speculum disciplinae*, a mirror of religious discipline, to the others. In her humility and sense of service, she did not lord it over her charges but became from the start a pattern to her flock. In sickness and in health, she strove to be led by virtue rather than by office, to be conformed in all things to the common life, as she demands in her Rule of her successors. There was never a question of one rule for the Sisters, another for herself. Like Francis, rather, she was the living embodiment of the Gospel-life,

the mirror of virtue, the rule of conduct. So in a Franciscan exemplarity of life, total conformity, will make up for many defects.

This leads to a final point (though only a few virtues are mentioned): like Francis and Clare, the Franciscan prelate has as his true goal the spiritual interior living of the Rule, the formation of his charges in the spirit and the life of the Order, his duty (or privilege!) to lay down all sorts of new laws and rules for his community, as though its perfection depended on his decrees. Rather, since he is under the Rule—and it is the Franciscan way of life, which his subjects have promised to observe—his duty is primarily to provide, regulate, guard the conditions which he and his subjects alike can keep the Rule they have accepted. To do this, he needs must follow true Franciscan principles, which we have suggested. Therefore, he should know and “implement” the basic philosophy of our life. Above all, he must be as Saint Bonaventure puts it, to make those committed to him *in formas*, like Christ. Therefore, let the prelate be Christ-like: *Christum ingerat subditis imitandum*, from the heart a pattern for his flock!

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady



The knowledge of your own unworthiness and deformity is the most pure divine light whereby you are forced to reflect on your nature and its potentiality for every sort of crime; and it was given to the greatest saints because it both protects the soul from every sin of pride and vanity and increases humility, which is the basis of true prayer and of Christian perfection. Saint Teresa herself had this knowledge, and she says that at times it brought with it enough pain and suffering to cause death, if the Lord had not sustained her.

P

## FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Within many minds, even modern minds, there lurks the thought that beneath a habit beats a rejected heart. In sundry places, and in so many ways, there breaks into expression the conviction that “she can’t get a man”. How little such people know of the magnetic pull exerted by Love Itself on these suspect hearts! However, not to disappoint those who belittle the intention of souls seeking a temporal happiness with the Eternal Lover, there have been, and are, instances of such misguided individuals. Some of these come and go; some come and attempt a life of compromise between the world and the spirit, but find them incompatible; some come, and after a while are captivated by the Creator of souls. Foremost among the so-called disappointed in this world who attempted a life of bodily ease and comfort within the shadow of the cloister was Hyacintha Mariscotti, today honored among the canonized saints of the Church, and enrolled under the banner of the Seraphicello.

Hers was a disposition that could be summed up in such words as vain, arrogant, proud. Of course, from a strictly worldly point of view she was justified in her vanity, for she belonged to a wealthy and prominent family; her mother was descended from the illustrious Roman family of the Orsini, and her father was Mark Anthony Mariscotti, Count of Vignanello, where our saint was born in 1585. Baptized by the Bishop of Civita Castellana, this third of the five children born to pious parents was given the name Clarice. Already vain and self-regarded even as a small child, Clarice nonetheless gave evidence of a firm normal piety and of an intelligence considerably above the average. But, as she grew older, she became giddy and frivolous and almost completely overwhelmed by the sense of her own importance. The Count and his wife were made all the more aware of her inclinations because they were so in contrast to those of her eldest sister, Genevieve, a sweet and lovable person with an attraction to mortification and self-denial. Genevieve herself made many attempts to check her younger sister's

innate vanity and self absorption, and was one day provided made-to-order object lesson. While dawdling with the rope of on the castle grounds, Clarice slipped over the edge but was miraculously entangled in the rope. She hung there breathless the awful depth until Genevieve saw her and came running rescue. The impact of this shocking experience seemed to steady for a time, but before very long she was once more the self-sufficient little daughter of the Count of Vignanello.

In the hope of counteracting these tendencies in Clarice, her parents entrusted her education to the Franciscan nuns of Saint Eudine's Convent in Viterbo, where Genevieve had meanwhile entered and was known as Sister Innocentia. Clarice hated it, and she justly hated her sister, who she felt, was at least partly to blame for her being cut off from the round of amusements and pleasures. Then, her education supposedly completed, Clarice, at the age of seventeen, returned to the family home at Vignanello, where it became increasingly evident that the good Sisters had failed to check her frivolity and egoism. She settled back complacently into her old attitudes and gave rein to her impulses and conceit.

At the age of twenty she fell in love. Determined and self-willed in this as in all else, she set her heart on marriage with the Marquis Cassizuchhi, a member of one of the celebrated families of Rome. The object of her affections—or calculations—had his own ideas, which exactly coincided with the plans of the Count: the Marquis married her younger sister, Hortense, with the Count's blessing. Clarice was hurt and chagrined at seeing her younger sister preferred before her in marriage that she became embittered. Piqued and self-conscious, having been "jilted", she became morose and in a rage of self-pity resolved to bury her spurned heart in a convent. At first her father refused his consent, but by some deception she managed to convince him that she had a real vocation and he allowed her to enter. Joining the same Community as her sister, the Tertiary nuns at Viterbo, she took the name of Sister Hyacintha.

What a contrast there was, however, in the lives of these two! Sister Innocentia is described as a "holy nun", while Hyacintha certainly had no desire to lead a holy life. She forsook her home in order to escape the situation in which she found herself—that of being the older sister of a successfully married younger sister. She had no intention

of leading the life of poverty as prescribed by the Rule of the Third Order; she did not flee the world to be a good Religious, but to live the life of a secular within the convent walls. And that is exactly what she did. On one occasion when her father came to visit her, as he frequently did, she told him that she intended to live according to her own wishes; and it was no mere idle boast—she meant it. At the foot of the convent garden was a sort of cottage which Hyacintha asked her father to furnish for her. He furnished it luxuriously: she had her own kitchen where special meals were cooked just for her; she wore a special habit made of the finest of materials; she gave full sway to her worldly vanity and everything was tainted by it. All this in a Franciscan convent!

Sister Hyacintha was a thorn in the side of the whole community—approached by superiors, entreated with tears by her sister, prayed for by each and every member. At least twice during that early time she promised to reform, but nothing ever came of it. Having lived her life in convenience and bodily ease for ten years, Hyacintha was one day taken seriously ill, and, thinking that her end was near, asked for the sacraments. Despite her frivolity, no fault could be found with her faith. There was nothing lacking in her devotion to the Eucharist, and it was her ardent desire for the Blessed Sacrament that really brought about her conversion. The chaplain, a Franciscan priest—apparently a very enlightened one—came at once; but upon seeing the elegance with which she had surrounded herself, and wearied with her shallowness, he reprimanded her severely. Saying that hell, not heaven, was the future abode of the vain self-indulgent, he refused to give her absolution unless she abjured her scandalous way of living. By a happy concurrence of circumstances—the grace of God, her desire for the Eucharist, an inspired priest, and a dread of death and eternal punishment—his words pierced the barricade which her arrogant spirit had erected around her mind and heart. And then it was that she was stricken with a heartbreak of a completely different order. With characteristic determination, she arose from her sickness bent on a life of reparation—a life radically different from the shocking one she had lived for the past ten years. For Hyacintha Mariscotti, too, the Fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom!

Begging from her superior a habit of the usual coarse material to replace the exquisite one she had worn until then, and disdaining shoes, Hyacintha made her first appearance since her convalescence in the



common refectory. With a rope around her neck, she publicly asked pardon of all the Sisters for the example she had set them by her life contrary to the spirit of Saint Francis; she pleaded with them to that her life henceforth might become one to wipe out the scandal of her living thus far, to make restitution to God for her abuse of grace. And well she might beseech prayers, for the course that she charted for herself was to prove a trying one for Clarice Mariscotti. All the good intentions in the world, there were lapses; she had pampered her body with tenderness for so many years that it took a recurrent sickness—a somewhat mysterious stomach disorder, which she accepted gladly as a penance for her former way of life—to keep her aware first, of the necessity of being on guard against its demands. Hyacintha later told one of the Sisters that, had it not been for this affliction to keep her mindful, she would probably have lost her soul.

She strove, by every means possible, to clear her mind and free herself of the attraction exerted on them by worldly things; she began to get away all the superfluities with which she had been surrounded, and eventually deprived herself of even bare necessities. She gave up her lavish furnishings, keeping only her crucifix, a relic of the true cross, and a small piece of the veil of the Blessed Virgin Mary for her private use. In exchange for her splendid room, she was given a monastic cell at one end of which were two large beams in the form of a cross, the ends reaching from floor to ceiling and the other from wall to wall. Suspended in this the symbol of Christ's sufferings, Hyacintha hung from it a chain which she attached each night to a different part of her body, so that it might disturb her sleep and thereby make compensation for her former ease and idleness. Two boards served as her bed and a stone as pillow. Her dainty clothes were replaced by veritable rags; she would wear the cast-off habit of some other Sister; instead of the sandals worn by other nuns, she adopted a so-called "scuff"—a mere sole with a strap across the foot; but, after a time, she abandoned even these, and for the remainder of her life went barefoot. Her undershirts were merely a collection of old patches, and became proverbial among the Sisters. On several occasions when she was ill and the nuns were getting her ready for the physician, her pains ceased immediately when her much mended shirt was slipped over her head. Somewhat confused, the doctor pronounced her recovery nothing short of miraculous, for what connection could possibly exist between a shirt and the terrific pains which she had been suffering from. In short, she became possessed of a spirit of poverty truly reminiscent

of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, and, like the Seraphic Father, determined to remove from her heart, also, all attachment to people. She renounced her natural parents that she might be free to adopt heavenly ones. Among all the saints from which she had to choose, it was Mary of Egypt and Saint Augustine who now became her father and mother; for her sister she selected Margaret of Cortona, and for brother, James the Hermit. The motive for her choice is certainly very obvious. So complete was this withdrawal from her earthly family that, when she was sent by the Abbess to the grate to visit with her parents, she went with a very evident repugnance and all the while she was there did not utter a word. The Count and his wife, being very religious people and realizing that Hyacintha was forsaking worldly converse for a celestial one, viewed her course of action with admiration and tenderness. Hyacintha was guided in this renunciation, as she was in every step of her reformed life, by the advice of her very wise director.

Naturally, such a spirit was the envy of the demons, who subjected her to extraordinary temptations in an attempt to prevent it. Knowing her weakness and inclination toward sensual enjoyments, they besieged her with pictures of a rose-colored, pleasure-filled world, the enjoyment of which was so much more to be desired in its certainty than was a distant, improbable heaven. They argued that, since there is no heaven or hell, where was the sense in not enjoying the present life to the full? When all this deception failed, they tried despair—for which they felt that she had every reason—suggesting that God would not, could not accept good deeds from such as her. But Hyacintha's only response was redoubled effort, for such an all-out attempt to stop her convinced her more than ever that her sacrifice was worthwhile.

What an enigma her life must be to those who consider life in a convent the equivalent of being buried alive—to those who contend that God-given talents are wasted in a Religious life where they are purely useless. To such persons, the amount of charity which she dispensed as a nun subject to obedience, hemmed in, so to speak, by four walls, must be past believing. Her activities and accomplishments in the interest of the poor and needy were without number, efforts in which she was encouraged both by her understanding superior and by her director, the caution of each being simply that she keep within bounds. Her father went so far as to say that probably God had set her apart and allowed her the experience through which she had lived in order to give her a real compassion for the sinner.

She was instrumental in many conversions; and, to aid her in much sought work for the salvation of souls, God gifted her with prophecy, miracles, and the discernment of hearts, powers which she used to the full, conscious that they made a first powerful thrust through the wall of indifference. One especially difficult case was brought to her by Sister Hyacintha by a mother grieving over her wayward son, who had deserted his wife, a good honest girl, for a woman of cheap morals. He was asking an acceptance of his common-law wife into the family home, and the mother feared that a refusal might estrange him from her. She begged to be advised, and Sister Hyacintha told her to bring her son to the convent. When, after a great deal of persuasion, he did go, Hyacintha extracted from him a promise to give up his illicit love and loose ways. Before he left after promising amendment, she gave him a medal upon which was an exceptionally beautiful image of Our Blessed Lady; but scarcely any time had passed until he was back at his same old haunts and loves. In answer to a second summons from Hyacintha, he returned to the convent; and before he could say a word, she related, act for act, all his evil deeds since his last visit. She asked for the return of the medal if he had no intention of conversion; but when he took it out of his pocket and glanced at it, the image had vanished completely! Stunned and filled with remorse, he decided to forsake his old ways completely and to enter on a life of penance, the course which he began immediately, and in which he persevered until his death.

Among the most notorious of her hardened sinners was Don Pacini, who had joined the army to escape the restrictions of home and more easily gratify his licentious desires. When an acquaintance petitioned Hyacintha for prayers for his conversion, she immediately sent for Pacini; but he refused to call on this nun of whom he had heard so much. Not at all discouraged, she very cleverly secured an intermediary, a good and pious fellow, prominent socially, who at Hyacintha's coaching sought out and cultivated Pacini. Then, on the plea of being ill, he persuaded the man to accompany him to Saint Bernardine's convent. Weighted with the grace of God, Hyacintha's first words touched his heart, and as he felt his heart inflamed, his resistance to grace crumbled. In such a frame of mind, viewing the panorama of his life, he was confounded at its guilt. When he returned to the convent, after making confession, to tell Hyacintha of his purpose of amendment, she told him that, since his former life had been one of public scandal, he was

to live just as spectacular a life of goodness. Taking her advice, he donned a penitent's garb and withdrew to a place apart, to an island later called the Isle of Elba. After living there a long time, communing with God, his only food herbs and roots, his only weapons a breviary and a rifle, he felt a strong urge to return to Viterbo. Upon his arrival there he discovered that Sister Hyacintha had prayed God for his return, for she needed him in her work for the sick, and in the organization of her Confraternities.

These Confraternities grew out of her realization that the work for the sick, the infirm, the poor, and the aged needed to be given some permanency. Having decided to found two of them—one, the Oblates of Mary, to care for the sick and the infirm among the poor, and the other, a Confraternity to provide homes for the aged poor—she secured the permission of Cardinal Barberini, as well as the use of the Church of Our Lady of the Roses for use as an Oratory. In the set of rules and regulations governing their duties to their charges, she outlined for them a way of life whereby they could sanctify themselves while sanctifying those for whom they labored. The devil assailed her especially severely in regard to this work, asking her about the possibility of an enclosed nun carrying on such activity within the contemplative spirit of her Rule, and suggesting the impossibility of one who had been so worldly as she being able to fulfill the role of foundress. Just as stubborn as ever, convinced that it was God's work, Hyacintha went ahead, and both institutions flourished and prospered.

Hyacintha truly loved the poor. When a beggar came to the convent, she would not allow him to be kept waiting, but immediately left to see what she was doing and went to attend him. If the community happened to be at the table at the time, she took her own portion—which, to be sure, was not much, for she had limited herself to one meal a day, and, for the most part, this consisted of only four ounces of left-over bread. When some of the Sisters noticed her taking her own food to the beggars, they vigorously disapproved, pointing out that there were other ways of providing for the poor; but the spirit with which Hyacintha was moved demanded that she sacrifice for them, and that she give of herself.

All the family property had passed into the hands of her older brother, who, as was the custom, set aside a sum to be used for Masses for each member of the family at their death. Sister Hyacintha asked for her share in money, preferring to provide for her poor who were in

need then, rather than to provide for herself after death. How thorough she was in her giving! When she distributed this money to the needy, it was given with the stipulation that there was to be no talk of trying to repay it; for she did not want them bothered with the debt. So great was the concern of this daughter of the Poverello the poor that the people of Viterbo in speaking of her referred to her as Mother of the Poor. No matter how poorly she felt, how weary she was, when word came of the needy, she was rejuvenated, and he to make plans to assist them.

She was known to be a friend of those confined in prison; could always count on an answer to their appeal. One man who was in prison for a grave crime had no one to whom he could turn for counsel or assistance. Hyacintha, hearing of him, but being unable to visit the prison, prayed, and while praying conceived a very clever idea. She baked a fish, sliced it through the middle and inserted her letter of consolation and consolation, then closed up the fish again and sent a messenger to the prisoner. In the act of eating the fish he came across her letter and was filled with joy in the knowledge of her prayers. There were many instances of her paying the debts of men who were dead in prison because they could not meet them. The money for these came to her by way of donations, and usually in the exact amount needed. By fasts, by fervent prayer, by long vigils, she prepared herself to be His instrument in all these cases, that God did not hesitate to use her.

As is often the case with those disciples of the Master, Who is *and humble of heart*, the esteem and respect for which she had formerly striven were now hers without seeking. Her counsel and her prayers were much sought. In a letter to a friend who asked her advice on the subject of mortification, she confessed that she had practiced penance for years and was getting nowhere until she realized that mortification does not sanctify—it is the interior virtue for which one must strive. As a nun who considered vigils a necessity to sanctification but could not do without the sleep, she gave the warning that unless she took the required rest—it is only to a few that God gives the gift of getting on on a little sleep—she would fail to accomplish the good that she sought. It is resignation in difficulties that is pleasing to Him, rather than wealings and forced prayers. Strange counsel, indeed, from one who, according to the decree of canonization, mortified herself to such an extent that the preservation of her life was a continued miracle!

As January of 1640 progressed, the pains which had racked her body from head to toe so often during her life became so increasingly intense that her superior and the Sisters were very much concerned; but Hyacintha would have none of them worrying about her. She told them that there was no sense in their getting excited, that she was going to die at the end of the month. There was no relief from the suffering, until one day, while calling on the names of Jesus and Mary, she died. As she had foretold, it was the thirtieth of January. Hyacintha was in the fifty-fifth year of her age, twenty of which had been spent in severe penance and wholly taken up with the thought and service of God's poor and sick and neglected. When the people of Viterbo were told of her death, their sorrow broke bounds and guards had to be placed both at the entrance to the convent chapel where her body lay, and also around the coffin. But the love and veneration of the people refused to be checked, and, despite the guards, they took pieces of her veil, habit, cord, rosary—some took finger nails—as relics of their beloved saint, as she was already popularly proclaimed. No sooner was she buried than they began pilgrimages to her grave, seeking cures. And there were cures—many of them. The silver cross placed over her grave was a thanksgiving offering from one of them.

In 1726, Benedict XIII, also a descendant of the famed Orsini family, declared her beatified, but it was not until 1807 that Pius VII entered her name among the canonized, a fitting climax to a life such as hers. The life of Hyacintha Mariscotti is one truly worthy of study by all those moderns who have lost their sense of values; but to every present-day Franciscan, especially, it carries a warning and a message that are fairly shouting to be heard; a warning and a message which can probably best be set forth in the words of the *Imitation*:

"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone. This is the highest wisdom, by despising the world, to make progress toward the kingdom of heaven."

Sr. Maura, O.S.F.

Pittsburgh, Pa.



The life of a Christian is nothing but a constant struggle against self, and its beauty does not become manifest except at the price of suffering.

Padre Pio

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XV)

TEXT: Chapter V: *Interior and Exterior Conduct*

### *The Fourteenth Article*

*Since the Brothers and Sisters of this Fraternity are called the Order of Penance, they should daily carry the cross of mortification as become true penitents.*

The supernatural love life of the Franciscan religious, we have seen, has as its triple objective to love God, to control self, to serve others. The previous chapter dealt with the various aspects of the Tertiary love of God, which is at once a love of adoration, a repentant love, an atoning love. The present chapter concerns the control of self, without which perfect love of God and neighbor is impossible.

Since mortification is the basic means of acquiring self-control, it is not surprising that the present article takes up this subject. Its very wording indicates the close connection between penance and mortification—a point treated in the preceding article. Not only does it tie in the subject matter of the present chapter with that which was treated before, but it provides us with the opportunity of discussing the Franciscan concept of penance and mortification from the standpoint of what they have in common, their subject-matter.

As we indicated earlier, the regulation on fast and abstinence in the preceding article represents a significant mitigation of the penitential practices imposed in the rule of Leo X. "The Brothers and Sisters," the latter reads, "shall even abstain from flesh meat on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, except when the feast of our Lord's Nativity falls on one of these days. They shall also fast on all Fridays throughout the year, likewise every day from the feast of Saint Martin until the Nativity of the Lord, to which they shall add the Lent of the Universal Church."

which they shall, however, commence on the Monday following Quinquagesima Sunday and continue till the Resurrection of the Lord. Days whereon they are not obliged to fast they shall eat but twice a day, except that from the feast of Easter until the month of October those who are employed in hard or painful labor may eat three times a day, fast-days always excepted" (*Rule of Leo X*, ch. 3).

In view of these strict regulations, we can better understand why the Third Order was indeed called the Order of Penance. But the abolition of these many fasts and abstinences by the new Rule may cause some wonder whether the Order still deserves this title. The present article reminds the Tertiary Regular that, despite the mitigations on this point, the obligation of daily mortification remains. It is incumbent upon all Franciscan religious to understand just what the Franciscan ideal of penance entails if they are to conduct themselves as become true penitents.

If we examine Saint Francis' own attitude towards penance, we are struck by three points in particular. First, his equating of the Franciscan way of life with penance. Secondly, the seeming inconsistency between this ideal and the practices actually incorporated in the various Franciscan rules. Thirdly, the distinction Francis insisted on making between his own penitential practices and those of his friars.

To begin with the first. Francis describes his conversion to a life according to the Gospel with the words: "The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance." The Franciscan way of life was to be synonymous with penance. That is why his first followers could call themselves officially "penitents of the city of Assisi," who were to preach penance more by example than by word (*Tres. Socii*, nn. 36-7). Francis knew such preaching would be a scandal in the eyes of the world, his "penitents" would be persecuted, their way of life ridiculed. But this should not deter them. "Wherever they are not received, let them flee into another land to do penance with the blessing of God" (*Testament*). And lest anyone think that only the First Order way of life should be called one of penance, Francis made it clear that penance is a symbol of Franciscanism itself. That is why he called his first lay Tertiaries simply "The Brothers and Sisters of Penance." That too is why Clare could describe her entry into religion with the words: "The most high celestial Father deigned to enlighten my heart by his mercy and grace to do penance after the example and teaching of our most blessed Father Francis"

(*Testament of St. Clare*, n. 7). We cannot escape the conclusion that the Franciscan way of life was to be equated with penance.

Yet, strangely enough, Francis did not overburden his Rule with many of the special bodily penitential practices characteristic of his day. As Bishop Felder points out, in this regard the Franciscan Rule is more moderate compared to some of the older monastic legislation (*Ideals of St. Francis*, ch. 10). He frequently counseled moderation in regard to bodily mortification, and at one General Chapter he reprimanded those who were imprudent in their vigils, fasting, and other practices of penance. On one occasion he commanded those who had spiked shirts, iron rings, and girdles or other instruments of penance to remove them and to wear nothing but the habit on their body (*Tres Socii*, n. 59; *Speculum perfectionis*, c. 27). While Francis was absent in the Holy Land, the two Vicars charged with the leadership of the Order passed a regulation at a General Chapter forbidding friars to procure meat for themselves and permitting them to eat it only when given by benefactors. In this action they were apparently influenced by certain contemporary practices in other religious orders. But on his return Francis promptly rescinded the statute because it violated the perfect liberty of the Gospel (*Chronica Fr. Jordani et aliorum*, nn. 11-12).

Yet, no one was more serious about the practice of penance than Francis himself. Which brings us to the third point, the distinction Francis made between himself and his friars. Though he forbade lack of moderation in bodily penances, as Celano points out, his own example in this matter did not accord with his teaching (*Legenda Secunda*, n. 129). So extreme were the penances he inflicted upon himself that towards the end of his life, with characteristic simplicity, he begged pardon of Brother Body for having treated him too harshly and admitted he had gone too far in this matter.

If we consider these three points, perhaps we can come to an objective interpretation of Francis' ideal of penance. To begin with, he conceived penance as something essentially practical and not to be performed simply for its own sake. Its value lay in the fact that it serves the high end of love of God and neighbor. Therefore, the basic "change of heart" if we may use the Greek expression for penance (*metanoia*), is that which seeks to bring one's sin-corrupted desires to the perfect way of life idealized by Christ. Since the Franciscan way of life was to be simply the Gospel in action, this must always be the basic penance of a follower of the Saint.

But because the Franciscan mode of life was to be as flexible, as adaptable as the Gospel itself, Francis decried the introduction of any universal practice that would militate against its freedom. Fasting, indeed, was incorporated in all the Franciscan rules because Our Lord sanctioned it by His Own example. But even this differed in the various rules according to the manner of life expected of the respective members, and Francis himself was the first to moderate or dispense from the fast when it conflicted with the aim and work in which the Friars were engaged. His guiding principle in regard to penance and mortification, as Celano records it, was this: "One must treat Brother Body with kindness lest a storm of rebellion break out on his part. One must not give him any reason to murmur, that he may not tire of watching and praying devoutly. Otherwise he could complain: 'I perish from hunger; I cannot bear the burden of thy good works.' But if he has received sufficient nourishment and still shows signs of rebellion, then may he know that the lazy beast of burden deserves the spur and the idle ass the goad" (*Legenda Secunda*, n. 129). The life of a Franciscan was to be in truth a life of sacrifice; but a sacrifice, Saint Bonaventure explains, that is seasoned with the salt of prudence—not indeed prudence of the flesh but that which Christ taught by the shining example of perfection of His Own life (*Legenda Major*, c. 5, n. 7.).

Some, it is true, have tried to explain away the distinction Francis made between his own penitential practices and those of his Friars in terms of the special inspiration of grace. True as this may be, the real clue to understanding it lies deeper. It is to be found in Francis' conviction that penance and its practice in the last analysis is a purely personal matter between the individual soul and God. The more clearly we see our own real needs, the greater our obligation to perform a corresponding penance. The Poverello's own excuse for his excesses is significant—he considered himself to be a "greater sinner" than his brethren. Thus Francis himself gave us the precedent of adapting our penitential practices to our personal needs. And here we have another characteristic of the Tertiary ideal of penance. The very leniency of the Rule, so to speak, makes it incumbent for the individual religious to adopt his own very real, though prudent, practices of penance. True Franciscan mortification must always be conditioned and directed by specific personal requirements.

Reflection on these characteristics of the Franciscan ideal of penance

leads naturally to some practical observations. For the zealous religious the practice of penance will find expression in three principal forms. The first and basic penance will always be that dictated by the Franciscan way of life. It consists in minute fidelity to the obligations imposed by divine and ecclesiastical law, the Rule, the Constitutions, the distinctive or interpretative customs of the respective congregation or religious institute, and the commands of religious superiors.

At this point it might be well to add a note of warning. When religious hear that their fundamental penance is that required by the ordinary mode of life, they tend to relax, as it were, and dismiss the matter as already cared for by their general good will or intention to live as they should. This is a great mistake. Ordinarily, when we examine ourselves on how we are living up to the commandments, Rule, Constitutions and so on, we evaluate any lapse or defection in terms of what we might call the objective value of the regulation or commandment in question. Is this a serious matter? How does it affect my status as a Christian, a religious, as a member of this particular Franciscan community? Am I seriously hurting myself or the community committed to my care, etc.? And because an intelligent and level-headed religious rightly puts first things first, he or she may quite correctly regard little lapses from prescribed silences, expressions of distaste or irritability at some disagreeable task, minor negligences in regard to duties assigned, etc., as of small consequence when viewed against the general aim and goal of religious life. Such minor infractions may become a matter of unconscious habit and so pass unnoticed in the ordinary examination of conscience. As a result, such religious are overlooking a golden opportunity to practice a most difficult form of penance and one they need not consult their superior or confessor before undertaking. For the objective importance of a specific rule or commandment has no indication whatsoever of its psychological effectiveness in curbing self-love. In fact, it is more often those regulations which in themselves are insignificant, or even objectively ineffectual or objectionable on grounds of prudence, that provide the best material for the exercise of self-discipline.

Franciscans might well ask themselves: Is my way of life, my daily routine, a real genuine mortification? Is it my principal form of penance? If not, is it because I have been ignoring these little disciplinary "flies" of which my daily life is woven? What about silence, punctuality,

fidelity to the practice of meditation, spiritual reading, etc., the daily cross of charity that imposes upon me the obligation of being amiable, patient, understanding, generous with my time, and so on? This is all part of what we mean when we say our Franciscan life itself must be our basic penance.

The second form of penance or mortification consists in bearing cheerfully the trials sent by Divine Providence. This is the cross God's goodness has splintered into fragments and distributed over our lifetime that we may be able to bear it. This is "God's hairshirt", as Teresa of Avila put it. So dear was this form of penance to Francis that he would not even ask God to remove his sufferings. In fact, Bonaventure tells of the time a simple brother, seeing the agony of pain and affliction caused by Francis' illness, said: "Brother, pray to God that He will deal more gently with thee, for it seems to me that His hand is heavier on thee than is meet." But Francis rebuked him saying: "But that I know the purity of thy simplicity, I should henceforth abhor thy company for that thou has dared to find fault with the divine judgments which are executed upon me" (*Legenda Major*, c. 14, n. 2).

The third form of penance comprises the voluntary practices of mortification good religious take upon themselves. It might be well to note that while we speak of this form as "voluntary" it is not something we are free to adopt or reject. It is an integral part of the Franciscan program of penance as the life of any of our saints, beginning with Francis himself, clearly reveals. Indeed, the entire history of religious Orders confirms the truth that the consistent practice of the other two forms of penance is possible only when reinforced by voluntary practices of mortification. The liberty of the Gospel to which Francis appealed in abolishing certain universal practices was not intended to free the individual from the obligation of undertaking additional penances, but rather to make it easier to adopt a program of mortification in accord with his specific needs.

The fact that this third form of penance is meant to complement the other two already indicates how it can be practiced profitably. Every religious has specific problems based on individual character weaknesses and on the nature of the environment in which obedience places him. The prudent Franciscan will be guided by self-knowledge in selecting these voluntary mortifications. Continual failure in charity with regard to certain individuals suggests that we put ourselves out occasionally to

do them special and uncalled-for favors. If a morbid curiosity continually prompts violations of silence, our voluntary mortification might take the form of deliberately refraining from satisfying curiosity in relation to some legitimate matter. Custody of the eyes at times not demanding prudence can be a fitting penance for voluntary distractions at prayer, mass, etc. Those who are strongly opinionated and are prone to their way in everything would find it a real mortification to keep their opinion to themselves when a subject about which they feel strongly is discussed or to follow the lead of another rather than voicing their own plan. In a word, we should try as far as possible to correlate penances with our specific faults. This "correlation method" of penance, if we might call it such, is of special value in character training. A specific violation or form of sin tends to initiate or deepen a sin habit. The more specific our penance, the more readily do we counteract the psychological effects of sin in our soul. Not only can we correlate specific types of mortification to specific character weaknesses, we can also correlate individual acts of penance to acts of sin. We know, for instance, if Francis offended his brother, he would not wait until the next day was over but immediately beg the brother or his self-appointed "superior" to give him a penance. If the practice of making some immediate atonement to God for an offense is not feasible, in connection with our examination of conscience especially at the time of confession, we might adopt the practice of promising not only to amend ourselves but to perform some special mortification for the deliberate sins we have committed. The priest's words at the end of the formula of absolution will have special significance in such a case. "May whatever good you have done and whatever evil you will have suffered be to you the remission of sins."

In selecting our voluntary penances, we should remember our purpose is to mortify self, not crucify others. Fasting, for instance, should not be carried to the point where it makes an infirmarian brother or a nursing sister uncontrollably irritable with the sick. A teacher, too, could fulfill her duty if by denying herself needed rest she became too sleepy to prepare properly for classes. When Blessed Albert of Pisa sought to perform a rigorous fast to his already arduous work of caring for the sick in the hospital to which he was assigned, we know Francis commanded him not only to abandon his fast but to eat twice the amount to which he was accustomed. Neither should voluntary penance become an excuse for self-pity, which manifests itself at times in subtle and devious

such as the tendency to compensate one act of self-denial by indulging in excess in some other way. But perhaps the greatest danger latent in this form of penance is the temptation to pride ourselves on our own practices while looking down on others. It was this thought that prompted Francis to add to the precept, "let the Friars be clothed in poor garments", the admonition "not to despise or judge men whom they see clothed in soft and fine garments, using choice food and drink, but let each one judge and despise himself" (*Rule of Friars Minor*, c. 2). If we are convinced that true Franciscan penance is that which is based in large measure on one's personal needs, we shall not be prone to pass judgment on anyone but on ourselves. Then, too, if all religious strive to make their private penances and mortifications as inconspicuous as possible—which is as it should be—there will be no basis on which a proud religious might compare himself with others, should he foolishly wish to do so. And this leads to a final observation about the Franciscan ideal of penance.

The test of true penance will always be: Does it bear fruit in charity? In his *Letter to All the Faithful*, Francis wrote: "Let us bring forth fruits worthy of penance, and love our neighbors as ourselves." Viewed in this light, the opening passage of his *Testament* speaks volumes: "The Lord gave to me Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance; for when I was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers and the Lord Himself led me amongst them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into the sweetness of body and soul." If our practice of penance is according to the mind of Francis, it will have a twofold effect. It will make God sweet to us, and it will make us merciful to others.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan Wolter, O. F. M.



The most beautiful *Credo* is the one we pronounce when we are in darkness, in the hour of sacrifice and sorrow, in the supreme effort of inflexible will for what is good. This is the one that as a flash of lightning breaks the darkness of the soul; the one that in the midst of a raging storm lifts up the soul and leads it to God.

Padre Pio



## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### *Admonition XVIII: The True Lover of His Neighbor*

Saint Francis wished his children to be united in true fraternal charity. This often-expressed desire was not only a part of his character but by nature he was kind and courteous, alive to the needs of others and reverential toward all the children of God; it was also a part of his following of the Gospel. In the words and example of Christ he found charity enthroned in the center of Christian life. If perfect charity based on humility it finds completion in charity.

There are various aspects to charity, and all are intrinsically good; but there is one which surpasses all others in excellence and in the difficulty of fulfillment. It is the perfection described by our Holy Father Francis in his Eighteenth Admonition:

Blessed is the man who supports his neighbor in his weakness to the same extent that he would wish his neighbor to support him if he were in a similar situation.

In other words, we are blessed by our Holy Father if we bear with our neighbor and help him in the way we would want him to bear with us and help us if we were in his place. We are to open our eyes, to realize our neighbor—to see *his* need, *his* plight, *his* situation, as if it were our own. It is quite needful that the eyes of our mind and heart be open to others. All too many of us are afflicted with the kind of spiritual blindness that simply does not see others, that is totally unaware of the needs of others. This blindness is in reality a lack of understanding the character of a person who is different from ourselves; it is a lack of sympathetic imagination. We cannot see ourselves in another's situation; or if we do, we fail to take account of his background, his talents and gifts, his problems and difficulties and desires, his experiences, his disappointments and failures, his desperate struggles, his pain

environment—which includes his confreres and, lest we forget, ourselves as well. It is surely no easy matter to always consider our neighbor from so many angles; but then, to imitate the perfections of our Seraphic Father is no easy matter. To deliberately fail to imitate his charity, however, would be to expose ourselves to the really devastating consequences of this strange spiritual blindness. One of its most cruel consequences is misunderstanding that leads to rash judgments and culminates in outright condemnation; one of the most tragic is aloofness and egotistical self-sufficiency that leads from unawareness of the needs of others to cold indifference, and culminates in lonely bitterness and sullen contempt of others.

It is to forestall such aberrations in ourselves that our Seraphic Father urges us to be conscious of our neighbor, or rather—and this is even more in line with the holy Gospel—to discover in our neighbor a man who needs us, who is really no stranger at all but close and dear to us as our own soul. Was not this the answer Christ gave to the lawyer who asked: *And who is my neighbor* (Luke 10, 29)? The parable of the Good Samaritan was the answer, and it meant that our neighbor is precisely that man who is in need of our effective help and understanding compassion.

Once we have truly discovered our neighbor by putting ourselves in his situation, then his difficulties become ours, his failures wound us, his sufferings stir our warm and tender compassion, and his shortcomings seem to be our own. We do not endure his faults as coming from another who must be patiently borne with; we envision them as our own and try to cover them with the gentle cloak of charity.

And now, by way of examining ourselves on Franciscan charity, let us ask some of the following questions. Must I confess that I am blind to the needs of others? Am I concerned with myself alone and indifferent toward my confreres? Such self-centered charity is really selfish blindness, and hardly consistent with the religious state. Still less consistent is the kind of selective blindness that shuts out the vision of all but a chosen few. Is this my condition? Do I open my heart wide to some, but close it tight against others? Does my sympathy go out to seculars or to those outside my community and not at all to my fellow religious? Am I perhaps totally unaware of my confreres because of my absorption in my work or hobby, because I am so contented when alone with a pet animal or a fascinating occupation that I do not feel any need for the



family life of my community? If such is the case with me, my charity is blind, for it neither sees nor seeks to understand my neighbor. His loneliness passes unnoticed; the companionship I could give him to help him forget his troubles and relax in the warm atmosphere of fraternal love is the one thing I never even think to offer. I wish him well, but I have no time to bother about him. I have chosen a way of life that is based on evangelical perfection. It obliges me to love all men after the example of Christ. I must be ever mindful of my responsibility to be awakened some day to the realization that perhaps I could have prevented the apostasy of a confrere had I but opened my eyes and my heart to his misery.

Reserve is unquestionably a virtue in religious, but, like every other virtue, carried to the extreme it becomes a vice. There are some religious who are so aloof, so buttoned up to the neck, that no one dares approach them. Am I of this kind? If I am a superior or if I hold authority over others, can those who are subject to me approach me with confidence? Our Seraphic Father insisted that superiors receive their subjects "with charity and kindness and treat them with such fellowship that they can speak and act toward them like masters toward their servants" (*Rule*, XI). It would be good in this connection to examine ourselves on our observance of the admonition of Saint Francis in Chapter VI of the *Rule*: "Wherever the brothers are located or meet one another, let them speak toward one another like members of a family. And each should endeavor to assure the other that his need is known to another; for, if a mother tends her child in the flesh, with how much greater attention must a man love and tend his brother in the spirit?" Do I honestly try to observe this?

There is no doubt that if we were in some of the unpleasant situations our confreres fall into we should certainly hope for understanding at least. And yet, how many misunderstandings occur among our good religious—even among saints. Let us ask ourselves: Do I make a sincere effort to understand my confreres when they do things I cannot approve of? Do I try to see things from their point of view or do I admit of only one point of view—my own? Am I prone to judgments, to critical, holier-than-thou attitudes? Do I watch out to take note of their transgressions? In the case of serious and open scandal, do I try to put myself in the place of my pilloried confrere and feel with him? Do I realize how bitter it tastes to have a sin of

error exposed, mercilessly judged and condemned? Would I enjoy the cutting remarks, the endless reproaches, the public stigmatization as a problem child? If we would love our fellow religious as a mother loves her children—and this is what Saint Francis demands of us—there would be much more of the charity of silence in our religious houses.

If our charity is not blind and if our heart is wide open, then we shall readily notice the needs of others and discover our true neighbor; and there are as many needs as there are human frailties. In fact, there are so many that it would be useless to even try to enumerate them. There are a few points, however, that we may consider briefly as examples.

First, there are the little services of everyday living, the common courtesies and kindnesses. Do I give them to others as I expect others to give them to me? Do I try to be pleasant and agreeable to others and to avoid in my own conduct whatever annoys me in others? Do I overlook a sour mood, an irritating remark, a nervous snappiness? Do I bear calmly with the shortcomings of my confreres, their mannerisms, speech, attitudes?

Then there are the Lord's dearest children, our sick confreres. Here again we have the words of Francis himself to guide us: "And if anyone of them falls into illness, the rest of the brothers must wait on him as they themselves would want to be waited on" (*Rule*, VI). Do I really try to place myself in the situation of the sick? Do I try to help them as I should want to be helped? Or am I simply lacking in understanding because I have never been sick and have never cultivated a charitable imagination? If I have sympathy, am I tactful and prudent in expressing it? Do I refrain from importunate questioning? Do I torture the sick by impetuously urging them to try cures or medicines which only a doctor should prescribe, or by diagnosing their illness and giving them uncalled-for advice?

Finally, let us examine ourselves on a point that is frequently overlooked: the manner of accepting charity. It is not always easy to be the object of another's charity; sometimes we have to suffer it rather than accept it. But in this matter, too, our Seraphic Father's admonition can guide us. We are simply to place ourselves in the other person's position and act accordingly. Do I try to believe, for example, that the clumsy charity of Friar X comes from a warm and sincerely loving heart? Could I be so lacking in understanding as to hurt him by brusque-

ly refusing his little services? How would I feel if my sincere attempt to be kind and helpful were so harshly brushed aside? It is an art to accept charity without feeling dependent on others or without suffering some loss of self-respect. But where true charity accepts true charity there can only be an increase of mutual fraternal love. The point always to keep in mind is this: if we can learn to put ourselves in our neighbor's position, we can be sure we shall never fail either to give or to receive charity in the spirit of our Seraphic Father. And then he will call us blessed.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.



Let us take care, therefore, if we have entered the way of the Lord lest by our own fault or negligence or ignorance at any time and in any way we turn aside therefrom and so do injury to so great a Lord, His Virgin Mother, and to our blessed Father Francis, and to the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant. For it is written, *Cursed are they who turn aside from Thy commandments* (Ps. 118, 21).

Among the many graces which we have received and continue to receive from the liberality of the Father of mercies (II Cor. 1, 3), for which we must give deepest thanks to our glorious God, our vocation holds first place. Indeed, because it is the more perfect and the greater among these graces, so much the more does it claim our gratitude. Therefore the Apostle says: *Know your vocation* (1 Cor. 1, 26).

Saint Clare of Assisi

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

MEDITATIONS ADAPTED FOR THE USE OF THE FRIARS MINOR CHAPUCHIN, VOLUME V, Fr. Bernadine Goebel, O.F.M. Cap., translated by Fr. Berchmans Bittle O.F.M.Cap. Detroit, Michigan: Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order, n.d. Pp. 480. \$3.50.

The fifth volume of Fr. Bernardine Goebel's *Meditations* is now available. It covers the time from the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost to Advent, and follows the same plan as the previous volumes.

Distinctly Franciscan in spirit, the meditations cover practically every aspect of the spiritual life for religious, particularly for Capuchins. The matter is instructive and doctrinal rather than inspirational in the sense of appeal to the emotions. Although intended primarily for the use of religious men who are also priests, these meditations offer solid food for the spiritual growth of all Franciscans.

A CITY ON A MOUNTAIN: THE CASE OF PADRE PIO, Pascal P. Parente, S.T.D., Ph.D., J.C.B. St. Meinrad, Indiana: The Grail. 1952. Pp. 148, with 35 photographs. \$2.50.

PADRE PIO THE STIGMATIST, Rev. Charles Mortimer Carty. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Radio Replies Press. 1952. Pp. 228, with 72 photographs. Paper \$2.50; cloth. \$3.50.

These two studies of the remarkable life of Padre Pio, the Capuchin Stigmatic, are both well documented and well protected by ecclesiastical approbation. Father Carty's *Padre Pio the Stigmatic* is the fuller of the two, containing accounts of more miraculous happenings and more of Padre Pio's own writings. Father Parente's *City on a Mountain* is somewhat more scholarly in approach, although in view of his wide reputation as an authority on mystical theology, his treatment of the phenomena surrounding Padre Pio is somewhat disappointing. The stigmatized Capuchin has been singularly unfortunate in his biographers, and these two books, despite the good intentions of the writers, still leave room for a more penetrating and more generally satisfactory study of the holy man's life. Both books can be recommended, however, for the sincerity and caution of their authors and for their truly inspiring content.

Padre Pio (Francesco Forgione) was born in 1887 at Pietrelcina, Italy, and entered the Capuchin Order in 1902. In spite of constant ill health, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1910. The piety that had distinguished Padre Pio from childhood became more remarkable after he received the invisible stigmata on September 20, 1915, the day following the Feast of the Stigmatization of Saint Francis. On September 20, 18, again on the Friday following the Feast of the Stigmatization, he received the visible stigma on his hands and feet and side. Since that time his life has been filled with extraordinary happenings and gifts of grace, especially the gift of discernment of souls of leading sinners to God. His greatest work is in the confessional. He does not

preach, and the Holy Office has forbidden him to write to outsiders; and he wishes to be considered a confessor only.

From the facts presented by Father Carty and Father Parente, there seems no doubt about the genuine sanctity of Padre Pio and the supernatural character of his religious, the most valuable sections of both books are perhaps those contain letters and extracts from the writings of Padre Pio. Here something of his spiritual life is revealed, and his skill as a director of souls is made unquestionably evident.



The Holy See has recently deigned to extend to the whole Seraphic Order the proper Preface of Saint Clare hitherto used at the Basilica of Saint Mary of the (Porziuncola) in Assisi. It is to be used henceforth both on Feasts and in Masses of the Saint, whose seventh centenary is celebrated this year. We present official Latin text, accompanied by a private English version:

Per omnia saecula saeculorum.  
R. Amen.  
V. Dominum vobiscum.  
R. Et cum spiritu tuo.  
V. Sursum corda.  
R. Habemus ad Dominum.  
V. Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.

R. Dignum et justum est.  
VERE dignum et justum est, aequum et salutare, non tibi semper et ubique gratias agere: Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeternae Dei: Qui famulam tuam Claram, per beatum Franciscum, studio vitae sublimioris incensam, ad sanctae Mariae Virginis aram Filio tuo mystice desponsasti; eamque, ad seraphicae perfectionis culmen elevari. Et ideo, cum Angelis et Archangelis, cum Thronis et Dominatibus, cumque omni militia caelestis exercitus dicentes:

SANCTUS, SANCTUS, SANCTUS—

World without end.

R. Amen.  
V. The Lord be with you.  
R. And with thy spirit.  
V. Lift up your hearts.  
R. We lift them up unto the Lord.  
V. Let us give thanks to the Lord God.

R. It is meet and just.

IT is truly meet and just, fitting availing unto salvation, that we at all times and in all places give unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God: Who hast mystically espoused to Thy Son before the altar of the holy Virgin Mary Thy handmaid Clare after she had been inflamed by blessed Francis with the desire of a life; and hast chosen her, who is the peak of Seraphic perfection, to be mother of many holy virgins. And with Angels and Archangels, Thrones and Dominions, and with the whole array of the heavenly host, singing a hymn to Thy glory, saying out ceasing:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY—

# the CORD

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*Cum permissu superiorum.*

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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*The obedient man shall speak of victory* (Prov. 21, 2)

Most Religious will admit that obedience is truly the hardest of vows, one of the most difficult of virtues, because it demands the sacrifice, that of our wills. So hard is it for fallen man that Saint Francis once remarked with a sigh: "There is scarcely any Religious in the world who perfectly obeys his prelate." This, however, he said of his first Friars, whom Celano describes as so eager to obey that they would set about fulfilling a command before the sentence was completed, never stopping to quibble over it or oppose it, but rushing themselves headlong into whatever was enjoined upon them.

So likewise the Lady Clare. She had entrusted her soul to the guidance of Francis; and once she had promised him that she would never in the slightest departed from that way (*Legend*). It may not be easy indeed to find specific examples of her obedience, though we know that at the bidding of Francis she accepted the office of abbess, "curtailed" her fasts to include at least a little bread, and granted her worn body a sack whereon to sleep. Her perfect adherence to the way of poverty and the form of life given by the Seraphic Patriarch is the outcome of her obedience. But above all, she received from Francis the vision of the true meaning of obedience: its foundation and spirit, the secret of true obedience, and an assurance of the fruits which obedience produces for the sanctification of the individual and of the community.

### *The foundation of obedience*

With the growth of the Order and the multiplication of its members within it, Saint Francis' concept of obedience seems to have become stricter, yet the basis of all obedience remains the same.

foundation of everything in the life of the Friars, so is He the basis of their obedience: "The Friars who have yielded themselves to obedience should remember that it is *for God's sake* that they have given up their own will" (*Rule* II, 10; Clare, *Rule* 10); therefore "they are to obey in all things which they have promised *the Lord* to observe." Obedience, its self-immolation, its constant sacrifice, is simply *propter Deum*. No human reason could justify that self-surrender, no mere man could demand it. It is for God and unto God that we accept obedience. We subject ourselves, our wills, not to flesh and blood or to the will of man, but to God and His holy will.

This we do in imitation of Christ, in union with Him "who placed Himself in the will of the Father, saying: 'Father, Thy will be done, not My will but as Thou willest'...and who thus 'left us an example, that we might follow in His steps'" (*Ep.* I). "For the Lord Jesus Christ gave up His life, that He might not fail in obedience to His most Holy Father" (*Ep.* II). Whoever then would be conformed to the image of the Son must with Him embrace the will of God in holy obedience. This is true imitation, as we have seen once before, since it means inner conformity of heart and will through the Spirit of the Lord and His cooperation. This is true union, for "we are His brethren when we submit to the will of His Father who is in Heaven" (*Ep.* I).

This will is manifested to us in the Rule, the Constitutions, and the commands and directives of the superior given for the perfect observance of the Rule and for the good of the community. Our obedience in return embraces at least all that is commanded by the Rule or by the superior prescribes according to the Rule and Constitutions. For its perfection Franciscan obedience is a total surrender of self to the hands of the prelate (*Adm.* III). It thus becomes an expression of true poverty of spirit, a perfect holocaust in which nothing is held back. We imitate, not the sons of Heli who held back part of their offering (I Kgs 2, 13), but Samuel who obeyed perfectly, and above all the Son of God Who emptied Himself in total sacrifice.

### *The secret of true obedience*

This is the foundation of obedience: the sacrifice of our will for God, in imitation and union with the Son of God, the secret of

true obedience must lie in the virtue of faith and above all in charity.

Faith gives us the vision we need to see God in our superior. His will in what is commanded us. Perhaps today more than ever stand in need of faith and such a vision. Whether the cause lies in secularism of our age, or in a spirit of false liberalism, or merely in the democratic way of thinking, it is evident that the ancient appreciation of authority has diminished. We fail—not only Americans, for the same complaint is heard in Europe—we fail properly to grasp and live the teaching of the Apostle: *Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God* (Rom. 13). Such authority goes with an office and must be respected and obeyed for God's sake. Yet how often today a superior of any kind is judged primarily for his natural qualities of leadership, personality, good judgment—and is obeyed (if we may use the word) because his directions or policy agree with us, appear sound and fair, etc. This is not obedience! We will not deny the place of good leadership and prudent judgment in a superior, or the place of good example and virtue. The abbess, Saint Clare made plain, was to rule more by her virtues than by her office, and lead others to obey out of love rather than fear. Plainly enough, obedience for her arose primarily because of the authority given authority residing in the abbess, however poorly endowed with natural gifts she might be.

Would that we might be as willing to obey a novice of one year as were he appointed over us as the oldest and most prudent prelate! For such respect and obedience rests primarily and directly on faith, for it is we see the prelate as the representative of God. "The subject (*subditus*) who has sacrificed his will) must regard in his prelate (the one seen as God-given authority over him) *not the man*, but Him for love of Whom he has made himself subject." To this principle Saint Francis added the remark that fully summarizes all we have said on faith and authority: "The more contemptible is he that is in authority, the more acceptable and pleasing to God is the humility of him who obeys" (S. Bonav. VI. 1).

To see God in the superior requires also that we see the will of God in what is commanded: another act of faith that is sometimes more difficult and demands the greater sacrifice. Perhaps the superior is none too prudent; he (or she) does not have the wealth of experience that we do; his commands or directives militate against our better

judgment. Granted that in some cases we may mildly state our opinion, we must still see the will of God in what is commanded us. This creates a difficulty for many, especially for young Religious; but the apparent anomaly is not hard to solve. Even if the command is not the best way to do something, and so seems at odds with wisdom and prudence (and therefore as such cannot be said to share divine wisdom), it is still the will of God that we obey. In the long run, God in His providence will make good come out of seeming foolishness. Therefore obedience is the best policy—because we are doing what God wants us to do. "If sometimes the *subditus* sees something better and useful for his soul than what the prelate commands him, *let him sacrifice his will to God* and endeavor to carry out what the prelate wishes: for this is obedience which is true obedience and proceeds from and makes for charity (*obedientia caritativa*), and which satisfies both God and neighbor (Admon. III).

Let us try then to have the faith of the first Friars, "for whatever was commanded them they thought to be according to the will of the Lord; hence to fulfill what was enjoined was to them a task easy and pleasant" (III Comp. 42). It was easy and pleasant—because they also had the second component of the secret formula of obedience: holy charity. For love, says Saint Augustine, makes all things easy.

This is not love primarily of the superior as such, but the virtue of divine charity which has led us to the sacrifice *propter Deum* of our will in obedience. The love of God and of His will, the love of Christ and the desire to share His obedience, the love of the God represented by the superior: this must be the well-spring of our obedience, for this is naught else but the positive side of the self-spoliation which is poverty of spirit. True obedience has in it "no flesh and blood," for these—our own desires—are sacrificed unto God. Little wonder then that Francis compared the truly obedient man (*rara avis!*) to a corpse: he is wholly dead to self and alive to God in his superior. But remember too, it takes a strong will to make a good corpse!

### *The fruit of obedience*

The Christian life, the Franciscan vocation, seems full of paradoxes. The weak things of the world are the strong things of God, the foolish

things of men are the wisdom of God! If we would have highest wisdom we must humble ourselves, for *where there is humility, there is wisdom* (Prov. II, 2). We give ourselves as slaves to justice (Rom. 6, 15) and we find not bondage but freedom (Rom. 8, 14).

Obedience then, because it is a bond of love, is the source not of slavery but of liberty, not of defeat but of victory. The obedient man can indeed speak of victory—over self and over the enemy of our salvation. Over self because by obedience he is becoming with Christ meek and humble of heart and is constantly exercising poverty of spirit and humility: and “in the humility of the *subditus* is gain of soul; then do we seek more after the dangers (of prelacy) than after that which benefits the soul, since what time we have here is given to gain me (II Cel. 145). Over the devil, because (as Saint Francis once said) a religious who spurns the bridle of obedience is ridden by the devil. Guided by the reins he has attached to him (S. Bonav. XI, II). There is no mean between these, comments Celano (II, 34): either you carry a “light burden” or rather be carried by it, or you will have a millstone hung about your neck and find iniquity sitting upon you with the weight of lead (Zach. 5, 7-8).

The obedient man, finally, shall possess the freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8, 21). He has obeyed the injunction of Saint Francis to cast his care upon the Lord (S. Bonav. III, 7); therefore he is free of fear and worry, his heart is ready and open, his soul is full of joy and confidence. He is given wholly over to God in his submission and thereby loses not one mite of the merit of obedience in all that he does (*Adm.* III; S. Bonav. VI, 4). Above all, the bonds of his obedience set him free for God, “for now that we have left the world, we have nothing else to do but to be solicitous to follow the will of the Lord and to please Him” (*Rule* I, 22). To steal a phrase from Saint Paul, “who is given to obedience is concerned only about the things of the Lord, how he may please God and be holy in body and in spirit” (I Cor. 7, 35).

If “we must deny ourselves and place our bodies (i.e., what pertains to self) under the yoke of servitude and holy obedience, and never desire to be over others, but rather to be servants and subordinates to every human creature for God’s sake,” let us realize that “upon those who have done such things and persevered unto the end the Spirit of the Lord shall rest and make in them His dwelling and His

and they shall be the children of the Father in heaven, whose works they do, and are spouses, brethren and mothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Epistle I).

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.



## ONE MOMENT PLEASE!

*The Poor Clares would like your attention.*

We have been asked to tell you that the Poor Clares in New Orleans have prepared a file of about 100 slides in black and white (2"x2") for use in a still projector, showing life in a Poor Clare monastery. They took the pictures themselves within the cloister, and have attached a brief description of each picture. Anyone desiring to show these slides to interested groups, especially potential vocations—may borrow the slides gratis. The Poor Clares will also send gratis a set of seven large posters, six-inch dolls dressed in the Poor Clare habit, and literature for distribution. The mailing of the small slide file is the only expense they ask the user to assume.

Our Seraphic Mother Clare will unquestionably bless those who help to make her Order better known. Those in charge of vocational guidance have an excellent opportunity here to make Saint Clare a centenary gift to many vocations. Don't neglect this offer. Address your request to

Monastery of Saint Clare  
720 Henry Clay Avenue  
New Orleans 18, Louisiana

## A NORTHERN LIGHT

The life of the Princess of Nericia, better known to the present as Saint Bridget of Sweden, is very definitely an answer to the plea of Jesus Christ, a plea made in His world-stirring Sermon on the Mount: *So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* Living today, she would have been designated as the embodiment of Catholic Action. Although one might say that so much about her life was extraordinary, and, therefore, not for imitation, still the lessons to be learned from her are foremost among which is the one of service. She realized that not only were creatures made to know and to love God, but, in addition, to love Him. In every phase of her life, regardless of the fact that much of what she was commanded to do was in direct opposition to her inclinations, she was yet a willing instrument of Divinity.

It was in the terrible spiritual darkness of the early fourteenth century, probably in the year 1302, that Bridget was born into a Swedish family, the head of which was Birger Peterson, Judge of the province of Upsala, a descendant of Saint Eric, and a very noble person, while Ingeborg, of the great family of Folkunga which had ruled in Sweden her first kings, was the mother, who had already borne five sons and three daughters. Besides being among the wealthiest landholders in the country, these parents were renowned also for their piety. A few months before the birth of the child, Ingeborg was at sea in a frigate when a storm during which many of her companions were drowned—she was saved, as she was told in a dream the next day, because of the destiny of the infant she bore. And on the night in which she did give birth to this seventh child, a very holy priest, while making a visit to a neighboring church, beheld a young maiden surrounded by clouds and bearing a scroll on which were inscribed the words, "This night a daughter is born to Birger, whose voice shall be heard through the whole world." Yet, for the first three years of her life, that same daughter—baptized Birgitta, but affectionately called by the people of Sweden—uttered not a sound; and when she did

to speak it was at once clearly and distinctly, with the polished speech of an adult, and not in the hesitating manner of a child.

Before Britta was seven years old she lost her mother and was entrusted by Birger to the care of a cousin named Katharine, a woman of rare prudence and virtue—another instance of the enfolding grace of Providence is regard to this unusual child, for she was truly an unusual child. Even at the age of ten she was strikingly impressed by a sermon on the Passion, and that very night saw in a vision the Divine Savior covered with wounds and hanging on the cross; all brought to mind, Jesus told her, by those who despise His love and reject His grace. The sufferings of the Crucified had always been Britta's favorite devotion, but with this vision it became more so, until her very looks and disposition were marked with a sadness and seriousness strangely out of character in so young a child. Katharine found her one night, when she was about twelve years old, kneeling before her crucifix, trembling with cold and crying bitterly. Fearful lest the child injure her health, she scolded Britta severely, but seeing that she was not making much of an impression proceeded to administer the rod. The rod had scarcely touched the little girl's shoulders when it fell to the ground in pieces. Aghast, Katharine questioned the youngster and was told that she only got up at night to thank the Crucified and to give Him the praise that others were denying Him. Needless to say, Katharine, being a truly pious person, never again interfered with her practices, but prudently warned her not to speak of them, or of her visions, to any one except the priest.

For several years, it had been the desire of Britta's heart to consecrate her virginity to God; however, when her father told her of his resolution to marry her to Wulf, the Prince of Nericia, unexpected though the decision was, she acquiesced immediately, accepting it as a direct indication of the Will of God. At the time of the marriage, Bridget had just passed her thirteenth birthday, and Wulf was not yet twenty years old. He was really a prince among men, governing Nericia with a Christlike prudence and justice, possessing those sterling qualities of which saints are made. When, immediately after the wedding, Bridget expressed a wish that they live together as brother and sister for awhile in preparation for their assignment of rearing citizens for Heaven, the naturally chivalrous character of Wulf prompted his agreement, and, for fully two years, this young couple sought every means to sanctify

their union, and did all that was humanly possible to prepare themselves to be good parents. They enrolled in the Third Order of Saint Francis, a saint very dear to Bridget, and, although Wulf was by nature pleasant, loving and fond of show and dress, yet the charm that his young wife exerted over him was so great that he came to realize the insignificance of these things, and to follow her in living the Rule of the Third Order. These two were well-loved by the people of their own household and the neighborhood—the bit of severity in Bridget's make-up being counterpoised by Wulf's liveliness—and many followed their lead into the Third Order. Then, after their years of preparation, Bridget and Wulf had eight children; four sons, Karl, Birger, Gudmar, and Benedict; and four daughters, Margaret, Katharine, Ingeborg, and Cecilia.

The quiet home-life of the pious couple, concerned mostly with the training of their children, the administration of their lands, and their many works of mercy, had been interrupted by periodic visits to the court of the King, Magnus Smek, to whom Bridget was very closely related. When Magnus married Blanche of Namur in 1335, he summoned Wulf and his wife to a residence in Stockholm, for he wanted Bridget to be chief lady-in-waiting to his royal bride. Although Bridget disliked the idea intensely, Wulf persuaded her to accept so that it would not be necessary for him to be separated from her for weeks at a time when he was about the business of the King. In addition to attending to the affairs of State, he used his influence at Court for the good of the people and in the interests of religion, while Bridget attempted, both by her prayers and by her conversation, to lead the royal couple to a true knowledge of values. The piety and sweetness of manner of this grave Swedish woman won the Queen's admiration and heart, and at times even a temporary reform. The distraction of the Court in no way interrupted Bridget's extraordinary life of prayer; as in her own home, her mysterious visions and revelations continued.

The King and Queen began, more and more, to oppress the people with heavy taxes; they confiscated money and land that belonged to the Holy See, in an attempt to maintain a Court equal in luxury to the French Court to which Blanche was accustomed. Magnus set himself against the warnings of his cousin and went so far as to threaten her to her own son by asking, when he met Birger, what his mother had been dreaming about the King on the previous night. When a decree of excommunication was pronounced on the King, Wulf was as anxious

as Bridget to leave Stockholm; and so, in 1339, after four years at Court, they resigned their offices.

That same year they began a course of pilgrimages to all the most famous shrines in Norway, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France. On the way back from the pilgrimage to Compostella, Wulf was seriously stricken when they arrived at Arras. He received the last sacraments, but Bridget, grieved at the thought of the Prince dying far from the country which they both loved so dearly, spared neither effort nor prayers for his recovery, which she was assured by revelation, would be granted. As had been predicted, he was perfectly restored to health, and was able to continue with his wife and the other pilgrims. When they reached Sweden, after very little delay he entered, with Bridget's approval, the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, where he led, for three years, a life of the most regular observance, edifying all with whom he came in contact. He died there, at the age of forty-seven, before he had pronounced his solemn vows. The Cistercian annals speak of him as "Blessed Wulf", although he never was beatified by the Church.

Bridget, now free to follow her inclinations, immediately renounced her rank of Princess. She adopted the dress worn by the typical Swedish widow of the time, under which she wore continuously a hair-shirt and a cord full of knots. All her valuables she distributed to the poor and divided her husband's estates among their children, as he had bade her to do when he appeared to her shortly after his death. Her relatives, distressed at all this, held a family council at which they entreated her not to remarry, for the children's sake, if for no other reason; but Bridget knew that there were other things in store for her. The only one among them all who stood by her in all her decisions was her brother, Israel, who, happily for her, was influential both with the family and in the State.

She had been told by revelation that she was to make known the will of God to the world, that hers was to be a strange and difficult life, but how, when, or where this was to come about, she did not as yet know. At the recommendation of her director, she applied to the Prior of Alvastra for a room in the outer part of the monastery, where she might retire to a life of prayer and penance while awaiting the pleasure of the Almighty. Most difficult of all that this entailed was the parting from her children; she was the only earthly comfort of her daughter, Margaret, whose marriage was a most unhappy one; with her mother's blessing, Ingeborg returned, as a postulant, to the Cistercian convent at Risaberg



where she had been educated; both Karl and Birger were married and promised a home and a father's care to the younger ones; Katharine, the beauty of the family, was married to Edgar, the wealthy young nobleman to whom Wulf had betrothed her.

Upon her arrival at the monastery, Bridget was conducted at once to the cell, which she never left except by the express command of God. How truly it might be said of her while in that monastery cell "she walked and talked with God." He Himself taught her many prayers during those days. To her many austerities she added still more modifications: for a bed she used only a rough carpet spread on the floor; in memory of the gall offered the Crucified, she often kept pieces of bitter gentian root in her mouth for hours at a time.

After little more than a year in her seclusion, God sent her once more to the Court in Stockholm, where again she daringly reproached Magnus for his excesses, for his tyranny, and for his evil life, and threatened him with the severest of chastisements if he did not reform his ways. Magnus was so impressed that when some of the nobles denounced her as a witch he was very firm in his rebuff. During her stay at the Court this time, she really exerted a beneficial influence on the royal couple; but her denunciations were so inclusive, that at the same time even some of the more devout persons of the Court began to question the origin of her prophecies, contending that God would not reveal Himself in so extraordinary a manner to an ignorant woman—forgetting, of course, that God's ways are strange ways.

Not long after her return to Alvastra, her youngest son Benedict died in her arms, leaving his mother's heart filled with peace and joy for she had been told that his destination was the Heaven for which she had reared her children. Then began for Bridget the most extraordinary phase of her life—an overwhelming gift of God by which she was in the habitual state of continual visions and contemplations—although her body was on earth her soul was almost constantly in Heaven. From the first, she was most faithful to her Lord's injunction to be perfectly open and frank with her confessors; and, as soon as she came out of a state of ecstacy, she related to either Master Mathias or to Olafson all that she had seen or heard, in such a humble way that the men were fully convinced that her revelations came from God. Her life abounds in instances of humility, of the heart and will, as well as

of mind, for she was well aware of the fact that to whom much is given, of them much will be required.

In 1344, many instructions were given to her by God for the foundation of a Religious Order, the Rule of which was dictated by Himself, word for word. She set about the plans for it immediately, and the first monastery of the Order—called the Order of our most Holy Savior, later commonly known as the Bridgettines—was made ready at the ancestral castle of her family at Wadstena.

Toward the close of the year 1346, at the express command of her Divine Master, she left Alvastra to go to Rome, consoled in her natural shrinking from such a conspicuous position only by the fact that Peter Olafson, one of her directors had obtained leave from his Superiors to accompany her and to remain with her. It was the spring of 1347 when the travellers reached the City which was then in a most deplorable state; abandoned by the Pope, its Churches and its poor neglected, and all law and order disregarded. They established themselves in a house near the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso, where Bridget followed a routine that was much the same as it had been in her cell at Alvastra. She prayed; she practiced corporal and spiritual works of mercy; she held supernatural intercourse with her Lord; but she never for a moment lost sight of the object of her mission which had been revealed to her—she was sent to Rome to bring about the return of the Pope from Avignon. So repugnant to her humility was this assignation, that it was only by direct command from Heaven that she would communicate to the Pope any of her revelations—and she was charged by God to deliver messages to three Popes, Clement VI, Urban V, and Gregory XI.

During the terrible scourge, "the Black Death," which struck the country in the year 1348, claiming many victims in both Avignon and Rome, Clement VI in Avignon, and Bridget and her Swedish priests in Rome, were untiring in their labors for the stricken. As might be expected, these days of the Saint's life abounded in miracles, and her reputation for sanctity increased. The miracles she worked, the numbers of conversions of hardened sinners, her fearlessness in checking vice, her tenderness to the poor and sick and penitent, and her own life of austerity were all proofs of her extraordinary mission. She became the very hub of spiritual life in Rome. Her commands from God included the reforms of several convents and monasteries that had lost their strict

observance, and in most of these cases the reforms were established. Another of the wrongs which she attempted to right was the frequent failure of very many of the priests of the time to recite the Divine Office regularly; Bridget warned them that only those priests belonged to God who were both regular and devout in this function. She carried on a virtual crusade against the extravagance in dress which was becoming more and more prevalent among the Roman ladies; and since she had access to the very first society of the city, she was able to impress what it did the most good. Then, as now, in the world of fashion, the example of those in high places set the trend.

In 1350 she was joined by Katharine, who said that she forgot how to smile the day her mother left Sweden. She journeyed to Rome ostensibly for the Jubilee, but Bridget's presence there was really a secret force which attracted her. During Katharine's stay in Rome her devoted husband died, and she remained there, her mother's inseparable companion until the very end.

On October 4, 1354, Saint Francis of Assisi appeared to Bridget and invited her to come to his cell and to eat and drink with him. This was to be an indication that Francis wanted her to make a pilgrimage to Assisi, she set out at once with Katharine and some of the other English pilgrims. At one of her visits to the church there, Christ appeared and reconfirmed the authenticity of the Portiuncula Indulgence, which she had heard questioned by some of her companions. As she knelt before the Church of the Portiuncula, begging a blessing of Saint Francis for herself and her fellow pilgrims before returning to Rome, Francis explained his invitation to her. Obedience, he said, was his cell; his love to win his neighbor to the service of God; and his drink, the delight felt when these souls gave themselves to prayer, and won others to a devout life. These words of Francis served to redouble her zeal for the virtues of obedience and fraternal charity.

Between 1367 and 1370, while Urban V was in Rome, Bridget had her audience with him, and sought approbation of the Rule of her Order which she had founded. It came from Montefiascone in the papal States where Urban issued the Bull granting confirmation of her Rule and the foundation at Wadstena, besides authorizing her to make new foundations.

She was almost seventy years old, when in 1371 her Lord bade

make the long predicted pilgrimage to Jerusalem. With her went Karl, Birger, and Katharine, together with the priests who had so long been her faithful guides and guardians. On the way they passed through Naples, and while visiting the Court there Karl became enamoured of Queen Joanna, and she, in turn, fell in love with the handsome, reckless Karl. Determined to marry him, regardless of her third husband and Karl's third wife, she invited him to remain in Naples as her special guest. But Bridget could not allow her treasured, favorite son to fall into the snares of such a wicked woman. She prayed God to take him rather than to have him the object of Joanna's lawless love, and her prayer was quickly answered. Karl died several days later, in the arms of the Church and of his saintly mother. After the funeral—a very elaborate one arranged for by Joanna—the pilgrims continued on their way and entered Jerusalem in May of 1372. For over four months, they visited all those hallowed spots made sacred by the lives of Jesus and his Blessed Mother, during which visits Bridget was the recipient of many unusual graces and revelations. In October, when they left the Holy Places, Bridget knew that she had made her last pilgrimage. They returned by the same route and it was March, 1373, when they arrived in Rome. For some time now Bridget's health had been failing, and once the journey to the Holy Land had been accomplished, it declined rapidly. Although she suffered intense pain and continual fever, she never lost her cheerful manner and was just as thoughtful as ever of others—the little "courtesies" had always been an important item in her life, and the touch of severity so marked in her younger days had completely disappeared.

Up to this time Bridget had been completely free from the temptations to impurity which had plagued so many of God's chosen; but in these last months, a woman in her seventies, she was assailed vehemently. Along with them, there were temptations to abandon prayer, since she did nothing more during prayer than fight evil thoughts and imaginations. Lent and Holy Week passed, with Bridget still in her state of spiritual anguish; but early on Easter morning, the Blessed Mother came to relieve her forever of these distressing temptations. Then, for a time, extraordinary spiritual graces of seeing and talking with Christ and many were withheld; nevertheless, she continued as exact about everything as she had been in the days of heavenly consolation.

Toward the middle of July, her health became much worse; and,

although the physicians spoke of a speedy recovery, Mary, in her appearance after a long absence, told her that this was not to be for her there was just a short time left. Then Jesus Himself came promising a clothing and consecration as a nun that she might be acknowledged as a religious and the Mother of the convent of Wadstena. Bridget had never worn the religious habit of either the Franciscan Order or of the Order which she had founded, and this clothing promised by Christ was to be altogether spiritual, witnessed only by angelic light. When Katharine and Birger returned to her bedside they found their mother rapt in ecstasy which continued until just before her death a day later, when she gave her last counsels and instructions to her beautiful Katharine and her ever dependable Birger. She commended her son to see that her body was carried quietly by night without show or ceremony to the convent of the Poor Clares and, as soon as possible, taken to Wadstena where her Lord had told her she was to go. After Peter Olafson had administered the last sacraments, he began Mass which was to be for Bridget the last Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At the moment of Elevation, with eyes uplifted and a smile of unearthly beauty on her face, the Princess of Nericia became a Princess of Heaven. It was on the twenty-third of July. With an unbelievable swiftness the news of her death spread through the city, and the crowds that assembled were so great that it became necessary to take her body at once to the church instead of to the convent as she had directed. During the two days it was exposed, many who came to pray received wonderful graces and cures; and when, on July 26, she was laid in the marble tomb prepared by her children, hearing and sight and life continued to be restored and sicknesses cured.

Five weeks were required to prepare for the journey to Wadstena and even then there was a great deal of difficulty about transporting the coffin; hence with all the required approval, it was determined to remove the flesh from the bones and to carry only the bones in a casket to Sweden. When the coffin was opened, however, this was found to be unnecessary, for there was no trace of flesh, only the bones lying in their burying cloths. Agreeable in death as in life, Bridget had saved her faithful followers an unwelcome task. The bones were removed from the coffin and placed in a rich casket, with the exception of the right arm which was given to the convent.

With their sacred burden the pilgrims left Rome in early September

stopping often on the way to permit veneration of the precious remains, and during these times Peter preached to the people and Katharine told of many of her mother's revelations. On the fourth of July, 1374, they arrived in Wadstena amid the great jubilation with which the people of Sweden celebrated the return of their beloved Princess and Saint.

The name of Bridget of Sweden was entered among the canonized saints of the Church in 1391; the remains of her body lie in the convent at Wadstena where they were taken in 1373; but across those hundreds of years her life still has the power of forceful teaching. Today, as in the fourteenth century, example—backed by prayer and coupled with exhortation—is one of the most potent weapons for the spreading of the true spirit of Christianity.

Pittsburgh, Pa

*Sr. Maura, O.S.F.*



Place thy mind before the mirror of eternity, place thy soul in the brightness of glory, place thy heart in the figure of the divine substance and transform thy whole self through contemplation in the image of the Godhead, that thou too mayest feel what His friends feel in tasting the hidden sweetness which God Himself has kept from the beginning for those who love Him.

*Saint Clare*

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XVI)

### *The Fifteenth Article*

**TEXT:** *It behooves them likewise to refrain from all that is choise of apparel as well as in everything else. And according to the salutary advice of Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, they should, after laying aside the other vain ornaments of the world, wear no other bodily ornaments but their religious garb (cit. Rule, ch. VI). They are, furthermore, bound to observe the enclosure according to the sacred Canons and their respective Constitutions.*

The previous article on mortification sounded the keynote of the chapter on the control of inordinate self-love. The present article descends to certain particular details of the Tertiary program of mastery. Before taking up the individual points, we ought to note the subject matter of this article as a whole fits into the master plan of self-conquest. Only in this way shall we appreciate the spirit in which it should be observed.

Mortification, like penance, is not a goal but a means to the perfect love of God. The interior life of union with God, then, should be the aim of the Franciscan religious. The threefold concupiscence of the fallen nature represents the chief internal obstacle to this inner life of union. And the spirit of worldliness, we know, is the great outside obstacle of this triple lust of nature. As Saint John put it: *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2, 15-16).*

If this be so, we can readily see why the specific directives of the article of the Rule go to the very heart of the matter. The allusion to the advice of Saint Peter reminds the Tertiary religious that their attraction

as an intimate friend or as the bride of Christ does not consist in outward adornment of braiding the hair, or of wearing gold, or of putting on robes, but rather in the inner life of the heart, in the imperishableness of a quiet and gentle spirit which is of great price in the sight of God (1 Peter 3, 3-4). As the Psalmist put it: *All the glory of the king's daughter is within (Ps. 44, 14).* On the other hand, the observance of the enclosure is both a symbol and a practical means of excluding the world from the convent and is intended more specifically as a special safeguard to chastity. Thus, this point of the rule strikes directly at the first of the three concupiscences, the lust of the flesh, even as the remaining prescriptions of this article are oriented specifically against the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

*It behooves them to refrain from all that is choice. . .*

The use of the term 'choice' or *curiositas*, as the Latin reads, indicates that what is proscribed here is any unwarranted departure from the common way of life prescribed for members of religious institutes in matters of food, clothing, furniture of one's cell, and the like. The inordinate desire for what is novel, costly or precious in this regard is rooted partly in vanity, a manifestation of the pride of life, and partly in the lust of the eyes, which is a passionate attachment to the goods of this world and the refinements proper to people of wealth. It was to mortify and curb any unruly craving or tendency in this direction that the Tertiary took the vow of poverty. The best way to observe the essentials of poverty and acquire the true spirit of detachment from temporal possessions and the comforts of life is to adhere faithfully to the common life.

That is why Canon law demands: "In every religious institute the common life must be observed by all, even in those things which pertain to food, clothes, and furniture. . . The furniture of the religious should be in harmony with the poverty they have vowed in their profession" (Can. 594, par. 1 and 3).

The perfect observance of the common life, however, does not forbid an individual religious having and using what is necessary or really helpful because of particular circumstances of health, employment, or occupation, provided this is done with the permission and approval of

the superior, who is charged with seeing to it that the common life be maintained. In all these things, however, we should bear in mind that it is not so much what we use as the way in which we do so. Periodically religious do well to examine themselves to find out if they have allowed their heart to become unduly attached to the things permitted for their use.

*After laying aside the other vain ornaments of this world. . .*

This admonition adapted from the earlier Rule expresses the mind of the Church, as is clear if we but consult the *Normae* or directives which the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars follows in approving new religious institutes. One of the norms, for instance, forbids ornaments of gold or silver except a plain cross or medal. Silk is prohibited as well as everything else that would indicate vanity or dissipation or occasion ridicule (*Normae*, n. 67).

*They should wear no other bodily ornament but their religious garb.*

The wording here is the same as that of the Rule of Leo X except that the words, 'their religious garb', has been substituted for the phrase 'what is humble and necessary for the covering of the body'. This itself indicates that the habit is to be a symbol of humility and unworldliness. The aforementioned norms suggest the same when they demand that the form, color, and other details of the habit must conform to religious dignity, reserve, and modesty as well as to the demands of poverty (*Normae*, n. 66).

Canon law prescribes: "The religious must wear the habit prescribed to their institute both inside and outside the house. The major superior, or, in case of urgency, the local superior may dispense from this obligation" (Can. 596).

Where a large percentage of the population is non-Catholic, special laws or legitimate customs may determine when the religious garb may be laid aside. For the United States, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore has determined what the secular clergy and male religious should wear in place of the cassock and religious habit in public.

of the medical profession usually require that those engaged in the care of the sick be clothed in white. This would be sufficient reason for the proper superior to dispense hospital sisters from wearing the proper habit of their institute while on duty. The same would be true where civil law forbids the teachers in public schools to wear any distinctive religious garb. Climatic conditions such as those in the tropics may warrant other dispensations in regard to the texture, color, or other details of the habit. Here the important principle to bear in mind is that the clothing the Franciscans wear, while not impeding their work as religious, should be indicative as far as possible of the fact that they are consecrated to the service of God.

*They are bound to observe the enclosure according to the Sacred Canons. .*

In the physical sense, the enclosure or cloister is that portion of the religious house or convent grounds reserved for the exclusive use of the members of the community. According to the sacred Canons, the enclosure is the ecclesiastical law which forbids outsiders to enter the cloister, or religious to leave it without the proper authorization. Thus, the enclosure is both a symbol and practical means for shutting out the world from the cloister and shielding the religious from the harmful effects of too free communication with outsiders, especially of the opposite sex.

Canon law recognizes two kinds of enclosure, (1) papal, and (2) episcopal or common. The papal enclosure, prescribed for members of an order or institute in which solemn vows are taken, is so-called because imposed by papal constitutions and sanctioned by punishments enjoined by papal or general Church law. In addition, the Holy See reserves to itself the right to dispense from it. By special indult of the Holy See, the papal enclosure can be granted to religious institutes with simple vows.

The episcopal or common enclosure is that imposed by Canon law upon religious congregations of men and women as well as upon nuns with simple vows. Though the Code does not use the term, 'episcopal', the common cloister is so-called because the bishop may protect it by imposing certain penalties for its violation should he see fit.

We shall say a word about each type of enclosure.

1. *The Papal Enclosure*

"The papal enclosure must be observed in every convent of regulars, whether men or women, which has been canonically erected, even if the community does not number six professed" (Can. 597, par. 1). The Code uses the term, 'regular', in the technical sense of a member of an order or institute that takes solemn vows. It sometimes happens that in the Third Order that customarily has solemn profession, the religious in certain monasteries due to special circumstances, take only simple vows. The virtue of a papal indult. The above regulation does not apply to simple monasteries, neither does it hold for temporary residences or the mother house of a community. The Code goes on to say: "All that part of the house inhabited by the community is subject to the enclosure, including its gardens and orchards, except the church and the adjoining sacristy, the guest rooms and the parlor; which latter should as far as possible be situated near the entrance of the house" (par. 2). "The places subject to the law of the enclosure shall be indicated by public notices. The major superior or the general chapter, as the constitutions may determine, and, in the case of nuns with solemn vows, the bishop, shall have the right and duty to fix accurately the limits of the enclosure and also to change them for legitimate reasons" (par. 3). The superior charged with determining the boundaries of the enclosure, then, has the power also to alter them permanently or by way of exception.

The papal enclosure prescribed for men differs from that imposed on nuns with solemn vows. In the case of the former, the Code forbids under pain of excommunication reserved to the Holy See women of any age, class, or conditions to enter the cloister under any pretext whatsoever. And the religious who admits a woman to the enclosure incurs the same penalty and in addition is deprived of both active and passive voice and any office he may hold (Can. 598 and 2342). The exception made by the Code is in regard to the wives of sovereign rulers together with their retinue (Can. 598). *A fortiori*, it would apply to the case where a woman held the supreme power. This privilege of rulers and their wives holds not only in regard to the monasteries or convents in their own country but to those in foreign lands as well. Not only the president of the United States have the rank of a sovereign ruler, but also the governors of the individual states.

Canonists explain that according to the general principles of interpretation of the Code excommunication imposed for violating

the enclosure would not be incurred by women unaware of the existence of the penalty or of the fact that entrance is forbidden or that they are within the enclosure, provided their ignorance is not crass, supine, or affected. Grave fear, violence, or necessity would also excuse from the penalty. While women of sound mind or girls under fourteen years of age would not incur the excommunication, though the latter could be guilty of grievous sin, whoever would admit such without sufficient reason would be subject to the penalty.

The Code prescribes further: "When the houses of male regulars have annexed to it a house for boarding pupils or for other works proper to the institute, a separate part of the house should, if possible, be reserved for the habitation of the religious and subject to the law of enclosure" (Can. 599).

Unlike the case of nuns subject to papal enclosure, Canon law does not lay down any special provisions in regard to religious men leaving the cloister, though Canon 606 requires superiors to see to it that the regulations of the respective constitutions on this point be carefully observed.

The papal enclosure of nuns with solemn vows is even stricter. No person of either sex may be admitted without permission of the Holy See under pain of excommunication. Neither may the nuns leave the cloister without an indult from the Holy See, except in case of very great and imminent danger. For the rest, it is not practical from the viewpoint of this exposition to discuss the additional regulations regarding this form of enclosure, except perhaps to note that the Code permits the following to enter the cloister of women with either papal or common enclosure. (1) The canonical visitator or his delegate, accompanied by at least one cleric or male religious of mature age; (2) the confessor or his substitute to administer the sacraments to the sick or to assist the dying; (3) sovereign rulers, their wives and retinues; (4) the Cardinals; (5) doctors, surgeons and others whose work is necessary may with proper precautions be admitted by the superior after she has obtained at least the habitual approval of the local bishop; which permission may be presumed in case of urgency (Can. 600).

## 2. Common or Episcopal Enclosure

Present day Church law requires that in the houses of religious congregations, whether under papal or diocesan law, the law of enclosure must be observed so that no one of the other sex may be admitted excepting those mentioned above in Can. 598 and 600, as well as those that the superior considers may be admitted for just and reasonable motives (Can. 604, par. 1). Where the religious house is connected with a school, hospital, etc., a special section, if possible, should be reserved exclusively for the religious and subject to the enclosure. 2). In special circumstances and for grave reasons the bishop may guard the enclosure with special censures, except in the case of clerical congregations; but he must always take care that the enclosure is duly observed and that any abuse that may creep in is corrected (p. 607).

The Code goes on to say: "All those who have charge of the house shall carefully see to it that useless conversations with outsiders do not relax the discipline and weaken the religious spirit" (Can. 604). "Superiors must see that the constitutions are faithfully observed regarding the egress of subjects from the convent, or their receiving visitors from, or paying visits to, outsiders. Superiors may not allow the subjects to remain outside the house of their own institute except for a grave cause and for as brief a time as possible according to the constitutions; but for an absence of more than six months, except for purposes of study, the permission of the Holy See is always required" (Can. 606). "Superioresses and the local Ordinaries must take care that religious women do not go out singly from the house except in the case of necessity" (Can. 607).

The question arises: What sin does a religious commit by absconding with himself from the convent without permission? To begin with, it is a violation of the rule that may or may not be serious depending on the circumstances of time or place, whether scandal is involved, whether the intention of the religious is, and so on.

Canonists distinguish simple absence from the cloister from absence without permission from apostasy and flight. An *apostate* is a religious who, after perpetual vows (simple or solemn) who leaves or who remains outside the convent with the intention of not returning. In addition to this grave violation of the vow of obedience involved, "the religious automatically incurs excommunication reserved to his proper

superior, or, if the religious institute is not a clerical institute, or is not exempt, to the local Ordinary of the place where the apostate religious resides; he is also deprived of the right to legal ecclesiastical acts and of all the privileges of his organization. When he returns, he is forever deprived of an active and passive vote, and shall moreover be punished with other penalties by his superiors in proportion to the gravity of his guilt in accordance with the constitutions of the respective organization" (Can. 2385). If the religious has only temporary vows, he still sins gravely against obedience by leaving without permission and with the intention of not returning, but he does not incur the canonical penalties of the apostate; he is treated juridically as a fugitive.

A *fugitive* is defined as any professed religious (whether in temporary or perpetual vows) "who, without permission of his superiors, deserts the religious house, but with the intention of returning to the institute" (Can. 644, par. 3). The crime of 'flight' or desertion implies that the religious withdraws himself temporarily from dependence on his superiors. As such, it differs from simple absence from the convent without permission. The latter, canonists explain, would consist in a brief absence, or the prolongation of a legitimate absence during which the religious may be readily reached by his superiors, for instance where the religious remains out a day or so longer without permission on ministerial work or on a visit allowed him to relatives.

Unless the constitutions determine otherwise, authors agree that an absence of at least two or three days contrary to the wishes of the superior is required before the religious would incur the penalties of Canon 2386 which declares: "The fugitive religious automatically incurs deprivation of any office he holds in the religious organization, and, if he is a cleric in major orders, incurs suspension reserved to his proper major superior. When he returns, he shall be punished in the manner indicated by the constitutions of the respective organization, and, if the constitutions do not provide for such a case, the major superior shall inflict penalties in proportion to the gravity of his guilt."

Both the apostate and the fugitive retain all the obligations of the Rule and of the vows. They have seriously violated the vow of obedience and the law of the enclosure and are obliged to return without delay (Cf. Can. 645).

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### *Admonition XIX: The Blessed and the Blameworthy Servant*

Saint Francis, as we know from his life, was deeply aware of great responsibility to God for all the wonderful gifts of both nature and grace that had been given him. We too, of course, readily admit that everything we are and have is a gift from God. But does our conviction go beyond a purely speculative consideration and find concrete expression in our life? Saint Francis really apprehended this truth and lived it with his whole mind and heart. His ideal of poverty was not only to know but to act in accordance with the knowledge that he was not the owner of any of the natural or supernatural gifts so richly bestowed upon him by the fathomless kindness of his Father in heaven. These gifts were entrusted to him for his use, but not for his possession; he simply could not call them his own. He was only a steward, a servant in charge of them who had to use them according to the will of his Master Who alone was their rightful owner. Francis had learned from the Gospel that the Master Who is infinitely kind in lending us His gifts is also extremely severe in demanding an account of how we use them. God's gifts are no dead capital; they are really, literally living investments, and He will one day require them of us with interest. Simply to forget about this obligation of trading with the talents entrusted to us would mean that we, the servants, act as if we think we can use or not use our property as we will. Obviously to act thus would be gross infidelity on our part; in fact, it would be theft, for we would be keeping for ourselves the property of our Lord and Master, property that He has entrusted to us that we might use it for His honor and glory and for our own sanctification. If we live as unfaithful servants of our Lord, what excuse shall we offer for our thievery when we are summoned to give an account of our stewardship? What can we expect but that God, the rightful owner of all we have been given, will take from us those gifts we sought to possess for ourselves?

It is against this thievish attitude and toward faithful service in the spirit of poverty that our Seraphic Father exhorts us in the Nineteenth Admonition when he says:

Blessed is that servant who returns all his goods to the Lord God. For he who keeps anything for himself hides on himself his Lord's money (Mt. 25, 18); and therefore whatever he thinks to be his own will be taken away from him (Lk. 8, 18).

Let us examine ourselves in the light of these words. We must give back to God all His goods—everything we are in body and soul, all our natural gifts and talents, everything the Lord has given us through the grace of others, as well as all the supernatural gifts, the powers and virtues, that adorn our soul. All these goods we must return to our Master, and we must return by using them according to His will.

It is perhaps unnecessary to mention the vice of laziness here, for we are now dealing with the perfections of the spiritual life and a lazy religious life is simply a monstrosity. Although among the vices laziness attracts less notice and incurs less censure than the others, it is still a flagrant injustice to God, it frustrates and ruins His noble gifts in the soul, and it is a stagnant pool in which all the other vices are bred. Saint Francis could not abide lazy friars, and wherever he found them he sent them away, comparing them with nasty flies. He saw clearly that a lazy man is possessed of "the enemy of the soul" (Rule, V)."

However, we must ask ourselves whether we are making *good* use of our natural and supernatural gifts. In the words of the parable, are we trading with the talents our Lord has entrusted to us? Are we using them as He wills, for our own sanctification and for the edification of others, for the welfare of Church and the glory of God? Or have we buried our talents out of fear or indifference or slothfulness? Are we not striving our utmost to increase the original capital our Lord lent us? We must always keep in mind that we are servants—slaves rather—of a stern Master Who will exact from us the last farthing we owe Him. We have His own warning to this effect, and it is up to us to take Him at His word, as Francis did. We are bound to grow in virtue, to reach spiritual maturity, to attain to manhood in Christ. This means that we must work to the best of our ability to develop and increase all the gifts that are ours by nature and by grace. It would, of course, take us too far



afraid to go into every point that is here involved, but for the example, let us question ourselves briefly on the use of our intellectual and affective faculties.

Do I realize that my primary obligation as a rational creature is to strive to know God? Hence, do I use my intellect for that purpose? Do I bury it in the earth of mundane trivialities, or allow it to slip into indifference, or simply let it decay with disuse? Do I strive to acquire the knowledge proper to my state in life? For example, if I am a priest, do I try to increase my knowledge of God and of the things pertaining to my sacred ministry? Do I read, study, and meditate for the purpose of increasing my own holiness and consequently my efficiency as an instrument in the hands of the Master? Or must I admit that I have put my intellect to unworthy use—or to no use at all? If I am assigned to a task requiring specialized knowledge, do I make every effort to obtain and increase that knowledge according to the will of God and the precept of obedience? Am I content merely to satisfy the basic requirements and let it go at that? What about my way of thinking, appreciating, and judging? Is it the way of Christ? Do I seriously study the life of Christ and endeavor to form my mind according to His that I may learn to listen, to speak, and to think as a true child of God? The religious who are thoughtless, shallow-minded, indifferent, curious, or mentally unstable must realize that he is burying a talent—the talent of his intellect—which belongs not to him but to His Master; and that some day he will have to give an account of his infidelity.

Similarly, we may look into the way we are using our hearts. Is God the first and final object of our love, or is it the little god of self? The answer to this question lies in our answer to some of the following points. Do I yearn to give myself wholly to God in all things—to yield myself to Him in total self-surrender through my vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience? True love is marked by a desire to surrender oneself utterly to the Beloved, to strive for union and likeness with Him. Can I truly say, then, that I love the Master, that my heart is His alone? Do I love the things that Christ loved, and hate the things that He hated? Do I try to love as He did? Do I ever pause to consider whether my affection for certain persons or places is really compatible with perfect imitation of Christ? Do I keep my heart calm and free from the agitation of earthly cares and receptive to the inspirations of grace? Am I mind-

ful that all my affective powers belong to God and that the Holy Spirit must rule and guide my love with absolute, undisputed authority? Do I keep my heart free from attachment to the joy of being loved by others? Do I return thanks to God for allowing me the delight and comfort of human friendship, and am I always careful to use these friendships for His honor and for the sanctification of the persons concerned? These and similar questions can help us to discover if we are really trading profitably with the talents God has lent us, or if we are burying them out of unholy fear or sloth, or if we are stealing them for our own selfish and sterile satisfaction.

It is well to consider, too, that superiors have an added obligation in this matter. They are bound to give an account to the Lord not only of their own talents but also of the talents of their subjects. No superior owns the natural or supernatural gifts of those under his authority; he cannot dispose of them as he pleases, but must return them to God. Superiors, therefore, should ask themselves whether they give assignments to their subjects with due consideration of their talents and individuality, and the circumstances of place, community, associates, and the like. They should bear in mind that they will surely be held accountable for talents unused or abused, for abilities misdirected, for potential virtues and perfection unrealized because of circumstances which they themselves controlled. The natural and supernatural gifts of religious are as so many deposits made by the Master, and He expects His due return. Superiors cannot rest content with knowing that their subjects are using their talents for the good of the community alone; they must also consider the rights of God. On the other hand, every religious should be aware that his gifts are not for himself exclusively, but that they belong to God through community life which is governed by obedience. As long as he keeps himself under the blessing of obedience, he will return everything to the Lord with interest—even those talents which he sacrifices by renouncing them in obedience.

There is another point on which we should examine ourselves—the matter of returning thanks to God for the daily graces He pours out upon us. If we had really made the most of every Holy Communion, every sacramental confession, of every sermon and conference and admonition, we should now be well on the way to perfection. If we had even humble thanks to God for the grace He gave us to resist a temptation, to perform an act of charity, to practice self-control, we should

certainly have gained other talents—other graces that would have carried us further toward the goal of holiness. But because we fail to reach all to the fountain-head, as the *Imitation* points out, we remain poor and needy and our talents gain us but little interest. We ought, then, to examine ourselves on our use of all the daily graces the Lord offers us. For example: Do I habitually disregard the sacramental graces of Holy Mass and Communion and confession? Do I merely take them for granted, or as a matter of routine, instead of as means of growing in Christ? Progress in Christ, however, does not mean that we feel ourselves becoming ever more virtuous. It means rather that we feel ourselves growing in humility, in an ever deeper realization of our weakness, helplessness and poverty. When we have come to understand our nothingness, that whatever we are and have by nature and by grace is but a gift of our infinitely loving and infinitely just Master, then we can hope to make true progress in perfection. Like the good and faithful servant in the parable, we will receive the talents of our Lord with humility, gratitude and holy fear, and we will trade with them until He calls for the final reckoning. Then our Seraphic Father can say to us: "Blessed is he who does not keep anything back for himself, but renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22, 21)."

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.



Ever since I have known the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through His servant Francis, no suffering has troubled me, no penance has been hard, no sickness too arduous.

Saint

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### Mission Notes

UCAYALI, Peru, is now a Vicariate Apostolic entrusted to the Province of Saint Francis Solanus. It covers an area of some 225,000 kilometers and has about 55,800 Catholics and 3,000 pagan Indians. Thirty-six friars—twenty-eight priests and eight brothers—are working in this territory.

In 1952 two boarding schools were erected for the Amuesha Indians, one for boys and one for girls. Likewise in Gran Pajonal two schools were built for the children of the primitive forest-dwelling Campa tribe. For over two hundred years the Indians of this region have been hostile to Christianity and have resisted every missionary who tried to work among them; but now there is every hope that they will soon be brought to the light of the Gospel. The work of evangelization is impeded by innumerable difficulties, especially lack of material. With the help of God, however, the love and ardent zeal of these intrepid missionaries is gradually surmounting all obstacles. They ask for a remembrance in our prayers.

In the region of the Apurimac and the Sivia Rivers, two more schools for boys and girls have been established. The difficulties here, however, are really enormous, and both places are so wild and inaccessible that Sisters cannot be brought in to care for the girls. But with the help of the Indians, the friars have recently completed a landing field, and it is hoped that soon the government will keep the mission supplied by air transport.

This year marks the first centenary of the martyrdom of Father John Chrysostom Cimini, O.F.M. then Prefect Apostolic, Father Felician Morentin, O.F.M., and Brother Amaden Bertona, O.F.M., who in 1853 were killed by the savage Campa Indians in the Apurimac River. The centenary was celebrated throughout the province. Missions were preached in the sixty-nine churches of the area, and in the very place where the martyrs met their death Dom Uriarte, O.F.M., celebrated Mass and distributed Holy Communion to a great number of the faithful. At the end of Mass the *Te Deum* was sung. The following day a Pontifical Mass was celebrated in the mission church, and the Bishop himself delivered the panegyric before the large and devout congregation. *Notitiae Franciscane Missionariae* III. (1953) 4, 10.

SAO LUIZ, in Brazil, is one of the latest missions opened by the Saxonia Province of the Holy Cross. One of the missionaries writes in part:

"On the first of January we opened a new parish in Piripiri. I found in visiting the neighboring places that there is much need of us here. Marriage problems create

the worst difficulties. The instruction of the children is progressing, but the ignorance of the older people makes one shudder.

After Easter we began parish work in Bacabal, midway between Sao Luis and Piripiri. About 60,000 souls. It is immigrant territory and is always increasing in population. The danger of Protestantism is great. They say one part here is wholly Protestant. This should not have happened. The people lack priests."

*Notitiae Franciscanae Missionariae* III (1953)

*CHINA. The judgment of God.* One of our confreres, a professor in the seminary at Macao, sent us the following story:

In a certain parish the Communists had set up the schismatic Nationalist Church and with the help of one of the Chinese priests were making considerable progress. When the Chinese Vicar General was warned of this, he summoned the priest and exhorted him to be faithful. "Dearest Father," he said, "let us remain faithful with our whole heart to our Sovereign Pontiff, for if we are with him, then and only then we be with Christ."

"Your Reverence," replied the priest, "I am ready to swear before the Lord that I have done nothing in favor of the schismatics. If I lie, may God take my life."

Reassured by this solemn declaration, the good Vicar General retired that day in peace. The next day was Sunday, and the priest was to celebrate the nine o'clock Mass for the people. The hour struck, but no priest appeared in the sacristy. The time pointed to 9:10, 9:30, and still no priest. Fearing something had happened, the Vicar General went to the priest's room and knocked. No answer. He forced the door open, and saw the priest lying in bed—dead. The terrible judgment of God.

This is an isolated case, thank God, for more than two hundred Chinese Christians are languishing in prison because of their fidelity to the Holy Father. Let us pray for them, for the persecution becomes daily more violent.

*Confession on Paper.* A certain Franciscan Ordinary is being held by the Communists under strict house arrest and can have no direct communication with the people. But he has worked out a plan for administering the Sacraments to the faithful. He has two Chinese Sisters who act as his housekeepers. They wear simple clothes and are able to slip into the homes of the Christians and exhort them to be constant in the Faith. Those who wish to confess their sins write them down on a slip of paper and give them sealed to the Sisters who take them to the Bishop. The next day, when he is working in his garden like a farmer, he passes by and greet him, telling him their names. Then the Bishop makes a sign of the Cross and pronounces the words of absolution, and the people go on their way unnoticed and unmolested.

The Sisters are also able to bring the Holy Eucharist to the people since they visit their homes.

*Notitiae Franciscanae Missionariae* III (1953)

# the CORD

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*Cum permissu superiorum.*

3 no 8 Aug 1953

## EPITAPH

Here lies the ideals of Saint Francis:  
Pressed in the folds of earth, the little plant,  
Drooped to a smile of meager flesh and bone.

Here lies the triumph of the little poor man,  
The lovely, wasted witness to his dream.  
Bring no polite compassion to her coffin  
And stay the pitying upward flight of brow  
For Francis and his dream without a haven,  
His made, impossible schemes. Here lies the proof  
His dream was wholly possible to her heart.

Here lies the refutation for crawling cautions,  
Sweet, mute rebuttal to any compromise.  
Her crypt is full of flower-talk, and gladly  
The stars come swimming down to kiss her face  
Caught in its quiet splendor. Be still! Be still!  
The place is full of angel-talk or song.

Here lies the fragile flower of Saint Francis  
Stronger than armies! Here, the unswerving gaze  
Shuttered at last on earth and turned to Godhead.

Here lies the testimony to Saint Francis:  
Clare of Assisi.

Who weeps, weep but for joy.

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

*Sr. Mary Francis*

## SAN DAMIANO, HOME OF THE POOR CLARES

When we ask those who have visited Assisi what made the deepest impression on them, they usually answer: "The tomb of Saint Francis, and San Damiano." San Damiano is indeed a holy place, unaltered for seven hundred years. It is still kept much as it was in the days of Francis and Clare. The spirit of primitive Franciscan poverty, simplicity, and union with God still hovers over the ancient little chapel, stirring the hearts of beholders like a sweet benediction.

From the Porta Nuova at the east end of Assisi, the road leads for about ten minutes through fields of wheat and corn. Here and there, grave cypresses raise their dark forms, and the ancient olives, with their gnarled and twisted branches, spread their silver-gray leaves to the sun. The road stops at a convent wall; stairs lead down the wall to a simple, lonely little chapel and convent, all hidden away among the olives and cypresses. This is San Damiano.

According to the legend a pagan mausoleum first stood there. At the time of the persecution of the Christians in 250, Saint Felicianus, patron of Foligni, kept hidden there for safety. Later a chapel was built over the mausoleum and dedicated to him, and still later Saint Benedict added a convent. For several centuries San Damiano belonged to the Benedictines, but at the time of Saint Francis it had become the property of the Bishop of Assisi. The little chapel was then somewhat dilapidated, but an old priest lived beside it and still performed the sacred functions there.

Shortly after his conversion, young Francis was praying with great fervor before the crucifix on the altar in San Damiano, when he heard the voice of the Master: "Francis, go and rebuild my house, which you see is falling to ruin." Francis took the message literally and felt himself called by Christ to restore the chapel of San Damiano and other little churches nearby. Immediately he set to work. He went about begging stones and mortar which he carried on his shoulders down the hill to the little sanctuary. Passers-by were invited to help him. One day the

spirit of prophesy seized him, as Saint Clare writes in her *Testament*: "and he mounted the wall of the church and cried out with a loud voice in the French tongue to certain poor folk of the neighborhood: 'Come and help me in building the monastery of San Damiano, for here dwell Ladies whose good name and holy life will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy Church.' "

When in 1212 the youthful Clare followed Francis in beginning his life of Gospel perfection, the Bishop of Assisi gave him the little church and convent of San Damiano as a present for her and her Sisters. There San Damiano became the first home of the Poor Ladies, and there Clare lived a life of perfection according to the ideals of Francis, their spiritual father.

Architecturally, San Damiano lacks harmony. The facade is marked by the low-set rosewindow, and the small square windows seem to have been set at random into the walls. Nevertheless, the total impression is charmingly picturesque. The interior of the chapel is narrow, with high round and pointed barrel vaults. The walls are darkened with smoke, but a few fragments of ancient frescoes can still be seen. Between the choir and the small apse is a grating, and here the high altar stands. Above the altar is a copy of the miraculous crucifix from which Francis heard the voice of Christ. The original is now preserved in the convent of Santa Chiara. Another impressive crucifix is kept in the chapel to the right of the famous crucifix of Brother Innocent of Palermo (1637).

The poor little convent of Saint Clare is close to the chapel. Franciscan Friars live in the convent, and also take care of the church, but it is the spirit of Saint Clare that still lingers in this sacred place.

Leading from the left choir of San Damiano, there is a small cloister dating back to the fifteenth century. In the middle of the courtyard is a fountain surrounded by oleanders, palms, and geraniums. A turn to the right leads to the refectory of the Poor Ladies. It might better be called the refectory of Lady Poverty, for it is here that the sublime poverty of Clare and her first companions appears most strikingly. With the exception of the ceiling, which is a late restoration, the poor, simple room is still the same as it was seven centuries ago. The primitive tables and benches are unsteady now and partly decayed, but the dark, coarse-grained wood must have looked in Clare's time much the same as it does now. At the head table, to the right, was the place of the Serafica

Mother. It is marked by a cross carved into the table and by a bouquet of fresh flowers placed there every day.

In spirit we can still see the Poor Ladies enter the room for the noon refectory. They group themselves in two lines before the tables, devoutly recite the prayer before meals, then take their places. Their food is scanty, for they observe a perpetual fast. While eating their simple meal they listen to the word of God read to them by one of the Sisters. Clare, in her loving humility, often serves the Sisters herself and brings them water to wash their hands.

This is the room that witnessed the miraculous multiplication of the bread. Quite close to Saint Clare's place at table is an opening in the wall through which the Sisters received the alms that the Friars begged for them. The miracle of the oil jar probably occurred close to this opening. Another miraculous event took place here in the year 1228. According to the *Fioretti* (33), when Pope Gregory was once visiting Clare and speaking with her about divine things, she begged him to remain and share a meal with her and her companions. With his customary graciousness he yielded to her petition, but when Clare asked him to bless the little breads, he commanded her to do so instead. In obedience and with great reverence Clare made the Sign of the Cross, whereupon there appeared a cross most beautifully imprinted on each of the breads. Some were consumed, and others were preserved because of the miracle.

On the walls of the refectory are two paintings by Dono Doni (1619). One shows Francis praying before the Crucifix at San Damiano, the other, Clare blessing the breads.

Whenever pilgrims enter this venerable room, they are always deeply impressed by the spirit of primitive Franciscan poverty that still shines forth there, and they cannot but compare their own comfortable lives with the poor and austere life of Clare and the Poor Ladies who left everything the world could offer them to gain Christ and Him alone.

Paterson, New Jersey

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## THE POOR CLARE NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

As the second half of the nineteenth century grew well advanced, normal conditions began to reshape themselves from the chaos and devastation left by the Civil War. Each year, signs of the United States' future prosperity became more apparent. In the Catholic circles of European countries, this prosperity, with its changes from ancient standards and methods, its modern comforts and conveniences, was viewed with considerable alarm. Would the Catholic Church in the United States become a prey to or a tool of Modernism? Prelates shrugged their shoulders, looked grave, held conferences, and wondered what the Vicar of Christ would do. There were misunderstandings among the prelates and clergy of the United States, each endeavoring by what means he deemed best to solve the many problems presented by Catholic immigrants from the various European nations. The great Pope Pius IX did not so easily take alarm, but viewed the situation more calmly. He sifted the rumors, knowing how to use and promote what was for the good of the Church, separating it from what was or could result in evil. The heart of the great Pontiff, with its truer perspective, realized that the new nation was adjusting itself to extraordinary conditions of prosperity and freedom—a freedom which he knew could unbind the shackles of the Brethren of Christ and permit her to advance unimpeded by the control or interference of the older forms of government. However, it was to require a number of years before co-ordination was established in the heterogeneous mass that was then the American nation.

One would think it was certainly not a propitious time for a contemplative Order to launch out into its first foundation in the United States! Yet, were prayer, sacrifice, and penance ever more needed than at this epoch? It was at this time that the Vicar of Christ was requested to permit a colony of Poor Clares to establish itself in the New World. Unexpectedly, he gave his willing and unreserved consent. It was Mother Ignatius Hayes of the Third Order Regular who made the petition, she being at that time on a visit in Rome. Upon stopping at the San Lorenzo in Panisperna Monastery of Poor Clares, she requested

that some of the nuns be permitted to return with her to the United States. Although a number of the Sisters volunteered, only the two Bentivoglio sisters, Mothers M. Maddalena and M. Constanza, were given leave, with the permission of the Minister General of the Franciscans, to go to the United States and there establish the first American monastery of the Order. They left their monastery on the 12th of August, Feast of Saint Clare, 1875, amid the tears and lamentations of the Sisters; for the Mother Abbess was convinced that her two daughters were going to an uncivilized land where they would suffer martyrdom at the hands of savages! Upon leaving their monastery, the two turned their steps toward the Vatican where Pius IX received them in audience, sending them on their way with his paternal blessing, and predicting that they would have much to suffer. A Franciscan friar, Father Paolino, had been appointed by the Minister General to accompany them to the New World to be their guide and advisor.

The community of San Lorenzo observed the Urbanist or mitigated Rule of Saint Clare. Mother Maddalena, however, desired to establish the first monastery of Poor Clares in the United States according to the primitive Rule. To this end, the sisters visited en route some of the French monasteries, finally sailing from Marseilles on September 11, 1875, to reach New York on October 12. They have left us no record of their first impressions on landing in the disorder and squalor which was then the port of New York.

Upon their arrival, Father Paolino went to live with his brethren, the Franciscans in New York. Mother Ignatius had insured hospitality for the two Poor Clares with the Grey Sisters. But little did the two Bentivoglio sisters know what a *via dolorosa* was opening out before them! It seems almost incredible that Mother Ignatius had not given the two nuns to understand her true purpose in bringing them to the United States. According to her plan, they were to go to Belle Prairie, Minnesota, to teach catechism to the children, while establishing their monastery in those wilds of northern Minnesota! Belle Prairie, far from the centers of civilization, was not at all a suitable place for the establishment of a contemplative community living on alms of the faithful. Nor were Mothers Maddalena and Constanza willing to relinquish their life of contemplation in the cloister for the active apostolate. Knowing that they were following the wishes of the Holy Father in the decision they made, the two refused to go with Mother Ignatius. This decision was

a great disappointment to Mother Ignatius, and it also deeply grieved the two Poor Clares thus to abandon her. However, they felt this was God's Will, though it left them stranded in a strange land with no knowledge of the English language and only very meager means. In view of what had developed, Father Paolino advised them to return to Italy as he himself planned to do. Feeling that they could not thus abandon a mission on which the Holy Father had sent them to the New World, the two valiant little nuns wrote to the Minister General in Rome asking further direction. But they were to remain standing on the threshold of their future for a long period of doubts, bitter disappointments, utter want, and physical and moral suffering which would test their faith and endurance to the breaking point.

Not wishing to be a burden on the Grey Sisters, the Poor Clares themselves, and rented a small room. Without means, and often without food, they were absolutely destitute except for the alms a few charitable persons gave them. And these, the heiresses of the noble house of Bentivoglio, accustomed to servants and cultured living! It was at this time that they met Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers, who was himself suffering great anguish of soul in the establishment of his own Congregation. His comfort and advice upheld the two in many of their dark hours. At times, they were obliged to beg their food from various convents in New York; and once, without home or shelter, they asked a priest to permit them to pass the night in his church. Mother Maddalena remained on her knees before the Tabernacle during the entire night, doubtless receiving the strength she needed to continue carrying her cross. It may happily be remarked that a number of priests were kind, understanding, and charitable to them during this trying period. Thus the two Poor Clares waited from October 1875, to January 1876, without so much as a letter, let alone any material help, from their superiors. Can we realize how strong a fire of faith burned in the hearts of Mother Maddalena and her sister, as they waited in hope after day, only to have each day bring a fresh disappointment, to watch the weary weeks lengthen into months? And all this time the two lived in utter poverty, wanting the very necessities of life, yet clinging to their Divine Spouse in their trust and hope! In June 1876, they finally received permission from the Minister General of the Franciscans to make a foundation in whatever diocese they should be received.

A first appeal to Cardinal McCloskey in New York brought

refusal, even the expression of his displeasure that they had loitered so long in his archdiocese "doing nothing". The same fate met their requests of various prelates in other dioceses. Finally, they obtained leave from Archbishop Wood of Philadelphia to establish themselves in his archdiocese; and the good prelate even provided them with a small house out of his own charity. However, the respite from trial was to be short for the sorely tried Poor Clares! After three weeks, having been influenced by other prelates who insisted that the time for founding contemplative communities in the United States had not yet come, the Archbishop ordered their departure. Turned out once more, the two indefatigable little nuns left Philadelphia on October 27, and returned to New York. During their short stay in Philadelphia, they had, however, received their first postulant, Elizabeth Bailey, who had come from New York. To her belongs the distinction of being the first American girl to join the Order of Saint Clare. The brave young girl remained with the Italian Mothers even after they were again homeless; as her reward, God was to permit that Elizabeth Bailey be the first one in the United States to return her pure young life to Him in the Habit of Saint Clare.

Different Congregations of Sisters in New York had manifested a true fraternal charity to the Italian nuns, helping and sheltering them. Now they received a small cottage at Eden Hall in Manhattanville with the Madams of the Sacred Heart. And finally, in December 1876, a benefactor with whom they were barely more than acquainted but who felt for the Italian Poor Clares the greatest compassion obtained from Archbishop Perche of New Orleans an invitation to come to his archdiocese. Their hopes seemed now to be realized; and in a small, rented house furnished for them by loving benefactors, the two again began the observance of their Rule with their young postulant. It was March 15, 1877, a year and a half since their arrival in the United States. This was not, however, to be the first permanent foundation of the Poor Clares in the United States.

In the early months of 1877, the Franciscan Provincial, Father Gregory, visited the nuns, and found them distressed at the deprivation of daily Mass and of the reception of Holy Communion. Upon his return to Cleveland, he approached the Most Reverend Bishop about the introduction of Poor Clares into his diocese. His request was favorably received. Acting upon this encouragement, Father Gregory bought and furnished a house and garden as a Poor Clare Monastery. Then he again visited the nuns in New Orleans, inviting them to return with him to

Cleveland to take up their abode in the newly acquired property where he would see that their spiritual and temporal needs were provided for. They acceded to the arrangement, arriving in Cleveland on August 1877, two lonely Italian nuns, Mother M. Maddalena, Abbess, and Mother M. Constanza, Vicar, sisters both by nature and grace. With them was also a postulant. Not long after, they were joined by four choir nuns and one lay sister from the Düsseldorf Monastery in Germany, in exchange in Holland as a result of the German Kulturkampf. Mother Veronica von Ellmendorf and Mother Josepha with their nuns arrived in the United States in December 1877. Although there was a slight difference in the observance of Rule on the part of the two groups, this did not constitute the main difficulty in their merging. Differences in language and custom made it soon apparent that separate foundations would prove a happier situation. With mutual consent, it was decided that the German Poor Clares should retain possession of the Cleveland house, and the Italians with the novice, Sister M. Clare (Elizabeth Bailey), and postulants who had joined them, should seek another shelter and make a foundation in another diocese. Mother Veronica wept on seeing Mother Maddalena and her sisters depart.<sup>1</sup>

Mother Maddalena and her four companions left Cleveland on February 26, 1878. They parted, some going to New York, and others toward the west in search of a new home. The separation of the two groups of Poor Clares caused a great deal of gossip, as needs scarcely be remarked! Seculars could not understand the affair; and the newspapers naturally left the growing "scandal" unexplained so that it mounted to such proportions that it required years for it to be repressed, to the detriment of both groups and their mutual sorrow. There was not any trace of enmity among the Sisters, however; and the foundresses of both groups remained close friends all their lives. In fact, after the Chicago foundation had been made by Mother Veronica, and the nuns of Mother Maddalena's Omaha foundation were rebuilding their monastery, Mother Veronica was overjoyed to welcome the Omaha nuns to live in the new monastery in Chicago until their own home should be completed.

But to return to the aeneid: on leaving Cleveland, Mother Maddalena went as far as Omaha, Nebraska, where she met Mr. John Creighton who was to become their greatest friend and loyalest benefactor through all the years to come. He and Mrs. Creighton encouraged Bishop Connor to receive the nuns into his diocese, promising that they themselves

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph was revised by the editor.

would provide for the Poor Clares. The Bishop gave his consent to the distinguished Mr. Creighton's petition, and that good gentleman immediately found a small house for the Sisters to occupy while he planned the building of a little monastery for them. After many more hardships and reverses, such as a storm demolishing parts of the uncompleted monastery, their new home was finally blessed on October 27, 1878, three years after their arrival in the United States. Now they were free to begin once more the observance of the primitive Rule of Saint Clare, after all the trials, heartbreak, and incredible difficulties. Their happiness was complete when cloister was established some time later. And, as God's final seal and blessing on the little monastery, Sister Death came to claim Sister M. Clare. Struck with an unexplainable illness which responded to no treatment, though Mr. Creighton sent his own skilled doctor to attend the young novice, Sister Clare Bailey made her holy Vows on her deathbed and took her pure flight to Heaven without any struggle, an innocent holocaust to God.

With the memories of the kindness she had received from friends in New Orleans always verdant in her heart, Mother Maddalena cherished the hope that they might return there. Bishop Perche, however, had died; she had no certainty that the new Archbishop would receive her and a little group of her nuns. The many friends who encouraged her to return, themselves petitioned Archbishop F. X. Leray to permit the Poor Clares to re-establish themselves in his archdiocese. And so, on June 16, 1885, Archbishop Leray having given his consent, Mother Maddalena left Omaha for New Orleans accompanied by Sister Mary Francis Moran and Sister Mary Coletta. The three remained with the Benedictine Sisters for three months while they sought a suitable site for their monastery. Finally, on October 4, 1884, they moved into their own quarters and began once more in New Orleans the observance of the Rule of Saint Clare. Mother Maddalena remained until 1886, when she had to return to Omaha because of the grave illness of Mother Constanza. The latter recovered; and in October 1889, she herself went to New Orleans, accompanied by Sister Mary Clare Tucker, to assist in the building of a permanent small monastery. This was completed in 1891; and, seeing that all was now firmly established, Mother Constanza returned to Omaha. Sister Mary Francis had been appointed superior by the Minister General in Rome. The New Orleans house was flourishing.

Mother Maddalena had received a number of postulants by this



time, young girls who gave proof that the contemplative vocation was not lacking in the United States, and that American girls possessed qualities of heart and mind making them adaptable to the life of close union with God in the cloister. One of her young professed Sisters, Sister Clare, who had come from Evansville, Indiana, to enter the monastery at Omaha, had lately lost her parents and received her inheritance. She begged Mother Maddalena to consider using the money for a foundation in her native town of Evansville. As Mother Maddalena was well known to the Bishop there, he readily consented to receive the Poor Clares in his diocese. Sister M. Charitas was sent with Sister Clare to undertake the beginnings of the Evansville foundation. A small monastery was established in January 1897; and the first Mass was offered there in July. On July 31, Mother Maddalena came from Omaha with several other nuns to begin the observance of the primitive Rule of Saint Clare. Mother Maddalena had left Mother Constanza in charge of the Omaha house; it proved to be their last parting. Remaining in Evansville, Mother Maddalena celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of her coming to the United States. In 1900 Mother Maddalena looked back on the results of her labors. There were three foundations now, the fruit of her unwavering faith, as well as of her tears and sufferings. Her heart rejoiced.

In 1902, the aging Mother Maddalena received the unexpected news of the death of her dearly beloved Constanza. Her heart was convulsed with grief, and she could console herself only with the prospect of meeting her dear one soon again. For, in these years, her own strength was waning; and in the summer of 1905, at seventy-one years of age, her health came to a really precarious state. She knew she was soon to lay down the burden she had borne for so long. In June, she received Extreme Unction, but she lingered on through the humid summer days until August, when twenty-three Poor Clares knelt around the poor bed on which the foundress of the Poor Clares in the United States lay dying. It was during the octave of the Feast of Saint Clare, and the old nun's eyes sought for a final time the Crucifix facing her bed before she lay forever on the scenes of time. For a few brief moments, she seemed in joyous ecstasy. Then, she whose faith had never once wavered in the face of affliction, and whose body had borne the heats of the day in labor for the Divine Spouse, went to receive her eternal reward.

From the Evansville house which is blessed in having the remains of the saintly Mother Maddalena whose cause for beatification is pre-

ceded by Rome, has come the present large monastery in Boston, founded by Mother M. Charitas in 1906, and also a foundation in Memphis, Tennessee. A further foundation from Boston was made at Bordentown, New Jersey, in 1909; and a second foundation at Philadelphia, in 1916. As late as 1947, the Boston monastery made a new foundation in Lowell, Massachusetts.

The mother community at Omaha established a foundation in Spokane, Washington; and then one in New York under Mother M. Seraphim who is still the revered abbess of the New York monastery. From the monastery in New Orleans came the foundation in Victoria, B. C., in 1912; it, in turn, sent a colony of nuns to Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, in 1923. At the present writing, the Sauk Rapids monastery contemplates a foundation of its own in the very near future. This foundation in Sauk Rapids brought the daughters of Mother Maddalena very close to that Belle Prairie which was originally to have been the first home of the Poor Clares in the United States. The house in Victoria has also founded a daughter monastery in New Westminster, Canada, in 1950. Thus, from the original foundation at Omaha, have sprung the monasteries of New Orleans, Evansville, Spokane, and New York. From these have come the houses in Boston, Bordentown, Philadelphia, Memphis, Lowell, Victoria, Sauk Rapids, and New Westminster. Great were the fruits of the toil and tears of the two homeless little Italian nuns of 1875.

Returning to Cleveland and 1878, we find Mother Veronica, grief-stricken over the departure of the Italian Sisters, but bravely turning with Mother Josepha to the task of consolidating her own little monastery. With the two German foundresses were three other cloistered nuns and one Extern Sister whom they had brought from their exile-refuge in Holland. They set themselves to establish the observance of the primitive Rule of Saint Clare according to the Constitutions of Saint Colette. (The differences in the observances followed by the Italian and German Poor Clares were so negligible as to be merely nominal.) The great poverty of the little group remaining in Cleveland, along with their ignorance of the language and of American customs, added not a little to their already penitential lives. When a severe epidemic of typhoid suddenly overtook the little group, one of the pioneers and a young postulant succumbed. The cause of the epidemic could not be determined, and it seemed that all the nuns were to be stricken with it. Finally, the Franciscan Fathers removed all the nuns in good health to the convent of the

Franciscan Sisters, and sent professional nurses to take care of the stricken Mother Veronica who, by a seeming miracle, never contracted the illness. She remained with her suffering daughters day and night, comforting and caring for them. When all were at length restored to health and more united in their monastery, they resumed their religious life with fervor; and their spirit of Franciscan joy which had not wavered during this trial became all the more vigorous because of the crisis they had survived.

By 1893, seventeen years after the Cleveland foundation had been established, the community had grown to such an extent that Mother Veronica looked for an avenue of expansion. It was then that she received an invitation from the saintly Archbishop Feehan of Chicago to come and establish a monastery in his rapidly expanding archdiocese. His vision, sharpened even more by his deep interior spirit, pierced the future; he realized that the ever-increasing bustling activity of his archdiocese needed a counterbalance of prayer. Accordingly, a plot of ground was bought on the south side of the city, and a small wing of the present monastery in Chicago was built. In April 1893, the two original foundresses, Mother Veronica and Mother Josepha, came to Chicago with four cloistered nuns and two Extern sisters. They arrived just when the great World's Fair was in full swing, and the city was much too engrossed in the wonderful exhibition to notice a few lowly nuns who had come to their midst to bless their city with lives of prayer and sacrifice. Through the hardships and poverty which are the ordinary companions of religious foundations were especially loyal friends of this one! The little group had about decided to abandon the foundation, seeing no hope for the future when the good Franciscan Fathers took matters in hand. One Sunday morning, they appealed to the people from the pulpit to go to the aid of the suffering Poor Clares and not let them die of starvation. This was to prove the turning-point. The people did go. And from that time on the community was generously supported by increasing numbers of Catholics in Chicago.

In 1916, during the first World War, the community of Cleveland sent another colony of nuns to the small town of Rockford, Illinois. In 1921, a third group made the first foundation on the Pacific coast at Oakland, California. This community later moved to a better location at Santa Cruz; and by 1928, was able to make a foundation at San Barbara, California, close to the Old Mission of the Padres.

Mother Veronica governed the Chicago community until a few years before her death, at which time she refused to accept the office of abbess again. Mother Josepha was, therefore, elected abbess, with Mother Veronica as her assistant. The latter had suffered a stroke, but had partially recovered when, on November 5, 1905, she was stricken with what, in retrospect, appears to have been acute appendicitis. At that time, little was known of that affliction; and an operation was not considered. The following day, in the midst of extreme pain, but in holy joy and loving resignation, and with her Sisters sobbing their hearts out at her dying bed, Mother Veronica peacefully expired. Born of a noble family, as Mother Maddalena had been, the former Countess Maria von Ellmenhorst died in the holy poverty she had cherished all her religious life. The beloved companion of her exile, hardships, trials, and sufferings, Mother Josepha, lived on until September 1908, when she went to join the saintly Mother Veronica and to receive with her the reward of their humble and faithful service to their Divine Spouse. The two foundresses had governed wisely and holily, leaving to their daughters an example of heroic virtue. Mother Veronica had declared that she considered the American temperament not only suited to the religious life, but as well suited or perhaps even more adaptable to the contemplative life. The years have borne out her conviction. The Chicago monastery has the great privilege of possessing the remains of the two saintly foundresses, Mother Veronica and Mother Josepha. Side by side, they rest in the little graveyard within the enclosure.

After the death of Mother Josepha, the community elected Mother Coletta Gardner abbess of the Chicago house. When she took over the reins of government, the little community numbered sixteen and was beginning to flourish. In 1919, at the request of Cardinal Mundelein, she built a new chapel destined to be the first of Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the archdiocese. Under Mother Coletta's wise government, the community grew and prospered. The numerous Chicago Catholics supported the monastery well; and Mother Coletta, in her turn, possessed a great, generous heart. No suffering person ever left her without having received comfort and aid, and her charity reached out especially to poor religious and missionaries. The extent of her loving generosity to the poor monasteries of her Sisters in Europe when they were suffering great want after the first World War, is known to God alone. Her charity was bread on running waters. She loved the missions with a real mission-

ary's heart; and the one poor diocese she loved most in the United States was that of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The Franciscan Archbishop Daeger received many a consoling word from Mother Coletta, though none but she and her secretary knew of it. After the tragic death of Archbishop Daeger, she extended the same generous charity to his successor, as she felt that the Santa Fe archdiocese so peculiarly Franciscan in character and tradition, had a particular claim on the daughters of the Poverello. When the sudden death of Archbishop Gerkin occurred, Divine Providence arranged that this link between the Poor Clares in Chicago and the Santa Fe archdiocese be apparently broken during the time that Santa Fe had an administrator of God Himself was to re-forge the link, and in His own ineffably wonderful way, so that all might know it was His work alone.

The new archbishop of Santa Fe, Edwin V. Byrne, came into a very fully poor land of impoverished churches and inadequate Catholic schools. To this day, his own episcopal residence is as simple and poor as the seraphic Father Francis himself could desire. Because of his own deep spirituality, however, Archbishop Byrne realized that, even more than it needed material support, his archdiocese needed spiritual reinforcements. Accordingly, he invited the Cistercian monks (Trappists) to found a house just outside Santa Fe. Staunch and loyal friends of the Poor Clares in Chicago, these same Trappists were to be the instruments chosen by God to bring the daughters of Saint Clare to New Mexico, the land of Saint Francis. When the Poor Clares of Chicago were preparing to found a new monastery, the Trappists urged Archbishop Byrne to invite them to his archdiocese. Thus was re-forged with a greater strength than before the old link between the nuns and the archdiocese of Santa Fe. Having founded their own new monastery in April 1948, the Trappist monks were equipped to give practical counsel and inestimable spiritual and material help to the new little community of Poor Clares who came to Roswell, New Mexico, in November of that same year. To join Mother Immaculata and Sister M. Annuntiata who had come in the previous August to prepare the way. Like Mother Maddalena and Mother Constanza, the two had set out on their journey on the Feast of Saint Clare, August 12, 1948.

Like the Trappist monks, the Franciscan friars showed the greatest generosity and devotedness to the little group of Poor Clares, manifesting the usual love which exists between the sons and daughters of our

Father Saint Francis. The foundation in Roswell was made in the southernmost part of the Santa Fe archdiocese. After nearly five years, the community has grown out of its little white frame, red-roofed farmhouse monastery, and is hoping to build a small permanent chapel and choir in order to receive more postulants.

The writer may be pardoned for giving the Roswell foundation special attention in this historical sketch. There are spiritual dramas in life far more moving than any of fiction; and in eternity we shall rejoice to have endless ages for admiring the sweet providence and delicate "plan-ning" of God in the lives of those who seemed to the world quite commonplace. Thus it was in the case of the Roswell foundation, for it was the former secretary of Mother Coletta in Chicago who was sent to establish a house of Poor Clares in the archdiocese of Santa Fe and who became its first abbess. Doubtless the story of every new foundation is much the same: a series of trials, sufferings, poverty, and sometimes misunderstanding and injustice. It is God's chosen way to place each new foundation on the Cross which alone can give it the spiritual power to become His faithful instrument.

Although the Roswell community was established as late as 1948, it is not the youngest of the foundations springing from the Cleveland house. In 1950, the community at Santa Cruz founded another monastery at Los Altos, California, bringing the number of Poor Clare houses in California up to three. It may be added here that the Cleveland monastery also made a foundation in Campina Grande in Brazil, South America, in 1950. This was the first attempt of any of the United States monasteries to make a foundation outside North America, and the joy and love with which the little group in Campina Grande has borne well-nigh incredible hardships, with the difficulties of climate, language, and custom superimposed on the ordinary trials of new beginnings, augurs well for the future of the Poor Clares in South America.

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

## THE FOOTPRINT OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Seldom if ever in the history of the world has man achieved anything of lasting value without the cooperation of woman. Even as the Divine Omnipotence chose to redeem mankind through the fiat of a young woman, so throughout the record of man's achievement the power of woman appears in active, positive, and decisive cooperation. It can be argued in the metaphysical sense, that the masculine alone possesses true personality; the feminine is rather a part of the whole. The man achieves fulfillment through the perfection of an individual form; the woman through the perfection of total selflessness. Yet it is the feminine mode of self-surrender that pervades both the order of nature and the order of grace. It is the power of the feminine that, through submergence and receptiveness, completes, preserves, and continues the masculine.

One of the most striking facets of the genius of our Seraphic Father was his penetrating awareness of the divine plan in nature. All creation spoke to him of God; natural beauty was to him a kind of mirror, through which and through which he beheld the eternal splendor of the Creator. He also found symbolized in nature the beautiful harmonies that result from the divinely ordained mingling of the masculine and the feminine. Thus he sang of Brother Sun and Sister Moon, of Brother Fire and Sister Water. He saw the masculine in the swift, strong wind; he saw the feminine hovering over the fertile womb of the bridal earth, in the meadows of field and forest, in every human act of giving and comfort and in death.

Because he understood the feminine as well as the masculine, and understood it so profoundly, Francis perceived with unerring clarity the God-given role of woman in the economy of human salvation. Woman was made to cooperate with man. Francis therefore realized that God entrusted Clare to him for a specific purpose—the sanctification of womanhood through cooperation with him in the holy service of the Lord. The pattern of her life, then, could not be identical with his. For her as well as for himself and his friars, he turned to the Gospel

guidance, and there in the life of our Blessed Lady he found the perfect pattern. The Virgin Mother of God, Mediatrix and Coredemptrix of mankind, was to be Clare's model and guide to perfection.

*Clare and the Imitation of Mary*

When Clare fled from her father's house under cover of night to begin her new life in Christ, Francis brought her to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. There in the little mother church of the Franciscan Order she was tonsured and clothed in the rough garb of religious poverty. If Clare had been conscious of the symbolism in every step she took from the morning of Palm Sunday to the following night when she slipped through the door of the dead to join Francis, she was surely aware of the symbolism in his choice of the Portiuncula for her investiture. As Thomas of Celano remarks, "it was most fitting that she who was to become the virgin spouse of Christ and the mother of a new Order of poor and humble virgins should begin her new life in this poor little shrine of the Virgin Mother of God." Clare took the veil under Mary's protection, and for the whole time of her religious life strove for perfect conformity with Mary. As the eldest daughter of the Seraphic Father she could do no less, for Francis "honored the Mother of God with a love so great that it cannot be expressed in words." Clare herself realized, however, that if God had given His virginal Mother to the world as a model of womanhood, she, as a Christian woman, must imitate that model. For Clare, then, to follow the Christ of the Gospel meant primarily to follow the hidden life of His poor and humble Mother.

There is no direct evidence that Francis envisaged Clare's life as an imitation of Mary, but there are several clear implications. The very form of life he chose for her shows what he had in mind. He could have assigned her to a hermitage (the eremitical life was ever dear to his contemplative soul), or he could have associated her with his work of caring for the lepers and the poor. But he chose instead a form of life that would resemble as closely as possible the life of our Lady in the poverty and seclusion of Nazareth. Clare and her daughters were to form a family of contemplative religious observing the Gospel of Christ according to the example of His holy Mother.

Shortly before his death, Francis wrote his last will for Clare and the Poor Ladies, exhorting them to be faithful to their common ideal

of following "the life and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ most and of His most holy Mother." Clare incorporated the will into her and added several precepts of her own enjoining imitation of our Lord's poverty. She asked her daughters, for example, to wear only poor garments for love of the Infant Savior and of His poor Mother who wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. She admonished them for love of Jesus and Mary, never to desire possessions; and she closed her Rule with the prayer that her daughters would "forever observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother."

For Clare, however, true imitation of Mary was not simply a matter of the exterior practises of poverty and humility. It was something much deeper than that. It involved the entire structure of the spiritual life. Mother of God and of men, Mary's role in the Church is that of Mediatrix and Coredemptrix with her Divine Son. If the Poor Ladies were to be true imitators of Mary, they must first of all take care lest "through fault or negligence or ignorance" on their part they hinder the work of Mary in the Mystical Body of her Son. Secondly, through total surrender to Christ in sacrificial love, they must draw down the mercy of God upon the sinful and suffering world, and obtain blessings and graces for the Church. Only then would the Poor Ladies merit the title of "coworkers with God and support to the frail and failing members of His glorious Body"; only then would they truly become "sisters, spouses, and mothers of the Son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin."

Clare showed special predilection for Mary's virginal purity, humility, and poverty, and the three are always closely interwoven in her thought. The vow of chastity espouses the soul to Christ, "Whom the Virgin bore and was yet a virgin after." "Cling to His most sweet Mother," Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague, "who begot a Son Whom the heavens could not contain, and yet she carried Him in the little cloister of her womb and held Him on her maidenly lap." Chastity, together with humility and poverty, will make the soul capable of close imitation of Mary. "As therefore the glorious Virgin of virgins carried Him in her body, without shadow of doubt you can carry Him in a spiritual way in your chaste and virginal body if you follow the footsteps of her humility, and especially of her poverty." Imitation of Mary is therefore the surest way to union with her Divine Son, for it will lead to the Crib and to the final consummation of the Cross.

Like Francis, Clare centered her spiritual life on the Sacred Humanity of Christ, especially on His Nativity and Passion—the mysteries that show forth most strikingly Mary's part in our redemption. God willed that our Lady should be Coredemptrix with Christ; yet she took no part in His public life. She gave birth to Him in an unknown hillside cave; she came forth from the thirty years of seclusion in Nazareth only to share more fully in the bitterness of His Passion. Here Clare found a model for her own life. If she saw Francis as "another Christ", she understood that it was for her to become another Mary, for only then would she truly complement his work.

Clare gave Francis a love whose depth and strength have seldom been equalled. More perhaps than all the others who loved him, she was able to penetrate the mystery of his transcendent holiness; and with the miracle of his stigmatization her reverence must have increased immeasurably. She was his eldest daughter, his own "little plant"; and she committed herself wholly to his guidance, as Celano says, "considering him to be after God the director of her steps." Yet she saw him but rarely, and never was she allowed to share actively in his apostolic life. She longed for martyrdom, but when Francis set out to preach to the Saracens, she understood that she could accompany him only in spirit and support his mission by her sacrificial life of prayer and penance. She longed to be coworker with him in his service among the poor and afflicted—and she was indeed, but only through the power of her intercessory prayer. The Process of her canonization recounts miracle after miracle wrought by her ~~merely~~ through the Sign of the Cross; "for she who was aflame with such great love toward the mystery of the Cross was glorified in signs and miracles by the power of the Cross." Through her life of prayer and penance she obtained light for the guidance of others. Francis himself sought answers from God through her, and drew comfort and strength in trial from her firm and steadfast loyalty. Gregory IX had such trust in her counsel that he consulted her on the weightiest problems of his pontificate. "This was something as worthy of imitation as it was remarkable for humility," writes Celano, "that the Vicar of Christ should seek help from a handmaid of Christ and commend himself to her power before God. He well knew indeed what power love has and how freely pure virgins have access to the Throne of Majesty." Thus Clare's life unfolds as a beautiful imitation of Mary's. She understood that her role was that of coworker with Francis, but like Mary, she was to remain hidden in the shadow of the Cross.

It was Francis, of course, who directed Clare's spiritual life, and was from him, humanly speaking, that she learned to enter into the mysteries of the Crib and the Cross. Yet Clare's concentration on the Nativity and Passion was different from his. It was distinctly feminine. She gave Christ the love of a woman's heart, and gave it totally. The Divine Babe of Bethlehem stirred her tenderest devotion and awakened her woman's compassionate love for the weak and helpless. As a woman she shared Mary's joy in her divine motherhood and her sorrow in the poverty and rejection of the Infant Savior; and she besought her neighbor "to be conformed in their little nest of poverty to the poor Christ Who His poor little Mother laid as a babe in the narrow manger." Devotion to the Passion, however, was the formative power in Clare's spiritual life. In all her writings, meditation on the sufferings of Christ appears as the characteristic element in her teaching. In this she came closer to Francis; yet again there was a difference. Francis longed to feel in his own body and soul—as far as humanly possible—the pain Christ endured for us and to feel in his human heart something of the infinite love that drew Christ from heaven to die for sinful man. He prayed for identification with Christ, and the stigmatization was the answer to that prayer. Clare, too, longed to share the sufferings of Christ, but her devotion was directed toward compassion rather than toward identification. Clare suffered with Christ as Mary did, not in body but in soul. "Deep and tenderness was her lament over the Passion of the Lord," writes Celano, and he describes how during the hours of Sext and None "she was usually filled with greater sorrow that she might be immolated as a victim for her crucified Lord." The only recorded ecstasy in Clare's life occurred when she was meditating on the Passion one Holy Thursday evening and remained insensible until the following evening of Good Friday. In prayer she followed the Lord in His prayer, and her soul, sorrowing even unto death, felt and shared the sorrow of Christ, and was caught up in the remembrance of His arrest, His imprisonment, and mockery. Her exhortation to Agnes of Prague takes the same direction. "Behold Him," she wrote, "consider Him, contemplate Him, and desire to imitate Him." As a woman, Clare's emphasis is always on compassion, on living *with* Christ, through love.

In harmony with the mind of the Church, Clare combined the Franciscan ideal of perfect imitation of Christ with the liturgical ideal of the espousals of consecrated virgins to the Divine Bridegroom. "Through the life and teaching of His servant Francis, the Lord gave the

of His grace" to Clare, that she and her daughters might follow Christ after the example of Francis and his sons. Francis, the faithful bridesman, led Clare "to make a temple of her body and strive by virtue to be worthy of the espousals of the Great King." In bridal love she turned to Christ not only to follow Him but to contemplate Him as a mirror in which are reflected all the perfections of His Sacred Humanity. These are the perfections that must adorn the soul if it would please the Divine Spouse. "Burning desire for the poor Crucified" forms the soul according to the image of the Beloved, Clare explained to Agnes of Prague and "as a poor virgin the soul embraces the poor Christ." Clare, like Mary, contemplated her Incarnate Lord, keeping His words and pondering them in her heart, striving for ever closer union with Him.

Clare's imitation of Mary began on the night of her clothing in the Portiuncula; it culminated on her deathbed. Her last words to her departing soul are filled with the spirit of Mary's *Magnificat*: "Go forth," she murmured, "for He Who created thee has sanctified thee. He has protected thee as a mother does her child, and has loved thee with a tender love. Blessed be Thou, my Lord, Who hast created me." It was Mary, according to the *Legend*, who comforted Clare before her death. "Accompanied by a multitude of whiterobed virgins, the Queen of Heaven proceeded to the bed where lay the spouse of her Son, and bending over her most lovingly, embraced her most tenderly."

Thus Clare perfected her role of coworker with the Seraphic Francis. She sanctified her womanhood as Mary did, by fulfilling her God-given vocation with all the strength of her great and generous soul. She knew the masculine, but she kept to the feminine, and in this she was as rare in her own day as she would be in ours. There were many great women in Clare's time who were striving, by fair means or foul, to wrest from men a power that was not theirs by nature. The results were often tragically grotesque. But Clare, though possessing the influence of birth, wealth, and personal charm, and endowed with the gifts of natural leadership, was not one to throw aside the glorious prerogatives of her Christian womanhood for the vain prestige of worldly power. She kept her eyes on the example of Mary, and attained to holiness as Mary did, by being totally what God intended her to be. For forty-two years she lived in the holy seclusion of San Damiano, and "broke the alabaster vase of her body by the stripes of penance, so that the house of the Church," as Celano says, "was filled with the fragrance of her ointments."

Clare was ever the most faithful daughter of the Seraphic Father.

Her ardent soul was always receptive to his words, and whatever she was taught she observed with unswerving loyalty, preserved intact, and bequeathed unglossed to her daughters. After the death of Francis when his Order was torn by the dissension and infidelity of so many of the friars, it was to San Damiano alone that his loyal sons could turn for light and encouragement. With Clare and her daughters they could find again something of the serenity and joy that had marked their life with Francis. Clare became for them a living symbol of the Franciscan ideal, a clear light shining through the darkness of the storm.

To her contemporaries, Clare appeared as "the new leader of women" precisely because she strove to become "the footprint of the Mother of God." Her example is as valid for us today as it was for the world seven centuries ago. Never before has our civilization stood so desperately in need of woman's cooperation—the true cooperation of self-sacrificing love and intercessory prayer. We can still turn to Clare for guidance, for she is still "the lofty candle of holiness that burned brightly in the tabernacle of the Lord," and we may still light our feeble lamps from her clear bright flame.

Paterson, New Jersey

Sr. Francis, S. M.



Take care that the sad spectacle of human injustice may not darken your soul, for this, too, has its place in the general economy. It is this human injustice that one day we shall see the Justice of God vanquish infallibly and triumph.

Padre Pio

## CLARE OF ASSISI: SAINT FOR NOW

Many persons have been arrested by the new perspective on hagiography given in the currently popular, *Saints for Now*. The fact that none of the gifted authors in the galaxy of literary talent represented there thought that Clare of Assisi was a saint-for-now may be a tribute to the obscurity she fostered, but it is also a judgment on our purblind age. And this, though the charming compiler of the studies bears her name! The saints whose lives are sketched in the engaging collection can all ably prove their claim to belong to our "now"; but their company would certainly have been enriched by a certain barefoot nun with little laughter wrinkles around her beautiful, illness-hollowed eyes, and lips shaped as well for singing as for compassion. Two of the literateurs chose our seraphic Father Saint Francis as the saint-for-now. Did no one think of the utterly lovely lady whose life was the incarnation of his ideals?

To recognize Clare of Assisi as a saint-for-now, we need first to clarify the needs and to study the complexion of our times. Who was it said, so deliciously, that the hero of whom he wrote was "born in a troubled age—just as everyone else is!" It is easy to subscribe to the dour philosopher's view, crediting our age as the most desperately wicked of all epochs. Perhaps it is. We have managed to systematize cruelty rather beyond anything our forbears did in that line. We have commercialized sin and made it a paying enterprise. We have also, however, proved that our wells of charity and goodness are far from dry, and have manifested a compassion far more vast than its antithetical cruelty. Our age is probably no more diabolically evil than the age which ignited Christians' bodies for lamps in its Roman parks; probably no better than the age when craftsmen spent whole lives perfecting a turret of a cathedral, or when kings marched to the Crusades. But it has its particular deficiencies, the first of which seems to be a lack of thorough-going courage. This is particularly evident in our own country where the vast majority are content to compromise with evil rather than to fight a clear-cut battle for the truth they own and the ideals they profess. Compromise is often a sin against courage, and we have become adept in its practice. Compromise and expediency are the watchwords taken up to silence the small clamor



of consciences. And we like to forget that it is supernatural prudence which is praiseworthy, and that the prudence of men often gives in to God.

Clare of Assisi was incapable of compromise where there was room for alternative. We can all dream over the romance of her elevation to Saint Mary of the Angels, her investiture in the rough robe of poverty, her adamant stand against all and whomever opposed her ideal. Can we likewise rouse ourselves to a vital concept of what courage a girl of eighteen, wealthy, lovely, cherished and pursued, required to become the first daughter of the Poverello? Francis was an enigma to those whom he was not an object of suspicion. His little ragged band of friars had no official status in the Church at that time. He had no security to offer the beautiful young Clare, not even to the extent of the next dinner (and one wonders where he contrived to get the shabby Habit thrown over her satin gown!)—nothing, in effect, but a dream as made real by the Gospel and his personal guarantee that, as his daughter, she would always be entitled to nothing at all.

Clare was no more a "dreamer" in the modern accepted sense of the word than was Francis. Chesterton has said that most of us are so "centric" in our mediocrity that we juxtapose our position with that of the true "centrics" and arrive at the remarkable conclusion that the mis-sighted genius and the literal-mind saint are the eccentrics. Our Father Saint Francis and our Mother Saint Clare were so centric that the world could defend its own pathetic dullness and cowardice only by calling them eccentric dreamers. Such courage as Clare had, to take absolutely everything on a principle she knew to be sound and true, is the antidote for our age poisoned with pusillanimity and the small, crawling fears for our comfort, our false security, our cultivated lethargy. The courage of a young woman who thought true values worth the highest stakes is the draught of fresh air needed in our hothouse world of today. And, if we tend to dwell on the beauty of the act of humiliation when Clare gripped hold of the altar with one hand and snatched off her veil with the other to uncover her shorn head before her raging relatives, we might also find the trace of Clare's delightful humor, the humor that true courage always begets. The shorn lamb of Francis, facing those fulminating Italian fathers, says the equivalent of: "And that, my dears, is that!" If we have forgotten how to laugh, it is because we have lost courage.

Thirty years later, ill and worn, this same brave woman could

calm orders above the hue and cry of the fast-approaching barbarian invaders, and then face them with the serenity of faith, while lifting up the Sacred Host for her single Defense and whispering to her Lover that sweet quasi-reproach of a sublime courage: "Deliver not, my Lord, to beasts, the souls of them who praise You." There never was a situation or a person to daunt Clare. When some of the first friars lost heart and courage for the ideal of their Father, Francis turned his sad steps to San Damiano where there was one heart that never knew any diminution of faith in him or courage to cling to his ideal. Meditating on the overwhelming griefs of our seraphic Father in those days of "too many friars" and too little courage, and on his humble turning to his first daughter for comfort and support, we feel a sense of warmest gratitude for Clare's constancy and the loyal courage of her Poor Ladies at San Damiano. The lines of Chesterton's exquisite carol might have been written as the cry of our Father Francis' anguished heart as it healed at the monastery of his daughters: "O, weary, weary is the world; but here is all aright!" It was all aright because Clare had the courage of faith and taught it to her daughters. Not even the Sovereign Pontiff could persuade her to turn a least left or a merest right from the straight path of her Father Francis' teaching. Again, there is a trace of Clare's quiet humor in her sweetly humble but calculatedly adamant reply to Pope Gregory IX: "Holy Father, absolve me from my sins, but not from my vow of poverty." Courage like Clare's could remake the face of our wavering society today.

With the cleanness of courage has gone the freshness of purity. Surely there is no need to defend the thesis that purity is a crying need of our polluted times. Our age has traded on lust so hard and so long, using it as the lure in advertisements, the cover-up for plotless, banal books, the theme of hit-parade songs, that Pope's classic lines are all too starkly evidenced by our hard-faced young girls and our prematurely-old boys: "Sin is a monster of so horrible a mien, as to be hated, need only to be seen; but seen too oft, familiar with its face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace." Purity, above all other things, is the myrrh that preserves youth. And its conspicuous absence in our modern world explains why so many high school girls look like sophisticated collegians; why so many college graduates look like faded women. Without an affection for holy purity, the heart grows quickly old in the world's precious wisdom, and the body is listless before it has ever quickened to the vast universe of those joys visible only to the clean of heart.

The Breviary has astonishing comments to make on Saint Clare.



The same childlike calm boastfulness of: "Our God is in Heaven, and does whatever He pleases," asserts that Clare is "more shining than light." God created light as the first miraculous diffusion of His own splendor. The Holy Church lets Clare's daughters claim that He made in their Mother something to outshine light itself. Each August 12th, Poor Ladies throughout the world take up their breviaries and sing out, in how many hundreds of bare little choirs, that: "The brightness of Clare has filled the whole earth."

If we quote Chesterton again, let us lay the blame on his own passing love for Saint Francis and Saint Clare! It was GK who insisted that, "Chastity is not mere abstention. . . it is something (positive) flaming." It was in Clare. Her purity was a white flame yearning towards Love. It was radiant. It blazed. Only the pure really know how to love. And Clare, who was fashioned for loving, made no apology for the rugged measures she took to preserve that wisdom. The thousands who endure tortures to effect a semblance of physical beauty in themselves shudder at the notion of a perpetual fast, a continual silence, an endless cycle of vigils, and the other means Clare used to insure the beauty of her spirit and that of her daughters. With her, it was always a question of penance, yes,—but penance for love's sake! She knew that without love, penance is as meaningless as turns on a trapeze. But she was not so foolish as to credit original sin in theory and not a vital principle. The world always fear for their purity. The impure do not trouble with precautions having already slipped beyond them.

Belief in the Communion of Saints, the Mystical Body of Christ, was the second living principle actuating Clare in her life of penance. She knew that on the mysterious scales of Divine Justice, the penance of the Poor Ladies would avail for the impenitent in the world, that their purity would weigh against the impurity of others, that they would be accepted as victims for others' sins. Seven centuries before Our Blessed Lady said to the children of Fatima: "Many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray and make sacrifices for them," Clare of Assisi was doing that thesis with her own and her daughters' lives of chastity and penance. A return to the humble paths of Clare who was "purer than light," could rekindle the blaze of youth in modern hard young people, could release incredible vials of fragrance down the odorous streets of our stale age.

It is the nature of goodness to diffuse itself, and in quiet. It is

nature of evil to defend itself, and most often with noise. We have called Clare of Assisi the candle in Umbria, because that seemed the truest symbol of her life and of her soul. She who was brave against the dark as candleflame is brave, pure in her flicker of life as candlelight is pure, was also quiet in her sanctity as the constant candle is quiet in giving up all that makes it a candle. The real office of a candle is to cease to be a candle. And the basic business of one aspiring to perfection is to become Someone Else. It is an extremely difficult business, for one does get so attached even to the unpleasant person one is! It has been said that the predominant evil of any age ultimately manages to scale cloister walls. If the world has found that a constant racket will, in time, fill in its thought chambers and outcry its conscience, religious need likewise to be careful that they do not camouflage a great lack of being with a great deal of doing. The hero of the hour is the man who can do the most things in the shortest possible time, but he makes a sorry monastic hero.

In her century, when abbesses were more often than not women-of-affairs, with huge temporal holdings and immense households, enjoying the prestige of worldly queens, Clare quietly shut herself up in dilapidated old San Damiano. And, at once, it was a monastery. Not because it was grand or picturesque or thriving, but because it was a house of prayer and a haven of silence where souls devoted themselves to the most intense of all activities: passivity. Most of the first Poor Ladies were noblewomen, one was a princess royal. To all of them, Clare offered nothing in substitute for the trumpeting and adulation they had known in the world, except prayer and solitude and poverty. She herself has left us not even one colorful statement on the political character of her times. And if some Popes have sought temporal counsel from certain saints, three Popes sought at San Damiano the spiritual counsel of one whose only concern with the world was for its soul, a concern of quiet prayer and self-immolation. When the aged Innocent IV found himself prostrated by temporal tragedies as well as by spiritual anguish, he came to his "daughter and mother, the Lady Clare," not for a plan of action, but to renew his own soul in the quiet of her holiness. It has never been claimed that our holy Father Saint Francis asked Clare what to do about recalcitrants or schismatics; it is known that he found his own answers in her serene loyalty.

We learn nowhere so quickly and yet so profoundly as we learn in quiet. Because the world cannot bear to learn about itself or to look in its own wizened soul, it fears and hates quiet. It hustles, because it

cannot afford to think. It rivets and blares because it dare not be still. Ours is an age of accomplishment, but one draws in the breath to think of what real and lasting accomplishments could spring out of a return to the silence of contemplation. The very word, contemplation, ought to be the most companionable of words for any soul, since it is the term for our eternal destiny. Yet most persons are ill at ease with it. Action and noise are less demanding companions. By modern standards, Clare of Assisi's life was wasted. She built no hospitals, introduced no system of pedagogy, made no speeches, wrote no books, did not even proclaim a new way of sanctity. The Gospel was her way. Francis was her guide. And her destiny was the quiet of utter union with God her Lover.

Clare had a taste for solitude and a talent for quiet. By indulging the one and perfecting the other, she learned the secrets of the King, and gained open sesame to His Heart. His first spiritual daughters have told us of their Mother's increasing hunger for hours of companionship with her Divine Spouse in the quiet of private prayer. The Poor Clare prayer schedule would probably seem staggering to most persons. For Saint Clare, it was never sufficient. When her daughters slept, Clare remained before the Blessed Sacrament, lost in the quiet of her perfect union with God. How many times her daughters saw flames or rings of light about her head when she knelt in quiet prayer, oblivious of ears. Her quiet, "useless" life brought her to such intimacy with Christ that when dying she could say to Him with a sweet simplicity that prayer tears to our own eyes: "I thank you for having created me." Hers was the true courtesy of her seraphic Father. One is reminded of Mother Janet Stuart of our own times who died, not with a protest of her love for God on her lips, but with a Franciscan cry of simple wonder: "How He loves me!" In the simple song that was Clare's life, the ictus was always on God!

Clare is the saint of silence. If our holy Father Saint Francis resembled our Lord as no other saint quite did, who will gainsay our belief that Saint Clare most resembled the Holy Mother of God? She has left us no autobiography, no guidebooks, no "accomplishments". As our Blessed Lady did, she has left us the legacy of her quiet. We know it so acutely, we poor, noisy, busy little people, that we could well shout out like thunder: Clare is the saint-for-now! Her courage, her bluntness, her purity, her perfect quiet are her claims to twentieth century veneration. Her valor sweetly rebukes our pusillanimity; her exquisite purity pleads for our stale generation; the great, missionary heart that beat for

the world in the silence of her cloister, sends its throb across seven centuries to us now. If we look for light in these dark days, let us hear, in Clare's year of jubilee, our seraphic Father's simple directive, uttered over and over again to sufferers of his own age and confided to our age from Heaven: "Go to the Lady Clare."

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*Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.*



Humility and purity are the wings that lift us up to God and almost deify us. Remember this: The evildoer who is ashamed to do evil is closer to God than the honest man who is ashamed to act honestly.

*Padre Pio*

# SAINT FRANCIS AND SAINT CLARE

Sr. M. Vita

# the CORD

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Moderato

Schola

Choir

1. St. Fran - cis ser - aph of our God, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
2. St. Fran - cis her - ald of the King, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
3. St. Fran - cis spouse of pov - er - ty, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
4. St. Fran - cis mod - el of the meek, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
5. St. Fran - cis mas - ter of chaste hearts, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
6. St. Fran - cis friend of broth - er - hood, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
7. St. Fran - cis loy - al to the Pope, St. Clare pray that we fol - low

Schola

Choir

1. St. Fran - cis mir - or of God's Will, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
2. St. Fran - cis fol - low - er of Christ, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
3. St. Fran - cis fa - ther of the poor, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
4. St. Fran - cis ves - sel of pure love, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
5. St. Fran - cis con - quer - er of vice, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
6. St. Fran - cis lov - er of all men, St. Clare pray that we fol - low  
7. St. Fran - cis pil - lar of the Church, St. Clare pray that we fol - low

CODA (Schola & Choir)

A - - - - - men.  
ff

## THE TRANSFIGE OF SAINT BONAVENTURE

*Veni, dulcissime Jesu Domine;  
Transfige medullas et viscera animae meae.*  
Reach to the inmost heart of me,  
Desolating, Christing Charity;  
Let be no part of me  
Where thy work is left undone;  
No hidden recesses  
Into which thy Life has not been poured;  
No place untouched  
No human crevice  
Where thy sweetness is not stored.  
This be my night:  
To drink and yet to thirst for Thee,  
Eternal, Everlasting Light,  
Fountain of Wisdom, Torrent of Pleasure,  
Richness of Delight.  
This be my peace, my mind's tranquility:  
To feed upon Thee  
Whom the angels long to see,  
And still to hunger and to spend my strength  
In search of Thee.  
*Veni, dulcissime Jesu Domine;  
Transfige medullas et viscera animae meae.*  
My soul, within this piercing flame,  
Be still, surrendered silently;  
Within this love which wounds ineffably,  
Be fixed in God, be still immovably.

Detroit, Michigan

Sister M. Charlita, I. P.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*All you are brothers* (Matt. 23, 8)

When the Lady Clare had gone, her soul to God, her worn-out body to San Giorgio, the little flock of San Damiano was desolate. In their grief they turned to Agnes, sister of their Mother. Yet she too, they knew, was soon to leave them to join that Mother in glory, perhaps within a month. (It is at least probable that she died in September, rather than in November.) With her they now recalled the forty years that she and Clare had followed Christ in the way of Francis. They told her what happened those more than thirty years that Agnes had been absent in Florence and elsewhere, the joys and sorrows, the glad days and sad in the loving company of their Mother. Agnes perhaps voiced again the very human grief and loneliness she had felt on her first arrival at a strange nunnery she was to turn into a new San Damiano. She would relate how gradually the Franciscan spirit of brotherhood and joyous love and fellowship in Christ had settled upon her new charges already formed in a monastic way of life. The bereaved Sisters thus came to appreciate once more and rejoice in the form of life given them by the blessed Francis, according to which they lived together in unity of spirit and in the profession of highest poverty.

Unity and poverty, brotherhood and poverty, poverty and joy, how wonderfully they went together in the life of the Poor Ladies! how marvelously were these two wed in the mind of Clare—because they were united in the thought of Francis and expressed by him in Rule and writings, words and actions! Can this be the secret of Franciscan brotherhood? With Saint Agnes and in her honor this month let us seek the answer.

*This brotherhood...*

The man who could call all creatures his brothers and his sisters—

Brother Robin and Sister Lark, Brother Sun and Sister Moon—and saw the virtues as sisters all, and welcome to Brother Body the coming Sister Sickness and Sister Death, had likewise an even deeper vision of the brotherhood of his little flock, this *fraternitas* of God, and of love that must bind together also the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.

He knew, because the Lord had revealed it to him, that his brotherhood was to be unique among the communities of that day (though many since have followed his example). From the first, he would refuse the advice of the Cardinal of Saint Paul that he adopt an appropriate monastic rule or hermit way of life. To the Lord Pope he would pound the parable of the *sons* of the king and the poor woman. To one who, in good faith no doubt, later urged him to accept parts of monastic rules he would answer almost brusquely that the Lord meant they should live in simplicity and poverty, in a new way of fraternity and equality and Gospel-liberty.

As a previous conference has suggested, he saw plainly, if they did not, the contrast between the monastic way and his brotherhood. *Sons* under even a spiritual Father, the Abbot, but brothers all because *sons* and children of the King, their Father in heaven. Hence his concept of the Franciscan "superior" as a *frater praelatus*, of the "subject" one who has for God's sweet sake given up his will. Both are brothers and if the minister is to correct and admonish his brethren, they are to correct the prelate if he himself is errant, and all are in the charism of the Spirit willingly to serve and obey one another, and in the charism of the Spirit to reverence and honor, love and cherish one another because they are spiritual brothers.

Clare had long shared that same vision and imparted it to her disciples. The Abbess, as the Saint typified her, was no grand dame but the handmaid of the handmaids of Christ, ruling by virtue, leading all things the common life, dependent on the counsels of her disciples, attending the sick of body, caring for the afflicted of soul, teaching and commanding by example and then by word: a pattern to the Poor Ladies, loving and nourishing one another as true sisters of the Spirit, careful ever to preserve among themselves the unity of mission, love, avoiding pride, vain-glory, envy, detraction and murmuring, dissension and division, were united in their poverty and their great charity.

In our day we are returning to a better appreciation of the doctrine

and practice of the Mystical Body. Francis and Clare were deeply imbued with this teaching, as was the theology of their age. In its light, they saw their community as a living part of that Body, Christ as true Head, the friars and the sisters as members united by a divine bond and therefore as brothers or sisters according to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the true soul of the Order, and Our Lady as Queen and Mother. How beautifully Francis reveals this when he remarks that the Order must be open to the poor and the unlettered as well as to the rich and learned, because "with God there is no distinction of persons"—therefore, as all are welcome in the Mystical Body, the Church, so all are equal members of the Order—"and the Minister General of our Religion, *the Holy Spirit*, rests equally upon the poor and simple." In Him and through Christ the Head, all were true Brothers.

... shall be called the Order of Friars Minor

Therefore were they to be called and to be a brotherhood, in poverty and simplicity and humility: Lesser Brothers (Matt. 25, 40): "I wish that this brotherhood be called the Order of Friars Minor" (1 *Cel.* 38). No mere formal title was this, for the name was to bear the secret of their life, the secret of their imitation of Christ!

*Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. 11, 29). Learn from My example to be yourselves meek and humble. A man is meek, said Saint Bonaventure when preaching on Saint Francis, a man is meek by a true appreciation of brotherhood; he is humble by a love of lowliness, *minoritas*. To be meek therefore is to be the brother of all; to be humble is to be lesser than all. Therefore, to be meek and humble of heart, this is to be truly a Lesser Brother. Learn of Me to be meek and humble, that is, to be *fratres minores*! Here then, in our very name, is the key of Franciscan brotherhood: to be both a brother (or a sister) and lesser than all. Thus are charity and poverty joined together.

*You are all brothers* (Matt. 23, 8) provided for Francis the first part of our name. All that Our Lord implied by that, all that He ever uttered on fraternal love and unity, is caught up by Francis and connoted in that title. For we are brothers in the Spirit, a greater bond than binds mother and child, for the love that arises from grace, the *amor caritatis*, is stronger than the love that is rooted in the flesh.

But because the Lord told the Apostles that greatness or rank among

them was based on humility and childlikeness, that *he that is greater among them must become as the lesser*, the friars, simple and subject to all, must be Lesser Brothers. The second characteristic of fraternity therefore must be humility and self-forgetfulness, poverty of spirit. Material poverty, too, as is evident from that chapter of the Rule which links lack of worldly goods and fraternal love, becomes a binding in the brotherhood of the poor. But above all, it is the self-emptying poverty of spirit, the love of littleness, *minoritas*, of self-forgetfulness that is implied by *Minor*. Only he can be a true Brother and exercise true brotherly love who is a true *minor*, the lesser among us.

### *The noble structure of charity*

With keen insight, therefore, does Celano remark that humility provides the sure and constant foundation on which there arises the noble structure of charity, the Order, in which living stones gathered from all parts of the world are built together into a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. He then proceeds to describe the beautiful charity that reigned in those new disciples of Christ, the early Friars.

If their secret lay in their very name, is not the same true for the Franciscan brotherhood, in friary or Poor Clare monastery or Third Order convent, will be truly achieved only when the mutual love implied in the name of Friar or Sister is charged with and informed by *minoritas*, littleness, self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice. Only he who is meek and humble of heart is possessed of Christ-like love for his brethren. That love among the children of the Seraphic Saint demands of us all the consequences of our spiritual union. More than this: because such emphasis laid by our Father on that unity, these consequences must be found with greater intensity: fidelity and loyalty that would suffer persecution rather than be separated from our brethren; love and pity for the erring; and joy in what the Lord works in or through one's brother; mutual prayer and good example; care and solicitude for the sick; the honor of the good name of the other.

Yet on the other hand, these fruits of charity cannot even come to blossom without humility and poverty of spirit. Unless one is willing to be under all, how can he escape a desire to be held in esteem among the brethren and be considered wiser than others, or avoid the tempta-

tion to envy the spiritual goods of another, which is a kind of blasphemy because it is an envy of God who works in our brother, or again to take credit to oneself when God works in us? Who but the truly humble brother will take reproof with equanimity, the more so if sometimes he is not at fault (Adm. 23)? Who but the humble can show such patience that he will not be angry at the faults of another?

It is only by emptying self of self that we become true brothers. This is not easy to learn, nor easy to practice. Yet here lies the secret of our love for one another, here the perfection of Franciscan unity and community. It is something we must "work at," something that cannot simply be taken for granted either in ourselves or in those we may be training and forming to the Franciscan way of life. Indeed, in these days even greater care must be taken to cultivate in them this happy union of charity and humility, for too often they have been brought up in an atmosphere that glorifies self-seeking and self-success; the families from which they come do not always possess that happy tie of affection and mutual aid that may have marked an earlier day when the home was more the center of true living. In ourselves too, we must guard against that strong individualism that has too often marred the history of the Order to the detriment of the community (and perhaps the downfall of the individual), that cold reserve, that shell which many build around themselves, sometimes in reaction to the coldness and indifference of others.

Brotherhood, joyous community life, a deep family spirit has been and must be the mark of the Franciscan Orders. If that spirit is deeply impregnated with humility, poverty of spirit, selflessness, we shall approach more closely to the ideal of Francis and Clare, the ideal of Our Lord, of a family of brothers with one heart and one soul.

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.



Although severe bodily mortification usually begets affliction of spirit, quite the opposite was seen in Clare, for in all her mortification she preserved a joyful, cheerful countenance, so that she seemed either not to feel bodily austerities or to laugh at them. From this we gather that the holy joy which flooded her within overflowed without: for the love of the heart lightens the chastisement of the body.

Thomas of Celano

## THE BETTER PART

Superficial people seeking to excuse their evasion of the marital life indicated in Christ's invitation, "Follow Me"—as well as those who avoid even the way of the precepts—have often pleaded the case of environment for their failure. Throughout the years, many lives have proved the fallacy of such a contention, but none more conclusively than that of Eve Lavalliere, the darling of the French musical stage of the early 1900's. Everything about Eve—the surroundings of her childhood, her temperament, the career in which she was an outstanding success—all seemed to militate—and for awhile, succeeded—against a life of holiness; yet her self-chosen epitaph, "I have done everything for God; He alone is sufficient for me," indicates that the circumstances kept her from God only temporarily.

Because of her reticence, remarkable in such a vibrant personality, very little is known about Eve's life. Born on an Easter Sunday, April 1886, she was given the name Eugenie Marie Pascaline in baptism. In the first years of her life, the family, Feneglio by name, lived in Perpignan where Eugenie was taught by the Sisters of St. Maur. The home of the Feneglios was an unhappy one, for the father, a master cutter and dressmaking establishment that specialized in stage costumes, was a violent, passionate temperament, extremely jealous of his wife's position. Between his outbursts of wrath, brought on by his unreasonable jealousy, and his periods of brooding and sulking, Eugenie and her brother lived in fear and dread of storms to come.

Then, when Eugenie was ten years old, the Feneglios moved to Perpignan, hoping, perhaps, that a change of scene and place of environment might induce a change of heart. It proved to be a vain hope, however, even though at times the father momentarily forgot his bitterness in his preoccupation with the childish theatricals which Eugenie introduced, for she had found an outlet for her love of beauty and her repressed spirit by organizing a group of children into a sort of amateur theatrical troupe. Of course, it was Eugenie herself who more often than not wrote the scripts, directed the cast, secured the props, designed

## THE BETTER PART

costumes, and even starred in the productions. In his own way, her father was interested in her work, but not to the point where it had any beneficial effect on him. His outbursts of rage gradually became so intense as to border on insanity. One Sunday, March 6, 1884, when Eugenie was about eighteen years of age, she saw her father, in a particularly violent fit of anger, shoot her mother and then kill himself. The mother lingered for several months before she died, leaving Eugenie alone, for her brother had fled from the house on the day of the shooting, never to be seen again.

The girl was taken by her mother's cousin, Madame Garnier, who, although a pious and well-meaning soul, was definitely not an understanding one. To her way of thinking, the only means of keeping a murderer's daughter from sinking in her father's ruin was to enforce a rigid discipline. After a time, the temperamental Eugenie revolted, and in a sort of hopeless gesture, Madame Garnier turned her over to the nuns in the Home of the Good Shepherd at Perpignan. It was with the spirit of an unjustly condemned prisoner that Eugenie went to this new home, her sense of grievance rankling in her heart. There was only one bright spot in the whole regime at the Home—the weekly excursion through the town when the girls walked double file along the streets; for it was on these occasions that she caught a glimpse in a store window of the photograph of the famous actress, Jeanne Granier. Every week she broke rank to gaze at her idol and to dream her dreams. But a rank was not the only thing she broke. She consistently disobeyed all rules and regulations and then rebelled vehemently at the imposed punishments. Finally, her resentment became so stifling that she ran off—ran back to Madame Garnier, who surrounded her with more vigilance than before, even refusing to allow her to go anywhere alone. One day, having managed to elude her cousin, she ran to the cemetery, possibly seeking an outlet for her brooding spirit at the graves of her parents. When Madame Garnier came seeking her, Eugenie was staring disconsolately at the river running along the edge of the cemetery, apparently on the verge of jumping in. Instead of sympathy, she received a month's confinement in the house, at the end of which she left forever the home of Madame Garnier, whom she considered an intolerable old martinet.

Eugenie sought and found refuge, and a job, with a friendly family who owned a millinery shop. There, too, she found expression for her innate good taste, her creative talent, her natural flair for clothes—everything she made was imbued with an added beauty by her little original touches. The girls with whom she worked inadvertently furnished her

with a name to replace her own tragic one. Eugenie had fashioned herself, from a piece of white hat ribbon, a very stylish tie to be worn with her blue sailor suit; it was the sort that was popularly known as "lavalliere," so that when she walked into the workroom, modeling her creation, she was greeted laughingly as "Lavalliere," and "Lavalliere" she became from that day—even the patrons who preferred her services asked for "Lavalliere."

Not for long, however, was her restless spirit and driving ambition satisfied to remain a milliner's apprentice. She was a stage-struck girl, and having marked time for two years, had reached the end of her patience! Then she was off again, intending to join a traveling theatre company at Narbonne; but having been persuaded by her former employer to visit first an uncle who lived in Nice, she arrived in that city by way of a three day stop-over in Montpellier, where she managed to spend practically all her savings in search of a good time. Her uncle considered this insult added to injury—he had been reluctant to have her in the place; now he refused to have anything at all to do with her.

Abandoned and practically penniless, on the verge of tears, she was ready prey for the pleasant stranger who offered to take her to Paris with him that very night. He argued that, if Eve wanted the stage, then Paris it must be. And with this argument he readily won her willing assent. At the time the train pulled into Paris, however, Eve was somewhat disillusioned about the kind-hearted stranger. As soon as she could, she left him and began her search for recognition with confidence, determination and self-assurance unimpaired.

In the cafes of Montmartre, where she readily found employment, Eve could sing and dance so much better than most of the other girls, that soon the patrons were showing a preference for her. Lavalliere, however, was reaching for the stars; so she began taking lessons from an elderly gentleman, known to the theatre people as Père Duraulens, who taught elocution, singing, and dancing to would-be stars. He was delighted with her voice; it had a lilt and a vivacity all its own, and he recognized in her spirited rendering of a popular song just the added verve that made it Variétés material. With very little persuasion, for he, too, had succumbed to her overpowering personality, Père Duraulens accepted her as a pupil and a friend. After only a few weeks of lessons and practice he arranged an audition for her with the director of the Variétés, Eugene Bertrand.

To M. Bertrand, Eve was a find. After listening for only a few minutes, he hired her immediately. Not only could she sing with a captivating style, she could act with a naturalness in which there was no shadow of self-consciousness; she had a grace of movement that was exquisite; and her beauty was very, very appealing—no one ever forgot Eve's soulful eyes. Her beginning was a very modest one—a place in the chorus of LaBelle Hélène—but to Eve it was the blazing of her path to glory.

Not long after she had joined the chorus, one of the principals, who had no understudy, suddenly became ill and died. Bertrand told Lavalliere to be prepared to take her place for the performance that very evening; not only was she prepared, but at that performance Eve Lavalliere touched success. Then just after her first taste of stardom, Fernand Samuel succeeded Bertrand as the director. Samuel felt that he had too many well-established stars to put much faith in an over-night success. As a result, for the next ten years, from 1891 to 1901, Eve played only minor parts, but she played them so intensely that her talent was undeniable. In fact, it was so obvious that when Lucien Guitry was casting Alfred Capus' *La Veine*, in which her one time idol, Jeanne Granier, was starring, he would have none other than Eve for a particular leading part. She made the most of this opportunity, for she outshone the star. In successive performances of the play, Eve won all hearts by her gaiety and her sparkling interpretation, even improvisation, of the part of the flower girl, Josephine. She was an instant success, her particular form of genius bringing just the kind of spontaneity and sparkle and versatility that was needed for Variétés-type productions. Sarah Bernhardt at one time said that, although she knew more talented actresses, not one of them could boast of Eve Lavalliere's creative gift.

Her standing liaison with Fernand Samuel must have begun about this time, and among the set in which they traveled, they passed as husband and wife. They had one daughter, Jeanne, and Eve was determined that Jeanne should have a happy family life. Eventually, however, the happy family life amounted to a life spent with nurses and governesses, for Paris was clamoring for Lavalliere.

There was now no longer any question of her reign. Eve Lavalliere went from one successful production to another, and in 1908 she had the greatest triumph of her eminently successful career. Her magnificent performance in *Le Roi* brought even the great Sarah Bernhardt to her



dressing room, lavish with praise—she who was ordinarily so sparing her compliments. Lavalliere was the undisputed queen, and a very domineering one. Her sparkling repartee made her the center of literary and theatrical circles. Fashion followed her lead in clothes. She bobbed her hair because of a head injury, and soon bobbed hair became the rage in France. All Paris was at her feet, as were also many of the royalty of Europe. In those days, Prince Henry of Bavaria, King Manuel of Portugal, Alfonso XIII of Spain, and Edward VII of England were among those who paid willing homage.

In 1911, the strain and stress of success and high living reacted on her naturally frail physique; she became seriously ill, and was taken to a nursing home conducted by the Sisters of St. Saviour. The surroundings of the Sisters themselves, and her own serious condition affected her, and she told the Sister in attendance, if she had to die, she was determined to die a Christian. However, this mood of repentance, although genuine, was short-lived, for upon her recovery and with the advent of her friend, she became again the Parisian Queen of Comedy with all that it entails.

From the moment of her return, each new production was another claim to fame and fortune. Eve Lavalliere went from theatre to theatre, making an overwhelming conquest of each audience, and winning universal applause every time she appeared. In 1916 she was playing in London in behalf of the war charities; then shortly after her return to the Variétés, in 1917, she signed a contract with Lucien Guitry to tour the United States the following winter.

Eve Lavalliere had her greatest success when she was forty-two, in 1917, when she was fifty-one, there was no sign of a diminution either in her beauty—for it was built in her superb bones—or in her art, which she never ceased to perfect. With it all, though, during these years of triumph, Eve was twice drawn almost irresistibly to suicide; once on the bank of the Seine in Paris, and once in London on the Thames, just as she had been in the cemetery at Perpignan. So thoroughly would she be engulfed in a sense of the emptiness of her life that it seemed almost a necessity for her to end it—and, resisting grace, suicide was her answer.

It was decided that, before her American tour, a complete rest in some quiet spot was an absolute essential. Accordingly, in May of 1917, Eve and Leona Delbecq, the young Belgian refugee who had been her dresser at the Variétés and whom she had adopted as maid and com-

panion, rented a little chateau in Touraine called La Porcherie. It happened that M. Chasteigner, the village curé, was the trustee of the property, and when he called on Eve, a few days after her arrival, he completely surprised her by commenting on her absence from Mass on Sunday. Lavalliere was so nonplussed by such a direct approach that she had no answer ready except to remind him, archly, and on the defensive, that she was Lavalliere of the Variétés; the following Sunday, however, she found Eve and Leona kneeling among the peasants at Mass. That day the curé began a series of sermons on great penitents, using the life of Mary Magdalene as his introduction. When Eve met him later, she remarked pleasantly, "There's one thing you forgot to put in your sermon. My name at the end!"

When she discovered that Leona had never made her first Communion, she made arrangements with M. Chasteigner to have Leona prepared for its reception; at her own request, Eve also attended these instructions and so impressed the curé with her avid interest, questing spirit, and the rapidity with which she absorbed his words that he ventured to give her a copy of Lacordaire's *Sainte Marie Madeleine*—even suggesting that she read it on her knees. She did. And when Leona received her first Communion, Eve was kneeling beside her at the altar rail. It was June 19, 1917. Lavalliere had returned to the Church. She made three visits to the Confessional beforehand, though, to make certain of the purity of her soul. To Eve this was the beginning of life, and from that time on she counted her age from June 19, 1917. She had never been half-hearted in anything—in her profession her strong will had played a great part in her success—and now she exercised that same determination in her return to the life of grace, in which her success was just as pronounced, if not quite so spectacular. Realizing her own weakness, she canceled her contracts—literally tore them up—and broke all ties with the theatre. Nor could the curé persuade her that it was possible to be both a good Christian and an actress. Eve knew Eve! Naturally there were rumors; some said that it was a typical Lavalliere publicity stunt; others, that she was keeping out of sight because she was suspect in regard to her association with the German Ambassador; some, that she had found a new love. How true it was that she had found a new Love—a Love that satisfied at last that forceful driving spirit, a Love in whom her restless heart found peace!

One of her old lovers, a wealthy diplomat, wrote, begging for a

personal interview to assure himself of her safety. She wired back—all the old regal spirit: "Reception impossible, send cheque ten thousand at once." Well accustomed to the whims of Lavalliere, and thankful she was alive, he sent the money at once. Eve promptly gave it to poor, and ignored the Baron.

In addition to her desire to do penance for her own past sinful Eve had the added incentive of Jeanne's conversion. Jeanne Sam abnormal life—she now dressed as a man and lived as one—was a constant source of scandal and of genuine heartache to her mother. Eve seemed never to give up hope where Jeanne was concerned; she made one attempt after another to win her, but eventually came to realize that only in a life of prayer could she accomplish anything worthwhile for her daughter. Moreover, she so distrusted herself that she yearned for the security of a religious rule to act as a restraining influence—failing, of course, to take into account that her failing health prevented her following any rule. She applied to Carmel, both at Lourdes and at Lisieux, but was refused at both, the refusals being due as much, probably, to her unfortunate reputation as to her broken-down health. While waiting to get from Carmel, she and Leona went to Lourdes where their days were filled with prayer and penance and study—a sort of prolonged retreat. She followed a horarium which she considered her proximate preparation for the religious life. She lived a life of poverty and wore only the simplest of clothes; she let her hair grow because bobbed hair was a sign of frivolity; she who delighted in cosmetics and was an artist in their use, now used no make-up—her lipstick was the last to go; a front tooth fell out, but Eve left the gap unfilled as an expiation for her former vanity. While in Lourdes, through the Superior of the Sisters of Notre-Dame who was both friend and guide to Eve, she met the Archbishop of Cambrai, Monseigneur Lemaitre. After a conversation of nearly two hours, M. Lemaitre willingly became her director; he recognized in her a soul, a humble and saintly one in whom the love of God was the absorbing interest. He was seriously considering using Eve in African missionary work when these hopes, too, were frustrated by a severe illness. When she wrote to tell him about it, she called it great news; she replied with a *Magnificat* that she had more to suffer. Meanwhile the Archbishop went back to Africa and while Eve was recuperating her hopes for the religious life again began to rise. This time it was the convent of the Visitation at Monteuil. However, this attempt, as well as another to enter the Carmel at Avignon, proved fruitless, although

prioress at Avignon, fully conscious of her worth, wanted to accept Eve, in spite of her poor health and notoriety. She called Eve's life of frustration a life of martyrdom.

Finally, after three years of trying, Eve came to understand that for her, life in a convent was not in the script. So in the fall of 1920, she found a little house at Thuilleries which she named Bethany; here she proposed to await the good pleasure of her Director, not in mere acquiescence, but in a joyful self-surrender, in an acceptance of His direction whatever it might be, with love. Five days after moving in, on September 20, 1920, Eve was received into the Third Order of Saint Francis, and became Sister Eve Mary of the Heart of Jesus. Although it was in a much more modified way than her expectations, Eve Lavalliere finally became a member of an Order with a rule to follow. True to character, she was no luke-warm Franciscan. Lavalliere and mediocrity? In every possible item, she lived the Third Order rule, and for the remaining years of her life she strove for the perfection of the spirit as she had once striven for perfection in her art.

The following year, M. Lemaitre, in recognition of her need for a positive and tangible service, suggested that she might find such service in his foundation, an institute for nurses, whose work lay with the Arabs of North Africa; and, as he fully expected, Eve accepted with alacrity. In all she made four trips to Africa, and each time her health failed; for Eve's spirit always exceeded her strength. Without losing heart, however, she would return to France, recuperate up to a point, and set out once more for the mission field, driven by her will to serve. Her ministry in Africa was of the body rather than of the soul; in fact, the last time she went back she was so frail that the Archbishop could assign her no other work than the organization of a recreational program for the Arabs. When she left Africa in December 1924, Eve knew that she was going home to die; and from her arrival at Bethany, she grew steadily worse until eventually she was a bed-ridden invalid. But the bed-ridden invalid had no complaint; the restless Lavalliere had, by the grace of God, become a peaceful, satisfied Eve, with a satisfaction that comes from a whole-souled, loving acceptance. In these last five years, God seems to have come very, very close to Lavalliere of the Variétés by granting her a mystical knowledge of Himself; so dazed was she by the wonder of this revelation of the Divinity that she took to writing her thoughts in an effort to clarify them for herself.

In August of 1926, Robert de Flers, the great French dramatist,

came to Bethany. He was amazed, even shocked, at the change in glory of the Parisian stage. He found her very pale and emaciated, with all the old sparkle in her glorious eyes; with an added war that had not been there in her days of fame. He found her surrounded by an all-embracing air of sweetness—she who in the days of her reign practically lived with nerves strained to the breaking point. But he found her supremely happy! Eve told him that her happiness arose from her sufferings, and not in spite of them, as he had deduced.

With the passing of 1927 and 1928 her pain increased—she suffered from her head, her eyes, her stomach, her kidneys—and all the while her love of God was growing in intensity. In the last months of her life, she was remarkably reminiscent of Therese of Lisieux in the all-consuming intensity of her love. Her imitation of her Seraphic Patron was limited to his spirit of poverty and the observance of his rule; like Francis she suffered horribly from her eyes. In an attempt to prevent the removal of her left eye, the doctors operated on it without benefit of an anesthetic; there was none they dared give her. After days of pure agony for Eve, the doctors discovered that their attempt was futile. When they explained to her that they were going to sew her eye-lids shut, and, once more there would be no anesthetic, Eve clenched her fingers, whispered, "Both together, Jesus!" then, "Ready, doctor."

At three o'clock in the morning of July 10, her death agony began. The parish priest was reciting the prayers for the dying, and during the litany of the Blessed Virgin, at the invocation, "Queen of Peace, pray for us," Eve took her final curtain. Her funeral was a typical village funeral—a far cry from the one that would have been hers as the toast of Paris.

Her biographers have dubbed Eve Lavalliere a modern Magdalen—a Tertiary Penitent, but the aspect of her life that might so easily be passed by is the proof that it gives to a restless, success-conscious woman of the words of Saint Augustine, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and restless are our hearts until at last they rest in Thee." Hers was the lesson of a complete, joyful acceptance of the plan of God. The Divine Master Himself explained that His preference was for a cheerful giver, and He put no limitations on that giving; it might even be a heart whose dreams of service have been frustrated by Divine command, but whose loving acceptance of such rejection has only plunged it deeper into the peace that "surpasses all understanding."

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sr. Maura, O.S.B.

## I MUST LIFT UP MY EYES TO HEAVEN

(The ninety-second of the *Meditaciones del Amor de Dios* of Fray Diego de Estella, 1524-78)

This life I am living, Lord, so brief and so full of labor, keeps telling me that I must love You with all my powers. If I consider the eternal duration of the life to come, where I shall have either everlasting rest or unending torment; and if I look about and see the misery of this corruptible life, how can I let my heart be captivated by ephemeral things that have no sooner come than gone, and how can I withhold my heart from the one love that lasts forever? Even if my whole lifetime on earth were prosperous and delightful, and if I were to enjoy every possible pleasure and amusement, I still would not love this life. For at best it would be brief, and its vain and empty pleasures would yield no fruit. To You alone would I give my love, and to that blessed life to come which knows no end. Man's life on earth is so filled with miseries and bitter toil, and he is so cruelly afflicted in so many ways, that he is even worse off than the animals that lack all reason.

The miserable life led by the children of Israel in Egypt led them to cry out to You and to long for the Promised Land. The human infant cries as soon as he is born, and throughout his life he is chilled by cold and prostrated by heat, burned by fire and drowned by water, and the earth demands his toil and sweat. He is tormented and weakened by disease, fatigued by pain; straitened by poverty, harassed by riches. Life is short and death is ever lying in wait. How then, seeing myself subjected to so many miseries and pains—more pains, indeed, than the Israelites suffered in Egypt and more miseries than they wept over by the rivers of Babylon—how can I refuse to cry out to You, my God? I long for freedom and for the Land of Promise when I remember the heavenly Jerusalem and find myself imprisoned and exiled in this valley of tears. How can I help despising this temporal life? How can I help loving eternal life? Whenever I think back to the past, I realize that the pleasures I have experienced are less than a tenth of my life. The many evils that torment us here compel us to desire and to seek Your divine

presence. So it was with the holy king David. Time and again he cried, "You when he was afflicted and persecuted, and, out of love, as he says in the Psalm: *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and unto my God I cried out* (Ps. 17, 7).

What good can my heart see in these things of the world, except that when I reject them all, they send me to You? The struggles and hardships of life tell me to search for the true life of eternity, and the wearisome cares that earthly love brings me admonish me to love You alone, my Lord and my God, my only good and the one rest of my soul. The Prodigal Son had less misery and anguish of heart than I when I am ensnared in an earthly love. But I turn to You and my soul is brightened with a new light.

Always have I loved Your Divine Majesty, and always in this life have I found the rare delight and the joy of infinite sweetness that You bestow upon those who love You. And I have experienced this as often as I have truly hated and despised the mundane frame that holds me captive. O unfortunate men and unhappy creatures! Why do you seek your delight and satisfaction in sensual stupidities and abominations? Come and see how sweet is the Lord and how delightful His conversation. If you had but a taste of the sweet and tender conversation of Jesus Christ, you would willingly spurn the blandishments of the world.

My soul, put aside these vanities and deceits that you delight in, and draw near to your God in love; for sweeter is a drop of the Lord's consolation than the loftiest and deepest consolation of the world. Creature love cannot last long; no sooner is it born than it ceases to be, but the love of the Lord endures forever. And why will you set your heart on things that so quickly fade and perish? Do not say with Adam that you cannot hold a feast in honor of God when you are sad, but love Him when so many burdens oppress you. These sorrows and tribulations that cause you pain are in fact so many blows from the hand of God; for they are the means He uses to soften the hardness of your heart, to strike sparks of divine love from it, as from a stone. Our Lord sees that His benefits do not soften you; but seeing rather that you harden yourself like stone, He hurts you in order to strike the sparks of love from your stony heart. This is the way He dealt with Manasseh, King of Judea. The king was converted not by benefits but by affliction. Only when he found himself a captive in Babylon, plunged into anguish and shame, did Manasses turn to his Creator and love Him. And if

brevity of life and its miseries do not move you to love your God, in Whom is eternal life and blessedness, then let the pains of hell move you—the pains suffered by those who do not love God. *Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat*, as Job says (24, 19), which will free you of the snows of your cold and frozen heart. Let the ardent flames of divine fervor move you, that you may burn with the sweet and warming flame of Jesus Christ.

If among these temporal things that can be seen there is no permanent love (and you cannot love what you cannot see), he who does not find enduring love will find perpetual misery. No man can be blessed without love, and he who does not love is miserable. Whoever is indifferent to his fellow men, despising peaceful companionship and human conversation and loving none but himself with a mean and solitary love, is not worthy of being called a man. Charity is a gratuitous love that goes out to another; and therefore if a man is said to have charity within himself he must extend his love to another outside himself.

He who loves himself alone, unmindful of God and neighbor, is vile. My Lord, You gave us Your life of suffering so that we may love You in return; and those who love You long to be free from the tribulations of the flesh that they may love You without hindrance. The Apostle calls himself unhappy and longs for someone to free him from *the body of this death* (Rom. 7, 24). And even though bodily pain is a reason for sadness, those who know something about the spirit do not so much feel what there is to the flesh in this as what there is that the soul loses or fails to gain. Although all men feel the pains of the flesh, Your friends, Lord, and the friends of the world disagree in this: that the friends of the world hate physical pain as something evil, while your friends dislike it because it hinders their freedom in contemplation and in the affairs of the spirit.

What makes this life so miserable is the continuous danger that threatens us, with our enemies ever bent on our destruction. There are many weapons in the world that they can use against us, for we have but little strength. And what is worse is that the soul is alone to defend herself. She is so alone that if she is not always on guard against the enemies that besiege her, she quickly succumbs. When she has driven off her foes from one gate, they enter at another; or she falls asleep and fails to notice their entry; or she is led through deceit and trickery to open the gates to them. And thus it is that danger is as great as life, and

life is but a bloody battle in which the soul is threatened and attacked by countless foes. Thus knowing myself so harassed, Lord, I have only remedy: I must lift up my eyes to heaven and I must long for my God, sigh after You, and love that true life where Your people meet and enjoy the beauty of peace. Desire for that life ravishes heart; love for that life draws me; and the labors of this life lift my in love to You, my Lord and my God, as to the true life of my soul all my rest; my only good and my refuge.

*Corpus Christi, Texas*

*Maria A. Laughlin (tr)*



Truly this blessed man appeared worthily marked by this singular privilege (of the Stigmata), since his whole desire, both in public and private, centered on the Cross of the Lord. What indeed were all his virtues—his kindness and gentleness, his austerity of life, his deep humility, his prompt obedience, his great poverty, his unspotted chastity, his deep sorrow for sin, his flood of tears, his heartfelt piety, the ardor of his whole compass of Christiform virtues—what were all these manifold likenesses to Christ and so many ways in which he was prepared for the Stigmata? Yes, from his conversion through the whole course of that life adorned with the great mysteries of the Cross of Christ to the very vision of the Seraph Crucified, he was totally transformed into the likeness of Christ by a certain deiform grace that burned within

*Saint Bonaventure*

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XVII)

### *The Sixteenth Article*

TEXT: *They must also be sparing of words and conversations, which cannot be indulged in freely without sin. Let the conduct of the Brothers and Sisters be such that they may edify all by word and example, remembering that Our Lord has said: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (Mt. 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 heart (cit. Rule, chapter 6).*

The third and final article in this chapter on the control of inordinate self-love is even more specific than the preceding and concerns itself with the proper use of the tongue. If we wonder why just this faculty is singled out for special mention, we would do well to recall the words of Saint James: "If anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man" (James 3, 2). Speaking through the apostle, the Holy Spirit Himself gives Franciscan religious a test or sign to indicate whether they have achieved that perfect self-mastery which should be their aim. This article, on the use of the tongue, therefore, comes as a fitting conclusion to this chapter on the control of self.

The article, however, contains three commands which at first sight seem more or less distinct and unconnected, *viz.* control of the tongue proper, the edification of others by word and example, and the exhortation to greet others with the blessing of peace. In reality these three are not simply thrown together haphazardly into a single unit. Though the reference to the earlier Rule leaves the impression that the whole of the present article is taken from that of Leo X, it is only the first of the three exhortations that is found there literally. The second and third, on the

contrary, are indicative rather of the spirit that inspired the remainder of the sixth chapter of the earlier rule, which speaks of other parts of the tongue such as lying or swearing and prohibits the taking of oaths except in certain specified circumstances. Thus, we might almost say that the three apparently unrelated commands found in the present article in reality form a coherent whole concerned with the proper use of the social faculty of speech or communication. The first warns the Tertiary primarily against sins of commission; the other two chiefly against sins of omission. The exhortation to edify one another, for instance, indicates that this is to be accomplished first of all by word and secondly by example, which for Francis was simply silent preaching and therefore an extension of the positive apostolate of the tongue. The peace greeting, though new to the Third Order Rule, is something Francis incorporated in both the first and second Rules he gave to his friars. In the present Tertiary Rule, it reminds us of one of the glories of the Third Order of Saint Francis. By forbidding Tertiaries to take the oath of fealty or to bear arms, the Third Order Secular Rule was to play a special role in the providence of God. It made the numerous lay followers of Francis the backbone of a great peace offensive that was to cripple the feudal system and put an end to the petty wars between city states that troubled the world in the days of the Poverello. The spirit of Francis embodied in the present article, then, is this. Negatively, our speech should never edify others or prove to be a source of sin and discord; positively, it should become an instrument of peace and charity. With this general perspective in mind, we can consider the individual points in greater detail.

*They must be sparing of words and conversations. . .*

"Sparing" in the sense of the rule implies two things: negatively, it excludes all wasted words; positively, it connotes that our speech should be in the interests of the twofold law of love that is the heart of the Tertiary Rule. Silence or parsimony of speech is not a virtue in itself, for a religious can fail against charity by silence as well as by speech. Rudeness, surly lack of sociability, an unhealthy timidity or sense of inferiority may all be the real reason behind a person's silence. It would be absurd to appeal to the present article of the Rule to defend such an attitude. There is also such a thing as a "dumb devil"—the kind Christ had to cast out of the mute before he was fit to associate with his fellow

Whatever prudence and charity dictate should be said in view of circumstances of time and place and the requirements of propriety or good taste; far from violating this precept, this procedure would rather honor it, for the religious who acts in this way indeed has a well-ruled tongue.

What is forbidden here, however, is the misuse of this social faculty. "Sparing" signifies an absence of waste, and all words are wasted that are not ruled somehow by love of God and neighbor. It goes without saying that small talk, innocent joking, and the like during recreation play a useful and important role in keeping the spirit of a religious community healthy and sane; such talk is far from wasted. But speech is squandered that violates charity, pampers self-love, or leads to idleness and the neglect of duty. For such idle words there is indeed a day of reckoning (Mt. 12, 36). Sinful gossip, useless chatter outside the time assigned for needed relaxation, speech prompted by vanity or narcissistic self-love which cause us to seek the limelight, parade our own views at every opportunity, make the feelings of others a foil for our wit or satire, or seek cheap human consolation—all these are wasted words and must be written off as loss in the books of eternity.

*Which cannot be indulged in freely without sin. . .*

Where a religious make no attempt to bridle his tongue or discipline his speech, he cannot hope to escape sin. Daily experience bears out the observation of Solomon: *In the multitude of words there shall not want sin* (Proverbs 10, 19).

Every religious might well ask: *Who will set a guard before my mouth, and a sure seal upon my lips, that I fall not by them, and that my tongue destroy me not* (Eccl. 22, 33)? Such a guard and seal he will find in the time-honored practice of religious silence. By faithfully observing the "sacred silence" imposed by rule, constitutions, or book of customs, the religious learns to discipline his tongue. Such silence, in its essence, prohibits on the one hand all unnecessary talk, and on the other it requires that even necessary talk be reduced to a minimum.

Much could be said on this subject to which Saint Bonaventure devoted an entire chapter in his *Holiness of Life for Sisters*. Indeed, whole books have been written in praise of silence, which for a religious

is not only a disciplinary value but makes recollection and the spirit of prayer possible. So necessary did our Father Francis deem it that he imposed a period of sacred silence on his friars even in their travels. "In the name of the Lord," he told them, as he sent them into foreign provinces after the General Chapter of 1217, "go your way two by two humbly, decorously and in particular amid strict silence from dawn till after Tierce, praying in your hearts to the Lord. Idle and needless words are not to be uttered between you. For though you walk abroad let your manner nevertheless be as humble and decorous as if you were in a hermitage or a cell. For wherever we are and go, we have our cell with us. Brother Body is our cell, and our soul is the hermit dwelling inside the cell in order to pray to God and meditate on him. If his soul does not remain in retirement in its own cell, any handbuilt cell has little use to a religious" (*Speculum Perfectionis*, ch. 65).

*Let their conduct be such that they may edify all...*

These words of the Rule require no explanation. We only add comment that Francis regarded the apostolate of word and of good example as something essential to our vocation as Franciscans. We are called not so much for our own sakes, as for the sake of others, he would say. The reference to Our Lord's words: *Let your light shine before men* brings this out even more. When Christ had finished the famous sermon on the Mount in which he imparted his moral code to the people, he turned to his apostles and commissioned them to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Their lives, in a word, were to be a living example, a living object-lesson of what Christ came to teach. But the Gospel is the basis, the substance of the three Franciscan Rules, the Franciscans are called to the same apostolate. Lack of oratorical gifts does not excuse them from preaching. For whether they be within or without the cloister their very conduct must be a sermon unto edification or the "building up" of the Christ-life in their fellowman. Like the Apostles, they must prove in their own lives that the Gospel way of life of virtue, is something possible and feasible. "Let us take thought of our vocation," Francis tells us, "God in his mercy has called us into the world and admonish everybody by example as well as word. Repentance and to be mindful of God's commandments" (*Tres Socii*, ch. 3).

*Let them approach everybody with the greeting of peace...*

The Franciscan apostolate of preaching through word and example is to bear fruit in peace. Perhaps that is why Francis began each sermon with the greeting God revealed to him: "The Lord give thee peace!"

Peace in the most literal sense of the term was certainly a need in Francis's day when province warred against province, city feuded against city, the nobility quarreled with the townsfolk, the *majores* clashed with the *minores*, and Church and civil authorities were often in bitter conflict. No wonder Francis considered it his special mission to restore peace and good will among men. Much has been written on this crusade of Francis which Bishop Felder calls the "greatest peace movement ever launched" (*Ideals of St. Francis*, ch. 14).

We too must become peacemakers if we would be called the children of God and of Francis. The Franciscan peace movement, as Bishop Felder points out, was an outgrowth, a consequence of Franciscan charity. We might even go further and identify the task of peacemaking with the practice of fraternal charity. For if Christ *himself is our peace*, as Saint Paul insists (Eph. 2, 14), what is the Franciscan apostolate but to make peace in the sense of that apostle, *to re-establish all things in Christ* (Eph. 1, 10), to restore the bonds of love between man and his fellowmen that were severed by sin. Francis himself tells us as much when he says: "Even as you proclaim peace with your lips be careful to have it more fully in your heart. Let no one be roused to wrath or insult on your account. Everyone should rather be moved to peace, goodwill, and mercy as a result of your gentleness. For we have been called for this purpose, to heal the wounded, to bind the bruised, to recall those gone astray. Many a person may seem to us a child of the devil that will one day be a disciple of Christ" (*Tres Socii*, n. 58).

No wonder then that the Rule exhorts Tertiary religious to *approach everybody with the humble and pious greeting of peace*. No distinct formula is mentioned but we cannot help but recall the words Francis inscribed in his *Testament*: "The Lord revealed to me this salutation, that we should say: 'The Lord give thee peace!' " And in the Rule of the First Order he inserted the Gospel exhortation "Into whatever house they enter let them first say 'Peace to this house!' " (*Regula O. F. M.*, c. 3). Another form of the peace greeting is *Pax et bonum!* Each time

Franciscans of any of the three Orders address one another with blessing they can gain a hundred days indulgence (cf. *Acta Ordinis Minorum*, XLIII 46-47). The precise origin of this traditional Franciscan salutation is unknown, though we read in the *Legend of the Three Companions* that Francis heard it often on the lips of a certain man who passed through the streets of Assisi hailing people in this fashion (*Socii*, n. 26).

More important, perhaps, than any fixed formula or verbal salutation is that wordless greeting of peace we should have for everyone we meet: a warm and friendly attitude born of genuine interest and Christian concern in their welfare.

If our peace greeting, especially in this last named form, is to be true, we must carry Christ's peace in our hearts. Such peace we know possible only if a religious has learned to control unruly affections and to curb inordinate self-love. The closing words of this fifth chapter fittingly call attention to the goal and aim of Franciscan self-conquest: *the peace of God which surpasses all understanding* (Phil. 4, 7), and that is both the fruit and the blessing of mastery of the heart.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.



In the prison of this little cloister (San Damiano) Clare shut herself up for the love of her heavenly Spouse. Here she hid herself from the turmoil of the world and imprisoned her body as long as she lived. In the hollow place of this wall, this silver-winged dove built her nest and begot the community of the virgins of Christ, instituted a holy monastery and laid the foundation of the Order of the Poor Ladies. Here, like a little flame, she wore out her body in the way of penance; here she sowed seeds of perfect justice; here by her own manner of life she pointed the way for those who were to follow. In this narrow retreat, for forty years she broke the alabaster vase of her body by the stripes of penance so that the house of the Church is filled with the fragrance of her virtues.

Thomas of Celano

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRANCISCAN CROWN

The origin of the Franciscan Crown has been recorded by Wadding in his *Annales Ordinis Minorum*. It is related there that in 1422 a Franciscan novice was granted a vision by the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this vision he was taught the method of reciting an *Our Father* and ten *Hail Mary's* in honor of each of the Joys of Mary. Wadding concludes his report on the matter by observing that the custom thus arose of saying the seventy *Hail Mary's* and adding two more in honor of the seventy-two years which, according to a probable opinion, our Blessed Mother spent on this earth.

Whether the two-fold scope (the seven Joys and the age of Mary) was universally recognized is open to doubt; but by the seventeenth century it seems that both purposes had been well established in the Order.

The question of the indulgences that have been granted for the Crown through the course of the centuries is an involved problem. The Crown had received a generous number of indulgences, and other Crowns of similar form (in numbers and types of *Our Father's* and *Hail Mary's*) had received similar indulgences; as a result, some confusion and apparent overlapping seem to be indicated in historical sources. At any rate, it seems fairly well established that a plenary indulgence was annexed to the Crown by Pope Leo X, in 1517. Since that time, various Popes have confirmed the plenary indulgence for the Crown. The Sacred Congregation for Indulgences settled any doubts by decreeing that the Crown of the Seven Joys is endowed with a plenary indulgence, and that the Crown beads do not have to be blessed for this purpose. Hence, the indulgence is a personal one for Franciscans (*Decr. auth.*, n. 412).

The recitation of the Franciscan Crown begins immediately with the seven decades, each consisting of one *Our Father* and ten *Hail Mary's*. It concludes with two *Hail Mary's*, and a final *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* for the intention of the Holy Father. Each decade is said in honor of one of the seven Joys of Mary, but meditation on the Joys



or even mention of them is not required. The Creed, the *Our Father* and the three *Hail Mary's* that introduce some other rosaries. Crowns are not required, nor need any *Glory's* be said.

With regard to indulgences, all members of the three Orders have the personal privilege of gaining a plenary indulgence, provided the Crown be completed in a natural day; the recitation may be broken up into decades at various times of the day. According to several writers who base their opinion on a fairly explicit passage in the Brief *Dilectus Filius* of Pope Pius X, September 18, 1905, this plenary indulgence can be gained more than once in the same day.

All the faithful—and, therefore, all the Franciscans of the three Orders—may gain plenary indulgences under several other titles. For instance, if a properly blessed set of beads is used for recitation on a common, or is used on several major feasts of the year, or on feasts that commemorate the Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This limitation of using the material blessed beads apparently applies to Franciscans also. The limitation referred to above brings up a few points that have caused some discussion, but not much can be found in the sources or commentaries to clarify the matter. The problem revolves about the faculty to bless the Crown beads, and the limitation on the faculty regarding both the person who receives it and the extent to which it can be used.

The faculty to bless the Franciscan Crown beads, attaching indulgences (for all the faithful), is now limited to the Minister General of the Order, who may delegate this faculty to the priests of his Order only. The Minister General of the Capuchins has delegated this to the priests of his Order; but this apparently has not taken place in the Conventual or Friar Minor groups.

In this field of faculties, we shall now consider briefly a few pertinent points:

1. Can Franciscans gain the indulgences granted for "all the faithful" if they do not use the Crown beads blessed by a priest with proper faculties? The answer seems to be no. The intent of granting the group of indulgences "for the faithful" was, according to the *Dilectus Filius* of Pius X, that the "piety of the faithful throughout the world toward the Immaculate Virgin be more widely propagated by these special indulgences. Franciscans already have the per-

sonal indulgences for each recitation of the Crown, whether they use blessed beads or not. The extra conditions laid down for the indulgences granted for "all the faithful" do not mention any special grant for Franciscans; hence, Franciscans would have to use the specially blessed beads to gain those extra indulgences.

2. What are the limitations on the category of persons who can bless the Crown beads? The Minister General of the Friars Minor has the faculty of blessing the Crown beads and can delegate this faculty to priests of his own Order only. This last limitation on delegation went into effect on April 2, 1933, though priests who had the faculty previous to that date still retain it.

3. What other indulgences, besides the Crown indulgences, are attached to the Crown beads? The papal indulgences may be attached to the Crown beads, since the physical arrangement of the Crown beads does not militate against this. Outside of this possibility, there seems to be no foundation for the idea that a Franciscan priest, having the faculties to attach both the Crown indulgences and other indulgences such as the Brigittine, Crozier, and Dominican, can attach all of these to the Crown beads. After some research, no indication of such a possibility was found. Furthermore, the limitations on Ministers General of the various Orders, namely, that they could delegate priests of their own Orders only to bless their respective Crowns or rosaries, militate against the possibility. It is true that the so-called A, B, C, D indulgences (Apostolic, Brigittine, Crozier, Dominican) can be attached to a single set of five-decade beads; but these beads meet the physical requirements of the A, B, C, D indulgences. The Crown of seven decades represents a major change from the required make-up of a five decade rosary, and for this reason does not meet all the physical requirements. With even more reason, the Franciscan Crown indulgences could not be attached to the five-decade beads, though we must keep in mind that Franciscans could use the five-decade beads, blessed or unblessed, as mere mechanical counters for the Crown, and still gain the *personal* plenary Crown indulgence.

The writer has heard of an extraordinary faculty, by which a priest can attach the Crozier indulgence to the Franciscan Crown beads. The occurrence of this faculty is rare, inasmuch as one of the requirements is that the priest must have spent some time in the Holy Land.

In conclusion, one unusual feature of the plenary indulgence of the Crown may be noted. All that is required is the devout recitation of the Crown. No other conditions must be met that we find in indulgences for gaining other types of plenary indulgences. For the Crown indulgence, confession, communion, and meditation on the mysteries are required. And, as noted above, recitation of the *Glory's* is not required, though by laudable custom they are usually added.

This article has not given a complete list of the various indulgences that can be gained by recitation of the Crown. Those descriptions of finding a rather complete list are referred to Fr. Gummerman's *Handbook of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis*, published by St. Anthony's Guild. The Crown is richly indulgenced; but perhaps the most notable feature of the indulgencing is that the plenary indulgence can be gained by Franciscans without using beads at all; though, for the sake of convenience in counting, they may use any set of beads. In fact, one's ten fingers can serve the purpose; this method of counting is as good as any if (as in the case of the Fathers) the beads are broken, or (as in the case of the Clerical beads) the beads have been misplaced.

Christ the King Seminary

Fr. Roch Knopke, O.F.M.



May this seven hundredth anniversary kindle anew in the hearts of all who follow the ideal of Saint Clare, both Friars and Sisters, the spirit of love and loyalty to their divine Spouse. In the light of her virtues, may the world come to see that the eternal treasures of the spirit are to be valued above the transitory joys and goods of earth; may we properly appreciate that sublime mission of constant praise of God through expiation and supplication which each day so many souls, drawn to the divine Spouse by the example of Saint Clare, fulfill within the walls of the cloister. Let all realize that the vocation to this life of immolation, poverty, chastity and obedience is indeed a singular privilege reserved for His chosen few; and that activity likewise, accepted in the spirit of Saint Clare, can become a means of raising our souls to God; that, finally, only in the complete and integral fulfillment of the Gospel can be found that true peace and universal brotherhood of which the world so direly stands in need.

Fr. Augustine Sépinski, Min. Gen. O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

*THE FIRST FRANCISCAN NATIONAL MARIAN CONGRESS IN ACCLAMATION OF THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION, OCTOBER 8-11, 1950.* Studia Mariana VII. Burlington, Wisconsin. 1952. Pp. 312

The papers read at the Franciscan National Marian Congress in 1950 are now at last available in a 312-page volume. The material is scholarly, but not to the point of being unintelligible to the general reader. In fact, all the articles are on subjects relating to some aspect of the Dogma of the Assumption, and as such will not be totally unfamiliar to the average informed Catholic. The volume includes the following papers: Olhmann, "The Assumptionist Movement and the Franciscan Marian Congresses;" Guglielmo, "Immortality of the Blessed Virgin in the Light of Sacred Scripture;" Brady, "The Relation between Sin and Death according to Medieval Theologians;" Habig, "The Cult of the Assumption of Our Lady in the United States, 1598-1888;" Grajeswki, "The Franciscan Marian Cult in the United States in Our Times;" Moholy, "St. Irenaeus: The Father of Mariology;" Huber, "Mariology of St. Anthony of Padua;" Sonntag, "The Marian Doctrine of St. Lawrence of Brindisi;" May, "The Assumption in the Exegetical Works of Franciscans;" Plassmann, "The Papal Definition of the Dogma of the Assumption."

Though not of uniform quality, all the articles are timely and informative, and do much to clarify the background and significance of the Dogma of Our Lady's Assumption.



*DIE LETZTE HYMNE.* P. Ceslaus Boedefeld. Werl/Westf.: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag. 1952. Pp. 222. (Available through Franciscan Institute: \$2.75)

Father Kilian Kirchhoff, O.F.M., of Holy Cross Province in Germany, was sentenced to death by the People's Court under the Nazi regime. His body was burned at the Brandenburg crematorium April 26, 1944.

Father Kilian was a brilliant scholar, especially well known for his work in Byzantine liturgy. The title of the book, *Die Letzte Hymne* (The Last Hymn) pays tribute not only to his translations of the great hymns of the Eastern rites, but also to his saintly and joyous Franciscan life.

The present biography by Father Ceslaus Boedefeld (also deceased) is a deeply moving and swiftly paced account of Father Kilian's life and work as a Friar Minor up to the time of his death in the Nazi prison. Original documents, especially letters, add to the authenticity of the account and to the portrait of Father Kilian's truly great and heroic soul. To those who read German, this book will afford a clear picture of what the Franciscans—and all religious—endured under the Nazi government, and

than that, it will provide inspiration in these troubled times from the life of a man who was both a cultured scholar and a gay and humble son of Saint Francis; whose unflinching loyalty to Christ and the Church was a scandal to his enemies and a glory to his Order.



**ANTONIUS DER EINSIEDLER IN KULT, KUNST, UND BRAUCHTUM WESTFALENS.** P. Dr. Gandulf Korte, O.F.M. Edited by P. Dr. Adalbert Klatte, O.F.M. Werl/Westf. Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag. 1952. Pp. 150, 56 illustrations. Paper. (Available from the Franciscan Institute: \$3.00)

This is another book issuing from Holy Cross Province in Germany, and again it is the work of a victim of the Nazi persecutions. Father Gandulf had a hero's record in the First World War, but that did not save him from the fury of the Hitler regime. He was arrested and condemned to death.

The present work on Saint Anthony the Hermit is one of the last projects that engaged Father Gandulf's attention before conditions in Germany made scholarship and research a practical impossibility. It was inspired by his desire to know how much Saint Anthony of Padua was influenced by Anthony the Hermit, whose cult is so popular in certain parts of Europe. In the finished book, this point covers only about half a dozen pages; but they are the most interesting pages. The treatment of Anthony the Hermit is quite thorough, historically, devotionally, and iconographically. The illustrations, in halftone, are excellent.



**MY SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR.** Fr. Athanasius Steck, O.F.M. Privately Printed.

This is a revision of the well-known series of articles on spiritual direction appearing in *SPONSA REGIS* during the year 1949 under the title "Spiritual Direction for the Ordinary Confessor." There are seven articles or conferences in all, discussing how women religious can make their weekly confessions more fruitful and effective in their spiritual life.

In order to make these conferences more readily available, Fr. Athanasius has had them printed in pamphlet form. They may be ordered directly from Saint James Friary, Riverton, Illinois. Prices: single copy, 50c.; 12 copies, \$5.00; 100 copies, \$35.00.



**THE HOUR OF ST. FRANCIS.** Reinhold Schneider. Transl. by James Meyer, O.F.M. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press. 1953. Pp. 113. \$1.75.

With so many studies of Saint Francis already published, one may well ask what more could be said about him. Yet Dr. Schneider has found much to say that has not been said before; he has studied the Saint in his historical significance, pointing out with penetrating and sweeping vision the role he played in his own age and the role he can—and must—play in ours. Here is a book that merits reading and re-reading in the spirit of meditation. Unfortunately, Dr. Schneider's brilliant and profound style is much in translation, but Father James Meyer's rendering is at least competent and readable.

# the CORD

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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*Our inner man is being renewed day by day* (II Cor. 4).

The lives of the Saints are for us, says Saint Ambrose, a pattern of life. In his life-time our holy Father Saint Francis was the ideal incarnate, for his friars and for Saint Clare and her Sisters. Son of God became for us the Way; and that Way our blessed Francis, His true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by example" (S. Clare, *Test.*, n. 2, p. 82). From his death, he has been followed, and is the *forma Minorum, virtutis speculum, recti via*: our example, the mirror of the Lord's perfection, the way of holiness.

So great was his likeness to Christ in holiness that he appeared to men as *Christus reviviscens*, Christ re-born among them, while he became what Dante called the new Orient, the new Holy Land. After Francis died, says Celano in a little known chapter (II, 219), a holy friar beheld him clothed in the rich purple dalmatic of a king, followed by a great crowd of people. Some of these came to the saint and said: Is not this Christ, O brother: *nonne hic est Christus*, O brother? He answered: He is indeed! Then others inquired: Is not this Saint Francis? and he answered as before. It seemed to him and to the crowd that the person of Christ and of the blessed Francis were as one: *quodammodo beati Francisci una persona foret!*

Such holiness on the part of Francis is beyond compare for us, seemingly beyond imitation and attainment. Here is the example for us! It becomes the child most of all, says Pius XI, to reflect in itself the image and virtues of its parent: as children of Saint Francis must imitate our Father. Yet he is so far above us that he substituted a Seraphic Order all his own. Perhaps there is a way of holiness, a way suggested by Saint Francis himself in his own sanctity.

## The Christ of Umbria

The holy Patriarch seemed always to realize that his life was to provide an ideal, a norm for the guidance and inspiration of others. Saint Clare likewise warned her Sisters at San Damiano that they were models for others to follow: *Testament*, n. 6, p. 83.) For that reason Francis refrained from many things and by example sought to teach the highest lessons in virtue. When he practiced extreme penance, he claimed it was his duty, because he was given to others as an example. When he was forced to yield somewhat to the needs of the body, he announced it to the people lest they see more in him than he truly was. When an old peasant warned him to be a model for all who looked up to him, he was thankful for the seeming rebuke.

Therefore, his poverty had to be of the highest, and he was sad when he found one more poor than himself. His prayer life was so a part of him that he prayed always, "striving always to make his mind ever conscious of God... (so that) walking and sitting, within and abroad, at work or at leisure, he was so given to prayer that he seemed to have dedicated to it not only all his heart and body, but his work and time" (Bonav., X, 1). His humility matched his poverty and his prayer: for, though lifted up to heaven by graces and charismata, he saw himself as the worst of sinners and the least of men. What he had was from God, and to Him all credit was due: what a man is in the sight of God that is and nothing more. And who is to speak of the shining brightness of his chastity or the depths of his perfect obedience?

But why multiply words? Every child of Saint Francis that has pondered his seraphic life has found him the mirror of Christ, and perfectly were all his virtues the image of his divine Ideal. And what are these virtues but so many preludes to that complete conformity shown on him from above in the Sacred Stigmata, the divine proof of his Christ-likeness, the divine seal of approval on his life, his Rule, his teachings?

## Our difficulty

In his glorious likeness to Christ, then, Francis is for us a grace from God, sent that by his example we may learn to reject ungodliness and

worldly lusts, and live conformed to Christ and thirst with unquenched desire for the blessed hope of Heaven (Bonav., Prol. 1). To us he adds the words of the Apostle: *Be imitators of me as I am of Christ* (I Cor. 11:1). Yet, when we contrast the holiness of Francis and the heights he reached with our own unruly natures and our feeble efforts toward perfection, we are disheartened and ask if we can ever expect to fulfill the ideals he has portrayed in his own life. Perhaps we even give up the pursuit of Franciscan Gospel perfection and soothe our consciences by saying that its attainment is impossible in our day and age.

Yet have we not here forgotten that Francis did not attain the heights all at once? He was not suddenly and completely made conformed to Christ from the very beginning of his conversion. Undoubtedly God gave him extraordinary graces throughout his life, because Providence had designed for him a special mission, of bringing Christ back to the lives of men. But at the same time, he had to make his way slowly up the mountain of the spiritual life; he did not achieve the heights in one swift step.

Did he not have to learn, and slowly, the very meaning of his vocation, which at first he interpreted as the re-building of the material church at San Damiano? Was not his prayer-life an evergrowing thing which took complete hold of him only gradually? May we not venture to say that the place of the Divine Office in his life became clear to him only after some years? Did his chastity preclude all temptation or lack of self-control? Not if we believe his biographers and the words they quote. Was he not in joy his from the beginning?

His progress, of course, hardly paralleled our plodding steps. But he did advance quickly, far more quickly than we have after him, following him. His purgation, however, was constant, his illumination unceasing, his union ever deeper until the climax on Mount Alverna. Yet withal, it was a *growth in God*, a steady pursuit of God in all things, and it is this constant growth that we can endeavor to imitate. It is this growth that we must imitate: a gradually deepened realization of the meaning of our vocation, a constantly increasing spirit of prayer, a steady battle to win victory over self by poverty of spirit, by poverty, holy chastity and penance, the submission of Christlike obedience to the will of the Father.

Whether we reach the heights is for God to decide. Ours is to

each day what we have promised the Lord to observe and to seek after.

*Semper Novus! Always New!*

This is no easy task, particularly if we have lost our Franciscan enthusiasm, if we have settled into a rut and a routine, if our ideals have become dim, if disillusionment and discouragement have taken their toll. Such dangers threaten every religious, every Franciscan, every priest. When we are young in religious life, a natural enthusiasm and sense of participation carry us along. Though these are poor foundations if purely natural, who is to say they did not help us as we anticipated our reception, our first profession, our solemn or final profession—and, for the priest, the steps of Holy Orders? We thus reached our goal, and the momentum of that final step carried us through the next few years. But then comes the danger! Our whole life stretches out before us, and if we let the inner flame grow small or, God forbid, have let it die out, our life may become nothing but an empty, hollow shell. We may bury ourselves in everish activity, but the fire is dead. Yet “the Religious without devotion, who is lukewarm, is not only unhappy and useless: before God he carries a dead soul in a living body!” (St. Bonaventure).

The danger of such a condition, to face the facts, seems to confront the Friar, be he priest or lay-brother, or a Sister, contemplative or active, between the ages of thirty and forty. Perhaps in some it comes sooner; they have entered religion earlier in life; for others, it may come later. Young religious have growing pains; older ones must watch against the hardening of spiritual arteries, when they have lost the joy of youth and have suffered the rude jolts of life and have slowed up in spiritual ardor.

What was Francis doing in those crucial years? He died in his forty-third year. Two years before, he had received the Stigmata, marks of his conformity to Christ, proofs that he had never paused, never slowed up, never grown old and stagnant within. And shall we dare say his was a peaceful life, free from complications, untrammelled by the hard facts of life, never subject to discouragement or to opposition from others? Why did he once complain: “They twist the sword deeper into my flesh,” when others despised his ideals?

But in the long ago it had been revealed to him and his two companions as they thrice opened the Gospel-book: *If anyone wishes to come*

after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Luke 9, 23). Daily! *Quotidie poenitentia crucis debet esse nova recens*, comments Saint Bonaventure: the penance of the Cross must be daily new and fresh. This, he continues, was exemplified in Saint Francis, who even at the end of his life when he had reached the summit and fulness of the imitation of Christ exhorted the Friars: *Brethren, let us begin to serve the Lord God, because until now we have scarcely made any progress! Never did he think, remarks Celano (1, 103), that he had laid hold of the goal, and unflagging in the pursuit of that holy mission of life (Rom. 6, 4), he hoped always to begin!*

*Cogitabat semper perfectiora incipere!* He thought always to begin to attain greater perfection. Despite bodily illness, weariness, the approach of Sister Death: let us begin! *We do not lose heart*, he could say like Saint Paul. *On the contrary, even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is renewed day by day* (II Cor. 4, 16). In a word then every son and daughter should remember and treasure: "Although he had laid up for himself many treasures of the spirit, he was *semper novus*, ever new, ever fresh, ever eager in the things of the spirit" (II Cor. 4, 16).

Would that this were our watchword! *Semper novus!* If the Marine is *Semper fidelis*, the Coast Guard *Semper paratus*, surely the Missionary of God, the shock-troops and knights of Christ, can emblazon their banner with *Semper Novus!* The Franciscan, like his Father, can be *semper novus*, always new, born anew in spirit each day, taking up his cross daily. That was the secret of the Seraph of Umbria. It can be our secret too.

But how shall we do this? Very practically, for one thing, by leading a daily life to renew our union with Christ through a conscious and faithful morning offering: *Domine, in unione*. . . By starting the day with thanksgiving from our heart: *Ecce venio*, behold I come, O heavenly Father, in union with Christ Thy holy Will. We shall do this by the constant practice of the spirit of prayer, by taking time to meditate on our vocation in our daily life, to see it as a pattern, the pattern of a Christiform life! *The dominion of a scribe*—of the friar, the nun, the Sister—*cometh by his diligent leisure*—the leisure of meditation, of prayer, of spiritual reading; *and he that is less in action shall receive wisdom* (Ecclesi 38, 25). Thus shall we, as a scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bring forth from the storehouse of the spirit things new, renewed, and old (Matt. 13, 52).  
Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.

## THE FRANCISCAN NOVITIATE

Deep in the heart of every true aspirant to the Franciscan life there wells a restless impatience for the day of his investiture in the holy habit of Saint Francis. On that day of days on which his great dream will be realized, there will begin for the new novice that journey upon the Franciscan road of life which leads to perfection and to sanctity. One of the most important stages of that journey is the very first, that of the novitiate, which immediately following the investiture leads the new novice into a year of prayer and silence, in complete retreat not only from the noise and distractions of the world but even from studies and indeed from anything which might in any way detract from the spiritual formation of his soul. This initial year of religious life is given up entirely to the cultivation of the spiritual life of the novice along Franciscan lines to the exclusion of all else; it is set aside precisely that he may completely and thoroughly steep himself in all the virtues which filled the heart of his Seraphic Father and which will from this time on govern his entire life.

Indeed one might say that during his stay in the novitiate he will come to learn the heart of Francis, that heart in which is contained the very essence of all Franciscanism, and which, as the Seraphic Doctor tells us, burned with a triple zeal:

"The Holy Father Francis, full of the spirit of God and wholly inflamed with the zeal for the love of God and of neighbor, burned with a triple desire, namely: that he might be able to be a perfect imitator of Christ in the perfection of every virtue; again that he might be able perfectly to cling to God through the taste of His continuous contemplation; and again that he might be able to gain for God and to save many souls for whom Christ willed to be crucified and to die." In the proper understanding of this threefold desire is that spirit of Francis which the new novice must assimilate and make his own during the year of probation.

"Francis burned with the desire that he might be able to be a perfect imitator of Christ in the perfection of every virtue." For the money of investiture, Holy Mother Church fittingly chooses the words of Saint Paul, telling us to *strip off the old man with his deeds. . . and put on the new man which has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth* (Col. 3, 9; and Eph. 4, 24). Now this new Man is none other than Christ Himself for Saint Paul tells us in another place *put on the Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. 13, 14). This putting on Christ is the first aim of the new Franciscan who must so dispose himself in his every thought, word, and deed, he might strive to think, and speak and act exactly as Our Lord would have in the same circumstances.

But while this imitation of Christ is basic and fundamental to the life and religious life in general, it is in a special way the mark of the true Franciscan. We know that from the very first, the ideal of imitatio Christi narrated in the Gospels captivated our Seraphic Father and most literally the life which our Blessed Lord and the Apostles lived in his every act. Furthermore, his imitation of Christ was limited to a particular aspect of His life but rather directed to the imitation of the whole Christ. For him, it would have to be all or nothing. This principle was the basis of his entire life and that of his followers. The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor: namely, to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . It is to the living of this Gospel therefore, that Francis calls the new novice on investiture day. In the peace and solitude of the novitiate he will teach him that love for God which so filled his own Seraphic heart and turned him into "the leper of Umbria."

Although the Franciscan neophyte must learn in his novitiate that this Christ-life presupposes both activity and contemplation and that both are essential elements of the Franciscan life, he must come to understand the priority of contemplation. From this prayerful love of God will emanate all acts motivated by fraternal charity, and it will be necessary for the novice to establish himself firmly in the practice of Franciscan Prayer which was so necessary a part of the life of our Seraphic Father and his first followers. "Francis burned with the desire that he might be able perfectly to cling to God through the practice of assiduous contemplation."

Soon after the Apostles had begun to follow Christ—one day while they were still in their novitiate—they one day approached

Our Lord with the humble request, *Lord, teach us to pray* (Lk. 11, 1). The young Franciscan novices approach their Father Francis with the same petition: Teach us to pray. During this all-important year of retreat, they will become imbued with the spirit of Seraphic Prayer. In their meditation they will learn of God, of His goodness and mercy and love. Here will they pour forth to their Father in heaven the longings and the joys, the trials and the tribulations, the joy and the sadness which fill their hearts. Here they will *draw waters in gladness out of the Savior's fountains* (Isa. 12, 3). By their recitation of their particular Office joined to the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass they will take an active part in Christ's work of Prayer, mediation and sacrifice for the souls of all men. Finally, by their Crown, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and other devotions they will more closely unite themselves to the Eucharistic Lord Whom they are striving so closely to imitate.

But important as is the life of prayer to the Franciscan, his life is not one of pure contemplation. The Seraphic Doctor tells us further: "Francis burned with the desire that he might be able to gain for God and to save many souls for whom Christ willed to be crucified and to die." For Francis, it was impossible completely to love God unless he also loved all men for whom God sent His only-begotten Son to suffer and to die. Now love is shown by deeds and so Francis would not rest content only to pray for his neighbor. Taking example from Our Lord, he zealously set his hand to the works of the active ministry which are God's visible means of drawing souls to His love. Francis was always ready to help his fellow men, whether they were in need of help for soul or body, and this also should be the disposition of his followers, to see in all men, as Francis saw in the lepers, the image of the Crucified Christ. The service of his fellow man, particularly as expressed in the works of the apostolate, should be such as to draw from the Franciscan the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles: *I will most gladly spend and be spent myself for your souls even though, loving you more, I be loved less* (2 Cor. 12, 15). In the novitiate, then, the new novice must learn this principle well. Although as yet he engages in none of the works of the active ministry, still this year he must fill himself as a great store house with prayer, contemplation, and the love of God, for from these will later flow the works of his active ministry. *Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur* (Matt. 12, 34).

On the day of investiture, the young aspirant to the Franciscan life stands before the altar of God. A year hence he will return to this

altar to vow to live the Franciscan life. In the intervening year there is much to be done. The novice must seek out Francis and at his feet learn that triple desire which animated his soul. He must learn to cast aside the old man of the world and to put on the new man, the man of Francis. He must learn the spirit of Franciscan prayer and contemplation and, that he may be able to bestow the fruits of this contemplation on others, he must learn the spirit of Franciscan fraternal charity. In its external manifestations, the works of the apostolate. Indeed, it is enough to say that he must learn the heart of Francis, for in it is contained every virtue necessary for the living of Franciscan life, the perfect replica of the supremely perfect evangelical life.

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Blessed is the servant of God who remains loyal to the clergy according to the established order of the Holy Roman Church. Woe to those who despise them! For even if they are sinners, no one has the right to sit in judgment on them, since the Lord reserves to Himself alone the right to judge them. For as the ministry entrusted to them surpasses all others, concerned as it is with the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which they receive and they alone minister to others; so do those who sin against them have a greater sin than if they were to sin against other persons in this world.

*Saint Francis of*

## THE THREE CROSSES

*(Sermon in honor of Saint Francis by Berthold of Regensburg—d. 1272).*

*On the three crosses: The Cross of Christ, the cross of the Good Thief, and the cross of the Bad Thief, and the fourfold suffering of each cross.*

*But as for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galat. 6, 14). Since these words could so aptly have been spoken by Saint Francis, they are applied to him today. But significantly the Apostle says that he does not wish to glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—not in the cross of the evil thief, nor in the cross of the good thief, but only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. These three crosses signify the three afflictions or punishments of men. The first of them leads to hell; the second to the heavenly paradise and the communion of the saints, although sometimes through purgatory; the third leads to a glory and reward which is above that of all the ordinary saints. Everyone hangs on one of them. The first cross, that on the left, is that of the evil thief; the second, on the right, is that of the good thief; and the third is that of Christ Himself, the Son of God.*

Sinners have their own cross, that is, their own suffering and torment; and they hang on the cross of the evil thief. For although they do not recognize the fact, they are in great fear and suffering, and they are by no means happy. As Ecclesiasticus says: *There is no good for him that is always occupied in evil and that gives no alms* (Ecclus. 12, 3). And *many are the scourges of the sinner* (Ps. 31, 10). In other words, great are the sufferings of evil people. *Woe to the wicked unto evil* (Isai. 2, 11). *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest* (Isai. 57, 20). For as the sea is rarely or never at peace, so it is with the evil ones. The cross, from which they descend to hell, has four parts. For the evil people have a fourfold torture, punishment or torment.



The one part is the great trouble which they have before their death. For they work very hard in order to commit the sin which they desire. A person will torture himself with heavy labor for a long time in order to gain the coveted honor and glory of the world; and after he has attained it, he finds some little consolation for a short time. He has a long watch and after that, a short feast. *In a short time they suffer want* (Ecclus. 16, 3). For it happens to them, as though in a dream, that they have had amusements, honors, and riches; and when they wake up they find not but misery and poverty. *They have slept their sleep: and all the riches have found nothing in their hands* (Ps. 75, 6). *The dreamer finds comfort evilly* (Zach. 10, 2). Their lot is like that of the spider in the morning and evening, on feast day and holiday, works very industriously; in fact, it works its insides out, in order to catch a few worthless flies. Thus it happens to these men. *Our years shall be considered as a day* (Ps. 89, 10). *They have woven the webs of spiders*, etc. (Isai. 58, 5).

The second punishment or torment of evil people is remorse of conscience after their sin; this they cannot avoid, whether they want or not. *For whereas wickedness is fearful, it bears the witness of its guilt* and of the condemnation of everyone: *for a troubled conscience always forecasts grievous things* (Wisd. 17, 10). For it always prepares the evildoer worms and hell-fire and other very severe torments applied without end. *Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched: and they shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh* (Isai. 66, 24). That is, the good people will see in them such a vengeance of God that they will not ask for more, even though they now say: *How long, O Lord, dost thou refrain from avenging*, etc? (Apoc. 6, 10). The miserable sinners are like those who already live in hell, since their conscience does not allow them any quiet, regardless of their wishes. *He is counted with the wicked that go down into hell* (Baruch. 3, 11). The evil conscience is that of a woman about whom Ecclesiasticus speaks: *There is no anger about the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion or a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman. All malice is short of the malice of a woman* (Ecclus. 25, 22, 26). And *like to a roof continually dripping is a scolding and irate woman* (Prov. 19, 13), for she ever threatens and taunts. On the other hand, a good conscience makes a person happy. *Happy is the husband of a good wife. A good woman gives her husband joy, and shall fulfill the years of his life in peace. She shall be a crown to a man for his good deeds. As the sun, when it rises to the world*

*in high places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament of her house. She is a lamp shining upon the holy candlestick* (Ecclus. 26, 1-3. . . 11-22). Now note! As delightful as the sun is during the day time, and as the lantern shining in the night, so is a good conscience in a man.

The third punishment, that is connected and mixed in with the sin itself, is very bitter, since every sin has its own particular torment. This is evident in envy, which carries its own punishment, in anger, avarice, drunkenness and all the others. As Jeremias says, *Your wickedness is bitter* (Jerem. 4, 18). And: *Ephraim has provoked me to wrath with his bitterness* (Hosee. 12, 14). And also a great deal more bitterness is mixed in as to how the sin can be hidden, or excused; moreover, there are many embarrassments, fears, and the like. Therefore, the Apostle warns us: *Let all bitterness be removed from you, along with all malice* (Eph. 4, 31).

The fourth part of the cross of the evil ones is the torment which they have at their death, when the devils terrify them, scold them, and gathering their sins together, throw them in their face. Then, in a short time the evil one pays many times over for all those things which ever gave him pleasure in his sin. *The affliction of an hour makes one forget great delights* (Ecclus. 11, 29). And then he is taken down from that cross with the thief on the left hand, to the torments of hell, where he is tormented most cruelly for ever.

Therefore, it is good advice to us sinners that we hang on the cross, not with the thief on the left, but rather with the one on the right. For then we will go from there into paradise.

This is the second cross, which is that of penitents. This likewise has four parts or torments, and not unjustly, since these people, too, have offended God. For this reason, the thief on the right said, *And we indeed are justly, for we are receiving what our deeds deserved; but this man has done nothing wrong* (Luke. 23, 41). For penitents rightly undergo evils. It is right and customary and natural that one who has gravely offended his lord should satisfy him in some way. Therefore, it likewise has its four kinds of punishment.

The first is a good confession. This part is very painful. *I will not spare my mouth, I will speak in the affliction of my spirit: I will talk with the bitterness of my soul* (Job. 7, 19). Indeed, there is much bitterness in a confession. For many a person would rather fast for fifteen days or a month than make a thorough and good confession. Yet the penitent



according to the heart of God. Of him the Lord could truly say, *I found a man after my own heart* (I Kings, 13, 14). (Vulg.: *The Lord sought him a man according to his own heart*). For he literally had his breast pierced to the heart as did the Lord Himself, and moreover his hands and his feet also. Such a man was not found among all the men of that time so that he could most properly have said, *But as for me, God forbid that I should glory*, etc. (Galat. 6, 14). And *With Christ I am nailed to the cross* (Galat. 2, 19). Furthermore, he was crucified with Christ on the spiritual cross. This is the cross of great spiritual love. On it hang the perfect men. On it likewise hung Blessed Francis who was wholly united with a great love. And although there is a great delight in virtues, according to the famous saying of Gregory: "Far be it that there should be a great delight in vices as there is in virtues", and as is read today in the Gospel: *Take my yoke upon you*, etc., *for my yoke is easy*, etc. (Matthew 29, 30), nevertheless this cross has four parts of very great suffering.

The first is the strong desire and affection which the perfect have for the joy of heaven and the vision of God. This pain is so great that they ardently desire death. *I desire to depart and to be with Christ* (I Corinthians 23). *Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death?* (Rom. 7, 24). That is: since of myself I cannot be freed. *The Lord look for death and it does not come, are as they that dig for a treasure and they rejoice exceedingly when they have found the grave* (Job, 22). For example, take Saint Andrew, John the Evangelist, or Blessed Francis. The latter went to the infidels in his desire for martyrdom when death was upon him, he received her joyfully, saying: "Welcome to my sister death."

And the second very painful part is the compassion for one's neighbor. For when perfect men see others suffering bodily pain and are unable to help them, they are in great anguish. *Who is made to suffer that is, by some disturbing tribulation, and I am not inflamed?* (I Corinthians 11, 29), with the fire of charity, with which I feel compassion for others. This virtue crucified Blessed Francis so that, strange to say, he could hardly stand to see a man poorer than himself, because of his great compassion. *And if one of the members suffers anything, all the members suffer with it* (I Cor. 12, 26). But, miserable man, how do you show compassion? In no way! For you are a rotten member and therefore you are insensible to the pains of others.

The third part is compassion for sinners; and it hurts the perfect

very much when they see that sinners offend God so much and that so many souls are lost. *Who*—that is, of all the faithful—is *weak*, either in some virtue, or in his faith, *and I am not weak?* (2 Cor. 11, 29), as if he were saying, I sorrow for him as I would for myself. *I speak the truth in Christ. I do not lie, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sadness*—that is, a constant numbness of mind—and *sorrow in my heart*, not externally, but in the depths of the heart, *for the sake of my brethren*, that is, the Jews who wander away from Christ (Rom. 9, 1). So also Christ Himself on Palm Sunday, *when He saw the city, he wept over it* (Luc. 19, 41). So also David: *A fainting has taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake your law* (Ps 118, 53). This pained Blessed Francis so much that he could hardly hear of the defection of certain religious, and if it was spoken of, he tried to flee because it hurt him as much as if in some way one had stuck a spear into his side, as he himself said.

The fourth part is that, either because of sickness or ignorance, they the good do seem as nothing to them. Therefore, one of the perfect said, cannot serve God as He is worthy to be served and as He deserves from him. *I do not consider that I have laid hold of it already. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind, I strain forward to what is before* (Phil. 3, 12). For this reason, they suffer very much and, therefore, they humble themselves as if they were of no account. As a result, whatever they do. And so the saints considered themselves as the least, so that Jacob said, *I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies* (Gen. 32, 10). And *the days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few, and evil* (Gen. 47, 9). And when John the Baptist was thought by almost all to be Christ he answered: *I am not the Christ* (John 1, 20). Now hear, that he said that he was not the Christ or a prophet or anything like that. Likewise, Abraham said that he was dust and ashes (Gen. 18, 27). And such a person was Blessed Francis, who when he was perfect in all things, wished at the time of his death to begin anew to serve God. Those who hang with Christ on this cross will be great above all the ordinary saints with Christ, Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XVIII)

### Chapter VI: Care of the Sick

Like the two previous ones, the present and following chapters of the Rule give specific directives as to how the dual law of love, the heart of the Rule and substance of the Gospel message, can be carried out in practice. Where the earlier chapters were concerned primarily with the love of God and the mastery of self, the sixth and seventh are oriented to fraternal charity. Bishop Felder commenting on the distinctive characteristic of Francis' love for his fellowmen declares: "Active, practical charity was at all times the ideal of the Seraphic Saint. Its soul is the knighthood of Christ, its sphere principally the *care of the sick and relief of the poor*" (*Ideals of St. Francis*, ch. 13). If this be so, we can see that inasmuch as Chapter Six on the "Care of the Sick" and Chapter Seven on the "Nature and Manner of Work" reflect the Poverello's sentiments in regard to the infirm and needy, they indicate what should be of major concern in every Tertiary's practice of charity.

Christ willed that fraternal charity should "begin at home," that within the confines of the apostolic band, the first religious community *this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another* (Jo. 13, 35). The Rule of the Third Order Regular with its sense of values singles out the sick and needy of the community as the object of a Franciscan's charity. Three articles comprise this sixth chapter.

**TEXT:** *Article Seventeen. If a Brother or Sister falls ill, no one shall refuse to offer his services; but it shall be the duty of the Superior to provide for the proper care of the patient. The others who are not assigned to this duty should not hesitate to visit the patient and comfort him with consoling words. Not only the sick, however, but also the aged and otherwise needy should all gladly tender the offices of charity as becomes the children of the Seraphic Father.*

*Article Eighteen. The Superiors especially are bound to admonish the sick Brother or Sister to accept the penance of illness and to be truly reconciled with God, reminding the patient also of the nearness of death, and of the severity of Divine Judgment, as well as of the Divine Mercy (cit. Rule, ch. VI).*

*Article Nineteen. When a Brother or Sister has departed this life, the Superiors shall see to it that the obsequies are held with great piety (cit. Rule, ch. IX). The prescribed suffrages should be faithfully performed for the soul of every deceased member.*

It is the closing phrase of the first article, "as becomes the children of the Seraphic Father," that adds the specifically Franciscan note to what is otherwise of general obligation for all religious communities.

Francis, we know, had a tender compassion and natural sympathy for those who were sick or in need, even though at times the nature of the disease itself might cause an almost abnormal loathing or revulsion of soul as was the case, for instance, with leprosy. Under the influence of divine grace, however, this natural compassion rose to the heights of heroism, and became a spiritual ferment that transformed and supernaturalized his entire life. That is why Francis himself, in reviewing his spiritual Odyssey that culminated in the combined Calvary and transfiguration of Alverna, could date its beginning to the discovery of Christ in the person of the leper. "The Lord granted me thus to *begin* to do penance, for when I was in sin, it seemed to me too bitter a thing to see lepers, but the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, that which had seemed bitter to me was changed for me into sweetness of soul and body" (*Testament*).

As disciples began to band about him, Francis' compassion for the sick found a new object of concern, his own brethren. Nothing could make him forget his own excruciating pain so quickly as the sight of another friar's suffering. Countless charming instances of this concern are recorded by early biographers. The migratory life of the first friars and the lack of fixed dwelling places made it incumbent on Francis to write in his first Rule: "If any of the brothers fall into illness, wherever he may be, let the others not leave him, unless one of the brothers, or more if it be necessary, be appointed to serve him as they would wish to be served themselves; but in urgent necessity they may commit him to some person who will take care of him in his infirmity." Even afterwards

when the establishment of convents made such injunctions unnecessary. Francis still cautioned superiors in particular of their duty to care for the sick and needy. In the Rules of all three of his Orders Francis included special reminders of this obligation.

Not only did the Poverello personally exemplify how to care for the sick but he gave his followers a no less important object lesson in how to bear their affliction when they themselves fell sick. So great was his anxiety lest he become a burden to his brethren in his illness that he was constrained to beg their pardon whenever they rendered him a service. He hid his own sufferings beneath a mask of smiling cheerfulness. Celano tells us, Only obedience forced him to accept the attention and care his condition demanded (*Leg. Prima*, n. 101, 107). "I ask the pardon of my brother," he wrote, "that he give thanks to the Creator for all that I have received and that he desire to be as God wills him to be, whether sick or well, for all whom the Lord has predestined to eternal life are disciplined by the rod of afflictions and infirmities and the spirit of compunction; and the Lord says: 'Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise! If however, he be quieted and angry, either against God or against the brothers, or perhaps he eagerly ask for remedies, desiring too much to deliver his body, which is soon to die, which is an enemy to the soul, this comes to him from the flesh and he is carnal, and seems not to be of the brothers, because he loves his body more than his soul'" (*Rule of 1221*, ch. 10).

As Francis viewed the matter, a twofold obligation exists: one upon the religious superiors and brethren to look after their sick, the other enjoined upon the infirm to bear with their adversity patiently. Articles Seventeen and Eighteen reproduce substantially this dual duty of a Franciscan religious. While the clarity of the wording almost makes further commentary superfluous, we might consider with profit what moral theology and Canon Law have to say on the subject.

Moralists, for instance, point out that the obligation of a community to care for its sick and bury its dead is not merely a matter of charity but rather of strict justice. It is one of the consequences of the bilateral contract involved in religious profession. On the other hand, justice requires only that religious superiors make use of the ordinary means of caring for the sick. No community is obligated in justice to provide extraordinary remedial measures, for instance, those so expensive that only the wealthy class could afford to make use of them. Sending the sick to a great cost to a distant and more healthy climate, for example, would

be a question of charity, not of justice. Prudence dictates if and when such extraordinary measures can be employed in the name of charity without detriment to the relief of other pressing community needs. In the spirit of Francis, however, we can say that other things being equal, it is better to fail by excessive solicitude for the sick than by defect. With him it was always a matter of reserving the best cell, the finest food, the warmest clothing for the sick. In fact he did not hesitate to provoke wonderment and even a certain amount of scandal by personally begging for delicacies during the penitential season of Lent that he might gladden the hearts of his sick brethren.

Where it is necessary to send religious to hospitals or sanitariums, superiors should take note of the prescription of Canon 605, par. 2, which requires special permission of the Apostolic See if the sick religious is to remain outside a house of his or her Congregation for more than six months, and this even when the hospital in question is staffed by religious of some other institute. Such permission can be readily obtained, however, where there is any real necessity, for example, in the case of a religious with tuberculosis.

Implicit in the notions of "proper care of the patient" (Art. 17) and "to be truly reconciled with God" (Art. 18) is the idea of providing the sick with the opportunity of going to confession and communion and of receiving the last sacraments. In this connection we might note the special concessions made by Canon Law and the Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus* of Pius XII.

The latter permits the sick, even if not confined to bed, to take non-alcoholic liquids or medicine (liquid or solid) any time before receiving communion providing they have the permission of some confessor, which permission may be given once and for all as long as this condition of sickness lasts. Where priests are concerned, probable opinion maintains that the permission of a confessor is not required.

Canon 523 permits any religious sister seriously ill, even though not in danger of death, to call any priest approved for the confessions of women though not specially approved for the confessions of nuns, to whom she may confess during the grave illness as often as she wishes. The superior may not either directly or indirectly prohibit the sister from making use of this concession. Canonists explain that by 'serious illness' is to be understood any illness that would require the services of a physi-

cian or an illness that obliges a patient to remain in bed for a week or more. Where the sickness is such that it constitutes 'danger of death' of course, any priest, even though not approved for confessions can validly and licitly absolve any penitent (Can. 882).

Religious men, whether sick or not, "for the peace of their conscience, may go to any confessor approved by the local Ordinary. The confessor may absolve the religious from sins and censures reserved to the institute" (Can. 519).

The religious superior has the right in clerical orders or institutes to administer the last sacraments to his subjects (Can. 514)—and if the order is exempt, at least from the pastor in whose parish the religious house is situated, the superior also has the right to conduct the funeral (Can. 464, par. 2). In the case of lay institutes (Sisterhoods and Congregations of Brothers), however, the local pastor has both the right and obligation to administer, either in person or through another, Viaticum and Extreme Unction to the religious, except where the bishop has given the chaplain of their church or oratory 'parochial rights' in this matter (Can. 514, par. 3). Of course, in case of necessity or with reasonably presumed permission, any priest can administer the last sacraments (Can. 848, par. 2; 938, par. 2).

Article Nineteen requires the religious superior to "see to it that the obsequies are held with great piety," that is to say, to provide for ecclesiastical burial for the deceased. Here it is well to recall the legislation laid down by the Code of Canon Law regarding the interment of religious.

Ecclesiastical burial according to the Code consists of the transportation of the body to the church or chapel, the funeral services proper (Mass and Absolution of the Dead) and the interment in some lawfully designated burial ground (Can. 1204).

Novices have the right to choose their place of burial as well as the Church where their funeral will take place. They lose this privilege granted generally to the faithful, when they make religious profession (Can. 1221, 1224).

While the superior may give permission to the parents or relatives of the deceased to bury the religious in a family vault, if specific regulations or customs proper to their institute does not forbid it, the funeral

itself must be conducted according to the following norms set down by Canon Law.

In case of death outside the religious house (e.g. in a hospital), the professed religious and novices are to be transferred to the church or oratory of the convent to which they were attached or at least to some house of their organization, unless the novices have chosen otherwise. If death occurs in a place so distant that the body cannot be conveniently brought to a church or chapel of the religious institute, the deceased is to be buried from the church of the parish where the death occurred, unless it be a case of a novice who has chosen some other church. Religious superiors, however, always have the right to have the body transferred at their expense to any house of the institute should they so wish (Can. 1221).

In institutes of men, even when they are not technically clerical exempt orders or congregations, if the religious superior is a priest he is usually given parochial rights by the local ordinary in regard to his own subjects in the matter of ecclesiastical burial. In lay institutes (such as Sisterhoods or Brothers of the Third Order Regular), if the chaplain of the convent church or oratory has been given parochial rights or is exempt from the local pastor, it is he who has the right and privilege of conducting the funeral services at the convent, otherwise this is the right of the pastor in whose parish the religious house is located. Consequently, if a religious superior wishes another priest, e.g. a relative, friend, former pastor, etc., of the deceased to have the funeral Mass, permission must be obtained from the chaplain or pastor as the case may be.

With regard to religious women, Canon Law prescribes that the priest is not to enter the enclosure, but the sisters are to bring the body to the threshold of the cloister where the priest meets them and conducts the body to the church or oratory for the last rites (Can. 1230, par. 5).

The earlier Rule of Leo X, referred to in Article Nineteen, prescribed in some detail the various suffrages for the dead. The present Rule follows current procedure in the Church which leaves it up to the Constitutions of the religious institute to determine what the specific suffrages for the dead shall be. Canon 567, par. 1, however, indicates that those who die as novices are entitled to the same suffrages as the professed religious.

## FRANCISCAN GENEROSITY

In commemorating the death of Saint Francis, all Franciscan hearts are moved to joy and admiration. Joy, because of the heavenly reward and glory that is now his; admiration, because of his unusual life of love, peace, poverty, and obedience. But all these things in the life of Saint Francis might never have been if Saint Francis had lacked the virtue of generosity.

The virtue of generosity is a self-less and willing giving of ourselves for some cause. From such a definition we can find any number of examples. The lives of great men and especially of the saints proffer much material and inspiration for generosity. But the generosity of Saint Francis stands out in a singular way. True, his poverty could scarcely be proved upon; his obedience was a paragon for all religious. But the virtues of Saint Francis got their real start at the time of his conversion. Once he had given himself to God and the things of God, poverty, obedience, and the other virtues of Saint Francis followed with comparative ease. This ease was assured because of his generous heart in cooperation with God's grace.

Before Saint Francis was converted, his life was devoted to a search for comfort and success, camaraderie and gay times. He used little restraint in the indulgence of all his desires, so long as serious sin was not involved. His head was full of the worldly glory of knighthood, pageantry, gay clothes, and a fascination for trifles. Evidently Francis Bernardone was convinced that all was right with him. He was relatively upright in the eyes of the Assisiens, but behind his uprightness a layer of egotism lay hidden and untouched. It was egotism that prompted him to demand the liberty of trivial transgressions without any serious displeasure from God. He probably loved this wretched liberty which seemed to leave him the right of being unpunished, though unfaithful. Then something happened. The soul of Francis Bernardone was moved and enlightened. He desired something great, very great. One thing led to another until

realized what it was that he wanted. He wanted and longed for God!

The virtue of generosity urged Francis to give himself entirely to the love of God. To do this he realized with shame that he must change his interests and ideals. God must be first and last—nothing else mattered but God. His self-centered life of gaiety and pleasure must be supplanted with a God-centered life of love and penance. By determination to change, he stifled every desire incompatible with this new longing for God. He rejected every worldly interest that would leave his soul less open to follow the movements of God's grace. He realized the truth of Christ's words, *No man can serve two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other* (Matt. 6:24). After Francis had God for the center of his life, he truly found God. He had learned through experience the truth of God's words, *You shall seek me and shall find me, when you shall seek me with all your heart* (Jer. 29:13).

The conversion of Saint Francis was a conversion that lasted throughout the rest of his life. Repeated acts of generous cooperation with God's grace filled every day. Whatever he knew to be right and pleasing to God, he did with thoroughness and a willing heart. He gave his all to God; he never started those dangerous backward steps of taking back bit by bit what he had so generously given to God. His generosity toward God was without reserve and without counting the cost.

We say that we envy the converted life of Saint Francis. Are we perhaps deceiving ourselves? Do we envy his converted life of love, fervor, and sacrifice, or is it only his eternal reward we admiringly long for? Reward follows after sacrifice and not after mere wishful thinking. If we truly want the same reward of Saint Francis, we must necessarily want the same sacrifices. If we want to suffer the sacrifices that he made—the sacrifice of self-love in the forms of poverty, obedience, chastity, and a Christo-centric love of neighbor, we must have the generosity of Saint Francis.

To develop in our hearts the generosity of Saint Francis, we must have what some authors call a "readiness to change". We are to have the humble willingness to realize that we are not what we should be. With Saint Augustine we should convince ourselves, "Whatever we are, we are not what we ought to be." But to convince ourselves of this may be difficult. We may be perfectly content with ourselves. We say that we

obey the orders of God and of our superiors. We think that everything we do is the way God wants it to be. We pride ourselves in being kind, understanding, and spiritual-minded. But to these virtues we attach reservation—keep these things in their place and their place is the appointed place our selfishness allows them. We will not have our comfort and liberty invaded at any price. If anything does interfere with comfort or self-love, we quickly label it too radical, theoretical, or impractical for Novices.

In a moment of fervor we may walk with God for awhile with a generous heart. But our generosity soon fades away. As Père Charles de Foucauld in his *Prayer for All Times* (p. 26), "...with a vacant look, we turn away our heads and leave Him. We fear that He is about to ask for some service that will call for generosity. . .for the moment we don't want to do it. But we dare not look Him in the face, for we know so well that at a glance all our opposition will fade away, and we should fall prostrate at His feet. So we pretend to be busy and absorbed with things outside of service; and in this very pretense it is easy to read the secret desire for His power, and the fear of His inevitable exactions."

How differently Saint Francis acted. Once God became the center of his life, God *remained* the center of his life. There was no looking aside. We must realize with Saint Francis that we are to change our hearts from being self-centered and pleasure-centered, to being only God-centered. As Fr. Leen says in *Progress Through Mental Prayer* (p. 103), "we must be ready to pursue our own sanctification, even though we are tried by hunger after the satisfactions of a life lived for the indulgence of every gratification not positively sinful." To do this requires generosity and more generosity. When God moves our hearts to correct our faults and to be faithful in little things, let us respond with the generosity of Saint Francis. How un-Franciscan it would be to say, "Move the center of someone else, God; I like myself just the way I am." To limit the love of ourselves and our love of God in advance, ends up in not giving anything at all.

Christ gave His all for love of us. Saint Francis followed His example by giving his all for love of Christ. We are followers of Christ. Saint Francis. Are we ready to imitate their generosity? Are we ready to open our hearts wider for God's love and grace, which in turn will prompt us to correct our faults? Was Saint Ignatius Loyola correct

He said that *few* souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them according to His will? Who of us can say with Saint Francis, "Up till now we have done nothing; let us now begin"? (I Celano, n. 103).

*Consider that I have set before thee this day, life and good, and on the other hand, death and evil. . .Choose therefore life, that thou. . .mayest live; and that thou may love the Lord thy God and obey His voice, and adhere to Him for He is thy life* (Deut. 30: 15-20).

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Because his activity lay really in the life he led, Francis strove with the most terrifying ruthlessness to achieve in his person the utmost in harmony between what he was and how he lived, between his interior and exterior self—strove for consuming truthfulness. Whatever took visible shape in his conduct, was made to correspond most exactly with his interior attitude. Any point where exterior and interior were at variance with each other, where his life failed to match the demand of it, Francis would have felt to be a horrible blot, a barefaced lie. His life, his inmost self becoming visible exteriorly, was all the law he knew; he laid down no law but what he was fulfilling.

Reinhold Schneider, *The Hour of Saint Francis*



## THE HILL OF PARADISE

From *La Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi* by Fr. Raynold Sciamannini, O.F.M. Conv.

With the celebration of so many centenaries this year, we are to forget a most important one in the history of our Order—the Centenary of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Francis.

The Church in Assisi arose at the express command of Pope IV who as Cardinal Bishop of Ostia had been a personal friend of Saint Francis. The strongest supporter of the nascent Franciscan Order, on April 29, 1228, with the Bull *Recolentes qualiter*, he announced to the entire world that it was his wish that a majestic temple be built on a certain hill of territory," so runs the venerable text, "given to Us and the Church for the permanent custody of the blessed body of Saint Francis, reserving to himself the inalienable proprietary rights over it with the relative rights of immunity. To show his jurisdiction over the Order, he ordered the Friars to renew each year to himself and his successors a homage of a pound of wax, to be given on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The piece of land was the western slope of Assisi, presented to the Pope on March 29 of the same year by Simone di Pucciarello in the presence of the communal judge, Guido, and six witnesses. The gift was confirmed the following year with the offering by Monaldo di Leonardo of a woodland stretching from the east to the Tescio River. These were the first gifts—the ones nearest the heart of the Saint since they were given by his own fellow citizens—destined to become a place of veneration for the whole world. On July 17 of the same year, 1228, after the dedication of the Poverello, the same Pontiff, amid lights and music, laid the cornerstone.

A pious legend has the story that on this spot, popularly called Colle dell' Inferno, culprits were executed and buried. Saint

Francis, in a last act of humility, had previously selected it as the place of his burial. Legend has woven a beautiful story about the ugly name of the hill. The hill was called *inferno* only because it was lower than the hill which dominated the city. At any rate, the solemn laying of the cornerstone cancelled any apparent unseemliness in the name and transformed it into a veritable Colle del Paradiso, a Hill of Paradise.

Emperors, princes, cardinals, Assisians, and faithful from all parts of the world visited the wonderful edifice planned and executed by the genius and love of Brother Elias, vicar and successor of the Saint. The offerings in money and material literally poured in from everywhere, and in a way unprecedented in the construction of shrines and churches. The Pope himself authorized and solicited alms in a Bull granting spiritual privileges to the benefactors. In less than two years, the Church was ready to receive the sacred remains of the Saint. This seems incredible when we think of the many shrines, begun with a like fervor, the building of which ran on for years or was never completed at all.

On April 22, 1230, with the Consistorial Document *Is qui Ecclesie*, undersigned by thirteen cardinals, the Pontiff himself declared that it was his will that the cathedral and papal throne be placed in the new Church, which he proclaimed the "Head and Mother of the Order of Friars Minor." He then made it immediately subject to the Holy See. On May 25, 1230, the vigil of Pentecost, the body of Saint Francis was solemnly transferred from its temporary resting place in the Church of Saint George to the new Church. The body, still in its stone sarcophagus, was drawn by a team of purple-clad oxen. The entourage was unparalleled. There were men from far and near, says Thomas of Celano, and the nearby hills were filled with their Hosannas. More than one miracle occurred that day at the touch of the Poverello's bier.

When the procession reached the Church, however, the doors were closed. The magistrates of Assisi, jealous of their treasure, did not want the people to witness the actual burial. Accordingly, they lowered the sacred relics into the bowels of the hard immobile rock under the main altar—the exact place known only to them.

Both because of the tremendous love and veneration of the people for Saint Francis, whose body they might have attempted to exhume, and because of the everlasting strife between Assisi and Perugia, such precautions were most necessary. The way in which the burial was carried

out may seem to us somewhat violent; as a matter of fact, the Pope lamented the procedure. Upon being apprised of the circumstance, however, he expressed his approval of what had been done.

Succeeding centuries proved that the fears of the Assisians had been groundless. In the repeated invasions of Frederick the Second's soldiers from 1239 to 1246; of the Ghibellines in 1319; of Braccio Braccio in 1442; and of the Beglinoni in 1497, the body of Saint Francis was as prize booty to be taken from the sanctuary and from the city.

Rome, however, was ever watchful over this house of predilection. Innocent IV, leaving his exile in France to which Frederick the Second had constrained him, came to Assisi in 1253 for the consecration of the Church. He himself presided over the ceremonies, and remained in Assisi from April to mid-October. It was during this time, also, that he blessed the Convent. In the course of the succeeding years, with Gregory IX, Clement IV, Martin IV, the Franciscan Nicholas IV, and Sixtus IV, came a torrent of gifts and privileges, renewing the plenitude of jurisdiction of the Holy See over the Church. The Franciscan Pope Sixtus V, in 1585, instituted there the Confraternity of Cordbearers. In 1600 a Papal Bull granted a plenary indulgence to be gained once a day by the faithful who visited the Church. This privilege is recorded in letters inscribed over the door of the Lower Church.

The jurisdiction of the Papacy over the sanctuary of Saint Francis became more and more emphatic. The Constitution of Benedict XIII, March 24, 1754, *Fidelis Dominus*, to dispel any possible doubts, gathered and codified all the rights and privileges granted by his predecessors. With this document, a monument of jurisprudence, the Church of Saint Francis was elevated to the rank of Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Basilica, equal to the major basilicas in Rome. Thus the Pope became the immediate ordinary. A ceremonial was compiled to regulate expressly the Papal ritual to be followed there.

After the interest shown to the Basilica by Clement XIII and the Franciscan Clement XIV, there came the revolutionary movement in France at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1798, while Pius VI was subjected to the most trying difficulties, the Basilica was invaded by military hordes of France and despoiled of practically all its gold and silver. In May of 1810 there followed the first suppression of religious orders. As a result, only seven priests with three lay brothers were

left to remain as custodians of the Sanctuary. But at the fall of Napoleon, in December 1814, the religious again took their place in the Basilica.

The finding of the body of Saint Francis was the secret joy God had prepared for the comfort of his children in their hour of trial. In 1818, at the fervent and repeated requests of the religious, Pius VII allowed the sepulchre of the Saint to be made accessible again to the faithful. The patient and secret search that followed was at length successfully ended. Behind layers of mortar and slabs of stone, an oblong opening was found, about six feet deep and nine feet wide, covered entirely with dark travertine. Deep within, as if buried in the bowels of the earth, and enclosed by an iron gate, lay the limestone tomb containing the body of the Saint. To the tremendous joy of the Catholic world, the Pope announced by a Brief that "the question of the identity of the body recently discovered under the main altar of the Basilica in Assisi is settled, and without doubt it is the body of Saint Francis, the Founder of the Order of Friars Minor."

After the visits of Gregory XVI in 1841 and Pius IX in 1857, the Italian suppression brought new trials for the Convent in Assisi. It was turned into an orphanage for the children of teachers employed by the government. The Holy See decried this unjust usurpation, invoking the Law of Guarantees. At the recovery of the Convent in favor of the religious, October 2, 1927, the Friars, with the help of the government and with offerings from all over the world, constructed a new building for the orphanage. Pius XII, finally, with the proclaiming of Saint Francis as the Patron of Italy (June 19, 1939) conferred upon the Sanctuary a national character.

Every detail, every stone, every color breathes the august presence of the sovereign Pontiff in this Franciscan Basilica. The Papal presence seems to be a very part of that Chair, erected from the beginning, in the center of the tribune of the Upper Church; it stands as incontestable proof against the usurpers of the apostolic rights. *Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk; and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon* (Ps. 90).

Saint Francis Seminary  
Staten Island, New York

Fr. Hugh DeCicco, O.F.M. Conv. (trans.)

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

PRINCIPLES AND PARADOXES OF THE MILITANT LIFE. St. Joseph Piat, O.F.M., transl. by James Meyer, O.F.M. Chicago: The Franciscan Press. 1953 Pp. 195. \$2.75.

For every Franciscan Tertiary with an apostolic turn of mind, this book was a tremendous appeal. It gives the answer to how and when to plunge into apostolate, as well as to what is required of the would-be apostle by way of spiritual and intellectual equipment.

Coming from France, where so much is being done by the "workmen-priests," this little volume is vibrant with the spirit that is driving the priests of France to go among the sheep that have been so long without a shepherd. That spirit, as preached by Father Stephane Joseph, is not only challenging to our lethargy but is also contagious. No one can read this book thoughtfully without being stirred to a deeper spiritual life, a more fruitful piety and a greater activity among those who are in need.

As a veteran of the Franciscan Home Mission Band, Father Stephane writes with a background of rich experience in Paris and in the Department de la Mayenne. His experiences much like those described in Abbe Michonneau's *Revolution in the Parish* and other recent books dealing with religion in France. He presents problems, however, that are not exclusively French but universal; they are the problems that every serious Catholic meets with in daily contacts—social injustice, bigotry, ignorance, prejudice—all the evils that afflict the body and mind and soul of modern man. Clearly and unequivocally—slangily even—he states the case; then, none the less, he states the remedy. Basically, as we all admit, the remedy for the world's ills is simply the sanctification of believing Catholics. Once Christians have learned to live like Christians, to give Christianity a chance to function as Christ intended it should, then we can hope for peace in the world but not before.

Besides stressing the need for the spiritual formation of the apostle, the book also gives practical guidance for militant Catholic action in every field of endeavor. With insight and humor he discusses all the angles, from how to keep happily militant to tactful methods of dispensing soup to the neighbor in need. Though militantly Catholic to tactful methods of dispensing soup to the neighbor in need. He divides the book into five parts: I. The Call to the Militant; II. The Militant's Spirituality; III. The Militant's Program of Life and His Training; IV. The Militant's Spirit and Method of the Apostolate; V. Christian Social Action; and concludes with a beautiful summary chapter entitled: To Christ the Victory.

Although intended primarily for laymen, clergy and religious can gain much information from Father Stephane Joseph's book, and also much material for their own thoroughly searching self-examination.

Father James Meyer's translation happily preserves much of the author's original and virile style. The Franciscan Herald Press is to be congratulated on publishing one of the most valuable books in their long series of very valuable Franciscan materials.

# the CORD

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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*Come, My Spouse, come, thou shalt be crowned* (Cant. 4, 8)

Anyone who has had the privilege of attending the deathbed of a good Christian parent carries away tender memories of a deathbed Christ, a lesson in living as well as in dying. At the deathbed of Saint Clare, in the month of August 1253, the friars present, Brother Angelo, Juniper, felt as though they were assisting anew at the transitus of their Seraphic Father. Once again they read the Passion of Our Lord, and perhaps sang the Canticle of Creatures to welcome Sister Death who would do no harm to Sister Clare. The Ladies, who had experienced daily the holiness and patience of the Mother in her long illness, who had come to regard her as close to Our Lady in sanctity and were the grateful recipients of her unending kindness and love, were now pierced with the sword of overwhelming sorrow. Yet despite their grief, all knew that Christ was coming to call her to the palace of His heavenly kingdom. Now His voice was sounding in her ear: *Veni, sponsa mea, et coronaberis!* (Cant. 4, 8).

Then the hand of the Lord came upon one of the Sisters, she was privileged to see what the others knew in their hearts: the true meaning of Clare's vocation and indeed of their own vocation: the consecration of their lives wrought by holy virginity. For all fell to pondering the great holiness of her Mother and the happiness and glory that were to be her reward, Sister Benvenuta suddenly beheld white-robed virgins led by the Virgin of virgins enter the lowly cell and cover the dying Saint with a mantle of wondrous beauty. For twenty-nine years, Benvenuta had witnessed the vision of the Lady Clare, and she knew that the vision betokened the reward of her consecrated life.

That life Clare herself had unconsciously revealed in her letters to the Blessed Agnes, letters no one can read without recognizing

therein a mirror of her blessed soul, without discovering the role of her consecrated virginity in the nuptials of the Lamb, without feeling the burning love of her heart for "that blessed Bridegroom whom love made Man."

*Return, O Sulamitess, that we may behold thee!*

Like the servants of David, Francis of Assisi had sought out for his Lord the young virgin Clare, and found in her a soul that was pure, prudent, and wise, full of love and given to contemplation. She had rejoiced and warmed the Heart of the King, as Saint Bonaventure says of Agnes the Martyr, because she was overflowing in the abundance of her love.

Now such a soul, continues Saint Bonaventure (whose sermon provides our key to the doctrine of the nuptials of the Lamb), such a soul, virginal and holy of life, united to God by contemplation and mystical union, the Spouse calls to Himself, addressing her now as sister, again as daughter, again as His bride and spouse, or sometimes as His beloved. She cannot be His beloved, the delight of His Sacred Heart, unless she is sister and daughter and spouse. The sister of Christ, because she is like Him in her innocence; the daughter, because she is so prompt and wholehearted in her obedience; the spouse and bride because she cleaves to Him forever. Thus graced with virtue and possessed of surpassing beauty in heart, mind, and will, she is most beloved of the King of Love.

It is not this our Sister Clare, who matched her name with the brilliance of her virtues, whose whole life was offered to Christ that glorious night of Palm Sunday, whose whole heart thenceforth was set on the pursuit of that perfection which leads to the heavenly bridal chamber of the Beloved; who saw herself, as reflected in her words to Blessed Agnes, as daughter and handmaid of the Eternal King, sister and spouse of the Lamb, lover and beloved of the Son of the Most High Father? What did these glorious titles mean for her? What do they imply for every soul that belongs to Christ, especially for those vowed to God in holy virginity and chastity? Is it not

in this, above all, that Clare was placed as "an example and mirror... for our Sisters whom God has called to" the Franciscan "way of life"?

Her very life, as Pope Alexander IV was to say, was for others a school of instruction and doctrine. In this book of life the others learned, and others now may learn, the rule of life; in this mirror of life, others may behold the path of their own life. In her shining light, the practice and love of chastity were increased in the world; the state of virginity restored to life and given its due honor. Clare was a most wise virgin, who knew that virginity alone was not sufficient without the oil of charity in her lamp. Only virginity embraced out of love for the Spouse has meaning, for that love alone leads the virgin to think about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and spirit (1 Cor. 7, 34). Virginity, purity, chastity thus make for one-mindedness, undividedness, if they have charity as their motive and flame; for the spouse of the Word, says Bernard, must cleave to the Beloved with all her power, live by Him, be ruled by Him. Such will be her conformity, imitation, union, that He will call her His sister and daughter, spouse and beloved.

### *My Sister, My Daughter*

Every soul in grace, but especially the virginal soul, states the Seraphic Doctor, is the *Sister of Christ* because she shows a familiarity to Him through the conformity which holy innocence effects. Has not the Beloved Himself proclaimed that whoever does the will of His Father in heaven is His brother and sister and mother (Mt. 12, 50)? But the virginal soul by her purity of heart, goodness of conscience, and faith unfeigned, reveals that she has accepted within her the laws of God. Above all, she has in love, which is the fulfillment of the Law, kept her heart for God alone.

Thus did Sister Clare admit only the Beloved into her soul, and warn Blessed Agnes to let none turn her heart from Him to whom she had surrendered herself. Her firmness of faith set a wall about that soul, to keep all out save her God and to protect her from

treasure from the enemy. May we not see a marvelous faith too in her embrace of virginity in poverty, for it was only by faith that she could know that poverty would help, not hinder, her consecration to God? Would that the Lamb might find in our souls, too, such innocence that He would enter through the door of a good conscience, crying: *Open to Me, My sister* (Cant. 5, 2), and find within such a likeness to Himself that He would delight to call them sisters!

"Hasten with swift pace and light step and feet unshumbling," Clare had begged Agnes, "so that even thy steps stir up no dust, securely, joyously, promptly, and prudently on the path of happiness." Thus herself quick to walk the paths of God, Clare merited by the promptness of her obedience to be called the *Daughter of the King*: *How beautiful are thy steps, O daughter of the prince!* (Cant. 7, 1), in heeding the call of thy Beloved to forget thy people and the house of thy father. In ready answer, she had left behind the attractions of the world, her people, for contempt of the world pleased her more than its honors; she had abandoned the riches of her father's house, for greater than all wealth was poverty to her who had chosen to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth; she has fled all fleshly interests or affection for her family, as a poor virgin to embrace the Poor Christ.

In this had the Son of God obeyed His Father, that He became humble, poor, despised and afflicted. Looking upon Him who, though more beautiful than the sons of men, had become for her salvation the lowest of men, considering and contemplating Him, Clare was filled with a desire to imitate Him, to suffer with Him and to die to the world with Him on the Cross of sorrow. Therefore, despising earthly things and the momentary joys and deceptive glories of men and answering the will of God, Clare became truly the daughter of the Most High King and true Sister of the obedient Lamb of God. Such is the fear of the Lord that walketh with chosen women (Ecclus. 1, 16), and that wisdom which bringeth immortality (cf. Wisd. 8, 17).

Were we wise like our Sister Clare, instead of searching too often after the wisdom that is of earth, we would yield ourselves to

that true wisdom which makes those who use it friends of God and their souls sisters of Christ and daughters of the King. Our hearts would be undivided in our desire to do always and only the things that please Him.

### *My Spouse, My Beloved*

Above all did Clare seek that union with Christ which made Him Spouse and Beloved. From their first meeting, that loyal brother man of Christ, the Blessed Francis, had manifested to her the sweetness of the nuptials of the Lamb; and as she had given her consent, a glimpse of the joys of heaven had been opened to her that led her to strive by virtue to be worthy of the espousals of the Great One. The little plant of the Seraphic Father, growing within the cloister of San Damiano, soon became to her Spouse a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up, whose plants were a paradise (Cant. 4, 12). Her holy virginity in body, guarded like a garden enclosed, and virginal purity in mind, which like a fountain of living water gave her soul on God alone, brought forth that fruit of holiness which made her the good odor of Christ and merited her close and indivisible union with her Beloved.

Until the day of eternity broke and the shadows of earth returned, she lived as much as possible in the love and delight of her Spouse and inspired others to holy rivalry in the life of union with Christ. To Agnes of Prague she held up Agnes the Martyr, to whom Clare seems to have had great devotion, as a model to emulate in marriage with the Lamb. "Love Him in complete surrender who has given Himself up entirely for thy love. . . Happy the soul to whom God has given to attain this life with Christ, to cleave with all one's heart to Him whose beauty all the heavenly hosts behold forever, whose love inflames our love, whose contemplation is our refreshment, whose graciousness is our delight, whose gentleness fills us to overflow, whose remembrance gives sweet light. . ."

Daily, as she exhorted Agnes, she herself looked into the mirror of Christ to find her delights in her Bridegroom as He in turn found delight in her as His Beloved. *Ego dilecto meo, et ad me conversus*

*eius*: I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me (Cant. 7, 10; 6, 2). She sought Him "in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall." The Rock is Christ, as Saint Bonaventure suggests, and the clefts His sacred wounds and His Passion, in which Clare so often found her joy and over which she often wept as she fed her mind unceasingly on the delights of the Crucified. In reward, her Beloved bestowed on her a "blessed sleep," an ecstasy of the Passion through one Good Friday. Once, too, her Beloved appeared to her as a little Child to delight her as she listened to the sermon of Friar Philip, while in prayer she found such fire of love that her face would shine with more than wonted radiance as she returned from the altar of her God. Would that we too were as God-centered, as Christ-centered, as undivided in heart and mind as our Sister Clare!

But let us go back to her death-bed. The Friars and the Sisters are lost in a contemplation that is a mixture of joy and grief. They are to lose their Mother, the greatest flower of the spirit of Francis; but they know that she will go quickly to the bridal chamber of her Beloved. The Mother of God had come to prepare her:

Put away the penance and the sorrow  
And claim the crown of those who love My Son.

*(Candle in Umbria).*

The Bridegroom Himself was soon to call her: "Behold my Beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come! For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone" (*Capitulum*, from Cant. 2, 10-11).

Blessed indeed is that going forth from the vale of misery, for it is her entry into a blessed life. Farewell, most beloved Mother, unto the throne of the glory of the great God. Include us, O glorious Virgin Clare, in thy most holy prayers, that by their help we may merit the mercy of Jesus Christ to live here below in a manner worthy of thy example, that together with thee we may merit the everlasting vision and enter into eternal union with Christ thy Beloved. Amen.

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.

## VITA MUTATUR, NON TOLLITUR

*It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty and everlasting God; through Christ our Lord. In Whom the hope of a blessed resurrection hath shone upon us, that those whom the certainty of dying afflicteth, may be consoled by the promise of future immortality. For unto Thee, O faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away: and the abode of this earthly sojourn being dissolved, an eternal dwelling is prepared in heaven. . . (Preface of the Mass for the Dead).*

The Preface, like the color of the Mass vestments, gives tone or character to the day and its significance in the calendar of the year. Though Saint Cyprian aptly styles the Preface the *Canticum Excellentiae*, that is, the most excellent of all the canticles and hymns, that Mother Church invites her children to sing, it may also strike a mournful note if the mood or temper of the day should call for it.

With the approach of the Month of November, our gaze turns to the "place of sleeping" where those who were near and dear to us are awaiting the call of Judgment. We need not wonder, therefore, if during this season our kindly Mother, Holy Church, should attire the multicolored raiment of her sacred Liturgy to our feelings, hopes, and prayers. How skillfully and lovingly she has acquitted herself in this delicate task is most graphically apparent in the Preface to the Requiem Mass.

But Mother Church does not lapse into sentimentality. Her brow is ever turned to the realms above even though she shares the grief of her children below. She wants them to remain strong in faith, steadfast in hope, and stable in charity, even though the tears stream down from their eyes while the flowers on the silent graves are still fresh and fragrant.

Hence the Preface of the Mass for the Dead begins with the

## VITA MUTATUR, NON TOLLITUR

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four stalwart adjectives which like four mighty pillars sustain the faith and tradition of the ancient Church: *vere dignum et justum est, aequum et salutare*. Do we not all feel the power, the majesty, the solemnity of the sacred hour, when we join the chorus of the Church Triumphant and Militant in declaring that "it is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty and everlasting God"? This is where man rises to his true dignity; where he renders thanks to God in the highest, the almighty Creator of the entire universe, the true Father of the human race. In the holy Sacrifice which is shortly to follow, the same heavenly and eternal Father is about to reveal His power in the ineffable mystery which was anticipated in the little Upper Room and unveiled on Calvary's heights in view of all the world, in view of all creation invisible and visible. The eternal God never changes; but the precious Blood of His divine Son keeps streaming down the Cross daily, hourly, *from the rising of the sun to the going down*, for the Redemption of man.

Yes, His divine Son. The glorious anthem of thanksgiving seems to halt as He enters upon the scene: *per Christum Dominum nostrum* ("through Christ our Lord"). The melody changes from a majestic major into a mellow minor key. At the same time, a feeling of relief appears to dominate the atmosphere in the House of God; for, while the name of the Lord Almighty fills all hearts with holy awe and fear, the sweet name of Jesus changes, as if by a supernatural magic, all awe and fear into love and affection. A moment ago we stood like mountaineers on Alpine heights; now we are back in a peaceful valley, for Jesus is with us.

*In quo nobis spes beatae resurrectionis effulsit* ("in Whom the hope of a blessed resurrection hath shone upon us"). O blessed hope, what a comfort and solace thou dost impart to the Catholic heart. Hope is our life and our joy; we are *rejoicing in hope*, exclaims Saint Paul (Rom. 12, 12), not like others *who have no hope* (I Thess. 4, 12); and *our hope does not disappoint* (Rom. 5, 5). Jesus is risen from the dead, and even so the hope of our resurrection envelops us with its serene and celestial light.

*Ut quos contristat certa moriendi conditio* ("that those who the certainty of dying afflicteth"). Death is inevitable for all, *for it is appointed unto men to die once* (Heb. 9, 27). This is a *certain conditio*, a certain event in human life. The Church is firm and adamant in this assertion. Her language is stern and stirring. There is no palliation or alleviation. She does not want to deceive her children. Death must be faced, even though the mere thought of it casts a gloom over our whole life from the cradle to the coffin. *Dies magis et amara valde*: the day of death will be bitter, whether it comes to us or bereaves us of those near and dear to us. This bitterness is wholesome for our souls, and the Church knows it. But listen to what follows.

*Eosdem consoletur futurae immortalitatis promissio* ("they may be consoled by the promise of future immortality"). What a magnificent line. The *certain moriendi conditio* is wafted by angelic hands to the serene heights of the *immortalitatis promissio*. Has the verb *consoletur* ever been put to a more sublime, a more uplifting use? In this exquisite parallel, the Church unfolds before us the superabundant grace, the unspeakable love, of our Divine Savior.

Then follows the most tender and loving line of all: *tuis enim fidelibus, Domine, vita mutatur, non tollitur* ("for unto Thy faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away"). It sounds like the voice of a child who has discovered a great mystery and joyfully steps up to the Master to tell Him—as if He had not known it before—that for His devoted servants life is only changed, and not taken away. Truly, life is all that matters. To live is man's unconquerable ambition. And now, behold: the souls faithful to Jesus are sure to suffer only a change in their life, not its loss. The words, *vita mutatur, non tollitur*, are a synthesis of the entire body of our Christian Faith and Revelation. But how is this done?

*Et dissoluta terrestris hujus incolatus domo, aeterna in caelis habitatio comparatur* ("and the abode of this earthly sojourn being dissolved, an eternal dwelling is prepared in heaven"). Step by step the language of Mother Church becomes more intimate, more affectionate, more maternal. She now stands at the gate of our home

above and welcomes her children to the many mansions in her Father's house, which have been furnished and adorned by Jesus, her divine Spouse. Our earthly abode was only a temporary sojourn (*incolatus*); our heavenly dwelling (*habitatio*) shall be our possession for a happy, blissful, and unending eternity.

After this, the priest resumes the sacrosanct text of the holy mysteries as he bends down to say with the angelic choirs, *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*. . . Before the Throne of the Triune God, the *alter Christus* renders solemn assurance to all the faithful departed that, even as their Redeemer died and rose again, also will rise again *they who are Christ's, who have believed* (I Cor. 15, 23).

The masterly composition of this Preface of the Mass for the Dead has a right to stand among the best and finest of the literatures of the world. But in the power of theological thought it rises above all that human lips have spoken or human pen has written, for it opens the flood-gates of divine mercy and gently radiates into every bereaved soul on earth "the hope of our blessed resurrection" (*In quo nobis spes beatae resurrectionis effulsit*).

*Christ the King Seminary Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.*



You, O My daughter, are a light in the midst of darkness. I want your life to be a proof of My Religion, following the example of your Blessed Father Francis, who was the restorer of My Religion and of My Church.

*Christ to Margaret of Cori.*



## SAINT FRANCIS' PRAYER

The prayer of our holy Father Saint Francis might well be considered an overwhelming subject, for who can speak particularly of the union of the seraphic heart of Saint Francis with his beloved Lord? How aptly, in his book, *The Words of Saint Francis*, Father James expressed the saint's desire for that union, translating his prayer for love that he be "lapped up" in love until he die in love! We all know the simple definition of prayer; but what was the prayer in the heart of the seraph of Assisi? One prayer of his is known to every Franciscan,—the very comprehensive aspiration, "My God and my All!" We do not know when he first uttered it. It may have been in his childhood, leading him on to an ever greater fulfillment of its words; or it may have been when God was inspiring Francis to leave all for Him.

It must have been his gentle mother, the Lady Pica, who folded Francis' hands as a child and taught him to pray. Watching the tender piety of her growing son increase even in the midst of his boisterous, care-free days, no doubt she also fostered it, and prayed for him herself. She did not chide him when he spread the table with bread which he wanted to give to the poor. Surely more than anyone else did, she must have believed she saw in her young son the indications of a call to something higher than that for which his father destined him. After some years of a spendthrift, adventurous youth, when Francis was recovering from a serious illness, he felt the first stirrings of an extraordinary call, though not yet aware where it would lead him. We know that Francis prayed even in the company of his high spirited, singing companions who twitted him when he seemed lost in recollection during their revelry. Now he must leave these old companions, he knew; but he was still uncertain where the Holy Spirit was leading him, for the path stretching before him was untrodden and strange.

Unable to comprehend what had come over his son, Francis' irate father thought to bring him to his senses by imprisoning him in his own home. Can we doubt that Francis spent many hours during those idle days of imprisonment in prayer for Divine light and

guidance? We know that he became more and more deeply enamoured of God and the Lady Poverty. His mother brought him food during those days; perhaps she also tried to dissuade him from his seeming folly, as she, too, was suffering from the anger of Pietro Bernardone.

The climax came when, released from his prison, Francis at once returned to his unusual conduct of part-time beggar, part-time extravagant youth, giving away his father's substance and visiting churches. Pietro cited him before the civil court for misdemeanor; but Francis appealed to the Bishop of Assisi, considering himself an ecclesiastical "criminal" and desiring the Church's protection. Francis knew that he and his father had come to the parting of the ways, and who can say how much prayer went into making of his decision? Not easily will a helpless youth deliberately turn away from his wealthy father to go out penniless and alone into the world. The fatal day came; and Pietro Bernardone stood before the bishop with his son, Francis making no plea of innocence when he was accused. Would the bishop understand and allow him to pursue his divinely inspired way? What, really, would have been more natural than for the bishop to send Francis back home with his father, telling him to obey and to cause his parents no further grief? But the bishop, we know, under divine inspiration, espoused Francis' cause, leaving the irate Pietro to himself. Surely, the words, "Our Father Who art in Heaven," never sounded more triumphantly and lovingly in the Heart of God than when they came from the lips of this youth, standing divested before his father, with the episcopal robes folded about his naked limbs! Pietro gathered up those rich garments and fled to his home. Sadly the Lady Pica must have regarded them, all that remained to her of the son she loved so dearly.

With this scene, Pietro and his wife disappear into oblivion. They could not have been very old, and one wonders if they lived to see the triumph of this son of theirs twenty years later. What a pity that historians have told us nothing more of the parents of him who more closely of all the saints resembled the Redeemer of the world. We cannot doubt that his mother must have often been among the crowds who listened to Francis when he preached and all Assisi

flocked to hear him. And what of Pietro? Let us not be too hard on him. After all, it was his hard-earned money that Francis was squandering, and how was the older man to know what this unpredictable son of his would do next? He had gone far enough in disgracing his family name! Pietro had no book in which to read how the Franciscan movement would be approved by the Church, or know the path to which the actions of his son would reach in their maturity.

Francis left the bishop's house alone. He was alone in the street, dressed in pilgrim's garb, a staff in his hand. His was now the absolute pilgrim poverty to which he had aspired. We can see him, his face turned to the blue Umbrian sky, repeating in an ecstasy of joy, "Our Father Who art in Heaven!" What a trumpet call these words were, resounding jubilantly in Heaven; for here was the beginning of a new era in the Church's history. Can we doubt that he added to the list of all times, "My God and my All!"

Soon we see Francis kneeling before the crucifix in the church of San Damiano, praying for further light and guidance. We can be sure his life's work was not spread before him like a panorama. It must have been in answer to a fervent prayer that God's Word was manifested to him, that he suddenly heard the words spoken to him from the crucifix: "Go, Francis, and repair My house which is in need of repair; for the house of God which thou seest is falling into ruin." Saint Damien's was in need of repair, and Francis could see that. So Francis gathered stones, and set about making the necessary repairs with his own hands. One wonders how he could do it, unskilled, not very robust, but he must have succeeded, for he would not have attempted to do the same to Our Lady of the Angels chapel and to San Pietro. It was at this time, working on the scaffolding at Saint Damien's, that he called to the people passing by, asking them to come and help him rebuild San Damiano, and speaking prophetically of Clare and her daughters who would one day be there as the nucleus of the Second Order of Saint Francis. But he had not even his own first followers. And for the present he understood only that our Lord wanted him, with his own hands to repair these dilapidated churches. How could he, a mere stripling in his twenties, have thought that our Divine Redeemer was asking him to repair the Church, the Bride of Christ? She stood in torn

tattered robes, and our crucified Lord asked Francis to mend them. Only after years of prayer, days and nights spent in union with God in forlorn churches and forests, did he come to the full realization of what was asked of him. Once sure of his real mission, he did not hesitate to tell his brethren when, angered at some of the bishops who would not let the Friars preach in their cities, they wished to secure a grant from the Sovereign Pontiff himself to preach everywhere, that they did not know their true calling. He told them boldly that he wanted to convert the bishops! Audacious words, these; but Francis did not waver, knowing now what manner of repair the Church needed! Some time before making this declaration, when he was uncertain of his vocation, feeling by nature drawn to the contemplative state rather than to the active apostolate he had sent to Clare and Brother Masseo, humbly begging their prayers for divine light for himself. When the answer of these two contemplatives came, Francis accepted it as coming from God, and knew that his mission was not only to preach to the poor, but to bring back to apostolic living and to true zeal the princes of the Church whose example of worldliness was retarding the growth of holiness among the common people. Now, he knew, he and his brotherhood were called to heal the wounds from which the Bride of Christ was languishing.

The first account we have of that aspiration so dear to Francis and all his children, "My God and my All!" is in the house of Bernard of Quintavalle who had invited Francis to spend the night with him. It would seem that Bernard wished to discover for himself whether Francis was all he had been told. Accordingly, Francis was assigned to a large, luxurious room in the house; and his host concealed himself in the folds of the drapes. Francis refused to sleep in the magnificent bedroom, but did not hesitate to pray there. From his hiding-place Bernard watched Francis, holding his breath when he first heard the burning words, "My God and my All!"—Who art Thou and what am I! Did he hear no others? But what words could that seraphic heart have uttered which could express more? Between intervals of silence and burning love, he heard again and again that all-embracing prayer, while Francis' soul reached out in a steady liquid flame, never quite touching the heights to which it aspired, and falling back again on the helpless, ardent words: "My God and my All!"

Bernard no longer doubted the holiness of his guest, for he had seen him in prayer.

One might wonder whether Francis' heart ever knew the depths of desolation which we feel when our hearts of flesh are unresponsive to every incentive to love and devotion. We are inclined to think that our holy Father Saint Francis' spirit was always aglow, passing in a breathless endeavor to be united with God. Francis would never have been able to define his own state of prayer or to analyze it. Such definitions of our interior state as "the dark night of the senses" which the great doctor, Saint John of the Cross, used to analyze our helpless stages on the road to higher prayer, Francis might not have understood. But we have proof that his seraphic heart well knew the weight of interior temptation and desolation. Did he not rush out into the night, divest himself of his garments and roll in the snow and briars until his wounded body, bleeding and torn, ceased its demands for the lawful pleasures of the Sacrament of Matrimony? This is a temptation which many souls striving for holiness must battle, when they would rise instead to higher prayer. Temptations and desolation are the usual companions of those striving for prayer of closer union with God; and it is a consolation to recall that the great heart of Francis also suffered such human weakness.

What is contemplative prayer, and what the state of contemplation? When Francis went singing along the highway soon after his conversion, calling himself the herald of the great King, his heart was in contemplative prayer and his soul in a state of contemplation. His conversation with the Lady Clare, when Saint Mary of Angels seemed afire, was contemplative prayer.

Let us also consider that double petition made in prayer to the Crucified Savior, when his love became so daring that he asked God to grant him to bear in his own body, so far as possible the sufferings and agony of Christ's Passion, and added the second petition that he might also feel in his heart the overwhelming love of the God who died for mankind in His sacred Passion. Francis knew what he was asking. He knew, too, that if the first petition were granted, he must accept the granting of the second or die. He wanted to share the sufferings of Jesus in a most realistic manner, but he knew that for this he must

have a new kind of love. He was not ignorant of the fact that the flame of love must sear and burn our hearts before it can consume them. To what heights had that flame of love risen in the seraphic heart of Francis, that he dared long for the sufferings of the God-man in His Crucifixion? Yet he calmly made his petition, the very thought of which makes our poor hearts quake. When the hour came and the Seraph's dart pierced the flesh of Francis, imprinting on his body the marks of Christ's Passion, what was his prayer then? We cannot speak of Francis' state of prayer in the granting of that second petition. Our stammering words are meaningless sounds when we attempt to speak of his prayer made with a love so like that of our Suffering Savior filling Francis' heart. The Church has instituted a feast commemorating the granting of that first petition. Of the second we seldom make mention. But we do know that the embrace of Christ with the frail, broken body of Francis was so intense, that it gave him the knowledge that he was confirmed in grace. His wordless prayer at that time could not but be a swift mounting of the flame of love from the heart of Francis, straining to make itself but one heart with Christ. To speak of the prayer of Francis at that moment would only desecrate it.

No definition of Francis' prayer is better, to my mind, than the words which Saint Paul spoke of himself when he said: *For me to live is Christ!* Surely that would have been our holy Father Francis' answer, and the words can hardly be applied to any one more aptly than to the Seraph of Assisi. *Mihi enim vivere Christus est.* When we ponder this short sentence, are we not convinced that living Christ, our life being the life of Christ, is indeed contemplation, rising to greater heights in proportion as our life is truly more and more Christ's own life in us, as our holy Father Francis' was? His life was indeed a flame rising ever higher until it reached that fullness of union where his soul, his body, his love were indeed Christ's and no more his own. How truly could our seraphic Father have added to his *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi*, the words: *Mihi enim vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum.*

Poor Clare Monastery  
Roswell, New Mexico

Mother M. Immaculata, P.C., Abbess

## THE PERFECT LIFE

(Chapters VII and VIII of the *De Perfectione Vitae* ad S.  
Saint Bonaventure)

### *The Perfect Love of God*

According as the Lord has inspired me, I have taught the preceding pages, O handmaid of God, how you should train your soul so that you may be able to ascend step by step, as it were, to advance from virtue to virtue. Now in this seventh chapter I mainly to speak of the form of the virtues, that is, charity, which leads a man to perfection. For the mortification of vices, for attainment in grace, for the attainment of the highest perfection of virtues, nothing can be called better, nothing can be thought more useful, than charity. This is why Prosper, in his book *The contemplative Life*, says that "charity is the life of the virtues, the death of the vices," and *as wax melts in the presence of the fire so do the vices perish in the presence of charity*. Indeed, charity is of such power that it alone closes hell, it alone opens heaven, it alone grants the gift of salvation, it alone makes one lovable to God. Charity is of such power that among the virtues it alone is called the virtue, and he who has it is rich and wealthy and blessed, but he who has it not is poor and beggarly and piteous. It is because of this that the Gloss comments as follows on that passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, *If I have not charity*: "Notice how great charity is; for if it is absent, the others are present to no purpose; if it is present, all the others are there; he who begins to have it will have the Holy Spirit." As Saint Augustine says that "if a virtue leads us to the life of blessedness, I should maintain emphatically that there is no virtue but the greatest love of God." Since, then, charity is a virtue of that kind it should be urged in preference to all the virtues in the aggregate, and not any kind of charity, but that alone whereby God is loved above all things and one's neighbor loved because of God.

## THE PERFECT LIFE

How you should love your Creator, your Spouse Himself teaches you in the Gospel where He says: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind*. Notice with diligent care, most beloved handmaid of Jesus Christ, what kind of love your beloved Jesus demands of you. In very truth, your most loving Jesus wishes you to give your whole heart to the love of Him, your whole soul, your whole mind, to such an extent that in your whole heart, in your whole soul, in your whole mind absolutely no one possesses any part with Him. What, then, will you do in order surely to love the Lord thy God with a whole heart? Listen to what Saint John Chrysostom teaches you: "To love God with a whole heart means that your heart does not tend to the love of anything more than of God, that you do not take a greater pleasure in the beauty of the world than in God, not in honors, not in parents. For, if the love of your heart is occupied in any of these things, then you do not love with a whole heart." I entreat you, O handmaid of Christ, do not be deceived in love. Certainly, if you love anything that you do not love in God or because of God, then you do not love with a whole heart. In this connection Saint Augustine says: "Lord, too little does any one love Thee, who loves some other thing together with Thee." Now, if you have love for anything, and out of its enjoyment you do not progress in the love of God, you do not then love with a whole heart; and, if you love anything, and in defence to this love you neglect those things you owe to Christ, you do not then love with a whole heart. Therefore, love the Lord thy God with your whole heart.

The Lord Jesus Christ must be loved not only with a whole heart but also with a whole soul. How is He loved with a whole soul? Listen to what Saint Augustine teaches you: "To love God with a whole soul is to love Him with a whole will without variance." You surely love with a whole soul when without question you freely do what you know the Lord God wills, not what you will, not what the world counsels, not what the flesh suggests. You surely love God with a whole soul when for love of Jesus Christ you willingly expose your soul to death if necessity demands. If you should be negligent in any of these things, you do not then love with a whole soul. There-

fore, love the Lord thy God with your whole soul; that is, conform your will to the divine will in all things.

Love your Spouse the Lord Jesus not only with a whole heart, not only with a whole soul, but also with a whole mind. How do you love Him with a whole mind? Listen to what Saint Augustine teaches you: "To love God with a whole mind is to love Him in every memory without forgetfulness."

### Final Perseverance

After one has encompassed the beginning of all virtues does not as yet appear illustrious in God's sight unless perseverance therein is present, the consummation of all the virtues; because man, wholly mortal, however perfect he may be, is to be praised in his life unless he first brings that good which he has begun to attain to a happy end. For perseverance is the end and the "consummation" of the virtues, that which fosters merit, the advocate for reward. Hence Saint Bernard says: "Take away perseverance, and neither devotedness nor kindness wins grace, nor does fortitude effect praise. It would matter little if man had been religious, had been pious and humble, had been devoted and continent, loved God and possessed the rest of the virtues, unless perseverance were present. Though all the virtues run, perseverance alone receives the prize because not he who begins but *he who has persevered to the end* shall be saved. This is why John Chrysostom says: "What use are you to that flower, only to waste away gradually?" as though he would receive absolutely no use.

Therefore, most beloved Virgin of Christ, if you have some virtues arising from good works—nay, because you have many virtues—persevere in them, advance in them, fight Christ's campaign steadfastly in them until death, so that, when the last day and end of your life comes, there may be given to you as your pay and the reward of your labor the crown of glory and of honor. This is what Jesus Christ, your only Beloved, said when He addressed you in the Apocalypse: *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of*

This crown is nothing else than eternal life's reward, to whose attainment the desire of all Christians should be inflamed. It is so great that absolutely no one can form an estimation of it, as Saint Gregory says, so extensive that no one is able to reckon it, and finally, so continuous and lasting that it can never be terminated and ended. To this reward, to this crown, your Beloved Spouse Jesus Christ invites you in the words of the Canticle of Canticles, *Come from Libanus, my spouse, my beloved, come from Libanus, come, thou shalt be crowned.* Arise, then, beloved of God, bride of Jesus Christ, dove of the eternal King, come, hasten to the nuptials of the Son of God, because the whole celestial court awaits you, because all is prepared.

For there is readied a resplendent servant and a distinguished one to minister to you; exquisite and delectable food to refresh you; a delightful and most friendly fellowship to rejoice with you. Arise, therefore, and hasten quickly to the nuptials, since there is prepared there a resplendent servant to minister to you. This servant is none other than the angelic host, indeed the very Son of the eternal God, just as He described Himself when He said in the Gospel: *Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, and will make them recline at table, and will come and serve them.* How great a glory will it then be for the poor and the forlorn, when they have the Son of God and the Most High King to minister to them, and the whole assembly of the multitude of the heavenly kingdom!

And there is prepared exquisite and delectable food to refresh you. The Son of God Himself has set the table with His Own Hands, as He spoke of Himself in the Gospel when He said: *I appoint to you a kingdom, even as my Father has appointed to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.* How sweet and delicious is that food which God in His sweetness has provided for His poor. How blessed is he who in the kingdom of the heavens will eat of that bread that was baked by the fire of the Holy Spirit in the oven of the virginal womb! *If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever.* With this food, with this bread, does that celestial King feed and refresh His elect at His table, as the Book of Wisdom says: *Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labor; having in it all that is delicious.*

and the sweetness of every taste...and serving every man's will. Behold, this is the repast of the divine table.

In addition, there is prepared there a delightful and most friendly fellowship to rejoice with you. For Jesus will be there with the Father and the Holy Spirit; Mary will be there with the flower-laden host of virgins; the apostles, martyrs, and confessors will be there and the celestial army of all the elect. Piteous indeed is he who will not be joined to that most illustrious of companies; a desire that is utterly dead has he who has no desire to be united with this group.

But you, most distinguished handmaid of Christ, I know of your surety that you desire Christ; I know that you are striving with your abilities for this one purpose: how you may be joined to the companionship and the embraces of the eternal King. And "now, in far as you are able, incite your heart and your soul and lift up your understanding and consider. For, if each and every good is a delight, think in all earnestness what a delight that good will be that contains the joy of all good; if created life is good, how good is creating life; if fashioned salvation is joyous, how joyous is the salvation that fashions all salvation? What will he who enjoys this good possess and what will he not possess? He will certainly have what he wishes and will not have whatever he does not wish. Indeed, there will be such a perfection of body and soul that *eye has not seen nor ear heard nor does the heart of man know* its like. Why, then, O handmaid of God, do you wander through many things, looking for the wealth of your soul and your body? Love one Good in which is all good, and that suffices; desire the unalloyed Good that is all good, and it is enough.

"What you love is there, Sister; there is what you desire, fortunate virgin. What do you love, Sister; what do you desire, fortunate virgin? Whatever you love is there, whatever you desire. If beauty delights you, *the just will shine forth like the sun*. If a long and healthful life gives you pleasure, health-giving eternity is there, because *the just shall live forever*, and the salvation of the just is eternal. If fulfillment delights you, *they will be satisfied when the glory of God appears*. If rapture delights you, *their senses will*

*be ravished with the treasures of thy house*. If sweet melodies give you pleasure, the choirs of angels are singing there together, praising God without end. If friendship gives you pleasure, there the saints will love God more than themselves, and one another as themselves, and God will love them more than they love themselves. If unanimity gives you pleasure, among all of them there will be one will because in them there will be no will but the will of God. If honor and riches delight you, God *will set* His good and faithful servants and handmaidens *over many*; in truth, *they shall be called sons and daughters of God*, and such they will be. Where God will be, there also will they be, *heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ*.

"What kind of joy is that and how great, where there is so great a good of this kind? Certainly, Lord Jesus, *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man* in this life how much Thy Blessed will love Thee and rejoice in Thee in that blessed life." As much as one loves God here, so will he joy in God there. Therefore, have a great love for God here, so that you may have great joy there; let the love of God grow in you, so that there you may possess the joy of God in its fullness. "On this let your mind meditate, of this let your tongue speak, let your heart hold it in its love, your mouth discourse concerning it, your soul hunger for it, your flesh thirst for it, your whole being desire it, until you enter into the joy of your God," until you come into the bridal-chamber of your beloved Spouse, Who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Christ the King Seminary Fr. Columban Duffy, O.F.M. (trans.)



Those who love Me must imitate Me by weeping, not over their own trials but over My people. They must weep over their own sins, over My bitter Passion which I endured for them, and over sinners who doom themselves by offending Me. Never has the world had more need of tears.

Christ to Margaret of Cortina

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XIX)

### Chapter VII: Nature and Manner of Work

The present chapter represents an addition that has nothing to it in the Rule of Leo X though it does have an analogue in of both the First and Second Order of Saint Francis. Consequently we have another instance here where the Holy See has remedied a defect in the earlier Rule by incorporating a section that might have come from the hand of Francis himself. Not only does it seem to breathe his spirit but its very wording at times echoes his own and written exhortations.

The three articles that comprise this chapter are marked by such continuity of thought that it is well to treat them as a unit for the purposes of exposition and comment. The first (art. 19) emphasizes the general obligation of a Franciscan to shun idleness and to busy himself with the things that concern the service of God and man. The second (art. 21) specifies to some extent the tasks expected of the religious, while the third and last (art. 22) stresses in particular the interior supernatural motive that should vitalize such actions and transform them literally into a labor of love for the Mystical Body of Christ. Their wording runs as follows: **TEXT:** *Article Twenty. Those who, inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost, have dedicated themselves to the service of God, should avoid idleness, and give their efforts faithfully and devoutly to the divine praises or the various works of piety and charity (cf. Rule of the II Order, ch. VII).*

*Article Twenty-One. The religious should, therefore, carry out with their duties for the love of God, and perform what their superiors require of them, to the best of their ability, devoutly and faithfully, as has been said. Nor should they refuse to perform the humble tasks that may be imposed on them; on the contrary, following*

*footsteps of their Seraphic Father, they should perform them more willingly than other tasks.*

*Article Twenty-Two. Let all things be done in charity, and let the holy love of God so animate the sentiments of the religious in doing their work that they may labor only for His honor and glory, and fulfill the admonition of Saint Paul the Apostle: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10, 31).*

The opening words, *inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost*, give Tertiary religious a brief but emphatic reminder of the source of their holy vocation and all that it implies. *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*, Christ says to them as to his first religious, adding, *and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain* (Jo. 15, 16). Should not Christ's parable of the barren fig tree be as stern a reminder to those who have squandered what Francis calls "the grace of working" as it was for God's chosen people who squandered the grace of their divine election? *Cut it down, therefore; why does it still encumber the ground?* (Lk. 13, 7).

As religious, Franciscan Tertiaries *have dedicated themselves to the service of God*. The Latin text of the Rule reads, *servitio Dei se manciparunt*, indicating that this dedication is not simply a part-time service, but rather a total and unlimited giving of oneself to another person. The *mancipia*, as applied to men or women, indicated that they had been sold, either by themselves or another, into the service of a master as bondsmen or even slaves. Their contract, consequently, was not for so many hours of labor each day; day and night they belonged to another and were at his service. So too we might say that in a deeper and spiritual sense religious by their holy profession have obligated themselves to serve God night and day. If the parable of the unprofitable servant (Mt. 25, 19ff) applies to the faithful in general, a fortiori it would seem to hold for the *mancipia Dei*.

*Should avoid idleness.* . . The Latin reads *otium fugiant*, that is to say, they should flee from idleness as from an enemy or some

threatening danger. Francis himself expressed as much in the rule he gave his Friars. "Let all brothers apply themselves with diligence to some good works, for it is written: 'Be always busy in good work that the devil may find thee occupied'; and again: 'Idle is the enemy of the soul.' Therefore, the servants of God ought to continue in prayer or in some other good work."

Not only are they idle who do nothing but also those who employ themselves with useless matters and time-consuming hobbies for the purpose of needed recreation or other justifiable means but as an excuse to keep from doing what they should be doing. Real work is never easy, and in the present order it still has the character of penance, a punishment for sin (Gen. 3, 17). The danger therefore, is always present that a religious may turn away to other tasks, occupations, hobbies, and the like, using these as a pretext to keep from doing real earnest work.

To such idle religious, the words of Celano apply: "Pardon me, holy Father (Francis), to cry out to thee in heaven over those who should be thine. Many to whom the exercise of virtue is repugnant, wish to rest before ever working, and thus prove themselves sons of Lucifer and not of Francis. . . They work more with their mouths than with their hands; they become hostile to superiors and punish them. . . At home they would be obliged to live by the sweat of their brow, and now they live without work and thrive on the sweat of the poor. Strange prudence, for though they do nothing yet they always seem occupied. They never miss the time to work. Should I, esteemed Father, regard these monsters as worthy of glory? No, not even of thy habit. Thou hast ever taught during thy short and fleeting life, to acquire a treasure of merits, so that we would not be forced to go begging in the world to come" (*Leg. secundum* 162).

As the book of Proverbs puts it: *He that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty* (28, 19)—not only poverty in a material sense but even more in a spiritual sense, for such religious shall want grace. Cursed by Christ in the language used to the barren fig tree: *No fruit ever come from thee henceforward forever* (Mt. 21, 19).

their souls shall wither up. How much wisdom there is in the observation of Ecclesiasticus (33, 29): *Idleness hath taught much evil.*

*They shall give their efforts to the divine praises. . .* Three types of activity are specified by the Rule. The first place is justly assigned to the *divine praises*. This embraces the divine office, the public and official praise of God, as well as participation in other religious services, prayers, etc., prescribed by the Constitutions and ordinances of the particular religious congregation or institute. While this applies primarily to community exercises (which enjoy a special prerogative because of the words of Christ, *Where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there I am in the midst of them*: (Mt. 18, 10), it does not exclude private devotions, provided of course that these do not represent encroachments on time that should be legitimately and according to the will of the superior devoted to other tasks.

We might wonder at first blush why this reference to the divine praises is introduced in this section of the Rule devoted to fraternal charity and the Tertiary's activities in the service of his fellowmen, rather than in that portion of the Rule which defines his relation to God. We must remember that even contemplation according to the Franciscan conception can never be a purely personal or individual matter. As a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Franciscan religious cannot worship God without by that very fact helping his fellowmen. So keenly aware of this active aspect of contemplation was Saint Clare that she could write to Blessed Agnes of Prague, a contemplative like herself, "To use the words of the Apostle *in their proper sense*, I hold thee to be a *co-worker of God Himself* (I Cor. 3, 9) and a support for the frail and failing members of His glorious Body." In the truest sense of the term, time spent in these *officia* and especially in reciting the office or the *opus Dei*, can be called working and laboring in the service of mankind. This thought should be an incentive to perform these divine praises with greater care and devotion.

In the second place, the Rule mentions *works of piety* (Latin: *religiositas*). Under this designation fall all those tasks that are



associated with religious or community life, such as work in the sacristy, garden, kitchen, laundry, sewing room, or tailor shop, and so on. All these works in the service of the religious institute, of spiritual mother, should be recognized for what they are—a labor of love for those who belong to us in Christ by spiritual family ties.

In the third place are the *various works of charity*, which include all those activities of Tertiary Religious that are performed immediately and directly as a service to others, such as teaching, nursing, missionary work, and so on. The word *charity* emphasizes what the dominant motive behind such service should be. The work of a religious order, especially of a Franciscan order, should never be evaluated in terms of material recompense or regarded simply as a source of livelihood. As Francis put it in his Testament, the purpose of our work should never simply be “to receive the price of labor”, the dominant motive in the world today. In our mercenary and mechanistic age with its flair for standardization and organization, charity, there is a danger that in the field of education or even such truly Franciscan work as caring for the sick and the poor, religion may become so enmeshed in the administrative aspects of the work as to lose sight of the Franciscan motive of personal service. Nothing so warms the heart or breaks down prejudice so quickly as a genuine personal interest in another’s welfare. And who more than a religious has more reason to be genuinely interested in the actual or potential members of the Mystical Christ? As one layman pointed out, in Catholic hospitals there is a golden opportunity for an apostolate against religious bigotry and for all that Catholicism stands for. What a world of good could be done if hospital communities would release one or two personable sisters from all duties except that of making the rounds of each and every patient’s room, greeting them with a warm welcome born of true Christian friendliness, manifesting a sympathetic concern in them as human beings and not simply as interesting medical cases or just another patient. “smothering them with kindness”, as it were, not in any obviously offensive way, but with the artless simplicity of Francis whose Christ-like love for all those in need constantly prompted him to see others “above and beyond the call of duty.” Such practice of work

is fast becoming the lost art of Christian charity might well be the first step to bringing such souls, Catholic or non-Catholic, closer to Christ. Perhaps all religious institutes engaged in the works of charity might do well to devote more consideration to what is known today as public relations.

*And perform whatever their superiors require of them...*

These words of article 21 indicate specifically what almost goes without saying, that religious are not simply to flee idleness but to busy themselves with the work assigned by their superior and not with that of their own choosing. On the other hand, superiors have a corresponding obligation to discern the talents and capabilities of their subjects and assign them suitable work in as far as this can be reasonably done. It is not only inferiors but also superiors who can waste or misuse the talents that God gives a religious community or Order in the person of its subjects. On the other hand, if superiors through imprudence, lack of foresight, and so on, assign tasks beyond the physical strength or mental capacity of their subjects, the latter are not obliged to the impossible but, as the wording of the Rule puts it, they should carry out their work *to the best of their ability*.

*Nor should they refuse to perform the humbler tasks...*

Once more the Rule alludes to the example of Francis, who wished that his brethren accept the humbler tasks in preference to others. In his Rule of 1221 he wrote: “Let the brothers in whatever place they may be among others to serve or to work, not be chamberlains, nor cellarers, nor overseers in the houses of those whom they serve, and let them not accept any employment which might cause scandal or be injurious to the soul, but let them be inferior and subject to all who work in the house.” Recognizing the difference in intrinsic value of various kinds of work, even as Paul did in speaking of the functions of the various members of the Mystical Body, Francis at the same time realized also that *if one member glories, all the members rejoice with it* (I Cor, 12, 26). But other things being equal Francis preferred the humbler tasks, perhaps, because of humility.

and his desire to keep peace, but perhaps also because he understood so well that to serve Christ is to rule and that the more he employed himself taking the form of a servant, the closer he drew to the Father that he loved.

In the United States, however, we are apt to miss the significance of this article of the Rule. Raised in a democratic atmosphere where every worker in theory at least is a potential leader and the equal of any of his fellows, we can hardly appreciate the attitude towards menial tasks that exists in countries where distinctions are still strong between the nobility or land owners and the common working classes.

#### *Faithfully and devoutly...*

These words, used twice in this chapter, indicate the manner in which the work of a religious should be performed. Work done *faithfully* is done at the right time, in the right way, with due concern and care. Slovenly work is characteristic of the mediocre person. Not that one should work for the eyes of men, but rather for the eyes of God. Here perhaps the example of medieval craftsmen is appropriate. In the darkened corners and sheltered nooks of the great cathedrals we discover exquisitely sculptured figures that the casual visitor or pious pilgrim were never intended to see, for these figures were working for God and their work was in truth a prayer. If the Tertiary Religious try to sanctify their daily tasks by a similar intention then indeed their work will be done *devoutly* as well as *faithfully* and, as Francis put it, "in banishing idleness, the enemy of the soul, they (will) not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things must be subservient" (*Rule of the Third Order*, chap. 5).

#### *Let all things be done in charity...*

But the best guarantee that their work will be done both *faithfully* and *devoutly* is found in the final article of this chapter. *Let all things be done in charity* (1 Cor. 16, 14). Once more the Rule

calls the fundamental truth that the heart of Christian, religious, and Franciscan perfection is the practice of the dual law of love or charity. By this norm all the activities of the Tertiary Religious are measured.

And this brings us to a final observation that concerns the positive value of work in a truly Christian conception of the universe. Though invested with a penitential character because of the fall of Adam, work is not exclusively a punishment. Equated with human activity, it is meant to bring man closer to God and to his fellowman. For the latter was to continue the unfinished work of creation, subduing the earth and dominating it through the instrumentality of intelligent hands. It almost seemed as though God wished man to feel something of His own divine thrill on creation's morn when looking at the work of His hands, *He saw that it was good* (Gen. 1). But more than that, in working with the "playthings of divine wisdom", man would learn not only to admire the artisan in God but to love in return the Creator whose *delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8, 31).

As we read the account of the Three Companions, we wonder if Francis did not experience something of this primitive and unspoiled joy when in struggling with the heavy stones and bending his back beneath the mortar board he rebuilt the church of San Damiano. What else could explain the relish with which he set himself to this backbreaking work, or the happiness in his heart that would not be repressed but caused him to burst forth in the love songs of France, and prompted him to invite passerbys to share his thrill in working for God.

But in the divine plan, work had another purpose—to knit man closer to his fellowman. Working with others creates a bond of unity that endures long after the work itself is finished. And where his work is a genuine service, as it should be, man's labor will always be the most practical and concrete way of manifesting his love and concern for others.

Sin, however, has marred the beauty of this plan of God. Work is no longer the thing of pure joy that it might have been. But what

is more, it often drives one away from God and provokes discord and jealousy among men. For this reason, the words of the concluding article, *let all things be done in charity*, reminds us that not only should a supernatural motive transform all that we do, but in our work we strive to avoid the strife and discontent that marred the conduct of the Corinthians and caused Paul first to pen these words. Francis intended that his children be apostles of peace, not of conflict. For this reason, especially, he desired that his first followers in putting themselves in the service of others shun all positions of distinction that might arouse envy or dissension. Nevertheless, the nature being what it is, it is not always possible for a religious man to avoid provoking opposition to his good works. For that reason the Rule goes on to point out that human likes and dislikes should not deter us from doing the work of God. *If I were still trying to please men*, wrote Paul (1 Cor. 1, 10), *I should not be the servant of men*. Like Paul's, ours should be a supernatural motive so that in everything we do we labor only for His honor and glory.

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M.



As I am the Creator of all that lives and as I preserve what I have made, I wish and command you to love and reverence all creatures for love's sake. Me, judging and despising none of them in your heart, and showing neither disgust nor displeasure toward any one, no matter who it is.

Christ to Margaret of Cortina

# the CORD

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## CHRISTMAS CAROL

Mary sang like falling snow  
And loved like violins  
At the wedding of love and sorrow  
In Bethlehem.

Angels crashed bewildered skies  
And stars blazed into hymns,  
But Mary looked in Jesus' eyes  
In Bethlehem.

The night got down upon its knees,  
The moon with wonder dimmed  
When Mary laid her Jesus down  
In Bethlehem.

And in the bright and noisy inn,  
The keeper's heart was grim;  
For Mary's face burned in his heart  
In Bethlehem.

Now all love has a wound on it;  
But joy with tears can limn  
Since the wedding of love and sorrow  
In Bethlehem.

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

*Sr. Mary Francis, P.*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*A heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness (Col. 3, 12)*

Noble by birth, said Pope Alexander IV in canonizing Saint Clare, she was more noble by grace and by her manner of life. There was nothing harsh or rude, nothing repelling about the Lady Clare even in the midst of poverty and seclusion. Rather, all the high ideals of Christian womanhood shone forth in her. Especially did she have that gentle dignity combined with deep humility which makes for a true nobility that expresses itself in reverence and courtesy and care for others.

One is conscious of her graciousness throughout her Letters, her courtesy in the salutations used for Blessed Agnes, her tenderness in the blessing she sent her. The words of her Rule and Testament give voice to her solicitude for all the Sisters, from the Abbess to the lowliest postulant. Her thoughtfulness and gentleness (as well as her sternness when deserved) echo through the testimony of her nuns and in the pages of Celano's Legend. In this, Clare is the feminine counterpart of the noble and courteous Francis, who even before he was called to the way of the Gospel was known for his gentleness, gaiety, and reverence. Was not *cortesia* the sum of all the virtues of a knight, a nobleman; *cortesia*, but half-translated by "courtesy," courtliness, the pattern of chivalry, the code of honor of the Christian noble?

When Francis and Clare were called by God to a new and higher life, he to become the knight of Christ the King and His standard-bearer through the Stigmata, she to be "the new captain of woman-kind", "princess of the poor and duchess of the humble", they lost none of their natural feeling of reverence and courtesy, their inborn gentleness and nobility. Instead, these natural good qualities were given new life, a new foundation, and became marks they would pass on to us.

### *The Bases of Reverence and Courtesy*

The immediate and more direct basis of such holy reverence and gentle courtesy is revealed by Clare when as "the most lowly and unworthy handmaid of Christ and servant of the Poor Ladies" she wrote to Blessed Agnes as to "her Lady most revered in Christ Sister and Spouse of the Most High King of Heaven." It is in the true estimation of our own worth and that of others before God that we shall find the foundation of reverence. "What a man is before God, that he is and nothing more" (St. Francis, Adm. 20). When we are truly before God will make us humble, and should make us wish to be "simple and subject to all"; what others are, will make us reverence them. *In humility*, says St. Paul, *let each regard others as his superiors, each looking not to his own interests but to those of others* (Phil. 2, 4).

Franciscan reverence, nay Christian reverence, concerned primarily of course with God and the things of God, extends not only to rational beings, but to all creation. Its broader basis, motive and inspiration therefore is the presence of God, the mark of God in all things. The whole wide world is God's handiwork. It is God's house. It is God's temple. Francis could find God everywhere, for all creatures are the manifestation of the power, wisdom, and goodness of our Heavenly Father. Therefore all creatures, both great and small, must be revered for God; and we must be courteous and gentle to all.

If other spiritual leaders, especially earlier than Francis, preferred to avoid the world as turning them from God, or would almost condemn the material, the corporeal, as an impediment to sanctity, not so the Poverello. True, Brother Body must be called and treated as Brother Ass, for it is "the enemy" and must be kept captive and wisely guarded (Adm. 10). Yet, "in what high position has not God placed you, O man, since He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son in your body, and to His own likeness in your soul!" (Adm. 5) And that the good God has become Man and walked this earth; that in preparation for His coming He

readied a worthy dwelling in the body and soul of the Immaculate Virgin, and after His death carried our human nature to the throne of God, makes of this world the Temple of the Incarnate Word.

### *The earth is the Lord's...*

Francis, then, could never have been satisfied with the poet who bade men look up through nature to nature's God. He would look at nature, the lowly and humble worm as well as the great and awe-inspiring heavens, and there as in a mirror see not nature's God but his loving Father. Though here below he was a pilgrim hastening to the Absolute, the world itself and all it contained offered him no little help along the way. "It was at once the battle-ground with the princes of darkness and the clear mirror of the Goodness of God. In what was beautiful he saw and knew the Most Beautiful; and all good things cried out to him: He who made us is Best of all. For they were His footprint, and showed the Beloved everywhere. Of all things, then, Francis made himself a ladder to reach to the throne" of his Heavenly Father (II Cel. 165).

We scarce need dwell on this sacramentalism of Saint Francis, so well is it known to us. All things indeed to him were sacraments, so to speak, of God: outward signs of an inward grace, external manifestations of the Creator and Father of all. But, if it is known to us, do we see its place in our lives and therefore show ourselves reverent and courteous to all creatures? Do we fall into a rhapsody over Francis the lover of nature—and fail to see rather Francis the lover of God who found his Love, his Beloved, mirrored in all things? And if we do understand, do we with him sing, in thought and action as well as in word, the Canticle of creatures, or more properly the Praise of the Creator through all His creatures? Do we let this thing lead us to God or away from Him?

Unfortunately, Jansenism still has its influence in many a child of Francis. We are hastening to God; therefore we think we must put blinders on our eyes lest we look at the world as we hasten through it! Yet, often we are passing by the very things which led

Francis to God. Is there a superior today who would admonish his or her subjects to praise the Creator for every leaf and flower they saw, to praise their Maker whenever they saw any human being or any other creature? Clare did that! Do we think it more perfect, more ascetic, to refuse to smell a flower rather than let its sweetness waft us to the eternal sweetness of God? Did we ever hear that Francis bade the gardener plant a plot of flowers along with his vegetables, that their beauty might preach to us the loveliness of God's great Beauty (II Cel. 165); or that he preached to flowers as well as to birds (I Cel. 81)? All these things led him to God "from whom (as he said so often) is every good", because, as Celano gives us his secret, that Fountain of all goodness who will be *all in all* in the life to come (I Cor. 15, 28) even now *worketh all things in all* (I Cor. 12, 6), and so shone forth to the Saint in all the works of His hand.

If we have lost that spiritual sight, then more than likely we are blind also to the role of things as symbols of the God-man. Of all irrational creatures, Francis loved and honored those above all which had especially in Sacred Scripture some allegorical likeness to Christ, the lamb, the lowly worm, even the rock in the road. With the Church he could and did find the marks of God and of His Christ in the symbolic meaning of her vestments, and saw in his own habit the livery of Christ, in books the reflection of God's wisdom—even copies of the pagan classics he handled reverently, for what good might be in them belonged to God. (So surely he would have thought of Juvenal's word: *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*: The greatest reverence must be given the child.)

Would not a corresponding sense of God's presence everywhere induce in us a greater feeling of reverence, for example in the things conceded for our use; and show us how to go to God from and through all creatures?

...and the fulness thereof (Ps. 23, 1)

If Francis so loved and revered the lowly creatures of God and saluted them as brethren, how much more did he not show love

and courtesy to those who were the image of God, his fellow men? He was no friend of Christ, he said, if he did not embrace in love all for whom Christ died. And so as he went through the world as the herald of the Great King, the knight-errant of Assisi, his way was marked by the same and even greater courtesy, gentleness, and reverence that had marked his love for the little creatures. Is not the same implied of Clare when she is praised as "the vessel of humility, the essence of kindness, the strength of patience, the bond of peace and source of loving unity in her flock: meek in word, gentle in deed, lovable and beloved in all things"? (Bull, n. 14, p. 107)

Reverence, courtesy, gentleness, urbanity, are as important for the Franciscan of the twentieth century as they were for Francis and Clare and the ancient friars in the dying world of chivalry. They are far more important than a veneer of culture and gentility that goes by the name of politeness or etiquette; more important because deeper, and rooted in a supernatural as well as natural basis, a supernatural vision of the world as the house of God, and of men as the creatures and images of God and actual or potential members of Christ.

That God and the things of God are the first objects of our reverence and courtesy goes without saying. What a sense of awe Francis ever manifested in the face of God; what a feeling of decorum and delicacy he had for the house of God and all things therein; what reverence and devotion in the Divine Office and in assistance at Mass. Here, however, we would rather emphasize his outstanding reverence for the priests of God "I wish to fear, love and honor them. . .and I do not wish to consider sin in them, because I discern the Son of God in them." How beautiful was the courtesy he showed them on all occasions, and revealed likewise in his words to those Friars who were priests (Epist. II). Religious, whether priests or not, have need of such reverence, for too easily can they short-sightedly see only the human side. Would that we too with the vision of faith might always discern in them the Son of God.

To others likewise whom the Friars would meet in their apostolate they are expressly bidden to show such virtues as *cortesia*

mands: "Let them be gentle, peace-making, and modest, meek and humble, and speak uprightly to all (i.e., explains St. Bonaventure, give every man the reverence due him)" (Rule II, 3). Wherever they are, "let all who come to them be received kindly, whether friend or foe, thief or robber" (Rule I, 7; *Fioretti*, 26). In such a spirit of reverence and gentle courtesy, they should rejoice to be among the poor and the lowly, the sick and the leper and the beggar by the wayside (I, 9); for these indeed when lowlier than ourselves are a greater reflection of Christ!

But above all, may all of us, everyone who calls himself or herself a Franciscan, fulfill these words: "Wherever the Friars are and in whatever place they may meet one another, let them spiritually and diligently (or, perhaps we should say: in the Spirit of God and in all love) show reverence and honor to one another without murmuring" (Rule I, 7). Yes, let our reverence and courtesy, our kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, start with one another! It will simply be Christ loving Christ!

Could you imagine the courteous Francis or the gentle Clare laughing at the foibles and faux pas of those whom in reverence and courtesy they called Brother or Sister in God? Would they gossip or murmur, slander or detract? Nay, "blessed is the Friar who would love and fear (i.e., reverence) his brother when the latter is far from him as much as when he may be with him; and who would not say anything behind his back that he could not say to his face and still preserve charity" (Adm. 25). Do boorishness, rudeness, crudity, form part of our hidden family life, though to the world we seem so suave and sweet? Rather, brotherly love must be the soul of our community life, and it is all the better, says Saint Bonaventure, when it is mixed with reverence: *Ipse amor aliquo modo suavior sentitur cum reverentia mixtus!*

These days of Advent are full of joy for us as we close the seventh centenary of the Lady Saint Clare and at the happy command of Pope Pius XII inaugurate a Marian Year. Our hearts and our voices are anticipating and preparing for the Feast of Feasts, the Birthday of our Brother. Clare, Mary, the Christ-Child: With the

poet (Belloc) may we not see here Three Pictures on the wall: "And courtesy was in them all!"

"Of Courtesy, it is much less  
Than Courage of Heart or Holiness,  
Yet in my Walks it seems to me  
That the grace of God is in Courtesy."

Detroit, Michigan

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.



## ENCYCLICAL LETTER

*of the Most Reverend Fr. Augustine Sepinski, Minister General of the entire Order of Friars Minor, on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the devout death of holy mother Clare of Assisi.*

Frater Augustine Sepinski, of the Strasbourg Province of St. Paschal in France, Minister General of the entire Order of Friars Minor, and humble servant in the Lord: to the Very Reverend Ministers and Commissaries Provincial, Superiors of the Missions, Fathers and Brothers of our Order, Sisters of the Second Order, Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular and Secular, in whatsoever way our subjects,

Peace and the Seraphic Blessing.

Most beloved sons and daughters in St. Francis:

That splendor of life-giving and seraphic light with which "the clear renown of Holy Clare so marvellously filled the whole world" now blazes forth with even greater brilliance. It is the occasion of the seventh centenary of your holy mother's joyful entrance into heaven.

Anyone who has been following the events which were commenced so fervently in Europe and America at the beginning of this year could justly make his own the words of an ancient verse:

"As a sign of yet unseen clarity  
Does Holy Clare shine forth;  
As the star of a new magnitude  
Does there appear this brilliant light of sanctity." <sup>2</sup>

Yes, there have passed seven centuries since that day of August 11, 1253, when Sister Death embraced the virgin of Assisi in a small cell near the Church of St. Damian. It was in this church that the

Seraphic Founder of the Minorite Family had received from Christ Crucified the command to repair the tottering house of God; it was to this place also, as to a well fortified citadel of holy poverty, that he led Clare, the little plant, chosen and devout, and, with her, the first Poor Ladies.

At Assisi there is now a magnificent basilica built around the tomb of Clare where her devoted daughters keep faithful watch. It was here on January 11, 1953, that we, in company with the Ministers General of the other Franciscan families, presided at the ceremonies which inaugurated the jubilee solemnities. We were happy to use this joyful occasion to deliver a radio message and thus recall the event to the minds of all who were present either in person or in spirit at that festive celebration. <sup>3</sup>

In a short while we shall celebrate the anniversary of the day on which "Clare entered heaven in the company of virgins," <sup>4</sup> and we feel bound by our office to speak to our dearly beloved sons and daughters of the First, Second, and Third Orders, both Regular and Secular. We would like to speak more at length about this serene and unspotted mirror.

When, as you will recall, we gave our fatherly greetings and New Year's message last Christmas, we entertained great hopes that Holy Mother Clare's return in spirit, occasioned by this year's remembrance, would strengthen our lives with the piety of the seraphic spirit. Resplendent in her glorious life as the singular and most faithful interpreter of the holy Patriarch of the poor, she encourages us to walk in his footsteps. Fashioned from the depths of her soul into a model for the seraphic flock, she admonishes us to seek out his sweet odor and to do all things in imitation of her shining example which has so glowed throughout the ages. She appears in this bright year of jubilee nearer and more glorious than light itself.

In recalling the virtues of such a mother, we are only too pleased to borrow the very words of the Supreme Pontiff, Alexander IV. In his Bull of her canonization he thus expressively extolled the

<sup>1</sup> First Antiphon, I Vespers.

<sup>2</sup> Chevalier, *Repertorium Hymnorum*, 12336.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta Minorum*, vol. 72 (1953), pp. 24-25; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>4</sup> First Antiphon, Lauds.



Virgin of Assisi: "She shed light while yet in the world, while in religion she shone above others. In her father's house she was like a little ray, but in the cloister like the brilliance of lightning. In life she shone to a few, after death she shines on the whole world. On earth she was a clear light, now in heaven she is a brilliant sun." <sup>5</sup> This sublime encomium coming from the lips of Christ's Vicar only confirms that prophetic voice which, according to Thomas of Celano, Clare's devout mother heard shortly before the birth of her child: "Fear not, woman, for you shall bring forth without danger a light which shall greatly illumine the world." <sup>6</sup>

### *She Shone Forth While In The World*

From her early years and throughout adolescence Clare gave ample proof of that splendor of eminent sanctity whose rays, growing greater day by day, she was to send forth in abundance from her monastery of St. Damian for forty-two years. Hiding like a silver-winged dove within the hidden recesses of this cloister, Clare made of herself an altar on which she continually offered the perfect and entire sacrifice of herself to her dearest heavenly Bridegroom, Christ Jesus.

She came from a noble family of Assisi: her father, Favaronius of Offreducci, was of the nobility; her mother, the Lady Hortulana, was not only of noble birth, but was very pious as well. In support of her piety, consider that she was burdened by the duties and cares of a wife and mother. And yet she allowed no sacrifice or danger to deter her from making devout pilgrimages to Palestine's Holy Places across the sea, to the shrine of St. Michael at Monte Gargano and to the Tombs of the Apostles at Rome.

Her mother's example and instruction helped Clare to advance in wisdom and in age. Thomas of Celano tells us a few things about this girl whom heaven had already chosen: she was constant in the practice of holy prayer; she gave alms willingly to the poor and

did much to satisfy their needs; she denied her own frail body of delicate foods so that she might feed the orphans. As far as her spiritual life was concerned, she nourished it with constant reading of Scripture and the lives of the Saints. She rarely permitted herself any luxury and was very careful not to attach her heart to the wealth which her family possessed. Like a pure vessel, she spread the sweet perfume of spotless virginity. Her way of life was much different from that led by others of her own age. It was a small, growing beacon light for those who walked in darkness; later, it would brighten up the whole world. Those were the virtues that she practiced in her father's home; those were the first fruits of her spiritual life, and her first experiences in the realm of sanctity. All this gladdened the heart of her good mother Hortulana. Both she and her husband wished the happiest of futures for their daughter and were anxious that she be betrothed to some very noble suitor. Hortulana was a God-fearing woman and would never interfere with the designs of the Heavenly Bridegroom and the constant workings of unseen grace. Thus, without realizing it, her maternal care furthered the plans which the Ever-Provident Lover of Virgins had prepared for Clare.

In this manner did Clare, in the privacy of her father's house, strive to please Christ, and by intense good will and serious work, run quickly along the way which led her to Jesus, her Spouse. It was only natural, then, that she should visit often the Cathedral of St. Rufinus nearby, and here it was that she heard St. Francis preach. This sermon of Francis served to light the way for the hesitant steps of the virgin, and was the occasion which the Father of Mercies used to quicken her eager journey towards her bridegroom.

And now, dearly beloved sons and daughters, we advise you to consider seriously the calling of St. Clare. It is true that even from childhood she had accustomed herself to live with God. She disciplined her tender body with a hairshirt and she cherished no desire for the things of the world. But remember that she had no little experience in the bitter warfare, the continuous struggle and contradictions of all kinds which block the way of all who wish to lead a devout life. There were allurements towards a happy life in

<sup>5</sup> N. 3; in *Legend and Writings of St. Clare* (Fran. Institute, 1953), p. 101; all references have been changed to this edition.

<sup>6</sup> Celano, *Legend of St. Clare*, chap. I; ed. cit., p. 20.

the world; before her mind there arose images of a possible marriage which her more than ordinarily favorable circumstances and beauty augured fortunate and favorable. But in spite of the tossing waves of a tempest-ridden heart, the valiant virgin did not sink. She merely strengthened her trust in God and fought the harder. Unpleasant work conquers all things because hardship calls for a struggle both interior and exterior, and this struggle in turn presupposes virtue as its underlying support.

Enlightened by the example and teachings of the blessed Francis, she came to realize what is meant by the true life and the true way of life. Hence there was no doubt or obstacle to hold back this dove from taking flight. Once she had penetrated fully the logic of her Seraphic Father, she became an exponent and industrious companion of his endeavors to restore the falling house of God. She showed herself a wise leader in bringing into being the militia of women which Francis had conceived in his mind.

You must therefore look for the beginnings of Clare's admirable work within the privacy of her ancestral home. It was from here, as from a solid piece of rock, that there flew off that small spark which, growing constantly and becoming brighter and more resplendent down through the ages, has drawn in its wake countless virgins to serve Christ their King in the spirit of a virginal humility purified by continual self-abnegation.

### *She Shone With Greater Brilliance In The Religious Life*

Memorable in the life of St. Clare was Palm Sunday, March 27, 1211. It was on this day that as a bride adorned to meet her bridegroom she went to St. Rufinus' Cathedral to receive from the hands of Assisi's Bishop the blessed palm and to implore of the Divine Guest in the tabernacle the strength necessary to carry out her resolve of leaving the world and seeking the better things to which St. Francis had summoned her. After receiving courage from the prayers which she poured forth to God, she returned home. "On the following night she set about to fulfill the Saint's command, and undertook in good companionship her long-desired flight... Thus she

abandoned home, city and kinsfolk, and hastened to Saint Mary of the Porziuncola. There the Friars who were keeping vigil at the little altar of God received the virgin Clare with lighted torches." <sup>7</sup> In front of the altar of the ever-blessed Mary, the Queen of the Angels, she espoused herself to Christ and exchanged her splendid womanly attire for the sackcloth of penance. She allowed her golden hair to be cut off, and then covered her head with the veil of humility. With firmness did she pronounce the formula of consecration before our Blessed Father Francis to whose counsel she had committed herself entirely, and whom, after God, she had chosen as the guide for her spiritual journey. "Nor was it fitting that the Order of virginity raised up in the evening of time should come to flower elsewhere than in the sanctuary of her who, first and most worthy of all, was alone a mother and a virgin." <sup>8</sup>

The ensuing ages have marveled rightly at this shining example of staunch will and faithful cooperation with divine grace found in a girl who had not yet reached her eighteenth birthday and who was enticed on all side by the allurements of the world. And yet what she did was only the first step of the arduous upward journey toward the final embrace of her Spouse. There were yet harder battles to win and more severe hardships to endure. Everyone knows how her parents tried to dissuade her from this lowly kind of life by their entreaties, promises and threats. But Our Lord gave her strength. Clare overcame all these various difficulties and was faithful to the advice of blessed Francis; she took flight to the Church of St. Damian, "where, as it were, she fixed the anchor of her soul on solid ground... nor did she waver or hesitate because of the straitness of the place or shrink back because of its loneliness." <sup>9</sup> In this small and holy retreat she served Christ most faithfully for forty-two years; she brought into being her company of virgins; she instituted the Order of Poor Ladies. She strove to keep alive that flame which she had received from the hands of St. Francis; with care she fed it and made it grow on the oil of holy prayer, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, love of poverty, and continual self-immolation

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. IV, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, chap V, p. 24.

in union with Christ Crucified. She spread abroad the perfume of her sanctity, for her younger sisters came to join her, and finally even her mother Hortulana. It was as though her entire family had come together again within the rough walls of St. Damian's.

*In The Cloister A Brilliant Sun*

"This light was confined within a convent cell, yet spread itself through the wide world. It was kept within, yet it streamed forth without. For though Clare was hidden, her life was known to all. Though Clare was silent, her fame cried out. Though Clare was enclosed in her cell, she was preached to men in all the cities. Little wonder indeed that a light so burning and shining could not be hidden but would break forth and illuminate the house of the Lord." <sup>10</sup>

This is so true. For when we pause to consider her virtues, we see that surely they were a real sermon—a sermon all the more convincing because it was joined with humility, solitude, and silence. Reflect on her virtues: the ardent and unbroken faith which she professed by her actions; her zeal to make herself like the suffering Christ through continual prayer and perfect adherence to the Divine Will, through the spirit of charity towards her sisters and the poor, and by the practice of holy and imperturbable joy. All these things she used as so many adornments for her martyrdom which was a life of poverty and privation.

Every day she took pains to please the Spouse whom she had chosen. She was ever careful to observe the things which she had freely promised at Our Lady of the Angels' on the night of her consecration. To imitate the Crucified and to follow in the steps of her Father Francis was her task. She was deeply anxious lest she lose her privilege of poverty, and she was devoted to the Blessed Eucharist. These virtues and others like them make Clare's life a herald shouting far and wide. You could say that her virtues were a poem relating with eloquence the life-story of this admirable heroine. "Ever since I have known the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through His

servant Francis, no suffering has troubled me, no penance had been hard, no sickness too arduous." <sup>11</sup> This testimony of a clear and tranquil conscience was given at the hour of her death when her Spouse was at hand, and it is the best possible praise for the virtues of this virgin who was truly brighter than light. What more is there to say of her faith, of her love, of her great trust? When the Saracens were scaling the walls of St. Damian's, the nuns lost courage; they trembled with fear and began to cry and scream. But Clare, with fearless heart, firmly took hold of the Blessed Sacrament, put the enemy to flight, and restored peace to the entire city. Because of this action, she merited to hear the Lord Jesus Himself say in words full of peace and protection, "I shall guard you always." <sup>12</sup>

*A Serene And Unspotted Mirror*

With the death of St. Francis, their great leader, the Friars felt themselves orphaned. Desirous of seeing the image of their Father even after his death, they would joyfully go to Saint Damian's to visit their holy Mother Clare, because she was the most authentic replica of the Holy Patriarch's image, and was able to tell them exactly what Francis would wish in any circumstance.

The lapse of seven hundred years has not lessened this marvelous prerogative of St. Clare; rather it has increased it. On the occasion of her seventh centenary, this holy Mother has come to us to show us the portrait, to speak the voice, and to interpret the will of Our Holy Father Francis. When he was troubled with doubts or difficulties, he would seek often the prayers of the virgin Clare and ask for her counsel and advice.

Let us, then, be imitators of our Father and have recourse to our Mother Clare, for we too are troubled with cares. Terrible wars surround us and difficulties are on the increase. Most beloved sons and daughters, do not say that a long time has passed—that changes of time and ways of doing things make Clare's example impractical for our age and manner of living. The Gospel is timeless: it fits every century. The countless turns of the calendar and the flight of time are incapable of undermining or destroying the Master's call

<sup>11</sup> Celano, op. cit., chap. XXIX, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., chap. XIV, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> "Bull of Canonization", loc. cit., p. 105-106.

to the state of perfection. Then, too, the voice of Francis who captured the marrow of that Gospel shall never pass away; nor shall there pass away Clare, the perfect echo of such a voice as Francis'. A virgin has returned to whom we may aptly apply this line of poetry: "I shall never completely die; I shall keep on living, made eternally young by praise."<sup>13</sup>

We spoke above of Clare's life at home and how she illumined that home with her purity. To her, purity was worth more than any feminine charm or beauty. It was the pearl of great price, and so she desired this treasure and despised all else. Hortulana, her mother, gave her training and example, and cooperated carefully with her daughter's high resolves. This is something which can be applied beneficially to family life even today. Parents should learn to look to the example of Clare and her mother when they hear in their home the voice of the Master calling, "Come, follow me!" Obstacles like rationalization, prejudice, or worldly considerations should not bar the way; there should be no opposition to that divine grace which knocks at the virginal heart's door, inviting her to a heavenly marriage with the Son of God. Insanity is what worldly men called the penitential life of the daughter of Favarionius the noble-born; they disapproved of her intention and used all their powers to carry her back to the world. The same thing happens in our own times: men do not honor virginity or the cloistered life; they do not esteem the desire for heavenly things, or the love of poverty or the happiness of sacrificing oneself for the love of Christ and mankind. Often when a young woman at home thinks of giving her life to Christ, what a war is waged! There is strong opposition and violence; there are the allurements of nice clothes, of shows, books, friends, and parties—and all of this is aimed to destroy in her any longing for better things. You can see, then, how timely is the return of St. Clare. Among other things, she will make her voice heard especially by young ladies who are considering a life of virginity.

Her voice is all the more opportune in this jubilee celebration of sons and most beloved daughters, because it so concerns our own interests: it repeats the voice of Christ's Vicar on earth. About ten months ago, Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in addressing the

<sup>13</sup> Horace, *Poems*, III, 30.

Superiors General of Religious Orders and Institutes of women, lamented the fact that there are some priests and preachers of the divine word who not only devote no effort to praising the consecrated life, but even look on the married state as the only one which can lead to the full perfection of nature and the human personality. He warns them to reflect on what a responsibility they assume before God and His Holy Church whenever they speak or write such an erroneous opinion as this.<sup>14</sup>

All of us, therefore, have a serious obligation to implant, to promote, and to foster vocations to the state of virginity. We must do all we can to explain and praise the spiritual and social value of this unknown apostolate in which voluntary victims of divine love labor in the bosom of the Church.

Cloistered nuns talk very little, but their deeds are eloquent arguments for the primacy of the spiritual over the materialistic tendencies of our age. Their hearts are lyres on which they play a constant song of praise to God and make reparation to Him for the indifference of agnostics and the public hostility of so many men who attack the Name of Christ whenever the occasion presents itself. The unceasing prayer that these nuns offer before the altar of the Lord is like so much leaven to vitalize the daily work of the apostles who plant the seeds of the divine word. More than this, the nuns actually make a great contribution toward spreading and preserving the Christian way of life in every land.

We readily agree that the life of a Poor Clare is strict in its great poverty and complete separation, and we admit that such a life is not suitable or bearable for many of our present-day young women. They most certainly hear Our Lord's voice and desire to live with Him by keeping themselves pure and untouched by this world. But God's grace has many facets: if a life with the Poor Ladies is difficult, there are many other different religious institutes which glory in the name and spirituality of St. Francis. These put into practice the advice which St. Clare gave to our Seraphic Father about uniting the life of action and apostolic work with a life of contemplation and prayer. Thus, they share very much in the spirit of St. Clare.

<sup>14</sup> Address of Sept. 14, 1952; *A. A. S.*, vol. 44 (1952), p. 824.

*Tender Little Plant Of St. Francis*

The life of the blessed Clare is also an incomparable example to each and every soldier who fights beneath the banner of the holy rule of St. Francis in the divisions of the First, Second, or Third Order. The valiant virgin Clare had one constant aim: to put into practice the words of St. Francis, and to use all her strength in following most closely his own footprints.

After all, the basis of the Franciscan life, as of any religious profession, is the gift of self—absolute and without reservation. The concrete expression of this giving is to be found in the rule which one observes; and the perfection of this giving lies in an unchanging attitude of soul which in every action and circumstance constantly repeats the generosity with which it made its first self-offering. Holy Mother Clare did all of this in a more than ordinary way.

She was deeply rooted in the virtue of humility: "She would rather serve than command, and give honor rather than receive it." She guarded her unspotted chastity by constant vigilance and defended it with a special zeal and care through the incessant practice of extreme mortification. Her obedience to the rule of life which Francis had given her under Our Lord's inspiration was most perfect and exact. Besides this, she kept continual vigils, prayed incessantly, and spent her time practicing charity. Her mind was constantly on God so that, while "her body remained on earth, her soul dwelt in heaven."<sup>15</sup> Her life, then, was a pilgrimage to God, which is the final goal of all Christian perfection.

*United To The Bread Of Life*

Clare's life is truly striking. But there is one virtue in particular which completes and makes all the others one; it is the fresh and unfailing fountain from which she drew all her many graces and gifts: her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Francis had invited her to "fall in love with the God-Man, Whom love had made man."

<sup>15</sup> "Bull of Canonizat.", n. 13, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Second Antiphon, First Nocturn, Matins.

She followed Francis' example and with tenderest love dwelt upon each mystery of Our Redeemer's life on earth. But she was concerned most of all with the mystery of the Cross and its perpetual and living reminder, the tabernacle. Clare the virgin frequently made visits to her Jesus hidden beneath the Sacramental Species, and it was from this Eucharistic Bread that she gained the strength which rendered her a staunch Abbess of penitents. "When she was to receive the Body of the Lord, she shed burning tears and would approach with awe, for she feared Him no less in the Sacrament than ruling heaven and earth."<sup>18</sup> Her devotion towards Him was such that "when at last she was stricken with prolonged illness...with a support at her back, she would work with her hands, making many corporals for the Sacrifice of the Altar."<sup>19</sup>

How should we praise her act of faith in confronting the Saracens with that ebony-encased silver pyx containing the Sacramental Body of Christ? The outstanding devotion to the Eucharist which Our Holy Father Francis and Blessed Mother Clare evinced are applicable to these times of ours when the cult of the Holy Eucharist continues to grow despite the many overwhelming evils and path-obscurating clouds. It has been promoted in many ways and has spread the world over; it has reached its peak in the solemn manifestations of regional, national and international Eucharistic Congresses.

And so with this year's celebration we ardently and hopefully await the much desired return of St. Clare. We call upon her to enkindle in all a love for the Blessed Sacrament and to renew everywhere life with the Eucharistic Christ, for it is He who is the leaven which will move even the most inert of the populace.

With St. Clare's help, assistance at Mass, daily Communion, and frequent visits to the Tabernacle will produce abundant fruits. It is the Eucharist which is the unfailing source of those spiritual energies which give life to the work of the apostolate and conserve carefully the life of grace in the souls of all.

<sup>18</sup> Celano, *op. cit.*, chap. XVIII, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Bull, n. 16, p. 108.

We take pleasure at this point in recalling what an effective contribution the daughters of St. Clare are making towards the conversion of souls and the honor of the Church. In imitation of their blessed Mother, they take turns, day and night, at perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They make acts of adoration to the God Who is there present, they make reparation for man's sins and carelessness, and they implore help for the Church.

We commend them for this practice of adoration and reparation, and we hope that this centennial celebration of the death of St. Clare will result in spreading such Eucharistic devotion to an even greater extent in every monastery.

#### *Promotor Of Peace*

There are also examples from the life of St. Clare which are very applicable to some aspects of this troubled age in which we live. Take the social question for example.

This "noblest of the poor" reiterates the true doctrine of the brotherhood of Christians. Her family ranked high on the social scale, and she lived in an unfeeling age when the masses of the poor and less fortunate were trodden underfoot by the property owners. But Clare completely disregarded the distinctions placed by such a wall of pride and hate, and she showed no preference for the social status even of her own family. She rose above all class-consciousness and took every person to her heart in that fiery Gospel charity which holds that all men are members of one family, and that the Head of that family is Christ, the Redeemer of all. If there is anything which we must rescue from oblivion in these times, it is the "new commandment" of brotherly love. For our part, we must preach this "command"; we must do all we can to see it practiced by people who differ so much among themselves and in their opinions. This task is ours because we are followers of Francis, the unwavering model of brotherliness and love. It is ours because

we take pride in calling ourselves the heralds of the doctrine which the Son of God Himself preached while on earth, and which we claim for our own, as is indicated by our manner of greeting: *Pax et Bonum!*

#### *Earnest Advocate Of Poverty*

Bitter conflicts are destroying the unity which Christ Our Lord restored to human society through His Blood. One of the evident causes of these misunderstandings is the unjust distribution of goods and wealth in a society unprepared to receive them. But everyone knows that the principal and ultimate cause is the unbridled striving after the things of the world, and a growing forgetfulness of heavenly things. How opportune, then, is the return of St. Clare who "valued the glory of the whole world as worthless", and in "refusing to possess what was given her", "sowed the seed of justice."<sup>20</sup> It is precisely her kind of justice that the children of our day clamor for. Clare was intent on storing up treasures only in heaven; "she paid no heed to passing joy for fear of losing the happiness of eternity."<sup>21</sup> And this was the one thing which she willed to her daughters: "Never to be unworthy followers of their mother's poverty."<sup>22</sup>

She was very firm in her adherence to the spirit of total renunciation and poverty. Thus it was that she fought hard for her "privilege" against all the advice of men. She kept always in mind the commendation given her by her dying Father Francis: "I beg and counsel all you, my Ladies, ever to live in this life of holiness and poverty."<sup>23</sup>

This heedful virgin rested from defending her position only on her death-bed when she was able to seal with a kiss the pontifical document of Innocent IV which sanctioned her "privilege" of the highest poverty.

<sup>20</sup> *Office of St. Clare*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Rule of St. Clare*. VI. n. 3, p. 74.

The words of Christ Our Lord should incite us to follow faithfully these teachings and examples of St. Clare, for He says: *Seek ye therefore the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.*<sup>24</sup>

We are thoroughly cognizant of the difficulties and the state of affairs which today press in upon many monasteries of cloistered religious, and, for our part, we have followed the daughters of St. Clare with heartfelt and fatherly anxiety. We have encouraged them to lift up their hands and eyes to their Spouse, for He it is Who will give them aid. We have stressed the fact that they must renew at every moment their trust in Divine Providence. In all of this, we have called upon the example of Holy Mother Clare, who provided for the necessities of life by manual labor, and even left in her rule a special precept of work.

This is also the sentiment of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, as is evident from his recent constitution, *Sponsa Christi*. In this document he sets down timely and wise norms: he reiterates the law of enclosure and invites monasteries of religious women to take a definite part in the labors of the apostolate; he advocates that even in their monasteries they should establish useful and wisely-regulated projects to meet the various needs of the times. The Vicar of Christ also urges an amalgamation of the monasteries into federations through which they will be better able to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of their lives. If our devoted daughters keep these things in mind and strive to observe them faithfully, they will share in the joy of their holy mother Clare who, in imitation of Francis, promised and observed with constancy the "obedience and reverence which she promised "to the Lord Pope Honorius and to his legitimate successors."<sup>25</sup> Finally, the return of St. Clare with these jubilee solemnities gives us the long-awaited and auspicious occasion to express and strengthen our paternal affection toward our beloved daughters of the Second Order. We are therefore happy to renew what our Blessed Father Francis promised the virgin Clare in telling her that he would assist the Poor Ladies in their spiritual and tem-

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 6, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Rule of St. Clare, I. n. 3, p. 66.

poral affairs. In doing this we hope to strengthen the family bond which our Holy Founders were the first to establish. This is what we, on our side, promise; and we exhort of of you, provincial superiors in particular, as also all our beloved sons and daughters of the First and Third Orders to do your part and treat the devoted Poor Clares with brotherly love and solicitous care. As ample reward, you may expect the protection of St. Clare and the prayerful assistance and good works of our cloistered sisters who help us to fulfill our ministry and who enable all to work out their sanctification.

We have written this letter because the thought of Holy Mother Clare has inspired delightful memories. We were likewise firmly confident that the jubilee remembrance of this virgin would yield abundant fruits for our entire Seraphic family. Such also was the ardent wish of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII.<sup>26</sup>

Let us therefore earnestly implore St. Clare to teach us how to tread more closely in the footsteps of our Seraphic Patriarch. Let us ask her to intercede for the whole Franciscan family, to come to the aid of Our Holy Mother the Church, to protect the Supreme Pontiff and our Eminent Cardinal Protector, and to hasten the triumph of Christ in His kingdom of justice, love, and peace.

Upon each and every one of our beloved sons and daughters subject to our care we call down the fulness of the blessing of Our Holy Father Francis and Our Holy Mother Clare. Through their intercession may all your attempts after the better gifts yield fruit and profit.

Given at Rome, from our General Curia at St. Mary Mediatrix, on the feast of Corpus Christi, June 4, 1953.

Frater Augustine Sepinski  
Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor

*The Theologians of Santa Barbara (trans.)*

<sup>26</sup> Letter of May 25, 1953, on the Seventh Centenary of the Death of St. Clare

## SINGULAR VESSEL OF DEVOTION

Dogmas are not merely determinations of the Church, or truths imposed upon Catholics simply to be held by an act of faith. Dogmas are more. They are formulae in which basic principles of the spiritual life are condensed; they are transpositions, translations, as it were, of religious truths into words and, as such, axioms of our religious life. Consequently, dogmas are not formulated for their own sake, nor simply to provide matter for the speculation of theologians. They are given to the faithful that they may be lived and practiced in that charity which is the fulfillment of Christian life.

There seems to be a danger in modern times of our forgetting the basic and all-penetrating role of Christian dogmas. We are subject to the temptation of leaving a dogma to intellectual faith and our spiritual life to uncontrolled sentimentality. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception seems to be a case in point. We certainly know the truth defined by our holy Mother the Church. We believe it; but for the rest we seem to feel that the dogma expresses at most just another venerable title of the Virgin Mary. This is not the attitude the Church intends for us. Rather, she wishes us to inquire and to search deeply into the rich treasures contained in the dogmatic formula and to make them an active and integral part of our own personal spirituality.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception states in terse theological terms the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the very first moment of her existence, was pre-redeemed from the bondage of original sin through the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ. If we try to translate this formula into Christian life, we find it revealing itself as the example of God's free gift of grace. The Immaculate Conception is a miracle of grace. Grace, transcending natural powers and rights, is in itself a miracle and absolutely incomprehensible.

But the fulness of grace is still more incomprehensible in the supreme and unique miracle of grace realized in the Blessed Virgin. She is "full of grace", wholly and entirely penetrated by grace from the very beginning and for all time and eternity. *Thou art all fair, O Mary, and the original stain is not in thee.* Only once in the tragic, sin-stained history of human existence was a child of Eve conceived and born free from the taint of the Ancient Serpent, and embraced at the first moment of her being in the love of God: *Dominus tecum.* Never was it true for her, as it is true for all the rest of Eve's children, that for a time the Lord was not with her. In Mary grace is complete; it reaches its full measure; the love of God finds total fulfillment because it is love without reservation.

Let us try to penetrate more deeply into this mystery of grace. Why was the Lord always with Mary? Of course, because she was the Mother of the Incarnate Word. But why was she chosen for this ineffable dignity? Because of her merits? But no one merits without grace, and in crowning our merits, says Saint Augustine, God crowns His own works. Why then? There is no other answer than that the Lord bestowed upon Mary the plenitude of grace because it pleased Him to do so. His gracious will, His infinite love, embraced the lowliness of His creature. Here our reason comes to a halt, not because it is satisfied, but because it has no right to search further. *O man, who art thou to reply to God? Does the object moulded say to him who moulded it: Why hast thou made me thus?* (Rom. 9, 20).

God loves all His creatures, and He loves the one more than the other, and He does so because He is good (Lk. 19, 15). The choice of grace is inscrutable. It is for us children of our most loving Father to fall to our knees in adoration, and overwhelmed by our absolutely undeserved gifts of grace and predilection, to give voice to our gratitude in the rapturous cry of Saint Paul: *Oh, the depth of the riches of wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!* (Rom. 11, 33).

In this adoration, thanksgiving, and love, we join the Immaculate Mother of Christ. She leads the choir of the redeemed and



predestined. She knows that she is nothing of herself and everything through the love and grace of God. She has the first duty and the first right to chant the new canticle of the predestined, and from her we too learn to sing: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid. For, behold, henceforth all generations call me blessed. Because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.* . . (Lk. 1, 46-49).

When God calls a creature, that creature must respond; but freely, not in fear or as a slave. God's call is His love and grace; the creature's answer must be free, humble, and wholly without reservation. This is the meaning of devotion. The word "devotion" comes from *devovere*. Originally it signified to be sworn with body and soul to the gods of the underworld. This meaning has been changed into its opposite, and now it means to be sworn body and soul to God, to belong to God without reservation, to be sacrificed to God, to be holy for God. This is devotion in its Christian meaning.

In this sense the Blessed Virgin, in and through the Immaculate Conception, became the *Vas insigne devotionis*. The evil spirits never had any right or any part in her, as they had, at least for a time, in all of us. From the very first moment of her existence she was the chosen vessel in which the flame of sacrifice burned in holy devotion for the Lord alone. She was with the Lord and the Lord was with her. She belonged entirely to Him. In this most profound and total devotion the Blessed Virgin bowed her head and as handmaid of the Lord accepted His will to become the mother of the Redeemer, and she accepted it with the almost certain possibility of shame in the eyes of the world and anxiety for her future bridegroom.

Our Lady surpassed every creature by her privilege of being the Mother of God. But Christ Himself did not praise her for this privilege; He praised her for her devotion. When a certain woman lifted up her voice and said to Him: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast that nourished thee*, the Lord answered: *Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it* (Lk. 11, 27-28).

We are not able to be what Mary was, a "singular vessel of devotion." We had to be purified from sin by the holy waters of Baptism. But once we are set free from the bondage of Satan, we become the property of the Lord, we are His booty. However, we are not His slaves; we are redeemed and called by Him into freedom, and He expects our response to His call to be given in freedom and humility and charity. In other words, He expects our devotion. In this devotion, if it is perfect, nothing is left to us. We are of no account in our own eyes; only God matters. Then, following the pattern of Mary, we become vessels of devotion in which the flame of devotion is the same for us as it was for Mary. While the Immaculate Virgin said: *Be it done unto me according to thy word*, we say in the Lord's Prayer: *Thy will be done*. In this sense, then, we can join Our Lady and become true vessels of devotion if the kingdom of God, His will and His glory, are our deepest interests.

The fact remains, however, that we cannot join Mary in her purity. We are conceived in sin, and we cannot avoid personal sin without such extraordinary grace as was given to the Mother of God. We have to carry on in our misery, and we have to combat our inherent weaknesses. We have to struggle against Powers and Principalities and against our own corrupted nature; inevitably, in this ceaseless warfare waged from within and without, we must frequently suffer severe and disabling wounds. As long as we live upon earth we are exiled children of Eve and we must carry the burden of her disobedience. If we, from the murky depths of our impurity, contemplate the Immaculate Virgin who was not only free from original and actual sin but even from the inclination to sin, we could fall into hopeless shame and despair. Her dazzling brightness cannot be our model, for we are by nature incapable of reaching it. But it can be our ideal. Mary is the realization of such innocence—the first innocence—of such unsullied purity and radiant holiness that, although no model for our second innocence, she is nevertheless a source of strength for us in our struggle. For Mary is our hope, a bright greeting from our eternal homeland where no battles rage, no tears are shed, no uncleanness dwells. On earth we are bound fast by impurity of compromise, but gazing upward at Our Lady's . . .

self-possession, we know that in her victory there will finally be an end to our combat.

It is a well-known human experience that a pure and saintly woman creates an atmosphere of purity and cleanness; it is some irresistible and mysterious power radiating from her. The ideal, the perfect woman, is given to us in Mary; it is her purity and sanctity that elevates our heart, stimulates our activity, dispels evil desire and inspires hope. For Mary is the mother of fair love, of fear of the Lord, and of holy hope. She is indeed our hope—and hope is the virtue of homesickness for the eternal mansions.

*St. Bonaventure University      Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.*



## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### CHINA:

Is there any relaxation in the persecution of the Church in China? Apparently. At the beginning of May this year, many imprisoned Chinese priests were set at liberty. In a certain small city, over six hundred faithful received Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. In Wuhan, where there are three episcopal sees, three processions were held during the month of May—at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the month. More than forty priests took part in the processions together with three thousand Christians and thousands of pagan spectators. In another city, two foreign priests received official residence permits and are now able—at least theoretically—to set out for their missions. In the famous sanctuary of Zo-se (near Shanghai) forty-five thousand Holy Communions (fifteen hundred daily) were distributed during the month of May. All these things were done openly and without the least trouble or opposition.

But now suddenly there seems to be a reaction. In the little city mentioned above, the names of all who had celebrated Easter were taken by the police. In Hankow, the Peoples' Court was summoned and two missionaries were expelled by the "people". In Shanghai several missionaries were imprisoned, others placed under house arrest. The Franciscan Procurator in Shanghai was among those imprisoned, while his two assistants were sentenced to house arrest. We can therefore easily believe that the two missionaries who received their residence permits may indeed begin their journey—to prison or to exile.

In a certain seminary in China there are at present thirty-seven students in the minor seminary, thirty-three in the major seminary, and twelve Franciscan clerics.

### KARACHI:

A new problem has arisen here. Many Catholics from the Province of Punjab have had to migrate because of the influx of Mohammedan refugees from India. The great majority are migrating to the city of Karachi, where they apply at the mission for work to support their families.

### JAPAN:

The Franciscan Fathers at Nagano-Ken have opened a new school, a kindergarten, for four hundred boys and girls.

The mission in Urawa reports that on April 19 five aspirants to the Order received the Franciscan habit in the novitiate house there. Father John Ber... Provost has been named Master of Novices.

## SOUTH AFRICA:

In the Kokstad mission, the Fathers work among a population of whites, blacks, and mixed. The whites, especially those of Netherlandish origin, are fanatical Calvinists and violently hostile to the Catholic Church. Those of English origin are much milder. The law prohibiting the erection of a church or school within three thousand miles of a place where a church or school of another religion already exists is a serious handicap to our missionaries.

Marriage between whites and blacks is forbidden by law; almost every form of association—business, commercial, or social—is also prohibited. This applies to all public places—churches, schools, theatres, public conveyances, and the like. It is very difficult to apply Christian social principles in such a society.

In Pretoria the new seminary is flourishing. By a decree of the Propaganda Fide, August 12, 1950, the seminary for the education of priests for the Union of South Africa was entrusted to the Irish Franciscans. Hostility to the seminary is rapidly diminishing because of the work of the Friars themselves and because of the truly excellent results they have already accomplished.

Besides the Father Rector, eight other Franciscan Fathers teach in the seminary. All hold advanced academic degrees. This year there is an enrollment of thirty-two students. Civil and ecclesiastical authorities as well as the clergy and laity hold the work of the Fathers in great esteem. Their fine culture, especially in the humanities, will of necessity bring about a change in the temper and cultural level of the South African clergy. It has been recommended, especially by non-Catholics, that the University should keep in mind the courses taught in the seminary, and should make similar courses obligatory for those seeking academic degrees.

Besides their work in the seminary, the Fathers take part in the spiritual and academic life of the region. They hear the confessions of religious women, give conferences, and during vacation time they direct retreats for priests and religious. One of the Fathers fills the post of chaplain to Catholic students at the University of Pretoria.

## BRAZIL:

Recently the Minister Provincial of Saint Anthony's Province, Brazil, visited the mission among the Mundurucu Indians, located far in the interior of the vast Amazon valley. The mission, which is constantly receiving contributions from the Mission Procurators of all the houses of the Province, is developing rapidly. The Provincial reported that the religious life of the mission is flourishing, and the Indians have the greatest confidence in the missionaries. Many of the Indians of their own accord come to the mission and wish to remain there, for they see the good example of the Fathers and the Sisters (Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception), and realize that at the mission they can more easily receive religious instruction. The physical development of the mission, however, is progressing very slowly; lack of needed material and help is a great hindrance to the missionaries.

Besides working among the Mundurucus, the Fathers also take care of mission outposts along the Tapajoz River, especially in the "Danger Zone," so-called because of the almost unnavigable cataracts through which the Fathers must pass to reach the people dwelling in that region.

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