

# the CORD

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## CONTENTS

CONSPIRACY: MARIAN YEAR.....	2
<i>Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.</i>	
OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	3
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O. F. M.</i>	
THE TWO MEDITATIONS (trans.).....	7
<i>Fr. Marian Douglas, O. F. M.</i>	
<i>Fr. Fintan Warren, O. F. M.</i>	
SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (I).....	10
<i>Joseph F. Mahoney, T. O. F. (trans.)</i>	
THE HOLY NAME.....	16
<i>Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.</i>	
FULL OF GRACE.....	20
<i>Fr. Vincent de Paul Sullivan, O. F. M. (trans.)</i>	
FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (I).....	23
<i>Fr. Cajetan Esser, O. F. M.</i>	
SYMPATHY.....	28
<i>Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Plassman O. F. M.</i>	



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## CONSPIRACY: MARIAN YEAR

Sound never a trumpet. Only let her name  
Go up like flocks of birds from every land.  
Fire no salute. Her fragrance shall possess  
The earth like arms, like eloquence of eyes.  
Let there be silence, that no foe may guess  
How Mary comes to wreck his careful wars.  
Deep in the very tents of battlesmoke,  
Her gentle plot is sprung; and we are doomed  
To watch our terrors melt before her gaze.

Oh, write her name for jubilee upon  
Our dreariness! until the heart recalls  
How we were meant for sun and song and splendor,  
And earth remembers how it was paradise.

Light her pure name to bonfires on the rubble  
Of earth's despair; for, in our darkest season  
Of bitterness and blood, there sounds no trumpet,  
But Mary laughing with her little Child.

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

*Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*The things that were gain to me, these, for  
the sake of Christ, I have counted loss (Phil. 3, 7)*

The love of God in the heart of a saint becomes a fire. The love of God in the heart of Francis was a mammoth flame, and the great torment of it drove him into a sublime madness. God poured into his heart in unusual fulness the Spirit of His Son crying, "Abba, Father" (*Spiritum... clamantem*, Gal. 4, 6), and the heart of Francis almost burst with the echoing cry in the same Spirit, "Abba, Father" (*Spiritum... in quo clamamus*, Rom. 8, 15). And thus, at length, the love and the echoing love grew to a thunder.

Love blazed in Saint Francis. Almost as an outward proof of this, the Fioretti recounts the incident when Saint Francis and Saint Clare were conversing on the love of God under the open sky: "Saint Francis began to speak of God so sweetly, so sublimely, and in a manner so wonderful that the grace of God visited them abundantly, and all were rapt in Christ. While they were thus rapt, with eyes and hearts raised to heaven, the people of Assisi and of Bettona, and of all the country round about, saw Saint Mary of the Angels as it were on fire, with convent and woods adjoining. It seemed to them as if the church, the convent, and the woods were all enveloped in flames, and the inhabitants of Assisi hastened with great speed to put out the fire."

And at the giving of the stigmata, the Fioretti tells us: "Then did all the Mount Alvernia appear wrapped in intense fire, which illuminated all the mountains and valleys around, as it were the sun shining in his strength upon the earth." This was the answer to Francis' prayer that Christ "would grant me in my lifetime to feel, as far as might be possible, both in my soul and body, all that He had suffered in His most bitter Passion. The second favor which I asked was that I might feel in my heart that exceeding love which enkindled His, and moved Him to endure so great a Passion for

us sinners. And then God put it into my heart that it was granted to me to feel both as far as it is possible for a mere creature; and this promise was well fulfilled to me by the impression of the stigmata." Here the transforming power of love has come to a glorious consummation: by the stigmata Saint Francis is conformed to the likeness of the supreme Love, Christ crucified.

It was a torment to him that men were heedless of the love of Christ; yet, Love must be loved; so Francis often climbed to the rocky caverns of his Umbrian hills—a trysting place with Christ—and there he would parley long and fervently with the love of Christ. Then he would go down to the valley to spread abroad the fire that flamed within him. Christ had said, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?* But the fire was burning low, so Francis wore himself out, going from place to place, blowing the hot coals into a streaming flame, till the flames leaped up and the fire of divine love roared again in the land.

A love such as that of Francis is uncompromising; it leads to a holy folly. It is so utterly engrossing, so ravishing that all else is nothing. Having this love, he would have naught besides. Saint Paul experienced this intoxication: *The things that were gain to me, these, for the sake of Christ, I have counted loss. Nay, more, I count everything loss because of the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord* (Phil. 3:7-8). Francis was of the same mind: every temporal thing would be an encumbrance to him. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And earth does not delight me if I am with thee. My flesh and my heart melt away; the Rock of my heart and my portion, God forever* (Ps. 72, 27). Thus, detachment followed from love. If the Son of God stripped himself of glory for love of Francis, he in turn would strip himself of everything for love of Christ. For, in truth, that heart is too avaricious which, possessing such treasure, would want other treasure besides. "I beseech thee, O Lord, that the fiery and sweet strength of thy love may absorb my soul from all things that are under heaven, that I may die for love of thy love as thou didst deign to die for love of my love." Therefore, Francis gave back his clothes, he abandoned his former social prestige, he surrendered every right of possession, he flung comfort to the winds. To the

carnal and worldly-minded all this seems to be a madness. Yes, let us grant the madness, but a madness of excessive joy, an intoxication of love, a heroism born of immortal desires, for who would not gladly pass through fire and water that he might at the last embrace the living God? That is why self-conquest, and detachment, and fasting, and vigils, and long hours of prayer are sheer delight to a soul who has fallen in love with God, for all this is like a thundering declaration to Him who sits upon the throne, that you love Him above all things.

Such is the folly of divine love when it truly seizes you: it alienates you, by its ecstasy, from your worldly prudence and makes you a fool in the eyes of the world. And thus, at first, Francis became a laughing-stock to men, for *the sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand* (1 Cor. 2, 14). That is why his father raved at the very thought of it all, and why the boys pelted him with mud and stones because their elders had told them that Francis was mad.

Yes, in truth, Francis was beside himself because he walked in an ecstasy of love, and that makes every man a fool, for no one can understand such a lover unless he himself is deeply in love. Saint Augustine says very much to the point, *Da amantem*. . .—"We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, but we are without honor! . . . We have become as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all" (1 Cor. 4. 10-13). Such, in the estimation of the carnal man, is the spiritual man.

It seems, therefore, that the poverty of Saint Francis has a sublime explanation; it is the expression of his all-absorbing love for Christ. The great poem on divine love, the Cantic of Canticles, would put it this way: *If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing* (8, 7).

"Ah! is Thy love indeed

A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,

Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?" (Francis Thompson).

Yes, an amaranthine weed, a never-fading flower whose beauty and splendor make all other blossoms vile.

It will not be given to us to have the seraphic love of Saint Francis—its consuming ardor, its ecstasy. Yet, we too have the Spirit of the Son crying, "Abba, Father." And if we do not have the rapture, we can have the devotedness, and this is the true touch-stone of love, for *He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me* (J. 14, 21). *He who keeps his word, in him the love of God is truly perfected; and by this we know that we are in him* (1 J. 2, 5). If, then, we are loyal and devoted to the will of God we can have assurance.

As to Franciscan poverty, we have seen that it was begotten of divine love. We must love poverty as Francis did through a deep love for Christ. It would be senseless to surrender all things if we were not moved by the compelling love. And if in our present age we cannot be as uncompromising in fact as Francis was, at least let us be as uncompromising in spirit. We are renegades from the spirit of Saint Francis if we are renegades from the spirit of his poverty. We must be glad to be poor. Poverty is our riches. Therefore, *having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content* (1 Tim. 6, 6). *It were better for me to die than... No one shall make void my boast!* (1 Cor. 9, 16).

Old Mission,

Santa Barbara, California

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.



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## THE TWO MEDITATIONS

*(From the medieval chronicle, The Holy Friars of Saxony)*

During the early days of the Order, Blessed Francis left such telling examples of devotion to his descendants that the Friars engraved them upon their hearts and never let them vanish from their memory. To the example of his devotion not only were the Friars who were priests most attentive, but the lay-brothers also panted after fervor of spirit and by their assiduous prayers besought of God the spirit of great and ardent fervor.

One of these was Friar Conrad, a laybrother who attained such devotion that the Lord deigned to work miracles through him... One day he was out as companion to a friar-priest, who was to say Mass in a nearby town. As they walked along, they came to a woods through which they had to pass. When they had entered to grove the priest, who knew Friar Conrad for a jolly fellow, was fearful that Conrad would delay him by some ill-timed prank; so he started some friendly yet serious conversation and talked quite lovingly and amiably to him. Then he said to Friar Conrad: "Say your prayers now; I want to prepare for Mass." And with that the priest walked ahead of him lest Conrad disturb him in his prayers.

Having said his own Office and prayers, this devout friar-priest began to meditate and ponder on the majesty of Him Whose blessed Body and Blood he was about to bring down, to touch with his hands, and to consume in Holy Mass, and meditating deeply on Him, he proceeded in his thought and came to the Passion of Christ Jesus. And as the eyes of his soul now saw Christ hanging on the Cross, covered with wounds and crowned with thorns, he considered himself unworthy to enter upon such a high ministry, both on account of the boundless love which he beheld in Christ and an account of his own sins by which he so often had offended Him. The soul of the priest melted within him with a boundless compassion for Christ Whom he never ceased to gaze upon interiorly. He then

began to weep very lovingly and with all his heart he suffered with Christ on His Cross. Thus he saw Christ within his heart, and his soul was filled with sadness in beholding Him.

But Friar Conrad, on his part, knowing nothing of what his companion was doing, also gave himself to meditation. He became deeply engrossed with the Holy Infancy of Our Lord, and was absorbed into the joy that the Holy Angels felt at the Nativity of Christ when they sang *Gloria in excelsis* and in the unexampled happiness of the shepherds when they found Him whimpering in the manger. In a similar way he entered into the delight of the Magi when they adored Him in the stable as the Evangelist tells us: *But seeing the star the Magi rejoiced with exceeding great joy*, etc. And while he was lost in such holy thoughts, he was thrilled with such mirth that he began to exult loudly and to talk heart to heart with the ever-blessed Infant.

And thus the two friars enfolded God in their souls: the priest who gazed upon Christ in grief and sorrow, and the laybrother in great mirth and joyfulness. More perfectly, however, did he see Christ and greater was the love of Christ in *him* whose soul beheld Christ on the Cross. So as to place Friar Conrad on the same level of meditation with his companion, the good God increased his joy by the following miraculous apparition.

While the priest, weeping bitterly over the Passion of the Lord, continued his way, and the lay-brother followed, rejoicing over the Lord's Infancy, the brother heard near the road a voice like that of a little boy weeping and whimpering. Rooted in amazement he stopped and listened carefully. But hearing nothing except the boy's voice, he began to call out and ask whether there was anyone with the child. Receiving no answer, he entered the forest to find what might be wrong with the babe. But when he came to the spot he found a very beautiful child smiling up at him. He lifted the child into his arms and the child's glance filled him with a wonderful happiness. He thought about taking him along to the town, but he feared to give scandal to those who might see him. But he feared even more to leave him there, lest he be devoured by wild beasts. Finally, however, he decided that the child had been left there by some careless person, and so it seemed best to him to take him along

and place him under the care of some good people when he and his companion emerged from the forest.

He carried the boy in his arms and the boy smiled up at him, and the longer the brother gazed upon him, the more beautiful the child appeared. Then he hurried after his companion and began to call after him to wait and see the beautiful child. But the priest in his heart saw Christ on the Cross and was weeping most bitterly, while the other saw the child in his arms and was transported with delight. And when the laybrother insisted that he wait for him, the devout Father, fearing that the brother would put an end to his meditation, called to him: "O Friar Conrad, I am afraid that you are about to offend greatly the good God Who just now has given me some good thoughts from which you will distract me." When poor Conrad heard that the Father felt annoyed, he ceased calling and followed him to town in silence. And when they were about to enter the town, he saw nearby a wall with a window fairly high up from the ground. So he decided that he would place the boy there and, after finding out whose child it was, he would return; he did not dare to carry the boy into town because he was afraid he would give scandal to the townsfolk.

But when he lifted the boy up, He disappeared from his hands and vanished before his eyes. Friar Conrad then understood that it had been the Christ-Child, on Whose Infancy he had been meditating. And now it was his turn to weep bitterly because he had to do without Christ's very beautiful appearance. When the priest now looked back because he heard the brother sobbing, he asked the cause of such bitter tears. And Friar Conrad said: "O dear Father, I have lost the Boy I had, and if I only had known, as I know now, Who He was, how tight I would have held Him!" And when the priest heard what Boy he was talking about, he wept even harder than the lay-brother, because he had not seen Him.

But the priest had seen something more perfect and lovable in his own heart. And so our Dear Lord, Who would not distract him from the contemplation of His most bitter sufferings and hinder the tears that so consoled him, withdrew the presence of His Holy Infancy.

Oldenburg, Indiana

Marian Douglas, O. F. M.

Fintan Warren, O. F. M.

## SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (I)

### *Preface*

*Be transformed in the newness of your mind that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* These words the Apostle writes to the Romans as to novices, that they who in the world were deformed by sin and were dark, being now established in religious life, may be reformed by final penitence and become bearers of light, so that it may be said of them: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk then as children of light.* Whoever, therefore, desires to reform in outlook and habit should strive to refashion his life according to the norms I have explained below. For him the good will of God will consist in the forgiveness of sin that deforms; the acceptable will, in the inpouring of grace that restores; while the perfect will lies in the enjoyment of the reward of glory, in which he will receive a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord Jesus, Who will render to every man according to his works, *for He is just and has loved justice.*

### *The Divine Office*

Spiritual things are ever and everywhere to be given first place. When, therefore, you are in church or elsewhere to say the Divine Office, do not let your heart wander or admit harmful thoughts or other distractions, because, as Saint Bernard says: "It is a great abuse to have one's mouth in choir and one's heart in the market." Of such men the Prophet says: *They blessed with their mouth, but cursed with their heart.* Rather, say the Office with profound humility of heart, with reverence and fear. For, according to Holy Scripture, *the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart and shall give joy and gladness.*

And strive to understand what you are saying, if you can; if, however, you cannot understand the text, revere it nonetheless,

## RULE FOR NOVICES

because the Wise Man says: *For thy reverence, good grace shall come to thee.* And always stand erect during the Office, both for that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and for that of the day. Yet in the night office, after Matins of the Blessed Virgin, you may rest against the back of the stall.

Do not omit the Office of the Blessed Virgin on double feasts. Whenever you are saying Office, conduct yourself modestly, not gazing around nor speaking with anyone. But with head slightly bowed and eyes cast down, keep your hands in front of you, either in the form of a cross, or joined before your breast, but never in the pocket of your habit or in any unseemly place. And remember that you are not only before your brethren, but also in the presence of God and His Angels. For the Psalmist says: *The Princes, i.e., Angels, went before, joined to the singers.*

And pay careful attention to the psalter, lest negligence or excessive modesty cause you to omit any word of the Office. And in praying your hours, do more than merely say the words, lest you be like those pious hypocrites, of whom the Lord complains by the Prophet: *This people with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me.* Beware of doing or saying anything which would provoke others to laughter because, as Saint Isidore says: "Compunction has no entrance where there is immoderate joking and laughter." But rather let your joy and your meditation rest always in Jesus that, praying and meditating, you can say with the Prophet: *May the words of my mouth please Thee: and the meditation of my heart be ever in thy sight.* And when you have completed any hour, say the *Miserere* and the *Salve Regina* with the oration *Omnipotens.*

### *Prayer*

Since the Lord says in the Gospel that we *must always pray and not lose heart*, strive always to spend your time in prayer or in reading or in profitable thought or at work, "for he does not cease to pray who does his duty well. Your prayer should be frequent and sorrowful, rooted in deep devotion and humility of heart. For, as the Wise Man says, *the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.* And whatever you ask in prayer, do so with confidence that it will be heard, for Truth Itself says: *All things whatever you ask* . . .

*believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you.* And let your prayer be based on the highest charity, for Saint Gregory says that "the power of perfect prayer lies in the intensity of its charity."

Let it be also secret, modest, just, tearful, and frequent. And since prayer is nothing but the "ascent of the mind to God", therefore, before you begin your prayer, prepare yourself for interior devotion if you desire to attain to divine delights. For, as Saint Gregory says again, "prayer is a matter of the heart, not of the lips; nor does God merely listen to the words of the petitioner but He also scrutinizes his heart." And therefore the Wise Man says: *Son, before prayer prepare thy soul and be not as a man that tempteth God.* A man who prays is said to tempt God when, without any interior preparation, he runs to vocal prayer and asks to understand divine things. But rarely, if ever, will he obtain this, for such a man does not pray devoutly, but rather barks out his words.

If, therefore, you seek consolation in prayer; prepare your heart for devotion; for of this preparation Christ says through His Prophet: *Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.* Thus also we read in the lives of the Fathers: "As we wish to be found in prayer, so should we prepare ourselves before the time of prayer."

Three things go to make up this preparation. First, as Saint Gregory says, we must turn the five senses from exterior things to attain quiet of mind, lest the soul, which intends to dwell only on God, be drawn by them to other things. For if the invisible soul is like the invisible God, then in prayer it should forget all visible things that it may easily concentrate on heavenly things without earthly admixture. For, as the tree grows upward, so must the soul grow toward the things of God. And therefore Saint Gregory says: "The man who prays will receive the interior taste of wisdom more avidly, the more he tries to repress the delight of the flesh for its wisdom." And therefore the Lord says: *But when thou prayest, go into thy room and, closing the door, pray to thy Father.*

The second element of this preparation, viz., consideration of our own smallness, follows from the fact that no one ascends to the contemplation of God unless he first descends through his own humility. Now if you who pray wish to learn your own littleness, consider the immensity of Him to Whom you pray; for you are nothing

in comparison to the living God. You are a vile worm, but God is eternal; you are a creature, mortal and weak, but God is the omnipotent Creator; nor, since you are nothing, have you honored God as the creature should reverence his Creator or the servant his Lord; but to your discredit, by your sins *you have provoked Him to wrath* and have used His very gifts against Him. And therefore you do not deserve to be heard, but rather to be tormented eternally. And thus tearfully picture Hell to yourself, considering the grave sins you have committed and the great glory you have lost and what dire punishment you have incurred, that thinking thus, you may come to know your transgressions and how justly you were condemned, and the Passion of the Lord, by which you were redeemed.

And from this follows the third element, namely, burning love of Christ the Redeemer. If you would love Christ perfectly, consider how greatly He loved you. For *greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends.* But Christ did more, because He died for us, His enemies. *For when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.*

Think, therefore, of these great benefits that God has given you. For, although you deserved to suffer eternally in Hell, the Son of God Himself, to save you, willed to be born of a poor woman and to suffer most cruel torments and to die a horrible death, that He might descend to Hell and free us therefrom and place us in the heavenly company. And then ascend mentally to that company of the Blessed and, fired by divine love, begin to pray fervently that you may say with the Prophet: *My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.* And for the remainder of your prayer, continue to picture that glorious heavenly Jerusalem, that you may say with the Apostle: *But our citizenship is in Heaven.*

Let your private prayers be of a certain determined number, and do not set any of these aside unless forced to by pressing necessity or illness. These I recommend: first, in praise of God and the Blessed Virgin, say daily between dawn and evening one hundred Paters, Aves, and Glorias, with as many genuflections; second, say the Seven Penitential Psalms with the litany daily for living benefactors and one nocturn of the Office of the Dead for deceased benefactors. And other prayers as God shall prompt you.

Always remember that the most important thing in our prayers is their devotion, not their completion. Thus, when you find Christ in devotion, immediately discontinue your vocal prayer, enjoy Him Whom you sought, saying with the bride of the Canticle: *I have found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go.* When Jesus withdraws devotion, continue the prayer you had begun. I advise you not to leave that prayer undone, for he who begins is not commended, but he who perseveres to the end.

Pray, therefore, dearly beloved, and exercise yourself in prayer, because eternal punishment is promised to the poor man who does not pray. For Saint Bernard says: "Pray, my brother, pray always, because he who nourishes his flesh on the sweat of the poor is said to have a coat stained with blood. By our chanting, these good things come to us; therefore pour forth for them heavy groans, otherwise, what you take here in joy, you will later vomit forth in torment." Therefore, as you see yourself to have been more greatly blessed than others, strive to surpass them also in the frequency, duration, and devout fervor of your prayers because, as Saint Gregory says: "A man's office and dignity should make him more humble and quick to serve God, the more he sees himself bound to render an account." And let your whole prayer be centered either on the blessings of God, and then give thanks; or on your own sins and those of your neighbors, and then be sorrowful and weep.

Prayer is the ladder on which Jacob saw angels ascending and descending. Once a day, separated from your brethren, strive to release your soul from all care and, without taint of evil thoughts, recall all the blessings of your Creator with deep humility of heart, devotion, and thanksgiving. Remember especially that for your sake He willed to be born in lowliness, to suffer bitter torments, and to die the basest death. Saint Bernard tells you how to think then of His Passion: "See, Man, how great reparation you owe to your God. See the bloody sweat, the outrageous blows, the stinging lashes, the thorny crown, the blasphemous spittle, the mocking words, the weighty cross. See the anguish of Calvary, the bloodshot eyes, the pallid lips, the gall and vinegar, the bowed head, the agony of death. No need for more! Life Itself has died for us!"

And when you have thought of these things at length, return

again to yourself and consider that Christ suffered not only these but many other torments to free you from the slavery of Satan. And you, in black ingratitude, do not realize the blessings your Creator gives you, although you were redeemed by His death. Not only have you not loved Him as He deserves, but by sin you have rebelled against Him, as He complains by the Prophet: *They repaid me evil for good and hatred for my love.*

For a good hour think with sorrow how gravely you have offended God, what great glory you have lost, and what terrible punishments you have incurred by so doing. And let your soul melt with sorrow and break forth in bitter tears, that you may say with the Psalmist: *My eyes have sent forth springs of water; because they have not kept thy law.*

But at the end rise up with hope in the mercy of Jesus Christ, for *He is long-suffering and full of mercy.* And therefore humbly and confidently beg Him, since by His death He redeemed you and then called you from the world and placed you in religious life, to preserve you sinless in the number of the Saints to the end.

Finally, pray for the Roman Church, i.e., for the Pope and cardinals, and the other prelates of the Church Militant that, having conquered the enemy of the human race, with their flock they may triumphantly receive their heavenly reward. Afterwards pray for all religious, especially for our Order, that He Who has called us before all others to the height of perfection and has marked us with the sign of poverty, may likewise call us to His heavenly kingdom to receive the crown which he has promised to all the perfect. Then pray for the whole Christian people, especially for our benefactors, that they, who have given their goods to the needy, may merit to receive great things for small, heavenly things for earthly, those that are eternal for those of time. And finally, pray for the dead and for the infidels who are deceived by the devil's cunning, that divine mercy may recall them to the light of Faith. And do not despair of anyone for *it is a question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy.*

(to be continued)

Jersey City, N. J.

Joseph F. Mahoney F.



## THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

The ancient Romans coined the phrase: *Nomen atque Omen*, which indicated their custom—superstitious or not—of seeking to determine a man's destiny by his name. In the Old Testament the belief prevailed that divine Providence has a part in the assignment of a name to a person. Thus whenever a new name was given to a man it signified that the person so named was given a new office, and that he was destined to perform a certain function or work, usually in the spiritual realm. Our Lord followed this custom, as is evident when he changed the name of Simon to Cephas, which means "a rock" (in Latin *petra*, hence Peter).

Mother Church has placed the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus right at the entrance to the ecclesiastical year. The reason is evident: the faithful are to begin the new year in the Name of Jesus.

Have we ever seriously considered the spiritual power, the extraordinary wealth, the ineffable sweetness that this Holy Name contains? We often wonder if the humble Saint Joseph fully understood the meaning of the Angel's command: *And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins* (Mt. 1: 21)? This name came from high heaven; it was destined for the second Adam. If the first Adam took his name from the earth ("Adam," from *adamah*, "earth"), it was proper that the second Adam should receive His name from the realms above. Saint Paul puts it tersely when he says: *The first man was of the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven, heavenly* (1 Cor. 15: 47). The same Paul grows eloquent when he extols the glories of the name of his Master: *Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth* (Phil. 2: 9-10).

To every child of Saint Francis devotion to the Holy Name is a sweet heritage. We have but to recall Celano's description of the

Christmas celebration at Greccio to realize something of what the Holy Name meant to our Seraphic Father. "He preached to the people standing about," writes Celano, "and spoke in the sweetest words concerning the birth of the poor King in the little town of Bethlehem; and often when he would name Jesus Christ, glowing with exceeding great love, he would call Him the Child of Bethlehem, and, uttering the word Bethlehem in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound but even more with the sweet affection. Moreover, when he named the Child of Bethlehem, he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with happy palate and swallowing the sweetness of the word." And can we ever forget the glorious triumph of that name, achieved, humanly speaking, by the devotion of Its two great champions, Bernardine of Siena and John Capistran? The latter had experienced Its power at Belgrade; the former did not cease to extol Its spiritual power in every sermon he preached, and had Its symbol posted at the roadsides, in front of houses, and at the very gates of the cities.

This devotion, however, was not directed toward the symbol or sound of the Name, but to the Person Who bore it, to Jesus Christ, Son of the Immaculate Virgin, the Incarnate Word of God. The name "Jesus" means "Savior," and indeed, this name stands for all the love and mercy, the benignity and kindness, the forbearance and forgiveness of the Lord of Hosts, the Ancient of days, recorded in the forty-six volumes of the Old Testament. And when to this venerable volume the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were added, it became known to all men that *the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared* (Tit. 3:4), which means nothing else than that the Holy Name of Jesus had reached the fulness of Its signification. Thus Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the sacred writings, of divine revelation; It should also be the beginning and end not only of every task we perform, of every day we spend, but of our whole life.

In our Office we read the glowing words of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the "Honey-flowing Doctor": "The Holy Name," he writes, "is like oil poured out." It is "*lux, cibus, medicina*"—light, food, and medicine." No one has ever pointed out more beautifully

and aptly the virtues of the Holy Name. If you read the appellations in reverse you have the whole spiritual life—the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive Ways. If you analyse them singly, you see that they provide you with everything you need for every task, for every mood, for every need. The *lux* is the light of faith, in which you see things as God sees them, in which you see the sweet workings of divine Providence in whatever befalls; *cibus* is the food that gives you strength, integrates your whole being, gives you fortitude in battle, vigor in your daily work, happiness in performing your daily tasks to please God and Him alone; and *medicina* is intended for the times of stress, depression, illness of sundry kinds. Invoke the name of Jesus, and, as Saint Bernard says, it will be “honey on your lips, music in your ears, and brightness in your vision.”

*Christ the King Seminary. Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.*



More than two million Korean children returned to “school” this fall. Classrooms in many cases were nothing but tents or open fields with sand for blackboards and twigs for pencils. A contribution to “CARE for Korean Children”, 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office will send school kits containing pencils, notebooks and other supplies.

## FULL OF GRACE

*St. Bonaventure—Sermon V on the Annunciation*

In greeting our Lady, the Angel said: *Hail, full of grace*; and thus gave us the way to greet the Virgin, a way simple yet meaningful. It was not without reason that she was addressed as “full of grace”, for the Virgin Mary was graced in a sevenfold way.

Just as in us sanctifying grace purges the soul of the filth of sin, in her the plenitude of grace so completely prevented sin, that with Ecclesiasticus we can say of her; *A holy and modest woman is grace upon grace*. The woman, made holy through the influx of grace and made modest through the gift of an incorruptible flesh, truly describes the Virgin Mary of whom Bernard wrote the people of Lyons: “The Mother of the Lord was sanctified before birth, not only was she sanctified but she was made chaste” And so the same Bernard continues: “I think that so great was the grace of sanctification that descended on her, that it not only sanctified her birth but kept her life free of all sin.” The prophet assigns the reason of this full and perfect sanctification when he says: *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, in all its days*. Therefore Anselm says: “It was fitting that Christ be conceived of a Mother of such purity that under God no purer could be known.” And thus not only is she called grace but rather grace upon grace for she was full of sanctifying grace. Therefore let us say with the Angel: *Hail, full of grace*.<sup>1</sup>

She was also full of a grace which would fortify her against the downward tendency of our weak nature so that she would never be overcome by temptation; whence Proverbs can rightly be applied to her: *A gracious woman shall find find glory*. A woman, I say, full of the grace of fortitude in battle, shall attain the glory of praise and honor in victory. But who shall find this woman who will crush the head of the enemy, the serpent of old? By his greeting the Angel shows he has found this woman, for she alone has the power to crush the head of the serpent with her heel and destroy all the malice of

<sup>1</sup> The theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had neither a solemn definition nor a clear teaching of tradition on the Immaculate Conception.

heresies. So says Bernard: "She is the woman once promised by God, who with the foot of her virtue has trampled the head of the serpent for whose heel he has plaited many cunning traps; but foolishly, for she alone destroys all the evils of heresies. Without a doubt she did crush the poisonous head of the evil one and bring to naught his temptations both of the delights of the flesh and of the pride of life." She alone can boast that her conscience in no way was troubled during her whole life. And thus Augustine says: "When I treat of sin, I wish in no way to include the Mother of God". Let us then say, *Hail*.

She was filled with a superabounding grace to supplement the defects of nature so that there would be nothing wanting in her; hence she could say with the Apostle: *But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace in me hath not been void*, as if to say: The Lord not only gave me my nature but filled and perfected it with the fullness of grace. "She was not empty because she was full." Whence Bernard says: "Who shall call her empty whom the angel salutes as full of grace? Not only that, but the Angel also says that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, which could only mean that if the Holy Spirit came to her she would be filled herself: but as the Holy Spirit came upon her she became superabundant for us". That her grace was most superabundant is witnessed by Saint Jerome: "Just as no one is good in comparison to God, so in comparison with the Mother of God no one is found perfect no matter how extraordinary his virtues". Wherefore we can rightly say to her with Solomon: *Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all*, and with the Angel cry, *Hail*.

Mary was filled with a grace that beautified her life. Nothing, therefore, in her is worthy of reproach and, like Esther, *She was exceeding fair and her incredible beauty made her appear gracious and lovely in the eyes of all*. She was favored above all and beautiful, not only in body but also in mind, for *favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised*. And since she was beautiful within and without, we can say: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee*, which Bernard, when commenting, applies to the Virgin: "You are wholly beautiful because your face is most beautiful, your body inviolate and your soul most holy." And also: "The Virgin Queen, adorned with the jewels of

virtue, resplendent with the double grace of mind and body, known among saints and spirits for her comeliness and beauty, draws to herself the glances of heavenly dwellers so that she moves the soul of the king with desire for her and draws to herself a heavenly messenger." And Jerome confirms this: "If you look closely you will see that she lacks no beauty, no lustre, no glory. For she was clothed with many virtues and merits; she was purified beyond the whiteness of snow by gifts of the Holy Spirit and in all things shows the simplicity of a dove."

She was filled with espousing grace to make her a bride and unite her indissolubly with God, that of her as of Esther, the spouse of Assuerus, we can say: *She was brought to the chamber of king Assuerus in the tenth month, which is called Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved her more than all the women, and she had favor and kindness before him above all the women, and he set the royal crown on her head*. The Virgin Mary is Esther who was led to the chamber of Assuerus, when through intimate love she was brought to share the divine union. Thus Jerome says: "The grace of the Holy Spirit completely filled her whom divine love had set on fire so that there was nothing worldly in her to shatter the union; there was only a continual flame and the ecstasy of unending love." Thus she is said not only to have grace but to have it above any other woman, because before all she was loved more dearly by God, as Bernard says: "My Lady, how close to Christ have you become, how near! Rather, how intimate have you merited to become! What great favor you have found with Him! He lives in you and you with Him; you clothe Him and are clothed by Him; you clothe Him with flesh and He clothes you with the glory of his majesty". Truly, as was said in the foregoing verse, *he set the royal crown on her head*.

Our Lady was filled with a grace that prepared her for a conception that was completely virginal; hence the Angel says to her: *You have found grace before God. Behold you shall conceive and bear a son and you will call His name, Jesus*. Truly she was full of grace which filled not only her mind but also her womb. According to Jerome, "she was full because the grace which others receive at Mary received at once in all its fullness." And Bernard:

chosen the best part. The best because, though conjugal fertility is good, and virginal chastity is better, the best is virginal fecundity. This is the privilege of Mary; it is given to no other for it will not be taken away from her." And again: "The womb of Mary which is integral, chaste, and inviolate has produced a flower whose beauty never withers, whose glory never fades." And because of this virginal fecundity we should say, *Hail*...

Finally, she was so full of grace that it overflowed unto the salvation of men. No one *can hide himself from her warmth* and in the words of Ecclesiasticus: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all you that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.* In me, she says, there is every grace of way and truth, because I have given birth to the Incarnate Word. But the Only-Begotten of God the Father is full of grace and truth; and, therefore, knowing that she bears overflowing grace, she invites all to share her fullness. Thus Jerome: "The Holy Virgin Mary is the help and protection of those looking to her, the refuge of Christians who flock to her, the consolation of the troubled, the way for the erring, the ransom of sinners, and Mediatrix with God for all men. All have received of her fullness." Wherefore Bernard exhorts us to fly to her: "Why should human frailty tremble before Mary? In her there is nothing hard, nothing rough, nothing severe, nothing bitter; she is wholly sweet and pleasant, wholly merciful, offering to all nourishment and rest". Therefore we can rightly say:

*Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*St. Bonaventure University Fr. Vincent de Paul Sullivan, O.F.M.*



Tattered rags will be the winter attire of many of Korea's thousands of orphans. A CARE woolen suiting package containing three yards of material will make several warm jackets. Send your donation in any amount today to "CARE for Korean Children", 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office.

## FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (I)

*The following paper was prepared for private distribution by Father Cajetan Esser, O. F. M., Definitor of Holy Cross Province, Germany. Because the problems herein described seem so prevalent among Franciscans everywhere, and because the solutions offered are so practical, we have thought the paper of sufficient interest and value for publication in THE CORD. (The Editors.)*

Nowadays when we take up the question of Franciscan Education, we indicate by the very fact of posing the question that many of its aspects have become open to question. The stating of the question alone indicates a kind of perplexity, and it seems to me that today we should calmly admit this perplexity. Let us confess that we do not yet know—or no longer know—how Franciscan education is to be carried out, how it is to be realized. To admit our ignorance is certainly better than to go on acting as if we knew all the answers. This "as if" attitude is too dangerous in the relationship between educator and pupil. When we admit that we have reached the end and do not know where or how to begin again, only then shall we see clearly that here we face a problem that we must no longer avoid, no matter how very difficult it may seem to us, no matter even if we very much doubt its genuine solution.

Have I drawn too black a picture in these introductory remarks? I can imagine that one or another may think so. Perhaps, then, it would be well for us here and now to examine our conscience on just how, up to the present, education has been carried out among us and in our Order. Then each may judge for himself whether or not I am too pessimistic.

The first part of our reflection should be a very sober stock-taking of Franciscan Education as it currently exists. But let us begin with a few observations on education itself.

1. Education among us has been and still is looked upon primarily

as a means of imparting religious knowledge. The novice master has to convey a specific amount of knowledge according to a definite plan. The "schola," therefore, plays an eminent role in the life of the novitiate. The same holds true for the master in the clericate. During the first three years he has to say the necessary things about the religious, and during the last three years about the priest and the pastor. With our Brothers the situation is much the same, if not still more difficult; for after the novitiate even the systematic conveying of necessary knowledge is then left to chance—or to the zeal of him who holds the little-craved office of Master of Brothers. And in our colleges—all is overshadowed by academic training. Briefly, then, we educate by giving lectures to which we add (if we *dare* at all!) reprimands and corrective measures for gross faults. From this situation proceeds our first question: Is it not true that education today is too much influenced by the Socratic error that virtue is a matter of right knowledge? Please do not misunderstand me. I am fully aware that for all sound education right knowledge is indispensable; but I am equally aware that the imparting of knowledge by lecture alone is not sufficient. There is a long road leading from right knowing to right doing—and the educator has to accompany or even urge his charge all the way to the *end* of that road.

2. There is another point that seems to me still more important: Our present system of education stands too much under the sign of "as if." This is what I mean:

a) We act, for example, "as if" communal living were as familiar a thing to the people of today as it was during the Middle Ages or even about fifty years ago. Take the most basic of all human communities, the family. Formerly the community life was the natural and most appropriate training school of community life in religion. A young person was educated in the family to become an *ens sociale*, not by lectures but by actually living a community life. The larger the family the better and more thorough the education. The Christian family especially possessed in its very Christian being sufficient creative power for this kind of communal education. But in these times of ours, we all know into how sad a state this "first school for community life" has fallen. As the family succumbs to the spirit of

liberalism and individualism that characterizes our age, so the young people who come to us are no longer capable of forming a community in the proper sense of the word. And where the Christian element is missing from the family, so much the worse! Our second question, then, is this: Knowing that the difficulty besetting family life has already become the difficulty of religious community life, can we still sit back and wait for *chance* to educate our young religious—acting "as if" it were going to happen all by itself? Our educators will have to meet the problems and difficulties that arise from this condition at the very first stages of the religious life, even in our colleges. Each and every educator must face these problems squarely, and try to solve them, even if it means endless spade-work. But more about this later.

b) David Gathen, the well-known sociologist, remarked in a conference to the *Aachener Seelsorgeamt*: "Democracy is in its nature hostile to the family because it undermines the authority of the father."<sup>1</sup> This statement discloses a fact that has the greatest importance for us today: the hollowing out of authority. Have we thus far paid sufficient attention to this? Or have we not rather acted "as if" life under authority were still the most obvious thing in the world, "as if" the full acceptance of life under authority is something that develops in time by a kind of spontaneous generation? Let us rather bear in mind that in this era of ours the idea of authority has shifted from the objective to the subjective. Nowadays a man has authority not because through the sacrament he has become the representative of Christ, not because he holds an office as one commissioned by Christ; no, a man has authority today only when and if he possesses the human qualifications appropriate to his position. Every deficiency in the qualifications of an office holder leads immediately to corresponding loss of authority. This is the root cause of our present "superior shortage", of our desperate lack of good superiors and good educators. Office no longer implies reverence and respect. The office holder must *merit* reverence and respect, and above all he must take care not to lose what he has merited. It works havoc when an educator demands reverence, insisting on and to

<sup>1</sup> I.e., Democracy introduced into the confines of the family. See Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 4, verses 1-2. (The Editors).

enforce objective obedience upon those who have no mind to render it because of the educator's subjective disqualifications. To act "as if" this were not the actual fact, "as if" obedience and reverence for authority were self-evident, is extremely dangerous. And now that we have discussed briefly some of the problems attaching to modern education in general, let us turn to education in our Order as it has existed up to now.

3. Education in our Order has been and still is imparted without any particularly clear patterns or objectives. In almost every province the handbook of the Jesuit Zimmermann has been providing the foundation of our ascetical instruction.<sup>2</sup> In piety also, the most essential part of the religious life, the rising generation has been educated according to the pattern of strictly Jesuitical spirituality. This pattern has been further strengthened by the fact that most of the meditation books we use stem from the same school. Franciscan life has been taught only by the highly questionable means of explaining—more or less juridically—the Franciscan Rule. In the education of our students in the Seraphic college and Brothers the situation is much the same. It can be said without exaggeration that thus far education among us has not been conducted according to the pattern of life—especially community life—of the Friars Minor. This has been and still is its greatest deficiency.

4. Another point not to be overlooked is this: that in the novitiate and especially in the clericate there has existed a contradiction between the course or plan of our education and its objective. Life in the novitiate and clericate has been molded according to patterns that date from the time when the Recollect ideal still held in our province. All of us in my own class knew quite well that everything would be *quite different* once we were let loose to fulfill our ministry among the people. Thus we looked upon life in the clericate as possessing only a kind of temporary character, something that we knew would last only as long as we remained in this transitory stage. The fact that the master of novices had warned us of two great impending crises in our life—one after first profession in the clericate and the other after the granting of faculties by the province—proves that he

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Cajetan is speaking of Germany, of course, but the over-all situation in this country is not much better. (The Editors).

foresaw this precarious development, but in the face of existing realities he was unable to banish it. Thus it happened that we took part in the routine of the clericate but did not let it become the form of our life because we knew it could not be a real and permanent form for us. How we were going to cope with the problems that would inevitably arise in our later life was left to chance and the good will of the individual. In any case, we were ill equipped to meet the crises of life in the ministry and, left to ourselves, we had to find out our own way out of our difficulties.

5. All in all, education among us has been a very problematic affair; and its most problematic aspect is that we have tried to meet on a purely ascetical basis the difficulties that have kept arising on every side. Instead of hearing the matter spoken about openly and sincerely, we never heard anything official about it. Therefore, there has been the danger—and it is still with us—that the individual may cramp himself into an ascetic attitude which renders him interiorly and exteriorly unfit for community life. From this it is an easy step to the lie of life, which does "as if" but which in reality lives in a world of illusion. One knows about these things, no doubt, but fails to let the tensions come to a true and real solution in life, for one meets them with an ascetical short-circuit.

(To be continued)

Muenchen-Gladbach, Germany

Fr. Cajetan Esser, O. F. M.



Many of the boys and girls in Korea will go to bed hungry tonight. Hostilities have ended but the struggle against hunger continues. A contribution to "CARE for Korean Children", 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office will send a CARE package of rice and other staples to provide many nourishing meals.

## SYMPATHY

In the remarkable booklet entitled *De Sex Alis Seraphim* ("The Six Wings of the Seraph") which Saint Bonaventure wrote for superiors and directors of souls, under the Second Wing he treats of *Pietas*. It would be a great mistake to translate this word literally and call it Piety. This is a case where etymology fails us completely. In English the term "Piety" is used almost exclusively to express religious devotion of varying kinds. Saint Bonaventure, however, follows the usage of his day and applies the term *Pietas* to express the kindly relationship which exists among members of the same family and which, consequently, by implication should reach a high spiritual level in a religious family and govern the relationship between superiors and subjects. It is not Charity specifically, which is the source of all and embraces the whole category of such kindred relations. If we read the entire chapter and try expressing each relationship in turn, such as kindness, benignity, graciousness, mercy, compassion, condolence, commiseration, and so forth, we shall not be satisfied until we meet the word, Sympathy. Under the skillful touch of the pen of the Seraphic Doctor, Sympathy receives a religious halo and, when we come to the end of the chapter, we will agree that this disposition of heart and mind earns indeed a place of universal respect and dignity in every religious community. For, as the love of God, declares the author, inflames the Religious with the zeal for justice, so the love of neighbor engenders in him that affection which we understand to be sympathy. He calls attention to the Good Samaritan, who poured into the wounds of the half-dead wanderer the wine of fervent zeal and the oil of fraternal sympathy.

Who, then, needs our sympathy? There are two kinds of infirmities, corporal and spiritual. In the former class, which is rather extensive, Saint Bonaventure includes the aged and those who are exhausted because of hard work. Here he advises the usual physical remedies, and does not fail to recommend the prudent use of exemption from certain monastic duties.

## SYMPATHY

The saintly author is careful to note that the underlying reason why superiors and those of the same household should exercise sympathy towards the ailing, either physically or spiritually, is because all affliction is from God. Again, religious communities are God's families, in which the superiors hold the place of God. Thus it follows logically that the spirit of God, that is, the spirit of fatherhood, should manifest itself in the relationship of superiors towards their subjects. Hence the superiors should be true fathers and mothers, not step-fathers or step-mothers, or task-makers, or merely managers or procurators. To illustrate this point, the Saint calls attention to the Golden Rule, which our Lord borrowed from Tobias of old when he declares: *Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets* (Mt. 7, 12; cf. Tob. 4, 16).

The serious and solemn lines of Saint Bonaventure seem to jiggle a bit when he humorously remarks that for many superiors and other Religious, who are blessed with a rugged constitution and have never known what it means to be sick, it would be a blessing if the Good Lord would favor them with a real dose of sickness. It would serve them as a valuable lesson for all days to come. In connection with this, we are reminded of a neat little convent where a *mulier fortis* had wielded the superior's staff for many a year. She was never sick, nor did she tolerate sickness in any of her subjects. "It's all imagination; take this pill and go to work." Such was her curt answer to every complaint. Then there was an epidemic of sore throats. Mother Superior stood her ground valiantly, until finally she too succumbed, so much so that she had to stay in her room. At the noon meal the acting superior gave "Deo gratias" and all response heartily, "Amen". It is not known whether this lusty response was elicited by the wonderful soup that was making the rounds, or by some other reason which it is not proper to mention.

Saint Bonaventure is always ready with an appropriate passage from Holy Writ. The following quotation from Saint Paul is most apt: *For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tried as we are in all things except sin* (Heb. 5, 15).

But, to safeguard the good name of our superiors, is it not true that many of us frequently imagine or feign sickness when there is none? As the great abbot Saint Bernard puts it, from time to time some Religious always take out three days for an illness. On the first day they fear it coming. On the second, they imagine that it has come. On the third, they lament over what really did not exist. Human nature does not change, nor does the monastery gate take away all our freaks and foibles. At least, our natural propensities to ease and comfort remain, and it is the duty of every good Religious to battle against such human frailties.

However, Saint Bonaventure asks, is it proper to blame all for the vagaries and foolish notions of a few? By no means. Here the superior must use good judgment, and all Religious must co-operate in discovering those who feign sickness and those who really deserve attention, medical or otherwise. Meanwhile, charity or—to be specific—sympathy and justice must be brought to a proper balance then all will be happy. There will be perfect harmony if, on the one hand, the rights of inferiors are duly respected, and if, on the other, the charity and fairness of the superiors are not abused.

One of the oldest institutions in monastic life is the Infirmary. There is hardly a religious Rule or set of Constitutions which does not provide a place for the sick, where they may get medical attention, and spiritual attention as well. While too much visiting in the infirmary is apt to lead to much abuse, it is well, none the less, to remember that infirmaries are not to be considered as prisons of forceful detention and rigid exclusion, not to say consecrated concentration camps.

Sometimes the idea prevails that sick Religious are useless Religious. It is true that their ailments may make them absolutely unfit for work, especially when old age has overtaken them; but Saint Bonaventure strongly condemns that practise as purely secular and commercial which relegates such apparently unproductive people definitely to a state of separation from community life and contact. No; the sick and the aged are not a loss to the community; rather, they are a distinct gain. A young priest once attempted to

express his sympathy to an old Father in the community, when he lugubriously remarked: "It must be hard on you, Father Senior, not to be able to work any more." "What!" replied the Senior, "not work any more? I can still pray, young man, and I do so while you sit loafing at the radio."

A cloister that underrates the inestimable value of prayer and sacrifice is not worthy of its name, and it is precisely in this spiritual asset that the aged and infirm make—or should make—their invaluable contribution.

Among the spiritual ailments or infirmities Saint Bonaventure lists these three: the spiritually weak who in the rush of work have lost their fervor and spirit of devotion; those who are easily discouraged and are given to diffidence; lastly, those who are actually wavering in the pursuit of virtue and become unsteady in their vocation.

The difference among the three may appear slight, but the director of souls will easily discern the causes for such dispositions and know of the proper remedies. Here the director as well as other experienced Religious should play the part of spiritual doctors who understand symptoms and will not fail to render the necessary help in the spirit of true Christlike sympathy. Mark these beautiful words of Saint Paul: *Although as the apostles of Christ we could have claimed a position of honor among you, still while in your midst we were as children: as if a nurse were cherishing her own children, so we in our love for you would gladly have imparted to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls; because you had become most dear to us* (I Thess. 2, 7-8).

Saint Paul aptly speaks of nurses. This brings to mind the marvellous opportunities that our hospital Sisters have in the matter of exercising true Christian sympathy towards their charges. What is it that makes people of all classes and all denominations give preference to Catholic hospitals? It is not the medical staff, nor modern comforts and equipment; rather, it is that singular Christlike sympathy that our Sisters dispense with such grace and charm. They know well that a kind word, a smile, a prayerful wish has greater power



than the choicest medicine. Every human being, when in need or distress, is sensitive to sympathy, because true sympathy has a heavenly touch.

Nor has the strictest monastic Rule or the most rigid manner of life deprived us of our nature's weakness for sympathy. Some one has said that most Religious are "big children"; our superiors often say this with disdain, if not with disgust. And yet, they should be happy that their lot has fallen with big children rather than with unruly ruffians. Sometimes we forget how easy it is to give relief to a person who is sick either mentally or physically. They are looking for help, which cannot be given. Let them tell you the tale of their illness; listen with patience to their complaints; and the very consciousness that someone sympathizes with them makes them feel tremendously relieved. Which proves that man is a social being, that communion of hearts is better than medicine. Saint Francis of Assisi finds the happy medium when he writes in his Rule: "And wherever the Friars are and meet other Friars, let them show to one another that they are of the same household. And let one make known his needs with confidence to the other; for if a mother love and nourish her carnal child, how much more earnestly should not one love and nourish his spiritual brother. And if any of them shall fall into illness, the other Friars should serve him as they would wish to be served themselves.

Surely, Saint Bonaventure knew this passage, and undoubtedly this beautiful Seraphic sympathy inspired him as he wrote the third chapter of the "Six Wings of the Seraph".

*Christ the King Seminary Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.*

# the CORD

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## CONTENTS

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	34
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.</i>	
ST. BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (II) .....	37
<i>Joseph F. Mahoney, T.O.F. (trans.)</i>	
THE OBLIGATION OF ADEQUATE ACADEMIC AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR TEACHING SISTERS.....	43
<i>Very Rev. Fr. Theophane Kalinowski, O.F.M.</i>	
FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (II) .....	48
<i>Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M.</i>	
AS FRANKINCENSE BURNING IN THE FIRE.....	59
<i>Sr. Francis, S.M.I.C. (trans.)</i>	



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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *Saint Francis' Love of God*

In our last conference we considered Saint Francis' love of God. Let us go into a little detail. What seems to have ravished the heart of Francis was the goodness of God. He comes back to the thought often. Thus in his "Praises of God", he says, "Thou are good, a good, highest good, Lord God living and true." In his eyes God is wonderfully good, Supreme Goodness. You can imagine how the soul of such a sensitive man would exult in this sublime conviction. So to Francis and his early brethren God is "sweet", the sweet God, the sweet Lord Jesus.

Thus, by loving the goodness of God, Francis found himself at the very center of God's essence, love; for the most spontaneous movement of love is to be good, to give, to communicate, to give gifts by creation, to give knowledge of itself through revelation, to give itself irrevocably to mankind through the Incarnation, to give His Flesh and Blood to us in the Eucharist, to give us glory through its grace, to give itself forever and ever by a face to face revelation in beatific vision, for this generous movement of loving and giving which is so essential in God cannot satisfy its infinite urge till He has given Himself, the infinite Gift.—"Thou are good, all good, highest good, Lord God living and true."

For any man who realizes all this, a fountain is broken open in him of boundless joy. Goodness overshadows him, pours itself out upon him by its gifts, pours itself into him by its presence, and draws man into itself by the transcending and transforming beauty of its Face. *We shall be like to him, for we shall see him just as he is* (1 John 3, 2). "Thou are joy and gladness," says Francis, "Thou are all riches to sufficiency. Thou are beauty. Thou art meekness. . . Thou are refreshment. . . Thou art our great sweetness. . . Lord, God Almighty."

You will see why there was unbounded joy in the heart of Saint Francis. In the face of such goodness who would not be joyful? You will also see the explanation of Saint Francis' great spirit of thankfulness, for the gifts that fill the universe to overflowing have been poured out from heaven by this divine, prodigal Goodness. Hence, for the great and for the smallest gift Francis is thankful, and his thanksgiving is so joyous that it turns into song:

"Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all thy creatures,  
Especially for my worshipful brother Sun. . .  
Praised be my Lord, for sister moon and for the stars. . .  
Praised be my Lord for brother wind. . .  
Praised be my Lord for sister water. . .  
Praised be my Lord for brother fire. . .  
Praise and bless ye the Lord, and give Him thanks."

*Viditque Deus cuncta quae fecerat: et erant valde bona—And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good* (Gen. 1, 31).

No wonder there was gladness in the brotherhood. No wonder that the spirit of it has so pervaded it through the centuries, for Francis left his spirit together with his songs as a legacy to his friars. Saint Augustine says, *Cantare amantis est*,—to sing is characteristic of a lover; small wonder that Francis and his brethren became the troubadours of God, and song gushed forth from their lips and poetry clung like a nimbus around them because the love of God purged in their hearts and they rejoiced exceedingly in His goodness. Therefore, the asceticism of the early friars was not a somber thing; it was rather the wooing of the one great love of their hearts, Goodness, and that is done in joy. Lugubrious service was a plague to Saint Francis.

Let us cherish this Franciscan heritage. Of course, we must distinguish joy from boisterousness. Boisterousness is a worldly thing and is begotten of frivolity and despair, and there is no peace therein; joy is begotten of a tranquil heart because of the divine goodness which overwhelms it. It should be our purpose to dispense this joy to men. It should be our ambition, in the Franciscan way, to make it a consoling and exhilarating thing to all.

And so we shall re-echo the songs of Francis to this weary world, and give courage and peace to the suffering children of God.

In our last conference we considered poverty as being the expression of Saint Francis' exceeding love for God, and we put its roots in love. Now, we can touch upon poverty as springing from Saint Francis' awareness of God's boundless goodness. He gave us so much, will he refuse another gift? He gave us life, will he refuse food?; he gave us our bodies, will he refuse raiment?—behold the lilies of the field! Saint Paul argues the same way, *He who has not spared even his own Son but has delivered him for us all, how can he fail to grant us also all things with him?* (Rom. 8, 32).

There was wisdom in the poverty of Saint Francis, for it is a prudent and profitable thing to shift all the burden of providing on to the shoulders of an almighty Providence who clothes the flowers of the field and feeds the birds of the air. And if God has given us immortal souls and the right to the heavenly inheritance, would he refuse us meat and drink? Hence the simple system of individual and community economics devised by Saint Francis: Love God immensely, trust Him absolutely, and throw your worries to the wind, *for your Father knows what you need before you ask him* (Mt. 6, 8). The Fioretti illustrates all this by the injunction which Saint Francis imposed on the Chapter of Mats: "I command you all here present through holy obedience, to take no thought what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or of ought else that is necessary to the body but only to meditate, to pray, and to praise God." Thus, divine love made us poor; divine goodness makes us trustful, and though having nothing, yet we possess all things, for indeed *all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's* (1 Cor. 3, 22).

We must stick to the spirit of Franciscan poverty. We are poor not precisely because we want to have nothing as a matter of mortification, but rather because we are already too immensely rich and having the love of the Eternal King and confident access to his treasures.

Old Mission,

Santa Barbara, California

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (II)

### Confession

Since bitter contrition, simple confession, and suitable satisfaction are required for the remission of sin, before you go to confession diligently recall to mind with heartfelt sorrow all the sins you have committed since your last confession, whether in thought, word or deed, by omission or commission, lest you pass over any in the confessional. And when you have called to mind with sorrow all your sins, go modestly to the priest and setting aside your mantle, kneel humbly and with head uncovered and hands joined say the *Confiteor* as far as *Ideo precor*. And here begin to mention those sins which you previously recalled, and for each sin, acknowledge your fault. At the end, add: "For these and for all my other sins, mortal and venial, confessed or omitted, by which I have offended my Creator, whether by sight, hearing, taste, smell or touch, I am truly sorry." And this suffices for frequent confession.

But when you wish to confess more at length, mention your offenses against the Rule, especially as regards obedience, poverty, and chastity and indicate whether you have offended especially in any of these. Likewise, tell any great negligence or irreverence in Office, e.g., if you said it sleepily and indevoutly, distractedly or imperfectly, by sometimes omitting verses or syllables. Mention also your great ingratitude for the temporal and spiritual gifts and blessings of God. For you do not rightly value spiritual gifts, especially the blessings of your redemption and vocation, on which you should frequently meditate with gratitude. You are likewise ungrateful for corporal blessings, because you do not give due thanks to God for the alms you receive, and you pray too little for your benefactors. So also you can tell of your insufficient charity toward God and your neighbor, because you do not love God with your whole heart as you should, nor do you obey His counsels and commandments but to

the peril of your soul you frequently resist His will. Nor do you love your neighbor as you should, for you neither rejoice with him in his prosperity, nor suffer with him in his adversity, both of which you should do.

Confess also your waste of time in standing idle all day, speaking and hearing vain, useless, harmful, and laugh-provoking words. And you can accuse yourself of unbecoming, harmful, and peevish thoughts, which you do not resist as manfully as you should. Or perhaps, what is worse, you neglect the beginnings of those sensual impulses which arise in you. Tell also of your overindulgence in eating and drinking and in doing other unnecessary things. Likewise of your failure to carry out the good thought God inspires in you which you frequently put off for the future.

So also you can confess your false and rash judgments of others, your vain rejoicing and sorrowing; likewise that you are quick to do evil and slow to do good; mention your great pride, vainglory, envy, boastfulness, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and sensuality. Likewise tell of your lack of sorrow for your sins and that you do not repent as you should; and of any other things concerning which your conscience reproves you. When you confess these things, mention specific instances. And always, when you have received your penance, kiss the floor in humility.

And let your confession be frequent, open and complete, modest and tearful. Be truly contrite and do not try to excuse yourself. Finally, if you can confess daily, do so; but if not, confess at least every third day and make a general confession yearly.

#### *Holy Communion*

Saint Paul tells us that whoever partakes unworthily of this ineffable Sacrament eats and drinks judgment to himself. Therefore whenever you propose to communicate, strive to prepare yourself with care throughout the whole preceding week by continual contrition for sin, confession, and devout prayer. For it was of this preparation that the same Apostle said: *But let a man prove himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the cup.* And if you decide to receive on Sunday, strive to arouse a fervor of spirit with

yourself throughout the preceding three days, so that on Friday you are detached from all distracting thoughts. Fix your mind's eye always on the Crucified Jesus, crowned with thorns, given vinegar and gall to drink, overwhelmed with spittle and insult, blasphemed by sinners, exhausted with stripes, consumed by a most bitter death, pierced with a lance, buried by mortal men. And think of these things whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, so that by thinking of your crucified Creator you may have sorrow in your heart and in your external appearance all day, and thus say with Saint Paul: *God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

On Saturday try to avoid the company of your brethren and seek peace of mind, for this is a day of rest. Impose strict silence on your tongue, so that on that day at least you do not speak idle words, nay, scarcely even what are necessary. For Jeremias says: *It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God.* And occupy yourself until Compline in reading or holy meditation. After Compline enter the church and there call to mind with sorrow and bitterness of heart your offenses against your Creator, saying with the Prophet: *I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*

And always, when you intend to receive Holy Communion, fast on the preceding day, and do not retire after Matins, but watch in prayer, knowing that our Savior is most often found in the watch after Matins, as He Himself says: *He that early in the morning watches for me shall find me.*

After you have received, go immediately to your cell and with great joy meditate on the effect of this communication, which Truth Itself expresses for us: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting.* Then say the Penitential Psalms with the litany. And take care on that day not to let any harmful or idle word go forth from your mouth, by which Jesus, our glorious refreshment, is entered. For Saint Paul says: *No one can worthily drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils.*

I do not dare to advise you on the frequency of Holy Communion, except as far as Saint Augustine goes. I do not blame daily reception; but I exhort you

Sunday. But if the mind is yet attached to sin, then by Holy Communion it is rather burdened than purified. Though a man succumb to sin, if he has no longer the will to sin and has atoned by his tears and prayers, let him approach securely. But I say this of him who is not burdened with mortal sins."

#### *Conduct At Table*

When the bell sounds for table or for meals, be silent and diligently inquire how you have labored that day in prayer or study or work, that you may partake of the prepared alms with a safe conscience. For sinners do not bestow alms on you that you may speak of politics or of wars or remain idle, but that you may pray to the Lord for them unceasingly. But if you find you have been lazy, or have said improper things, be filled with sorrow, knowing that for the alms received, you will have to render an account of your stewardship. Think of these things till the second bell, meanwhile praying for your benefactors.

When you enter the refectory, always sit next to the more upright and mature Friars, if you can conveniently do so. And before beginning to eat, say the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, or three *Our Father's*; after invoking the Blessed Trinity in the words, *In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen*, begin to eat with fear and sorrow of heart, that the words of Job may be verified in you: *Before I eat, I sigh*. And as Saint Bernard says: "When you eat, be not wholly engrossed in eating, but attend to the reading, think of God; that both the spiritual and the carnal man may be duly refreshed."

Practice modesty at table: your head should be covered; your eyes cast down; speak to no one unless it is necessary. Do not be anxious to know what or how much or in what manner others eat. Cut the bread a little at a time and be moderate with the wine, that when you have finished, there be no extra bread cut and no wine left in your cup. Be not the first to begin eating nor the last to finish. And as long as you are healthy, do not take only the better bread and leave the less good, lest you offend God and scandalize your neighbors, but take whatever comes. Do not eat ravenously, as do the gluttons whose God is their belly, as the Apostle says; but take your food

in a polite and seemly way, as befits a religious, who should always be courteous. And when you drink, having said an *Ave Maria*, use both hands on the cup; and pour enough water into the wine, lest what is given you for your benefit turn out to be harmful. For wine can arouse passion, as the Wise Man says: *Wine is a luxurious thing*. And therefore the Apostle says: *Do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery*. and again: *Use a little wine*. Therefore, always mix water with your wine. Do not seek anything special and if such be offered, refuse it if you can do so gracefully. Do not distribute gifts from outsiders at table, except perhaps to those who sit near you. But at the end, diligently gather and eat the crumbs, because the Lord says: *Gather up the remaining pieces, lest they perish*.

#### *Abstinence*

Since the Lord says in the Gospel: *Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be over-burdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness*, strive always to flee this drunkenness and revelling, and to choose sobriety; because the Wise Man says: *By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate shall prolong life*. So, when you are eating, let not taste but hunger arouse your appetite, as Saint Bernard says; thus you will never eat for pleasure but from necessity, because Saint Augustine says: "A mind overcome with too much food loses its vigor in prayer."

Throughout your life eat only a moderate amount of ordinary food, because Saint Isidore says: "Wherever there is satiety and drunkenness, there is lust and anger." And be moderate in eating and drinking, as Saint Isidore again says: "Fast only as much as you are able. For it is better to eat a little every day than to eat too much infrequently." And Saint Augustine says: "It is of no use to fast all day, if the soul is afterwards undermined by satiety or excess." And for the rest, avoid procuring for yourself any delicacy or specialty; but when you are healthy, be content with the ordinary foods, such as bread and wine. If something else is offered you and you need it, take it sparingly, "as becomes the servants of God and the flowers of most holy poverty." Always avoid foods which are more for the sake of satisfying hunger, as are unusual dishes.

namely those that are spicy and such-like. For as Saint Bernard says "Salt with bread and hunger is sufficient condiment." And when you abstain from some dish, let not another be given you, for that is not abstinence but pretended sanctity. Beware also lest, when you fast you judge or condemn those who eat, because as the Apostle says *Let not him who does not eat judge him who eats*, but on the contrary, *He who eats, eats for the Lord. . . and he who does not eat abstains for the Lord.*

Never eat outside of the refectory unless forced to by necessity or illness, but always observe the common life. When you are healthy always observe the Lent of Epiphany and that of the Apostles which begins at the Ascension and lasts till Pentecost. Try always to fast on Saturday.

And when abstinence seems unbearable to you, immediately think of Jesus, Who, although He was the Lord of all, was worn out in the anguish of the Cross, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails and in His thirst drank vinegar and gall. In meditating on these things you will easily be able to bear not only abstinence from food but all difficulties and sufferings. For Saint Gregory says: "If the suffering of Christ is called to mind, there is no hardship which cannot be borne patiently."

Abstain above all, brother, from dainty and spicy foods, which arouse passion, and always avoid superfluity and craving for any food or drink, so that even after eating you seem to be hungry and famished, if you wish to be filled at the eternal banquet. For Saint Jerome says: "It is impossible for a man to enjoy the goods of this world and of eternity, to fill his belly here and his soul there, to pass from the pleasures of this world to those of the angels, and to appear glorious both here and hereafter." Whence, *blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice in this world, for they shall be satisfied in the next.*

*(to be continued)*

Jersey City, N.J.

Jos. F. Mahoney, T.O.F. (trans.)

## THE OBLIGATION OF ADEQUATE ACADEMIC AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR TEACHING SISTERS

*(From the sermon delivered by Very Rev. Fr. Theophane Kalinowski, O.F.M., Minister Provincial of the Assumption Province, at the Mass opening the second day's meeting of the Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods, Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Saturday, November 28, 1953).*

You are the chosen representatives of numerous communities and institutions, all of which have a deep interest in the matter under discussion, for all are aware that, despite their best efforts, God does not receive the attention and consideration He deserves.

The extent of "Theology in Daily Life" of the various communities differs, as the communities differ in their personnel, regime, and educational standards. Many communities have creditably integrated their educational programs to satisfy the educational code and requirements of their State and their accrediting association. Many have managed to incorporate philosophy and theology into their curricula. Yet even these must admit that in their overall plans the ideal Catholic educational standards have not been attained. Most of the communities would have to acknowledge the fact that their teaching training and educational programs have pursued too slavishly the policies and dictates of secular education. Too frequently have they lost sight of the fact that they are engaged in Catholic Christian Education.

If I may resort to symbols, I would say that the crucifix could very well symbolize both the secular and Christian education, with due regard for the respective roles they play beneath the Cross.

Secular education has in effect assumed the antagonistic role against Christ. It has rejected Him. It is putting Him, as it were, out of existence. *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas* (Lk. 23, 28). *They know not what they do* (Lk. 23, 34) Truly,

secular education has been progressively profaning the Freedom of Religion, which the Fathers of our Country hoped to guarantee for posterity. It has reached the point where the preposition "of" in the sacred phrase, "Freedom OF Religion", is being imperceptibly "betrayed" for its opposite, "Freedom FROM Religion."

On the other hand, Christian education views the crucifix through the eyes of Mary and John. The vertical beam of the Cross rising from the earth heavenward can well represent the supernatural deposit, firmly founded on the Rock of Peter: eternal truths, spiritual good, the catechism, Christian doctrine, dogma, and morals. The horizontal beam of the Cross could typify the secular sciences: the natural truths, the things of this world—all in an orderly line—a harmonious beam firmly set in the supporting vertical beam that lifts it heavenward. On this symbol of true Christian education, we find Christ, Who is the Source and Cause of its infinite, supernatural value, diffusing divine wisdom, revelation, the Divine Sacrifice, the Sacraments, grace, faith. It was under Christ's Cross that true wisdom was acquired by founders of religious orders like Saint Francis and Saint Paul of the Cross; by great Doctors of the Church like Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas; by great philosophers like John Duns Scotus and Saint Catherine; by great mystics like Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila; by great teachers like the Patron of Teachers, Saint John Baptist de la Salle...

You, dear Sisters, have an important role of striving to bring order out of this world's educational chaos. Do you then wonder why in such confusion of educational ideologies and aims you are urged to stand by staunchly, satisfied with no half-heartedness, under the Cross of Christian education?...

Do you not realize the full import of the appeals of our Pope? His Holiness Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth, *Divini Illius Magistri*, states plainly that "the so-called 'neutral' or 'lay' school, from which religion is excluded, is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school, moreover, cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious... Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in

the matter they have to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office... Let their formation be one of the principal concerns of the pastors of souls and of the superiors of Religious Orders" (*Christian Education of Youth*, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, The America Press, 1936, pp. 26 and 30).

And our saintly and learned Pope Pius XII, in his apostolic letter, "On Educating Youth", read at the First International Congress of Teaching Sisters on September 15, 1951, exhorted them: "Sisters who are teachers and educators must be so ready and so up to the level of their office, they must be so well versed in all with which young people are in contact, in all which influences them, that their pupils will not hesitate to say: 'We can approach the Sister with our problems and difficulties; she understands and helps us.' Many of your schools are being described and praised to us as being very good. But not all. It is our fervent wish that all endeavor to become excellent. This presupposes that your teaching Sisters are masters of the subjects they expound. See to it, therefore, that they are well-trained and that their education corresponds in quality and academic degrees to that demanded by the State... Let it never happen that material advantages, personal authority, wealth, political power, or similar considerations induce you to renounce your educational ideals and betray your vocation!" (*The Catholic Mind*, June 1952, No. 1074, pp. 379-380).

My dear Sisters, many of your communities have excellent educational programs worthy of emulation. Seek, however, to avail yourselves of even greater treasures, especially in the infinite realm of theology. Enrich your minds and souls and those of your Sisters and students with an ever greater measure of true wisdom. Avail yourselves of an increased share of theology and its fruits in your daily life.

However... I humbly appeal, especially to the Superiors of those teaching communities who have been lax in heeding the exhortations of the Popes, who have slighted the important recommendations of Church authorities, who have disregarded the many resolutions adopted at the various Educational Conferences... following the unjust policies of assigning untrained

junior Sisters, and at times even Postulants, to teaching responsibilities, much to their detriment and that of the children and youth entrusted to their training and direction—for God's sake, for the sake of the Sisters themselves, for the sake of the precious souls entrusted to your community for direction, desist from all such unjust practices! In conscience you are bound to take the proper steps, to adopt and promote the necessary measures in order to remedy the situation and rectify the abuse. Integrate your courses and allow your Sisters to pursue them, giving them all the while the necessary religious foundation. Do not assign them to venture into a complex labyrinth without the full skein of truth to lead them out safely. . .

A soldier is not sent into battle until he is carefully trained, prepared by a toughening process to bear the hardships of the front lines, and armed with suitable weapons and ammunition. May we permit a teaching Sister to be less prepared in God's army? May we send her as a directress of operations into combat with a wily antagonist without a sufficient insight into his tactics, strength, and weaknesses, as well as without the knowledge of the most effective strategy to counteract his onslaught—this, over and above the requisite development of other educational endowments? . . .

Our Religious teachers must not only be, in the words of our Holy Father Pope Pius XII, "well-versed in all with which young people are in contact. . . masters of the subjects they expound. . . well-trained. . . that their education corresponds in quality and academic degree to that demanded by the State," but—what must be taken for granted—they must also be acquainted with religious tenets, Catholic philosophy, theology and spiritual life. They are Religious above all. This is their vocation, their primary obligation. As Religious teachers they are expected and are obliged to instruct in the light of the supernatural—in the Spirit of God Whom they serve.

Especially the teachers of religion must be well-versed in philosophy and theology. . . It is true, the State and other accrediting associations demand degrees only in the secular sciences; but does that warrant placing the science that is above all sciences in a subordinate, perfunctory, or even dispensable role? If modern secular standards of education do not require religion, if secular educators are not won-

to assign it a place in the educational curricula nor give any suitable credit for its pursuance, are we justified to fall in line meekly with their secular standards, disregarding what we know is the most important factor in the complete education of man?

Educators, especially the directors of the educational departments and the Superiors of Religious communities, have an obligation to bring to the fore "Theology in Daily Life." They are obliged to integrate their courses with sound pedagogical training not only in the secular sciences required by the State, but likewise in philosophy and theology. By all means, they should provide their teaching Sisters with the best in secular learning; but they should not fail to provide them likewise with a worthy, spiritual, religious, theological training, so necessary to them as Religious teachers of Catholic education.

At this Meeting you are commemorating the Seventh Centenary of the first Franciscan Sister, Saint Clare of Assisi. Would that God reward your sincere retrospective veneration with the facility to imbibe her Franciscan religious spirit, her detachment from the world, her love for all that pertained to God, her eagerness to incorporate "Theology in her daily life."

Then, too, we are at the threshold of another centenary—the Centenary of Mary Immaculate. During this Marian Year we are urged by our Holy Father in his Encyclical *Fulgens Corona Glorise* to "conform our lives to the image of Mary." You, my dear Sisters, should above all others be like Mary. Your name is Mary. Each of your community's Sisters is Mary. All should live up to that adorable name "Mary." Be a "Mary" to mankind, especially to those placed in your charge. Like Mary, pray for them, love them, serve them, be concerned about every one of their needs. Above all, like Mary, give them Christ and lead them to God.

Pulaski, Wisconsin

Very Rev. Theophane Kalinowski, O.F.M.



## FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (II)

After attempting a sincere examination of conscience on the manner (I dare not say method) of educating currently in us among us, we still have the far more difficult task of discovering ways by which the deficiencies we have found can be remedied somehow—or rather, not somehow, but in accordance with the distinctive qualities that characterize the very nature of Franciscanism. For greater clarity let us take the individual points of our examination one at a time and think them over.

1. In the first point of our examen we were concerned with showing that intellectual training has been given, and perhaps still being given, chief stress in our educational programs. This holds not only for us in particular, but for modern education in general. No doubt this is a direct consequence of the Greek ideal of education that gained new importance in the Christian Occident through the Scholastic renaissance of Aristotelianism. Our Seraphic Father was untouched by it. Francis valued knowledge only in so far as it served life, as it is translated into action. "A man knows only as much as he does (*quantum operatur*)," as he himself put it. And the great theologians of our Order—Bonaventure and Scotus and the others—follow in quite the same line. We know it, too; but for us it remains an object of knowledge and nothing more, merely a tract on the *scientia practica* of the medieval Franciscan school. Perhaps we could find our way back to the original meaning of Franciscan education if we would ponder the old dictum; "*juventus operando formetur*—youth is to be formed by doing." We must be careful, however, not to misunderstand this. To educate (let us be clear on this point) does not mean to lead young people to set up and follow routine exercises, to fill the day, for example, with one pious exercise after the other simply because they are prescribed or recommended. Then education would be an entirely disciplinary matter and no more than a nobler kind of drill. Misconceptions of this kind have

held sway many times and in many places, and may come to hold sway among us, too. What we want to say is this: *juventus operando formetur* means that education has to be carried out and realized by action—for then it is achieved not only by the acquiring of knowledge but by the acquiring of life. "If anyone desires to take up this life," says the second chapter of the Rule; and the Testament (IV) repeats the thought: "Those who come to take up this life, etc." Thus entrance into our Order is in a certain sense a new birth, a being born into a new community of life with a specific mode of living. Therefore the Rule so fittingly paraphrases the formula of profession: "At the end of the year of probation, let them be received to obedience, promising to observe for ever this life and Rule." Here we see that the role of the educator is not so much that of schoolmaster as of father or mother, and that education is not simply a matter of academic procedure in minor dimensions. Therefore it is certainly not good—and it may even be dangerous—to appoint a Lector to the office of Master. For the educator's primary purpose must not be to help the young religious acquire all kinds of new knowledge, but to help him take possession of his new life and to conform to this new way of life. This is the reason, perhaps, for the prescription of our Statutes requiring that novitiates and clericates be located in monasteries where Franciscan life is particularly flourishing. This prescription was not made only for the sake of good example—although it is undeniably an important factor—but in order that the young religious may fully and completely grow into this new life and really take root in it. But how is he to appropriate a life if there is none, if it does not vitally surround him? Superiors, therefore, should think several times before transferring anyone to a novitiate house or clericate. And the Master himself, it goes without saying, must be firmly grounded in this life. Therefore our Statutes insist that he be free from all duties and offices, and that he must not be hindered in any way from taking part in the community life of the young religious. He must be among them, however, not as the eye of the law, but as a mother among her children, or a brother among the younger ones. To be sure, he has his ears open in order to become acquainted with

young and not only must he become acquainted with these difficulties in a general way, but he must really take them in, absorb them, ponder and solve them. Then he can help his charges by discussing with each individual his own concrete situation. In this way cultural and formative education is accompanied in the proper way by deed and action; and because it forms activity it forms life and *for* life. Discussion plus concrete action is the most effective method of educating.

When we say: *Juventus operando formetur*, we mean, of course, that this is to be done as the occasion offers rather than systematically. In other words, we are to seize upon every suitable opportunity in every concrete event in practical everyday life, as a possible means toward formative education. It is here that the educator finds the point of departure for the verbal instructions and teachings which education cannot dispense with. For the lecture alone offers solutions to the young before they have encountered the actual problems; to give the answer before the question has come up cuts no ice. But when the question arises from practical life, from a concrete situation, then the answer will be applied to practical life.

Again when we say: *juventus operando formetur*, we mean that our young religious are not only objects of education but subjects as well. To educate, therefore, also means to awaken accountability in youth and to give them responsibility. A young person grows by and with his tasks. It is a fact of common experience that a youth overcomes his own problems and difficulties much easier when he is responsible for the care of another person. Furthermore, the demands of a responsible task keep him from continuous introspection and the consequent exaggeration of his own problems and difficulties. The more he is claimed by responsibility the less he circles around his own ego and the less apt he is to fold himself into his own interior life. Our *Regula pro eremitoriis* wonderfully expresses how the roles of Martha and Mary are to be interchanged from time to time between the "mothers" and the "sons" so that everyone, in caring for another in the motherly role of Martha, may grow beyond himself and thus be saved from the danger of egocentrism.

Finally, *juventus operando formetur*, means that education is

very much advanced through the mutual cooperation of the young people themselves. I recall with gratitude the circle of companions with whom I worked as a cleric, and discover again and again that I was formed and trained most strongly and lastingly by that work which we carried on in a real community of interest—in spite of, or perhaps just because of, the fact that we were left wholly to ourselves and made to depend upon our own strength and potentialities. Purely intellectual education is all too easily imparted in a vacuum. It is rather in these circles or groups or whatever else they may be called, in which the young religious work together, that the greatest progress can be made. This will be true, of course, only if the young clerics are enabled to take in the current problems of their times, and the young Brothers, current advances in their vocational fields. The more seriously our young religious study contemporary affairs and the spirit of the age, the more openly current questions are taken up, so much the more clearly can the religious life appear to them as offering the right solutions. I say *can*. For such group activity would be out of place if it were simply developed along the lines of a spiritual or intellectual tournament. It must be governed by the methods of education—observing, judging, acting—in order that every new perception may become a deeper and more effective grasping of the new life; in order that the new life may be looked upon and—of more importance—be *lived*, as an answer to the needs of the times. Here the educator will have more influence in directing and promoting if he refrains from too much participation in common and reserves his remarks for occasional private discussions with individuals.

By way of conclusion, let us say a word here about formal lectures or conferences. Would it not be better to complement them with "colloquia" in which the Master with the clerics and Brothers, or the Perfect with the students, arranged according to age, works through questions—still following the method: to observe, to judge, to act? We all know how difficult it is for modern man to follow a lecture; but conversation is easy and offers the best opportunity for investigating a question and for grasping its importance in life. Here also the difficulties of the young religious must emerge, be expressed, and solved by joint effort.

The realization of this kind of "colloquium" would also perhaps remove something that has such a devastating effect on our communal living and eats at our community life from within—I mean the boycott of silence in regard to everything religious. We are quite unwilling to admit that by nature man is averse to speaking about the intimacies of his spiritual life. This is something we should not attack. But that among us who are brethren it is no longer possible to converse about religious matters or problems relating to Christian living—this, I do not hesitate to say, is the ruin of our communities. Stating it from another aspect: Do we still dare to judge people, things, circumstances, openly according to Christian categories? Do we still dare to judge the situations and facts of our private lives according to the standards incumbent upon us as Friars Minor? The answers to these questions show how frightening far advanced among us is this boycott of silence on everything religious. If we could break it by such "colloquia", then perhaps there would be another valuable fruit of *juventus operando formetur*.

2. We now come to the second point of our examination of community science—the "as-if" attitude. Here we have to view the "as-if" from a two-fold aspect: "as-if" community life and "as-if" authority which is still self-evident to modern youth. Let us consider each in detail.

a) The individual-community tension is as old as mankind, and traced to its ultimate source, it reveals itself as a consequence of original sin. At the very moment and to the same extent that man separates himself from God and strives to become like God, deciding arbitrarily and high-handedly what to do and what to avoid, at that very moment, I repeat, and to the same extent, community life is endangered and thrown into confusion. The man who desires to be like God will not tolerate strange gods before him. It is not without significance that Holy Scripture refrains from telling the whole story of Cain's fratricide after the Fall. The more modern man, since the advent of Humanism and the Renaissance, tears himself loose from God and makes himself the center of life in autonomous self-glorification, the more man's community life decays and falls to pieces. Liberalism and Individualism are true offspring of the Humanistic Renaissance, while they, in turn, have begotten Collectivism. For

man, finding that he must be dependent upon himself and shoulder his own obligations alone, seeks refuge in the irresponsibility and anonymity of the mass. He can no longer bear up alone nor endure his own isolated individualism. This is the situation we encounter today in our social communities. Liberalistic individualism has hollowed them out and sapped the best of their vital powers. Community life is valued only in so far as it is of service to the individual and is paid to the attainment of his own private ends. Bare community of interests is almost the last vestige of communal living. The individual is unwilling to sacrifice something to the common life provided he himself profits by it. From the opposite side comes the threat of Collectivism. "The Province has to provide for everything—;" "The Church has failed—;" "The Order should—." Such phrases show how far the individual has distanced himself from the community and how he tries to discharge his duties to an anonymous thing: the Collective. As a consequence, responsible leaders have come to be looked upon more and more as mere functionaries, as officials. And right here at this point comes disastrous centralization: everyone passes the buck to the man in the next higher position.

This development of secular life certainly has not come to a halt at the gates of our monasteries. On the contrary, it has insinuated itself to such an extent that it has become the basic difficulty in our modern community life. This is certainly obvious to every thinking person. But what does our Rule say? "Wheresoever the Brethren are located or meet one another, let them act toward one another as members of a family" (Chapter VI). This precept of the Rule gains in significance from what we have just said. When Francis prescribed *familiaritas*—familiarity in the root meaning of family feeling—as the directing norm for the common life of the Friars, everyone knew by experience what he meant. The family was still a reality. Today it is not. Today the cultivation of *familiaritas* is a problem, and a problem for each individual. Our communities are no longer truly or self-evidently "familiar," but are faced with the urgent task of becoming so, in the fullest sense.

Right from the start, then, education among us has as one of its primary aims the realization of the power in

being and living to create or form a family—a power which flows from the grace-giving union with Christ. Our communities may again become centers for educating adults to family life, to fraternal oneness in Christ, to *fraternitas*. Therefore, whoever joins one of our communities takes over *ipso facto* the primarily personal task of vivifying the community by continually serving it out of the strength of his Christian being. From this it follows that for total education, especially in the religious sphere—there is demanded of the young person a complete yielding of himself to his social or communal obligations and relationships. The feeling for community action must be awakened in him; for Christianity either functions in the community or it perishes. Later on and in another connection I shall come back to a further interpretation of this problem. Let us first make a synopsis of some of the essentials for community formation—essentials of which we have heard very little in the course of our education. In our day emphasis was laid on the frictionless functioning of the common life (excuse the harsh terminology) rather than on the conscious fostering of the fraternal community, the *fraternitas*, the *familiaritas*. But to go on with our proposed analysis:

Firstly: The fundamental supposition of man's communal living is that the individual—as redeemed by Christ from egoism—is a liberated human being who can say "no" to himself. The *ab-negatio* to the *spiritus carnis* is the Franciscan formulation of this, as Our Seraphic Founder, in Chapter X of the Rule, unequivocally states: "I warn and exhort the Brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ that they beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, of interest and concern about this world, of detraction and murmuring. . .but let them mind that above everything else they should desire to have the spirit of the Lord and his holy operation." To realize this "no" to self, the *ab-negatio* in the Lord Jesus Christ, means, in virtue of the Redemption, to be freed from the consequences of original sin and to become ever more capable of the life of the Kingdom of God, of the Communion of Saints. Only when applied to this end does the grace of redemption remain vital and effective.

Secondly: Community life requires that our hearts be open to one another, that we do not push aside or exclude from our friend-

ship any one of our confreres. Expressions such as: "I'm through with you," betray the fact that we have totally forgotten one of the fundamental teachings of Christ. How often, too, do our actions betray another fact—that we have forgotten that the sinner is still a member of the Church and a brother in Christ. Let me again quote the words of our Rule (III): "But I advise, warn, and exhort my brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ that when they go about in the world they do not become involved in disputes and wordy contentions, nor judge others, but let them be meek, peaceable and reserved, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everybody as is proper." And further (Chapter VI): "Wherever the Brethren are located or meet one another, let them act toward one another like members of a family. . .and each should make known his need to the other with assurance; . . .or if a mother tends and loves her child in the flesh, with how much greater attention must a man love and tend his brother in the spirit." Only when we thus *live* our Christianity do we overcome individualistic isolationism in the community and the danger of introversion in ourselves; only through a sense of responsibility to Christ living in us can we force open our individualistic encystment; only then, indeed, can *fraternitas* really come to dwell among us.

Thirdly: Let us sincerely avoid all collectivistic over-simplification: community life is *not* cut-and-dried uniformity. It says clearly in our Rule (Chapter II): "...according as the Lord may inspire them;" and (Chapter V): "...those to whom the Lord has given the grace. . ." These and similar formulations in the Rule express the unconditional reverence of our Holy Father Francis for the God-given personality of each individual and for the operations of God's grace in each. Further, if we wish to form true Franciscan *fraternitas*, we must keep ourselves alert and open to that other operation of the Holy Spirit, the *divina inspiratio*, as Francis calls it; or else we shall lose that most valuable element of our community life—that we, as *fratres spirituales*, remain men directed by the spirit of God. If these elements prevail, then our word "community" could really come to mean "common." Certainly the educator has to be especially lest these things be abused by skillful advocates of camouflage for their egocentrism. As it says in the

(Chapter V): "If there is anyone among the Brethren, wherever he be, who is minded to live carnally rather than spiritually, the Brethren with whom he lives should admonish, instruct, and correct him with humility and care" The individualistic man cannot endure rebuke; and the liberalistic man either fails to recognize his obligation to "admonish, instruct, and correct," or else fears it out of erroneous solicitude for the common life. "What concern have we with the others?" "What concern have the others with me?" This is the attitude that ruins and puts an end to the Christian social community, and among us, to *fraternitas*.

Fourthly: Only if we learn to *think ourselves into* the individual personality of another; only if we learn to understand it as a gift from God; and if we learn to grant to this personality, in true solicitude for our community, the place that thus falls due to it—only then do we come to the real education of the individual *within* the pattern of the common life. It is not individuality alone that makes the man of sound character, but rather the conscious cultivation of his God-given personality developed within the pattern of his living together with others. Only *in* the community and *by* the community which stands in reverence before the personality of the individual can solid character be formed. To make right decisions here, in the teeth of this polarity that always and necessarily exists between the individual and the community, often presents the greatest difficulty for the young religious. And here the loving and understanding empathy of the educator is just as necessary as close and sincere guidance. The greatest disaster for the young religious is to find himself under an educator who handles all types of character in the same way, who acknowledges only the types congenial to himself, or, worst of all, who thinks his own character to be the only right type and educates accordingly. Our Order makes it possible for us to give to each individual his rightful place in the community; let us be careful then to make room for the free operation of God in the individual personalities, each of which He Himself has created differently from all others and endowed with different graces. This room has always been very large in our Order. Let us take heed not to restrict or contract it, but rather let us consciously foster the originality of our

young religious—originality, of course, understood in the best sense of the word.

Fifthly: Our communities consist of human beings. Purely spiritual communities are a catastrophe. Our brotherliness has need of material expression as well as spiritual. It is up to us, therefore, to make use of every least token of genuine fraternal love—even the smallest and most insignificant. A supernatural packthread cannot hold together a community of human beings; and a "purely supernatural" love is usually unbearable. On the other hand, the purely natural must also be avoided; and here again we are confronted with another real tension, the irremovable polarities of communal human living: nature and supernature, body and spirit. To take both poles with utter sincerity, not amplifying one at the expense of the other, much less subduing one to the other—this is the most difficult but the most sublime art of true education. Above all, the educator will have to lead the young religious to the knowledge that to bear and endure this polarity is no poor compromise, no inner untruthfulness, but a truly human request. Every "either—or", as youth so often mistakenly demands, in this matter is simply non-human. To be sure, "as well as" is not the proper solution either, because it would lead to a division or separation of the two. Polarity consists in an inherence and in a coherence which are indispensable, and which can be achieved and sustained in a truly human way only by daily practical concentration and alert observation.

Sixthly: Last but not least in importance, especially for our Franciscan communities, is the polarity: spirit and form. We have met with this tension before in our considerations, and we shall meet it again later *in concreto*. Let us here treat it as the principle: A community of human beings, considered as beings possessed of both body and soul, cannot exist for long without a certain number of fixed forms. These forms—if we do not want to run into formalism—must be animated, that is, they must correspond to an attitude of mind; it must be possible for the person who executes them to realize in them this attitude of mind, to find in them psycho-physical expression. Now it is certainly true that many of the forms of our Order were once true forms in this sense, but with the

have now become false forms. This does not necessarily imply apostasy. A community grows and ripens, and therefore its forms must also grow and ripen, they must be able to alter and change. This means that we should not mourn too much if time-approved forms which are really proved to be no longer good are beginning to disappear. On the other hand, neither should we give up the old forms lightly before we can put correspondingly new ones in their place. This means, in summary, that we should make room for the new spirit to develop correspondingly new forms, even though it was not that way before." This also means that we should try to begin again with spirit and meaning the old forms which are characteristic of our Order, if they are still appropriate. Forms are not to be blamed when our lack of spirit is the real fault.

All these matters regarding the tension between spirit and form could, I think, be important topics for regular consultations by the Masters. Because of their greater experience the Masters should regularly exchange opinions about this. Much more could be said but it seems best to come to a halt here and let each consider for himself what has thus far been discussed.

(to be continued)

Moenchen-Gladbach, Germany

Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M.



You are My tabernacle. The Holy Trinity speaks in you. You are the tabernacle and cell of My Mother, for with Me she gives you all gifts, with Me she rejoices in all the consolations with which I favor you, and she always asks Me to give you new ones.

Christ to Margaret of Cortona

## AS FRANKINCENSE BURNING IN THE FIRE

The following is a selection of passages from two sermons of Saint Anthony of Padua on the Feast of the Purification

As the sweet smelling frankincense in the time of summer, as a bright fire, and frankincense burning in the fire (Eccli. 50, 8).

In Genesis (2, 8 & 15) we read: *And the Lord God had planted paradise of pleasure from the beginning, and the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it.* But man dressed it badly, and badly did he keep it. Therefore it was necessary that the Lord God should plant another and far better garden, that is, Blessed Mary, into which those exiled from the first garden might return. Into this second paradise was placed the Second Adam, Who dressed it and kept it. He wrought great things in it, as Mary, the garden, herself declared (Lk. 1, 49): *He who is mighty has done great things to me, and holy is his name.* He kept it, in that He preserved it whole. He worked it, in that He fertilized it. He kept it, for He did not take away its flower. The first earth, cursed in the work of Adam, brought forth thorns and thistles after labor. Our earth, that is, the Blessed Virgin, without the labor of man, brought forth the blessed Fruit Whom on this day she offered in the temple to God the Father. Whence it is said: *As the sweet smelling incense in the time of summer.* In Ecclesiasticus (24, 21) it is written of the Blessed Virgin: *And I perfumed my dwelling as the Libanus uncut.* The Libanus is a large Arabian tree which yields a fragrant sap. It is named from a mountain in Arabia, for the mountain on which frankincense is gathered is called Libanus. There, twice a year—in autumn and in spring—frankincense is gathered. Now the Libanus uncut is Blessed Mary, who was never cut by any knife of concupiscence. Her soul, in which she dwelt, she perfumed with love, that is, she filled it with the odor of virtues. From this perfuming her habitation gave off the odor of humility and chastity because

of the bright purity of her life, Mary is called "Libanus," which means "whiteness"; and she sent forth from herself fragrant incense, that is, the humanity of Jesus Christ Whose good odor fills the whole world. By the twofold cutting of the incense, the twofold oblation of Christ is signified. In the first, His mother offered Him in the temple according to the law of Moses. In the second, He offered Himself in sacrifice to reconcile the human race to God the Father. In the first oblation He was incense offered to God; in the second, He was incense cut, because He was cut for our sins; and then He was *smelling frankincense in the time of summer*, that is, in the heat of persecution by the Jews. But now let us say something of the first oblation in the temple, to the praise of the glorious Virgin.

*At that time, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that nourished thee* (Lk. 11, 27).

The Bridegroom speaks to the bride, saying (Cant. 2, 4): *thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet*. The sweet voice is the praise of the glorious Virgin, sounding most sweetly in the ears of the Spouse, Who is Jesus Christ, the Son of the same Virgin. Therefore let each and all of us raise our voices to the praise of Blessed Mary, and let us say to her Son: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that nourished thee!* Blessed (*beatus*) means fulfilled (*bene auctus*). He is blessed, then, who has all that he desires; he is blessed who receives all that he hopes for. Therefore blessed is the womb of the glorious Virgin, who merited to bear for nine months every good, the Supreme Good, the Joy of Angels, the Reconciliation of sinners. Whence Augustine says: "We are reconciled through the Only Son according to His flesh, not by the Only Son according to His Deity. For the Trinity reconciled us to Itself by bringing it about that the Only Word should take flesh." Therefore, blessed is the womb of the glorious Virgin, of whom Saint Augustine says in his book *On Nature and Grace* (c. 36, n. 42): "When there is any discussion of sin, I do not wish the least question to arise in regard to the Virgin Mary, because of the honor of the Lord. For how do we know but that, for the conquest of sin on every side, more of grace was given to her who merited to conceive and

bring forth Him Whom it is certain had no sin? Therefore, with the conception of the Virgin, if all the men and women saints could be gathered together and asked if they had sinned, what could they answer but say with Saint John (I Jn. 1, 8): *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?*" But this glorious Virgin was prevented and filled by a singular grace, that she might give as fruit of her womb Him Who possessed her from the beginning the Lord of the universe...

Therefore *blessed is the womb that bore thee*. Truly blessed, therefore, is she who bore Thee, God and the Son of God, Lord of Angels, Creator of heaven and earth, the Redeemer of the world. The daughter bore the Father; the poor little Virgin bore the Son. O Cherubim and Seraphim, O Angels and Archangels, lower your faces, bow your heads, and reverently adore the temple of the Son of God, the sacrarium of the Holy Spirit, the blessed womb of the Virgin. O earth-born sons of Adam, to whom this grace, this special prerogative, has been conceded, devout in faith and prostrate upon the ground, adore this high and lofty ivory throne of the true Solomon, the throne of our Isaias, saying: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee*.

Concerning the part that follows: *And the breasts that nourished thee*, Solomon says (Prov. 5, 19): *Let her be thy dearest hind, and most agreeable fawn; let her breasts inebriate thee at all times; and be thou continually delighted with her love*. Note that the hind, as the natural histories tell us, brings forth her young in frequented places, knowing that the wolf avoids those paths which are much traveled by men. The *most dear hind* is the Blessed Virgin Mary, who brought forth her little Son, her *most agreeable fawn*, in a frequented place. Whence Luke says (2, 7): *She brought forth her son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes* (that we might receive the garment of immortality) *and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*. And here the Gloss reads: Christ went without a place in the inn, that we might have many mansions in heaven.

Mary's Son, praising her as the Spouse in the Song of Songs, says: *How beautiful thou art, and how comely*

lights. *Thy stature is like to the palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.* O my mother, my spouse, my dearest hind, *how beautiful thou art in body and soul, how beautiful in delights*, in the reward of eternal life. *Thy stature is like to the palm tree.* For the palm is rough at the base because of the bark; but at the top it is beautiful both in its appearance and in its fruit; and (as Isidore says) it bears fruit every hundred years. So Mary in this world was made rough by the bark of poverty, but in heaven she is beautiful and glorious, she is Queen of Angels; and the hundredfold fruit that is given to virgins, the Virgin of virgins merited to receive above all other virgins. It is therefore most fittingly said: *Thy stature is like to the palm tree. And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.* Now the grape is a kind of fruit that grows in clusters on vines. We read in the story of Joseph (Gen. 40, 10) that the king's chief butler said: *I saw before me a vine on which were three branches, which little by little sent forth buds, and after the blossoms brought forth ripe grapes.* Seven things are mentioned there: the vine, the three branches, buds, blossoms and grapes. Let us consider how these seven things are found in Mary in a special way.

The vine (so-called because it has the power of quickly growing roots, or because its branches are intertwined) is the Blessed Virgin who more than all others was quickly and deeply rooted in the love of God; and because she was inseparably intertwined with the True Vine, her Son, Who said (Jn. 15, 1): *I am the true vine*; and also because she said of herself (Eccli. 24, 23): *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.* The Blessed Virgin's parturition has no parallel among women, but it has a likeness in nature. Do you seek to know how the Virgin brought forth the Savior? As the flower of the vine brings forth its fragrance. You find the flower of the vine unsullied when it yields its odor. Believe, then, that the chastity of the Virgin remained inviolate when she brought forth the Savior. For what is the flower of virginity but sweetness of odor?

The three branches of this vine were the salutation of the Angel, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, and the ineffable conception of the Son of God. From these three branches the progeny of the faithful is propagated by faith throughout the whole world—thus, it is multiplied.

The buds on the vine are the humility and virginity of Blessed Mary. These are the ripe grapes from which flows the ripe and fragrant wine that inebriates, and by inebriating sobers the minds of the faithful. Therefore it is well said: *Let her breasts inebriate thee all times, and be thou delighted continually with her love.* For by so much as you are able to despise the false delights of the world for the love of her, by so much will you be able to crush the concupiscence of the flesh.

Fly to her, then, O sinner, because she is the city of refuge. For the Lord once said (Deuter. 4, 41-42): *Set aside three cities of refuge, that any one might flee to them who should kill his neighbor unwillingly*, so now the mercy of the Lord provides a refuge of mercy—the name of Mary—even for wilful murderers. The name of Our Lady is a most strong tower; let the sinner flee to it and be saved. A name of sweetness to the sinner, of comfort and of blessed hope; O Lady, such is thy name in the desire of the soul. *And the Virgin's name was Mary*, says Luke (1, 27). *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. 1, 2). The Name of Mary is jubilee in the heart, honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, Therefore it is said to the special praise of the Virgin: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that nourished thee.* But Jesus said to the woman: *Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* And the Gloss reads: Mary is not to be praised solely because she bore the Word of God in her womb, but rather she is blessed because she kept the commandments of God in deed. . .

*As a bright fire, and incense burning in the fire.* Note that on this day the faithful carry to church the bright fire of their burning candles, which are made of tow and wax. The fire symbolizes the divinity of the Lord, the tow the bitterness of His passion. On this day the Blessed Virgin carried and offered her Son to God in the temple, which is symbolized today by the faithful carrying and offering their burning candles. This gain symbolizes the three kinds of true penance. The fire signifies the ardor of true contrition which destroys the roots of vice; the wax signifies true contrition, for as wax melts away from the fire, so from the mouth of the penitent confession flows from the mouth of the penitent. The tow signifies the bitterness of aton-



things lies the salvation of men, that is, Jesus. For he who offers to God can say with the righteous Simeon (Lk. 2, 29): *Now dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace*

Note that in the four versicles of the Canticle of Simeon four beatitudes of the penitent man are signified. The first is the full remission of sin and in tranquility of conscience: *Now dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace*. The second is in the separation of the soul from the body, when he has what he has believed, what he has desired: *Because my eyes have seen thy salvation*. The third is in the trial of the Last Judgment, when it shall be said (Prov. 31, 31): *Give him of the fruits of his harvest and let his works praise him in the gates*. Whence the verse: *Which thou has prepared before the face of all peoples*. The fourth is in the light of eternal glory, in which he shall see face to face: *He shall know even as he is known*. Whence: *A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*. Therefore it is fittingly said: *As a bright fire, and incense burning in the fire*. Jesus Christ shone like fire to the shepherds at His Nativity, to the Three Kings at His Epiphany, to the prophet Simeon and to Anna at His most Holy Purification. And truly in His passion He burned like incense in the fire; and heaven, earth, and hell were filled with His odor. In heaven the Angels rejoiced at the redemption of the human race; on earth men arose from the dead; in hell the captives were set free.

We pray thee, therefore, Our Lady, chosen Mother of God, purify us from the blood of sinners, to make us carry the burning fire of contrition in the wax of confession and the tow of satisfaction, so that we may merit to attain to the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem: through that most excellent One Whom on this day thou didst offer in the temple; to Whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.

*Immaculate Conception Convent*      *Sr. Francis, S.M.I.C. (trans.)*  
*Christ the King Seminary*

# the CORD

VOL. IV NO. III MARCH 1954

## CONTENTS

MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	66
<i>Fr. Silvano Matutich, O.F.M.</i>	
ABAT MATER.....	69
<i>Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (trans.)</i>	
BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (III).....	74
<i>Joseph F. Mahoney, T.O.F. (trans.)</i>	
FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (III).....	78
<i>Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M.</i>	
EXPLANATION: RULE OF THIRD O. REGULAR (XX).....	86
<i>Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.</i>	
ILEMMA.....	92
<i>Fr. Eustace Smith, O.F.M.</i>	
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS.....	95



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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Saint Francis was not a learned man; according to the standards of the world he was not a man of power or influence—his associates were wealth, a gay disposition and a clean heart. He was still a young man when he turned completely to God and when disciples began to come to him. In view of all this, it is truly astonishing to see how the poor, simple, inexperienced young man could hold in his hands the souls and hearts of the men who came to him. To have his favor was a great privilege; to have merited his displeasure was a profound anguish.

His followers were a medley; they were not of one mold. Brother Ruffinus was cultured, Brother Juniper was almost a simpleton and could get in your hair, Brother Pacificus was a poet, Brother Elias was ambitious. Surely some were prudent, and others had but a little prudence; some had great courtesy, and others were as rude as the fields they had till recently plowed; some were quick-witted, and others were slow to learn. But all had loved Francis well, and all were covetous of his special love, and surely there must have been fringes of jealousy among them, and in their own way they will have asked among themselves, *quis putas major est in regno caelorum*.

Of stones such as these, of every shape and size and quality, could Francis have laid the foundation of an edifice that would outlive the centuries? With what did he cement them together that they should hold so admirably, if not with the binding of love? Saint Paul gives us the ingredients that make up this binding force: *For ye are all one in Christ Jesus; ye have all received the same Spirit, and are all partakers of the same Lord's Supper; and are all built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building is joined together, and grows up to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together, and grow up with him in charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. 3, 12-14).* There it is! This was Francis, and by his love he compacted the strange assortment together into a magnificent edifice.

It was this same spirit of mutual love which he bequeathed to his followers. He authenticated his Rule with the seal of charity.

Thus, in Chapter III we read: "Let the brethren be mild, peaceful and modest, gentle and humble." In Chapter VI: "If a mother nourishes and loves her carnal child, how much more should not one love and nourish his spiritual brother. And if any of them should fall into sickness the other brethren must serve him as they would wish to be served themselves." And in Chapter VII: "If any of the brethren . . . should sin mortally . . . let the ministers . . . impose a penance upon them with mercy. . . And let them take care lest they become angry," for this ruins charity. And in Chapter X the ministers are admonished to correct their subjects "in humility and charity," and they must receive those who have recourse to them "with charity and mildness." And then he adds a final confirmation in a new and holy sanction: "And whoever shall have observed these things, let him in heaven be filled with the blessing of the most High celestial Father, and on earth with the blessing of his beloved Son together with the Holy Ghost. . . And I, Brother Francis, your little one and servant, as far as I possibly can, confirm this blessing to you through and through."

You will see, therefore, how Francis cemented us together. We are gathered to his Order from North, South, East and West; the blood of every nation flows in our veins; each has come with his own family traditions; each with his special character: the mild and the wild, the languid, the dynamic, the generous, the selfish, the cultured, the rude, the idealistic and the common. Will not all this seethe and boil over like a witch's caldron? The fire could fly and the casualties could be numerous in a situation such as this. Francis, all these have come to you; how will you keep them in the peace of Christ? The divine directive is there in the words of Saint Paul which have already been quoted: *but above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection*, or as it might quite as well be rendered, "charity, which is the perfect bond." Throw over all of them this perfect bond, and the peace of Christ will rule in the midst of them.

We are the Seraphic Order, and the Franciscan Brotherhood should be something like a sacramental means for conveying to the world the blessings of true Christian love. But first, we ourselves will need good schooling in charity, in mutual love, in unfeigned

kindness toward each other, in patience with one another, not looking to the exterior of our Brother or to his foibles, but to the image of Christ which is in him and the bond of spiritual brotherhood which associates us to him. Our sympathies must be expansive. Of course, there is a correlative to this: those who are aware of annoying habits, of disagreeable traits, must get rid of them, for this is their duty both on the score of their own perfection and on the score of charity.

So then, while practicing the spirit of brotherliness among ourselves, let us also carry it out into the world and share our Christian and Seraphic love with men. We are never too poor to dispense the love of Christ. The more you give for His sake, the more He will pour into your heart *good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over* (Lk. 6, 38); your supply will be inexhaustible. But it is the charity of Christ, not sentimentality. The charity of him who could not withstand the sight of suffering or the signs of weeping. *Woman, weep not! . . . And he gave the young boy back to his sorrowing mother* (Lk. 7, 13). It must be that charity which will impel you to enter with compassion into the sorrows of others. It would be a shocking thing if the heart of a priest or a religious were callous to others' pain. Charity with those who are confused, sympathetic with the just ambitions of men; be proud of their noble pride, as a father would be proud of his son. In a word, have so much of the goodness of Christ and of Francis that you can alternately rejoice and weep with an upright heart.

You will thus exercise a fascination over men, some of that divine and courteous fascination which the Son of God exercised and which drew the crowds to follow Him deep into desert places forgetful of food and drink.

All men yearn to share in God's gladness, and we ought to be the dispensers of that gladness, we the members of an Order that has been reared on divine love and the gay songs of Francis, and has roamed down the centuries as the carefree vagabonds of God, having nothing yet possessing all things, since that we had long ago been committed by Saint Francis to the kind and omnipotent providence of God. Why should not people come to us in their sorrow and distress, presuming justly that, after we have had almost a thou-

and years of experience of being comforted by the goodness of God, we should have learned well how to comfort others (2 Cor. 1, 6)? And if joy has echoed down the hall-ways of Franciscan life for nearly a millenium, men might well presume that we know the secret of its contagion, and that we can turn their tears into happiness.

As one goes to school for learning, and to the doctor for healing, so men should come to us to be relieved of their sorrow. It is our duty to learn this sublime ministry. What a glory it would be if, after making unflinching experience of it, men should want to emblazon on our coat-of-arms and over our doorways—in a very humble sense, of course, yet in a true sense—those tender and compelling words of Christ: *Come to me all you that labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you*. This is an ideal to strive after. Our escutcheon has on it an arm of Christ and an arm of Saint Francis and each hand is pierced with a wound, the emblem of ultimate love. Shall we not embrace men in the love of those two arms? Those arms should be emblazoned on our escutcheon in flaming fire, an emblem of the blazing love. Through our own noble courtesy and our supernatural charity, with these two arms let us embrace men to our hearts with the tenderness of Christ Who is the revelation to us, in flesh and blood, of the eternal Love Who predestined all of us to divine adoption as sons, for *everyone who loves him who begot, loves also the one begotten of him* (1 Jo. 5, 1).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## STABAT MATER IUXTA CRUCEM

*A Meditation drawn from Saint Bonaventure*

*Stabat Mater iuxta crucem eius.* All these things on Calvary were done and said while Christ's most sorrowful Mother stood by the Cross. Her compassion for Him increased His suffering, and His love her sorrow. She was, as it were, on the Cross with Him and those rather to die with Him than to survive Him.

in and troubled on all sides, beyond the power of tongue to  
(*Medit. de Passione*, 6)

Now Our Lord, as He hung in agony on the Cross, said  
taught many things most useful to us. These are His seven words  
as you will find them written in the Gospel. Look up, then, O Christian  
soul, into the face of your Christ and listen attentively to what He  
ever word He speaks amid His sufferings, and what you have heard  
hide as a most precious treasure within the depths of your heart.

### The Third Word

The third word was that spoken to His Mother when He said  
*Woman, behold thy son*; and to John: *Behold thy Mother*.

O sweet and tender speech! O word so wondrous, betokening  
the greatness of our Savior's filial love! We do not read indeed  
the Gospels that Jesus, who was so gentle and kind, showed much  
affection for His most dear Mother, especially when He reached  
manhood, or took sup with her more frequently, or spoke more  
gently to her than He did toward others. Yet the greatness of His  
love for her He showed in these few words in His dying hour.

Can you doubt that, despite His own sufferings on the Cross,  
He was filled with the deepest compassion for His Blessed Mother,  
whose gentle heart He full well knew was pierced with a mighty  
sword of sorrow? The pains of His own wounds were increased  
the sorrow of His co-suffering Mother, when He saw her heart  
of grief, her hands clasped together, her eyes shedding torrents  
tears, her face lined with sorrow, as mournfully yet courageously  
she stood by Him crucified.

Think how often she must have sighed as she stood there with  
her head covered out of virginal modesty and exceeding sorrow, that  
while, we may suppose, bewailing her Son and saying: "Jesus, my  
Son! O Jesus! who will give me that I may die with Thee and for  
Thee, my Son, my most beloved Jesus?" How many times, think you,  
did she raise her modest eyes to gaze on His bitter wounds? And  
she did not look at times, it was by reason of her endless flow of tears.  
How did she ever bear up under so excruciating a sorrow of heart?  
Living, she died with Him, and by living bore a sorrow more cruel  
than death itself.

But lest she faint and die her Son strengthened her within and  
hardly consoled her by word and action; for as she stood thus by  
the Cross, He said to her: *Behold thy son*, as though to say: "Thou  
lose the bodily company of Me, thy Son. Therefore I give thee  
most beloved friend to be thy son. In My absence his presence  
comfort thee. And thou, John, wilt lose Me, thy Father; hence  
I give thee My most beloved Mother as thy very own" (*Vitis mystica*,  
c. 9).

### The Death of Jesus

Then at the last He spoke the seventh word with a loud cry  
and tears, saying: *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*. And  
having said this, He bowed His head upon His breast as though  
giving thanks to His Father who had summoned Him back, and  
gave up His spirit.

Oh what must not have passed through the soul of the Mother,  
as she thus sorrowfully beheld her Son grow weak and pale and  
then die midst cries and tears! I believe that she was so caught up in  
the greatness of her anguish as to have become almost unconscious  
of the things of sense or perhaps so afflicted as to seem almost dying  
herself, now much more than when she had met Jesus carrying the  
Cross. And Magdalen, faithful and beloved, John whom Jesus  
loved, and the two holy cousins of Our Lady! what could they do in  
the sea of their grief, but weep with her?

See now! the Lord hangs dead upon the Cross. The multitude  
returns to the city. Only the sorrowful Mother and the holy four  
remain. They sit near the Cross and contemplate their loved One  
while they wait for help from their Lord that they may remove His  
body for burial. . . In vain does Mary plead with the soldiers to leave  
untouched the body of her Son. One of them, Longinus, proud  
then and godless, but later a convert, a martyr and a Saint, contemning  
her prayers, thrusts his lance into the side of the Lord Jesus.  
Then truly was fulfilled in Mary what Simeon had said: *Thy own  
soul a sword shall pierce*, for the sword of this lance went through  
her soul as it pierced the body of her Son.

Then at last came Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and  
others. . . and as they removed the body of the Lord from the Cross

hold of His right hand and held it to her cheek. As it was laid on the ground, she held His head and shoulders on her lap, while Magdalen clasped His feet at which she had once found such mercy. The others stood by and wept bitterly as for an only son. Midst tears Our Lady gazed at the wounds of His hands and side, now one, now another; she contemplated His face and head, the holes made by the thorns, His beard plucked, His face matted with spittle and blood! (*Medit. de Pass.* 7-10)

Consider then, O sinner, that when you sin you are the cause of these wounds of Christ! Look to the Passion of Christ, and you will overcome the devil. If he tempts you to pride, see Christ on the Cross who became *the reproach of men*, and you will not give in. If he would lead you to ill-will, behold Christ praying for His enemies, and you will hate no one. If lukewarmness threatens, behold Christ pierced by the nails, and you will hang with Him on the cross of penance. If the devil tempts you to avarice, see Christ naked on the Cross, and in nakedness you will follow Him: *nudus nubi sequeris*. If impurity is what the devil proposes, behold the hardness of the Cross. Look at all this, and then do all things according to the pattern that was shown you in Christ. *Optimum est semper cruce meditari!* (*Sermons on Good Friday*)

#### The Burial of Jesus

After a little, as night was drawing near, Joseph besought Our Lady to permit him to wrap the body and bury it. Magdalen prepared the feet and washed them again with her tears, her last service to Him who was her Master and Lord. With even greater abundance of tears, Our Lady bathed the face of her Son and wrapped His head in the winding-cloth and blessed Him. Then adoring Him with bended knees and kissing His feet, they carried Him to the tomb, Our Lady holding the head and shoulders, Magdalen the feet, the others the body.

When they had closed the tomb and returned to Calvary, Mary knelt there and adored the Cross, for here, she said, has my Son rested and here is His most precious Blood. You may suppose, then, that Mary was the first to adore the Cross. They then left for the

but Mary would often stop on the way to gaze back at Calvary. (*Medit. de Pass.*, 11)

#### A Colloquy

What tongue can tell, what mind can grasp, O Virgin blessed, the full weight of thy desolation! Thou wast in the midst of all these sufferings and sharing in them! Now didst thou see that blessed and holy flesh which thou hadst so chastely conceived, so sweetly fed and nursed, so frequently held in thy bosom and covered with kisses, now with bodily eye didst thou see, I say, that flesh rent by the scourges, pierced by the thorns, struck by the reed, bruised with blows and fists, dug by the nails, mangled horribly as it was fixed to the Cross, subjected to every mockery and quenched with gall and vinegar. But with the eyes of the spirit thou didst likewise behold that most divine soul of thy Son filled with the gall of bitterness, groaning in spirit, fearful, weary, in agony, in anxiety, troubled and cast down with every sadness and sorrow. He suffered thus partly because His body was so conscious of every pain, partly because He burned with most ardent zeal for God's honor lessened and injured by sin, partly because He had such love for us miserable sinners, and lastly because He had such compassion for thee His Mother, whose heart was pierced on Calvary! (*Lignum vitae*, 28)

In conclusion let me pray: My God, my good Jesus! Though I am wholly ashamed and unworthy, unworthy indeed to have merited to be present in body at Thy sufferings and death, grant me the grace to meditate on these in mind, and so experience that deep compassion for Thee, my God, who wast crucified and didst die for me, which Thy innocent Mother and the penitent Magdalen felt in the very hour of Thy Passion. Amen. (*Ibid.*, 32)

Eia Mater, fons amoris,  
Me sentire vim doloris  
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (transl.)

## SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (IID)

### *Rules For Sleeping*

When the time for retiring arrives and not before, first sprinkle yourself with holy water and say a brief prayer before getting in bed, bless yourself and humbly recommend yourself to the Lord and modestly prepare yourself for sleep, lying on your right or left side, but never on your back or in any other unbecoming position. Never sleep with your hands inside your habit nor with your legs drawn up or uncovered, but always keep your tunic between your legs, lest someone find you lying immodestly. Thus lying on your bed, recite the Psalms until you fall asleep, or meditate on something useful, or, what is better, think of Christ hanging on the Cross. If you think well of these matters, the devil will never, or only rarely, be able to tempt you, because devout meditation on the Passion of Christ puts the host of demons to flight.

When you are awakened, recall immediately the thought of the Crucified, that with Saint Paul you may know nothing among men *except only Jesus, and Him crucified*. For Saint Bernard says: "Let Him be wholly fixed in our hearts. Who for us was fixed to the Cross." Signing yourself with the cross, go to choir quickly and bless yourself with holy water. When you enter the church say: *I will enter thy house, O Lord, and adore at thy holy temple in fear of the Lord, lead me in thy justice; because of my enemies, direct my path in thy sight*. But when you arrive at the altar, genuflect humbly and adore God and weep, if you can, and pray as the Lord shall inspire you. Recommend yourself to Him with great humility of heart and be always in church before Office begins that, having recollected yourself before God, you may more fully attend to what you say.

### *Daily Duties*

Let all the duties you perform be always rooted in charity, for otherwise you may expect no reward from God, because, as Saint Augustine says: "So great is the power of charity that without it both prophecy and martyrdom are reckoned as nothing." Willingly

serve Mass, with deep devotion of heart and reverence of body, for no one should approach that most holy Sacrament indevoutly. Do not wait for the priests to ask you, but rather, you ask them. Be careful to perform all the services properly, lest perhaps through your negligence, which God forbid, the devotion of the celebrant be lessened. And take care, when you are serving, never to look at the face of the celebrant.

In regard to other duties, prefer those which, though less outstanding, are necessary and useful, such as washing clothes, dishes, and tunics, caring for the sick, and similar things. When you are with the professed Friars to perform some task, do not speak unless questioned, and then briefly and submissively. Prefer "to be heard in silence" because it is said in the Psalm: *A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth*. You should frequently and solicitously visit the sick Friars, at least two or three times a day, and do for them what you can, as it is said in the Rule that "the Friars should serve them as they would wish to be served themselves." And this without much talking for, as the Wise Man testifies: *In the multitude of words there shall not want sin*.

### *Of Avoiding Idleness*

Since idleness is an occasion of sin for many, as the Wise Man tells us: *Idleness hath taught much evil*, be ever occupied with divine praise or the works of charity. For the Divine Wisdom took idlers to task when He said: *Why stand you here idle all the day?* Nor should we wonder that the devil frequently leads idlers to sin, when Saint Jerome says: "Be always about some work, that the devil may find you occupied at all times."

Concern yourself mainly with these three things: frequent and fervent prayer, reading, and works of mercy. Let your whole life pass in these three things, so that you are always praying or reading or serving. Give your services preferably to the old, to guests, and to the sick. When you have completed these works, do not stand idly with the Friars, but immediately go to your cell for prayer or reading. Stay there daily until Tierce, and let nothing except urgent necessity or service to your brethren bring you forth. Remember the words of Saint Bernard, that "the holy Angels of God

a cell almost like heaven and are equally delighted in either, for from his cell, one often ascends to heaven."

### *Religious Modesty*

Since control of the exterior senses helps perfect the virtue, your every word and act should show forth self-control, cheerfulness, and discretion. For Saint Paul says: *Let all things be done properly and in order.* If, then, you wish to attain the right harmony of the virtues, and to preserve it easily, strive always to have the following qualities. In the first place, frequent and fervent prayer, of which you can say with the words of the book of Wisdom: *All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.* Then, always avoid all idle and unbecoming words, neither saying them nor listening to those who do. For Saint Paul says: *Evil companionships corrupt good morals.* Beware of letting your hands wander, especially with young men. Avoid the gatherings of idle gamesters; despise flatterers and the compliments. Abhor the conversation of whisperers and murmurers, the double-tongued and detractors. For Scripture says: *Whisperers and detractors are hateful to God.*

Speak only considered, ordered, useful, and becoming words with anyone. Always avoid duplicity and pretense in conversation because Saint Ambrose says: "Every pretense and every duplicity is a lie." Wherefore also Saint Augustine says: "Let your words first be well-considered, then said." Go to wash the dishes daily. Moreover, be not a murmurer nor judge others, nor reprehend anyone unless he manifestly acts contrary to God. Rather, when you are blamed, immediately say the culpa on your knees, whether you are guilty or not. For Saint Gregory tells us: "It is a mark of person of good will to acknowledge their fault, even if they have not done wrong." And whenever someone offends you, do not reply, but take recourse to patience, saying within yourself: "It is indeed right that all creatures should offend me, because in my pride I have always offended the Creator of all, and still do offend Him unjustly and frequently."

And always, when you enter or leave a church, genuflect before the altar if it can be easily done, for it is written: *At the name*

*Jesus, every knee should bend.* Likewise, when you walk through the house or outside, be modest in your step, with hands in sleeves, eyes cast down and not wandering, for Saint Augustine says: "A roving eye betrays an unchaste heart."

And when you see the Friars speaking of someone, and not of God or Sacred Scripture, leave immediately, especially if they are mumuring against someone or speaking of wars. For Scripture says: *Their tongue is a sharp sword.* And that you may the better preserve yourself, strive always to have humility in your heart and your conduct, because Saint Gregory says: "Whoever practices the other virtues without humility, merely carries dust into the wind."

### *On Temptations and How to Resist Them*

The enemy of the human race strives without cease secretly to ensnare the faithful through the onslaughts of temptation, as Saint Peter says: *Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith.* Therefore, *always keep thy soul carefully,* as the Wise Man counsels. As soon as you become conscious of temptation, have recourse to Christ, for He is faithful, that He should make issue with temptation, and say immediately: *Help me, O Lord, my God; depart not from me. Hasten to my aid, O Lord God of my salvation. Free me from my strong enemies and from these men who hate me, for they are greatly strengthened above me. Place me near thee, O Lord, and then let any man's hand be raised against me, for even if whole armies stand against me, my heart will not fear.* And think immediately that by sin one loses the inestimable glory of the Blessed and is condemned to the horrible and unending torments of the damned.

For these two thoughts, if carefully kept in mind, will overcome all temptation; but if temptation still persists, meditate on the most bitter Passion of Jesus Christ. For Scripture tells us: *To think upon it is perfect understanding; and he that watcheth for it shall quickly be secure.* And for this reason, if you keep the Passion of the Redeemer before your mind, the temptations of the deceiver will have no place in your flesh. For this is the armor against enemies of which Saint Paul spoke: *Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* For true

no more efficacious medicine by which the hosts of our enemies are repelled. Therefore also Saint Peter said: *Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, do you also arm yourselves with the same intent.*

And Saint Bernard says this even more expressly: "As often as you feel yourself attacked by base thoughts and feel drawn to wrong desires, place before the eyes of your mind Christ crucified for you. See how He is betrayed to the Jews by Judas, how roughly handled, blasphemed and beaten, judged and condemned, stripped and scourged. And finally, covered with outrages and insults, He is suspended between two thieves, pierced by nails, spit upon, crowned with thorns, given gall to drink, and pierced with a lance. Then with blood flowing from every part of His body, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Thus did your Redeemer die for you and can you defile your mind with any evil thoughts?"

(to be continued)

Joseph F. Mahoney, T.O.S.

### FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (III)

Having duly considered the "as-if" attitude of current Franciscan education in regard to community life, we now have to consider it in regard to authority. We still jog along in our present manner of educating "as if" our young people looked upon authority as wholly self-evident and acceptable. This is dangerous.

In our introductory examination of conscience, we tried to point out the actual problem involved between the notion and the fact of authority. For the sake of clarity we shall summarize it: Office of itself no longer implies authority. Here again we face another disastrous consequence of the humanistic, anthropocentric *Weltbild*. To the extent that the office holder no longer embodies in himself the authority of God in which *paternitas* used to be perceived, to that same extent he has been thrown back upon himself and can

possess authority only in view of his human qualifications. When we read in our Rule (Chapter X) that "the Brothers who are subject should recall that for God's sake they have renounced their own will," it is no longer self-evident to us that we should therefore obey our superiors as representatives of God in all things because in them the paternal authority of God can be seen and grasped. We may readily obey a "good" superior, one whose human qualities we appreciate, but we as readily dispense ourselves from the duty of obeying a superior whose bad qualities repel us.

Now it would be very wrong if we—knowing that here we are facing a faultily developed attitude—were to adopt a narrow-minded authoritarian standpoint. That definitely would not meet the needs of this morbid condition. It can be treated properly only from two angles.

First, the educator must look upon himself as a carrier of authority, always in demand and always called upon; and he must make himself worthy of authority by the full effort of his whole strength. To be an educator today means more than ever before to be a model. The young must be able to look up to their educator; they must be able to esteem him as a man and as a Christian. The educator must always bear in mind that to hold authority today is more than ever a personal matter. He has to accommodate himself to this fact in every phase of his life, realizing that it is not so much his teaching that is demanded, but his *living*.

Second, the educator must also try to solve the problem by guiding the young people back to the Christian view of authority. The *propter ordinem ipsorum* of the Testament of Saint Francis still remains our directive in this matter. The young must learn to see in the humanly restricted superior not merely the creature subject to countless failings, but the representative of God, the man who by *virtue of his office* takes part and shares in the *paternitas* of God. It is not only the young who must learn to bow to authority in faith, *propter Deum*, but also most of the older religious of today. Of course, this will be possible only for him who really believes. Here we may note in passing the importance of prayer and sacrifice for our educators.

In this connection there is one particular danger—and just in



our Order—that we should mention: In our *fraternitas* and in the form of our community life, the holder of authority must find and keep to the right line between being a brother and being a father to his charges. Whatever smacks of the “good fellow” or the “just one of the boys” attitude, too much compliance, or anything else that tends toward blurring or blotting out that boundary line, always in the long run, proves dangerous. This is unquestionably a difficult task for all of us, but one that must not be sidestepped.

3. And now we come to the third point of our examination of conscience: that the present helplessness and desultoriness in the matter of Franciscan spirituality is fatal for community spirit in our Order. Genuine community life requires the unifying force of a leading motif, of a common ideal and pattern—in other words, requires unity of mind. I presume it to be an open secret that the helplessness and desultoriness really exists among us. Its external indication can be seen in the fact that within the last thirty years volumes have been written about it at home and abroad. As a result of the work accomplished during these decades, the specific character peculiar to our spirituality is becoming more distinct.<sup>1</sup>

Educators in our Order now have abundant material at hand through which—with a modicum of good will—they can accustom themselves to the Franciscan spiritual world. This good will can lead to a rich reward if each and every one of us works himself first of all into the writings of Saint Francis and of Saint Clare in such a way that, with the aid of the commentaries in the new editions, we all find ourselves more and more at home therein.

At this point, perhaps, some will say what we have already established in the first part of our reflection: that it is important for us not only to *know* the spirituality of our Order but to *live* it. Surely this is one of the most important tasks for all of us, but I must refrain from discussing it here. It has already been discussed so often and in so many places that anyone can look it up for himself. However,

<sup>1</sup> Here Fr. Cajetan lists some of the German material published in recent years. Since most of the titles are inaccessible to the average reader of THE CORD, we have omitted this paragraph from our translation.

<sup>2</sup> In English we have Fr. James Meyer's *The Words of Saint Francis* and Fr. Ignatius Brady's *The Legend and Writing of Saint Clare of Assisi*, somewhat parallel to the German editions Fr. Cajetan refers to.

should like to point out some of the more practical aspects of the matter.

First: Since education without an ideal is like a road without a destination, the educator has to keep the ideal of Franciscan life clearly before his mind, and must refer all the ins and outs of his daily life to the judgment of this ideal. Only when we daily confront all our actions with the spirit of our Order will we grow into the proper attitude, into the Franciscan conviction; and conversely, the stronger this attitude and conviction becomes in us, so much the more will all our actions be formed by it and bear its stamp.

Second: All Christian life begins with that which God has given us through Christ in the Church. The essential beginning of Christian life lies with God Who created man and the universe in and with the Word, Who redeemed sinful man by the Incarnate Word, and Who passes on to us and completes in us this redemption through the Incarnate Word Who lives on in the Church. Christian life, as well as all asceticism, is nothing else but the response of man to the *magnalia Dei*. Christian penance as man's *metanoia* is nothing else but joining the work of salvation which God, through Christ, accomplishes in His Church. There can be only one point of departure for Christian life—the foundation which God laid in the Incarnation of His Son. Every point of departure that proceeds from the *humanum* usually fails to lead to full *metanoia* because it so easily becomes a cult of the ego—a piously behaving cult of the religious ego. This is just the contrary of the *vita secundum formam sancti Evangelii* which Saint Francis has made obligatory upon us—obligatory from the standpoint of God's work of salvation. Christian education in our Order, therefore, has to be realized through the mysteries of the Incarnation and Passion, and the sacramental life—the Eucharist in particular. Whether or not we want to call it “Crib, Cross, and Altar” does not matter here; we are interested only in emphasizing the proper starting-point.

Third: Religious life, therefore, and especially Franciscan religious life, dwells and flourishes in the Church. We are religious *in* the Church and *for* the Church; our religious life is the most important thing we can give to her. She needs us for her own interior life—but she needs our Franciscan *being*, not just some kind of activity.

This organic union of our Franciscan religious life with the life of the Church must appear before us most vividly as the task that confronts us daily. Our vows, for instance, are not only a means for the perfecting of the individual religious, but have an eminent social importance reaching deep into the interior life of the Church. That we receive the Sacraments and how we receive them is of importance and significance not only for our own private religious life, but since as Christians we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and since as religious we are called to an ever more perfect Christian life, it is of importance and of significance for the interior life of the entire Church. The cult of the liturgy is not a private sport, nor is it an opportunity for the private glorification of God. It must be carried out in the name of and in behalf of the *whole* Church, each individual representing all members of the Church. We must be ever solicitous for the realization of God's kingdom on earth, and this in imitation of our Seraphic Father Francis who served it with passionate love and unwearying ardor. In other words, let us again place Franciscan religious life where it was right from the beginning: let us make it again the *vita secundum formam sancti Evangelii*.

Fourth: Let us free the interior and exterior life of the Order from all the alien influences that have been adopted in the course of time, and let us try to arrive at forms that are appropriate to our own Franciscan spirituality. One cannot adhere to alien forms if one wishes to live according to his own spirit. Take, for example, the form of examination of conscience. To dwell upon our sins in sorrowful repentance is both solidly Christian and very strongly Franciscan. But it certainly never occurred to our Seraphic Father to note down whether or not he had observed this or that point well or badly (C. Admonition 28). It was not so much self-control that he strove for; his efforts were directed more toward repeatedly confronting his frail and faulty humanity with the sanctity of God which appeared in Christ. "Who art Thou, O Lord, and who am I?" In the light of the sun-like sanctity of God, Francis clearly perceived each mote and speck, each tiniest blemish on his soul, as so much besmirching dirt, and because of this experience of God's holiness he could call himself in all truthfulness the greatest of sinners. Let us take another example, meditation. Francis immersed himself, out of intense personal interest, in the words and actions of the Incarnate Son of God

in the splendors of the Father's creation. Consequently, his heart overflowed with joy and gratitude, admiration and wonder, humility and love. For him meditation was never a matter of intellectual exercise aimed at gaining new knowledge of spiritual things, but rather a prayer of the heart. *Draw near to God and he will draw near to thee* (Jas. 4, 6). Francis could never consider meditation as a process of repeating to the Lord, according to a fixed method, some previously heard matter, thus giving to God, as it were, a kind of academic lecture strewn at certain points with affections prepared the night before. For Francis, meditation was immersion in the *magnalia Dei* leading the heart to conversation with God. Take again the matter of asceticism. Many of us indulge in it as if it were some kind of spiritual cosmetic. We work away at our soul, perfecting it more and more—with the help of God, of course, for after all we *are* Christians—but it is all done according to a well-considered plan of our own or another's design. Francis, however, practised it as a means of setting himself free from self to allow the grace of God, which accomplishes everything, to effect or co-effect the *kinosis* of Christ, the poverty of utter self-despoliation. These few examples show us how humanistic, how anthropocentric, our methods and forms of piety have become. Here again, the most important task for all of us is to find once more the fundamental attitudes that are ours by rightful heritage and their corresponding external forms.

Fifth: It follows then, that our education must once again be based wholly on the Rule of our Order in which these fundamental attitudes are clearly set forth. The spirit of our Rule must permeate every part of the life of every Friar Minor—his piety, his work and his ministry, his communication with others, and his life within and without the friary. Nowadays all these elements stand more or less incoherently isolated together, so to speak, each one presenting its own special problems to be solved according to its own legal code. Our living in all its details must again be borne, moulded, and developed by the spirit of the Rule. . . We must all of us make this point our own personal study and endeavor, and then, by fraternal cooperation, we can make regular observance the interior and exterior pattern of our religious life. Only in this way can we become again what God called us to be: Friars Minor.

4. The fourth point in our examination of conscience

with the contradiction existing between life in the novitiate and life in the province. One of the most important reasons of this discrepancy is the undeniable fact that life in the province is determined exclusively by the pattern of the *cura animarum*. The exteriorly active apostolate, the exterior cure of souls is the ideal to which everything else is subordinated, if not actually subjected. Therefore life in the novitiate for the Brothers and the clericate for the Fratres has the provisional character we mentioned in our critical preface to this discussion. Therefore it is felt to be merely a transitory stage during which one has to button the lips and stiffen the ears. And therefore the form of life we live in the novitiate and clericate never becomes the form of our entire life. In view of this incongruity. . . I would propose that we again make *salus animarum*, rather than the *cura animarum*, the pattern of our religious life. This is in complete harmony with the life and teaching of our Seraphic Father, and it is precisely as Friars Minor that life in the regular observance, of which the *cura animarum* is but a part, can best serve the *salus animarum*. But all of us are bound to serve the *salus animarum*, according to the doctrine and example of Francis, by our prayers and sacrifices, by the example of our life and by our preaching. Our life as Friars Minor must therefore be apostolically determined from the very start. At each and every level of our life, always and everywhere, we must serve the *salus animarum* in this truly evangelical spirit.

If this would again become the pattern of our conventual life, then the pattern of life during the years of preparation and education would naturally find its full meaning and purpose. Furthermore, our monastic life would again be an essential part of the Church's interior organic principle of life. Judgments are beginning to ripen in these days of ours. When we hear such remarks as: "Today the monk saves marriage," we then realize that if such judgments are ripening in the world, they should ripen much more quickly in our own communities. We could indeed add to that remark and say: "The stability of the Christian family is most effectively influenced by our religious *familiaritas*. The wanton sexuality of our age, especially as a danger for the young, is decisively banned by Christ in the Church through our *castitas*. The avarice that is poison-

Christendom today has an antidote in our *paupertas*. The desire for power and the will to rule which so much threatens our people and even our clergy can be annulled by the humility of our *minoritas*." This will be brought about not because others see our example and are moved to adjust themselves accordingly, but because in the interior life of the Church there is no loss of vitality, because in the kingdom of God there is no dissipation of energy. For, as Saint Paul says (I Cor. 12, 26): *if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glories, all the members rejoice with it*. Therefore our conventual life is an eminent and decisive contribution to the life of the Mystical Body of Christ; in itself and as such it is an *aedificatio Corporis Christi, id est, ecclesiae*. It is not only by praying and sacrificing for the Church and her intentions, not only by consuming ourselves for her in the *cura animarum*, but also and above all by living in her as true Friars Minor that we shall fulfill our vocation and mission. In fact, it is only by taking this point of view of our organic life in the Church that we can hope to overcome that great danger that overhangs our education—the danger of allowing life in our novitiates and clericates to go on being a transitory stage without permanent meaning or value.

5. And now we come to the last point in our examination of conscience. In the course of this consideration—which is by no means exhaustive—it should have become quite clear that modern Franciscan education is highly problematic; and some of the problems should have become quite clear in important details. Now perhaps it will be understood how futile it is to try to meet these difficulties solely by ascetical and disciplinary measures. Such measures too easily lead to a state of pietistic externalism, and from that state to out-and-out Pharisaism is a very short journey. The overstressing of external modes of piety and the predominance of discipline inevitably lead to a violation of charity and outrage to the spirit of Franciscan freedom—the freedom of the children of God. During a recent conference a priest quoted the remark of a young Catholic: "The clergy have served for themselves a strange god whom they call Religion." I would like to repeat that remark, formulating it as a question and applying it to our present problem: "Have we religious ourselves a strange god whom we call Asceticism?"

the question to the problem of education: Education is a spiritual problem (and remember that spiritual is not to be equated with intellectual), and as a spiritual problem it must be solved by means other than the raising of ascetical achievement or the tightening of discipline only. He who would substitute the spirit of piety, as our Rule says (Chapter V), by ascetical exercises, he who would save the spirit of our religious life by discipline alone, dissolves the spirit and perishes because he does not begin from God's work of salvation but from man's. Following such a course, the *simplicitas* of the Friar Minor would disappear—*simplicitas*, that is, as Francis understood it the straightest, purest truthfulness and honesty of life, the most limpid truthfulness in all thought and striving, the undeviating direction toward God and Jesus Christ Whom He sent, Who lives on in us and among us in His Church.

Let us therefore, in view of all that has been said, strive to awaken the spirit, the spirit of minor-fraternal life which is spirit from the Spirit of God and which also—if we pray for it and open ourselves unreservedly to it—still has power to renew all in us, in our communities, and through us in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M.

(Conclusion)

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

### Chapter VIII: *Obligation of the Rule*

Wise legislator that she is, Holy Mother Church in the closing chapter of the Rule indicates the precise nature of the obligations Tertiary religious take upon themselves by professing this Rule of the Third Order Regular. All religious, we know, by reason of their state, have the obligation to strive for perfection. The common means

of fulfilling this duty are to be found in the three essential vows, while the Rule and Constitutions map out in further detail the road each religious should follow to attain perfection. The three articles that comprise the present chapter deal with these three points in inverse order. Article twenty-three delineates the obligation arising from the Rule as such, article twenty-four takes up the three religious vows, while the final article is concerned with the religious state as such.

### *The Twenty-third Article*

TEXT: *Each and all the articles contained in the present Rule are counsels to help the wayfarers save their soul the more easily; none of them oblige under sin, either mortal or venial, except where one were otherwise obliged to them by human or divine law (cit. Rule ch. X).*

Moralists commonly distinguish three ways in which a legislator may issue directives to those under his authority. The first is by law that directly obliges a person in conscience to perform or omit some action. Such, for instance, would be the Church's laws of fast and abstinence, attendance at Sunday Mass, and the like. These are called "moral laws" inasmuch as a deliberate breach or violation thereof entails moral guilt or sin. The second type of directive is the purely "penal law," which does not directly oblige a person under pain of sin to perform or omit some action but merely imposes an obligation in conscience to accept the penalties incurred for the violation of the law. Many state laws, for instance, regarding taxation, zoning and housing regulations, would come under this head. Finally, a legislator may use simple guiding norms which are offered by way of counsel rather than precept and of themselves neither directly nor indirectly impose an obligation in conscience. The Holy Father, who is not only the highest legislator in the Church but also the final interpreter of its law, has indicated that the articles of the present Tertiary Rule, like that of Leo X, belong in this last category which represents the mildest form of directives.

In requesting admittance to the religious state, the candidate customarily declares that his purpose in entering is "to do penance, to amend my life and to serve God faithfully unto death." The

Church on her part, through the Rule of the Third Order Regular, intends to show the Tertiary religious a practical way of fulfilling this purpose. *Each and all of the articles are counsels to help the wayfarers save their souls more easily.*

The intention of the legislator, then, is not so much to oblige under sin, *either mortal or venial*, as to reveal to the religious how they can carry out what is in itself a serious obligation, striving for the perfection proper to their state. The religious who is faithful to the Rule of his institute can rest assured that he is fulfilling this obligation. Furthermore, he has the guarantee that a life patterned on these norms has the merit of obedience and the blessing of God. But while the Rule represents a manifestation of the will of God in his regard, it is the divine will presented by way of counsel, not of strict command or precept; so that the violation of the individual articles of the Rule as such is not of itself a sin.

We say, the Rule *as such*, because it may well be that an obligation in conscience arises on some other score. For that reason, the restrictive clause is added *except where one were otherwise obliged to them by human or divine law.*

Under the heading of *human law*, for instance, would fall obligations imposed by the Church that coincide with the requirements of the Rule. While the ninth article of the Rule prescribing the divine office, for example, does not of itself oblige under sin, nevertheless those Tertiary Institutes having solemn vows fall under the prescriptions of Canon law which oblige the community to choir recitation and the individual religious in solemn vows to the private recitation of the office if absent from choir (Can. 610). In such cases, the omission of a notable part of the office, such as a canonical hour or a nocturn of Matins for a cleric, or for a lay brother in solemn vows, the number of Our Fathers that can be recited in an equivalent period of time (about twenty), would constitute a serious sin. Similarly, while the observance of the enclosure prescribed in article fifteen does not bind under pain of sin in itself, a serious obligation can arise in virtue of the Sacred Canons as we have explained above—for instance, in regard to the papal enclosure, or in the case of flight or apostasy. Also, we could list under the heading of human law obligation that arises when the content of one of the articles of

the Rule corresponds to some prescription of the Holy See equivalent to a command or precept, or where the diocesan bishop commands something of religious communities under his jurisdiction, for instance, in regard to the episcopal enclosure, or where the proper superior commands some point of Rule in virtue of holy obedience, for example, that a certain religious take care of the sick, and so on.

Under the heading of *divine law* fall all obligations of the natural law or positive divine law. Thus a religious can sin seriously if the violation or disregard of the Tertiary Rule is prompted by formal contempt (Cf. Art. 2, above), constitutes grave scandal or leads to the breakdown of religious observance in the community. Even in lesser matters, if the disregard of the Rule proceeds from some unworthy or sinful motive such as pride, sloth, and the like, sin would be involved not indeed by reason of the rule violated but rather because of the blameworthy motive that inspired the transgression. In practice then, a religious who deliberately and with no extenuating circumstances ignores or violates the Rule, could hardly be expected to avoid all sin. Where the transgression is frequent and flagrant, scandal would inevitably ensue. Such a religious would do well to bear in mind the words of Francis: "By Thee, Most Holy Father, and by the whole heavenly court, and by me, poor little one, may those be cursed who by their bad example tear down and bring to ruin what Thou hast built up and dost not cease to build up through holy brethren of this Order" (Celano, *Legenda Secunda*, n. 156).

#### *The Twenty-fourth Article*

TEXT: *The Brothers and Sisters are, however, obliged to perform the penances imposed on them by their Superiors when required to do so. They are also obliged to keep the three essential vows: Poverty, within the limits of their respective Constitutions; Chastity, binding themselves to observe celibacy and to refrain under an additional title, namely, that of the vow itself, from every act whatsoever, be it external or internal, that is opposed to chastity; and Obedience, assuming the obligation to obey the command of their lawful Superior according to the tenor of their respective Constitutions (cit. Rule ch. X).*

No law or regulation can be effective without some sanction or some means of enforcement. Now even though the articles of the Rule are not penal laws or precepts to the violation of which some fixed punishment is attached, still the Church gives superior means to insure their observance, the power to impose penances for the transgression of the Rule or other regulations. The religious, in turn, like persons who have violated a penal law, can have an obligation in conscience to accept and *perform the penances imposed by their superiors*. For this obligation to arise, however, the superior must *require* them to perform it, that is to say, impose it by way of moral precept. Even in such a case, unless the superior indicates otherwise and the penance imposed for a notable transgression is itself a serious matter, the presumption is that its performance is not enjoined under pain of mortal sin. In administering penances, the superior might note the prudent procedure outlined by the Code of Canon Law. Public penances, Canon 2312 points out, ought not to be imposed for occult crimes or transgressions. Nor should the gravity of the offense alone determine the gravity of the penance, but the latter should be tempered according to the measure of contrition in the offender or other mitigating circumstances. The principal penances mentioned by the Code are recital of specified prayers, some work of piety, special fasts, retreats or spiritual exercises (Can. 2313). To these might be added such others as prudence and custom dictate.

*They are also obliged under pain of sin to keep the three vows* which are *essential* to the religious state as defined by the Code of Canon Law. For by the religious state, Canon 487 informs us, the Church understands "a stable mode of community life in which the faithful, in addition to obeying the commandments, bind themselves to the observance of the evangelical counsels by the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty."

Inasmuch as a vow is "a free and deliberate promise to God to perform some possible and higher good which promise binds by reason of the virtue of religion" (Can. 1307), in the last analysis, of course, it is the intention of the individual that determines the extent of the obligation. However, in so far as the vows essential to the religious state are not private, but public (Can. 488), that is,

promises "accepted in the name of the Church by a legitimate ecclesiastical superior" (Can. 1308), it pertains to the Church alone to specify the conditions under which she will accept them and it is in this sense that she determines the obligation of these vows of obedience, chastity and poverty.

We have already discussed the obligation of the *vow of obedience* (Cf. Art. 2), and to some extent, the positive significance of the *vow of chastity* (Cf. Art. 6), which imposes *celibacy* as a matter of obligation by making marriage either invalid, if the religious is in solemn vows, or gravely illicit, if the religious is in simple vows (Can. 579). For the sake of completeness then, we need only add that this second vow binds one to *refrain under an additional title, namely, that of the vow itself, from every act whatsoever, be it external or internal, that is opposed to chastity*. Thus every sin of a religious against the sixth or ninth commandments involves a double malice or guilt, one against the virtue of chastity made obligatory by the decalogue, the other against the virtue of religion, the *additional title* of obligation arising from the vow. Where the sin of impurity is grave, the violation of the vow is also serious; where sin is venial, for instance, through inadvertence or lack of deliberation, the vow also is not grievously violated. On the other hand, religious should remember that any breach of modesty on their part is most likely to give greater offense than glaring faults in other Christians. For that reason, religious can be guilty of serious scandal by imprudent conduct, especially in regard to the opposite sex, even though they do not directly violate the vow by behavior which is unchaste in itself or which constitutes the near occasion of sins against purity. Francis was particularly sensitive on this point and strictly forbade his friars to have any "suspicious association or conversation with women" (*Regula Bullata O.F.M.*, c. 11). And in commenting on these words of Francis, Saint Bonaventure points out that in regard to the opposite sex such suspicion can arise by reason of circumstances (1) *of place*, supposing it to be lonely or dark; (2) *of time*, if such meetings take place at night or a time when others are not around; (3) *of the manner of conversation*, for instance, if such private conferences occur frequently with the same person, or are unduly prolonged without any justifying reason; (4)

of gesture or action, such as the holding of hands, unrestrained look or other unbecoming behavior, or (5) where the parties concerned lack maturity of age, or even more, maturity of character (Cf. *Expositio super regulam Fratrum Minorum*, c. 11, n. 2).

Perhaps the most potent antidote to such imprudent conduct towards the opposite sex and the best safeguard against violation of the vow is a mature understanding of the divine purpose of sex for man, and the sublimity of chastity for the religious.

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

## DILEMMA

Franciscanism has ever had the certainty that the holy Rule of Saint Francis and Saint Clare have the essence of perfection in them. As well as incorporating in legal terms the prohibition for him professed to seek another way of life, Saint Francis left the tremendous moral force of his own experience. The reason underlying his action is more than that of counteracting an evil of the day in religious life. There is too much of the absolute in his attitude for him not to have been aware of the dangers and evils that can inspire the seemingly best of intentions. He is not unique among the Saints in this point of view. A century before him, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux had arrived at the same conviction. While there is no thought of paralleling the two great Founders, everyone is aware of how much Franciscanism owes to the traditions and spirit of Saint Bernard. On a problem as intimate and soul-searching as that of the pursuit of perfection in a state of life other than that in which the religious finds himself at any given moment, it is indeed enlightening and comforting to find these two great Saints so emphatic in their judgment. The following letter of Saint Bernard confirms this observation. It is addressed to a nun entertaining intentions of taking up the life of a solitary. The warning speaks for itself.

"I have been informed that you have in mind leaving your Institute in search of a stricter life, so-called. Since you do not wish to abide by the recommendation of those dissuading you, and are resisting in every possible way your spiritual mother as well as your Sisters, you have chosen to seek our counsel on the matter and to the extent that whatever I shall deem proper you will trust as a solution in your regard. Indeed, you did have need of seeking counsel on the matter; even though you arrived at this conclusion, I cannot conceal the fact that in my personal opinion this procedure was the correct one for you. After reflecting over and over again about the spirit in which you may have made your decision, I dare not judge this desire of yours of which I now have knowledge. Actually you could be acting with zeal for God in this affair and that would render your intention tolerable; yet theoretically how you are going to realize as to which of this kind I just cannot see. You ask me, why? And you will add, is it not wise that I get away from a good table and recreation, from comfort, from city life. Will not my conduct be more sheltered in a hermitage where I shall be living in peace with others or enjoying solitude and engaged in fulfilling that will alone to which I am subject? By no means. For one with the wrong intention, even the desert has abundance, and the forest has its shade, and solitude its silence. As a matter of fact, no one will gainsay the evil thereof, no one will contradict it. Moreover, where there is no fear of a critic being at hand, the tempter is on more secure ground and sin readily enters. In a Institute, however, no one will hinder any good you are doing; anything bad you might attempt will not be allowed. As soon as the latter is discovered, it is checked and remedied; on the contrary, when anything good is in evidence, all admire it, respect it, and try to imitate it. You see, therefore, my daughter, that as long as you persevere, your merits are of extraordinary consequence for you in the Institute due to the opportunities there are for giving good example, and all the easier is there the chance of correcting failings when you may have given offense.

"By way of conclusion and to remove any occasion for error on your part, let me bring to your attention that part of the parable which would make you either one of the foolish virgins (Mt. 25, 1-12). If you are) or one of the wise virgins (Mt. 25, 1-12). If



yourself amongst the foolish, then you have need of your Institute; if you can be numbered amongst the wise virgins, then the Institute has need of you. If indeed you are intelligent and honest, the Institute—but recently established there and now universally esteemed—will be subject to loss of reputation upon your withdrawal, and, in fear, weakened. No matter how good you may be, let it be emphatically stressed that you should never abandon a place where good discipline already prevails. If you deem yourself one of the foolish virgins and leave, the thought occurs that, inasmuch as a bad life is not tolerated amongst those who are good, you, as one not so good, are attempting to find a place where you will be tolerated. And this is reason for such deduction. It is reported that before the reform happened in your Institute, there never was a word from you about a step of this kind; yet, when the Institute began to flourish and immediate evidence of a more cloistered environment began to appear, you commenced to have a sudden fervor for entering a hermitage. My daughter, I recognize, and recognize all too well, would that you would recognize with me—the viper's poison, the liar's deceit, the turn-coat's guile. The wolf prowls the forest; you venture into that forest shade, like a stupid little sheep, you are willing to be the wolf's prey. Listen to me, my daughter, and follow this advice faithfully. Be you sinner or saint, do not separate yourself from the flock, *lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you* (Ps. 49, 22). Are you holy? Strive by your example to embrace your associates in your sanctity. Are you a sinner? Do not add sin to sin, but do penance right where you are, lest you fall with peril to yourself, as I have already explained, give scandal to your Sisters, and provoke the tongues of innumerable detractors against you" (M. P. L., 182, 261-2).

Fr. Eustace Smith, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

A RICH YOUNG MAN: SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA. John E. Beahn. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953. Pp. 250. \$3.25

Here is a story of Saint Anthony related as fictional biography. Against the colorful background of feudal Europe, when Saracens were a constant threat, when the Church was torn within by heresy and without by unruly monarchs, Saint Anthony stands out as a powerful and attractive personality. The author has indeed used his imagination in presenting the story, but he has kept surprisingly close to historical facts. The stress is on Anthony himself—the proud young nobleman who fought tooth and nail for sanctity—rather than on the miracles that legend has so lavishly attributed to him. In fact, only a few miracles are recorded—the one of the kneeling donkey at Rimini, his preaching to the fishes, the restoration of the trodden wheat field—and they are so skillfully woven into the story that they seem quite ordinary and natural.

The account begins with the Saint's childhood. As Fernando de Bulhom, only son of one of Portugal's most powerful nobles, he had to combat an impulsive temperament and a loquacious tongue. As a young man his desire to become an Augustinian Canon forced him to combat his love for his parents, for his heritage of wealth and power, and for the little Princess Sancha who was to have been his bride. Then as an Augustinian priest he again had to break his natural ties when God called him to the newly-founded Order of Friars Minor. From then on Anthony's combats were waged more exteriorly, against heretics, suspicious and recalcitrant confreres, and plain difficult people. Throughout the book the struggling human nature of the Saint is effectively brought out, and the ideal of the religious life, especially of the early Franciscans, is quite accurately and attractively depicted.

Of sustained interest and high inspirational value, this is a book that can be wholly recommended, especially to young people of high school age.

FRANCISCAN EDUCATION: Report of the First National Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1953. Pp. 218. Paper. \$1.00

Those who did not attend the Sisters' Division of the Franciscan Educational Conference held in Joliet, Illinois, November 28-29, 1952, will now be able to find out for themselves what went on at that meeting and how much they missed. The Program shows what fields of activity were covered at the meeting: education (at elementary, secondary, and higher levels), music, methods of teaching, libraries, and nursing. The papers read and the discussions that followed were all of good quality, and not a few were definitely challenging. We recommend that all Franciscan communities, or at least their libraries, obtain copies of the report. The price is nominal (\$1.00), and the material is important. It is hoped that these meetings will be more widely attended in the future, and that the conclusions reached will be actually put into practice.

FRANCISCAN LIFE IN CHRIST. Mark Stier, O.F.M. Cap. Paterson, New Jersey: Saint Anthony Guild Press, 1953. Pp. 290 + xx. \$3.00

Father Mark has given us a good practical guide for the development of our spiritual life according to the Franciscan pattern. As such—that is, as a guide—it is



by no means an exhaustive treatise on Franciscan spirituality; but it points the way. The author first discusses such matters as the personality of Francis, Assisi and environs, sources for the life and spiritual doctrine of Francis, and similar matters. Then he devotes a chapter each to Franciscan spirituality in general and in particular, and follows up with a long and informative section on the doctrinal basis of the Franciscan ideal. With the goal established, the author then discusses the ways and means for attaining it, and concludes with a good treatment of the high-point of Francis' life in Christ—the apostolate flowing from the abundant riches of the mystical life. The work is fully annotated and is supplied with a good index.

This is a book that should be warmly received especially by those in charge of educating young religious to the Franciscan way of life. It offers the solid groundwork for building a systematic course of spiritual training.

MATT TALBOT. Eddie Doherty. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company. 1952. Pp. 200. \$2.75

For those who like Eddie Doherty's journalistic style applied to hagiography, this study of Matt Talbot's heroic battle for sobriety and sanctity will have much appeal. Although Matt's connection with the Franciscan Order is tenuous enough (he was a Tertiary, but neither his Director nor his fellow Tertiaries knew anything about him), his life was certainly Franciscan in its poverty and total self-effacement. It is doubtful if any other Saint, with the exception of Benedict Joseph Labre, his fellow Tertiary, managed to hide himself more completely from the world of men. He strove for anonymity with all the ardor of a worldlyling striving for fame. It is this, not his heroic conquest of alcohol and his model life as a common laborer, that make Matt Talbot the "Saint for today." This humble, "unimportant" little man, who made himself a slave of Mary and bound his frail body with ropes and chains, has an important message for all Christians: "The Kingdom of Heaven," he wrote, "is promised not to the sensible and the educated, but to such as have the spirit of little children." Eddie Doherty, in his own way, has interpreted this message very well.

THE SECRET OF HOLINESS. James O'Mahony, O.F.M. Cap. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952. Pp. 178. \$2.50

This is a pleasantly solid little book treating of the elements of Christian perfection. Franciscan in approach and in spirit, it is based on the direct study of Christ and the Gospel. Appealing, sound, and profitable for meditative reading, but hard on the soul-shaking.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI. The First English Translation, revised and emended by Dom Roger Hudleston, O.S.B., with Introduction by Paulinus Lavery, O.F.M. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953. Pp. 245 + xxii. \$3.50

This edition of the first English translation of the *Fioretti* is one of the latest of the recently revived Orchard Series publications, and is typical of their excellent work. It is not a scholarly production in the strict sense, but it has been competently and unobtrusively edited by Dom Hudleston and fortified with a well-balanced Introduction by Fr. Paulinus Lavery. Besides the text of the *Fioretti*, the volume includes the "Life of Brother Juniper", the "Life of Brother Giles", and the "Golden Sayings of Brother Giles." The format and typography are both pleasing; a really attractive edition of "the most beloved book in Franciscan literature."

# the CORD

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## CONTENTS

INTROIT FOR THE MASS OF SAINT FRANCIS.....	98
<i>Sister M. Charlita</i>	
OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	99
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.</i>	
SEEKING JESUS WITH MARY.....	102
<i>William J. Manning</i>	
THE SIXTH JOY.....	109
<i>Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.</i>	
A LAWYER AND HIS CONSCIENCE.....	113
<i>Fr. Dominic of St. Denis, O.F.M. Cap. (Adapted)</i>	
ST. BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (IV).....	118
<i>Joseph F. Mahoney, T.O.F. (trans.)</i>	
OUR FRANCISCAN NATIONAL MARIAN CONGRESS.....	122
<i>Fr. Berard Vogt, O.F.M.</i>	
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS.....	126



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## INTROIT FOR THE MASS OF SAINT FRANCIS

I am my soul's prisoner  
 And only Your mysterious pain,  
 Disguising love, can set it free,  
 My Sweet Lord God.  
 May this hard knowledge  
 Be my one possession, my ceaseless contemplation  
 Till my heart owns no other seeking  
 Save to be laid bare  
 To the sword of Your inconceivable cutting.  
 Hear the voice with which I cry out to You,  
 My Maker, my Sanctifier, and my Salvation:  
 If You are searching the world  
 For something to shape anew,  
 Some vessel to receive the overflow of Your mercy,  
 A darkened room to fill with Your light,  
 A soul to empty and unfold therein, to melt with love,  
 A life to mirror Your Own, to declare You Infinite—  
 O Plenitude of Peace,  
 O Inexhaustible Source of all transforming desires,  
 I urge Your merciful coming.  
 O Delectable Fire of God, I will to draw You into my breast  
 Burn out of my heart all the sweetnesses  
 That creatures can produce.  
 One drop of Your Divine Delights I would bear  
 As Flame upon my lips  
 That, henceforth, with You, in the Father,  
 I might speak  
 But one compassionate sound: The Eternal, Everlasting Word  
 Christ Jesus.

Sr. M. Charlita,

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*You have been called to liberty (Gal. 5, 13)*

The perfect man, the man who honestly and strenuously labors for his personal perfection, is the free man, he who strives to deliver himself from all trammels, from bondage to hampering conventions, from human respect, to the tyranny of the flesh, and thereby declares open revolt against every enemy that would tempt him in the pursuit of his purpose, which for the Franciscan should be the perfect achievement—as far as it will please God to grant it—of the Christ-life. In this generous, heroic effort his unfailing support is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and communion with the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13, 13).

Let us see how Saint Francis did this. He received his great grace and the vision of what he was to be—that was enough. From then onward he marched with his face to the sun and not a thing in the world could stop him. Ridicule, persecution, his own feelings of revulsion—he mastered all, *sub nullius redigar potestate: I will not be brought under the power of any* (I Cor. 6, 12). He set out on the way of poverty; his father attempted to intercept him, and Francis, because it came to such a pass, was willing rather to forego his own father than forsake the Lady he had come to love. Later God enlightened his mind on the nature of the Order he was to establish, and Francis would establish it *according to the pattern, that was shown (him) on the mount* (Ex. 25, 40).

He was jealous as well of the freedom of others. He knew that the young lady Clare had a call to follow Christ; he realized that her plans too would be interfered with, so he advised her to “elope” with Christ, for every man and woman must be free to fall in love with God. Clare's daring experiment fired the imagination and the heart of her younger sister, and soon we see Agnes fly the coop and settle at San Damiano. Here we have, in fact, three rebels; but rebels against a tyranny which sought to fetter them to the world whereas they longed to be clasped in the arms of God. This was nothing new; it had all been said before with the sanction of the Holy Ghost: *Who will all separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am sure that neither*

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8, 35; 38-39). Who, then, was Pier Bernardone? Who were the Scifi family? For *the Lord is the spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (II Cor. 3, 16).

So too with his early brethren. Francis asked but a few things that they live the life of the Gospel thoroughly, in poverty and obedience—as to the rest, the world was open before them. He did not even fix them to any abode. They could roam like gypsies and pitch their tent wherever they would, so only they were following a great quest: the love of Christ which surpasses all comprehension and if they always had the Lady Poverty with them to minister to their needs. Francis would not fetter the spirit of any man. Each has his grace from God, and as Francis would let no one impede him, so neither would he impede another. And if one had the grace to roam, as it were, in search of perfect love, let him roam; and if one had the grace to dwell in the company of Divine Wisdom in a cell, let him be a hermit, but it must always be in the quest of love. Francis, then, it meant nothing whether his brethren lived on the highways of the world, or in inaccessible mountain caves, provided that in either case they could say in honesty: *I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me* (Gal. 2, 20).

No wonder we have saints from every walk of life, no wonder the startling variety. Saint John Capistran led the Christian army to the battle of Belgrade, but Blessed Veridiana immured herself within four walls with the blessing of the Seraphic Father. Saint Leonore roamed the length and breadth of Italy preaching incessantly, while as Blessed Peter would only unwillingly utter an extra word. Saint Paul puts down the same principle of liberty in this way: *each of us has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that way* (I Cor. 7, 7).

Thus too when it was a question of determining the nature of his brotherhood. Why not follow Saint Benedict, or Saint Bernard, or Saint Augustine? They had been tried and were found to be good. But Francis would have none of them. Christ had inspired him to

a new and independent way, and he would have no other. In fact, how could a spirit such as his be forced into some conventional mold? So he broke with precedent; a troubadour must roam, the rule of stability would crush him; his friars, therefore, will take to the road and preach to all men of peace and love *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody in (their) hearts to the Lord* (Eph. 5, 19). The Cardinals were at first opposed to his ideas; but Francis overcame that too. Such a mild man, yet he bent everything to his will; conventions yielded, the Pope blessed his Rule, the Wolf of Gubbio obeyed, leprosy vanished at his kiss, fire refused to burn him, death changed her visage and became to him a sister. Even the Almighty God could not withstand him: Francis wanted his crucifixion, so Christ came to him and pierced him with His stigmata. What power in this liberty! what overwhelming force in this love! In eighteen short years he bent nature and man and the Creator to his will because he loved as few men have ever loved, and no man could bid him do otherwise.

For us too there is the vision of Christ, there is holiness beckoning to us; have we the will? Besides the grace of God we need but one thing—have we the will? Have we the will to throw everything overboard as Francis did? *Let us also . . . put away every encumbrance and the sin entangling us, and run with patience to the fight* (Hebr. 12, 1). The great love will give us strength; the cost we shall have to pay will be reputed as nothing, for *the things that were gain to me, these, for the sake of Christ, I have counted loss. . . For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things. . . that I may gain Christ* (Phil. 3, 7-8). *Jesus Christus et hic crucifixus*—for his sake you will be glad of the contest, the self-sacrifice; *I am pleased, for Christ's sake, with infirmities, with insults, with hardships, with persecutions, with distress* (II Cor. 12, 19-10).

On the contrary, what a disaster it would be to forget Christ! What a disaster to set one's heart on self, on popularity, on making a name for oneself; what a loss in becoming sluggish in love, in making friends with the world, in forgetting the glory with which Christ has surrounded us, in malingering in his service, in giving up prayer to Him that one might prattle with the world, in letting the spirit die that one might pamper self, in loving futile and transient

things of every sort and neglecting the Eternal Love Who created you for Himself and Who died to redeem you. *O foolish Galatians who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been depicted crucified?* (Gal. 3, 1). *You have been called to liberty* (Ib. 13); *do not become the slaves of men* (I Cor. 7, 23).

This is not the fierce and proud liberty we should have learned in the school of Saint Francis; this is not jealousy over our liberty which left us supremely free to strive after Him Whom we should love more than father and mother, with our whole heart, our whole strength, and with all our strength. Saint Francis had to struggle to keep himself free, free from himself and free from all outside influence. We, too, as children of Saint Francis, must be free: free from our passions, from our self-will, free from human respect, free from fear of humiliation; we must have his great liberty of spirit and be true to whatever grace God might give us; we must cherish the liberty of living our Rule conscientiously. If we have the Franciscan liberty of spirit, we will not permit ourselves to be entangled in our own selfishness or in the enticements of the world; we will defend our liberty to death, the liberty of serving God faithfully in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the freedom that reigns in the kingdom of God and of the Spirit (Rom. 8, 21; II Cor. 3, 17) while we are eager slaves of justice (Rom. 6, 16), slaves of Christ *cui servire regnare est*. We must fix our gaze on Him Whom the Father has pierced; He will give the courage and the strength: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself* (Jn. 12, 32).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## SEEKING JESUS WITH MARY

The name of the Virgin Mother Mary springs forth so often from the writings of Saint Bonaventure that it appears well-nigh as a motif for his luminous exposition of Sacred Doctrine. The Seraphic Doctor knew well that her name was shadowed with profound m

ystery;<sup>1</sup> hence we can assume that what he has written of it is the fruit of his most intimate and prayerful contemplation.

Saint Bonaventure frequently sustains his praise of the Blessed Virgin on the ancient interpretations of her simple and lovely name. Thus Mary is for him *Mare Amarum*, *Stella Maris*, *Domina*: *Sea of Bitterness*, *Star of the Sea*, and finally and pre-eminently *Queen*.<sup>2</sup> Saint Bonaventure's considerations of our Mother propose three meditations for this Marian Year. We will consider her in three of her most exquisite roles in the drama of our Redemption. First, we meet her at Calvary; then we will await with her the great Feast of Pentecost; finally we will reflect on the significance and wonder of her glorious Assumption into heaven where the Godhead wills that she reign as Queen.

### SEA OF BITTERNESS

*Call me not Noemi (that is, beautiful), but call me Mara (that is, bitter), for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness* (Ruth 1:20).

Of Our Lady's first title—*Sea of Bitterness*—Saint Bonaventure counsels: Be you also a sea of bitterness in your tears of contrition, that you may pour forth a flood of bitter sorrow for the sins you have committed; be a sea of bitterness that you may mourn from the depths of your being the good that you might have done but failed to realize; lastly, be a sea of bitterness that you may be pierced by the incessant recollection of the days you have neglected and lost.<sup>3</sup>

With Passiontide all the lovely depictions of Our Lady are veiled in our churches. Yet Mother Church does not thereby imply that we are to forget Mary; rather these veils are her invitation to turn within ourselves and with the eye of the soul to consider well the great mystery of Christ's Passion and Death. It is Mary who leads us to a deeper appreciation of her Son's tragic end. Well then can we ponder the Sea of Bitterness and beg of her a participation in her sorrow, that we may be purged of our past faults and washed of all our evil propensities. With great courage and devotion we will

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *Comm. Evgl. Lc.*, c. 1, n. 45 (VII 22a).

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *ibid.*, et Cf. *De Purif. B. M. V.*, sermo 2 (IX 640b-641a).

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *De V. Festiv.*, Festiv. 2 (VIII 91b).

attend and hear the lament of Jerusalem's daughter, through whose heart there passed the sword of Christ's Passion. She will lead us embrace the Cross in penance and tears, lest we affect to compassionate her naked Son while yet clothed in the luxury of our own world while pitying the death-white pallor of the Crucified we be deluged with worldly satisfaction, pleasure, and comfort.<sup>4</sup>

The immediate prelude to Golgatha is the *Via Dolorosa*. On this narrow way that we first behold the sorrow-filled but smiling Mother of God silently weeping for her torn and bleeding Christ. He, *who knew nothing of sin*, is on the way to pay the price of our sin as it could never be given to another to pay; and it is she—the Sorrowful Mother—whose Bitterness—who so compassionates him in his suffering that it can be said that while he journeys up to Calvary, there to redeem us by the flow of his Precious Blood, she attends him on the way, there to co-redeem us by the flow of her bitter tears.

O Sorrowful Mother of Christ, *give water to our heads, and make of your fountain of tears to our eyes, and we will weep day and night for our sins*. O Lamb that goes to be sacrificed, and for you who met him on the way. We, too, have met him on the way, only to cower behind the jostling jeering crowd. Yet you are there, the *Valiant Woman*, the shadow of the Cross resting heavily on your heart. You alone, with your knowledge, know the secret part that we have played in his Passion; for how often we have fallen and how often we have arisen to show ourselves hypocrites of sin. We have assiduously sought the way of virtue, only in so far as to appear virtuous in the eyes of men. Well then, O Saint Bonaventure remind us, grief-stricken Virgin, that we have only feigned to follow you, so deep within do we fear to wrench ourselves from ourselves. We pretend your humility—yet how smug we are; we pretend your kindness—how merciless we are; we pretend your meekness—how rebellious we are; we pretend your devotion—how sanctimonious we are; we pretend your generosity—how niggardly we are; we pretend your temperance—how avaricious we are; we pretend your chasteness—how wanton we are.<sup>5</sup> These are our failings, O Sorrowful Virgin, and they must be purged in the flow of your bitter tears; that sea of sweet bitterness which sustains

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., *De Dom. infra Oct. Epiph.*, sermo 1 (IX 172b).

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., *De Epiph.*, sermo 1 (IX 150b-151a).

the slightest stain of sin to survive its waters,<sup>6</sup> wherein is mirrored the Passion of your Son by which we are redeemed. Take the hands of your children now, O Mary of the Sorrowful Way, and touch them to his Cross, that that same Cross may free us of all our evil inclinations. Let our tears mingle with the Precious Blood that already trickles down the furrows of that Holy Wood.

We do not hear the shouting rabble, for we have *grown dull of hearing*; we do not see the milling mocking mob, for our *eyes have failed with weeping*. What have they for us, O woman, who see only Jesus and you! We cannot speak, but only weep and beg you to understand that we would thus compassionate with you your Son's derision. Grant that we may hate our sins, not so much for their iniquity, as for the part they have taken in bringing about these terrible torments of your Son. May this picture of your meeting along the way encourage us forever to *embrace discipline*, lest we *crucify again for ourselves the Son of God and make him a mockery with this cruel crowd*.

We have seen enough, O Virgin, and *therefore is our heart sorrowful, therefore are our eyes become dim*. The way is now made known to us wherein we should walk, and we will no more make *excuses in our sins*. Mary, we love you, for you have poured out your heart like water before the face of the Lord, in the beginning of the watches for us: now *lift up your hands to him for us, for your little children, that have fainted for hunger at the top of the Via Dolorosa*. Pray that this Blessed Tree may be cast into the waters made bitter by our penances, so that henceforth *from within us there shall flow rivers of living water*.

Secondly, Saint Bonaventure would have us become a sea of bitterness in our tears of contrition that we may mourn from the very depths of our being the good that we might have done but failed to realize. For by neglecting opportunities to increase in virtue we have again increased the sufferings of Christ's Passion, and laid *the chastisement of our peace upon him*. Well then are we disturbed in contrasting our neglect to the attentions of the Sorrowful Mother, who, weeping, *hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her*.

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., *De Purif. B. M. V.*, sermo 1 (IX 641a).

Her eyes shed streams of tears because his law has not been kept because he who hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows has become despised, a leper; while we, settled in comfort, lose the necessity of mortification and discipline. What price our neglect of our comfort, that it should be requited in him, who was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins.

Were we to stand on Calvary and see the grossness of the scene as it actually took place, there is no doubt but that we should fall away with the first blow that battered the fair face of Christ as he was measured to the Cross; with the first clang of the mallet's requiem toll as it drove the nails through his hands and feet and fixed them on His bloody Throne; with the first creak of the wood as the Tree of the world's redemption was planted in the ground, in order that the *Root of Jesse* become an *ensign* of the people. O God! what men would we to fear to meditate each tragic happening on that Hill—would we that our sins froze us so icily! Mary stands there, weeping but not wailing; her heart turned within her, full of bitterness; standing for all of us who, in the person of one or other of the intimates of the Master, have failed with trembling to follow him to the end. Have we not often, like them, tasted his goodness and sweetness: the nets filled with fish, the thousands fed bread, the guests at Cana, the lame, the blind and the deaf? But more than these; and sorrow of sorrows, only he who sat at the Supper and ate the Bread is at the Cross. Where are they? where are we?

We cry to her: *O daughter of Jerusalem, to what shall I expect thee, that I may comfort thee*, in this sad hour? She answers not, but the irony of our words is that she is to comfort us. The first and only word spoken by her Son to the Mother of Jesus through the Passion makes her our *Mother*. Her heart so close to breaking would not bear that loving word, and for this reason Jesus said to her: "*Woman behold thy Son.*" But to the disciple: "*Behold thy Mother.*" This word completes her sorrows. Who is this John, and who is he whom he represents, in exchange for her Son, Jesus? Mary is emptied, and now becomes so poor that she is nothing—absolutely nothing! This is how she becomes *everything* to us. How can it be otherwise? Her Son gave all, even to the last drop of His Precious

Blood; can Mary then reserve anything of herself? This is poverty of spirit, preciously complete, completely precious. Although not able to approach the sufferings and emptiness of her Son, nevertheless the Mother has given all that she could give for him. No other mother, regardless her love, ever gave, gives, or will give as Mary gave for her Son; no other mother, regardless her anguish, ever knew, knows, or will know sufferings to compare with these. This love—this suffering? A mystery beyond our most profound comprehension.

Saint Bonaventure somehow found the secret of imitating Mary on Calvary, and with characteristic brevity and loftiness of phrase he gives it to us as: *Cor in cruce—crux in corde!*<sup>1</sup> This is to say that Mary's heart throughout all the Passion, through every moment on Calvary's hill, pulsated in constant unison with the throb of her Son's. God knows, by that very fact, that the Cross has pierced no heart, nor will it ever, as it pierced Mary's. Because Mary's heart was on the Cross, and because the Cross was in her heart, the last of Simeon's sorrows becomes the crown of the martyrdom of the Queen of Martyrs.

*Into thy hands I commend my Spirit!* Jesus is dead! The earth is dark for the *Orient* has burned out for man. The soldiers have had their sport, and are too sated now to taunt the little group that remains by the Cross. The two Marys and the beloved disciple are dazed and deadened, so blunted their senses by the torn and battered Body hanging from the crimsoned Wood above them. We have failed so often in our small participation of bringing the fruits of the Redemption to souls, but Mary does not fail. Now that it is over she does not quiver, nor retire, nor moan; for the sun will soon set. Joseph and Nicodemus appear over the crest of the little hill bearing their linens and ladder and with soft-spoken words of deference seek Mary's approval of the burial plans. From the arms of the Cross the sacred and lifeless form of her Son is lowered into her loving outstretched arms. She washes each wound with her tears, embracing and kissing her Child times unnumbered before surrendering him to the disciples.

The tragic day is spent and the little group must move down

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *Laudis. de S. Cruce, Opus. VII, Rhyth. V. 4* (VIII 667a).

to Jerusalem. One artist has touchingly captured the Return of the Woman of Sorrows supported by the arms of the beloved disciples and the holy women. Affecting as the picture is, there does not seem to be any tradition demanding our assent to the artist's impression. Perchance that is how they did return; perchance, too, and more probably, it was Mary who gathered the pathetic little group together. It was she who guided their faltering steps back to the Holy City. Such does not seem incongruous, for when her Son Jesus died on the Cross the last dregs of bitterness welled forth from Mary's Immaculate Heart. She was filled now with joy and love. Mary knew all that *all things*. . . written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man had been accomplished. She knew that this sacred and precious Death had conquered sin; she knew that this merciful and saving Death had opened heaven to all.<sup>8</sup> Knowing this it was for her to come the Mother of all the sorrowing, the sweet *Consolatrix afflictorum*, and the return from Calvary already necessitated that she should know her comfort.

So she sends us forth with *mourning and weeping*, to learn the horror of our ways in her Son's Passion; yet she knows all the while that the Lord will bring us back to her *with joy and gladness forever*; for *the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench*. God alone knows the uncounted souls that have resolutely turned to him from sin, and begun to do good because of one last glance, one last hope in the *Sea of Bitterness*.

Our tears are truly bitter, and well may we be pierced by incessant recollection of the days we have neglected and lost. Saint Bonaventure hopefully assures us that our meditation is without fruit. We have learned from the Sea of Bitterness that the Cross must wound and break our hard hearts, in order that they may send forth their torrent of tears. But when we are emptied of ourselves we learn the meaning of the hymn with which we salute the same Cross on Good Friday, and it truly becomes for us *Dulce nuncium*—the Sweet Wood, by which our wounds are healed. As for the well left emptied by our tears, that, says Saint Bonaventure,

<sup>8</sup>Bonav., *Rythmica de 7 Verbis Dom. in Cruce*, Opus. Dubia 7 (VIII 676b).

<sup>9</sup>Bonav., *De Nativ. B. M. V.*, sermo 3 (IX 713a).

be filled to overflowing by the rain of graces which Jesus pours on us through Mary.<sup>9</sup> Proving ourselves now with these tears of repentance we look more confidently to that day of blessed expectation when *God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.*

William J. Manning

## THE SIXTH JOY

"If what the Apostle says is true: *As you are partakers of the sufferings, so will you also be of the comfort*, think how wonderfully the Virgin Mother was partaker of the Resurrection of her Son." Thus Saint Bernardin (after Ubertino da Casale) speaks of the Sixth Joy of the Franciscan Crown. But what he has here in mind is missed in many English instructions on that Crown, since they do not indicate that Mary was *the first* to see the Risen Savior. While the official version of the *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum* reads: *Virgo Immaculata Jesum prima a mortuis resuscitatum cum gaudio vidit*, our English translations (preceded by the German in the *Via franciscana*) announce the Joy simply as the Resurrection, or more fittingly though inadequately say: "The Immaculate Virgin Mary joyfully beheld Jesus after His Resurrection." The slip is hardly intentional, and one may doubt if a past and somewhat current controversy has influenced such a rendition. Nevertheless, the Franciscan tradition which coincides with a very old tradition in the Church (despite some exceptions) bids us here meditate that "The Immaculate Virgin Mary was the first joyfully to behold Jesus after His Resurrection."

### *Was She the First?*

As Easter joys unfold themselves in the next few weeks, some may suddenly realize that there is no Scriptural basis for such an apparition. Indeed, Saint Mark would seem to preclude it by saying that Our Lord *appeared first to Mary Magdalen* (16; 9).

This silence of Sacred Writ has caused a few theologians to deny the appearance of Christ to Our Lady in either a first or special apparition. Even within recent years one writer has condemned the belief as arbitrary and without foundation, as showing slight reverence to the sacred text since it tends to supply and correct a deficiency in the Evangelists—therefore as dangerous because it adds to the word of God and thus runs the risk of compromising the truth and lastly, as lacking in the reverence due to Mary, since it puts her on a par with those who had to behold Christ bodily whereas she had no need of external visions. But there is a sufficient answer to such charges, as we shall see.

Surprisingly enough, this negative position can call upon a Seraphic Doctor for support. Not that he enters into or even mentions any controversy; he simply states that according to the Gospels there was no first or special apparition *because Mary did not need it*. Of her glorious prerogatives, he writes, was the perfect contemplation of God and the knowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation which she possessed in this life. For this reason she was not present at the Transfiguration, nor was any apparition (first or special) given to her after the Resurrection because she who was always conscious of the secrets of God did not need to be strengthened in faith. This is shown, Bonaventure continues, at the marriage-feast of Cana, where she knew beforehand what her Son wished to do, and so instructed the attendants: *Do whatever He tells you* (Jn. 2, 5). Another reason becomes manifest in Mary's unshaken faith. She alone, the Saint says in several passages, remained strong and solid and unshaken in faith after the death of Christ. All the others doubted or at least wavered; therefore Christ appeared to them to strengthen their faith. Because Mary Magdalen was the most perfect and persevering among the women, Christ appeared to her first.

That Saint Bonaventure should not consider the possibility of such an apparition to Our Lady as a reward of her faith and her participation in the Passion, is rather remarkable, especially since he states that Christ appeared to the fearful women. Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Mtt. 28; 9), "because of the intensity of their love and devotion merited this." The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (in which are incorporated Bonaventure's

*Meditations on the Passion*), on the other hand, picture the vision to Our Lady, as does Saint Bonaventure's contemporary, Saint Albert the Great. Later tradition was to agree with this positive teaching.

#### A Solid Tradition

The oldest authority in tradition to hold that Christ appeared first to His Mother is the famous Christian poet Sedulius, in the first part of the Fifth Century. Both in his *Carmen Paschale* and his prose-work, the *Opus Paschale*, he speaks of the Risen Savior as manifesting Himself *prius* or *illico*, first or immediately, to His holy Mother. Saint Paulinus of Nola implies the same when he says that though Mary saw her Son die she was soon to see Him alive once more. From the Twelfth Century onward the list of those who speak thus far outweighs the few who deny it; a tradition so strong therefore that Pope Benedict XIV, speaking as a private theologian only, finds ample basis for this pious belief. Interestingly, without giving it more importance than is its due, he cites the revelation received by Saint Teresa of Avila (*Life*, app. IV, n. 4).

If then the deep faith of the Mother of God had led Saint Bonaventure to say that she had no need of the vision of her glorified Son, the opposite tradition would claim, as expressed by Ubertino da Casale (d. 1305), that we should not doubt that He appeared precisely to reward her faith and especially her participation in the Passion. Could we suppose that on the first Easter, when Christ showed Himself the fount of consolation and grace to so many, He would fail to console her whom He knew alone had tasted to the full the bitterness of His death?

But how does such a tradition explain the silence of Sacred Scripture? Some claim to find implicit allusions; e.g., in the angel's command: *Go, tell His disciples and Peter* (Mk. 16, 7): the angel would not speak of Our Lady because she had already seen Christ. Ubertino and Saint Bernardin suggest that perhaps the solution lies in a twofold vision: to Mary Magdalen Christ did appear first *in body*, but to His Mother He showed Himself earlier in a *mental or spiritual vision*, which would be stronger and clearer. While such suppositions may have some value, the answer usually given in tradition, e.g., by Abbot Rupert of Deutz (d. 1130), Saint Albert, Saint Bernardin and Benedict XIV, is that the Evangelists wish to speak only of the appearances



of Christ to those He had made *witnesses of His resurrection* (Lk 24, 28; Acts 7, 8 and 22). They had all doubted or hesitated; not convinced, they could and would give strong testimony of what they had seen. Another reason, suggested by Saint Bernardin, is an accepted principle of Mariology: in the divine economy Our Lady holds a place apart, transcending the other children of Adam; therefore the Gospels in view of her position say very little of her and nothing of her vision on Easter.

The positive answer thus has a solid basis in tradition and theological reasoning, if not directly in Sacred Scripture. It does not have such force, of course, as to demand assent; nor is this a matter of immediate import for the faith. The opposite opinion remains open to acceptance, though it seems to have less in its favor.

### *The Sixth Joy*

When this special apparition of Christ to Mary Immaculate came to be the special subject of the Sixth Joy of the Crown is a debatable question intertwined with the complicated but interesting history of the Franciscan rosary.

Usually the origin of the latter is explained according to the account Luke Wadding (d. 1567) gives in the *Annales Minorum* of the story of the novice who was taught by Our Lady to satisfy her devotion through a crown of Aves. The Sixth joy, he was told, was that which Mary experienced when her Son visited her after the Resurrection. Wadding drew this story from an unedited tract of the older chronicler, Mariano of Florence, written in 1503. This legend of the roses, however, has many variants; even Mariano admits that it is also told of a Cistercian (in whose Order indeed devotion to the Joys of Mary antedated Saint Francis). Moreover, there are older forms of the Crown. In 1452 Saint John Capistran proposed to novices the daily recitation of a crown that combined both joys and sorrows and in which the *seventh* meditation considered that Christ rose from the dead and appeared to His Mother, as the doctors believe (*ut credunt doctores*). Again, a very rare tract published about 1500 counts the seven joys as follows: the Annunciation, the Visitation and Nativity, the Presentation and the Visit of the Magi, the Resurrection ("but first of the sorrows on Calvary and then of the joy

when Christ appeared to the Apostles and Mary"), the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption. Other crowns embraced twelve or merely five joys. Gradually, however, the form given by Mariano became the most prevalent, so that by the mid-sixteenth century Wadding could speak of it as customary in the Franciscan family. Even then the sixth Joy was not always interpreted explicitly as the apparition of Christ to Mary *before all others*. Such, however, is now the proper subject of that decade, as suggested by Saint John Capistran and Mariano.

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Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.

## A LAWYER AND HIS CONSCIENCE

Mark Rey was a good lawyer when he placed his conscience before money. He was a good Capuchin when he preferred his conscience to soup. He was a good missionary when he followed his conscience even to the sacrifice of his life. He was able to make these wise but difficult choices because throughout his life, even in the smallest matters, he had always placed conscience first.

Mark Rey or Roy, was born in 1577 in Sigmaringen, a pretty little town in the Duchy of Swabia. His grandfather was Belgian, a native of Antwerp, and a man of deep faith. It was probably from him that John Rey, Mark's father, inherited the strong and loyal character that endeared him to his fellow townsmen and won him the esteem of Prince Charles. Through the favor of the Prince, John Rey was appointed Counsellor to the Court and Burgomaster of Sigmaringen. He married Genevieve of Rosemberger, an excellent woman who was

fully his equal in piety and nobility of character. She gave her home the atmosphere of a chapel and raised her children in the love of the true Faith. Her second daughter, Mary, became the wife of the Count of Helfenstein, of the Hohenzollern line.

At an early age young Mark gave evidence of remarkable intellectual gifts. His memory was prodigious. He could recite word for word everything he was taught, and the most difficult problems seemed like games to his agile young mind. When he was nineteen, however, he suffered a severe blow in the death of his beloved father, and it seemed for a time that his studies would have to yield to the task of managing the family estate. His mother recognized the difficulty facing her son, and realizing her inability to manage alone, contracted a second marriage. This she was able to relieve Mark of all anxiety for her and to provide him with a step-father whose wisdom and love guided him through the uncertain years of young manhood.

Reassured for the future, Mark resumed the studies he had so brilliantly begun. Nothing seemed too difficult for him. Problems that overwhelmed the minds of others seemed to relax him. Yet the question of a career caused him some trouble. From his earliest years he had determined to devote his life to the relief of the poor and the outcasts of society. But how could he best do that? In what career could he be of most service to others?

In those days justice was being most shamefully trampled underfoot, and the weak and the poor were the ones to suffer. Seeing the cruel exploitation of the helpless, young Mark determined his course. "I shall become the defender of the oppressed," he announced to his family, and thereupon entered the University of Freiburg-in-Breisgau, where he first studied philosophy, then law. He gave such evidence of proofs of a keen mind, sound judgment, and iron perseverance that the professors and students alike, stirred to admiration, called him "The Christian Philosopher." The title suited him in every sense. So great was his ability that he was given a professorship at the University—a quite uncommon favor to one so young. During the years at the University he also made himself familiar with foreign tongues, especially Italian, Spanish, and French. He earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1601. In 1611, on May 7, he was made

Doctor of Civil and Canon Law, *Summa cum laude*. As his professor, Andrew Zimmermann, acknowledged: "There was no one in the whole University town who was better in law than Mark Rey."

After receiving his degrees, Mark began to practise law in Ensisheim, Alsace, a city which was then the capital of the Austrian States and the seat of the government. Within a few months he was named Assessor to the High Court of Justice. His reputation grew apace. The extraordinary breadth and depth of his knowledge together with his personal integrity won him wide recognition. His office was crowded with clients. There was one rare quality in the young lawyer that especially endeared him to litigants—his ability to settle disputes privately outside of court. Before long his absolute honesty and disinterestedness won him the name he had always desired: "The Lawyer of the Poor and the Defender of the Oppressed."

But there were difficulties ahead. An honest man in the midst of corruption and injustice was certain to be unpopular with his colleagues. Their flagrant dishonesty aroused his indignation, and his flawless integrity provoked them to annoy him with malicious and unceasing vexations. At first they considered him merely eccentric and singular; as time went on they began to regard him as inopportune and troublesome. "Do as the rest of us do!" they would tell him angrily. But that was precisely what Mark Rey would never do, nor did he hesitate to say so.

One day, while defending an innocent client, Mark advanced arguments so strong and convincing that the prosecutor was left without a word of reply. After the hearing the irritated counsellor gave free rein to his anger. "What in the world are you thinking of, Rey? You'll never build up a fortune this way. You should have tried to prolong the trial, not shorten it. You'll have to learn to sell your clients their rights at a little higher price!"

Shocked and disgusted by the whole atmosphere of the courts, the young lawyer began to think of another mode of life more beneficial to his soul. He wanted no more of a profession so dangerous to a man's conscience and so apt to make one wealthy through the exploitation of others. Besides, the thousand and one details of his professional life engrossed him so much that he was often kept from

the exercises of devotion which his soul so ardently craved. He decided to embrace the religious life.

Without further delay, Mark Rey presented himself at the Capuchin friary in Freiburg-in-Breisgau. The provincial, however, refused to accept him. Upon his insistence, the provincial countered making ordination to the priesthood the condition for his acceptance.

Because of his degree in Canon Law, Mark was soon able to be ordained. In September, 1612, Bishop John James Murgel ordained him to the priesthood, and within the same month the Capuchins received him as a candidate. Significantly, he chose the name Fidelis. A Doctor of Philosophy, of Civil and Canon Law, Father Fidelis seemed also to be a Doctor of Asceticism. His mortifications kept pace with his humility, and his humility was extraordinary. On October 4, 1613, at the age of thirty-five, Father Fidelis pronounced his vows as a Capuchin.

Formerly an excellent lawyer, Father Fidelis became an excellent preacher. According to the testimony of a witness, "He explained the most difficult passages of Scripture with such facility and prudence that the learned as well as the unlearned were satisfied." His apostolic eloquence drew huge crowds to his pulpit, and the people confessed that it was not only the power of his words that moved them, but the supernatural radiance and charm of his personality as well. There were some, however, who found the incisive logic of his reasoning somewhat disconcerting. These were the men of half-measure and compromise. But the burning zeal of Father Fidelis would brook no half-measures; he preached the Gospel of Christ without compromise. One of the noblemen who found his unglossed preaching unpalatable reproached him, after a particularly devastating sermon, for being offensive. "If you want to eat good soup here, Father," remarked the gentleman, "you'll have to preach differently." "What do I care for your soup?" retorted Fidelis. "I would have you know that I preach only according to the dictates of my conscience."

In those days the Reformation was rapidly gaining ground. Political and religious upheavals were disturbing the peace of Europe, and Leopold of Austria had to reinforce his garrisons. Father Fidelis was appointed chaplain to Feldkirch. No one was better fitted for

the position. With his knowledge of foreign languages, his power over the hearts of men, and his own serene virtue, he immediately gained the confidence of the soldiers. Hard-bitten mercenaries they were, from every corner of the world; yet they admired their chaplain as a man and as a priest. They knew his kindness and sympathy, and they knew his fine sense of justice. He was no respecter of persons, that they also knew; nor did he hesitate to express himself in virile and pungent language when the occasion required.

Father Fidelis was not content merely to minister to fighting men. He joined battle with the enemy himself—but his battlefield was the pulpit. With perfect lucidity he exposed the errors of the Reformers, the cogency of his arguments forcing the heretics themselves to admit the soundness of the Catholic doctrine. To his eloquence and erudition the obvious sanctity of his life added such strength that many loyal Protestants began to recognize the preachers of the so-called Reform as dangerous heretics and political opportunists and revolutionaries.

It was principally among the Grisons that Father Fidelis labored. Their Canton is one of the most important in the Swiss Confederation. The numerous conversions that followed his preaching and the distribution of his apologetical tracts aroused the hatred of the Calvinist leaders. Unable to withstand him in debate, still less able to destroy his reputation for holiness, they determined to kill him.

Meanwhile, through the initiative of the Capuchin Father Jerome of Narni, Pope Gregory XV founded the Propaganda Fide in 1622, to coordinate the missionary labors of the Church. Father Fidelis was named Prefect of the Mission among the Grisons. This new office urged him on to still greater efforts, and as he poured the full power of his zeal and genius into the task before him, the fury of his opponents was inflamed to fanatical hatred. Father Fidelis was warned to flee if he wished to escape death, but the warning only served to increase his activity. The end was soon to come.

On April 24, 1622, Father Fidelis said Mass and preached as usual. As he stepped forth from the church, twenty-five rioters, armed with pitchforks, clubs, and swords, surrounded him. "Answer us, yes or no!" demanded the spokesman. "Will you or will you not accept our faith?" "I did not come here to become a heretic," replied Father

Fidelis calmly. "I came to root out heresy and to bring you back to the true faith of the Catholic Church." A sword flashed in the sunlight and struck the missionary on the head. That was the sign. The rioters fell upon him, beating him with their clubs and stabbing him with their swords and pitchforks until his mangled body lay dead at their feet.

Thus Father Fidelis became the Protomartyr of the Propaganda Fide. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XIV on June 29, 1746.

*Adapted from Fr. Dominic of Saint-Denis, O.F.M. C.*

## SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (IV)

### *On The Manner Of Conversing With Seculars*

Throughout your life strive to avoid familiarity with seculars, so far as you can do it with good grace: *for it is a perverse generation of unfaithful children*. But if you are forced to be with them because of some necessity or benefit, speak only useful and upright words. If they begin to speak of the world or of wars or other useless things, change the topic of conversation, even if you know what is happening, but follow with the prophet: *Let not my mouth speak the works of men*. And when among them, be fearful, not secure, humble, speaking but briefly, and upright, that the word of the Gospel may be fulfilled in you: *Let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven*.

Flee women as you would serpents. Never speak with one unless urgent necessity compels you to, and never look upon the face of a woman. If a woman speaks to you cut her off as quickly as possible, *their words are softer than oil, but they are darts*. Therefore Saint Augustine says: "Conversation with women should be severe, brief, and formal. And they are not less to be feared because they are holy; for the more holy they are, the more attractive they become, and under the flattering guise of holy conversation, the vilest desires enter. Believe me, I am a bishop, I speak the truth in Christ; I do not lie. I have seen the cedars of Lebanon and the rams of the flocks collapse under the pretense. And I did not view this fall as any more possible than that

Jerome or Ambrose." Flee, therefore, the snares of women, *for you are not holier than David, nor stronger than Samson, nor wiser than Solomon*.

### *On Not Judging Others*

No man has been appointed to judge the secrets of the heart, as the Apostle says: *Pass no judgment before the time, until the Lord comes, Who will both bring to light things hidden and make manifest the counsels of hearts*. Therefore never take it upon yourself to judge or despise others, but whenever you see something done which displeases you, before you judge the doer, look to yourself and see if in you there is anything worthy of contempt. If so, then condemn yourself in him whom you judge and say: *It is I who have sinned; it is I who have done wrong*. Be not like the hypocrites who never see their own defects but, feeling confident of their own righteousness, judge all others, detract and condemn, and wish to see the mote in another's eye, but do not see the beam in their own. Truth Itself condemns them, saying: *Hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thy own eye, and then thou wilt be able to see the speck in thy brother's eye*. Whence the verse: "O you who worry about the mote in your brother's eye, remove the beam that blinds your own."

Saint Bernard says: "Avoid being a curious explorer of another's life, or a hasty judge. Even if your neighbor performs some act that you condemn, judge him not, but rather excuse him. Excuse the intention, at least, if you must condemn the deed, on the grounds of ignorance, or accident, or inadvertence. But if the certainty of the thing is not susceptible of excuse, say to yourself: "How strong a temptation this must have been! What would I have done if it had happened to me?" Therefore, be not given to judging or murmuring, but rather judge and scrutinize yourself and say with the Prophet: *I will speak my own iniquity, and will meditate on my sin*.

### *On Humble Obedience*

Because there is no safer way to salvation than self-denial through humble obedience, Our Lord said to His disciples: *Let him who wishes to come after me, i. e., to eternal life, deny himself (through humble obedience) and take up his cross (by mortification of the flesh) and follow me (through complete surrender)*. And rightly does He invite them to the subjection of obedience because through it one obtains a marvelous victory over his enemies. *The obedient man shall speak of victory*. What even more, God Himself can be conquered by obedience, for Saint Gregory says: "If we are obedient to our superiors, God will obey our

prayers." And Saint Augustine adds: "One prayer of an obedient man is heard more quickly than ten thousand of a haughty man."

Likewise, throughout your life strive to be subject to all for God's sake, and to obey humbly not only superiors, but also subjects. Do not worry who it is that commands you, but rejoice because he commands you. For Saint Gregory says: "It is not lawful for subjects to judge, but simply to obey immediately." And Saint Jerome tells us: "A monk must not say 'Yes' or 'No', except to sin." Take care not to extort a permission publicly or in secret, either yourself, or through others, for whoever does this does not obey humbly; rather, he follows his own wilful pride. "If anyone openly or in secret implies that his spiritual father has commanded what he himself wills, he seduces himself, if he flatters himself that this is obedience, for in this matter it is rather his superior who obeys him, not he his superior." Let such a one beware, then, for Saint Bernard again says: "Nothing burns in Hell except one's own will. To move self-will and there will be no Hell." Even in good deeds, then, not your own will, especially if it does not accord with the will of your superiors. "The great evil is self-will, by which it happens that even your good deeds are not good."

### On Silence

Since divine consolation is often lost by excessive talking, observe silence always at the places and times where this is commanded or useful. For Sacred Scripture says: *In silence and in hope shall our strength be built up.* And observe silence wherever you are: in the celebration of divine office, in eating, in performing any service, and wherever there are more than three Friars. From Compline to Tierce you should not speak unless spoken to, or unless some necessity or helpfulness demands it. For "the soul which does not have the wall of silence is easily pierced by the darts of the enemy." And Saint Augustine says: "Man's mouth should be dumb except for three things: to praise God, to accuse himself, and to help his neighbor."

Be silent, therefore, so that you never yield to detraction, murmuring, dissipation or impropriety, knowing that, as our Savior says, you must render an account not only of idle, harmful, and dangerous words, but even of the least thought. Therefore does the Prophet say: *They rejoiced because they were silent.* To flee such sins of speech, you must first train yourself to avoid idle words. "Whoever does not suppress idle words quickly gives way to those which are harmful." And therefore the Wise Man says: *Son, scarcely speak in thy own cause, and if thou be asked*

*twice, let your answer be short.* Most especially, keep quiet about the world and wars, and do not listen to those who speak of them, for these things are the deadly poison of the soul. Of such men the Psalmist says: *They have spoken evilly with their tongues; the poison of asps is under their lips.*

And whenever any heavy obedience disturbs you, think quickly of Jesus, Who, although He was the King of kings and the Lord of lords, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to death. For He said: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but his who sent me, the Father.* You, too, must say this, if you wish to imitate Jesus: "I have left the world not to do my own will but that of others." Saint Bernard describes the perfectly obedient man when he says: "A man who truly obeys does not know hesitation, does not delay the execution of a command, but immediately prepares his eyes to see, his ears to hear, his tongue to speak, his hands to work, his feet to walk. He is wholly recollected interiorly, that exteriorly he may do the will of his superior."

Since voluntary poverty is the primary foundation of the whole spiritual life, observe the strictest poverty in regard to transitory things throughout your life, so that you have nothing under Heaven except what the Rule concedes for your necessity. For the Rule says: "Let the Friars appropriate nothing to themselves, neither a house nor a place, nor anything." And this is rightly said, for *all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.* For transitory things are opposed to eternal. Therefore, if you do not wish to be repulsed from Heaven, be always a pauper on earth. Saint Gregory tells us: "Everyone is separated from heavenly love in so far as he is pleased with a lesser love." And, on the contrary, the more one despises earthly things, the closer he is to God. And therefore the Apostle says: "I have counted all things as dung, that I might gain Christ."

If you wish to despise the things of earth, meditate always on those of heaven. "If we consider what things and how great are promised us in heaven, those which are on earth become cheap in our estimation." Therefore: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* If, then, we attain the glory of the Blessed through our lack of things on this earth, strive always to observe the strictest poverty, especially in books and furniture and clothing, so that you have no more than strict necessity demands. And do not call superfluities necessities, but rather fear that what seems necessary is really superfluous.

For Saint Gregory says: "If we use only what is necessary, we will soon see that we have many superfluities." Therefore, have nothing, either

yourself or through an interposed person. See to it that you have nothing in your cell except what is necessary. This I say even of the least thing lest perhaps by neglecting the little things, you soon fall in what is most important. "You have avoided the great; beware lest you are ruined by the insignificant."

Embrace poverty, then, with all your strength, for *this is a test of life to them that lay hold on it: and he that shall retain it is blessed*.

Thus, if you observe holy poverty to the end, you will come to the kingdom of heaven. Truth Itself has promised this: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. In this kingdom we find our joy in its fruitfulness; our security in its sublimity; our delights in its beauty; our dignity in its noble society. To this may He lead us Who lives and reigns for all eternity. Amen.

## OUR FRANCISCAN NATIONAL MARIAN CONGRESS

Whoever read the inspiring words of *Fulgens Corona*, the Encyclical of our Holy Father Pius XII, in which he proclaimed a Marian Centennial Year in honor of the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception to be held the world over from December 1953 to December 1963, learned therefrom the sentiments which this noble privilege of Mary should arouse in Christian hearts. The Sovereign Pontiff said: "The centennial celebration should not only serve to revive Christian faith and earnest devotion to the Mother of God in the souls of all, but Christians should also, in so far as possible, conform their lives to the image of the same Virgin."

The Order of Saint Francis, under the leadership of John Duns Scotus, has played an important role in advancing this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to its ultimate triumph of dogmatic declaration. This same abiding Franciscan love of Mary and zeal for her honor characterizes the Order of Friars Minor today. Some years ago the Most Reverend Father General in Rome instituted an International Franciscan Marian Commission, with branch National Marian Commissions in all larger countries where Franciscan scholars exist in sufficient number for the purpose of promoting the knowledge and honor of Mary, the Patroness of the Order.

The American Franciscan National Marian Commission consists of six members, one from each of the six Provinces in the United States.

Its desire to make a distinct American contribution towards putting the above wishes of the Encyclical into practice, the American Marian Commission decided to arrange for a Franciscan National Marian Congress, to be held in California, May 2-9. This will provide an opportunity for a national tribute to Mary during the centennial year of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and it is hoped that it may also prove a potent means of bringing to our country and to the world an abundance of God's blessings and lasting peace.

The Congress is in three parts: a) Marian Days; b) The Franciscan Day; c) General National Congress Sessions. The Marian Days are locally sponsored observances in San Diego, Los Angeles and Sacramento, on Sunday, May 2, each of which communities treasures an heroic Franciscan tradition. Solemn Pontifical Masses, processions, and public acts of consecration will characterize each day. In Los Angeles the Franciscan Pilgrims to the Congress will join in "Mary's Hour" in the Coliseum. In Sacramento a "Living Rosary" will be exemplified.

In Santa Barbara the Friars will assemble on the evening of May 4, for the official opening of theological sessions with papers by Franciscan scholars on the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the history of the cult of Mary in the United States. His Paternity, the Most Reverend Augustine Sepinski, O.F.M., Minister General of the Order, will preside, and Father Ralph Ohlman, O.F.M., of Cincinnati, President of the Franciscan Marian Commission, and Father Marion Habig, O.F.M., St. Louis member of the Commission, will read papers. Franciscan Day proper, Wednesday, May 5, will open with Solemn High Mass, celebrated by the Most Reverend Minister General, assisted by the American Provincials. The Sermon will be preached by the Most Reverend Timothy Manning, J.C.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles. The activities of the day include a solemn procession with the statue of Mary Immaculate from the Mission to the Seminary, Crowning of Mary, Profession of Faith in the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and Dedication to our Blessed Mother. In an academic session during the afternoon there will be discussions of Mariological doctrine, to be led by Father Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. and Father Allan Wolter, O.F.M., members of the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University, Saint Bonaventure, New York.

The General Session in San Francisco, to which the local clergy, Institutions, and the Franciscan Pilgrims are invited, will open with a Solemn High Mass in Saint Boniface Church on Friday morning. The Very Reverend Joseph Fulton, O.P., Provincial Prior of the Dominican Order, will preach. During the doctrinal sessions in the afternoon, papers will be read by the Reverend Fathers Maurice Grajewski, O.F.M., of

the Catholic University of America, and Fidelis Chauvez, O.F.M., the Mexican Province. In the evening the San Francisco Opera House will be the setting for a peace program—"The Madonna of the Ages." The Conference will reach its climax during the official Solemn Pontifical Mass in Saint Mary's Cathedral, celebrated by the Most Reverend John Mitty, D.D., Archbishop of San Francisco.

During the morning session Mariological papers will be read by Fathers Eustace Smith, O.F.M., of the Franciscan Theological House of Studies in Washington, D.C., and Berard Vogt, O.F.M., of Christ the King Seminary in Saint Bonaventure. In the afternoon session papers will be given by the Very Reverend Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., Rector of Christ the King Seminary, Saint Bonaventure, and the Most Reverend Merlin J. Guilfoyle, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco. A banquet will be held at the Palace Hotel in the evening.

The triumphal close of the Franciscan National Marian Congress will take place on Mother's Day, May 9, at a magnificent outdoor altar on the grounds of the San Carlos Mission at Carmel on Monterey Peninsula. Buses will convey National Pilgrims from San Francisco. The Most Reverend Aloysius Willinger, C.S.S.R., Bishop of Monterey-Fresno, will preach the sermon. Mission San Carlos is where Father Junipero Serra, O.F.M., made his headquarters as Father President of the California Missions and where his body lies buried. The afternoon will see a veritable drama of faith unfold itself, as representatives of all the races which have come to dwell on the lovely Peninsula, march to the feet of Carmel's cherished *Madonna of the Seas*. The setting sun over Carmel Bay will lend its red rays as a glory to the Eucharistic Christ raised in Benediction. Afterwards, there will be a candle-light ceremony, during which the Bishop will preside over the coronation of Mary, when a silver crown presented to the same *Nuestra Senora de Carmel* by Juan de Maiztegui, captain of the Spanish Frigate *La Poisima* in 1798, will again be placed on her brow.

The Franciscan National Marian Commission is also sponsoring a preparatory crusade program to "re-Christianize the Christians and Marianize everyone" during this year of grace. It has prepared to extend a comprehensive program, replete with challenging suggestions to school children, artists, lawyers, scholars, the sick and abandoned—in short, for every walk of life—a crusade of prayer, penance and real charity to return the world to Christ through Mary.

The Congress is under the able executive chairmanship of Father Alfred Boeddeker, O.F.M., pastor of Saint Boniface Church in San Francisco, and California Member of the National Commission.

Joseph F. Mahoney, T.O.R.

## STORY WITH A MORAL

A very good friar of the Province of Cologne told this story to Friar John, who in turn told it to us. Once, he said, while I was laboring under a serious illness, even the doctors despaired of my life. When I thought I was about to die I began to pray to God most attentively, saying: "Lord spare me! For I hope that I shall escape eternal damnation, but I am very much afraid of Purgatory. Would that I understood, O Lord, which were the offences for which I deserve to suffer the most." While I was engrossed in this thought, I looked up and saw staring me in the eyes a large mirror which seemed to hang in mid-air. In it I clearly saw the image of my body, and while I was in great wonderment I saw on the forehead of this image many written words all running together, like *donus* for *dominus*, *misere* for *miserere*, and the like. Much astonished, I saw in the mirror that my tongue was pierced through. Suddenly a spirit told me that I was to be greatly punished in the tongue, because I had not said my canonical hours distinctly before God, but had offered them with many clipped words. But by the mercy of God, I was freed from my sickness, and from that time on I began to say my Hours more diligently and to sing the Psalms more distinctly and devoutly!

*Liber exemplorum Fratrum Minorum*, n. 59





## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

The first six Franciscans to reach Japan, led by St. Peter Baptist, arrived in 1593, not quite a half century after the arrival of St. Francis Xavier and his companions. Four years later, on February 5, 1597, St. Peter Baptist and his companions, together with fifteen native Japanese Tertiaries, members of the Third Order of St. Francis, were among the twenty-six proto-martyrs of Japan. They were crucified and then transfixed with spears in Japanese fashion on the Martyrs' Mount at Nagasaki. In the half century following, many other Friars followed in their footsteps, sowing the Faith widespread on the good ground during times of peace and making the supreme sacrifice with their flocks during the numerous and violent persecutions. In 1605 they were active in Kyoto, Fushimi, Osaka, Okayama, Uraga and in Yedo, the present Tokyo, where they also established a Chapel for the Lepers in the Asakusa district. About 1640 there were hardly any priests left alive in Japan, and the country was closed to foreign intercourse. A prohibition against Japanese leaving the country prevented any Japanese from being ordained abroad.

But the blood of the martyrs proved a very hardy seed. Secret communities of Christians, without any priests to guide or care for them, faithfully preserved and handed down the faith for the next two hundred years. Just one century ago, in 1853, Commodore Perry concluded the treaty that reopened Japan to the outside world. Twelve years later the long-hidden Christians at Nagasaki warily revealed themselves to the chaplain of the French Officers stationed there. After news of their discovery spread throughout the world, finally, in 1873 the centuries-old persecution in Japan came to an end with the official proclamation of the freedom of religion.

The first Franciscans in modern times

to return to Japan were the German Friars of the Fulda Province, who in 1900 began missionary work in the virgin territory of the Island of Hokkaido. One of their number, Msgr. Wenceslaus Kinnig, O.F.M., became the first Bishop of Sapporo in Hokkaido. Besides their missions a preparatory seminary in Hokkaido, the Fulda Friars have chaplaincies in Osaka and Kumamoto in Kyushu (Leper Mission), another preparatory seminary in Fukuoka, a new parish (1953) in Tokyo and one of their number in Tokyo is in charge of editing the nearly-completed volume Japanese Catholic Encyclopedia.

The next group of Franciscans to arrive in Japan were the Canadian Friars in 1910. Their motherhouse in Japan is Den-en-chofu in Tokyo, for many years also the Franciscan Novitiate in Japan, which has recently been transferred to Kiyomizu Urawa just outside Tokyo. Their preparatory seminary in Nagasaki was destroyed by the atom bomb. The site for a new one has been acquired in Yokohama. In addition to these places they are entrusted with the missions in the government Prefecture of Tochigi, a parish in Nagano and various chaplaincies.

The International Franciscan Mission in Nagano, consisting of the northern part of the Diocese of Yokohama, was formally entrusted to the Friars in 1949, though the church in Nagano was founded as early in 1935 by a German Friar of the Silesian Province. The personnel of the international mission comprises Friars from Columbia, S.A., Belgium, Spain, Poland and Silesia in East Germany.

The Friars of the New York Province arrived in Japan in 1950. In 1952 the Prefecture of Gumma, with Maebashi as its capital, about one hundred miles northwest of Tokyo, was given into their charge.

The first Italian Friars of the Roman

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

Province arrived in 1949 and now have a parish in Tokyo. Franciscans from other provinces in Italy are working with the German Friars in Hokkaido, part of that territory having been recently committed to the Province of Venice.

Similarly assisting the Friars in Hokkaido are several Franciscans from the Netherlands.

Very recently the organization of a new parish in Osaka has been undertaken by the Friars in Japan.

Directly under Very Rev. Alphonse Schnusenberg, O.F.M., Delegate General of all the Friars Minor in the Far East, are the Language School, the new Regional Franciscan Major Seminary now (1953) under construction, and the adjoining Biblical Institute, all located in Tokyo.

The Language School, at present the residence of Father Delegate, was organized by him in 1950. It offers one, two, or three-year courses in spoken and written Japanese in line with the special needs of newly-arrived missionaries, along with other auxiliary branches such as mission law and history. The seventy-five students who attended the school in 1952-53 represented fourteen different nationalities and twenty-four different religious congregations. The enrollment for the coming year (1953-54) is already ninety-six.

This rapid growth is taxing the present limited classroom space. An additional building will soon be a necessity.

Another general work of the Franciscans in Japan of basic importance, the need of which has been repeatedly stressed by Pius XI and the present Holy Father, is that of fostering native vocations. The new Regional Seminary now being built is a direct answer to this need. On September 1, 1952, seven native Franciscans were raised to the priesthood the largest group of Franciscans ordained at one time in the history of Japan. Though funds necessary to complete the new seminary are still far from realization, the work has

been begun with firm trust in God's Providence.

The projected Biblical Institute, now in the process of preparation and organization, will have as its first and chief task the rendering of the Scriptures from the original text into modern Japanese,—dignified yet understandable to the ordinary Christian. As yet there is no complete Catholic Japanese version of the Sacred Scriptures. The first requirements of such an undertaking are the training of Japanese and foreign Friars for this specialized labor and the building up of an adequate library. Both these requirements are being met, but much yet remains to be done. The building that will house the institute and its personnel is already standing on the site of the new seminary.

The Friars Minor in the whole of Japan now number over 150. Of this number more than one hundred are priests, including eleven native Japanese and one Korean; over twenty are professed lay brothers, the majority of whom are Japanese with two Koreans; the remainder are all native clerics, novices, and postulants.

To provide for the years of training and education of these native postulants and novices and clerics requires outside help. To establish them later in missions and to keep them going requires more help. Moreover, the sizeable number of foreign Friars in Japan whose native lands have been depleted by the war, or whose home lands have come under Communist control, have been cut off from all support from their mother provinces. Many of them too, have recently come to Japan as expellees from missions in Red China, where the few belongings they had were stripped from them. They too depend trustfully on outside help. But besides these general needs, there is the daily pressing one now of meeting the obligations building up with the new seminary, not to mention the Biblical Institute.



But God, and through Him those who can help, be it in ever so small a way, will not fail their needs. Financial support is necessary, but even more important is support by prayer and sacrifice. The Franciscans in Japan, in their unselfish work for souls, depend on your support. They know you will not fail them. In return their Father St. Francis will say:

"The Lord bless thee, and give thee peace."

Address of Father Delegate:  
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28-4 Mikawadai-machi  
Minato-ku, Azabu  
Tokyo, Japan  
Cables - Framinor Tokyo  
Tel. 48-0204

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# the CORD

VOL. IV NO. V, MAY 1954

## CONTENTS

THE GOLDEN ALPHABET.....	130
Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.	
THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	132
Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.	
THE LITURGICAL PUBLICITY IN SANCTITY.....	136
Sr. Maria, O.F.M.	
THE EXPLANATION: RULE OF THIRD ORDER REGULAR.....	148
Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.	
THE LITTLE DARK QUEEN.....	157
Adapted from an Article in <i>Priestly Studies</i>	
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS.....	159

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## THE GOLDEN ALPHABET

(Prov. 31:10-31)

In the Book of Proverbs (31:10-31) there is a composition consisting of twenty-two distichs, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. The line reads: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* It is called *The Golden Alphabet* because it enumerates all the virtues that should adorn a Hebrew maiden or woman. The second last distich reads: *Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain. The woman feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* Which means that the true adornment of womanhood does not consist in outward apparel, jewelry or glittering devices, but in and genuine virtue, the highest of which is the Fear of the Lord.

Mother Church uses this beautiful text for the Lesson of the Commemoration of Holy Women. It might well be used in our modern courses of pedagogy or education, for, in spite of its antiquity, it still stands forth as the ideal text for the formation and training of women.

The Seraphic Doctor, Saint Bonaventure, was so enamoured of the beauty and power of these inspired lines that he used them in their entirety in his work, *Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, under the Gift of Fortitude. And, from the vast number of famous women in history, whom would the Seraphic Doctor select as the type of the Valiant Woman? None other than the Virgin all-Powerful, our Immaculate Mother. Undoubtedly he was intrigued by the inspired line of Saint John who describes the Mother of the Saviour as *standing beneath the Cross* (Jn. 19:25). This is the same line which inspired Jacopone da Todi to write his immortal *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. Above all, in time and in eternity, Mary is The Valiant Woman! Let us paraphrase her praises.

Aleph	Who shall find the valiant woman? Rarest pearl from distant coast:
Beth	Faith in her, not spoils to conquer, Is her husband's proudest boast.
Ghimel	Blessings, unalloyed with evil, She will yield him all her days;
Daleth	Gathering wool and flax; her fingers Defly plying skill with grace.
He	Like a merchant craft a-sailing, She hauls food from alien shores;
Vau	Rising in the night, to portion To her servants bread and chores.
Zain	Heedfully she buys an acre, Plants a vineyard from her gain;
Heth	Then, her loins with virtue girded, Bares her arm to prove her main.
Teth	Scanning with delight her bargains, Through the night her lamp she stirs;

Jod	Reaching for the flowing distaff— Merrily the spindle purrs.
Caph	Open hands greet the afflicted, And the poor her kindly arm:
Lamed	Clad in double cloth, her household Fears from cold or snow no harm.
Mem	Woven rugs adorn the homestead; Silks and purple, her attire—
Nun	While among the city fathers Sits with pride the honored Sire.
Samekh	Fine-spun linens off to market; Girdles rare the merchant craves:
Ain	Strength and dignity her vesture, As she hails the latter days.
Pe	Wisdom from her lips teems freely; From her tongue but kindliness:
Sade	Watching every step about her, She bewares of idleness.
Koph	Hark! Her sons in fondest praises, And her husband's boastful call:
Resh	"Many daughters won distinction— Thou hast far surpassed them all".
Shin	Charm belies and beauty withers; Praise to her that fears the Lord:
Tau	Give her of the fruit she gathered— Praise undying, her reward!

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*If any one speaks, let it be as with words of God (I Pet 4:11)*

*Charity is patient, is kind, . . . endures all things*, and charity gracious and courteous in word and deed. It has its prototype in God: what we possess of it comes down to us from its fathomless wellsprings in his bosom. The courtesy which flows from divine love is gracious and generous beyond comprehension: it fills us with every spiritual blessing; it predestined us to be adopted as sons; it gave us beyond measure wisdom and prudence; it sealed us with the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the promise, that he might be the pledge of our inheritance. And these were gracious gifts which God bestowed freely, of his own good pleasure, in order that his kindness might be praised now and in the ages to come (Eph. 1:3 sq.).

His kindness and courtesy shine forth with infinite splendor in his relation with us who by sin had become so wretched and degraded. When his love was rejected and his gifts spurned, he *endured with much patience vessels of wrath, ready for destruction* (Rom. 9:2); though the world had veered so far from his love and the true knowledge of him, yet *he did not leave himself without testimony, bestowing blessings, giving rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness* (Acts 14:16); *always he made his sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust* (Mt. 5:45); *he is kind towards the ungrateful and the evil* (Lk. 6:35). Even more, when mankind fell from his grace through sin and was, of itself, devoted to reprobation and utterly helpless to rescue itself from its unspeakable misery, he took the burden upon himself: *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting* (Jn. 3:16). He bestowed redemption upon us lavishly, for *God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his great love wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead through our sins, brought us to life together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and seated us together in heaven with Christ Jesus, that he might show in the ages to come the overflowing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus* (Ep. 2:4-7).

The Father sent to us his Son born of a woman. Saint Paul describes the coming of the Son of God in this way: *The goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared* (Tit. 3:4). This goodness is really benignity; it is much like charity; it has something in it of meekness, affability, amiability; while kindness is benevolence and clemency. Our Lord manifested all of this under all circumstances. When John the Baptist first pointed him out as *the lamb of God*, John and Andrew timidly followed him; but Jesus turned to them and asked in a friendly way: *What is it you seek? They said to him, 'Rabbi. . . , where dwellest thou?' He said to them, 'Come and see,' and they stayed with him that day* (Jn. 1: 36-39). Nicodemus came to him at night for fear of the Jews, yet Jesus received him graciously and conversed with him at length (Jn. 3). Hungry and weary, he waited at the well that he might win the soul of the Samaritan woman whom he led in a most gentle way to the admission of her sins (Jn. 4). When the poor widow made her small contribution to the temple treasury, apparently not without some public embarrassment, Jesus bestowed great praise upon her: *Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all* (Lk. 21: 3). The penitent woman rushed to his feet during the banquet in Simon's house; the pharisee had unkind thoughts about her—"what woman. . . a sinner"—but Jesus defended her, praising her sorrow and her love (Lk. 7). Jesus saw the man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been thirty-eight years under his infirmity, and in his divine courtesy he offered to cure him: *Dost thou want to get well? . . . Then he said to him, Rise, take up thy pallet and walk* (Jn. 5:5 sq.). Jarius asked Jesus to restore to life his daughter who had just died, and immediately *Jesus arose and followed him* into his house and raised the dead girl to life (Mt. 9:18). A certain woman had had a hemorrhage for twelve years (Lk. 8:43-48). She would have been much embarrassed to ask for a cure such as this, so in her faith she planned on "pilfering" a miracle by touching the tassel of his cloak. And she was healed forthwith and was praised for her pious thievery by Jesus who was courteous not in word only, but in power also (I Thess. 1: 5). To the women who were lamenting over him he said: *Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children* (Lk. 23:8). The dying thief said courageous words in defense of Jesus and asked for a remembrance. Our Lord was grateful for his defense and made the

gracious promise: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise* (Lk. 23:43). Thus, he who easily made himself the friend of publicans and sinners did not hesitate to take the penitent thief as his companion into paradise on that very day.

Such was the courtesy of Christ in his actions. What will have been his speech! He had been preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth, and the Gospel tells us that when he had finished, the people who heard him  *marvelled at the words of grace that came forth from his mouth* (Lk. 4: 22). We could not expect it to have been otherwise for this is he of whom the psalmist says: *Grace is poured on thy lips* (Ps. 44:3). Thus it was that courtesy flowed forth in word and deed from the love of God.

Saint Francis too was courteous to the fingertips because charity abounded in him. "Know, my dear brother, that courtesy is one of the attributes of God, who sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust; for courtesy is the sister of charity; it extinguishes hatred and enkindles love" (*Fioretti*, ch. 37). He held up as a model to his friars "the courtesy of Brother Angelo, the first knight to come into the Order, a man graced with all courtesy and gentleness." He counsels his brothers, when they go about in the world, to be "modest, peaceable and reserved, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everyone as is proper." The ideal minister must be "a man to comfort the afflicted," and his associates are to be so courteous "that they receive anyone coming to them with holy geniality."

Francis' first great conquest of self was an act of courtesy toward a leper whom he kissed. We later see him extending courtesy toward robbers. The story goes like this: Brother Angelo had refused to give the robbers bread and reproached them for their evil ways. On hearing of this, Francis reproved Brother Angelo, and sent him with provisions bidding him to find the robbers and give them the provisions as a gift from himself. The upshot of it all was that the three robbers were converted and were received into the Order by Saint Francis. The *Fioretti* records the end in this way, "Two of them died shortly after their conversion and went to heaven." Was this an expression of simplicity, trust, and Christian courtesy—"and went to heaven." How much real goodness is hidden in that phrase! (26).

Saint Francis and his true followers have always taken to their hearts the lowly, the sinful, the outcast, the leper. We are intended for such as these; therefore we must be accessible, compassionate, gracious towards them all. Being fully persuaded of our own lowliness, we must become the support of the weakness of others, always having kind and courteous words. Let people come to us with their griefs, their embarrassing problems; let them pour out the story of their sinfulness; and let them find in us understanding and compassion. *Put on, therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience* (Col. 3:12), for if one closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn. 3:17). What a comfort to those in distress, sorrow, or sin, if they find us friendly and courteous! It will be like ointment on the harassed soul and the tortured mind. *Let your speech, while always attractive, be seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one* (Col. 4:6). Thus are we to converse with our suffering brothers; thus too are we to dismiss them with the courtesy of the Son of God; then our name will be always in benediction. *Thy lips...are as a dripping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue* (Cant. 4:11).

Courtesy is due also to the sinful and degraded if they approach us, for *the Son of Man came to save what was lost* (Mt. 18:11). They too have been called to adoption as sons of God, and if now they are *children of wrath* because of their sins, still, we have no knowledge of the mysteries of grace, for God can lift them up. *Amen I say to you, the publicans and harlots are entering the kingdom of God* (Mt. 21:31). Therefore, also with regard to these, *let no ill speech proceed from your mouth, but whatever is good for supplying what fits the current necessity, that it may give grace to the hearers* (Eph. 4:29). We may thus contribute our share toward adding them to the number of those that are to be saved. In this connection, it would be well to recall the words of Saint Bernard; "We have taught that every soul, though burdened with sins and entangled in vices... and prostrated in the mire... I say, even granting him to be thus damned and despaired of, still, we have taught that such a one can perceive within himself the ground why he can not only be revived but also hope of pardon, hope of mercy, but may also dare to aspire to

nuptials with the Word, and without hesitation enter into a compact of fellowship with God, and need have no fear to bear the sweet yoke of love with the King of the angels. For, why should he not securely approach him by whose image he sees himself to be eminent and by his likeness illustrious? Why, I say, should he dread the majesty to whom confidence is given by reason of his origin?" (P. 183, col. 1181).

Untold spiritual harm has been done by caustic words, by unkind and unseasonable reproach of the simple. The simple has inflicted wounds which well might have ended with everlasting death, *for the wrath of man does not work the justice of God* (Jas. 1:20). We must rather be *imitators of God, as very dear children of His love, as Christ also loved us* (Eph. 5:1), and in our lives, by word and in deed, show forth the *goodness and kindness of our Savior* (Tit. 3:4).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.S.B.

## SIMPLICITY IN SANCTITY

There is no gainsaying that example is the most potent of teachers. The Divine Master used it almost exclusively, in one form or another, during His life on earth, to teach His doctrine; St. Francis was certainly one to whom teaching by example was the favored means, and all the really great teachers through the centuries have found it their most effective type of instruction. The Church, too, in the lives of her Saints, her Blessed, and her potential Blessed, says: "Thus it is in action." If a virtue has been practiced before, if a sacrifice has been made by someone else, if a mode of life has already been lived by another, then much of the uncertainty about it disappears, and there is a feeling that "if he could do it, so can I." At no time, more so than at the present, has there been a need for a particular type of example offered in the life of the young Scottish working girl, Margaret Sinclair, a fun-loving girl, who died

Poor Clare Nun in a Nursing Home just outside London in 1925. Her life is a revelation and an encouragement to the working girl, as well as to the nun; it is an additional proof that even in a very modern environment—and a far from sheltered one at that—sanctity is possible.

Margaret Sinclair was born on March 29, 1900, in a two-room tenement in a slum district of Edinburgh, Scotland. She was the second daughter, and the third child, born to very poor, but very good parents. Andrew Sinclair was just a city laborer, who had been received into the Church only a few months before his marriage to the very refined and devout Elizabeth Kelly; yet all her life Margaret found occasion to thank God for "such a good father and mother." Shortly after Margaret's birth, in spite of the great personal privation entailed, Andrew and Elizabeth moved their growing family from the two rooms in Middle Arthur Place to a flat in Blackfriars Street—still in the slum district—so that the girls might have a room to themselves.

Eventually there were three girls and three boys in the family and, although they knew privation, the Sinclair household was a happy and merry one. It was a family that prayed together and played together. The Family Rosary was a daily must, and Mrs. Sinclair, a deeply religious woman, early taught her young ones to shun sin, and, in each child in turn, she instilled her own special love for the Infant Jesus and the guardian angel. When friction arose, as it will in even the best of families, and Mrs. Sinclair was not around, it was Margaret who poured the soothing oil. She was a natural peacemaker—the needed word was said most unobtrusively. As a growing child she was unusually sensible and unselfish, always trying to do something for someone. Most children want to be helpful, but with Margaret it seemed to be a necessity, a drive. Already at the age of three she found little things to do that were a help to her mother, and at that time told Mrs. Sinclair that she wanted to hurry and grow up so that she could do more for her.

When she reached the age of five, Margaret started school, going with Bella, who was two years older, to Saint Anne School. The Sisters of Mercy were in charge of the school which was the Catholic school closest to their home. Although she was not above average in

intelligence, she was soon in the same class with the definitely slow Bella, and from that time on it was Maggie who helped Bella with her lessons, as it was Margaret who later helped Andrew, and the Lizzie, too, as each began going to school. She was docile and obedient in school and, apparently, was never the cause of concern to the teachers; after class she was a regular tomboy. When Andrew, who was sixteen months younger than she, became involved in fights, it was Maggie who usually finished them off for him—even the big boys shied off when they saw that Margaret was taking over. She was so full of life and brimming over with spirit that it was contagious, and at most of the playground games and sports she was the leader. One of her favorite pastimes was swimming; she was good enough at it to win several prizes—she won prizes for running, too.

1910 was an eventful year for Maggie Sinclair—it brought what she later called the “happiest day of her life”—the day on which she, together with Bella, received her First Holy Communion; and the day on which the two of them were confirmed by Archbishop Smith. It was during her tenth year, also, that her mother was taken seriously ill, and because she was so much more helpful than the older children and so wise, Margaret was the one chosen to stay home from school for a while to keep things going.

By this time, Lizzie was going to school with the others, and she was Margaret’s pet charge—Bella refused to bother with Lizzie because of her impudence. Margaret mothered this delicate “wonder” sister. She washed and dressed and fussed with her; every night she helped her with her lessons; and she sacrificed her own playtime to entertain Lizzie and the others. The Sinclair children did much of their playing together in the playground of Saint Anne’s school, because it ran along just behind the houses on Blackfriars Street. They spent many a happy hour pushing each other on the swings. Oftentimes when they were swinging, other children would gather about to watch them, plainly envious. Maggie was not content to see them; she saw that they, too, had “twenty each.”

Mrs. Sinclair, in her attempt to keep her children above the level of the sordidness of slums, had taught them to avoid those who were rough and ill-mannered. However, one day when Margaret

returning from the store, her arms filled with packages, one of these rough fellows caught up with her. He was about her own age and had been trying for some time to attract her attention, but Maggie would never take any notice of him. This time he caught her about the waist for a mere instant before she broke away, ran into the house, put her packages on the table, rushed out again and was quick enough to administer two very resounding slaps. Returning to the house, she sat down, caught her breath, and told the whole incident to the family, concluding, matter-of-factly, that she had taught him a lesson. Her father was particularly amused and teased her for many a day about it.

She was always saving something, from Hail Marys to half-pennies; but it was saving for giving. She saved her half-pennies to buy hair ribbons for Lizzie, or for a Christmas present for her mother and father; she saved Hail Marys for the Lovely Infant—and they ran into the thousands—Hail Marys which she said during the in-between times. The first job she had—an after-school job of carrying messages in a fancywork shop in town—was an attempt to save her mother some anxiety and to ease the financial situation of the family. She came home so tired at nights, however, that Mrs. Sinclair soon made her give it up. Then there was the clothes problem—always a trying one, especially for the girls of a family in circumstances such as theirs—but, since Margaret was clever at sewing, she was able to satisfy to some extent her love of pretty clothes, both for herself and for the others. When the question of a Communion dress for Lizzie arose, and the family finances would not permit a new white one, Margaret made over her own first Communion dress for her little sister, and did it so well that even Lizzie was pleased. While still in school, Margaret and Bella attended night classes in dressmaking and cooking several times a week, and Margaret was awarded certificates in these which enabled her to attend classes in Atholl Crescent School of Domestic Economy.

Then Margaret Sinclair grew up. At fourteen she left school and went to work at the Waverly Cabinet Works as a french-polisher. It took only a few weeks for her to learn the trade at which she soon became proficient, the trade at which she was employed until she entered the convent. The dirt and clamor of the place, the speech

and morals of her fellow-workers failed to dampen either her piety or her graciousness; even in such surroundings she dared to be herself. When she found in her workroom, among a lot of worthless junk, a beautiful picture of the Blessed Mother, she cleaned it fully and hung it in the corner where she did most of her work. The fact that her employer was a Protestant did not deter her—she was not flaunting her religion, it was just so much a part of her. The next day when she came to work, the picture was gone from the corner, but she quickly found it, and up it went again in the same place. The next day there was a repetition of the procedure; the next. In fact, it turned into a contest of wills that went on till Margaret left the place. However, when the firm had to close because of the war, her employer gave Margaret the best of recommendations for a job with the Scottish Furniture Company. The manager, in a friendly vein, he gave her a bit of parting advice; he suggested that if she put up her hair to make herself look older, she would get more pay—and Margaret took his advice.

In her work, Margaret had to mix with all sorts of people, to work in surroundings that were far from her liking, but she found where lay her strength; she went to the Source of goodness and found her strength at Holy Mass and daily Communion. This entailed more of a sacrifice than might appear on the surface, for one of Margaret's weaknesses was her love of sleep. She was one of those people who require a great deal of sleep, so she really had difficulty getting up in the mornings; besides, her work was at some distance, frequently she had no time for breakfast. Yet every lunch hour found her kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, and no matter how tired she might be at the end of the day, she would always stop at the church, if just for a few moments, on her way home from work. Her love of the Sacred Heart was a vital part of Margaret; from Him she learned meekness and humility, and the pleasant, charming manner for which she was well known.

And she was a fun-loving working girl. Margaret was fond of having a good time and her happy laughter brightened many a group. She liked especially to attend socials where she could dance, for dancing was another of her favorite amusements, and she and Andrew were quite good at it. Andrew usually took the two girls home from

affairs when nine o'clock came around—Margaret insisted on leaving at nine. This inseparableness of the Sinclairs was often a topic for laughter and comment among their friends; even Mrs. Sinclair herself said in regard to Bella and Margaret, that one could not go the length of the street without the other. Always, after one of their evenings of dancing and enjoyment, Margaret would slip to her knees to say her rosary, for, as she said, she had had a wonderful time and she must give God His share.

The correspondence of the family usually fell to her lot, and when her father and John were away at the war, it sometimes became a chore, for Margaret was not much of a writer. Happening to glance up one evening when Margaret was writing to John, her mother caught her in the act of cutting a strip off the bottom of the paper—that way she would not have to write as much. Punctuation was an especially weak point with her; on one postcard to Mr. Sinclair from her mother, she had written "God keep you from your loving wife." How the family enjoyed it when her father brought the card home, and she still could not see why they laughed so.

Margaret liked reading the lives of the saints, and the pamphlets of the Catholic Truth Society. Much of her time going to and from work on the bus was spent in such reading, and often when the girls were washing up, she would begin to tell Bella the things that impressed her, hoping thus to entice her into reading the books. However, Bella preferred to be read to. At night, the father at times had to knock on the wall to put an end to these nocturnal readings. Once she came across a passage about a purgatory on earth that especially appealed to her; but in talking it over with Bella, she admitted that, much as she would love to have her purgatory on earth, she would never ask for it, lest she become a burden to her mother and father. Her concern was ever for others!

Every summer the two girls went away together for their vacation. There were several sailing expeditions, for the water had a special fascination for Margaret—there was even a venture into a hired rowing boat, although neither of them knew anything about rowing. The summer that Margaret was seventeen they went to Rosewell, a little place close to the famous Roslin Chapel which had been built by their Sinclair ancestors. They stayed with an old couple in a small

cottage at least a mile away from any other house, and won the hearts of the old people, not only because they did all the housework, but also because of their unaffected goodness and gaiety. Although it was vacation time, at Margaret's urging, Bella joined her at Mass and Holy Communion every morning; afterwards, Margaret would make her thanksgiving sitting outside in the good, clean air; it was such a joy after the dust and dirt of her work-room. They found a spot, too, where they could sit by a stream to say the Little Office of the Children of Mary. On all their vacations, there was this same pattern of prayer and enjoyment.

In the summer of 1919, they went to Bo'ness for their holiday where they stayed with some relatives of a friend who lived in the same house as the Sinclairs. By this time, Margaret had grown to be a very lovely girl, pretty, and with very charming manners. Young men really found her attractive, but none had ever been able to persuade her to keep company with him. The case of Patrick Lynch was, to her way of thinking, quite different, for it involved an act of charity. A nephew of her hostess, Patrick was a young ex-serviceman, who was not practicing his religion. He asked Margaret if she might show her the town and the docks for which the town was famous. She went, but Bella went along. The following Sunday found him at Mass with the two sisters. Although his language was anything but desirable, he promised to break himself of the habit of profanity if Margaret would consent to keep company with him. She refused his conditions and made her own—he would have to change a great deal before she would go with him. Patrick really did try, and the change was so evident that he became a frequent visitor at the Sinclair home. They had long talks about religion and he was the subject of many of her prayers. All this while Patrick was under the impression that Margaret would eventually marry him, for, although she had told him repeatedly that she had no intention of doing so, he was sure that she was joking and refused to take her seriously. They drifted into a definite engagement, but only because Patrick insisted that unless she assented, he would probably fall back into his old slipshod habits. Margaret thought that it must be the will of God since everybody, including her father and mother, were so in favor of the marriage; and as he slipped the

ring on her finger, she prayed to love Patrick. But she was miserable. At last, in desperation, she went to Father Agius, a Jesuit who had recently become her regular confessor, and with an absolute lack of selfconsciousness told him the whole story. The advice he gave coincided exactly with her own inclinations, and she broke the engagement.

At this time, Margaret was working in the biscuit factory of McVitie and Price, doing the french-polishing on their exhibition showcases and working in a little room by herself. She always wore her Handmaid of the Blessed Sacrament pin on her overall; when one of the Catholic girls commented on her courage in thus displaying her religion so openly, Margaret replied that there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Handmaid of the Lord. At all times, she kept her beads and prayerbook at hand, on the table right beside her in the workroom. One day, one of the workmen came into the room and ventured to tell a very off-color story, hoping thus to establish a sort of camaraderie. She gave no sign at all that she either saw or heard him, and he withdrew somewhat deflated, but not quite; for he was in the act of making a second attempt several days later when he was stopped by the sight of the prayerbook and rosary on the table. Contrary to expectations, he went out quickly and warned the other men that Margaret was not the kind of girl to whom they could tell their stories. The warning was not necessary, for, wherever she worked, everyone treated her with respect. She was so considerate of others, always willing and ready to help anyone, and never giving a display of temper. In more ways than one, her devotion to the Sacred Heart was effective—there was a time when Margaret had to count almost to a hundred to prevent an outburst.

It is of her smile, so irresistible and winning, that everyone seems to have such a vivid remembrance, a smile that uplifted the hearts of those who came near her. She unconsciously gave the secret of her own smile when she advised Bella to force herself to smile, no matter how she felt; for, she explained, one never knows who may be in trouble and a smile in passing may lighten the way for them and give them courage to bear it.

During the time of her engagement, subconsciously, at least, the thought of a religious vocation must have been taking form;



for very shortly after the break, she confided to Bella that she was thinking of entering a convent. That autumn, while she and Bella were making a retreat for working girls at the convent of Mari Reparatrice, the thought became a conviction; from that retreat onward, her spiritual life seems to have grown deeper and fuller and her mortifications increased. Often, after receiving Holy Communion, she was so full of love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament that she failed to notice that the last Gospel had come, and she knelt on without moving. She made a cross from a piece of wood and inserted eight nails—they were left sticking out so that they might pierce her flesh when she wore it bound to her back. Sometimes when her sisters awakened in the night, they saw Margaret kneeling beside her bed with arms extended in the form of a cross—Margaret who was so fond of sleep. Margaret was practicing. She was getting ready for the life of a Poor Clare, for it was to their community that she felt drawn. Bella tried to dissuade her; for she herself had decided to become a Little Sister of the Poor, and she saw no reason why Margaret should not enter with her. In reply, Margaret jokingly asked why she could not enter the Poor Clares with her—but the life was not for Bella. When she made known her desire to Father Agius, he was very explicit about the austerity of the life and the difficulties that she would encounter; but Margaret assured him that “with God’s help” she could bear it.

Having been refused as a candidate for an Extern Sister at the Poor Clare convent in Liberton because there were already four girls on their waiting list, she applied, at the recommendation of the Mother Abbess, to the community at Notting Hill in London where she was accepted on condition that she pass the required physical examination. As Margaret had a slight cough, Father Agius suggested that she first take a two weeks rest at a convalescent home at Lanark. When she gave notice to her employers, they were reluctant to lose her that they offered an increase in wages and vacation if she would stay; but her mind and heart were set. When she returned from her two weeks at Lanark, the doctor pronounced her perfectly fit for the life that she had chosen. Bella left home in June of 1923 to join the Little Sisters of the Poor in Liverpool, and Margaret, with her mother in mind, suggested to Father Agius that

she wait six months or so; but he advised against it. Mrs. Sinclair had readily given her consent to her eldest daughter, but when Margaret also sought it, she felt the need of an additional Mass and Holy Communion to gain strength enough to make this second sacrifice. In July, just a month after Bella entered, Margaret and Andrew set out together—Margaret bound for the Poor Clare convent in London, and Andrew for Canada.

The letters to her family during the next few months were typical of her. True, they told of her own happiness and contentment, but one can see under it all, loving solicitude for those she left at home. Because she knew that her mother was deprived of the companionship to which she had grown accustomed, she warned Lizzie, who, she feared, was a little spoiled, to be very considerate and affectionate with her. To Father Agius she confided her amusement at some of the quaint practices which she found in the life of the convent.

For her Clothing in February of 1924, her mother, father and John were present. Bella, too, was able to stop off on her way to her Novitiate in France, and to be present when her beloved Margaret became Sister Mary Francis of the Five Wounds. Such a happy novice she was—the happiness shone through—she was radiant. The naturalness, the sincerity, the unaffected piety that was Margaret Sinclair was, if possible, intensified in Sister Mary Francis, the novice, who gradually grew to be the personification of the Spirit and Rule of the Order. She pronounced her First Vows on February 14, 1925, a ceremony for which none of her family could be present, probably because of the death of Mr. Sinclair, which had occurred as the result of a motor accident the preceding December.

Among her duties as an Extern Sister was that of questing for the convent. It is a duty that is definitely not pleasant to naure; yet the people whom she visited remember her for her sweet simplicity, her sunny cheerfulness, and her winsome smile.

Then quite unexpectedly, they received word in Edinburgh that Sister Mary Francis had tuberculosis of the throat, and was to be moved to Marillac House, a Sanatorium conducted by the Sister of Charity at Warley. Margaret was heart-broken at having to leave the convent in which she had found such delight; all the way to

Warley she whispered over and over "It is God's will." Much as she felt the separation, however, no one at the Sanatorium would have guessed it—she was so cheerful and bright. She suffered very much physically—from a prostrating weakness, from a constant breathlessness and choking; and she suffered much from loneliness, from being away from her convent. With it all though, she was always cheerful, always resigned, always smiling, for it was God's will that she was living. She felt keenly her move from the nun's quarters—she was to be transferred for a while because her cough disturbed the others—there were tears in her eyes when they moved her, but she was still smiling. To be dissatisfied and hard to please is almost a universal concomitant of tuberculosis, but with Margaret there was no least sign of impatience. Like the true child of Francis she was, she radiated joy under all circumstances. She resisted any attempt to make her more comfortable if she thought it was not in conformity with the spirit of her Order, following faithfully what she could of the rules and customs of the Poor Clares. She loved Francis, and Clare, and Colette, and felt she had to share her life with the other Sisters by telling them stories of her Saints.

When Father Agius visited her in August, she told him of her distress at not being able to say the Office as the Rule enjoined, but he was able to reassure her. At his questioning she told him that Our Lord was always with her, that she called Him "Sweet Jesus" and that He called her "My Love", but that she had never seen Him or heard Him with her ears. When he asked what books she read, she showed him the New Testament and the Imitation of Christ, and pointed out for him her favorite chapters, seven of the first eight of the Second Book and five of the Third. At this same visit Margaret made a general confession and Father later remarked that she had never committed even a deliberate venial sin.

She seems to have had a conviction that she would not recover, and in her letters to her mother she tried to prepare her gently for the end. Margaret had no fear of death, but talked about it as one would have done about her Profession Day. Upon his return in September, she greeted Father Agius with the words, "I want to see Him, Father." Living in the Presence of God continuously, she made no show of her holiness. Her gratitude for even the small

service was beautiful, and "May God reward you" came to her lips as naturally as breathing. She seemed to have no likes and dislikes—her mortifications were done quietly, and she was embarrassed at having been detected when the Sister who nursed her reminded her that she was in a hospital and that there were to be no mortifications. After a particularly trying day, she sometimes would glance up at Sister and, with a smile on her face, tell her that it had been a glorious day because it had been a day of great suffering. When a wasp got into her throat during a severe coughing spell and stung her, she smilingly called it a "wee splinter of the Cross." Sister Mary Francis was gathering her "splinters" carefully!

Especially during her last three weeks the nights were periods of torture; yet she would begin as early as two o'clock to prepare for Holy Communion, for regardless of her severe coughing spells, she was usually able to receive her Divine Lord. The night of her death, the whole night through she kept repeating, "Jesus, forgive me all my faults;" then she would add, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul." And it was her last prayer, her last breath, as she died in the early hours of the morning of November 24, 1925, conscious to the end, and clasping the little crucifix which hung from her wrist at all times.

In just twenty-five years, Margaret Sinclair had spent a lifetime of love—a lifetime engrossed in God and filled with thoughtfulness of others. It was a singularly beautiful life of heart-warming humility and sincerity, of tranquility and joy; it was a life reminiscent of the spirit and virtues of the Little Man the whole world is still running after. She took the matter-of-fact, everyday occurrences and proved that they need not be stumbling-blocks, but exemplified in her own life that they can very well be the stepping stones on the path to sanctity.

Sister Maura, O.S.F.

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

### *Article Twenty-four (continued)*

**TEXT:** *They are also obliged to keep the (vow of) poverty, within limits of their respective constitutions.*

While the obligations of the vow of chastity are the same for religious, the same cannot be said of poverty, even as observed by various Third Order Regular Congregations. Consequently, the Code adds that Franciscan Tertiaries are obliged to practice poverty within the limits of their respective constitutions. Despite these differences, however, it is possible to set down certain general norms or principles regarding the observance of this vow, particularly those incorporated in the Code of Canon Law or elaborated by moral theologians.

Generally speaking, we can say that voluntary poverty as vowed by religious has as its object the renunciation in whole or part of the ownership of property. By property or temporal goods, the Church understands such material or earthly possessions as can be bought, sold, or exchanged. In short, they include money or such things as have a monetary value as real estate, precious articles even of a religious nature such as chalices, reliquaries (though not the relics as such), and the like; such rights or privileges as are immediately connected with property such as mortgages, options, the right to revenues, interest, and so on.

Religious who make simple vows, whether temporary or perpetual, relinquish the right to the independent use of their property during the period of profession. They retain the ownership, however, as well as the capacity to acquire additional goods after profession unless their constitutions specify otherwise (Can. 580, par. 1). By solemn profession, on the contrary, the individual religious ordinarily surrenders the right to ownership itself so that he is no longer able to possess, to acquire, or freely dispose of his property. Canon 581 requires that religious about to take solemn vows give away whatever goods they still own to whomsoever they wish sometime within the sixty day period preceding profession. This renunciation, which cannot validly be made earlier, is conditional on the subsequent solemn profession. Once the latter is taken place, the formalities of civil law necessary to make the transfer of ownership valid in the civil courts should be complied with as far as possible.

Though Canon 580 (par. 1) indicates that religious in simple vows do not lose the right to acquire property after profession, for example, through inheritance or by way of purely personal donations, nevertheless, it reminds them (par. 2) that whatever they acquire by bodily or mental labor or whatever is given them in consideration of their being religious, belongs to the community. As canonists point out, donations to religious are usually made for the benefit and support of the convent and its members and must be accepted and employed as such, unless it is clear from the circumstances or expressed words of the benefactor that the donation is purely personal. Except in the case of the latter, therefore, religious are not free to refuse donations. To do so without a sufficient reason, however, would not be a violation of the vow of poverty but rather a sin against the charity they owe their institute. We say "without sufficient reason" for particular circumstances at times may justify a refusal, for instance, where the would-be benefactor is poor and needs the gift far more than the community, or where the acceptance would put the religious or the community under unwelcome obligations to the donor, and so forth.

Religious in simple vows must follow the prescriptions of Canon Law and their respective constitutions regarding the administration of the property they possess. In this connection, we might note that the Code forbids the novices to relinquish their possessions or assume any obligation with regard to them during the time of the novitiate. If they do so, the renunciation or obligation is not only illicit but automatically invalid in the eyes of the Church (Can. 568). This wise precaution was introduced to protect the too-enthusiastic novice from disposing of temporal goods in view of a profession that may never materialize, or what is worse, from being reluctant to leave because he no longer has his material possessions. As we have mentioned above (Article Five) in connection with the requirements for those to be professed, Canon Law requires that novices cede the administration of whatever property they possess to whomsoever they wish (either to the religious institute or to someone outside) during the period of their profession. They are also required to make a will disposing, in the event of their death, of whatever property they now possess or will obtain in the future (Can. 569). This will, though valid even for minors in the eyes of the Church, though not necessary before civil law must be legalized when the religious comes of age.

We might note here, inasmuch as it pertains to the vow of poverty, that once religious take simple vows, whether temporary or perpetual,

they are not permitted "to relinquish the dominion of their property gratuitously by an act *inter vivos*" (Can. 583, par. 1). An act *inter vivos* as understood here would be any juridical or legal transfer of property (except a last will or donation in case of death) which becomes effective while the religious is still alive. This canon only applies to gratuitous alienation of property, that is, where nothing of equivalent value is asked for in compensation. This prohibition was introduced by the Holy See to protect the religious should he desire or be obliged to leave the institute at the expiration of his profession or dispensation from his vows. For this reason, canonists explain that where it is a question of disposing (with the requisite permission) of sums relatively small or insignificant compared with the size of the fortune or estate, neither the spirit nor the letter of this canon would be violated, for such donations could not justly be called "relinquishing the dominion of their property."

The Code also forbids them to change the last will after profession except with the permission of the Holy See. However, where the matter is urgent and there is no time for recourse to Rome, the major superior may give permission, or if he cannot be reached in time, the local superior may do so (Can. 583, par. 2). The Code does not state what is to be done if the novice neglected to make a will before profession. According to the probable opinion, this Canon only forbids a change or alteration in a will originally drawn up in anticipation of their first profession. It does not prohibit a professed religious who through some oversight fails to comply with this regulation during novitiate, from first making a will with the permission of the superior.

As to the disposition of his goods, which Canon 569 orders the novice to make, probably be one fourth, or certainly one third, of the total revenue before his profession, cannot be changed afterwards at will by the professed, unless the constitutions allow this, but a change may be made with the permission of the supreme head of the religious organization.

The Code also declares that "the arrangements regarding the cession and in religious communities of women with solemn vows, the permission of the local Ordinary is required, and if the monastery is subject to regulars, also the permission of the regular superior must be obtained. The permission can be given only when there is no question of making a change in favor of the religious organization to which the professed belongs, at least not one which involves a notable part of the property. If the religious should leave the organization, this cession and disposition of his goods is cancelled by that very fact, and he regains the rights he had before making such arrangements" (Can. 580, par. 3). Except for

religious communities of women in which solemn vows are taken, then, the supreme superior of the order or congregation may permit their religious subjects to alter the original arrangements regarding the administration or the use and revenues accruing from their property without going to the Ordinary. To avoid all suspicion that the community is attempting to influence the religious or vice versa, the Code forbids that whatever change be made, it must not be such that the institute obtains a notable part of the property. Such a part, for instance, would be a restriction applies only to an alteration in the original disposition. There is nothing to prevent the religious making the institute the beneficiary by the initial disposition, whether this be at the time of the first profession (if the novice has property) or afterwards (if the property is acquired only later).

In addition to these limitations which the Code imposes on professed religious regarding the exercise of their rights of ownership, the vow of poverty also requires that the religious obtain the permission of the legitimate superior for whatever they need for their personal use, whether such necessities be provided from the community property or whether they be given as personal donations to the individual religious from outsiders. In regard to such donations, superiors should remember that they have an obligation to see to it that their subjects observe the common life "even in those things which pertain to food, clothing and furniture" (Can. 594, par. 1). Hence, they have no right to permit subjects to accept for their personal use expensive presents or donations which would violate this prescription. Even when luxurious gifts are made to the community as such, superiors should keep in mind that "what is furnished to the religious must be in harmony with the poverty they profess" (Can. 594, par. 3), and therefore they are free to refuse such gifts or to ask that they be exchanged for something more appropriate. The permission of the superior is also required to dispose of things given for one's use or to turn them to other purposes.

To be legitimate or valid, the required permission must be obtained without trickery or deceit from a superior competent to grant it. The latter condition not only implies that the superior has authority over the subject but also that the superior is justified in granting the permission for the article or goods in question. He or she has no right to give permissions for what is superfluous or too costly to be in harmony with the state of poverty as observed by the institute. Where the constitutions contain prescriptions or regulations regarding the granting of

permissions, the superior as much as the other members of the community is obliged to observe them. Otherwise the superior sins against poverty rather than the subject.

A legitimate permission may be one of four kinds: express, implicit, tacit or reasonably presumed. (1) *Express* permission is that which is given for a definite object either in so many words or by such equivalent signs as a nod of the head, and so on. As spiritual writers point out, it is the surest of all permissions and it is that by which a conscientious religious will be guided, where possible, for the sake of the perfect observance of poverty and for greater peace of soul. (2) *Implicit* permission is that which is contained or implied in some express permission. Thus, an express permission to make a journey includes an implicit permission to make the ordinary expenditures connected with it. (3) *Tacit* permission is that which is legitimately inferred from the circumstances, usually from the silence of the superior who knows of such actions, transactions and does not forbid them or object to them even though he could easily do so. Silence in such cases is equivalent to consent. Such is not the case, however, where the religious knows, or has good reason to think, that the superior actually disapproves or condemns the action, yet through weakness of character, or to avoid great evil, keeps silent. Under the heading of tacit or silent permission come legitimate customs or unwritten practices which have been gradually introduced into a community, either by way of interpretation or by way of modification of some point of the Rule or constitutions. Thus, in many religious communities custom permits the acceptance or donation of articles of small value among the members of the community or even with regard to outsiders. (4) *Presumed* permission is not an actual consent, whether express, implicit or tacit, but one which is supposed to exist in his mind because the subject reasonably judges that it would be readily granted under the circumstances if it were asked. Spiritual writers warn of this form of permission, if wrongly understood and applied by inordinant self-love, can give rise to laxity of discipline and other abuses. To presume permission legitimately, the inferior must reasonably suppose that the superior neither objects to the action e.g. the acceptance or disposal of the thing in question, nor to the subject's manner of acting under the circumstances, namely, his acceptance or disposal of the article without explicit permission. For it may well be that the superiors are not opposed to the action as such, when they know it to be necessary and useful, but rather to the subject's independent manner of acting which

recourse to them is easy or the matter can be conveniently deferred. In such cases however, the violation would seem rather to be one of obedience than of poverty. On the other hand, presumed permission properly interpreted is not only legitimate but it may often be a matter of duty to make use of it, for instance, if urgent necessity or the welfare of the community demands it. It is always licit and sufficient in cases where it is impossible to consult the superior and there is every reason for the subject to believe the permission would be granted under the circumstances. Even if it turns out later that the religious was mistaken, he has not offended God or violated his vow. While presumed permission may suffice to justify the acceptance of a gift or donation, if the latter is something that will be retained or used for any length of time, permission should be asked to keep and use it.

As for the nature of the sin involved in violations of poverty, the following may be noted. Where it is a question of accepting personal gifts for one's own use or disposing of one's own property without necessary permission, a religious can sin against poverty and also against obedience; against poverty in so far as the religious has voluntarily surrendered his right to the independent use of what he possesses, against obedience if it is a question of some contrary command of a superior or a violation of some prescription of Canon Law. Where it is a matter of appropriating or disposing of things belonging to the community without permission, a sin of injustice against the seventh commandment is also involved. In the latter case, the obligation to restitution can arise. If the loss to the community is not serious, the religious can make restitution by being more parsimonious in the legitimate use of community goods or funds, or by performing additional services or labor beyond what is normally required. Where the amount is serious, the subjects may be obliged to cede an equivalent portion of their own estate, if they have property or money, provided the community does not waive restitution through the superior.

Regarding the gravity of violations against poverty, moralists usually give the general rule that if a religious were to appropriate or dispose of things the value of which would constitute a serious or grave violation against the seventh commandment, the violation of the vow would be serious. However, they point out that if it is a question of appropriating illicitly property or money of the community, the latter ordinarily, unless circumstances argue otherwise, is considered to be a moral person who is not indigent but rich. Furthermore, the relationship of a religious to the

community can be regarded as that of a child to a family, and hence somewhat larger amount of the common funds would have to be appropriated to constitute a serious matter than in the case of an outsider (one and a half times as much according to a common opinion).

Since superiors are not the owners but merely the administrators of the temporal goods of the community, they too are obliged to observe the vow of poverty. Where they incur expenses or dispose of money contrary to the regulations of Canon Law or of the constitutions, for example without the consent of the council or chapter where this is required, they can easily sin mortally.

It is well for superiors to recall that the Code has laid down stringent regulations regarding the administration of community property, to nothing of the prescriptions concerning the dowry (Canons 547 to 553 in institutes of women).

Canon 532 declares that "the property of the institute, of the province, and of the house be administered conformably to the constitutions. Besides the superiors, those officials who are empowered by the constitutions can, within the limits of their office, validly incur expenses to perform the juridical acts of ordinary administration." Even prior to promulgation of the Code, the Holy See pointed out that superiors have a grave obligation to inform their council with all sincerity about the management of temporal affairs and to submit such matters for the deliberate vote of their council whenever this is prescribed. The councillors or consultors, in turn, have a grave obligation to exercise the control entrusted to their care by the Code or the constitutions of the institute.

In addition to the formalities imposed by the constitutions, Canon 533 requires superiors to obtain the previous consent of the Ordinary for investments or changes therein in the following cases: (a) If the house belongs to a diocesan institute, the superior must ask permission for every investment. According to the general principle *parvum pro nihilo* ("an insignificant amount is reputed as nothing"), if it is only a question of buying a few dollars worth of bonds, such permission would not be necessary. (b) Where it is a question of the dowry of the professed, however, even the superioress of a papal congregation must obtain this permission. (c) If funds have been left as a foundation the revenue and interest of which is to be used for divine worship (e.g. for masses, upkeep of a chapel or shrine, etc.) or to works of charity in the neighborhood (e.g. the maintenance of the sick, the aged, orphans, etc.), such

consent is required. If the benefactor merely gives the superior money to be spent according to his intentions within a more or less specified space of time, the latter should not invest it but keep it and devote it to the purposes assigned by the donor. In such a case, the approval of the council is not even necessary, since the superior merely functions as an executor of the will of the donor. (d) All religious, even regulars, must obtain the bishop's consent to invest money which has been given to a parish or mission cared for or served by the religious, or which has been given to the religious for the benefit of the parish or the mission. But if the principal intention of the benefactor is to help the religious institute rather than a specific parish or mission where they are engaged, the bishop's permission is not demanded. However, the Code points out that whenever donations are made to a pastor of a church, even the churches of religious, the presumption of the law is that the donation is made for the support of the church unless the contrary is clearly expressed (Can. 1536, par. 1).

Where it is a question of contracting debts or obligations in excess of 30,000 francs, or alienating community property estimated in excess of that value, or which consists of precious objects, noteworthy relics or images of special value or for which the faithful have a special devotion, the previous authorization of the Holy See is required. Otherwise the contracts are null and void, and in addition excommunication is incurred by all those who, while aware of the law and its punishment, neglected to ask the necessary authorization. When it is a question of obtaining consent to contract debts or obligations, the request for authorization must specify, under pain of nullity, the other debts or obligations with which the moral person in question is already burdened, be it an institute, a province or a house. For sums less than 30,000 francs, it is necessary and sufficient to obtain the written permission of the superior, according to the constitutions, with the consent of the council or chapter given by secret vote; but nuns or sisters of a diocesan institute must have besides the written consent of the local Ordinary. (Cf. Can. 534, 2347).

The monetary unit used in the documents of the Holy See is the (French) franc or the Italian lire, and strictly speaking these should be taken at the value they had when the Code was promulgated. While no special decision has been made regarding the equivalent values in other present day currency, the English version of Creusen, *Religious Men and Women in the Code* (Bruce, 1940) gives \$6,000 as the American equivalent of 30,000 francs.

By noteworthy relics, the Code understands "the body, the head, the arm, the forearm, the heart, the tongue, the hand, the leg or also any part of the body in which a martyr suffered, if it is entire and not small" (Can. 1281, par. 2). Images of special value would be those which are noteworthy by reason of popular veneration, artistic value or antiquity (Can. 1280). Precious objects are defined by the Code as "those which have notable value, for artistic or historical reasons or because of the material of which they are made" (Can. 1497). What the Church has in mind are movable goods such as precious collections, books, libraries, works of art, and the like. Their value is notable if it is around \$200 (Crenshaw, *op. cit.*, n. 163). While it is permissible to sell different objects for a price less than \$6,000, if none of them is precious in the above sense, when it is a question of a complete set, say of books, or carvings, and the individual items are to be considered as a single piece of property. Furthermore, in regard to the sale of several different pieces of property, estate or a collection of movable goods that is not precious, the Commission for the Interpretation of the Code (*Acta Apost. Sedis*, 1929, p. 100) has ruled that where several transactions form a moral unity, even though the individual items are less than \$6,000 but the combination or collection exceeds that amount, authorization is required. Such would be the case, for instance, where the superior, to raise money for some particular project, wished to sell several different plots of land each of which was slightly less than \$6,000. A similar situation would exist where a community contracts several debts or sells several pieces of property within a short space of time. Such acts would be considered morally one. Nevertheless, if the acts, e.g. two loans, are sufficiently separated in time and when in good faith, the community did not foresee the need of the second loan at the time the first was made, the two transactions could be considered morally separate. Since the prescriptions regarding the alienation of property are based on the evaluation thereof and not the actual price, it would not be necessary to obtain the authorization of the Holy See, for instance, to sell a piece of land estimated at \$5,800 to a bidder who offered over \$6,000 for the same.

Canon 537 declares that "donations from the goods of a house, province or religious organization are not permitted, except as alms or for another just cause, and with the permission of the superior and in accordance with the constitutions." This canon was introduced to correct or prevent certain abuses of the community funds by superiors in favor of friends or relatives. On the other hand, it is not the intent

to forbid all gifts or donations. Superiors, unless the constitutions prescribe otherwise, can and should give alms proportionate to the resources of the community as well as certain gifts to special benefactors of the community. Nor is it forbidden for the community to help, for instance, the parents of one of the religious, where they are in great need if this can be done by way of alms. However, this is a matter of charity, not justice. In regard to all these things, prudence must be exercised lest ill-will or justifiable criticism arise within or without the community.

## THE LITTLE DARK QUEEN OF THE AMERICAS

In the year of Our Lord 1775, the iron-nerved Captain Anza was commissioned to lead a colony of settlers from San Miguel de Orcasitas in Mexico across the deserts of Southern Arizona to the California coast, there to found the mission of San Francisco.

The chronicler for the expedition was Fray Pedro Font.<sup>1</sup> It was an interesting journey, and Fray Pedro was an interesting writer. Above all, however, he was a devoted client of the Virgin of Guadalupe. His diary clearly reveals the loving devotion of the early Friars to the Virgin, the little dark one of Tepayac. They had already proclaimed her patroness of their *Opus Franciscanum*, a title which in our own day has been declared anew. If we American Franciscans wish to have Our Lady of Guadalupe as our Queen and Patroness, we can do no better than follow the example of the early Friars who carried her image into the land of the Twenty-One Missions. Fray Pedro's diary is history—history of the kind we must strive to write again in our own era if Mary is to bring peace to our troubled world. A few selections from his diary may help us to catch the spirit of his devotion to the little dark Virgin of Guadalupe.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 29, 1775: "... and everything being arranged for the beginning of the march to Monterey... I sang a Mass for the success of the journey. After the Mass I gave a talk concerning the matter of the expedition... I told them that the principal patroness of the expedition was the most holy Virgin, our Lady of Guadalupe, who had been chosen by unanimous consent and with the approval of myself and the commander. For we were one in the thought, and even before speaking about



it we had both already decided that our patroness must be the sovereign Virgin Mother of God, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, as mother and patroness which she is, of the Indians and of this America."

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Font's Complete Diary*, translated and edited by Herbert E. Bolton (University of Calif. Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1931).

SUNDAY, OCT. 22: "I said Mass for the success of the journey of the expedition all the people attending. . . I exhorted everybody to show perseverance and patience on this long journey. . . I reminded them of the punishment God might mete out to them if they mistreated the heathen on the way or scandalized them by their conduct. On the other hand I assured them of the help of God and our patroness, the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe. . . if we conducted ourselves as good Christians."

THURSDAY, OCT. 26: It is surprising that although the road we traveled so far is very dangerous because of the Apaches, they did not come out to attack us nor did we see them during the whole journey. This favor we ought to attribute to our patroness, the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, because if the Apaches had known forth no doubt we should have suffered disasters, for the troops were few and as they traveled they were occupied with their little ones, some of the soldiers carrying two or three children at a time, and most of them carrying at least one. God was guiding us and the Virgin Mary was our patroness; with this everything was said."

MONDAY, MARCH 11: (*When the expedition reached the presidio of Monterey, the mathematical-minded Fray Pedro preached a sermon, applying the number of their journey—one hundred and sixty-five—to their patrons, Mary, Saint Michael, and Saint Francis.*) "We might liken the number one appropriately to our principal patroness, the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe. She is the one, only and elect, chosen among thousands to be the mother of God and the help of mankind, and under the title of Guadalupe, the principal patroness of the Americas, she is equal to a hundred. Even in the rays of light which we see in this her image, which has been the staff of the expedition and our consolation on the journey, her patronage is depicted. From the head to the feet a hundred and one rays of light are depicted on this sovereign image which we have before us. It was the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that I carried with me, and with which I formed the altar on the journey when I said Mass. And in this number is mirrored the patroness of this our sovereign land, in order that we may understand that by the number one hundred is symbolized our principal and first patroness, who is a person equal to a hundred."

SATURDAY, MAY 11: "Fray Thomas told us that Captain Palma (a Yuma Indian chieftain who deeply impressed the Padres) determined to go to Mexico with us, having entertained this desire ever since he was told of the fiesta which is held in Mexico in honor of the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe."

JUNE 2, TRINITY SUNDAY: (*When the expedition returned, Padre Font brought his diary to a close. He had prepared a sermon, but because of some difficulty with Captain Anza, he could not preach it. However, he recorded it in his diary.*) "... the whole time comprised eight months and three days, very mysterious numbers representing an enigma. It was that the Most Holy Trinity, represented by the numbers 3, granted us a safe return, and our patroness, the Virgin of Guadalupe, represented

the number 8, alluding to the figure 8 discovered among the flowers of her garments. . . Concerning this various persons have held various opinions, but I wish to call her the Virgin of Eight, for the eight months during which she, as our principal patroness, so plainly favored us. But now that I was not able to say this in public I note it down here in order that I may not forget it, and that I may always be thankful to so merciful a mother, universal patroness of America, and since she is designed to appear in the shape and color of an Indian woman, more especially the principal patroness for the promotion of spiritual conquests. And with this I bring this diary to a conclusion at the end of this second day of June, 1776."

Adapted from an article in *Priestly Studies*

## THE CULT OF MARY IN THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONS

### China

We have relatively few documents concerning the work of the first Franciscans who went forth to bring the Kingdom of China to Christ. But we do have two archeological monuments which prove that those gigantic Franciscan souls implanted the cult of the Queen of Heaven among their new Christians. In 1950 there was found in Sianfu a picture representing the image of the Virgin depicted in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major. Experts assigned the picture to the Fourteenth Century, a period when none but the earliest Franciscans had preached Christianity in China. In the Year 1952, near the city of Yangchow, Kiangsu, there was found a stone sarcophagus dated 1342, having a carved image of the Madonna with the Christ Child. It is evident from this that the early Franciscan missionaries taught their spiritual children to have recourse to Mary not only in life but also in death, and to seek her intercession at the judgment.

In the Sixteenth Century a new attempt to convert China was begun. Soon the Friars Minor took their place again in

the life of the great Middle Kingdom, and everywhere spread devotion to the Mother of God. Beautiful pages were written in the missionary annals about the cult of Mary in those regions which were originally evangelized by the Friars, but which in modern times have been turned over to the Chinese clergy or to the newer religious congregations.

The Chinese people showed their devotion to Mary primarily by dedicating churches to her under her various titles of honor from the Immaculate Conception to Our Lady of Sorrows. In the diocese of Sanyuan nine of the fourteen churches are dedicated to Mary; and in the little Apostolic Prefecture of Weihaiwei there are churches in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Immaculate Conception, The Seven Joys, and The Consoler of the Afflicted.

In all these churches Marian societies of every kind are flourishing: the Rosary Society, the Society of Mount Carmel, Seven Dolours, and many others.

The recitation or chanting of the Rosary among Chinese Christians is a widespread custom. Everywhere on every Sunday—



It was through the rosary that Yangchia-kuan-chang was saved from the Boxers in 1900. Protected only by earthen defenses, the Christians were surrounded on all sides by several thousand soldiers. An unseen arm, however, hindered the soldiers again and again from making an attack. They were puzzled and frightened, for they knew that the Christians were poorly armed and unskilled in warfare, yet the men stood watch over the earth-works calmly and fearlessly, as if they were facing no danger at all. The soldiers did not know that while the men were keeping watch, the women were gathered in the church and were chanting the rosary day and night without ceasing. The passive victory of the Christians was so evidently supernatural that even the pagan soldiers recognized it as a divine intervention.

Besides churches, there are innumerable shrines dedicated to Mary throughout China, and many of them are famous places of pilgrimage. In Patai, diocese of Shohchow, there is an ancient cavern which was the first of these places of pilgrimage. It was dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels, and in 1876 a church was built there. Every year the Christians of that territory gathered there for the Feast of the Portiuncula, and every year at that time they donated a horse to their missionary in honor of Mary.

In the Diocese of Taiyuanfu there is another Portiuncula chapel in the mountains of Wutai. This lovely sanctuary, destroyed by the persecutors of the Church, was rebuilt in 1889 by the martyred Bishop Grassi, and even today, in spite of Communist prohibitions, it is the scene of innumerable pilgrimages and gatherings, especially on the Feast of the usually the men in the morning and the women in the afternoon—the people chant the rosary publicly. In some places the catechists chant it daily after Mass.

Portiuncula. Recently the missionaries wrote that the last three feasts of were real triumphs.

The most famous place of pilgrimage in the Province of Shantung is the shrine of the Virgin in Huchiachuang. In the first chapel was erected. In 1900 it was destroyed by lightning, but it was already rebuilt again by December of the same year. During the month of June when High Mass is celebrated daily, the place is visited by a continuous stream of pilgrims, coming either singly or in processions. Not infrequently pagans join the pilgrimages. The sanctuary had the greatest influence on the people of the district, for they are all Catholics. Every year many of the young people move to other places in search of employment, and the parting word of every family is usually: "Don't forget the Mother of God." And most of them when they return for visits, go to the shrine and then home to their families.

In the church of Cha-yuan-kow, Peking, the people venerate a miraculous image of Mary brought there from Europe by the first Vicar Apostolic of the Diocese, Msgr. Banci. It was before this image that Anthony Shen, promoter and founder of the Legion of Mary, consecrated himself to Mary before entering the minor seminary.

Concerning the Legion of Mary, we shall not say much here. Suffice it to mention that all the Franciscans who have been expelled by the Reds were victims of the same "crime"—that they were promoters of the Legion of Mary. The work of this apostolate are most beautiful and consoling for our missionaries, as many of them tell us. It is enough to recall the statement of the exiled Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Riberi, to the effect that none more than the Friars Minor have worked for the promotion of the Legion of Mary in China.

# the CORD

VOL. IV No. 6, JUNE, 1954

## CONTENTS

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....162  
*Father Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.*

ED BY LOVE.....166  
*Sister Maura, O.S.F.*

SEEKING THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH MARY.....175  
*William J. Manning*

AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER.....182  
*Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.*

HER STEPS ARE CANTICLES.....189  
*Sister Mary Francis, P.C.*



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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*Who will not love in return One who loves so much?* (Saint Boaventure)

To love, yet not be loved; to be friendly, yet friendless, profound suffering. To give, yet receive no thanks; to give all, receive nothing in return, is a bitter disappointment. In view of what shall we say of Christ? That he might be ours, that he might rescue us, the Son of God hurried with giant strides; from the form of God to the form of a servant, to obedience, to death, to death on a cross. The Word became flesh, he put himself within the reach of our hands and under the scrutiny of our searching gaze (I Jn. 1:1). He soothed our wounds, he carried us on his shoulders, he ran to meet us and threw his arms about our neck, he asked us for a drink of water and in return gave us the gushing springs of everlasting life. As God, he demanded full atonement for our sins; as the God-man, he made the atonement himself. The story would be endless. Withal, he is lonely and he is loved but little.

Let us review the dismal fact that we might gain insight into his pain and thereby be inspired to render him love and reparation. This is especially appropriate now that we are in June, the month which is dedicated to the Sacred Heart. We might pass over the long, preliminary years of retirement during which Christ labored, prayed, obeyed in loneliness; when God walked the narrow path of Nazareth and no one had any intimation of who he was, and none could share with him his great secret of love and anguish. The Word beloved of the Father was recognized only as the carpenter's son, and nothing good could come out of Nazareth (Jn. 1:46).

Let us rather watch him as he is being consummated in his priesthood through the Passion which he endured. It began in the Garden, in the dark shadows of the trees, in the middle of the night when the world seemed to have stopped still, and even the voice but one was hushed. The Silence was almost a tangible thing as if creation were stricken mute with wonderment, and from the midst of it came a lonely voice pleading: *Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me* (Mt. 26: 39). What cup? It was the

palliating experience he was enduring, he who is *holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners* (Hebr. 7:26), to feel upon himself the touch of sin, for he had made himself the victim of our sins. He threw himself upon the ground like a humble suppliant praying *with a loud cry and tears* (Hebr. 5:7). While he thus prayed and sweated his blood, the apostles he had chosen to be witnesses of his agony and give him comfort in his distress were asleep. He came again and again in his deep desolation in search of comfort and compassion, but they were asleep. He was in agony for the whole world, yet not one man was there with a wakeful eye or a compassionate word. How well he foretold this lonely hour through the Psalmist; *I waited for someone to pity me, but there was no one, and for someone to comfort me, but I found none* (Ps. 68:21).

When he stood before Pilate, the governor offered him to the multitude, but none would have him. "Away with him! . . . Give us Barabbas!" Those who had looked upon his beautiful face and heard the wonderful cadences of his speech and felt the soothing touch of his hand and profited from his miracles, rejected him. Like "a lion ravening and roaring," they cried out, "We have no king but Caesar!"

*He came unto his own,*

*and his own received him not* (Jn. 1:11).

When he carried his cross he was abandoned to his own weakness. He dragged it through the narrow streets, the multitude surged around him, they were at arm's length from him and could look into his tired eyes and see that he was dreadfully weary and that he tottered under the weight; still, not one willing hand was raised to relieve him of the burden. They left him strictly alone.

On the cross he hung in dereliction, abandoned by most of his friends. His Mother was there together with Saint John and some pious women, but the rest had fled in fear. He had no other company than the scoffing, hostile crowd. The prophet had foretold what a savage company it would be:

*Round about me are many bulls, the strong bulls of Basan hem me in. They open their mouths against me, like a lion ravening and roaring. Many dogs beset me, a band of evildoers prowls around me. They have dug my hands and my feet, I can number all my bones* (Ps. 21, 13, 14, 17, 18).

We are not to imagine that the time of his rejection and abandonment has passed forever. No; he suffers it to this day. He wants the sincere love of every human creature, but how many turn away from him by sin and leave him to himself while they seek their own pleasure. He has his arms outstretched and pleads: *Abide in love!* (Jn. 15:9), but they turn away from him in disdain. Wrath and hatred is poured out upon him by his sworn enemies! Consider how he was warred upon by Naziism and Communism with the destruction of faith and love in the hearts of many. How he was and is being afflicted in his members by the persecution of the Church in Communistic countries where he is robbed of his possessions where he is cast into prison, where he is made to suffer cold and hunger, where he is tortured and put to death, for *I am Jesus, who thou art persecuting* (Acts 9:5). They crucify again the Son of God and make him a mockery, treading him under foot, and regard a very common thing the Sacred Blood by which they had been sanctified (Hebr. 6:6).

It is not only loneliness that afflicts him, but lovelessness as well. He is lavish with his love, but he receives little in return. He has left a fire on our altars. There we have the burning, blazing Heart of Christ aflame with all the vehemence of divine love; we have the privilege of walking confidently and unafraid into those invisible fires as a bird flies into the flaming sunset, but how few use the privilege! We can enter through the wound. And if we will, we can peer deep into that bottomless wound of love and explore something of the unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8); but many esteem it all as nothing. "Unto this end was thy side pierced that an entrance might be opened to us. Unto this was thy Heart wounded that we might dwell therein, being freed of all external cares. Nay, and for this it was wounded, that through its visible wound we might behold the invisible wound of love" (Saint Bonaventure).

Go, enter into this Sanctuary. His thoughts are thoughts of love. He gives us a pressing invitation. One day in Jerusalem, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood and cried out in a loud voice to the multitude that surrounded him saying: *If anyone thirst, let him come to me; and let him drink who believes in me* (Jn. 7:37). Only a few listen to him. It is a discourtesy to him, and an incalculable loss to our selves. We have within arm's reach him who is

life, the resurrection, and eternal love, and we do not seize him. He is as approachable to us as he was to the apostles. *What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands handled: of the Word of life* (I Jn. 1:1), but we do not enter into intimate fellowship with him. The multitude replies to all his urgent calls: *We will hear thee again on this matter* (Acts 17:32).

If, then, we appreciate this *unspeakable gift* (II Cor. 9:15) our purpose should be fixed, a purpose of unbounded devotedness. We should become deeply Eucharistic. Give him that drink of water for which he asks (Jn. 4:8), serve him with loyalty and zest, greet him always with enthusiasm: *Hosanna to the Son of David* (Mt. 21:15). *Thus may you walk worthily of God and please him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God* (Col. 1:10).

The reward will not be wanting. At the end he will bless you: *Lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand* (Lk. 21:28). You will be able to look with supreme confidence on the sign of the Son of Man, his wounded Heart which you sought to comfort, and in which resides all the hope of those who are to be saved. He will be your refuge, you will not die in his disgrace, your name will long since have been written in his Heart never to be effaced, he will be mindful of your goodness toward him throughout eternity: *Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom* (Mt. 25:34). And he will say in your behalf with all the assurance of the only-begotten Son: *Where I am there also shall my servant be. If anyone serve me, my Father will honor him* (Jn. 12:26).

And on your part, you will be able to challenge the Sacred Heart confidently in the words of Saint Augustine: "Give me what thou hast promised, because I have done what thou hast commanded." *Thou hast glorified thee on earth. . . And now do thou (Jesus) glorify me* (Jn. 17:4). What reply will you expect from him who is loyal and true? None other than his own words: *You are they who have continued with me in my trials. And 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* (Lk. 22:28-29). And turning to his heavenly Father he will claim your reward for you: *Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; in order that they may behold my glory* (Jn. 17:24). Then you will be forever

secure in the bosom of God, and *neither death, nor life, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:38-39). *And these things we write to you that you may rejoice, and your joy may be full* (I Jn. 1:4).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.S.A.

### LED BY LOVE

Among the many, many people who have been friends, admirers, and co-workers of the Franciscans, yet have never actually joined the Order, is Catherine Fieschi Adorno, more popularly known as Catherine of Genoa. This saint of theirs—and she is a much-claimed saint in that city even today—came from one of the outstanding families of Genoa, the Fieschi, a family that had already produced Popes Innocent IV and Adrian V, several Cardinals and some famous Genoese generals. The father, Giacomo Fieschi, had been viceroy to Naples under Rene of Anjou, and the mother, Francisca di Negro, was descended from another of the aristocratic families of the city. Born to them toward the end of the year 1447, the youngest of five children, the future saint was christened Caterinetta, and undoubtedly placed under the protection of St. Catherine of Alexandria in whose honor there was a very popular altar in the Cathedral, which stood close to the Fieschi palace, Catherine's home from birth to her sixteenth year.

From the first, she was a strange child, good, devout, extremely serious; yet introverted, shy, and retiring. At the age of thirteen she begged to become a Canoness of St. Augustine in the same convent where her elder sister, Limbania, had already taken the veil. When making application for admission, she really astounded both the superiors of the convent and the confessor there by her precise replies to all their objections; the only one she could not explain was her age, and, since it was definitely against the custom

to accept applicants at such an early age, they refused her on that account. For some reason, Catherine did not appear to be too deeply disappointed, but, apparently, very willingly took up her abode at home where she had tried to leave it off.

Here she grew into a very lovely lady, taller than most, graceful of form and with a most interesting, if not beautiful, countenance. Yet she was intensely impressionable, of the nervous and extremely sensitive make-up that is found so often in typically hysterical women. When she was sixteen, on January 13, 1463, she became a sort of pawn to the hopes of her mother and brother for a reconciliation with the Ghibelline Adornos—she was married to Julian Adorno. About the only thing these two had in common was their standing in the social world—the Adornos were just as important a Ghibelline family as were the Fieschi among the Guelphs. Julian was selfish and extravagant, reckless and undisciplined, fond of show and pleasure, and certainly no more anxious for the marriage than was the shy, retiring, and very devout Catherine.

Those first years of her marriage were terribly unhappy ones for Catherine. Julian neglected her, ridiculed her piety, and, from the beginning, was unfaithful to her. Catherine retired more and more to herself, she refused to associate with anyone, she began to sulk, never going out except to Mass and to pray in the Cathedral; yet she seemed to find no strength in prayer—she was desolate. Finally, after five years, she decided to try it the way her family expected it, and for the next five years she lived the brilliant society life that was expected of a daughter of the Fieschi, trying to gain peace for herself, and to attract her husband in this lively existence, without, however, there ever arising the question of grave sin. It was, nevertheless, a futile attempt, for not only did this type of living fail to bring any alleviation from her distress which she sought—she was still a deserted wife,—but it also caused her to experience an agony of remorse. She was extremely melancholy—probably on the verge of a nervous breakdown—when she made a most peculiar prayer. It was the eve of the feast of St. Benedict in 1473 when she begged, "St. Benedict, ask God to make me stay three months ill in bed."

Two days later—St. Benedict still had not sent her to bed—seeking consolation in her misery, Catherine paid a visit to her

sister in the convent. Limbania, having probably heard the story many times, was certainly not too sympathetic, for she recognized as a disordered state of mind and emotion. Hence, she advised confession for her confused sister, and, although Catherine was reluctant to reveal herself to the priest, she did agree to go to the Chaplain of the convent, if only to ask for his blessing. Appropriately, it was the Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Graces that there was given to Catherine a truly extraordinary grace, an instantaneous conversion to the ways of Love, which St. Francis de Sales has compared, in regard to its immediate and complete effect, to the conversion of St. Paul. While on her knees before the priest, her mind was suffused and her heart inflamed with a ray of Divine light—a light which, like fire, not only reveals but consumes as well. All her fears of loneliness and neglect, her hopelessness, her wretchedness, all were wiped away and in their place there remained only the flame of Love—her “true Love”, as she always referred to her Lord from this time forth. Forced from her lips the words, “No more world! No more sin!” that instant Catherine Fieschi Adorno became essentially Sister Catherine of Genoa.

She arose from her knees, and, with a murmured apology to the priest that she found she could not make her confession after he had hastened to her home, shutting herself in her room for several days, entirely and absolutely absorbed in contemplation of the majesty of God offended by sin. She had a vision. There has been quite a lot of discussion written about the nature of this vision; suffice it to say that whatever its nature, it made an impression which lasted—and vividly so—for thirty-seven years. She saw “in Spirit” Our Lord crowned with thorns—blood dripping from every wound made by the scourging—and bearing His cross; it engendered in her a hatred of sin which characterized her life from that moment on. It so penetrated her very being that it overcame her natural reticence and sensitiveness to the point where she declared herself ready to confess her sins—even in public. Four days later she did make a general confession, although it was certainly not a public one, and began a life of prayer and penance which was to last for four years, during which time the enormity of her sins was spotlighted by the Divine light. Seeing the malignity of her sins so vividly, she felt that it was just

and vengeance which she deserved—and wanted—and not grace and mercy. Catherine was the malefactor and Catherine must endure all the sufferings that could possibly come to her so as to personally expiate her sins; she even refused to avail herself of plenary indulgences—not that she scorned them, but she wanted to pay her own debts. She was inspired to the severest of mortifications, and she became quite extreme in denying her natural inclinations and desires. She refused herself what she wanted because she wanted it. She made very, very strict rules for herself; she dismissed her maids and adopted a rather severe mode of dress beneath which she wore a hairshirt; she put briars and thistles in her bed; she practiced almost continual silence and ate only what was necessary for life—she even made that little unpalatable by seasoning of bitter herbs.

Then in the summer of that same year, just a few months after Catherine had begun her penitential life, Julian returned home a changed man—and a much poorer one. Naturally, it was trouble that had mended his ways. He had squandered not only his own fortunes, but Catherine's as well. Yet when he walked in she offered no reproaches and asked no questions, not even about the small daughter he clasped by the hand. Catherine, the childless wife, became the protector and lifelong friend of this child of another woman, and she set about immediately to help Julian save what he could out of the wreck of their fortunes—she was exceptionally apt at financial affairs. It was their common decision that they should sell both the palace in Genoa and their summer place in Pra, and move to a much smaller house; but it was definitely at Catherine's urging—and not out of mere necessity—that the little house they chose was in the poorest section of the town—this for two reasons, because it was where the poor were to be found, and because it was close to the Hospital of Pammatone, an institution under the protection of the Franciscans. Julian had meanwhile become a Tertiary, and he and Catherine having agreed to a life of continence, spent their days in prayer, penance and good works—following closely the spirit of the Third Order which Catherine never actually joined even though she worked with them for so many years. She not only served in the hospital, which had a capacity of one hundred and thirty beds, and in the institution for foundling girls which was

connected with it, but besides, she assisted the Ladies of Mercy in their labors among the poor of the district. Not satisfied with nursing them in their sicknesses—there was never enough room for them in the hospital—she always cleaned their homes, and, very often, she was so fastidious, would take their vermin-filled and filthy clothes to her own home and wash them.

Not long after the Adornos took up their work in the hospital, Catherine began her practice of daily Communion, and this was the time when even in the convents the cloistered nuns were not allowed to communicate so often. She suffered intensely in the beginning, but she knew that she was attracting notice by her daily reception—it had already made an enormous demand on her courage to continue her practice, self-conscious as she was, for at one time she spoke of envying priests because they could communicate daily without causing comment. However, when a Franciscan friar, Blessed John of Chiavasso, whose opinion she greatly respected, suggested that it might possibly be wrong for her to approach the Sacrament so frequently, she refrained, but her distress was so marked that when he heard of it, he sent her word to resume her daily Communion, saying that he had only made the remark to test her purity of intention.

And on Lady Day, 1476, her "tender Love" told her that she wanted her to share His forty-day fast in the desert, and from the moment of her acquiescence she was truly not able to eat; the sight of food nauseated her, for the entire time of her fast. When she related this vision and the request to her confessor at the hospital, he considered it merely the twisted whim of a hypochondriac and ordered her to take her meals as usual. And she really tried. But the attempt brought on such terrific spasms that he retracted his command. She did however, drink daily, after her Communion, the quantity of wine customarily taken by the faithful of Genoa at that time as a sort of ablution; sometimes, too, she would drink a glass of water and vinegar and ground rock salt. It is a notable fact that during these fasts which she performed semi-annually for more than twenty years—one during Lent and one during Advent—her health was always better, she was always stronger and even more cheerful than at other times.

When God deemed her satisfaction sufficient—the period of her intense mortifications lasted for four years—the sight of her sins and their malignity was erased from her consciousness; one by one she discontinued her severe penances, until by 1477, she had ceased altogether to practice the austerities to which she had been inspired—her inclination and even the ability to such active mortifications were withdrawn. She even stopped going to confession, that is, except for the yearly reception of the sacrament required by the church. Catherine was fully aware of her inclination to evil, but from this point until the end of her life she was not conscious of guilt.

In 1479, she and Julian moved from their little house into two rooms within the hospital proper where for the eleven years following they served the sick as devoted nurses and servants. During this time her so-called trances continued; never was she without an awareness of her "tender Love," but at the first warning of one of her visitations, Catherine would go directly to her room in order to keep them as secret as possible. When she was needed and they went looking for her, they sometimes found her walking up and down, back and forth across her room as if she never meant to stop, or completely entranced that she noticed nothing and no one; at other times they would discover her on the floor of her room with her face in her hands, oblivious of her surroundings. It was in one of these trances that she was given three rules that she followed for the rest of her life; never to say, "I will" or "I will not,"—never to say "mine," but "yours"—never to excuse, but rather always to accuse herself. Just as in her fasts, she was greatly strengthened both in body and soul following these experiences which sometimes lasted for hours—or even days—until there was a call to duty. For neither her prayers, nor her raptures interfered—were allowed to interfere—with her care of the sick. And this care must have been outstandingly noteworthy, for in 1490, by the unanimous request of the directors, she took over as Matron of the hospital—manager and treasurer, with unlimited powers, so that it was the respect they held for her ability and judgment. Their respect was magnanimously repaid, and especially so when the plague, one of its most disastrous visitations to Genoa, descended on the city in 1493. From early spring until the end of August it raged; practically all the rich and noble, and others who could, fled. Of

those who remained, four-fifths were stricken. Among these plague victims, Catherine displayed not only a devotion that was truly heroic but a marvellous efficiency and an unusual common sense—at least unexpected in a mystic. It was she who originated the open-air ambulance and semi-open-air wards—sailcloth tents, which she had erected in the open space behind the hospital. Catherine was far in advance of her day in reasoning that the circulation thus provided would diminish contagion. She made provision for doctors and nurses, for priests and tertiaries, to care for the afflicted; she herself was constantly among them. Both stricken and workers seemed to draw inspiration and strength from her.

Typical of Catherine was the incident of the dying Tertiary. This Tertiary, a woman who was dying of the fever, had been in agony and speechless for eight days. Catherine, in solicitous sympathy, kept telling her to call on Jesus. In an attempt to comply, after making visible effort, the woman moved her lips, but could manage neither sound nor word. At this, Catherine's love overflowed; the thought of the woman's mouth filled with Jesus so moved her that she could not restrain herself—she kissed the Word on the straining lips. She was so enthralled that she utterly disregarded the ordinary precautions, and, as nature would have it, she contracted the plague. Catherine very nearly died of it; she did recover, however—there were very few who did—and she went back among the victims with even keener compassion for their sufferings.

It was probably during her work among the plague-stricken that her first association with her chief biographer, Ettore Vernazza, occurred, and in 1495 he became one of her disciples and close friends. He was a young lawyer, twenty-three years her junior, but theirs was one of those rare friendships so lauded by Christ; he had found the treasure of which He spoke. Ettore found a guide, counselor, and Catherine, a son, and, for the first time in her life, a person who could understand her to some degree. There was the best of reasons for this understanding, for among the friends and disciples which she had begun to accumulate, immediately after her period of penance, he was most like herself.

About midsummer of 1496, when she was forty-nine, her health began to fail, and Catherine was forced to resign as Matron, with-

however, leaving the hospital precincts, where she and Julian were still living in a separate house to which they had moved in 1490. Here Julian died in 1497, attended by Catherine. Because Julian became so impatient toward the end—he had been suffering for about six months and was becoming irascible—Catherine, fearing for his safety hereafter, demanded his salvation from her "tender Love"—and she got it.

This request of hers was in direct violation of one of the rules she had followed since the time of her first "vision"—never did she pray for others, nor would she ask anyone to pray for her. Catherine explained this peculiar attitude to one of her friends by saying that she knew that God held her—and them—in His Love and Knowledge, and for her that was sufficient. Her trust was complete!

As her health grew worse and she felt her strength slipping, Catherine, content for over twenty-five years without any human help, she who for so many years had been guided by the Divine Spirit alone, felt the need of someone on whom to lean. Her choice, or rather the choice of her "tender Love," fell on the Rector of the hospital, Don Marabotto, a man who was in no way her equal, his priesthood excepted. He did not become her director in the generally accepted sense, however, for he certainly never led her; his direction consisted mostly in listening to her confidences regarding her spiritual life—her trances continued to the end of her life—and in recording them. He gave her human understanding and sympathy, and, undoubtedly, admiration, which, at times, became distasteful to Catherine. When she felt the need of support, of comfort, Catherine turned to Don Marabotto as to a father, and she did not find him wanting, for God's grace was very much with him in his dealings with this mystic.

As she grew weaker, she was forced to discontinue both her fasts and her work in the hospital; in fact, in these last years of her life, Catherine was dependent on others for services which she had been accustomed to render to the sick. And she was content that it be so. There was no display of false pride, no struggle to keep up practices in spite of her infirmities. In perfect conformity to the Divine Will, she accepted the break-down of her body. She was only fifty-three, yet worn out, and for the next ten years she really suffered the purgatory on earth which she had so desired. The flame of Love from

which she had derived her strength in other days, now seemed about to consume her physically; her skin seemed to dry up, her sufferings from thirst and hunger were almost unendurable, her vomits and hemorrhages were violent, the spasms of her throat almost suffocated her. The fever in her body was so great that at one time when she put her hands into a basin of cold water to bathe them, the water became so hot that it scalded the person holding the basin. And then, she would suddenly be well, and smiling, and talking to those about her. The physicians were baffled, and, in the end, were forced to admit, what Catherine had told them from the beginning, that hers was a supernatural illness. Even the illustrious Maestro Boerio, who returned to Genoa in the summer of 1510, having attended Henry VII of England in his last illness, was forced to concede that the medication he prescribed for Catherine did her no good whatsoever. Yet his esteem for his patient increased as he came to know her, and for the last few months of her life he was one of the members of the group that surrounded her—a motley group to be sure—Vernazza, the famous lawyer, Boerio, a former Court Physician, Don Marabotto, the Rector of the hospital, and the two maid-servants who were dear to her.

Catherine had asked for Extreme Unction several times, but each time Don Marabotto delayed, feeling that her time was not yet come. Then two days before her death, after an exceptionally terrible hemorrhage, she made to him what was to be her last confession, and at the usual time received Holy Communion, for never during all this time was she unable to receive and to retain the Blessed Sacrament.

Sunday, September 15, was just dawning when Catherine, a few moments after pointing to the sky in answer to a query about Holy Communion, gladly exchanged earth for heaven. Almost immediately the people of Genoa began to venerate her as a saint; they called her Blessed—their Blessed Caterina. It was not until 1608, however, that the title was officially bestowed on her. Then, on Trinity Sunday, 1737, more than two hundred years after her death, Pope Clement XII declared her Saint Catherine of Genoa.

Catherine Fieschi Adorno a saint! An unusual one to be sure, but one might even say an eccentric one. She had all the natural equi-

ment for becoming a psychological problem; in fact, she was far from long the road to hysteria and morbidity when by the grace of God and her own out-of-the-ordinary intelligence, she subdued her "selfish self". Catherine's answer to her problem was Love. It is the solution she offers to all the nervously high pitched, the super-tensioned, the morbid and melancholy of this materialistic, racing-tempoed world of today.

Sister Maura O. S. F.

## SEEKING THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH MARY

Our second Marian meditation happily coincides with the great Feast of Pentecost. There is much profit for us to reap in considering the Mother of God in her unique and mystical role as Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Saint Bonaventure's next interpretation of Our Lady's name reveals her particularly as an exemplar for us who seek to carry *the Spirit as a pledge in our hearts*, for it was given to no other wayfarer on this earth to shine with *the brightness of eternal light* as did the Immaculate Virgin, who was all radiant from the manifold graces of the Spirit of God.

### STAR OF THE SEA

*I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. (Eccli 24:24-26)*

The first great chime of heaven's *Angelus* announcing that *the Holy Spirit* had hovered over a youthful Virgin, overshadowing her with *the power of the Most High*, has echoed down the ages keying a melody that sings from the carilloned hearts of Christendom even to this moment. This, because the Maiden of Nazareth had so perfectly cooperated with the workings of divine life in her soul, that God raised her up over the sea of Christian souls to sparkle as the



great Star above that sea. Thus exalted, *she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared with light, she is found before it! She is more beautiful than the sun* because her soul magnified with blazing willingness the designs of God for her; *she is above all the order of stars*, that is, above all the elect of God, because with benign meekness, which is the soul's nobility, she softly sang that her lowliness had been regarded; *being compared with light, she is found before it*, because with manifested luminous wisdom her soul found its only joy in God her Savior.

No wonder then that Saint Bonaventure envisions the Star of the Sea as our *Illuminatrix*, to whom we must pray with great devotion if we are to be illumined and become ourselves as lights shining in God's Church this Pentecost.<sup>2</sup> It is with great confidence that we beseech her in her Litany: *Stella Maris — Ora pro nobis*. Pray for us, Star of the Sea, because *your thoughts are more vast than the sea, and your counsels more deep than the great ocean on which we are tossed*. Give us to share in your thoughts, grant us the grace of your counsel, as you granted it to the first Christians gathered about you in the Upper Room awaiting the Flame sent from heaven for we know that *you have not labored for yourself only, but for us that seek out the truth*.

Teach us, Mother of God, that we may become lights illumined by the power of the Holy Spirit. Teach us to shine with lucid love that by the goodness of our association men may truly love God. Teach us to burn with flaming faith, that the virtue of our fulfilling the obligations of holy religion may lead men to believe in God. Teach us to glow with holy hope, that we may encourage men to hope confidently in God.<sup>3</sup> We ask these graces of the Paraclete, through you because you are *the Mother of fair love, and of knowledge and of holy hope, shining gloriously in the firmament of heaven; because you were wrought in the grace of the Holy Spirit poured forth*.

Saint Bonaventure would first have us become a light in the goodness of our association with our fellow men. To accomplish this we must show all who behold us that *the charity of God is truly poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given*

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *De Assump. B. M. V.*, sermo 2 (IX 691a).

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *De Purif. B. M. V.*, sermo 2 (IX 640b).

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *De V Festiv., Festiv. 2* (VIII 91b).

us. Mary teaches us that love; for her soul was so inflamed by the Fire of Love brought forth by the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her, that nothing save the Divine Power could sustain her. The ardor of her love fans that of the flaming seraphs who hover around the Throne of God.<sup>4</sup>

O chosen Tabernacle of the most pure Spirit of Love, give us to reflect the endless hours you spent in prayer and meditation, striving ever to return love for love. How often our prayers are mechanical mutterings, our meditations mere worldly preoccupations which smother rather than enkindle *the grace of the Holy Spirit* which has been poured forth in us. How often we oppose the Holy Spirit by conduct which is far from upright, and by words which kill rather than encourage, thus dimming the light of love which should beam forth from us as a beacon to those who walk through the world seeking in us a ray of love to guide them into the harbor of Holy Church. How often we are engaged in making great displays of love which pretend to hate all that would separate us from holy things, when actually our pseudo-love is nothing but self-righteous desire to reform others. How often we pretend to love in little things, not caring for the really great obstacles that we ourselves have laid on the path leading to our sanctification.<sup>5</sup>

Teach us, then, Mother of Fair Love, to appreciate the great gifts which are all about us, which seeing we see not—the miracle of our Redemption, renewed before our eyes each morn; the wonders of creation, free and pure, uncluttered by the trash that mars the beauty of the world; the gift of our vocation, which means that we have been named by God as his ambassadors; the promise of our Resurrection, which means that *this mortal body puts on immortality*. We do not love sufficiently, because we are ingrates; because we fail to realize the priceless worth of God's gifts to us.<sup>6</sup> Do thou, our Mother, pray for us, that this Pentecost we may be filled with holy love, and that our gratitude may impart itself to all with whom we associate. Grant that henceforth we may open wide our hearts in fraternal love to the needs and sufferings of all with whom we come in contact, that as the Spirit of God is Father to our poverty, so we may love to

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., *De Vigilia Nativ., sermo 11* (IX 98b).

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., *In Pent.*, sermo 9 (IX 342a).

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.* (342b).

aid his poor; as he is the Giver of gifts to us, so we may love to give ourselves to the friendless; as he is the Light of our hearts, so we may love to illumine the ignorant; as he is our rich Comforter, we may love to console the saddened and oppressed; as he is the gracious Guest of our souls, so we may love to welcome all who turn to us; as he is our Refuge, so we may love to care for the helpless and miserable. May we become guiding lights to all who are lost on the vast ocean of this world, leading them into the safe Harbor of holy Church, under the heartening beam of your light, O Star of the Sea!

Secondly, Saint Bonaventure would have us become a light to the virtuous fulfillment of the obligations of holy religion, thus leading men to believe in God. In considering this counsel of the Seraphic Doctor we do well to recall the preface to the history of the Church. It is written in the few, yet intensely significant words that after Christ's death all, *with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with... Mary, the Mother of Jesus*. The words reveal the longings that filled the hearts of the first followers of Christ, and we can reflect enough upon the fact that they were gathered around the Bride of the Holy Spirit, waiting in prayer, until *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind blowing, which filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*. Lo! thus the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father has sent in Jesus' name, takes up his abode in the Church. The happenings of the first Pentecost are still so vivid that the whole world is yet aglow with the fiery coming of its Sanctifier. The reign of the Holy Spirit began, and it has not ended, nor will it end until the last whose name is written in the book of life. The Lamb is gathered into the New Jerusalem. As of old the Spirit of God moved over the waters of the earth, so this very day, and every day, he breathes out his spirit of holiness into the Church. This is the glorious mystery, the coming of the Holy Spirit; and she who is there is better able to illumine us with its significance than any other. For the advent of the Holy Ghost especially manifested the singular place of the Mother of God in the Church. We may ask of her, *Mother of fear, and of knowledge*, fear which will strengthen

fulfill our religious duties, and knowledge which will make us firm believers of every revealed truth.

O glorious Virgin, the words of the ancients are on our lips: *Now therefore pray for us, for thou art a holy woman!* Pray for us in order that we obtain from the Holy Spirit grace and wisdom: wisdom to know the truth, and grace to do the truth. We are dull and lazy, and we need your intercession, good Lady, that through your prayers we may be constant in imploring the divine aid of the Spirit, who will teach us to relish and delight in all things having to do with God.<sup>7</sup> Beholding you we are abashed at our small knowledge of things divine, and our willingness to compromise the little we know, fearing lest we upset the fictitious prudence of our times, or lest we ourselves be upset. Grant us to savor the fruits of the vision that was yours on the first Pentecost when, filled with the Holy Spirit, twelve poor mortals like ourselves went forth and preached Christ with such courage and conviction that the true faith was made known to men *from every nation under heaven*. Give us to speak with solid and firm assertion, that having heard us speak no man may excuse himself by incredulity, nor be led by us to hesitate in the things of Faith.<sup>8</sup>

Mother of God, your venerable place in Holy Church is not least among the truths which separate us from false brethren. *Lying men shall not be mindful of you, but men that speak truth shall be found with you, and shall advance, even till they come to the sight of God*. Grant us ever to stand proud of our faith in you, for it is the Spirit of God himself whom we await who has inhabited our hearts and enkindled in them such great devotion for you. He has made you our love and our Mother.<sup>9</sup> We come to you now, your children, your Magdalenes and your Johns, and implore you to obtain for us a great love for each and every truth of our Faith; great courage in defending the Faith against ridicule and falsehood; great strength in propagating the Faith among *all the nations*. Let your sublime and secret sanctification inform us that the Holy Spirit is most desirable because he shares with us the abundance of his grace; most delightful because

<sup>7</sup>Bonav., *De donis S. S.*, collatio 6 (V 483a).

<sup>8</sup>Bonav., *Sermones Selecti*, sermo 1 (V 537b).

<sup>9</sup>Bonav., *Sent.* III, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1 (III 64ab).

he communicates to us his glory; most refreshing because he fills our desires with his presence; most noble because he makes us partakers of his nature; most efficacious because he strengthens us in his power. Grant us to know, O Lady of the Cenacle, that he who filled the hearts of the Apostles with the abundance of himself, is the same Vivifier who pierces our intellects, inflames our affections, directs our intentions, enlightens our understanding, and makes known to us hidden things even as he did for them.<sup>10</sup> Keep ever before our minds and hearts the precious verity that *the manifestation of the Spirit has been given to us for profit.*

Saint Bonaventure's last admonition is that we become a light by encouraging men confidently to hope in God. The glorious Virgin, styled *Mother of Holy Hope*, in whom *is all hope of life of virtue*, is refulgent with this eminent virtue. She it is through whom God showers down the sweet dew of courage, confidence, consolation which falls into every corner of this parched earth where the hearts of men lie open to the grace of God. In addressing her we invoke her aid not only for ourselves, great though our need, but for all her children who need their Mother, and know her not.

O Mother of good Hope, in whom the Holy Spirit fulfilled the expectation of Israel, show us how to cultivate *the good trust through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us.* In thinking upon you may we come to *perfect understanding* of the disappointments and heartaches which *come up as thorns and briers* in this life to entangle our efforts. In watching for you, may we meet you and *quickly be secure* when *the ways are made desolate* under our feet. Meet us *with all prudence in the ways* of life's journey and turn our eyes to *Jerusalem the rich habitation* of heaven where we are destined to abide forever. Give us, Star of the Sea, the holy hope of gladness in our hearts where the land of our soul is *desolate and impassable.* Teach us to rest in the wilderness of this world when men are small and mean and contemptible to us. Pray for all holy hope in this season of *First Immaculate Virgin, flourishing as the lily.* Help us to tell all that the Pentecost means: that *the waters are broken out in the desert, streams in the wilderness. And that which was dry land, shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.* Turn to us all, Mother

<sup>10</sup>Bonav., *In Pent.*, sermo 6 (IX 336b-37a).

of God, *strengthen ye the feeble hands, confirm the weak-kneed, say to the fainthearted, Take courage, and fear not.* Let the eyes of the blind be opened, unstop the ears of the deaf, let the lame leap as harts, free the tongue of the dumb. Tell us all that God himself is coming and that he will save us!

Whatever our failings, how many our falls, how miserable our fervor, point out to us now the most generous Spirit who comes to impart *visions* of greater strength and virtue to the young, and *dreams* of promise for a life well lived to the old. Impress deep in our hearts the joy that the Church of God is filled today with holy hope, even as it *was filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit* in its infancy.

Instruct us of the three offices of the Paraclete which particularly fill us with holy hope. Lead us to the divine *Physician* who is possessed of eminent knowledge in both the spiritual and corporal arts, even as Ezechiel spoke of him: *Come, Spirit, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again.* We desperately need this Physician who is so learned that he vivifies the spiritually and physically dead, healing all wounds with neither knife nor drug, curing only with a word — his gracious: *So be it!* Beseech him, Star of the Sea, to raise us from the death blow of sin with the healing art of grace, for we know that just as our bodies are dead without our souls, our souls are dead without this Spirit. Bring us to the divine *Teacher*, who is endowed with eminent wisdom which will instruct our ignorance. We know that he is the only Font of knowledge, and without him we can never understand the truths of Faith. When we long for illumination in the study of things sacred, show us the words of Wisdom: *I wished, and understanding was given to me: and I called upon God and the Spirit of Wisdom came upon me.* Pray that this same Spirit may reveal himself to us as the *King* whose treasury abounds with overwhelming riches, with which he will fill our emptiness, even as he filled the emptiness of the Apostles, and sent them forth *filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Such are our desires to become lights of the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Handmaid of the Lord in Nazareth, filling her with such goodness that the Handmaid of the Lord in the Heavens shines as the Star of the Sea, *being transformed into his very image from glory to glory, as through the Spirit of the Lord.* In love, with firm

faith and hope we pray to this Virgin, that *with faces unveiled* may on Pentecost morn reflect *as in a mirror the glory of the Lord* the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier. Our prayer will be heard, and we become great lights of love and faith and hope, if we but continue *steadfastly in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with our brethren!*

William J. M.

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

### Article Twenty-five

**TEXT:** *All, both Brothers and Sisters, should guide and govern their life according to the law of the religious state which they have professed, and above all faithfully observe what pertains to the perfect fulfilment of their vows. They should have the highest regard especially for the points which direct them to follow the charity and poverty of the Seraphic Father, for it becomes the child most of all to reproduce itself the image and virtues of its parent.*

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, the present article is concerned primarily with the most general obligation of religious life, as such, that of striving for perfection.

The essence of perfection consists in charity, the perfect love of God and fellowman (Cf. Art. 6). That man is perfect who fulfils the law of love perfectly, being guilty not even of a minor transgression. As long as we remain in this life, however, such perfection exists only as an ideal, for to no ordinary mortal is granted the special privilege of sinlessness. Yet for all that, it is not just an ideal, but *our* ideal, one which Christ himself holds up to each of us as a personal goal. *You therefore, be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt. 5:48). We have the obligation to strive to become more perfect than we are, to conquer and control those habits and tendencies that lead us away from God, through virtuous counter-habits to attain an ease and facility in the practice of God, so that the practice of charity becomes as it were a second

and the violations or transgressions of God's will diminish in frequency and seriousness.

This obligation is incumbent on every Christian and is commonly regarded by spiritual writers to be a serious or grave matter. For unless man continues to strain forward spiritually he will tend to lose ground and slip backwards. The law of organic life holds in the supernatural realm as well. In all living things two countermovements are apparent, one constructive or anabolic in the sense that it tends to build up and strengthen the organism, the other disintegrating or catabolic which tends to consume the substance and resources of the organism so that weakened it becomes an easy prey to disease and death. So long as the first process predominates, man continues to mature, but as the latter gains control man begins to age and to die. To cease to strive for greater holiness and to war against the destructive forces of spiritual life is not only to fail to consolidate or retain one's spiritual gains but to begin to move backwards in what, if not checked, will become a precipitate flight towards spiritual death.

Moralists remind us that this obligation, already incumbent on all Christians, is *a fortiori* binding on religious, for their very way of life has as its fundamental *raison d'être* to enable them to run more quickly and surely on the path to perfection. So serious is this obligation that St. Alphonsus declares: "If a religious takes the firm resolution of not tending towards perfection or of giving no thought whatever to it, he commits a mortal sin" (*Theol. moralis*, IV, 18). For his own followers, Francis expressed the same idea in the language of the Gospel, "*No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God* (*Regula O.F.M.*, c. 2). And though he applied these words literally to those friars who would leave their order after final profession for an easier way to perfection, who will say that he did not also have in mind those who had already abandoned their way of life in their heart?

The Code of Canon Law not only reminds religious of this fundamental *law of the religious state they have professed*, but indicates how they can carry it out. "All religious, both superiors and subjects, must not only faithfully keep the vows which they have taken but must also be according to the rules and constitutions proper to their religious institute, and in this manner strive for religious perfection" (Can. 593).

In this sense we can say that even though individual articles, or even the Rule and Constitutions as a whole, do not oblige under sin, a religious is simply free to disregard or ignore them deliberately. Such an attitude of mind would be tantamount to declaring that he will

no longer strive for perfection. This becomes clear if we consider that the Rule and Constitutions are set down as counsels intended to guide the religious to their goal. In expressly declaring they do not bind a such under sin, either mortal or venial, the Church indicates that an one in itself (except where divine or human law oblige) is not put down as a necessary or required condition for attaining perfection and to the extent its violation would be a positive imperfection rather than a sin as such. But the frame of mind which would deliberately set aside or disregard these counsels where they do not entail sin on other counsels is equivalent to setting up as a norm or goal positive imperfection rather than the perfection for which one should be striving. To this extent such an attitude would be seriously sinful. It is precisely for this reason that where legitimate reasons prevent religious from following a particular requirement of the Rule or Constitutions, especially for any length of time, superiors either within or without the order are empowered to dispense them from it. Such powers would be meaningless if no obligation at all existed.

On the other hand it would be incorrect to believe that this general obligation, serious and grave though it be in itself, is violated or sinfully neglected by each and every transgression of the Rule. There is a fixed degree of perfection that we can set down as an absolute that must be attained and which when achieved would excuse us from further effort. Likewise, no fixed pace of progress is determined. Even if we could determine the rate of spiritual growth or for that matter the mere fact of growth or retrogression, it would be unwise to attempt it for it could only lead either to spiritual pride or discouragement, neither of which is conducive to the attainment of perfection. Leaving such matter to unhealthy speculation, then, the Code confines itself to stressing not so much the obligation, which is presumed, but rather the means by which it can be fulfilled, namely by keeping the vows and living according to the rule and constitutions. Where religious have the habitual will to fulfilling faithfully this prescription and are not notably transgressing the same, they may rest assured that they are also fulfilling the substance of their obligation to strive for perfection.

No Franciscan worthy of the name, however, would use the balance of the moral casuist to determine where he can set limits to his sacrifice of self without incurring sin. Rather his attitude will be that of Francis, who though signed with the stigmata as an outward sign of inner love that consumed him could still sorrowfully say: "Let us begin to serve the Lord, our God; for until now we have done little" (Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, c. 14).

For that reason the Rule urges that *all should faithfully observe what pertains to the perfect fulfillment of their vows*. Such perfect fulfillment as the Rule envisions excludes not only serious violation of the vows but venial or minor infractions as well. But envisaged is more than that. With the exception of the vow of chastity, generally speaking the vows oblige religious only to the external observance. For instance, so long as a religious carries out the command of the superior even though inwardly rebelling, the vow is not transgressed. But in such a case, the virtue of obedience is absent. For the latter extends also to the inner dispositions which prompt the religious to submit their will to that of the superior in so far as the latter is the representative of God. This too pertains to the perfect fulfillment of the vow. In like manner, the virtue of poverty goes beyond the external renunciation demanded by the vow, and implies the internal detachment from earthly goods that prompts a religious to shun the superfluous and to choose the inferior product to the superior where the former serves the same purpose. And when at times even essentials are denied us, the virtue enables us to accept this with something of that "perfect joy" Francis described to Brother Leo. Such an attitude is patent proof of the will to strive for perfection.

*They should... follow the charity and poverty of their Seraphic Father...* The Franciscan striving for perfection not only desires to fulfill perfectly the requirements common to all religious institutes. He also seeks this same fidelity in regard to the proper or specific demands made by his particular order, or congregation. That is why the present article is not content with exhorting the Tertiary to the inner as well as outward observance of the evangelical counsels. It continues with a reminder of a similar distinction, that which exists between the letter of the Rule or Constitutions and the spirit of the founder that should vivify it. *For it becomes the child most of all to reproduce in itself the image and virtues of its parent.*

From the time of St. Bonaventure down to our own day, learned men within and without the Franciscan family have speculated on the essence of Franciscanism. What is the substance of its spirituality? But because the personality of Francis, for all his simplicity, was a unique fusion of many different character traits, these scholars do not always come up with the same answers. But whatever be the merits of their respective analyses, it is interesting to note what Holy Mother the Church herself has singled out as most distinctive of the "Franciscanism" she wishes her children to practice. Charity and poverty! It is the "Seraph" and the "Poverello" in the son of Peter Bernadone that caught her eye.

Charity is the common trait of all the saints. For as St. John warned,

God is love And only he who abides in love abides in God, and God is in him (I Jo. 4:16). But for all that, Francis' charity was unique. Not inaptly perhaps, has it been styled "Christo-centric" and "evangelical" or "Gospel-centered". For when Francis, questing knighthood, heard the call to follow the Lord rather than the servant, with all the naiveté and idealism of unspoiled youth, he embraced Christ's way of life as he found it literally in the pages of the Gospel. He loved the *whole* Christ. And only when we compare his thought with the intellectual and spiritual movements of his age can we fully appreciate the significance of that statement. He loved the Christ, begotten of the Father, born in time in the likeness of men, the Christ-child of Bethlehem as well as the Man of Sorrows who bore in his flesh the marks of the passion, the Christ who founded the Church, who entrusted to Peter and those who would wear the "rock" of the fisherman his own authority, Christ who left us his Body and Blood and anointed priestly hands to administer it to us. And because man, as king of the creation beneath him, was himself formed by God in the image of his beloved Son according to the body and to his likeness according to the spirit" (*Admonitions*, n. 5), even the inferior creature took on something of a sacramental character, and in his *Cantic of the Sun* he showed us how we might praise God by and through the things of nature.

His love for the *whole* Christ, in short, explained both his reverence for the Fatherhood of God and for the brotherhood of man, the love of Greccio as well as the stigmata on Mount Alverno, his allegiance to "the Lord Pope," his "faith in Churches" that housed his Eucharist, God, his reverence for priests, in whom, as he put it, "I see the Son of God," or for theologians "who minister to us spirit and life" (*Testament*). These are only some of the outstanding characteristics of the Charity of Francis, indeed a gem of many facets. To achieve something of his embracing love is in truth the task of a lifetime.

Poverty, as Francis conceived it, is also unique. Like his charity is the fruit of an all-absorbing love of Christ. As Celano tells us he used to call it the "royal virtue" because it shone so resplendently in his King and Queen (*Legenda Secunda*, n. 200), for "the Lord is himself poor for us in this world." Furthermore, it will eventually unite us with Christ, "for it leads to the land of the living." "My dearest brothers," he would say, "is the sublimity of the most perfect poverty, which has made you heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven poor in goods but exalted in virtue. . . Clinging to it unreservedly for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, may you never desire to possess anything else under heaven" (*Regula Bullata O.F.M.*, c. 6).

But even more unusual is his idea of the ambit or extent of this virtue. It goes far beyond what we ordinarily understand by the term. In addition to poverty proper, for instance, it includes humility or the recognition of our spiritual neediness, the "poverty of spirit" of the first beatitude which is the entrance requirement for the kingdom of heaven. And like the humility of the first beatitude, this poverty, as we have seen, leads to the second which is meekness. "He who is truly poor in spirit hates himself, and loves those who strike him on the cheek" (*Admonitions*, n. 14). It is the very antithesis, therefore, of pride which glories in high offices. That is why Francis could write of those in authority. "If they are more perturbed by the loss of their superiority than they would be by losing the office of washing the feet (of their subjects), so much the more do they *lay up treasures* to the peril of their own soul" (*Admon.*, n. 4).

And because poverty, for Francis, implied the surrender of whatever we possess, it included both chastity and obedience. That is the reason he can use the language of poverty to describe purity of heart as "despising the treasures of earth and seeking those of heaven" (*Admon.*, n. 16). And in describing perfect obedience, he can say: "The Lord says in the Gospel, *he that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be a disciple and he that will save his life shall lose it*. That man leaves all he possesses and loses his body and his soul who abandons himself wholly to obedience in the hands of his superior" (*Admon.*, n. 3).

In short, Franciscan poverty implies detachment from all we might call our own, leaving all we might possess. It includes the gift of one's body (through chastity), the surrender of one's soul (through obedience), in addition to temporal possessions. It means humility and meekness as well as the absence of self-will.

But this detachment is not so much the abandonment of something that is evil as a dedication of something that is good. For that reason he does not tell us to give up all things *for* the Lord, but rather *to* the Lord. "Blessed is the servant who gives up all his good *to* the Lord, for he who retains anything *for himself* hides *his Lord's money*, and that *which he thinketh he hath shall be taken from him*" (*Admon.*, n. 19). All that we have, all that has been given us, belongs in reality to the Lord, our heavenly Father. It is not our exclusive possession but rather something that we are to use according to his will, in serving him and his adopted children. If love or charity has been aptly styled the "gift of oneself", then poverty as Francis knew it is the complementary virtue that makes such a gift or dedication possible, for it is nothing less than the refusal to keep back anything as our exclusive possession. In this sense, Francis'

espousal to Lady Poverty is significant. She is the only one he would possess as his own, she who was first Christ's spouse on earth and who he left behind only when he ascended into heaven, to remind us that we might follow him to paradise. That is why he would pray: "Jesus, give me a strong, an absorbing, an abiding love for thy spouse, poverty. She was with thee in Bethlehem, accompanied thee to Egypt, went with thee to Nazareth, joined thee on thy missionary travels, escorted thee up Mount Calvary, and when even thy Mother Mary remained beneath the foot of the Cross, thy spouse mounted the Cross with thee; and finally, she kept thee company in the tomb, which was now her own. Oh give me, Lord, a burning, a deathless love for this thy spouse"

**CONCLUSION:** *The Blessing of our Holy Father St. Francis*

In his last will and testament, Francis extended a special blessing to those who would observe the regulations he had drawn up for his friars. By adding this blessing to the present revision of the Rule of the Third Order Regular, Pius XI grants all who follow it faithfully the assurance that they, no less than the members of Francis' First Order, have the blessing of their spiritual father in heaven. There is no more fitting conclusion we could append to this explanation of the Rule, than the words of this blessing:

*And whosoever will observe these things, may they be filled with the blessing of the Most High Heavenly Father, and may they be filled on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son together with the Most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and all the Virtues of the Heavens and all the Saints. And I, Brother Francis, your little one and servant, so far as ever I am able, confirm unto you within and without this heavenly blessing, which may you enjoy with all the Virtues of the Heavens and all the Saints now and forevermore. Amen.*

(Conclusion)

Fr. Allan Wolter, O.F.M.

## HER STEPS ARE CANTICLES

### *The Music of Mary in the Franciscan Heart*

#### The Franciscan Heart Speaks OF BEGINNINGS...

I am the Franciscan heart. I have no personal identity, but in my deepest recesses burns that steady and joyous flame which has warmed the coldness and gloom of the world for seven centuries... that clean and constant flame which is called the Franciscan spirit.

I am the Franciscan heart, and I dwell in the breast of every son and daughter of the two saints whose names history has intertwined with the force of a thousand songs, myriad poems, countless frescoes: the saints of Assisi, Francis and Clare.

I am the Franciscan heart, and I beat for the first time when a gay young man threw back his dark head and laughed at the pale sanity of the world. I began to throb when Francis Bernardone embraced the sweet madness of the Gospel, and sang for the joy of possessing nothing on earth but claiming a Father in Heaven.

Francis was the tenderest of men, fashioned for pure love and absolute joy. It was quite to be expected that his gallantry would espouse the loveliest of all maidens: the Holy Mother of God. He carried the name of Holy Mary like a flower against his heart, and his spirit flew her colors when he set out to bring the joy of her Divine Son back to a world which had forgotten it was redeemed. It was at Mary's altar that his great family was conceived, and there he espoused the lovely Clare to the Lord most high. Saint Mary of the Angels... down the decades and scores and centuries of years, the name of that small chapel is a rose pressed in the Franciscan memory. It was there that the Blessed Virgin entered into an exquisite conspiracy with Francis to wrest from the Mercy of God the greatest indulgence ever granted: the Great Pardon of the Portiuncula.

Francis loved the Virgin Mother of God with a tenderness I cannot tell you in words. But I know it. For I am his heart. How I leaped for gladness the day his love for our Lady escaped into the relief of a poem. He found that song in me. For I am the heart of Francis, and I know.

#### OF BLOSSOMING...

I am the Franciscan heart, multiplied ten thousand, thousand times in the vast progeny of Francis. I was a chaste fire of the Virgin in the breast of his beautiful daughter, Clare. I was the virile courage of the



Stabat Mater, spurring on his daughter, Coletta. I was Mary-music trumpets in the soul of Bernardine of Siena. I was drumbeats of Lady in the spirit of John Capistran. I put the song on the stiffening of Anthony of Padua; he died singing, "O Gloriosa Virginum!"

I am the Franciscan heart; and the love of the Virgin Mary who first set me swinging in Francis, is still the dynamo which keeps throbbing in all the children of Francis. When devotedness to Mary wanes, I slacken my beats; I sicken and die.

I am the Franciscan heart, but I cannot swing my joyous pendulum without Our Lady. I leap forward on the Name of Jesus, but I swing back on the Name of Mary. From the first beginning of the great Seraphic Order, Mary Immaculate was chosen for its Queen. I know it because I was there.

#### OF HER COMING...

I am the Franciscan heart, and my beating was soon heard all over Europe. It was not enough. I yearned for new lands where I could hear the music of Mary. And so I came to the New World. I beat out my message of Jesus and Mary so ecstatically that, to this very day and to this day, men call that vast territory of the Americas where I first throbbed, "Land of Saint Francis."

I am the Franciscan heart, and I was the first to be decked in imperial purple in Mexico. I am the heart of Fray Juan de Zumarraga, chosen instrument of Holy Mary of Guadalupe. His were the first eyes to behold that unspeakable work of art which is her Immaculate Person. I shall never forget that day, that ever-blessed day... it was December 25, in the year 1531. A little Indian was kneeling before the Bishop's throne. Suddenly, he stood up; and cascades of scarlet roses gushed from his cheeks, and his legs would not support him. He fell upon his knees, but I gave him the words that came at last: "Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God!"

I am the Franciscan heart, and I was throbbing with unutterable joy when the great procession carried the miraculous image of the Lady of Guadalupe to the first shrine on Tepeyac. Many, many sons of Francis walked in that procession, singing the praises of the Virgin, shouting her name out on their tambours. And I know the inarticulate shouts, the unwritten poems that stirred in the soul of each of those friars. I am the heart of every one of them. I am the heart of Bishop Zumarraga. And I have seen the Immaculate Mother of God.

#### OF HER PRIVILEGE...

I am the Franciscan heart, and my love was quick to grasp what mere intellect could not fathom. Even that most devoted son of Mary, Saint Bernard, stumbled over the mystery of her Immaculate Conception. Even the incomparable Thomas Aquinas left no place for this dogma in the superb and sacred network of his theology.

But I am the Franciscan heart. I did not stumble over that Immaculate Exception to all laws, which is Our Lady. I had ample room in my love for her glory and her privilege. And so, when the great intellects of Christendom debated and declaimed, I explained to them out of the depths of my Seraphic love for Mary, how this most dear Lady was not redeemed, but pre-redeemed. I showed all men that by the foreseen merits of His Divine Son, God had willed that no least shadow of sin should ever fall across the sunlit purity of her who was to be the Mother of God. I am the heart of Duns Scotus, the friar whom generations hail: Doctor Marianus! I am the heart of each of the Franciscan Ministers General who presented to Pope Pius IX a golden rose and a silver lily when he proclaimed as a dogma of the universal Church that which I had always known.

#### OF HER GLORY...

I am the Franciscan heart, and each new century finds my love for Mary flaming in the very core of the Seraphic Order. I understood the mystery of her Immaculate Conception. Nor did I for a moment ever doubt that her chaste and precious person was taken up into the very porches of the Most Holy Trinity after the brief shuttering of her beautiful eyes in death. In the Middle Ages, I loved to call the Virgin's death merely, her Dormition. Other brilliant men debated the issue of Our Lady's Assumption, body and soul, into Heaven. I said nothing, but I resorted to strategy. In the primitive Franciscan Rule, I caused it to be set down that one of the scant dozen Feasts of the year on which Franciscans should be encouraged to approach the Eucharistic Table should be that of Our Lady's glorious Assumption.

I could not believe that the most courteous of Sons would permit the loveliest of Mothers to suffer the humiliating penalties of that original sin to which her Immaculate Person was completely a stranger. I knew that any son on earth would be quick to save his mother from the grave's ignominy, were it only in his power, were it only according to the law of eternal Justice. The Son of Mary had this in His power, and it was in flawless accord with the Justice of the Eternal Father.



I am the Franciscan heart, and for one long moment I hung perfectly still in every son and daughter of Saint Francis, while Pope Pius XII declared on November 1, 1950, that what I had believed for centuries was now a dogma all Catholics must believe under pain of exile from the porticoes of Holy Church. "Let him who refuses to believe that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was taken up, body and soul, into Heaven," said the slender, dark-eyed man whom I reverence above all men on the earth, "...let him be anathema!" I hung for that long moment, poised on the brink of my seraphic love for the Virgin Mary, suspended over the abyss of her perfection. Then I swung again, faster and faster and faster into a great thunder of drums. And I heard ten thousand trumpets afar off, in the home of Mary the Mother of God.

### OF THE CAUSE OF OUR JOY...

I am the Franciscan heart, and no fears gnaw at me. If men shatter the atom, they can never shatter Mary. If the world puts class hatred and bigotry like a rotting garment, Mary remains the Mother of all mankind. The face of Mary is a strange shining on the face of all sorrow. In the hands of Mary, every soul that has loved her life, will find its final tomorrow. She is the very flute of our sighs. She is the salvation in our tears. She is the bellrope of our laughter. She is the candle set on the distant sill of Heaven to guide us maculate, lonely ones—Home!

Sr. Mary Francis, F.M.



### WORK AND PRAYER

IN OUR Congregation there are to live jointly two Sisters: the Mary of Prayer and the Martha of Labor; the latter is to be sanctified by the former. We are wage-earners in the Service of God. We must regard ourselves as such and endeavor to earn our daily bread, and never waste time in idleness, for the distribution of our time is not at our disposal. Furthermore, we are to be satisfied with any kind of labor, so that in the evening of our life, when the Master repays our labor, He may say to us: *Good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of the Lord!*

Ven. M. Magdalen Daemen (d. 1858)

# the CORD

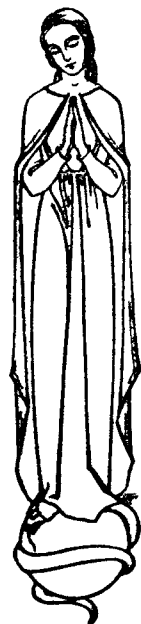
VOL. IV No. 7, JULY, 1954

## CONTENTS

MARY, A POEM BY NOVALIS ✓	194
Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M. (trans.)	
OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE ✓	195
Fr. Silvano Matulich, O. F. M.	
LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT BONAVENTURE ✓	198
Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O. F. M.	
MARY IMMACULATE ✓	203
Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.	
THE DOCTOR OF THE GOSPELS ✓	211
Fr. Anselm M. Romb, O. F. M. Conv.	
MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION ✓	216
Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, O. F. M.	
CORRESPONDENCE OF RELIGIOUS ✓	221
Fr. Honorius Hanstein, O. F. M.	
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS	223



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## Mary

Thy lovely features, Virgin sweet,  
 I see in pictures thousandfold,  
 But none to match the vision bright  
 I in my inmost soul behold:  
 The world and all its panoply  
 Have vanished in its brilliant light,  
 And heavenly serenity  
 Now fills my heart with chaste delight.

(NOVALIS)

Translated by Fr. Thomas Plassmann,

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

One night toward the beginning of his public ministry our Lord had a visitor. It was Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who had been moved to a measure of faith in Christ by the many miracles he had witnessed (Jn. 3). We can easily reconstruct the scene. Possibly it was in some abandoned hut, perhaps in a mere grotto on the hillside, and there the two sat on the ground and a lamp flickered in the darkness. Saint John certainly records but a fraction of the conversation.

Nicodemus, of course, as almost every contemporaneous Jew would have done, came to Christ full of those earthly thoughts of which they dreamed: a glorious kingdom of David, a kingdom of this world with Jerusalem a world-capital and the gentiles subject to her. Hence, it must have been disconcerting and puzzling when he heard the mysterious words of Christ, *Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Jesus used this solemn formula to coax Nicodemus to search for a spiritual sense in this material clothing. And he did. *How can a man be born when he is already old? Now Jesus enlightens him. Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Nicodemus was baffled. *How can these things be?*

It all seemed so strange and mystifying to him. What sort of kingdom is this? This is not what we have been waiting for. And though the Evangelist does not expressly say so, he does insinuate that Nicodemus, like every learned Jew, drew forth a long array of the prophecies of which their dreams were woven. He will have said: "We are looking for the restoration, in glory, of the theocratic kingdom, the reestablishment of the throne of David. So the prophets foretell. Here is, for example, Isaiah,

*A child is born to us,  
 A son is given to us,  
 And authority is upon his shoulder;  
 And his name is called:  
 Counsellor of wonderful things, powerful God,  
 Father forever, Prince of peace*

*Upon the throne of David,  
And over his kingdom;  
To establish it and sustain it*

And the Psalmist says, '*Ask of me, and I will give the nations for thy possession, and the ends of the earth for thy property*' (2:8).

Nicodemus, perhaps, went on and on, and then concluded: "We are looking for a Son of David to be lifted up on the throne of his father."

Now Christ replied with a teaching that must have nearly paralyzed the Pharisee. "You say the Son of David is to be lifted up and be exalted. Yes, indeed, but not as you expect. Let me tell you how he shall be lifted up. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Ita exaltari oportet Filium hominis.* The serpent was lifted up on a cross, not a throne. A throne will come in time, Nicodemus, but first the cross—as *Moses lifted up the serpent.....even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*"

"The cross will be his throne. They will give him a tormented and inaugural ceremony. It will last for hours on end. They will scourge him till he is entirely clothed in the purple of his own blood. This will be the first sign of his royalty. His crown will be an excremental instrument of pain. A withered reed will be his scepter. His court will be coarse Roman soldiers. They will see to it that the king is dishonored after they will have seated him on a mock throne in the praetorium. They will bend the knee before him in parody, *Hail, King of the Jews!* And each in turn will take the scepter from his hand and strike his crowned head till the thorns are driven deep. Thus invested in this awful regalia, Pilate will take him out to the people and say, *Behold your king!* And in wild frenzy they will clamor for his enthronement, *Crucify him!*"

"And so it will be done. They will not seat him on his throne; they will nail him to it. There you have it, Nicodemus. You said the Son of David was to be lifted up. Yes, indeed, but *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert.* That is the throne; it is a cross." And John adds this touching reflection, *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.*

Perhaps we are like Nicodemus and look for a throne without

the cross. But we must not forget that we were born in pain, for the waters in which we were regenerated have their power through the blood of Christ. We were dedicated to suffering at our spiritual rebirth in Christ, for baptism plunged us into his death. Henceforth we should bear in our bodies the dying of Christ. What is the dying we must undergo? Saint Paul tells us: *Mortify your members which are on earth. . . Strip off the old man with his deeds* (Col. 3:5,9). *Now before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels* (1 Tim. 5:21). Is this our supreme concern? or do we leave nature to assert herself with all her unlovely impulses: impatience, unkindliness, self-seeking, pride, murmuring, sloth? That would be to shirk our cross. Then there is that slow dying to self which is inherent in religious life: the many observances which we must honor, persevering effort at meditation, punctuality, forbearance with others, loyalty to an assignment which falls in little with our liking. All of this is accumulative; it can become a little agony. . . *Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! No, this is why I came to this hour. Father, glorify thy name* (Jn. 12:27-28).

Also the ministry offers us the cross. We must preach when we do not feel inclined to prepare. Do we then let ourselves become slovenly, not *rightly handling the word of truth?* (2 Tim. 2:15). There is the mortification of the confessional which can almost be a martyrdom for him who is zealous and conscientious. Are we always patient? Is that mind in us, at those trying moments, which was also in Christ Jesus? Even when we must reprimand, is it done *in spiritu lenitatis?*—It is good to reflect that, as there is a special crown of glory for those who confess God before men, there must certainly be a special reward for such that confess men before God.

By thus offering ourselves in sacrifice to God we do not die to sin for ourselves alone or contribute only to the discounting of our personal debt before God, but rather we assume our share of *what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ. . . for his body, which is the Church* (Col. 1:24). Thus suffering contributes to the effectiveness of our ministry.

Christ overcame the world and brought us life everlasting through the cross. We too shall overcome the world and bring life

to the souls of men by the cross: *In hoc signo vinces*. But we must approach it with a true heart in fullness of faith. . . . Let us hold fast to our confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has given the promise is faithful (Hebr. 10:22-23). Finally, the end will come with the end will come the reward. What will that be? Saint Augustine gives the answer in five words, *Seipsum dabit, quia se dedit*.

If, then, we hope for glory in the kingdom of God we must pay the price. One day the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, worshipping and asking a favor of him. He said to her, 'What dost thou want?' She said to him, 'Command that thy two sons may sit, one at thy right hand and one at thy left in thy kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you are asking for. Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink?' (Mt. 20:21-22).

No, Nicodemus. First the cross, then the throne. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. So too must his priests and religious be lifted up—on a cross.

*God so loved the world!*

*Fr. Silvano Matulich*

## LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT BONAVENTURE

In Franciscan history there are many little stories which give us an intimate insight into the life of Saint Bonaventure. There are, for example, the humorous anecdotes found in the chronicles of the Order. Then too, we have the legends which almost allow us to see the Saint alive—so human and revealing are they. Yet, with all their simplicity, these stories also show the flowering of virtue in the life of the Seraphic Doctor. But, whatever the viewpoint, the stories bring to light his simple Franciscan spirit. Let us open a few pages from the stories of his life.

### HOW HE BECAME A FRIAR

A son was born to John and Ritella, a noble couple of Bagnorea. And, it would seem, they named him John, after his father. But God evidently had other plans about his name. And this is how it all happened. The boy became very sick, causing his parents great worry. And his mother, fearing for his life, decided that something must be done. Now we must remember that this family was living in Italy, about the time of Saint Francis. So what was more natural for this mother than to turn to Saint Francis to help her boy? In fact, she made a vow to the poor little man of Assisi, asking him to pray to God for the recovery of her child. And Francis was not slow to reply. Due to the prayers and virtue of the Poverello, the little boy was snatched from the jaws of death.<sup>1</sup> And what an impression this cure made upon the mind of the little boy! He remembered it even much later when he was writing the life of Saint Francis; and he was so grateful that he thought he would be guilty of fault if he did not express his gratitude.<sup>2</sup> It seems that even his name was changed, due to his cure. For, from his good fortune, he was known from this time onwards as Bonaventura. And the good outcome of his cure prompted him always to love and imitate Saint Francis. More than that, the little boy henceforward loved more and more the simple way of life led by the followers of the poor little man of Assisi. He himself tells us that this Franciscan simplicity of life seemed to him to be like the beginning and perfection of the Church, which first began with simple fishermen;<sup>3</sup> and, from the inspiration of Francis, this little boy was determined to join the Franciscan Order. How well he had followed the simplicity and love of his ideal is told to us by Alexander of Hales, who, on his entrance into the Order, that it seemed as if Adam had not sinned in Bonaventura.

### HIS SIMPLE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

It seems that once Bonaventure was called upon to preach to the people. But, before he began, a certain Friar Marcus stopped him and said thus: "You are truly a hireling; and once, when you preached,

<sup>1</sup> *Legenda Sancti Francisci*, Cap. 1, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* de tribus quaestionibus.

you did not know what you were saying. Thus, I am afraid, you will act now."<sup>4</sup> But Bonaventure, far from showing hurt at the criticism, accepted the correction joyfully. And there were five reasons for his meek and humble action: because the Saint was a benign and patient man; because, in this, he was imitating Saint Francis; because the correction showed that Marcus loved him; because it gave him an occasion of avoiding vainglory; and, finally, because the criticism afforded him an opportunity of practicing better foresight. It would almost seem that, in his anxiety to practice Gospel and Franciscan virtues, he had forgotten about the coming sermon, so concerned was he to be a humble and simple follower of Saint Francis.

The story goes on to say that Marcus was acting from the best motives. For he believed that it was his duty to correct Bonaventure so that he would preach better. Moreover, he devotedly wrote out and kept all the Saint's sermons.<sup>5</sup>

#### HIS LOVE OF GOD

In the life of Brother Giles, ascribed to Brother Leo, we read the following story in the form of a dialogue between Giles and Bonaventure, the Minister General.<sup>6</sup> "Once Giles spoke to Brother Bonaventure: 'My Father, God has given you many favors. But we, ignorant and unlearned, who do not have enough, what can we do to be saved?' Bonaventure replied: 'If God gave no other grace to a man except that he could love Him, it would be enough.' And Brother Giles asked again: 'Can an ignorant woman love God as much as a wise man?' The General answered: 'One old lady can love God more than a Master in Theology.' Then, in a fervour of spirit, Giles jumped up and running into the garden outside, he faced the wall and shouted: 'Little old woman, simple and unlearned, you can love God and you can be greater than Brother Bonaventure!' And Brother Giles was so enraptured, that he remained immobile for three hours."

This simple story gives us a glance into the deep and genuine love of God, as found in the child-like soul of Saint Bonaventure. The spirit of the Seraph, marked with the signs of love, had also

<sup>4</sup>*Chronica*, Salimbene, *Mon. Germ. Histor.* t. XXXII, p. 308

<sup>5</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup>*Analecta Franciscana*, Tom. III, p. 101.

tured the soul of our Franciscan Doctor. We may know something of his marvelous capacity for learning the Sacred Sciences; probably too we are aware that he turned this learning into a form of prayer and used it to increase his devotion. But, being reminded of the little story above, we may be more conscious of the simple Christlike Seraphic charity that characterized his life. Like his Father who 'benefited others,' we are told that in his career as Minister General Bonaventure accomplished many good things. Who will say that this was not the fruit of his love of God?

#### THE MINISTER GENERAL SERVES ALL THE FRIARS

On another occasion, Saint Bonaventure was on his way to a Chapter at Assisi. In one of the houses on the way, a certain sick Brother Fulginas wanted to talk with the Minister General, but was unable to arrange it. So he had someone bring him to the outskirts of the town, along the way that Bonaventure and his companions must pass. When they came along, Friar Fulginas cried aloud to Bonaventure: "Venerable Father, I want to speak with you for my consolation. And I humbly pray that you will not despise your subject. Although he is only a poor little humble brother, still he is committed to your care." Now the other Friars were very disturbed and unhappy at this delay. But, leaving them, Saint Bonaventure went over and sat very humanly and calmly upon the ground beside the afflicted little Friar. There he openly listened to him, patiently bore his long talk and mercifully consoled him as he had asked.

But, as might be expected, the other Friars chafed at the delay; and they murmured while they waited, saying that the highest man in the Order ought not so to lower himself. They could not see how he should slight the worthier Fathers, and prefer to talk to this poor little Brother. But, when he returned, Saint Bonaventure had an answer for their complaints. He said: "Brothers, I was not allowed to do otherwise. For I am the Minister and Servant; so that poor little man is my lord. Because I often recall those words of the Rule: 'The Ministers should receive the Brethren so kindly and charitably, and should have so great familiarity toward them, that they may speak and act with them as masters with their servants. For so it ought to be, that the Ministers should be the servants of all the Friars.'" So Saint

Bonaventure concluded the lesson, saying: "I, the servant, obey the will of this, my master, and so have compassion on him who is a poor little sick Brother."<sup>7</sup> And we who read this story are inspired and edified at the humble service of Saint Bonaventure, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor.

#### THE CARDINAL'S HAT

Our collection of little stories would not be complete without including the legend about Bonaventure and the Cardinal's hat. It is told that Brother Bonaventure, the Minister General, was content to be a humble Friar. With peaceful and tranquil spirit he was ever an example of holy humility for the Brothers living with him. One of his usual humble tasks was to wash the dishes after the meals. In doing this he was merely acting like the rest of the community. And so, the story goes, one day while he was working in the kitchen, the Legates came from the Pope with the news that he was to be made a Cardinal. But Bonaventure, entirely undisturbed by their news, refused to meet with them until he had finished doing the dishes. Meanwhile, he told someone to hang that red 'cap' they had brought on a little branch of a nearby dogwood tree. When he finished washing the dishes, he said to the Friars: "After we have done the duties of a Friar Minor, we can undertake higher offices." "Believe me," he continued, "Franciscan labors are wholesome and salutary; but the works of great dignity are burdensome and dangerous." And so, saying, he went over to the dogwood tree, took down and put on the Cardinal's hat, and received the Papal Legates becomingly.

The legend tells us that the dogwood tree flourished beautifully and that the Brothers were wont to take visitors to see it, and to tell them the story of the hat of Cardinal Bonaventure, the Minister General and humble Friar.

Fr. Owen A. Colligan

<sup>7</sup>Omnia Opera, Tom. X, Dissertatio 1, De Vita Seraphici Doctoris, n. 7.  
<sup>8</sup>Annales Minorum, Wadding, Tom. IV, p. 428.

#### MARY IMMACULATE

To understand and appreciate the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we must let our mind search far and deep into the eternal decrees of the Triune God. This *great sign in heaven* (Apoc. 12:1) is not like the blue sky above and the millions of bright orbs that course through unmeasured space, declaring the glory, power, and majesty of the Almighty; it is not like the multicolored flowers, warbling birds, and crystal streams that tell us of his beauty and bounty; nor is it like this fertile earth, affording us fruits, shelter, and the means of livelihood in due season, to prove to us his abiding goodness and fatherly providence. Neither, indeed, was the full glory of this deep mystery revealed by *the glad tidings of the unfathomable riches of Christ* (Eph. 3:8), in which the burning soul and the inspired pen of the apostle of the Gentiles detected ever-increasing wonders of divine goodness and power. Rather, it came to light in the course of time, under the infallible guidance of holy Mother Church, as one of those priceless gems that had been mysteriously *hidden from eternity* by God, who created all things (Eph. 3:9).

In the venerable volume of the Book of Genesis, that marvelous document which may well be styled the oldest educational Primer written by God for the guidance of man, there is a brief pronouncement by the Almighty which, though profound and mysterious, solemn in tone and sweeping in reach, nevertheless rivets our attention upon *the Woman* who is engaged in bitter struggle with the serpent. The occasion was the fateful fall of our first parents. We seem still to hear the crash of the gates of Paradise as they are flung back on their hinges, while the Lord God turns to the Serpent and says:

*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed.*

*He shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for his heel* (Gen. 3:15).

Like a brilliant beacon light this ancient verse has shed its flare across the centuries, and though the words are shrouded in mystery, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have with one accord recog-

nized in them the final defeat of the Serpent and a victory which the *Seed* shared with the *Woman*. For even if the *Woman*, as the Vulgate reads, is to crush the Serpent's head, the power must come from the *Seed*. In this *Seed* the Fathers saw Christ, the Savior of the world, the second Adam and conqueror of sin and death. And who else could be the *Woman*, but the Mother of the Savior, Mary, who in place of Eve, was destined to assume the motherhood of *all the living*.

As Saint Paul says, *God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets* (Hebr. 1:2). Perusing the books of the Old Testament we frequently light upon passages, figures, and events that bear an unmistakable resemblance to the *words and deeds* of our Savior and his Blessed Mother. Like a magnificent drama the Holy Spirit unrolls before our eyes the story of salvation as it was planned in the Mind of God, *the Father's mercies*, and carried out by the Son of God, our Savior. At times these prophecies are faint and hazy; at other times they flare up like lightning and set the expectant world in wonderment. Like the nouement in the plot of a play or an opera, all these preliminary figures, and types seem to converge on the great stage of divine Revelation at the very moment which Saint Paul calls *the fullness of the times* (Eph. 1:10). That is, the time of the arrival of the promised Redeemer among us. At this moment the great curtain rises and the New Testament in all its glory and spiritual wealth comes into full view.

But the Almighty does great things in a small, almost hidden place. The world was following its devious and tortuous paths when unbeknown to the world without, a Prince of heaven appeared in a humble home at little Nazareth in Galilee and interrupted a young Maiden's prayer with the mysterious greeting: *Hail, full of grace* (Lk. 1:28). But this simple salutation carried a meaning of tremendous significance. For where there is grace there can be no sin; where there is fullness of grace, sin is totally barred, together with all its evil implications. Without hesitation the Fathers and Doctors linked this very salutation at the very dawn of the New Testament with the divine Prophecy in the first book of the Old Testament; they concluded that the *Woman* in Genesis was the Maiden of Nazareth, and that the *fullness of grace* which adorned her at Na-

areth bespoke the complete victory as recorded in Genesis. In other words the Serpent had no part in this *Woman*, standing on the bridge between the Old Law and the New, because she was, as the Evangelist records, *full of grace*, that is, wholly and singularly the favorite child of the heavenly Father.

Like a gentle rivulet the Gospel story of the Virgin of Nazareth winds its way through the valleys and over the hills of Palestine, the Land of Promise; from Nazareth to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Egypt, from Egypt back to Nazareth, then to Jerusalem, and lastly following noiselessly and reverently in the footsteps of the God-Man on his momentous Messianic mission which ended in the fulfilment of the Father's command on Calvary's heights. Only seven times do we see the pure lips of the Blessed Mother move in speech. Though she spoke only seven times, her whole life was action—action consecrated by a Mother's love and sacrifice. And this beautiful life, with all its hidden power and charm, has not failed to leave an impression upon the hearts and minds of early followers of Jesus and all later generations—an impression so profound and enduring that no turmoil or trial, within the Church or without, has been able to efface or weaken it.

Echoes from apostolic days, mingled with the voices and manifestations of succeeding ages, have established the unshaken conviction in all Christendom of the belief and acclaim that the Virgin Mother of the Savior was all-pure, all-holy, sinless and stainless. This belief comes to us from scrolls and scripts, from stones and parchments, and from all the relics and writings of antiquity. No one ever seemed to think that there was need of formal decrees and protestations of a truth that was so deeply imbedded in the consciousness of Christians; no one even dared to hint that Mary, the Mother of God, should have been in the slightest measure subject to the curse of Original Sin. The great Saint Augustine, Doctor of Grace and Heart of the Church, speaks for all antiquity when he declares: "I do not want a single word uttered about sin when we speak of Mary the Virgin." The eminent Doctor felt that the very mention of sin would offend our Lord, and in this he shows how deeply and correctly he sensed the mind of Mary's divine Son.

It was at the time of Saint Augustine that bitter controversies

arose regarding the grace of God and the nature and effects of Original Sin upon the human race. These and other theological controversies continued for centuries, and they will continue to the end of days. Almighty God in *the glad tidings of the riches of Christ* (Eph. 1:8) committed eternal truths to mankind. Some of these truths are clear and explicit; others are obscure and need clarification. The Lord God's way. He has endowed man with an intellect and free will. Ever, before departing from this world, our Divine Savior declared to his Apostles: *But, when he, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will teach you all the truth* (Jn. 16:13). This Spirit of Truth abides in the Church, and the Savior has endowed her with infallible authority in all things that pertain to our salvation. Under the guidance, therefore, of the infallible Church such truths as need elucidation are clarified by her theologians and, in God's own time, holy Church seals them with her infallible pronouncement. We call this dogma and every dogma has proven of far-reaching significance for the welfare of the Church and all her children the world over.

In the Thirteenth Century, when the great Schoolmen were raising the imposing edifice of philosophical thought and theological doctrine, the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception elicited great interest on all sides. Strange as it may seem, all of Christendom clung fast to the ancient belief that their glorious Queen, the Mother of God, had been free from all sin, actual and original, but in the minds of some theologians this pious belief seemed to conflict with other revealed truths. "Was she not a true child of Adam," they wondered, "and was she not therefore subject to Adam's guilt like the rest of men?" "Furthermore," others argued, "does not the inspired Saint Paul clearly teach: *Therefore as through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and thus death passed unto all men because all have sinned* (Rom. 5:12)? How can we dare to contradict the Apostle, even though it grieves us to be unable to defend the absolute stainlessness of the beloved Mother of our Savior?"

Many prayers were said for enlightenment on this difficult question. Many of the great Doctors of that glorious period laid down their pens in dismay, "hoping against hope" that the proper solution would come forth. But divine Wisdom *reacheth therefore from heaven and ordereth all things sweetly* (Wisd. 8:1). From

the ranks of the Order of Saint Francis there came forth a theologian who was singularly gifted. It was Blessed John Duns Scotus who, because of his mental acumen, had earned the title "the Subtle Doctor". It was he who found the solution and paved the way for future action on the part of theology and for the final verdict of holy Church.

Certainly, Duns Scotus argued, Mary was a child of Adam, and in the natural course of events she would have contracted Adam's debt like other men. But to be a child of Adam by nature does not imply that nature will force the contraction of sin if a higher power prevents it. Yet God can prevent this by the infusion of grace at the moment of conception, for grace bars all sin; in fact it excels in spiritual power and beauty that original justice which man possessed before the Fall. In a most ingenious and subtle way this Champion of Mary challenged all objections and, answering them one by one, sustained his point that Mary could well be a child of Adam in the order of nature, but that divine grace was able to make her a child of God before original sin took effect in her soul at the earliest moment of her existence.

After this Duns Scotus had to face the more serious difficulty of reconciling the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception with the revealed truth of Christ's universal Redemption. Christ was the universal Redeemer, as Saint Paul clearly states: he redeemed all men because all had sinned in Adam. At this point John Duns Scotus rises to the very height of theological argumentation, and by a gallant masterstroke of genius he draws his argument from the very heart of the objection, namely, from Christ's universal Redemption. Christ, he declares, being the universal Redeemer was also the most excellent Redeemer and, as such, he could not but manifest his excellence as Redeemer, Conciliator, and Mediator. For it behooves the most perfect Redeemer or Mediator to perform the most perfect act of mediation possible on behalf of some person for whom he mediates. But there was no person for whom he could have performed a more perfect act of mediation than his own Mother. And this could only be done by preserving her from original sin. But then, it was objected, was this act an act of redemption? By preserving Mary from sin, Scotus retorted, he not only redeemed but pre-redeemed his Mother, which act implies a far greater grace and greater



redemptive power than the simple act of redemption as in the case of other men. To the further question, why such an extraordinary feat should be performed on Mary, Scotus gives the beautiful answer that the Redeemer was prompted by the extraordinary love he had for his Mother. In this answer, the Subtle Doctor skillfully draws back the mystic veil from before the eternal decrees of the Triune God.

Thus Mary's Champion or, as he is called, the Marian Doctor removed all objections and opened the way for a clear elucidation and for the eventual definition by the Church. And yet, as a humble son of Saint Francis, he did not press his convictions, but, enumerating the various opinions, concluded with this remarkable saying: "God knows which of these is true. But if it be not contrary to the authority of the Church or the authority of Sacred Scripture, it seems probable that what is more excellent should be accorded to Mary." The Franciscan School throughout the succeeding centuries followed closely in the footsteps of the Subtle Doctor. They made the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception a glorious page in the history of Franciscan theology. The opinion of Duns Scotus gained momentum as the centuries rolled by. What the faithful, laymen and people alike, had always believed in their inmost hearts, had now been placed beyond the stage of theological controversy. He was urged by all the nations of Christendom, Pius IX of happy memory finally declared the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin a dogma of faith, in the year 1854. It proved a timely act of the Holy See, for this brilliant Morning Star of the Immaculate Conception shed a shining, warming and clarifying lustre upon the troubled waters of this age of liberalism, sensualism and unbelief. It is to the credit of our beloved country that several years before even our Hierarchy had chosen the Immaculate Mother as the celestial Patroness of our land.

We recognize in Blessed John Duns Scotus a free-thinker of the orthodox type. Before him lay the voluminous works of the Fathers of the Church and the Summas of the great Schoolmen of his own day, many of whom were drawing multitudes of students to their lecture halls. With the highest regard for the teaching of his colleagues, Duns Scotus, who was groomed in the school of Saint Francis of Assisi where the spirit of liberty prevails, opened new paths and vistas in the field of theological speculation and research.

His approach to any question started from lofty heights. His premises in the present discussion were three: the Omnipotence of God; the Excellence of the Redeemer; the worthiness of his Blessed Mother. The first premise rested on the words of the Archangel Gabriel: *For nothing shall be impossible with God* (Lk. 1:37). The second stemmed from the very heart of Franciscan piety, for the Rule of the Friars Minor is, "to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the Poverello of Assisi had bound himself with his whole soul to the Crucified. Meanwhile, Saint Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, had developed in his own inimitable way and with profound theological insight both the Cult of the Sacred Heart and the doctrine of the Kingship of Christ. Now his eminent confrere, the Subtle Doctor, resumed the latter theme and reached still deeper into the eternal decrees of God by posing the question: Would Christ have died if Adam had not sinned? In that event, Scotus argued, Christ would have come as a King in all his glory, rather than as a servant and a *man of sorrows*.

Standing on this lofty plane it was but natural that he should conceive an idea of the nobility, the excellence, and the loving generosity of the universal Redeemer toward the Woman who was predestined to be his Mother on earth. He rightly argued that Mary's divine Maternity is the basis of all of her glorious privileges in the mind of the Most High. *My secret to myself* the Prophet of God warns (Is. 24:16); yet, we shall not go wrong if we resolve all the glories of Mary to the eminently human and none-the-less divine law of a "son's love for his mother." For what is so genuinely and beautifully close to the human heart must in a superior manner be appealing to the Heart of God. This explains why at the Council of Ephesus, when Saint Cyril and the assembled Fathers came forth to proclaim Mary's divine Motherhood, the multitude responded in enthusiastic cheers and acclaims. This explains why the Catholic world from the beginning to the present day has never and will never allow a stain or shadow of evil fall on Mary's sweet name. This explains too, why the belief in Mary's holiness and sinlessness, her immaculate conception and glorious assumption, her undefiled virginity and loving motherhood, has always been treasured as a *pearl of great price* among the *unfathomable riches of Christ*.

Mary Immaculate, the Mother of God and of men, is destined

to live on in the world, in the Church, and above all in the hearts of the faithful. Her shining example cannot but mould, her powerful intercession cannot but help the human race. In our prayers, meditations, in our daily work and sundry tasks, we see our Immaculate Mother before us in three distinct phases or periods of her beautiful life and her glorious destiny. We always find her with her Divine Son who, as the Seraphic Doctor says, is 1) the Eternal Word of God, the *Verbum Increatum*, the Uncreated Word, existing from eternity, as the Second Person of the Triune God; 2) the *Verbum Incarnatum*, the Incarnate Word, the Son of Mary in the fullness of time; 3) the *Verbum Inspiratum*, as he lives in the Sacred Scriptures, the Alpha and Omega for all eternity. Thus *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, and forever* (Hebr. 13:8).

But also Mary was in the mind of the Triune God from eternity intimately associated with the "Uncreated Word," for in her mother she was to be. At sundry times her amiable figure looms in the Sacred Writings of the Old Law, and Mother Church weaves those passages artfully into her Sacred Liturgy. Then, in the Gospel and the Acts of the New Law Mary appears before us, the Mother of the "Incarnate Word." Here she is the Virgin full of grace, following her divine Son and sharing his joys and his sorrows. With exquisite taste these scenes are depicted on the pages of that simple and colorful Album which Mother Church unfolds for her children as each Ecclesiastical Year rolls by.

Lastly, the Old Law and the New, bound in one volume for the Church is *the Holy Book* of the Scriptures, the "Inspired Word of God." As we close this sacred volume and go about our daily lives, we carry it with us in our hearts and apply its teachings to our lives, and recall it at our devotions, meditate on it at our prayers. This is keeping Jesus and Mary with us on our way in the world, in our homes, in our hearts. What we have read in the Old Law and in the New, we assemble into a law for ourselves. In this sense the Immaculate Mother speaks to us: *My son, forget not my law, but thy heart keep my commandments* (Prov. 3:1).

Fr. Thomas Plassmann

## THE DOCTOR OF THE GOSPELS

"Brother Francis sends his greetings to Brother Anthony, his 'bishop.' It is pleasing to me that you lecture to the Brothers about theology, as long as their learning does not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, as it says in the Rule."

Saint Francis had heard of the successful preaching of his young confrere and was writing these words of encouragement to this preacher destined to be known as Saint Anthony of Padua. Yet in the tenth chapter of his Rule Francis had written; "And let those who are unlearned have no anxiety to acquire learning." We can scarcely think that he had changed his mind. No, it was Anthony's technique as teacher and preacher—in his mind there was little distinction between these two offices—that won the approval of the Founder of the Order. It was Anthony's approach to learning that brought him closer to the spirit of Francis than any other Franciscan Schoolman.

In a word, Anthony aligned all human knowledge about Christ. Later, of course, Bonaventure and Scotus amplified this Christocentrism in the doctrine of the Kingship of Christ; but what won Francis' special approval was the way Anthony employed Scripture and nature to teach the mysteries of our faith.

Anthony's remarkable penetration into the mystical meanings of Scripture motivated Pope Pius XII in conferring the title of the Evangelical Doctor, or Doctor of the Gospels, upon him in an encyclical dated 1946. As the sermon appended to this article shows, the title is well deserved. Saint Francis himself always believed every-thing a Friar need know was written clearly for him in the Scriptures. Anthony's almost exclusive reliance on the authority of the Scriptures is what endeared him to Francis. Likewise in the spirit of his teacher, Anthony delighted in using examples of birds and plants and animals to drive home a point. Since these two elements are typically the substance of most of his sermons, an explanation of his method is in order.

Saint Anthony's motto with respect to Scripture might have been taken from the pen of Saint Jerome: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Saint Francis himself was wont to open

the Divine Oracles for guidance when he was in a quandary. biographers tell us that he even tore apart the pages of the Old Testament so that he could share a part of the written Word with the brethren, even those who could not read, just so they might have it close to their hearts in reverence. The special flair of Saint Anthony was to search the Old Testament for texts which foreshadowed the New, or which mystically imply the truths revealed in the New. Thus he *accommodated* texts as metaphors and symbols of Christian life, his Mother's virtues, the soul's progress in sanctity, and so on. In Saint Anthony's theology, these parallel texts, or concordances, were not meant to be taken as absolute proofs of our faith; rather, they *suggested*, in that manner so dear to medieval minds, what was already believed. This last is important to note, for Saint Anthony worked within the framework of Catholic teaching. This distinguishes him from pseudo-mystics and liberal Protestants whose "personal interpretations" permit them to make truth relative to their convenience. There are ample illustrations of how the Saint used the Scriptures in the sermon excerpt we include at the end of this article. Often the sermons (which are the only writings indisputably attributed to him) appear to be little more than quotations from the Scriptures. The preponderant use of Isaiah in the excerpt we have translated is due to the fact it is from the Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent, when the Church inserts passages from Isaiah in the Breviary. Thus our Saint followed the liturgy throughout the year.

Analogies from nature belong to the thinking of every medieval man. Saint Francis often refers to sister lark and brother wolf. We find reflections of God's perfection and examples of His love in the silence every time he looked up at a mountain peak, heard the song of the birds, or was warmed by the sun. Saint Anthony's history may not always be accurate, but it is no less delightful for all that. In his Sermon for the Purification he wrote: "Note how the turtledove which has lost its mate will never take another. It sits alone instead, abstaining from clear water and never perching on a green branch with green foliage. . . Like the turtledove, the poor are alone, or penitents, because they had once lost their Mate, Jesus Christ. They live their mortal sins, live alone in the solitude of their mind and far from the world's distractions. They do not taste the clear

of earthly joy, but the clouded water of sorrow and tears. They do not climb high up into the green branches of earthly fame."

Another characteristic we might note in Saint Anthony's sermons, though to a lesser degree, is his fondness for playing on words. We can recall the time that Saint Francis punned and said of his simple companion, Juniper: "Would that I had a whole forest of such junipers!" Saint Anthony plays on words rather through their etymologies, finding hidden meanings and applications in their root meanings. Thus, for example, he wrote in the Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent: "*Bosra* can be interpreted *fortified chaos*—that is, the dissipated life led in some cloisters, which are protected by an outside wall, while they are open within to the attack of every passing vice. . ." "The *land of Edom* means *bloody* or *earthbound*. This is applied to the clergy who are defiled with the blood of luxury, and who are earthbound by their money."

The sermons of Saint Anthony are not the easiest spiritual reading in the world. They were originally destined as a hand-book for preachers to include the whole liturgical year and greater feasts, according to the Scriptural texts currently used by the Breviary. It is easy to lose the common thread of thought tying the concordances together. Sometimes the accommodations seem farfetched to a modern mind, and the etymologies obscure. But anyone who takes up Saint Anthony's sermons with a willingness to learn, and not from mere curiosity, cannot fail to profit abundantly.

#### An Extract

#### From The Sermons Of Saint Anthony Of Padua

Go and report to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them (Mt. 11:4-5).

The blind see. In the words of Isaiah, Out of darkness and obscurity the eyes of the blind shall see. . . Who is blind, but he that is proud? Or who is blind, but the servant of the Lord? Thou that seest many things, wilt thou not observe them? (Is. 29:18; 42:19). Who are the blind men of today—that is, the proud—if not religious and monks, who are called servants of the Lord and appear to serve Him? Who is so proud as those who perceive the manifold truth of Scrip-

tures, teaching it and preaching it, but keeping none of it? They apply what they read in Scriptures to others, but nothing to themselves. Isaias says, *What aileth thee also, that thou too art woe-gone up to the housetops? Full of clamor, a populous city, a Jerusalem city...* (Is. 22:1-2) It is as if the prophet had said: "It is permitted for men of the world to reach for high places. But how can religious and trained men, who know better, justify yourselves when you desire lofty positions and go up to the housetops of pride, so full of noise?" For pride is clamorous. That is why Isaias says, *Woe to the multitude of many people, like the multitude of the roaring sea; for the humble Christ he writes, He shall not cry...neither shall his voice be heard abroad* (Is. 17:12; 42:2).

*The lame walk.* A lame person (claudus) is so called from the fact that his walking is limited (clausus). He is a type of the hypocrite who is hemmed in by darkness on the way of his life. *For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, that his deeds may not be exposed by the light* (Jn. 3:20). *Woe to you who are deep of heart, to hide your counsel from the Lord! And their works are in the dark, and they say: Who seeth us, and who knoweth us?* (Is. 29:15). Thus the hypocrite limps along on one foot. His right leg is lifted from the ground by his leaning on a crutch, but the other is set upon the ground. By analogy the hypocrite shows himself polished, soft-spoken and pale from austerity—this is his lame foot. His other foot, set solidly upon the earth, without doubt is the true nature of a hypocrite, hungry for praise and trying to appear better.

*The lepers are cleansed.* Naaman was a great man and rich, a leper (IV Kings, 5:1). Wherever there is an abundance of riches and delicate living, there is likewise the leprosy of sensuality. Isaias couples these ideas when he writes, *Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end of their treasures; whereupon he immediately adds, And their land is filled with horses, which symbolize sensual men.* (Isaias, 2:8) The Book of Exodus tells us the story of the calf, fashioned out of gold by the Jews. Out of the gold of their riches they produced the calf of sensuality. *There the calf shall feed and there shall he lie down, and shall consume its branches* (Is. 27:10). *It (lustfulness) is a fire that devoureth even to destruction* (Job, 31:12). Wash sensuality from yourselves, lepers, and be cleansed.

Be rid of your wicked, lustful thoughts in the sight of the Lord, so that it might be said of you, *The lepers are cleansed.*

*The deaf hear.* As Isaias wrote, *In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book* (Isaias, 29:18). A deaf person (surdus) is, as it were, dirty (sordidus). This means that his ears are plugged up with dirt, so that their passages are blocked. The deaf symbolize the greedy and usurers, whose ears have been stopped up by the filth of money. *Their poison is like the poison of the snake, the poison of the deaf asp which stops up its ears* (Psalms, 57:5). The asp stops up its ears, they say, to avoid hearing the voice of the snake-charmer, by pressing one ear against the earth and sticking its tail into the other. The word for ear (auris) is similar to the word either for "eager receiving" (avide rapiat) or for "storing up sound" (hauriat sonum). Thus the unfortunate greedy men and the usurers deprive themselves of great gifts of nature and grace. A greedy man does not eagerly receive the word of life, nor does he store up the words of the preacher. Like the serpent, an avaricious man hugs the earth with one ear—symbolizing his attachment for what he has already acquired, and sticks his tail into his other ear—which symbolizes his ambition to amass even more money. Worldly-minded men refuse to hear the words of the book—the Gospels, wherein we read that the poor are blessed. The deaf must force their one ear away from the ground of dishonest riches, and pull the tail of financial ambition out of the other. Then it can be said of them that *the deaf hear.*

*The dead rise.* *Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again* (Isaias, 26:19). The dead here symbolize the intemperate. *Their throat is an open sepulchre, in which they lie as if dead* (Psalms, 5:10). *But these also have been ignorant through wine, and through drunkenness have erred: the priest and the prophet have been ignorant through drunkenness, they are swallowed up with wine* (Isaias, 28:7). Just as a crumb of bread soaks up wine and sinks to the bottom of the cup, intemperate men soak up alcohol and are buried in the hell of their own bellies. Remember the story of Dives, who feasted sumptuously every day but was finally buried in hell, while every day Lazarus, the beggar, lay outside his gate—that is, with every pleasure of the five senses denied him. In a parallel text we read that the Lord suffered *outside the gates of the city* (Lk. 16:19). But

the rich man buried himself daily *within* the gates—that is, in the hell of his own stomach. *O Lord, who will confess Thee? Who the dead praise Thee, O Lord?* asks the Psalmist (Psalms, 113:1). Whoever desires to praise God leaves the tomb of his intemperance, the shadows and disorder of hell, to enter the light of austerity, his food and drink. *Awake, and give praise, ye that dwell in the darkness. For thy dew is the dew of light.* (Isaias, 26:19) Just as the dew refreshes the parched earth, and light chases away the darkness, fasting cools off the heat of intemperance and vice, and chases away the darkness of the mind. Thus the intemperate “dead” resurrect to life.

*The poor have the gospel preached to them. The firstborn among the poor shall be fed, and the poor shall rest with confidence* (Isaias, 14:30). *The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the hungry men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel* (Isaias, 29:19). Of the poor—that is, the humble—have the gospel preached to them. Whatever is concave, made with a depression, can receive the liquid poured into it. Whatever is convex, on the other hand, or swollen, cannot hold any liquid. Let whoever is thirsty, says the Lord, come and drink. *I will pour out waters upon the thirsty* (Isaias, 44:3). The “poor” nowadays are those who lead simple lives, the unlearned, the unsophisticated, the aged. But the citizens of Babylon, who drink from the golden cup of the prostitute, the worldly-wise, the counsellors of Pharaoh, are “full of matter to speak of,” and the spirit of their bowels straiteneth them. Behold, *their belly is as new wine which wanteth vent, which bursteth the new vessels* (Job, 32:18-19). Believe me, nobody like that has the gospel preached to them. *O the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Anselm M. Romb, O. F. M. C.

## MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION

In recent years, souvenir brochures have become a by-product of any big event; in philosophical and literary circles they are called summaries of the proceedings. The happy opening of this Mary Year has nicely suggested a modest recounting, or *Florilegium*

texts, of the part which Franciscans in the past have added to the litany of Mary's praises.

The friars of every age have treasured the words of Bernardin of Siena, which contain a valuable bit of Franciscan tradition for us: “The Seraphic Father himself admonished his brethren that they should attribute to the Blessed Mother of God every privilege which may be appropriate to her excellence, and that they should exalt her with all the praise that is appropriate for such a pure human creature.”

The friars have done this. They have worked well, and the sentiments of the late Leonard Bello, Minister General of the Order, are a tribute to the Franciscans of the past and present alike: “It behooves us to come to the feet of the Blessed Virgin adorned not only with devotion but also with knowledge concerning the things of Mary. For not a few theological writings and outstanding deeds of our Saints make it clear that our Seraphic Order has really been chosen by an altogether *special vocation* to explain theologically the privileges of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to promote her honor and veneration throughout the entire world.” This *Florilegium* is a witness to their efforts.

The Franciscan School has discovered three main pillars upon which the privilege of the universal mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary rests: first, her absolute predestination as Mother of God and secondary head of the Mystical Body; secondly, her positive concurrence by her office of co-redemptrix in the acquiring of all graces ever granted to the Mystical Body of the Church; and, thirdly, her actual and habitual intervention in the dispensing of all graces and gifts by reason of her merit and intercession.

The notion of Mary's predestination, which will be discussed here, is prior to all other principles of her office of mediation; it is the bedrock of the Franciscan teaching. Upon it there rises a majestic and dazzling structure whose sole purpose is the exaltation of the heavenly Queen.

Duns Scotus wrote quite emphatically about Mary's predestination: “God before all other created things had in His intention and before all else did decree Christ the Lord and His most holy Mother; in fact, He willed to produce all other created things because of

Christ and His Mother." Praising our Lady in his sermons, Saint Bernardin captures the same sentiments, clothes them with the richness of poetic eloquence, and addresses his Queen: "You were predestined in the mind of God before all creatures, that as the chaste of all women you might bring forth God Himself, true God and that before all others, but after your Son, you might reign gloriously as Queen of Heaven." In beautiful words, Saint Lawrence of Brindisi reinforced this line of thought when he proclaimed that "thus there appeared in the heavens the woman clothed with the sun and bearing in her womb the only begotten Son of the predestined Mother of Christ, predestined together with Christ the first-born of all creatures, before all creatures."

From this flower-like adornment of Mary's predestination blossom two consequences: first, that our Lady enjoyed the fullness of grace and, secondly, that she is the secondary head and the neck as it were, of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Saint Lawrence of Brindisi has summarized the Franciscan thought on this point: "The fullness of grace in Mary was equal to that in Christ. I dare say that the fullness of this grace is apprehensible only to God." Later on, an eighteenth-century theologian, Carolus del Moral, likewise judged that Mary possessed the highest degree of grace possible for a creature: "If," he reasons, "the Doctor Maximus of the Church, Saint Jerome, truly expressed the opinion that 'there descended upon Mary the plenitude of all grace that is in Christ, although in a different manner,' which statement we take as applying to habitual grace, then why is it not permitted to state that Mary was given that sum of grace greater than what negatively speaking, God could not have granted, which our Master Doctor ascribed to the Son of God?"

Of course, Carolus del Moral was not the first to put forth this opinion. Years before his time Saint Bonaventure, Roger Marston, Saint Bernardin of Siena and John of Serrano had declared and taught that in Mary was the greatest possible fullness of grace.

A second result of Mary's predestination is her unique position in the Mystical Body of Christ. And here Franciscan writers like Saint Lawrence employ two particular metaphors: Mary as the neck and as secondary head of the Mystical Body.

"In the Mystical Body of the holy Church, whose head is Christ (for we are all one body in Christ)," Lawrence of Brindisi writes, "Mary is the neck." He goes on to explain this comparison by a rather clever and ingenious reference to the human body; for the neck "is situated above all the others (members) and immediately united to the head; thus Mary is above all the saints. By the neck the head is bowed; by Mary we receive the mercy of God. Through the neck descends the vital influence of the head upon the body, and there ascends the breath of life from the body to the head." Thus, this canonized physiologist concludes, "through Mary there ascend to God the prayers of the Church, and there descend from God graces for the Church."

This same line of thought continues in another eighteenth-century theologian, Salvator Montalban, who penned this lofty passage: "Wishing that Christ the Lord should be conceived from a Virgin Mother by the Holy Spirit without the intervention of man, God chose Mary for this and predestined her to such dignity and glory as befitted that dignity." His next paragraph reads like a litany: "If Christ was predestined to be the son of man, the Blessed Virgin was predestined to be His Mother; if Christ was to be King, she was to be Queen; if He was to be the sun, she was to be the moon; if He was to be Head of the whole Church, from whom all grace would flow upon the members of the Church, she was to be the Neck, through whom all grace was to be communicated to the rest of the members." In a word, "the Virgin was predestined to be most similar to Christ in all things."

This *Florilegium* can lay claim to a twentieth century reference to the description of our Lady's role in the Mystical Body. For it pleased Pius X to quote Saint Bernardin of Siena in his encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum*: "(Mary) is the Neck of our Head, through which all spiritual gifts are communicated to His Mystical Body."

Our Franciscans have been more partial to the figure of secondary head of the Mystical Body. Carolus del Moral discussed this comparison in great detail. To begin with, he writes that the moral head of all the angels, of our first parents, and of all men, must possess the necessary requisites. These are three in number, and the Blessed Mother has them: (1) primacy or priority with regard

to the other members of the Mystical Body; (2) fullness of grace; (3) final causality or moral influence upon all the members. At this last one he reasons: "Christ the Lord, in so far as He repaired the fall of men from original justice by His merits and restored men to the state of grace that they might be saved, was without doubt the Head of the predestined; but Christ granted to His Mother that, with Him and dependent upon His merits, she should repair the fall of the predestined and restore fallen men to grace by her merits. Therefore, Christ granted to His Mother, with Him and dependent upon His merits she should by her merits be Head of the predestined."

This preeminence, however, is not in the order of nature; rather it resides in the order of grace. As Carolus writes in another place: "Her eminence, primacy and dominion is verified only in the order of grace. Mary cannot be the queen and mistress of the angels because the grace of the angels is subordinated to the Mother of God and Queen of grace." Such a striking thought gives us a better idea of the phrase, *gratia plena!*

Again, coming down to our own day, Leonard Bello has summarized the thought of Carlous del Moral in these words: "All the conditions belonging to the idea of Head clearly exist in the Blessed Virgin Mary, because she possesses all these in her dignity as Mother from the merits of her Son—and this dignity with all its perfections arises from the exuberance and overflowing of her divine excellence—it happens that all these things accrue to her secondarily and dependently upon Him as the first to merit it, and she is rightly to be proclaimed under Christ the secondary head of the Mystical Body or the Universal Mediatrix."

This brief glance at the writings of various scholars gives us a summary notion of Franciscan thought on the doctrine of predestination. An over-all view shows us that, in speaking or writing of the heavenly Queen's role as Mediatrix of all graces, the Franciscan School always sets forth Mary's predestination as the first reason for this privilege of universal mediation.

Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, O.F.M.

## CONCERNING THE CORRESPONDENCE OF RELIGIOUS

The following directions are translated from a recent book, *Ordensrecht*,\* by Honorus Hanstien, O.F.M., Schoeningh 1953. This work is to be commended for its concise and precise presentation of matters from Canon Law that concern religious.

1. The correspondence of religious, as a rule, is subject to supervision and inspection by their superiors. According to a probable opinion, the superiors have this right already in virtue of their dominative power; usually they have it because it is expressly prescribed in their Constitutions. Canon Law does not formulate the right of supervision, but it presupposes it by defining its limits.

The superiors do not have the *duty* to inspect letters, unless the Constitutions prescribe it, or some abuse or other harm is to be feared. In any case, if they have the right, they must use it with discretion and with strict observance of the privacy of letters. Although the religious, by submitting themselves to the Constitutions, have renounced the right of privacy of letters, nevertheless the superiors are still bound by the grave obligation of natural discretion and of official secrecy. The purpose of the supervision of correspondence is fully achieved in general, when the mail—eventually opened—goes through the hands of the superior. Only grave reasons can justify the reading of these letters by the superior, and only then providing that he has the proper prudence and discretion in such matters. The right of supervision also includes the power to forbid the correspondence, in individual cases and for a just cause. Moreover—but this only for a grave reason—the superior may hold back incoming or outgoing letters, even without telling the subject about it.

2. All religious, both men and women, have the right of free correspondence (so that they can send or receive letters without inspection by the superiors, even without their permission or knowledge):

- a) with the Holy See, the Apostolic Delegate in their country and the Cardinal Protector.

\* *Ordensrecht* is available and can be ordered from the Franciscan Institute.

- b) with their own higher superiors and also with their local superior, in case the superior is absent; some Constitutions mention also other religious of higher position in their Congregation.
- c) with the diocesan bishop to whom they are subject; the bishop also holds for exempt religious, regarding matters in which they are subject to the bishop.
- d) with the higher superior of an order, if they are subject to such an order.

The correspondence of religious with confessors and spiritual directors is not exempt from censorship. As a rule, religious should discuss their matters of conscience in the confessional or orally with their spiritual director. However, in special cases, there can be grave reasons for spiritual directions by letters. If, with certain conditions, the Constitutions allow such letters, or if the superiors permit them in individual cases, then the superiors do not have the right of inspection. If, however, such permission is not given or if such letters have been forbidden by the superiors for grave reasons, the superiors retain the right of inspection in accordance with the regulations of their Constitutions.

Also not expressly exempt from supervision is the correspondence of religious priests engaged in the ministry with the faithful concerning matters of conscience or of their ministry or of other confidential matters. On the other hand the belief of the faithful, the respect for the official secret involved and also the teaching of religious authors alike demand that such letters should go unopened through the hands of the superiors. In fact, they should be inspected only in case of a serious suspicion or abuse; and, even then, they should be returned to the sender. In individual cases, where the seal of confession is in danger, the confessor has the right to circumvent supervision and to mail a necessary letter without permission.

If, inspecting the mail, the superiors find such letters in which matters of conscience are discussed or other confidential matters contained, they are not allowed to read or to continue to read them and they are always bound to strictest secrecy concerning that which they may have read.

### PRAYER for MARY'S YEAR

Hail, Holy Mary of the Angels, protectress and advocate of St. Francis of Assisi!

To you we dedicate our petitions during this Marian year, asking for grace to attain the selfless poverty of Nazareth, the beautiful humility of St. Joseph, the blessed obedience of the Christ Child, the pure chastity of His Holy Mother.

Hail, Castle of Christ, strengthened by your fortitude we will walk always with God.

Hail, Tabernacle of Christ, inspired by your detachment, we will cherish our badge of service to the needy and the poor.

Hail, Mother of Christ, immersed in your charity we will live but to spread the knowledge and love of your Divine Son, our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Hail, Mary Immaculate! Help us on our Franciscan way—the way chartered by our Spiritual Brother, Saint Francis of Assisi, a beautiful human double for Your Divine Son.

*Composed by*

HIS EXCELLENCY RICHARD J. CUSHING,

D.D., LL.D.,

Archbishop of Boston

### FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

#### II. Africa

The Mohammedan territory of North Africa was the first mission land to which Saint Francis sent his Friars. We have information, however, concerning the devotion of Mary in either of the two Moroccan vicariates, although the seat of the Provincial Commissary is dedicated to the Holy Mary of the Angels.

In Libya, almost seven centuries ago, the blessed Conrad of Ascoli spread devotion

to Mary by means of a wooden statue of the Mother of God. Many miracles were wrought through this statue, and not a few conversions. The Friars who followed, however, were unable to gain a foothold in the country until in 1818, after many futile attempts, they finally succeeded in establishing a mission in Bengasi. There they built a chapel in honor of Saint Lucius, the first bishop of Cirenensis and placed it under the



special protection of the Immaculate Conception. Besides the Cathedral Church in the Vicariate of Bengasi, there are now eleven oratories dedicated to Mary, the most noted of which are the Marian sanctuaries of Berca and of Messa. In the latter the beautiful wooden statue of Our Lady of the Mountain is venerated. Every year on August 15 the faithful gather there from the city of Bengasi—about two hundred kilometers distant. The city of El Marj also has a popular celebration on August 15—the Feast of La Madonna del Grano. There is always a solemn triduum and a great procession through the streets of the city.

The cult of Mary was introduced into Tripoli toward the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, amid circumstances that were truly Franciscan. The missionaries went there to serve the Christians who had been enslaved and forced to hard labor under the Turkish rule. In a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, the missionary used to gather the people at sundown, after their labor for the day had ended, and instruct them in Christian doctrine and morals. He also read to them inspiring stories from the lives of the saints in order to help them increase their fervor and bear their sufferings patiently. Then, before going to rest, they recited prayers in common. In the morning they arose early to assist at Mass. On feastdays they were not permitted to rest from work, but they were able to attend Mass and to listen to a brief explanation of the Gospel. In the afternoon they could chant Vespers. On Fridays the missionary preached a sermon, after which the people adored the Cross and chanted the *Stabat Mater*. The Feast of the Holy Rosary was always celebrated with the greatest possible solemnity. Even the Prefect Apostolic attended the ceremonies, together with missionaries from other places and the few free Christians who lived in the city for business purposes.

On the Christmas of 1703 Nicholas of Chio, Prefect of the Mission, dedicated a small church to Saint of the Angels; and in 1857. Ferdinand King of Sicily, donated a very statue of the Madonna and Child. Saint Francis, Patriarch of the Mission at her feet, together with Saint Patron of Libya.

In modern times devotion to has increased greatly in Tripoli. In when the war in Africa had ended was still going on in Europe, a was built in a suburb of Tripoli cated to Mary, Queen of Peace. pilgrimages were held there, and it the center of the Catholic Action. The year 1930 saw the erection Marian chapel in Azizia, called Our of the Rains. The feast is celebrated November 12, when the need is most urgent for the fertility country. Not far from there a family built a beautiful private dedicated to Our Lady of the Olive. In 1926 a statue was brought from Our to Tripoli, where a very lovely was built for it. The sanctuary was destroyed by a bomb in 1941, but the rebuilt it almost immediately.

Much could be said about devotion to Mary in our missions, but it can be summed up by saying that devotion of the Virgin Mother of God flourishes wherever the sons of Saint Francis have implanted the Faith. In passing we note one more specific instance: the cathedral church of Bellary, India, dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima, during the month of May a different takes care of the expenses for candles, flowers, and similar items.

If Mary is Queen of the Franciscan Order, she is very specially the protectress of the Franciscan Missionaries. *Notitiae Franciscanae Missionum*, 1953, 12. 29.

# the CORD

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## CONTENTS

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	226 ✓
<i>Father Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.</i>	
GARDEN ENCLOSED.....	230 ✓
<i>Sr. Mary Frances, S.M.I.C.</i>	
SEEKING OUR FATHER WITH MARY.....	237 ✓
<i>William J. Manning</i>	
THE SEED OF FRANCISCANISM.....	242 ✓
<i>Fr. Celestine Regnier, O.F.M. Conv.</i>	
SUNDAY MASS IN MEXICO.....	246 ✓
<i>Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.</i>	
A FOUNTAIN IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.....	249 ✓
<i>Fr. Vincent de Paul Sullivan, O.F.M. (trans.)</i>	
THE MODERNITY OF SAINT CLARE.....	252 ✓
<i>Mother M. Immaculata, P.C. (trans.)</i>	
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS.....	256



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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*Abandonment*

For the Christian there is nothing in this world so comfortable, so beautiful, so logical, and so productive of peace of mind and as total abandonment to God. We have a Father who is infinitely wise, good, and provident; a Father who has an infinite sense of fairness, who is considerate beyond measure, who is concerned for us with a divine solicitude. He is accessible always, even if we are wicked, provided we are penitent. We have a Father who does not want to be feared, who always calls to us that we come to him. We have a Father, who though omnipotent, is not concerned about himself half as much as he is about his mercy, and who finds more glory in pardoning the penitent sinner than in creating a universe. We have a Father, who though he can never really forget our iniquities, having once forgiven them, he will embrace his former enemies in his bosom for all eternity.

Even when he chastises he is prompted by paternal love. When he is compassionate when he sees us under our merited afflictions. There was a man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been invalid for thirty-eight years. He was waiting for the movement of the water in the hope that he might be cured, but he could never get in time. This man had been punished by God because of his sin (cf. Jn. 5, 14). Jesus, passing by, saw him; and though Jesus, who had punished him, yet looking upon him he had compassion, and offered him a miraculous cure. *Dost thou want to get well? Take up thy pallet and walk.*

Is it hard to trust him? to leave everything in his hands when we know it might be: health or sickness, success or failure, joy or sorrow, or misunderstanding, praise or blame? It should not be, for as he tells us through St. Paul: *We know that for those who love God, all things work together unto good* (Rom. 8, 28). He turns our misfortune to our spiritual profit. Even with such hopeless material as our faults, provided we are not attached to them, he gathers for us the fruits of humility and the spirit of prayer, employing them to dig a deep foundation and to raise up a grand edifice.

This simple and direct way, therefore, of trusting our Father and serving him is to love and do his holy will in all things.

It will be a grand and profitable simplification of our whole spiritual life. It is the means of coming to God on the precise road he has marked for us. We would not be in danger of scotching his plans, or of putting on the brakes when he is drawing us to himself. We would take the preoccupation of planning out of our poor heads and leave it in the hands of the supreme Architect, in the hands of Christ our Pathfinder who has blazed for us the way into the heavenly sanctuary.

Our heads are not clear enough, and often our hearts are not pure enough to take the burden. Our planning is ruined so often by our prejudices, by our pride, our ambition, our love of ourselves, our dread of pain, our lack of self-knowledge. We would doubtless lay down for ourselves a very devious and tortuous path: we would go high to flatter our pride, then dipping low to meet our fears, going dangerously close to the brink to avoid pain, and taking a thousand chances because we do not know our own soul. If ever we were to reach perfection under such circumstances, it would be a miracle late in the day.

There is a divine providence for this physical world, there is also a providence for the world of the spirit. Let providence have its way. Finally, it is the child that takes its father's hand and lets itself be led. The child does not lead its father except it is petulant, disobedient, mischievous, spoiled. Francis Thompson describes such a child in its relations to its heavenly Father:

“ ‘Why do you so clasp me,  
And draw me to your knee?  
Forsooth, you do but chafe me,  
I pray you let me be:  
I will be loved but now and then  
When it liketh me!’  
So I heard a young child,  
A thwart child, a young child  
Rebellious against love's arms,  
Make its peevish cry.  
To the tender God I turn:—  
‘Pardon, Love most High!  
For I think those arms were even Thine,  
And that child was even I.’ ”

Thus we deport ourselves toward God when we persist in taking our own bearings on our way home to heaven through this dangerous world, and fail to love the pressure of that guiding hand which is so much love, so much concern in it. . . "I pray you let me be!"

The model in this is sublime and clear. Jesus is the natural Son of God. He was sent into this world by his Father. *From the Father I came forth and have come; for neither have I come of myself, nor has the Father sent me* (Jn. 8, 42). But why was he sent? Jesus himself tells us: *I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly* (Jn. 10.) Before Pilate he declared: *I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth* (Jn. 18, 37). St. Paul writes: *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners* (I Tim. 1, 15). Again he writes: *God sent his Son. . . , that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Gal. 4, 4-5). In the Gospel according to St. John we read: *God did not send his Son into the world in order to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him* (3, 17). But Jesus reduces this to a sublime unity when he says, *I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me* (Jn. 5, 30).

Such is the Model, such is the simple system he followed. We must copy that—do the will of God, as St. Paul puts it, *as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart* (Eph. 6, 6). This is expressed in the commandments, and for us religious, a refinement in their observance; it is expressed in the rule we profess, in the limitations or duties which necessity places upon us, as when sickness immobilizes us; it is indicated by the demands of religious obedience; it is expressed to us by the inspirations of God's Spirit, and by the remorse through which he chides us for our negligence.

Let us draw out a little more in detail this last form of abandonment: complete surrender to the inspirations of grace. One who is in the state of grace can repeat the triumphant words of St. Paul: *It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2, 20). Christ is our life (Col. 3, 4). He is the Head of that Body of which we are the members; he is the Vine, we are the branches. If such is the case, will not Christ strive for self-expression through us? Will he not wish that the branches produce the fruits which are natural to such a Vine? He wishes to reveal himself to the world by the manifestation of his life in our lives, so that the life of

Christ may be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4, 11). He wishes us to be replicas of himself, even as the Apostle admonishes us to put on Christ, for God has predestined (us) to become conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8, 29).

To this end we have the solicitous activity of the Holy Ghost within us, the promptings of his prevenient grace. Always he urges us to conform our lives to the life of Christ so that the life of Christ may be made manifest in us. We walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5, 16), we are led by the Spirit (ib. v. 18). In Romans, St. Paul says: *whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (8, 14). It is this Spirit who inspires in our hearts that reassuring cry of love, *Abba, Father* (ib. 8, 15); it is he who helps our weakness and leads for us with unutterable groanings (ib. v. 26); his presence within us is the proof that we are the sons of God (Gal. 4, 6). It is he who conforms us, by grace, to the image of the Son of God. Will he not desire that that image be expressed in our lives? Therefore, he leads us by his inspirations, by his promptings, urging us to live our life as Christ would live it. This is expected of us, for *he who says that he abides in him* (God), *ought himself also to walk just as he* (Christ) *walked* (1 Jn. 2, 6). Our eager Guide is the Holy Ghost, to whom we should give full and glad obedience. *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God* (Eph. 4, 30) by turning a deaf ear to his inspirations. . . "I pray you let me be"! Rather, we must practice absolute abandonment to this solicitude of the Holy Ghost. Then we shall live worthily of the Son of God, for *the fruit of the Spirit is: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, modesty, continency* (Gal. 5, 22-23). Thus by generous, constant abandonment to the inspirations of his grace, the Holy Ghost will lead us onward till Christ be formed in us; thus too shall we achieve that measure of holiness which God expects of us.

However, the preceding remarks are not to be understood in the sense that we are always to expect ceaseless and distinct inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and that we are to rule our life exclusively by his guidance. We shall not always be aware of the workings of the Spirit. Besides, his grace often is attached to external things which enlighten or move us, such as spiritual reading, the good example of another, an admonition and the like. Neither are we dispensed from the duty of applying our reason, as enlightened by faith, to the

government of our lives, nor from cherishing the spiritual direction which might be given us.

Let us, therefore, abandon ourselves entirely to God's eternal providence in our regard and to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. This is the simple way intended for children, for we are his children. *We have received a Spirit of adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry, Abba! Father!* (Rom. 8, 15). *Abba* is a child's maternal address. The Holy Spirit himself, therefore, instructs us by his witness that we are little children, *Abba! Father!* It is logical, then, that we take the simple and uncomplicated way to the Father.

Life is short. It is prudent and wise to employ it well. Seeking perfection is a very dangerous thing; it is living after the instincts of this world, of which St. John says, *The world with its lust is passing away, but he who does the will of God abides forever* (I Jn. 2, 17). Leave everything in the hands of God, and with the Apostle cry out confidently, *I know whom I have believed* (2 Tim. 1, 12).

Father Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## A GARDEN ENCLOSED

One of the loveliest saints in the Franciscan family is Beatrice da Silva, foundress of the first religious Order dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Unfortunately, however, she is one of the most obscure. Perhaps it is because her distinguishing virtues were modesty and self-effacement that her cult is so little known, for quiet virtues are more disconcerting than inspiring to our modern jet-tempoed age. Yet for that very reason she is truly a "Saint of Today."

Beatrice da Silva was the daughter of Ruy Gomez da Silva, *alcalde* of Campo Mayor and Ouguela, and Dona Isabel de Meneses. The old chronicles tell us that when the Portuguese wrested Ceuta from the Moors in 1415, Ruy Gomez da Silva emerged as hero

\*The most useful biography of Blessed Beatrice da Silva is that of Fr. Rogerio de Aguiar, O.F.M., which is drawn from unpublished chronicles and other source materials.

in quest. The reward of his valor was marriage with the lovely Dona Isabel, natural daughter of Don Pedro da Meneses, commander of the expedition and Portugal's most powerful noble. The marriage was singularly happy. Equal in nobility of birth and in nobility of soul, Ruy Gomez and Dona Isabel were bound together by a love that was firmly rooted and grounded in Christ. Both were completely devoted to the Franciscan Order. A Friar Minor was always their chaplain and confessor; and it was always from among the Friars that they secured preachers for their people and educators for their children.

Eleven children were born to them, all distinguished for solid virtue and high achievement. Their fifth son, Juan da Meneses da Silva, who seemed destined for the most brilliant career of all, suddenly changed his course and became a Friar Minor and a saint. He is better known as Blessed Amadeo da Silva. And Dona Beatriz or Beatrice, their eighth child, followed her brother in the way of holiness.

Ruy Gomez was knighted in 1420. He returned to Portugal for a few years, then again took up residence in the fortress of Ceuta. It was there, in 1424, that Beatrice was born. She was a child of grace and loveliness. Spiritually precocious, she found contemplative prayer as natural as play—and much more delightful. Christ in the Eucharist attracted her powerfully. More than once her mother found her asleep in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and had difficulty in recalling the child to her surroundings. Her understanding of spiritual things was far beyond her years, for not only was Beatrice unusually good and unusually beautiful, but she was also unusually intelligent. The Friars who were appointed to educate her were always in admiration of their little pupil, and their pupil always equally admired her beloved teachers. Beatrice remained in the care of the Friars until she was about eleven, when the family again returned to Portugal. These early years under the close guidance of the Friars gave Beatrice the spiritual formation that was to lead her to the highest perfection. At that time, when the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was still disputed, Beatrice learned the arguments of Thomas Scotus and embraced them with all the ardor of her young heart. Meditation on this mystery inspired her with a longing to imitate the virtues of the Immaculate Virgin—especially her spot-

less purity, her modesty and humility, her silent life of hidden union with God, her patient waiting for the revelation of the Lord's pleasure in her regard.

The years spent at home with her family were happy years for Beatrice. She lived the typically sheltered life of the young medieval aristocrat, secluded from the world and its influences. Her only concern was to please her sweet Lord and His holy Mother, and that she had but to follow the guidance of her confessor. Life was tranquil, uncomplicated, secure. Yet for all her seclusion, Beatrice was not unknown. The fame of her beauty was already widespread, and if her prudence has not been as extraordinary as her beauty, her parents might have had reason to fear for their exquisite daughter. Even at that, Dona Isabel was apprehensive of what the world might do to so magnificent a creature, and poured out many a prayer for Our Lady in her behalf.

Beatrice was about twenty-two when she was summoned to the court of Castile. The King, Don Juan II, having buried his first Queen in 1444, fell blindly in love with Dona Isabel, daughter of Juan I of Portugal, and married her secretly. For personal and political reasons, there was much opposition to the marriage from the Castilian nobles, and the Queen had to use every possible means to strengthen her position. Surrounded as she was by enemies, she needed a friend who would be both loyal to her and powerful at court. She knew of no one better suited for her purpose than Beatrice da Silva. Dona Beatrice was related to the Queen on her mother's side, and her fidelity and prudence were beyond question. Without delay, the Queen summoned Beatrice from the idyllic society of family life to the chilling formalities of the royal court of Spain. Officially, she was to serve as First Lady-in-Waiting to the royal kinswoman; actually, she was to be the Queen's pawn on the Castilian chessboard.

Beatrice was presented at the Spanish court by her father, brother and half-sister, Don Duarte and Dona Leonor da Silva. We may surmise that the young woman, for all the good French training she had received, was not entirely unimpressed by the glory that surrounded Don Juan of Castile and his beautiful but unpopular consort. The King was a man of no little culture, although well past his prime, he was still a formidable

"To die in bed," he informed his knights, "is to die like an animal." The nobles followed the King in patronising the great artists of the day, and in pretending some kind of culture, but at heart they were men-at-arms. Valorous but undisciplined, quickly fired to love or hate, the Castilian nobles were dangerous men to cross. Into this milieu of brocaded splendor and thinly veiled barbarism came the pure and lovely Beatrice da Silva. Her beauty was dazzling, and it was the sweet and gentle beauty that stirs soft desires. Her modesty and reserve only increased her charm, and her radiant purity but made her the more desirable.

Beatrice played the role assigned to her with consummate prudence and discretion. Dona Isabel honored her with absolute confidence, and Beatrice, on her part, fulfilled her sovereign's every wish as perfectly as possible. She won over most of the nobles, too, but eventually her success with the unruly courtiers took on a dangerous turn. Stunned admiration slowly gave way to ardent importunity. Rejected suitors grew sullen and malevolent. Jealousy aroused suspicion. There were insults followed by challenges, and there was bloodshed and death. The situation was getting out of hand, and the Queen's enemies were turning it against her. Then the King himself, in his fondness for Beatrice, overstepped the bounds of prudence, and the harassed Queen, alarmed and confused as she was, gave credence to slanderous reports about Beatrice as an unprincipled woman, hiding her true character under a false show of innocence. Whatever else the Queen might tolerate, she would not let no one supplant her in the heart of the King. At this point the chronicles become somewhat obscure; but it seems that one night Dona Isabel requested Beatrice to accompany her to a remote part of the palace—apparently Tordesillas. No suspicion crossed the mind of the innocent Beatrice until the Queen paused before a large wooden coffer and commanded her to enter it; then she realized what the Queen meant to do. We do not know whether the terrified girl was forced into the coffer, or whether she unresistingly stepped into it at her sovereign's command. The chronicles say only that she denied her innocence and pleaded for her life. But the Queen was unmoved. She locked the coffer and left her cousin to die. If life at court had ever at any time held the least appeal for Beatrice, it certainly vanished as she lay helpless in the suffocating

darkness. The time she spent in the service of the Queen had brought her nothing but heartache and remorse. Now, if she had to die, she would at least die as she had always wished to live—as a spouse of the Eternal King. Calling upon the Immaculate Virgin to witness her pledge, she vowed perpetual chastity. No sooner had she pronounced the words than the darkness of the coffer was illumined by a vision of the Immaculate Queen holding the Christ-Child in her arms. Beatrice fell into ecstasy, and she was made to understand that she would live to found an Order dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The habit of the Order was to be white, like the robe of the Virgin herself was wearing, with a sky-blue mantle like the Virgin's. This was the promise, but the time and place of fulfillment were not revealed.

Three days passed. Then, quite unexpectedly, Don Juan Meneses came to court to visit his niece. It was an awkward situation for the Queen; but there was no point in subterfuge. She confronted the truth—or a part of it: Beatrice was dead and her body lay in a secret place ready for burial. The Queen herself conducted Don Juan to the coffer, and with her own trembling hands raised the lid. There lay Beatrice; but she was far from dead. She was in fact more alive after three days in the coffer than on the horrible night when she had been forced into it. We are not told exactly what explanation the Queen tried to offer Don Juan. Probably none—for she recognized that Beatrice had been kept alive by divine intervention, and the thought of God's wrath struck her with terror and remorse. Beatrice herself made no accusation. In fact, to prevent possible scandal, she resumed her place at court as if nothing had happened. As decency permitted, however, she petitioned the Queen for release from the royal service.

Beatrice left Tordesillas sometime in 1453 and made her way to Toledo. She was accompanied by three of the court ladies and a sizeable escort of armed men. The company had not gone far when two Franciscan Friars appeared on the road and signalled her to stop. At first Beatrice feared that the Queen had changed her mind and had sent the Friars to summon her back to court; but when they drew near she saw that they were strangers to her. One of them addressed her in Portuguese. The Friars' message was somewhat surprising. They had come to tell her that she must not waste

in her vocation; she would, in time, become the foundress of an Order dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin. Above all, she was to persevere in the Seraphic spirit as she had done since childhood. Only after the Friars had vanished from sight did Beatrice recognize them as the Seraphic Patriarch himself and her beloved countryman, Saint Anthony.

At that time in Toledo there was an ancient Cistercian monastery called Santo Domingo el Antiguo, where the Rule was kept with exemplary fidelity. It was a well-known stopping place for the Iberian nobility, and Beatrice sought hospitality there. When she understood that God willed her to remain for a time in this monastery, she asked the nuns to accept her as a lay member of their household.

For the next thirty years Beatrice lived in the holy seclusion of Santo Domingo. Shortly after her arrival she began to wear a veil over her face. This, so the old writers tell us, was for a threefold purpose: to atone for the many tragedies her beauty had caused; to atone for her personal sins—for like all saints, she regarded herself as the vilest of sinners; and to prevent further disasters. To the end of her life no one, neither man nor woman, looked upon her face. Only at night, when she knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, did she raise her face unveiled to her Beloved. Even among the exemplary Cistercians, the holiness of Dona Beatrice shone like a star. The nuns loved her, and she loved them in return, but she would never yield to their entreaties to become one of them. Although she observed the Cistercian Rule with the utmost perfection, she would not profess it, nor would she wear the Cistercian habit. She wore instead the plain garb of the ordinary middle class woman, and did the ordinary work in the monastery—quietly, unobtrusively, but with great love and joy in the Lord. This long sojourn in Santo Domingo was the trial by fire that was to prove her heroic patience. She had the promise, confirmed by supernatural occurrences, that she would found a religious Order. Yet year followed upon year, and no further sign was given her. She took no steps of her own, however, but rather accepted this long trial as a means of annihilating the last vestiges of self-will, that Christ might be fully formed in her. Thus she was content to let patience have its perfect work.

Finally, in 1484, the time of probation was ended. Beatrice

was again visited by the Immaculate Virgin who told her the means had come for the founding of the Order, and that the means would soon be provided. A day or two later a royal visitor was announced and Beatrice stepped into the arms of Queen Isabel the Catholic daughter of the former Queen Isabel. It was the new Queen's first visit to the all-but-forgotten Dona Beatrice. Remembering the striking beauty that Beatrice's cousin's beauty had made at court (Isabel had been a child then, about three or four), she commanded her to raise her veil. Beatrice obeyed—and the astounded Queen gazed into the face of a young woman that was as strikingly beautiful as a young girl. The Queen was convinced that the beauty she had looked upon was something quite beyond the natural. If the loveliness of her face reflected the loveliness of the soul that vivified it, her cousin was surely a saint and she, the Queen, would be her servant and client.

Before the end of 1484 the Conceptionist Order was founded. Queen Isabel gave Beatrice one of the ancient Moorish palaces, the Galiana for her monastery, and the neighboring church of San Juan. Twelve young noblewomen joined Beatrice, among them her niece, Dona Felipa da Silva.

Life in the beginning was difficult. The nuns observed the Cistercian Rule because Beatrice knew it best, having kept it for thirty years, and because she feared that the Rule of the Discalced Clares, which she would have preferred and which was later adopted, was too rigorous for the delicate young noblewomen who were her first daughters. The nuns could pronounce no vows, however, until they could wear the religious garb, until the Order was approved by a Papal Bull of Confirmation. It was not until 1489 that the long-sought document was signed—the famous *Bulla miracula* of Innocent VIII. According to the chronicles, the Archangel Raphael, to whom Beatrice was deeply devoted, appeared to her in the guise of a messenger from Rome, telling her that the coveted Bull would soon be in her possession. Then came the report that the ship bearing the Bull had been wrecked at sea and the entire cargo lost. The nuns were heartbroken, but Beatrice accepted the news with unruffled patience. She had waited half a lifetime to found her Order; she could wait a few months longer for its approbation. Calmly she went about her usual business. Opening a certain chest in which she kept the monastery documents, her eyes fell upon a strange parchment

It was the Bull, miraculously saved from the sea and deposited safe and sound in the monastery. The Queen, rejoicing fully with Beatrice and her nuns, ordered a fiesta to celebrate the miracle and a solemn procession through the streets of Toledo.

But Beatrice had not long to enjoy her new happiness. The third and last apparition of the Virgin warned her of approaching death. "My daughter, ten days from now you shall come with me; for it is not the will of my Son, nor is it my will, that you should enjoy life on earth that which your soul desires." It was the last trial of her patience and self-effacement—she would not even live to be called Mother and Foundress of her Order, nor would she see it firmly established. But Beatrice, as always, met the test with a joyful *fiat*. She soon fell ill of a fever, and knowing that death was near, she begged her confessor, the Franciscan Bishop of Guadix, to allow her to be clothed in the habit of the Order and to pronounce her vows. Her request was granted. Then, when the Last Sacraments were to be administered, the veil that still covered her face had to be removed. All twelve nuns and six Friars Minor were present at her bedside when the veil was raised, and all testified that the face of the dying Servant of God was of marvellous beauty. There was no sign of age, nor even of approaching death. The great dark eyes were luminous with a heavenly splendor, and the smooth skin seemed to radiate a soft ethereal light. Then a brilliant little star appeared upon her forehead and remained clearly visible until she drew her last quiet breath. It was August, 1491.

The process of Blessed Beatrice da Silva was begun in 1638; she was still patiently waiting, after some five centuries, for canonization.

Sister M. Frances, S.M.I.C.

## SEEKING OUR FATHER WITH MARY

Our last in this series of Marian meditations based on the writings of the Seraphic Doctor Saint Bonaventure happily coincides with the month in which we will sing of the Mother of God—"Mary, Mother of God, who has been taken to heaven," there to reign as Queen, "crowned of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of God."<sup>1</sup> There are many facets to Our Lady's queenship,

and that displayed by Saint Bonaventure in his third interpretation of her name is particularly pointed to our age.

*For she is a vapor of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God; and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her. For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness.*  
Wisdom 7, 25-26.

Saint Bonaventure proposes that we best imitate our Blessed Mother as *Queen* if we ourselves become *rulers*. Rulers of our senses, our passions, our every thought, in order that we might conform according to the dictates of reason, thus obtaining our own salvation and the edification of our neighbor; for it is by so acting that we indicate our desire for and merit the praise and glory of God for himself.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that we best appreciate Saint Bonaventure's tripartite admonition if we consider it directed to what for him was the virtue of virtues—holiness, which is the first pillar of the temple. Needs be raised by any soul which would make itself a temple to God. Indeed it is impossible in his mind to attempt the work of sanctification without this virtue.<sup>3</sup>

Saint Bonaventure's words are particularly meaningful for us if we but recall that our holy Father Francis had uncommonly high regard for that purity which should be maintained in both the inner and the outer man. It is deeply significant too that the place which Saint Francis loved more than any other place on this earth, the precinct of Portiuncula—Saint Mary of the Angels—was built-up by him and chosen as the spot to begin, perfect and consummate his mission on this earth precisely because of his reverence for the heavenly messengers of purity, and especially because of his burning love for the all pure Mother of God.<sup>4</sup> If the most beautiful title which our Saint confers on his and our Father is *Amator castitatis*—lover of chastity—we know that in giving us the Queen of Heaven as the model of purity, Saint Bonaventure does no more than convey to us the wish of our Seraphic Father for his brethren.

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *De Assumpt. B.V.M.*, sermo 5 (IX 699b).

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *De V. Festiv.*, Festiv. 2 (VIII 91b).

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *De Donis S.S.*, collatio 9 (V 501a).

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., *Legenda S. Francisci*, c. 2, par. 8 (VIII 509a).

If the flame of holy purity has grown dim in these our cold days, it is because we do not appreciate deeply enough the brilliant example given us in Mary's being taken up to heaven to be its Queen. And it is particularly the Franciscan heritage to see that her emblem, the *fleur-de-lis*, is emblazoned on the standard of the world, for she alone is the *Lily* of this Valley. It is our sacred duty and seraphic trust to reawaken the hearts of men to the salient truth that the *Flower* of manhood, Jesus Christ, stemmed forth from the virginal decor of her who this day is led to the throne of heaven, *a most beautiful Virgin*.<sup>5</sup>

Without in any way depreciating the honest efforts of sincere men and women who seek to free men's minds from illness, it is up to us to tell the victimized of the less scrupulous to rise from the analyst's couch with its plush enticements to release the libido to false love and get down on their knees and release their hearts to true love. It is for us to silence the disgraceful din of a world gone mad with egos and libidos, and intone the litanied praises of her who reveals *the thoughts of many hearts* to God alone. This charge becomes more real to us if we but realize that the silent but centuries-old motto of Franciscanism is *amor*, and love cannot be but it proceeds from a pure heart.<sup>6</sup>

The world is waiting for us, and God knows that we need have no fear in coming to it. All the world is crying for its Mother—its Queen—to whom it can pour forth its heart. The very evil of the day proves this beyond doubt. If woman is today glorified as a goddess it is only because man is searching for that woman who is the Mother of God.

In going to the world with the message of purity, Saint Bonaventure would have us prepare ourselves well lest we be contaminated by the very vice we are commissioned to destroy. For him our hearts are our homes, our castles, but it is the castle that is well fortified that does not have to fear attack. And what is the fortification of our hearts? The wall of chastity and continence, enclosing and defending the heart against the unceasing and bitter onslaught of Satan.<sup>7</sup> In a word, Saint Bonaventure reminds us that our love is totally God's, and nothing, above all love, is able to come

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., *De Ann. B.V.M.*, sermo 2 (IX 660ab).

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., *Sent. II*, d. 38, dub. 2 (II 895a).

<sup>7</sup>Bonav., *De Sanctis*, de S. Bartholomaeo, Ap. (IX 572a).



near to God unless it be pure. Nothing so unites us to God as love of purity, and it is because she was all pure that our Mother Mary, was so especially and singularly loved by God.<sup>8</sup> Even as there was nothing between the heart of Mary and the heart of God, there can be nothing of this world between the heart of those who invoke her as Queen and the heart of the King for whom she reigns. It is in imitating Mary then that the Franciscan heart becomes the true heart of love, and its love will burn and beckon to men precisely and only in so far as it is fed on the fuel of holy purity.

The cry of the world is the glorification of the human mind and the human body will be glorified, but only according to God's design in eternity. The assumption and enthronization of the Lady in heaven is a great reminder to us of this eternal destiny. Today she is all refulgent *with the garments of salvation*, only because on earth she was chaste enough to become the incomprehensible Vessel of Election, beautiful enough for even God to take humankind onto himself therein. She is the *Lily of the Valley*, the *Mystical Rose*, only because the garden of her soul was cultivated in purity. She is the Queen of Heaven only because she reigned totally for God on this earth. Realizing this we may pray to her with all our hearts.

O Virgin, Queen of the Order of Friars Minor, give us the purity of saints by following you, heaven's Glorious Virgin, in the holiness of purity, and the purity of holiness. Give us to know that by following you we will become precious to God—saints, and by following the world we are only made children of Eve—evil and vile.<sup>10</sup> Guide us in keeping the will of Our Father in heaven, let us *forsake not the law* of you, our Mother—that we be all pure and beautiful in the eyes of heaven and earth. Open your lips to the sons of men, for we would hear you speak of the great treasures which lie in store for the *pure of heart*.

As all your words are just, and there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them, give us holy tongues that our mouths may *meditate truth*, and our lips hate wickedness. Give us the pure words of the *Magnificat*, on our lips and in our hearts when we are before God, and turn us from any compromise, any word, with the serpent-enticed poor Eve in Paradise. Let us realize the venomous effects

<sup>8</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.*, *De Sancte Agnete, V. et M.*, sermo 1 (IX 503a).

<sup>9</sup>Bonav., *De Assumpt. B.V.M.*, sermo 5 (IX 695a).

<sup>10</sup>Bonav., *De donis S.S.*, collatio 6 (V 485b).

unchaste words—*vain babbling*—which rots the heart of speaker and listener alike.<sup>11</sup> O most upright among all women, who hatest *every wicked way*, deliver us from any speech which betrays a *double tongue*, corrupting and corroding the *most pure vessel* which God would have us be.

Mother most Pure, give us *learned thoughts* in which you are present to overcome the temptations which beset us. Teach us that *evil thoughts are an abomination* to God himself who thinks towards us only *thoughts of peace, and not of affliction*. Give us to know that by thinking on you and God, who so triumphantly willed your glorification in heaven, we can conquer all the wiles of satan. Lead us to follow in the path that you have traced to heaven; keeping in mind all the good and beautiful things said of you, ever pondering them in our hearts.

Mother most Chaste, show us the beauty of giving the very substance of our being for love of God, and teach us to *despise it as nothing*. Under your patronage may we cast off all the subtle and not-so-subtle influences of the world, which insidiously draw us away from integrity. Let us inspire great love among our people for your singular purity, so that once again a great legion of Mary men and women may fall behind the ensign that leads to heaven. Pattern our hearts to your own Immaculate Heart that they may be all embracive, totally inclusive, as they go out to reconcile men to God. With your seal upon our hearts, they will be closed to all encroachments; with your seal upon our arms may men know us for what we are—*friends of God*—made such by you. Teach us in the fight against the allurements of the world and of the devil that love is truly *strong as death*—and death a pleasure rather than to compromise the angels' very boast. Finally, O Queen of our Order, give us to shine with Seraphic candor before all men that they may know that the lamps of our hearts are fed with the flames of blissful dedication.

Guided by you, O Queen of the Universe, may we, on that day appointed for us to fall asleep, come to that Jerusalem whose streets are all *paved with the white and clean stones* of the *chaste generation* and awaken to your smile—who so loved us here on earth.<sup>12</sup>

William J. Manning

<sup>11</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.*, collatio 9 (V 502a).

<sup>12</sup>Bonav., *Opus. II, Soliloquium*, c. 4 (VIII 62a).

## THE SEED OF FRANCISCANISM

It happens frequently enough during the span of one's life to be jolted out of a comfortable complacency into trial and prob- Perhaps a particular situation considered well under control awry, or something taken for granted becomes a luxury because its sudden scarcity, such as water during a drought, and then is struggle for what really should be within easy reach. It is justifiable complacency on the part of man when, having employed the normal precautions against mishap, he feels sure of security whereas it is a false complacency when there exist limp reasons for arguing for its presence. As Franciscans, it is quite possible to be guilty of a false complacency concerning a subject that should be as close and as familiar to us as our weak human nature. Perhaps that is the very reason why Franciscanism can be taken so much for granted—its accoutrements surround us every day—and it is not until we are, for example, asked by a youth, "Father, what is a Franciscan?" And, "Father, what's the difference between a Franciscan and a Jesuit or a Dominican?" that we may find ourselves groping for words to express an idea or ideal which has suddenly become quite hazy and elusive. We may find, too, that our answers fall far from what it should be and that whereas we really should try to leave the youth a full and vivid picture of what a Franciscan is, we leave him with a miniature and uncertain impression. If there is any appeal on the part of the youth for the Franciscan Order, it is basically an attraction for an individual pleasing personality, not in black or brown, girded with a knotted cord. However, Franciscanism should not and cannot be made to depend for its maintenance and appeal, its force and ideal upon the slide rule of an individual's attractiveness based upon each onlooker's norm of what he does not meet with his fancy.

Franciscanism is one definite, concrete thing: it is a definite and noble way of life lived by countless men and women throughout the world in the same spirit and ideal as one man lived in a little town called Assisi. It is at one and the same time a life and a dignified *movement*, propelled by a dynamic restlessness that leads above all creation to the Creator and finds therein the one true source of life's meaning and fulfillment. As if in imitation

Divine Master's succinct summation of his basic principles: *He who is not with me is against me—Without me you can do nothing— I am the Vine, you the branches*— the Franciscan motivating ideal is contained in the brief exclamation, *My God and my all!* In it is implied all the mystical and ascetical writings of the ages: the 'how' of sanctity, the 'why' of surrender and immolation, the 'therefore' of salvation. It is the core of Franciscanism and the heartbeat of the Franciscan. Remove it, deaden it, substitute it, diminish it and Franciscan entity is either entirely lost or it assumes a split personality which attempts to function in an exalted mode of life without knowing why, and, therefore, suffers from a basic confusion that is only temporarily anesthetized by an overdose of work or play.

Franciscanism or the Franciscan vocation is a very particular kind of life. It is not Dominic, not Ignatius nor Benedict. It is Francis. "My Brothers, my Brothers, the Lord called me to travel the paths of humility and simplicity and with me all those who want to follow and copy me. Do not then speak to me either of the Rule of St. Benedict or of St. Augustin or of St. Bernard or of any other." (Spec. perf. c. 68)

The discerning adolescent who asks, *what is a Franciscan?* or the novice who is to be instructed in the school of Franciscanism can only be done justice to by a precise, sympathetic presentation—according to the mental capacity of the recipient, of course—of that which converted Francis Bernardone into St. Francis of Assisi. The fact that this little poor man of God is by far the most beloved saint in the church's galaxy of the canonized, not only among Catholics but non-Catholics as well, should deter anyone from erroneously theorizing on the impossibility or impracticality of a just categorization of Franciscanism for all seekers and questioners. Without any awareness of the ascetical process involved in the production of this Francis of Assisi, mankind has been attracted to him by one or more of the lovable qualities resulting from it, so that, for example, he has frequently been given the place of honor in a flower or animal show in recognition of his love of nature. That his engaging love of nature was a consequence of his love of God is a fact that should be propagated in this age of seeking but not finding, of progress without peace, of fear without hope. This magnetism of St. Francis to draw such a variety of followers into

his camp is in itself the most compelling argument for the universal appeal of Franciscanism and the unblemished presentation of its basic cause of that appeal. It is not enough to say that Francis loved God; it is why and how he loved him that is the life's blood of Franciscanism. From this alone comes the beauty, the loveliness, the magnetism, the appeal, the happiness and equanimity of Franciscanism. Not to accord it full justice is to extinguish a beacon and darken a lighthouse.

What makes Franciscanism unique in every respect is the fact that it is primarily concerned with Infinite Love. Hence it is imbued with a glorious optimism that has its feet firmly planted not on solid ground, which is the false security of the world, but in heaven, which is the security of the saint. Keenly aware of our own infirmities, it nevertheless basks in the sunlight of God's mercy and love. "You are charity and love. You are joy and gladness. You protect. You guard and defend. You are our eternal life, great wondrous Lord, God Almighty, Saviour merciful" (Op. 124).

Franciscanism emanates happiness because its gaze is focused on Infinite Happiness. As an archer aims his arrow to pierce the heart of the target, so does Franciscanism direct its attention on God. The archer studies his target, the distance involved, the condition of his bow, the hazards to his success, such as wind and shadows. Franciscanism studies God as love; it delves deeply into the mercy and goodness of this Infinite Love; it measures the distance between man and his lover, recognizes the innumerable gestures of God's love towards mankind, is aware of the evil hazards that tend to thwart those gestures, and thus its heart is like an arrow in constant flight upwards to Eternal Love. Actually, Franciscanism is the perfect application of the simple catechetical answer to the reason for man's creation: "Man was created to love God, to love him and to serve him." And so, the discerning adept and the novice who seeks to know what a Franciscan is, and the novice who is to be instructed in his attributes, have their basic answer in the purpose of man's creation. That is the seed that must be firmly and carefully planted in the mind and heart of the questioner. The daily living of that purpose with full intent and effort is the growth of the seed into a bloom of beauty. As long as the seed is nourished and protected by a persistent concentration and appreciation

Infinite Love, it will unfailingly produce the reflection of that love.

Hence its automatic appeal to mankind, even without a knowledge of its cause; for it is love alone that decorates the world with true beauty: a world which otherwise would be unbearable in its bleakness. It was Infinite Love that redeemed the world and gave it the warm consolation of hopeful promise. Nothing less could have achieved such a conquest, and by nothing less than the embrace and requital of that love can eternal glory be reflected in the life of mankind. Franciscanism is the continual embrace and retaliation of Infinite Love, the consequence of which is an altruism of limitless charity. It is, therefore, patient, *is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, endureth all things.* (I Cor. 1-8) "I counsel, admonish and exhort my friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when they go about in the world, they should not quarrel, argue nor judge others; but they should be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking becomingly to all" (Rule, ch. III).

Love cannot do otherwise. These are all the tendernesses bestowed on a loved one, and Franciscanism is concerned with nothing else than its loved one, who is Christ and all mankind for whom he had so much love that he gave him the gift of his life. It is understandable on this basis that Franciscanism treasures every word uttered by Christ, and seeks to fulfill its every nuance. "The rule and life of these brothers is this, that they live in obedience, in chastity, and without property, and follow the teaching and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ." (The Rule) If at any time it is preoccupied with sadness, it is only because it cannot be the perfect disciple and return Christ's love as completely as Infinite Love. Its own offering to God, therefore, is considered picayune in the light of Infinite Love which it continually contemplates, and, as a result, there is in Franciscanism a genuine humility. "I want this brotherhood to be called the Order of the Lesser Brothers." (Vita prima-38)

It is humble because it cannot return as much as it receives, and so, it is a lover who is ever trying more perfectly and more completely to retaliate the Infinite Love bestowed upon it from all eternity. But this humility is not depression nor is it the sadness of hopeless melancholia: these are contradictions of love, not a

consequence thereof. Rather, it is forever joyously overwhelmed by the realization that it is the recipient of supreme love, and it basks in the warmth of its undying fire. Thus, Franciscanism accentuates the positive: love, beauty, happiness, faith and hope, mercy and understanding. It is as proper to man as his nourishment, for it is the life that he is meant to live: knowing God and serving him because he loves him. When its fulfillment is achieved, it is as refreshing to mankind as the relief of a soft summer's breeze. That is why Franciscanism cannot and does not limit its fold, but beckons every man to realize the purpose of his creation and exist through one of its three Orders. Franciscanism, then, is at one and the same time a gift to God and a gift to the whole world.

*Fr. Celestine Regnier, O.F.M.*

## SUNDAY MASS IN MEXICO

It was the Fifth Sunday after Easter. I said Holy Mass at six o'clock in a little town of the Province of Jalisco. The Church, with signs of ancient glory. Built by the Franciscan Friars in the sixteenth century, it had been badly damaged by ruthless invaders; but, by the firm hand and strong will of the present Pastor—a Friar of the modern type—the building showed definite signs of improvement. It will probably soon regain some of its pristine beauty and grandeur. Meanwhile, the two Fathers and two Brothers attending it are content with a miserable but contented existence in a few little rooms in the back of the Church that were left them by the invaders.

The Church was crowded to capacity. What a gathering! It warmed the coldest heart to see this motley but devout multitude on their knees in wrapt devotion and attention. There were peasant boys with sunburned rugged faces, holding their large sombreros reverently in their hands. There were mothers, their heads covered with black shawls, some with a little tot on either side and a smaller one in the middle. There were sturdy young men, dressed in shirt and trousers, with glowing eyes—forgetful of the world outside—were riveted upon the altar where they saw the only ray of real hope in this vast world.

which they knew so little and probably cared to know less. There were young women, full of life and hope. Some of them were dressed in white in honor of the Blessed Lady, "La Virgen", as they fondly call her in whom they see the only true exemplar of all that is holy and beautiful in womanhood. And how right they are! Mary is the Queen of the only beauty contest they will ever know, and why should they desire anything else in this world and the next? Then there are small boys and little girls—crowds of them—sneaking their way through their elders so that they might be near the place where the Great Miracle, as their mothers have told them, will take place. Some are bare-foot, others in rags, but their dark gleaming eyes are a spectacle for men and angels. What little space there is left in the aisles is eagerly occupied by men and women who, instead of walking, prefer to make their way on their knees toward the Altar of their living God.

There is deep and reverent silence; even the little ones in the arms of their mothers seem to sense the sacredness of the hour. When Holy Mass begins, the organ starts and the best violinist in town (which is not saying much) renders the accompaniment. They play a merry tune; they even try a classic melody. It is all the musicians could gather; and the people love it. I have an idea that the Lord above loves it too. Then the children, and those that can, sing a hymn to "La Virgen". The rhythm is poor and rather irregular, and the voices are untrained, but their hearts are tuned to the Son of Eternal Love, and that is all that counts.

Before Mass the old tower bell was rung. It sounded as if someone were banging a hammer against a worn-out brass rail. Still the people loved the sound and understood its full meaning. At Consecration, the old and only Time-Keeper in town banged again and the altar boys chimed in with numberless smaller bells. And with what gusto they swung their instruments up and down, up and down, as if saluting a great Prince. And, I mused, are they not doing exactly that? Instinctively, I was reminded of the children's Hosannahs when the Saviour entered Jerusalem, sitting on an ass. And to make things realistic, a lonesome donkey waiting outside for his master moanfully joined the chorus. True, the Mexican loves noise, and I daresay the Lord does not despise it. After all, it is the widow's farthing.

When Holy Communion came, the whole church seemed to be in motion. They thronged from all sides, old and young, the few of higher standing and the many more whose poverty was apparent. Most beautiful of all were the parents with little ones on either side. One mother held a sleeping baby in her arms. A father received with great devotion

while the little one in his arms looked earnestly, following the Saviour to his father's lips. He seemed to say: "Why does dad not do this white precious Morsel with me, as he always does?" To me, that incident was the most powerful lesson in Parent Education that I have ever witnessed. All the while I could not help thinking of the scene in the Gospel where the poor, the sick, the afflicted and the children thronged to the Good Master of Nazareth to receive help, consolation and joy of heart.

Yes, the Holy Gospel of that very Sunday told the whole story of the Exegesis that we have learned, and all the books of Ascetical and Spiritual Theology have failed to equal the true interpretation which could be witnessed on that morning in this little town hidden among the rugged mountains of Mexico. The Gospel was that of St. John 16: 23-30, where Our Lord says to His Disciples: *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you.* The text was read to the congregation in the soft musical language of Spain, and all eyes fastened on the priest's lips. Did they understand? Yes, they understood, far better than many words have ever been understood in our most famous lecture halls or in our most celebrated metropolitan cathedrals. It was the perfect setting for the Latin saying: *ad cor loquitur (the heart speaks to the heart)*. Here the very words that came, two thousand years ago, with crystalline sincerity from the great Heart of the Saviour of mankind, flowed straight and easy as if they were being uttered by those same sacred lips at the very moment, into the hungry hearts of these simple Mexican people. But, after all, are they so simple? It would seem that their simplicity surpasses the wisdom of the wise; and that this humble folk of a down-trodden nation has indeed *chosen the best part which will not be taken away*.

For some time after the words spoken by the Apostles on that occasion lingered in my mind: *Now thou speakest plainly, and dost not speak in parables. Now we understand that thou knowest all things and that thou hast no need that anyone tell thee. By this we believe that thou hast come forth from God.* It was not telepathy, but the sign of what was before me and all around the Altar that impressed me, more than ever before, that the words of the Divine Master are *spirit and life*. Indeed, God bless—He cannot help but bless—the people that still believes in all simplicity and humility, in the truth of our Holy Faith. Thanks be to God that this people, in spite of or because of its cruel persecutions, has not yet learned to draw from the cisterns of modern unbelief or make-belief, but still quenches its thirst at the fountain of

living waters. Here is an eloquent example of what our Holy Faith really is. Here indeed the Heart of the Master speaks, in a language more powerful, penetrating and convincing than all the world's learning, to those who seek Him and love Him, even *the least of His brethren*.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.

## A FOUNTAIN IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

St. Bonaventure—Sermon IV on the Assumption

*The little fountain which grew into a river, and was turned into a light, and into the sun, and abounded into many waters, is Esther, whom the king married and made queen* (Esther 10, 6). The eminent nobility of Our Lady so far surpasses the bounds of our understanding that words become insufficient to describe it. So it is that the Holy Spirit, who filled her with the charismata of virtues, when speaking through the Prophets and other teachers in Holy Scripture, praises her in many ways, sometimes through clear phrases, at other times through figures and metaphors. Thus our text, although it is said of Esther in a vision, applies in a deeper and more complete way to the Blessed Virgin since Esther in name and in deed foreshadows Our Lady. The name Esther means both "prepared in time" and "raised up for the people;" Esther was the wife of Assuerus, the prince of monarchs, and became queen when a young girl. In this she typifies the Blessed Virgin who was prepared in time, raised up for her people and espoused to the King of Kings in order that she might become the Mother of God. Thus this text is applied to her for here she is shown as full of grace and appears under the figure of the fountain, the river and the light, and is thus praised because of the graces she received.

You must understand that the Blessed Virgin is called a fountain by reason of the origin of all good things. This origin is principally from God, then through Christ; thirdly, it overflows into the Blessed Virgin, and thus she is called a fountain; lastly, it is said of any person who pours forth to others what good things he has received from on high. The name of fountain belongs primarily to God the Father: *As the*

hart panteth after the fountains of water so my soul panteth after thee O God! From this fountain as from the first source we receive talents, graces and whatever else we possess. Thus Saint James says: *Every gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights*; and the Psalm: *For with thee is the fountain of life*. God indeed the fountain to which all good men hasten and which all evil despise, as Jeremias says: *For my people have done two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water*. This fountain channels His tributaries and streams through Our Lord Jesus Christ who is called a fountain flowing from heaven to earth. He flows from heaven as the Uncreated Word; for *The Word of God on high is a fountain of Wisdom*. He flows on earth as the Incarnate Word: *He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing into life everlasting*. It is characteristic of a stream that it rises as much as it descends: so too this fountain, as it descends from the womb of the Virgin to receive flesh, so it ascends likewise to glory above the choirs of angels. He is the fountain to which Christians must run to drink the waters of graces: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains*.

The third fountain, into whom the Word of God overflows, is the glorious Virgin of whom it is said: *A little fountain grew into a great river*. The Blessed Virgin is compared to a little fountain, a living fountain, to a sealed fountain and to a fountain that overflows into a full stream.

I say first that she is compared to a small fountain because of the prerogative of humility. In the vision of Mardocheus, the little fountain grew into a river. The smallness of that fountain is merely exterior for it increased interiorly: *He who humbles himself shall be exalted*. As much as one exalts himself and is carried away with himself in glories in himself, so much is he found wanting, corrupted and brought low. But anyone who humbles himself as did this small girl will be greater in the kingdom of heaven: for although she is the Mother of God, she wished to appear small in her own eyes. This is the beginning of the Christian vocation, as Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians: *See your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, and the things that are not that he might bring to naught the things that are*. God thus

favorably on the humble. It is no small praise, then, to say of the Blessed Virgin that she was a small fountain, small by reason of her own self-evaluation; she was indeed great but small in her own eyes, for her greatness consisted in despising great things.

Secondly the Blessed Virgin is compared to a living fountain because in no way is she wanting in sanctification; she is *the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus*. That is living which has in itself the principle of its own conservation: hence a fountain is living insofar as it flows continually. Because of her unceasing devotion and her continual communion with the origin of all sanctification, the Blessed Virgin possesses an un-failing sanctification. From her flows continually the works of sanctification because she is continually full. But when a font ceases to produce, it loses its worth as a source. What kind of fountain are we? There are some men who are foolish enough to refuse to accept anything and communicate it to others. Others are worse, for like misers they refuse to share what they have received; while the proud do not feel they have received their learning from God and yet they wish to teach others: *They are fountains without water and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved*. As lacking doctrine they are like fountains without water; when they propose fantastic arguments they are like clouds tossed with whirlwinds; and just as clouds generate not tranquility but a storm, so they with their foolish reasonings generate a tempest. If you have understanding, instruct your neighbor; if not, put your hand over your mouth. You should not make yourself a teacher of that which you do not know. I would call myself a fool if I were to attempt to take another's pulse, since I have not studied medicine.

Thirdly the Blessed Virgin is compared to a sealed fountain because of her integrity: *A garden enclosed. My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up*. The closed garden and the sealed fountain thus mentioned together show that if one wishes to have the virtue of chastity he must also have the charm of modesty. These things have closed the garden of the Virgin: She who was fecund remained a virgin; a closed garden because she was intact, unstained and undefiled; a sealed fountain for she had been closed to man. The Scriptures call her twice a garden enclosed because she possessed the strictest self-restraint and the most beautiful modesty. If anyone is pure, he does not give himself to the filth of vice. Such self-discipline restrains the taste, guards the sight, and closes the hearing that it may restrict the sense of touch which so often brings out the brute in man.

Fourthly, the Blessed Virgin is compared to a fountain flowing a full stream because of the liberality of her mercy: *In that day shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean work.* The fountain which is thus open is the Blessed Virgin who purges the Saints from sins committed and from the concupiscences which lead to sin. Hence we read in Joel: *A fountain shall come from the house of the Lord and shall water the torrent of thorns, the land of sinners.* For there are many who although they are like thorns made chosen trees through their trust in the Virgin. For there is a sinner so thorny and hard that will not become a holy tree if he goes to Mary. If we fly to her, we will receive her mercy. A figure of this is in Genesis: Eliezer the servant of Abraham said: *Behold I stand by the well of water, and to Rebecca: I ask you, young maiden, for a drink of water.* She answered: *Drink, my Lord, and I will also draw for your camels.* Though this surprised him, we find her a figure of Our Lady for as often as we ask her help, she will give us to drink: *To him that thirsteth, she says with her Son, I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely.* Let us go to her!

Fr. Vincent de Paul Sullivan, O. F. M. (1911)

## THE MODERNITY OF SAINT CLARE

Has the virgin saint of seven hundred years ago, she who spent forty-one years of hidden life in the cloister, a message for the restless people of the twentieth century? Are not the monasteries of the Poor Clares today an outmoded remnant of the past, anachronism in our present day of speed, industry, and efficiency?

Clare's one desire was for God; her one concern was for God. And God remains the modern need, the One Who alone suffices. Clare so well knew. Because Clare was convinced that in God alone things realize their final end, she is unquestionably "up to date" in modern with a greater modernity than the achievements of industry, economy, and politics which collide with the Almighty because they attempt to remain outside Christianity. Clare wanted God alone; therefore, she embraced the universe. The activity of moderns who

remain only peripheral to the center which is God is less real and intense than the activity of Clare which sprang from the very center of all things: God.

From Clare, we can learn to pray. Prayer is the opening of one's own being to God; but it is God Who does the greatest work—even if all Man's part, though important, is relatively very small. To open one's soul to God, to watch and listen for His word, is to be as wakeful to the needs of the hour as Clare was, and yet as unperturbed as she. The pinnacle of her inmost longings glowed with the Divine light as, opening her heart fully to the torrents of grace and persevering unshaken and firm in her vigil of prayer, she lovingly grasped in their fullest meaning the content of the Divine whisperings. Are we thus able to listen and to wait? Do we have time for God, or have we become deaf to His voice in the din and clamor of earth? Have we even lost the use of the organ which permits us to perceive the quiet voice of God? Do we open in prayer our inmost hearts or merely our lips and a limited space in our hearts? Like Clare, do we give Him the "glowing pinnacle of our inmost longings"?

The prayer of Clare always turned on Christ. Like that of Francis, her prayer embraces most particularly the Sacred Humanity of our Lord which supplied her spirit with an unfailing stimulant for contemplation. "The Son of God has become our Way; and our Holy Father Saint Francis, His true lover and follower, has taught us that way by his word and example." With Jesus, she suffered and endured; with Him, she loved and felt compassion; with Him, she longed to be united in her prayer. And Clare tells the people of today that our Divine Lord likewise wishes to be the power and force in our own lives. But what does Christ signify to us? Do we feel with Him, and does His life lay hold of ours? Do we endure all things for His sake? Is He real to us, or shadowy and elusive?

Clare's flight from her castle home to the Portiuncula, where Francis and his Brothers received her with burning candles and led her to the altar, is symbolic in her life. She gave herself entirely to God. "To God alone, Clare desired to consecrate herself, making of her body a living temple, and zealously endeavoring to make her soul worthy, by the practice of virtue, of being wedded to the great King." God alone was the end of her striving; He is the All she



asked. And consecrated virginity was her choice because she wished to make herself a living gift to God, free from all earthly bonds to be His alone.

Are God's interests our concern? Do we long to possess Him? In spite of earthly interests and duties, do we cherish virginity and strive for such measure of it as God asks of us?

Alone! Renouncing all things, can the renouncer yet not be by his own will? But Clare made a gift of her very self and was, in turn, enriched by Christ. "You have taken with all your being, O Bridegroom most noble, our Lord Jesus Christ. The King Himself unite you with Him in divine union where He is enthroned in eternal light." "Great things have we promised, greater still promised to us." "She who has renounced all may prepare for the await divine wedded union with the King." When Clare speaks of Christ as her Bridegroom, she almost invariably regards Him as the Lord of Glory, though still remaining united with Him in the mystery of His Passion. Her flight to the Portiuncula was the joyous bridal journey of her soul toward our Lord.

We today prefer to look at sacrifice, renunciation, and penance in their narrowest limits. Clare put them in correct perspective. We look first of all to what we give rather than to what we receive. Could we only recognize God hidden in every circumstance of our life and realize that we can advance toward Him by these very circumstances, then our pilgrimage on this earth could also be made the note of joyous expectation.

Finally, we should learn from Clare of the single thing which was our anxious concern. When, in the first monastery of San Damiano, there was no food for the Sisters, Clare sought assistance from God. She commanded one of the Sisters to divide the one small piece of bread in the monastery into fifty tiny morsels, and then she turned to God in prayer. The bread was so multiplied that each of the fifty Sisters was satisfied.

Clare lay seriously ill in her narrow cell when the Saracens of Frederick II invaded Assisi and threatened the convent of the Poor Ladies. Yet she roused herself and had the Blessed Sacrament brought to her in the Pyx. She prayed. And the voice of our Lord from the Sacred Host Which she uplifted in sight of the en-

spoke in clearest tones: "I will always watch over you." The enemy fled precipitately in fear.

Clare shows us how the people of our day lead cramped lives within the narrow confines of their anxiety for their physical needs, whereas the only worthy anxiety is not fearful but a constantly trustful one in the loving provident Hand of God our Father. From Him alone she expected—everything! Her lighthearted freedom from anxious care for physical needs sprang from her primary concern for the things of the soul—she who had elected poverty for her body in order to emulate the poverty of the poor Christ. "O blessed poverty! for those who love and embrace her, she hides eternal riches!" Is our anxiety more for our body than for our soul? Does it consist more in seeking after temporal security than the security of God's Paternal Hand? Is our anxiety such that we expect God to serve us, rather than ourselves to serve Him?

Genuine Christian concern looks beyond self to others. Clare enclosed herself within the cloister in order to be an intercessor for the needs and sufferings of the universal Church. "This little flock of our Lord and Father has gathered together in His holy Church through the word and example of our holy Father Saint Francis." Clare's narrow cloister demanded a wide field for her soul. She would help to bear the burden of the universal Church. "I regard thee as God's auxiliary and a support for the frail members of His ineffable Body." As Francis supported the tottering pillars of the Lateran Church, so Clare and her Sisters would support Holy Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. She knows that, even in her narrow cloister, her task is apostolic. Her little flock is not for herself, but for the Church whose Vicars and Cardinals confided their anxieties to her.

Do we regard ourselves as divinely called co-workers in the Mystical Body of Christ? Do we live for the Church, suffer for her and feel concern for her always? Or do we esteem mere external activity greater than sacrificial prayer? Is our interest in the Church's welfare merely territorial and personal? Or do we understand also that the silent, nameless sufferers of the world, the apparently useless, the aged and confined, can be valuable contemplatives for the support of the Church?



We see that this woman of the thirteenth century is more modern than we had realized, just as are the silent, hidden, walled strange monasteries of her daughters. She shows us that no external progress, no mechanical or industrial art, no fashions or multiplicity of accomplishments are the things of greatest value—but only the entire gift of self to God. Clare calls to us of today: take God seriously! Let Him be your greatest concern, your most burning anxiety.

Lothar Hardick, O.S.A.

Rev. Mother M. Immaculata, P.C.



## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

**UNDER ANGEL WINGS:** The Autobiography of Sister Maria Antonia. Translated by Conall O'Leary from the original Portuguese. Paterson: Saint Anthony Guild. 1953. Pp. xviii 214. \$2.00

This is the simple, beautiful story of a soul, Cecy Cony (1900-1939), who became Sister Maria Antonia of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity (Stella Niagara). Written under obedience, the autobiography covers only the first twenty-one years of her life, and is supplemented by a sketch of her years in the convent. A fuller study of her interior life, so much desired after one has read her ingenuous self-revelations, is promised in the future.

"Under Angel Wings" is a most apt title, since it emphasizes the extraordinary place Cecy's Guardian Angel had in

her life: for over thirty years, from early 1905 until 1935, she was always aware of his presence and ever conscious of his protection and very definite assistance. Certainly as Religious, we are brought to realize the need of total trust and reliance on our Guardian Angel, who is too often forgotten in action. Cecy will teach us too the need of prayer, sacrifice and mortification, of constant vigilance and care, especially in small things, which too easily turn our hearts from God.

The English translator has added a preface. *The Cord* corrects a statement of fact. The cause of Sister Maria Antonia has not been officially introduced (as stated therein); but preparation is being made for such a step. The autobiography will soon appear in French and Dutch and perhaps in Italian.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

All of us, priests and religious alike, labor for the extension and the firm establishment of the kingdom of God according to the nature of our particular calling. A greater or lesser field of labor is allotted to the lot of the various vocations, for *to each one of us grace is given according to the measure of Christ's bestowal* (Eph. 4, 7). Each must exercise the function committed to him, *ministry, in ministering; or he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhorting; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness* (Rom. 12, 7-8). The well-being and increment of the Mystical Body to which we belong depend on the full and healthy functioning of every member. The first function is our personal sanctification, as the Apostle puts it, *to practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ* (Eph. 4, 15). If then, we are to contribute our share to the building-up of the Body of Christ, it will be achieved only if we pursue our own sanctification and if we are devoted to prayer. In the present conference let us consider this from the viewpoint of the priesthood, for it can thus be more clearly illustrated, though, with due regard to difference of vocation, the following reflections are equally applicable to religious.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of priests are full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This is as it should be. It is the natural instinct of a Catholic; in the priest, it is the manifestation of the grace of ordination which is dynamic: *you shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth* (Acts 1, 8). In fact even today, for spreading and defending the Gospel message many suffer even to death, *as a criminal* (2 Tim. 2, 9). We realize that there is so much to be done: there are holy souls looking for direction and encouragement, and the lukewarm who need to be led to fervor, and lapsed Catholics to be reclaimed to Christ, and the multitude of non-Catholics who are wandering about in utter spiritual darkness. We would like to bring them in from the highways and byways and say triumphantly to Christ,

*Lift up thy eyes round about and see,*

*They are all assembled, they shall come to thee*

*Thy children shall come from afar,  
And thy daughters shall be borne on the hip.  
Then shalt thou see and be radiant* (Isa. 60, 4).

You have a consuming zeal, for the harvest is great and laborers few, but you must take care lest the zeal "consume" you. That is, do not let it absorb you to your own spiritual harm or the detriment of the very work you undertake for the sake of God. The sanctification and salvation of souls is a supernatural work. Accordingly, it is God's work and must be done in God's way. His field is God's field, the building is his building. We are his laborers, the channels through which the heavenly graces are conveyed to the world. Do you not think that God wants us fashioned into fit instruments for the accomplishment of his works? If we are the dispensers of the mysteries, should we not live in that world of mysteries? How can we speak the words of God if we have not often talked with God? How can we lead men on the way that leads to God if we have not often walked with God? How can we inflame the hearts of men with a longing for God if we have not looked upon the face of God? A fountain that is not fed by the heavenly stream can give no living water.

It is true that we perform supernatural wonders through the Word, the Mass and the sacraments; but there is a vast field which we leave untouched unless we are filled with the Spirit. By our mission God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5, 18) in order to perfect the saints. . . , for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4, 12). Therefore, we stand in need of heavenly unction, we need power to touch hardened hearts, and prudence and wisdom to guide such that are tempted and bewildered, and words of comfort to console the afflicted, and strength to fortify the weak, and the life of life that we may call forth tears of repentance, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may perfect every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1, 28).

To accomplish this we must be men of prayer. Let us imitate the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus, who was faithful to him who made him (Hebr. 3, 1). He who needed no rest began his ministry with a protracted prayer of forty days. And after we read that he passed whole nights in the prayer of God, that he rose very early in the morning and went into the

places to pray. Throughout the Epistles of his great Apostle we find the ever-recurring refrain, *nocte ac die obsecrantes—sine intermissione orantes*. St. Peter gives us the two preoccupations of the truly apostolic man when he says, *we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word* (Acts 6, 4). Thus you see the source of the tradition—Christ and his apostles.

We must follow their example with zeal and perseverance, otherwise we shall be working like mere men at the accomplishment of supernatural works and we are bound to fail, *for without me you can do nothing* (Jn. 15, 5). Certainly there is a tremendous output of work, but are the fruits commensurate? In view of the energy expended, should we not expect a far greater return? Applying the passage to spiritual illnesses, do we not see around us a repetition of the scene at the Pool of Bethesda, *a great multitude of the sick, blind, lame, and those with shrivelled limbs, waiting for the moving of the water?* (Jn. 5, 3). And who was it that stirred the healing waters of the pool? *An angel of the Lord used to come down at certain times into the pool, and the water was troubled* (v. 4). Not an organizer, not someone in a fury and frenzy of work, but *an angel of the Lord*. And the pool was stirred and the sick were healed.

We must not fall into the fallacy of thinking that we have so much to do that we simply have no time to pray. St. Paul was commissioned by Christ *to carry my name among nations and kings and the children of Israel* (Acts 9, 10). . . *in many more labors, in imprisonments more frequently. . . in journeyings often. . . in labor and hardships, in many sleepless nights. . . Besides those outer things, there is my daily pressing anxiety, the care of all the churches!* (2 Cor. 11, 29). Yet St. Paul prayed *night and day*. Now, can we imagine that we have no time to pray? Not satisfied with his own tireless prayer, he asks the Colossians to pray for him *that I may openly announce it* (the mystery of Christ) *as I ought to speak* (4, 4).

Perhaps we let ourselves succumb to a mere natural love of work or to an ambitious drive. The end-result will be that we shall become spiritual extroverts, strangers to ourselves and to God, and therefore we cannot be *the fragrance of Christ for God* (2 Cor. 2, 15) because God wants our apostolic sweat to be sweetened with the incense of prayer. Furthermore, how can we be intercessors

throne of mercy for our people if we are not well known around the throne? How can we pray for the power to remove the speck from our brother's eye if we are not concerned about the beam in our own eye? How can we enlighten others if we ourselves are not enlightened? . . . *Down to this very day, . . . the veil covers their eyes* (2 Cor. 3, 15).

Therefore, let us always ask ourselves: "Am I really among those who count on their prayer, their visit to the Blessed Sacrament, their Mass above all, to give to their eloquence its power of persuasion? If not, I may be a noisy *tinkling cymbal*. I may resound round the altar solemnly like a cathedral bell, but I'll just be hollow brass and a tolling bell. I am not a channel of love and mine is not the irrepressible eloquence of the friends of God" (Chautard, *The Soul of the Apostle*).

Therefore, we must never make the tragic mistake of giving up the practice of intense prayer. Rather, bring every difficulty, every discouragement, every project, every problem to Christ in prayer. By our prayer and in our prayer we must lead all our spiritual charges to Christ. In his presence we must pray over them, *we must pray for (them) unceasingly, . . . that (they) may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding* (Col. 1, 9). Then we shall have blessing on our work and strength from the Most High: *This is a lover of his brethren, and of the people of Israel; this is he that prayeth much for the people, and for the Holy City* (2 Macc. 15, 14).

We have been speaking of prayer, not of methodical meditation. We might indeed be too tired, too confused to meditate, but not too tired to pray. Not too tired to kneel or sit quietly in the company of Jesus and go over our problems, our personal needs with him, to ask him for light, for zeal, for holiness; to acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants except he bless us and our work; to tell him how we truly love him more than all else. And should we be too tired even for that, then we can kneel or sit before his tabernacle, because we love him and want to be near him. The rumor of holiness is not required, for intimate friends can converse intimately without words, as a mother converses lovingly with her weak infant.

We must first live our own spiritual life; we must sanctify ourselves. And, if we must pray for others, we must first pray for ourselves, for we too are mortal men, we too are exposed to danger. *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat* (Lk. 22, 31). We must have constant recourse to our Lord. From him we can have all things since he is the plenitude of gifts and virtues, *for it has pleased God the Father that in him all fullness should dwell* (Col. 1, 19). He is our fountain-head. We must drink deeply of his Sacred Heart, for, in truth, streams of living water gush forth from him, as the Scriptures say.

Let us do this. *Be fervent in spirit. . . persevering in prayer* (Rom. 12, 12). We shall have a rich blessing, *for if you abide in me, and if my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you* (Jn. 15, 7). *If my words abide in you. . .*, therefore our Lord expects us to unite our will to his to pursue holiness, to disentangle our hearts from attachments, to strive after greater purity of intention. Then at last, the veil shall be removed and we shall look steadfastly on the beauty of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Then we shall be true, effective apostles. For the effectiveness of our ministry does not depend on our words or works, but on the faith and love that are within us. . . "*Manent tria haec: verbum, exemplum et oratio; maior autem horum est oratio*" (St. Bernard).

The divine word is infallible. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. . . If you abide in me, and if my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you. In this is my Father glorified, that you may bear very much fruit, and become my disciples. . . These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full* (Jn. 15, 4. 7. 8. 11).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

*Saint Lawrence of Brindisi: Sermon VI on the Vision of Saint*

There are many who think they speak to the Virgin's pain saying that she felt no sorrow during Christ's passion. They say that Mary's certain faith in the resurrection and her perfect love for God made her one with God in spirit and in will; and it was her will that Christ should suffer by submitting to His passion and death.

Such men almost thrust the Blessed Virgin into that sect of the Stoics, who resolve perfect virtue into a morbid insensibility to natural passions. Can we say that Mary was so senseless and foolish? Shall we attribute to her a breast of granite, a heart of stone so that she did not feel that grief which shook heaven and earth, rent rocks, opened tombs, and raised the bodies of the dead? No! No! that there was in Mary a faith so perfect that, had there been no Christ, she, like Abraham, would have immolated her only and beloved Son as a sacrifice to God and crucified Him with her own hands. Had she not obeyed, had God so decreed, though the immolation of her Son would have crushed her soul with grief and crucified her own motherly heart. . .

Many women followed Christ to the hill of Calvary, mourning and lamenting Him with bitter tears, as Zacharias had foretold: *They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son and they shall grieve over him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the firstborn. In that day there shall be a great lamentation in Jerusalem. There shall be, the prophet says, a plaintive mourning, such as is customary in a family at the death of the firstborn son. Scripture wont to express the greatest grief under this figure, as Jeremiah says: Make thee mourning as for an only son, a bitter lamentation. While many women mourned and grieved over Christ, did His Mother alone remain with tearless eyes? Did she alone feel no sorrow when her firstborn and only Son was slain before her very eyes with such a cruel and lingering cruelty? No! No! She cried out in her travail as she brought forth again and was in the anguish of delivery. It was there, at the cross that she suffered the bitter sorrow and excruciating pain of delivery.*

Mary bore countless sufferings for the sake of Christ from

ment when she brought Him forth. Even before His birth, in fact, she was grieved over the suspicion of adultery which had arisen in her husband Joseph who, because he did not wish to expose her to reproach, was minded to put her away privately. Later, when the time of her delivery was at hand, she suffered the heartless inhospitality of the men at Bethlehem. She turned away from the homes of all; she found not one kind host, not even one who would accept money. Since there was no place for her at the inn, she was forced to take refuge in a stable in order to flee the affronts of the night. There, in the company of animals, she brought forth her Son, the Firstborn and Only-Begotten Son of God, and laid the tender Infant in a manger.

Mary suffered much at her Son's painful circumcision, when she saw her sweet and tiny Infant suffering and crying as a result of the wound inflicted. She experienced great sorrow on the day of her purification and the presentation of her Son in the temple at Jerusalem, when she heard from Simeon the prophecy that her Son was to suffer grievous and bitter persecutions. She was afflicted with great anxiety when, through the angel's revelation, she learned that the wicked Herod was seeking to kill the Child, and it became necessary to flee into Egypt. She endured intense grief at the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple when He was twelve years old: *Thy father and I have been seeking thee sorrowing.*

But these were only the beginnings, the prelude and foretaste of future sorrows; we have not yet touched the sword that pierced her soul. When Christ, after He had been baptized by John and had vanquished Satan in the desert, began to manifest Himself to the world by preaching the Gospel and working miracles to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, then began a merciless persecution. Mary was aware of the evils that warred against Christ. She knew that her fellow citizens, unable to bear the stinging censure of their vices when they heard Christ preaching in the synagogue, had angrily dragged Him out of the city in order to cast Him headlong from a mountain. She knew that He had fled this mortal persecution of the Jews, and walked about in Galilee, because the Jews were seeking to put him to death.

Mary was aware that they defamed, dishonored, and ridiculed Christ with many abusive names and insults, that they branded the

Only-Begotten Son of God, their true Messias, with many calumnies. She knew that they often wished to rush upon Him with stones. The leaders of the Jews, out of their intense hatred for Him, promulgated a decree of death against the Author of Life.

But the sword of keenest sorrow pierced her holy soul. Judas turned traitor and delivered Christ into the hands of the Jews. When, after the horrible scourging, she saw her Son condemned to the most shameful and infamous death of a robber; when she saw Him crowned with thorns and carrying His own cross, led by the robbers to be crucified on the hill of Calvary; when, finally, she saw her Son hanging between heaven and earth, nailed to the cross and heard Him speak to her, for: *There was standing by the cross of Jesus his mother*; when she gazed upon Him—dead! O unspeakable sorrow! When David, whose heart was as the heart of a lion, after the death of Jonathan, he could not restrain his tears. He went to weep inconsolably and lament with tear-choked voice: *I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan, exceeding beautiful, and amiable above the love of women*. What bitter tears did Mary shed! How great was the grief that shattered her breast! *Can a woman forget her suckling son, or as not to have pity on the son of her womb?*

Well may it be said of the Virgin: *Weeping she hath watched the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her*. And she can justly appropriate to herself that verse: *The Lord hath made me desolate, and with sorrow all the day long*. If Paul can say, on account of his loving love for Christ: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*, with how much more can Mary?

If Christ, then, lived in Mary, could Christ suffer any more than which His Mother did not suffer with Him? Yes, Mary bore the sufferings of her Son, though she herself was weighed down with sorrow; she grieved with her Son, but she herself was burdened with bitter grief. So great was her anguish that she had to be comforted by her suffering Son. Looking down upon her and then upon Christ, Christ said to her: *Woman, behold thy son*. Yet those very words opened a new fountain of sorrow in the Virgin's breast! For, a wound of the heart pains most when it is touched. Hence, the Virgin

made no answer to Christ's words, for her heart was, so to say, laden and knotted with sorrow. She answered not at all, because her grief had robbed her of the power of speech. . .

Mary stood by the cross, sustained by her strong faith that Christ would soon rise: *There was standing by the cross of Jesus his mother*. In what remarkable posture! Rather, O divine miracle! Mary stood with her body, but more with her soul, with invincible faith. She stood in amazement, marveling at the divine charity with which God so loved the world, at the divine mercy and justice which punished sin in order to induce the salvation of the sinner. She stood in astonishment at her Son's divine obedience to the Father, His divine courage against the demons, His infinite patience in enduring the utmost torments.

Mary stood beneath the cross, lost in wonder at the divine mystery of human redemption. She stood, an example and model to the entire Church of invincible patience in bearing adversities. . . With a noble and wonderful strength of soul, Mary drained the bitter chalice which God had set before her to the very dregs, while she said with her Son: *Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? If it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; yet not my will but thine be done. Not as I will, but as thou wilt*. In all things Mary was like to her suffering Son in courage and strength of soul.

Christ has suffered for us and has left us an example that we may follow in His steps. His Mother, Mary, has also suffered. With her Son she has given us an example, that as she has done, so we also should do. We should have this divine model, sculptured for us on the hill of Calvary, ever before our eyes. We should gaze attentively on it, that we may imitate both Christ and His Most Holy Mother with every endeavor. Let us think of her who endured such contradictions from sinners, and our souls will not grow weary nor faint on the path of virtue and the way of salvation. May Mary be to us always an example of unconquered and unconquerable patience, of invincible virtue, of indomitable zeal, so that no affliction, no creature, will ever separate us from the love of Christ.

Vernon Wagner, O.F.M. Cap. (transl.)

## FAR AND FROM THE UTTERMOST COASTS. . .

It was March ninth of the year 1440. Dusk had just descended when, with eyes alight and a smile that was other-worldly, Francesco Ponziani answered the beckoning of her guardian angel and followed his lead into eternity. This final summons of her heavenly attendant brought to a close a guardianship which had been vouchsafed to Frances for over twenty years. True, such a visible protection which she was checked in her faults (at times even to a slap on the cheek), encouraged in her good deeds, and very specifically guided in her search for perfection, was a most unusual grace; but it was only one among many such in the life of Frances of Rome. The largeness with which the good God showered these exceptional graces on her, nor even the gifts themselves, but rather her almost scrupulous correspondence to such graces; and that from a very early age for in regard to her spiritual life Frances was definitely precocious.

Born in 1384, and, as was then the custom, baptized on the very day of her birth, Francesca Ponziani was early introduced to the ways of holiness by her parents, who were the nobly descended Paul Bussa and Jacobella dei Roffredeschi. Before she could even pronounce the words distinctly, she was saying the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary every day; which practice, begun at her mother's knee, was to be a daily devotion till the day of her death. Scarcely was the little one able to walk when she became her mother's companion on her daily visits to one or other of the churches of Rome; and by the time she was six years old, she was following a pious life that was far beyond her years. Of course, in the fourteenth century, children had to grow up quickly, and many girls at the age of six were sedate little ladies, able to take over quite a few of the household chores. But Frances was much more than just a sedate little lady. She was a bright and gay little girl—growing more beautiful each day—filled with an almost passionate love of God, and imbued with an uncommon charity. Already, she refused to eat meat or wine, eating only bread and vegetables, and drinking only water. When she reached the age commonly defined as the age of reason, Jacobella entrusted the spiritual direction of her only

to the saintly Don Antonio di Savelli, one of the Benedictine monks of Mount Olivet, then in charge of Santa Maria Nuova, her mother's favorite church. Every Wednesday the little Francesca made her confession to him, asking his advice about her tasks, her studies, her prayers, and following his directions very precisely even in the most trivial things. Many times he had to refuse her the permission she sought for some of the penances which she wanted to perform, but recognizing in her a soul apart, Don Antonio occasionally gave his consent to austerities which would undoubtedly be considered much too severe for an ordinary child of her age.

Don Antonio had been the sole confidant of her desire to enter a convent, so that when her father informed the twelve-year old Francesca that all the negotiations had been completed for her marriage to Lorenzo dei Ponziani, and that the wedding was to take place immediately, he was appalled at her reaction. She pleaded; she wept; she begged him to dissolve the agreement. When he refused, Frances declared that no power on earth would induce her to consent to this marriage, or to any marriage. It was her first rebellion and Paul Bussa was at first stunned, then volubly furious. Frances was just as vehement; she was not going to give herself to any human bridegroom; she was going to belong to God—she was His already except for the actual vows. Thinking that perhaps her attraction for the religious life might be just a passing whim, the normal attraction of any pious Italian girl for convent life, her father sent her from him. She immediately made her way to Don Antonio, who, much to her surprise, counseled obedience to her parents in this regard, pointing out that the sacrifice of her own will would be even more pleasing to the dear God than the fulfillment of her natural inclination. And strong as this inclination was, Frances accepted the priest's judgment as the indicated will of God for her. After spending a few days in prayer for the strength to make her sacrifice generously, she begged her father to forgive her, and expressed her willingness to obey.

The wedding was everything that fourteenth-century Rome could expect at the union of two such wealthy and socially prominent families as the Bussas and the Ponzianis. In the long drawn-out ceremony, and during the days of feasting and rejoicing, Frances

conducted herself with such an appealing dignity and grace, that none of her in-laws suspected what it was costing her. She had made the sacrifice of her personal longing and was never to utter a regret—she really meant to live her life as God wanted her to live it, not as Frances wanted.

This child-bride was definitely born to become a saint, and her distinctly unusual correspondence to all grace that made her one. Very soon after her wedding Francesca found in the Order of St. Francis one of those special graces, and from it she drew the strength to fulfill the many obligations placed upon her. Her marriage to the handsome young aristocrat was a happy one on a mutual respect which very soon deepened into a beautiful friendship. She was most assuredly blessed, too, in the person of Vannozza, wife of Lorenzo's older brother. In this sister-in-law, Francesca found a friend with similar tastes, and with the same yearning for God and His service which claimed her own soul. Together they followed about following a daily schedule of meditation and prayer within a very worldly, very sociable household where both of them were under the beck and call, not only of their respective husbands, but of their in-laws as well.

Since Lorenzo loved to see his beautiful Francesca in her simple clothes and precious jewels she was happy thus to have an opportunity to delight him, although at the same time she invariably wore a hairshirt beneath the splendid robes. Most anxious to comply with everything which she felt duty or propriety required of her, Francesca drew a line; she refused to stay up late at nights—just as custom was in those times as it is today—nor could she be persuaded to play cards or attend the dances. Because of her "early to bed" and "early to rise" and thus spend much time in prayer before the rest of the household was astir; for in spite of all the distractions of her new and busy life, the little wife remained faithful to her early habits of piety. As before her marriage, her Wednesday visits to Don Antonio at Santa Maria Nuova continued and, in addition, every Saturday there was a private conference with a very learned Dominican, Don Michele, an intimate friend of her father-in-law.

Such an unusual manner of life attracted the attention,

In many instances, the censure, of Roman society, a reaction which was to be expected, inasmuch as her piety served as a reproach to the conscience of the worldly. They called her a fool, a hypocrite, a fanatic; they ridiculed her; they went so far as to suggest to Lorenzo that he should put a stop to his wife's eccentricities. Fortunately, however, Lorenzo was not a man easily influenced by public opinion. He loved and really appreciated his young wife far too much even to consider interference. Noble character that he was—though not outstandingly spiritually-minded himself—he recognized in Francesca a true sanctity, and venerated her for it. Both his father and mother had come to love and esteem his young wife, as had his brother Paluzzo, who was delighted at the friendship between her and his own wife; in fact, even the servants of the household were captivated by her and felt drawn to God by the holiness of the life of the teenage wife of Lorenzo.

Then mysteriously Francesca was stricken. For over a year she was unable to walk. For long periods of time she lost the power of speech and the pains which she suffered were so intense that at times it seemed she must die from them. Yet no one could discover the cause of it all; her illness defied the medical knowledge of the day. Her father, desperate and inconsolable, blamed himself for having insisted on the marriage; Lorenzo and his family were grief-stricken. The Ponzianis thought that the illness might be due to some diabolical influence and in order to remove the so-called spell secretly admitted a witch to her room. Dying, as she appeared to be, the power of speech suddenly restored, Francesca cried out, "Begone, thou servant of Satan. Do not ever dare to enter these walls again." Then she fell back unconscious and remained so far into the night. Toward morning when Vannozza, broken-hearted and weary with watching, threw herself on her own bed and fell asleep, Saint Alexius appeared to Francesca in a vision. After identifying himself—it was the eve of his feast—the Saint explained that he had been sent by God to ask if she preferred to be healed or to die. Characteristically, Francesca answered that her only wish was that the Divine will be fulfilled, which the Saint informed her that it was God's choice that she be restored to health and spend her life for His greater glory. Then, having spread his mantle over her, the Saint vanished, leaving her

completely recovered. At once Frances arose, dressed without tance, then awakened Vannozza to tell her of her cure and to her companionship on her visit of thanksgiving to the church of Saint Alexius.

Frances returned to the busy life of the Ponziani household more reconciled to her marriage, and determined that the more grace that had been bestowed on her should produce lasting results. She explained to Vannozza that now God expected more of them than heretofore; and together they resolved to be much more severe with themselves in the observance of the commandments, to be more exact in their obedience to their husbands, and to conform to their confessor in every single detail of their life. In order to have a secluded sanctuary when they managed to find time for quiet prayer, they furnished for themselves two oratories—whatever crucifixes and sacred pictures they could find—one in a little unused attic room, and another in a cave at the end of the garden. Their fasts and abstinences became even more rigorous with such a lack of display that even those who habitually attended to them scarcely noted it. Satan noticed it, however, and began a series of attacks by which he attempted to check the progress of their heroic way. Frances was the one at whom these attacks were especially aimed; he caused her strange sufferings, dealt her blows, revealed his presence to her in various horrible forms, yet he was never permitted by God to deceive or to injure her, nor to interfere with her manner of life. Along with all these hours of prayer, Frances and Vannozza were most conscientious in attending to their household duties; yet they found time practically every day to visit a few hours at the hospital of San Spirito, nursing and consolidating the sick, and aiding the most needy with alms.

Francesca and Lorenzo were blessed with three children—two sons and a daughter; the eldest, Giovanni Battista was born in 1660. Just a year later, at the age of seventeen, Frances took over, after the death of her mother-in-law, the management of the great household, though she felt that Vannozza, as wife of the eldest son, should become mistress of the palace, yet she agreed to assume the responsibility when Vannozza joined her insistent voice with those of the other women of the family. And their confidence in her ability was not

placed; in the government of the household she was firm yet gentle, and to the servants she was much more the mother than the mistress, nursing them in their sicknesses and zealously guarding both their spiritual and temporal interests.

Not long after Francesca had assumed this position in the family, Rome was visited by a terrible famine and the home of the Ponzianis was besieged by the poor. At Frances' orders no one was allowed to go out or come in without a pass. During this siege the family was witness to two striking instances in which God showed His approval of His self-sacrificing little house-keeper. One day Lorenzo came upon Frances and Vannozza bearing out of the granary a measure of corn which, they told him, was all they could find after searching through the straw for several hours. While Frances was explaining, Lorenzo glanced beyond his wife into the granary and saw, not the straw through which they had sifted minutes before, but instead forty measures of bright yellow corn. The awe which such a miracle inspired in him, however, did not prevent either Lorenzo or his father from becoming violently angry when they discovered that the cask of wine reserved for the family had been drained to the last drop by a desperate Frances when she could no longer endure the entreaties of the destitute. Unabashed by their reproaches and confident that God would provide, she calmly suggested that they go with her to the cellar to see if, perhaps, God in His mercy might have refilled the cask by that time. And He had!

In the face of such evidence, Lorenzo was possessed of an even greater reverence for the gentle little wife he loved so tenderly; and, recognizing the fact that her deference to his wishes was in reality a great restraint on her spirit, he told her that henceforth she was free to follow the dictates of her heart—told her that she could be certain that whatever she chose to do would have his approval. How well he knew his Francesca! Making no conditions, he was confident that neither he nor their son nor anyone who had any claim on her time or attention would be made to suffer because of this release, for that was not her kind of religion. In that regard especially Frances often expressed her sentiments, saying that a married woman must leave God at the altar to find Him in her domestic cares. Lorenzo was overjoyed at such understanding and sympathy in her hus-



band, and her first act was to replace her lovely expensive dress with a robe made of a coarse dark-green cloth and to convert her jewels into alms for the needy.

When Frances was twenty years old, her second son, Giovanni Evangelista was born, and, in the truest sense of the word, his mother's own child, a child in whom the gifts of God were perceptible. Evangelista was just three years old when little Lorenzo was born, a creature of loveliness, whom her mother guarded more carefully than she did her two boys. It was Francesca's dream that some day Agnese would take the place in God's service that she had denied her mother.

The Rome of Frances' day was a Rome of turmoil, of plots and counter-plots, of anti-popes and false popes, while the true pope was in exile. Understandably, confusion was widespread and to this was added the suffering wrought by the troops who frequently entered the city in the interest of the anti-popes. Because of their loyalty to the Church and to Pope John XXIII, the Ponzianis were a noble family. Lorenzo was in command of the supporters of the pope's cause, in 1409, when, in a particularly fierce street fight, he was stabbed in the back—mortally, it seemed, for his apparently lifeless body was carried home to his wife. She offered her dear one's life to God, if it was His will to take it; yet, feeling a tiny pulse in his cheek when she embraced him, she immediately set about to give him body and soul. The time she had spent nursing the sick had taught her many things, which now she hopefully applied to Lorenzo, meanwhile whispering to him acts of love and contrition, forgiveness, and of trust in the mercy of God. It was another year of love and devotion, for Lorenzo recovered, although he never fully felt the effects of this wound for the rest of his life.

The following years were years of pure anguish to Frances. With one misfortune after another befalling those she loved. Lorenzo's brother Paluzzo was taken captive by the troops of the anti-pope sympathizers, they demanded her eldest son as his ransom, and after an attempted flight with the child in which she was aided by her confessor, Frances, with only a momentary natural reprieve, gave her son into their hands. Then she went directly to the Piazza Maria Nuova and pleaded with the Blessed Mother. It can well be

imagined what her joy must have been when Battista was returned to her while she was still at her prayer. The soldiers had given him up because they found that every horse on which they set him refused to move, and they feared a supernatural influence. The next year Lorenzo had to flee from Rome, of necessity leaving his wife and family behind. Again Battista was taken from his mother by the troops after they had plundered the palace, burned the farms belonging to the Ponzianis, and slaughtered their flocks. Francesca and Vannozza, with their children somehow managed to exist through the next few years which saw not only the devastation wrought by the troops, but the even more widespread sufferings that resulted from the dreadful famine and the black plague which followed it. Evangelista, dearer to his mother than all else on earth, was stricken. He was only nine years old, yet while Francesca held him in her arms and sought to ease his sufferings, he, in turn, with words of heavenly inspiration prepared his mother so well for his death that when he finally smiled up at her and breathed his final sigh, she did not grieve.

Like the Little Poor Man whose Third Order she had joined early in her teens, the heart of Francesca was deeply touched at the plight of the suffering; like him she now had nothing of her own from which she could supply food and clothing and other necessities for them; like him, too, however, she gave what she had to give, herself in a whole-hearted, loving, Christ-like service. In what was left of the palace, Frances set up a temporary hospital into which she and Vannozza gathered as many of the most stricken and destitute as they could house. These they lovingly nursed, and for the provisions which they needed went out into the public places to beg. Many of their plague victims were unexpectedly restored to health, for at this time God bestowed on Frances another of His special gifts, the gift of healing. While using it as she knew He meant her to, she resorted to an ingenious subterfuge to conceal her own instrumentalities. Whether it was the plague or a mangled foot, or a severed arm, she applied some of the salve—her own concoction of oil and wax—from a little jar which she carried with her at all times. The results were the same—healing. Those she was not permitted to cure were prepared for death with the tenderest of care.

Just a year after his death, Evangelista, with an angelic companion whose splendor far outshone his own, appeared to her lighted mother. After warning Frances that her heart's desire was not to be fulfilled in Agnese, for she, too, was soon to be taken, he introduced to her the archangel whom God had charged with guidance for her remaining years on earth. For over twenty years an angel in the form of a beautiful child was visible to Frances, but only to her only, as he carried out his commission of guardianship.

For days after this visit from her favorite son, Frances and her daughter fade and droop until heaven finally claimed her. Her own health gave way. She became dangerously ill. In the face of contagion, everybody but Vannoza deserted her. They blamed her for exposing herself unnecessarily by taking the plague-stricken into the palace. For several months she hovered between life and death, then suddenly was restored to bodily health only to be subjected to a most terrifying spiritual experience. In several visions she was led by her angel down the awful paths of hell with its searing sights. The experience proved so appalling that she was never able to speak of them without growing pale and trembling.

Then at last, in 1414, peace came back to the Eternal City. The suffering brought to an end, for the time at least, the suffering of the Milanais. When Lorenzo returned, he brought with him Battista, not only child left to him and Frances. With the restoration of their liberty, Frances now had the wherewithal to increase her almsgiving and good works, and Lorenzo gave his whole-hearted acquiescence to her mere presence in the patched old green gown, which she had been wearing for so many years, worked wonders in effecting conversions. There was something irresistible about her words; her gift of revealing thoughts, greatly increased since she had acquired her angelic companion, enabled her to turn many back on the path to God.

When Battista married, there was daughter-in-law trouble. Mabilia, although she had been his parents' choice, considered Battista's mother intolerable; she labeled her conduct scandalous. After awhile, however, God by a visitation of sickness saw fit to change Battista's wife from a vain, mocking, haughty young girl to a gentle and affectionate daughter. Then as Mabilia gradually assumed the cares of the palace, Frances began to have hopes of be-

able to carry out a long-cherished plan to form among the friends who had accepted the challenge of her example a kind of union or confraternity, the members of which, while living at home, would keep a special rule of prayers and spend their leisure hours in visiting the sick and poor. When she talked it over with her husband, he told her that she was at liberty to do as she pleased about it, provided only that she did not deprive him of her beloved companionship. Francesca must have smiled at his thinking it necessary to make such a proviso, for she truly loved Lorenzo. So on the feast of the Assumption, 1425, a group of ten dedicated themselves to the service of Our Lady under the title of Oblates of Mary. The following year, the little band made a pilgrimage to Assisi, going on foot and begging their way, so timing it as to reach Our Lady of the Angels on August second. As they came in sight of Assisi, weary and almost fainting from fatigue, they were welcomed and cheered by the words of a little Friar. Because of the radiant light which her angel shed on the Friar, Francesca understood that it was Saint Francis himself. After blessing the women, he offered them pears from a tree which grew by the road and then he was gone. At the shrine itself, Francesca was promised in a vision that she would have the help and protection of heaven in all her undertakings.

Upon their return to Rome she found that Don Antonio had died. After much prayer, she placed herself under the guidance of Don Giovanni Mattiotti. He was a very good man, but in spite of all that he knew of Francesca Ponziani, he was inclined to discourage her, in fact, to snub her unmercifully. This was another grace which she did not fail to utilize to the full, and which, in the way she reacted to it, perhaps more than any other single thing in her life was a proof of her real sanctity. Since she had been encouraged by a vision to carry out her hope of having the Oblates live together as a congregation without vows, Francesca, with the half-hearted aid of Don Giovanni, acquired the Tor degli Specchi—so named because of a tower which was formerly on the same spot. In the pontifical bull by which they were canonically established on March 25, 1433, the congregation is designated the Oblates of Tor degli Specchi. While Francesca, the foundress, remained at home with her husband, Agnese de Lellis was installed as the superior.

During these years, Vannozza died in her arms, and following her death spiritual favors seemed to rain on Frances and her companions. From then on, her visions became so frequent that she seemed almost to live in heaven while her gift of prophecy was intensified. Like Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena, however, she was charged by Divine Providence with instructions for averting the new schism which threatened the Catholic world. The clergy of Rome regarded these as the dreams of a neurotic, but when Don Giovanni conveyed to them the instructions given by the Blessed Mother in a vision. Then Don Giovanni, directed by Frances, took the matter up with the Holy Father, who immediately sent word to Rome that these instructions were to be carried out. The letter. Because this was done, the schism was healed for ever.

Francesca's married life had lasted for forty years when Vannozza died; and she felt that her task in the world was accomplished. That she was free now, after all these years, to retire to a convent. She appeared at Tor de Specchi in penitent's garb and asked to be admitted as a servant. It is a particularly striking fact that, although she actually joined the Oblates, she, who had lived in daily communion with God and Our Lady, with His angels and saints, insisted on making a general confession of the sins of her whole life to the assistant of a group of Oblates—she really and truly believed herself to be unworthy of women. The others, overjoyed at having their former superior with them at last, and armed with the orders of Don Giovanni, compelled her to assume the office of superior, in which capacity she acted for a short time only. Sorrow, work, and penances had taken their toll, and Frances was failing. Having been warned in advance that her end was approaching, she wrote to a friend in Siena that she had made her promise to summon to her deathbed, that he should better make haste if he wished to see her alive. She did not live long. A moment, however, when Mabilia sent for her to come to the convent when Battista had a sudden and severe attack of illness. At the time she got to his side, he had recovered sufficiently to be in no danger, and it took persuasion to keep her with them for the rest of the day. Toward evening she insisted on starting for Tor de Specchi, for she was beginning to feel very weak and ill. On the way she stopped at Santa Maria Nuova, hoping to have a talk with

Don Giovanni; but he was struck by her extreme and unusual pallor. Becoming alarmed, he bade her go back to the palace, at least for the night. She complied, but with great disappointment, for she knew that this was the end, and she had so wanted to die in her little cell at Tor di Specchi. The next morning she was too ill to leave her bed, and during the next few days was strengthened and comforted by heavenly visions, while making careful preparations for death. She pleaded with all those gathered about her to help her on her way to heaven. On the seventh day of her illness, just as she had foretold, the summons came to find her, as always, ready and willing.

The people of Rome called her a saint as she lay on her bier; the Church declared her a saint in 1608. Both declarations were made centuries ago, to be sure, yet there is a timeless message in the life of Frances of Rome for those who in the midst of crowding duties and social claims are trying to keep very close to God: *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

Sister Maura, O.S.F.

## PRAYERFUL PSALMODY TO GOD

*I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced (Ps. 15, 9).* Whether Priest or Religious, should not this be our pious posture of prayer when we present ourselves daily in spirit before the throne of God? The words may vary, it is true, but the prayerful disposition should be similar. Perhaps we are privileged to recite His Psalms, either in choir or privately, before Him in the Tabernacle: *So in the sanctuary have I come before thee, to see thy power and thy glory (Ps. 62, 3).* Or it may be that we are following the Gospel injunction, praying to God in personal privacy: *But when thou prayest, go into thy room, and closing thy door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father, who sees in secret, will reward thee (Mtt. 6, 6).* Or possibly, for some good reason,

we must fulfill our office in the sight of men. Exercising prudence with regard to time and place, we can pray with the Psalmist: *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the peoples and I will sing thee among the nations* (Ps. 107, 4). But in whatever circumstances the prime point is to persevere in prayer, with our soul watchful and thoughtful upon God: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 121, 4). Not only will this promote the pure purpose of being intent upon God but it will foster the dictate of Saint Francis to *benefit* since they will realize that we are men and women of God: *And thou wilt bring forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Be subject to the Lord and pray to him* (Ps. 36, 6ff).

For those Priests and Religious who have a solemn duty to perform the prayer of the Divine Office, the Psalms are often felt as the *burden of the day*. And, under one aspect, this obligation cannot be denied. In this sense, the Psalter becomes a heavy burden. But in looking toward God, our pure purpose is to be free. Christ suades us to accept His advice: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. . . Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light* (Mtt. 11, 28ff). When Christ calls (among others) this labor of the Divine Office, it should be a reminder for us that the Divine Office is also a *work of God*. At times, work at it we can. But who among us so-obliged will not admit that the grace of God usually bears the greater part of the task? At least we express an attitude of hope for His assistance many times in the Psalms: *My soul waiteth for the Lord: for he is our helper and protector* (Ps. 124, 20); *My God is my helper, and in him will I put my trust* (Ps. 124, 3); *The Lord became my helper* (Ps. 29, 11). As a matter of fact, the Holy Mother Church prescribes that we usually call upon God at the beginning of every hour to help us perform our work: *Attend to my help, O Lord* (Ps. 37, 23). But even those not solemnly bound to this burden, will still feel its weight in their freely-offered prayer. Whether it be the Divine Office or some so called Little Office, whoever ever wills to recite it can find it a task. But admitting our obligation and offering and keeping the Lord ever in our sight, should we not willingly pray for that fervour of spirit experienced by the Psalmist:

*My heart grew hot within me: and in my meditation a fire shall be kindled (Ps. 38, 4)?*

Whether in Psalms or otherwise, prayer remains as the lifting up of the mind and heart to God. Referring specifically as we are to the Psalms, it seems that many find mainly in them intellectual uplift in prayer. For these persons, the affective part of the soul is not so strongly moved as is the mind which contemplates the sublime thoughts contained in the verses. Granting that a type of dryness may be here involved, nevertheless such souls should persevere in their preference. In fact, this mental appreciation of the Psalms as prayers to God is less likely to be the result of a false fervour in devotion. Lower emotions, for example, could hardly interfere in this lifting of the mind to God. On the other hand, neither should these Religious believe that their 'heart is not in it', when fulfilling their Office. For them, the will to devote not only the mind, but their whole soul to God, suffices. And who will dare gainsay that, sooner or later, God will 'in flame their affection'? Perhaps David himself would advise them: *Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord* (Ps. 26, 14).

Lifting the heart as well as the mind to the Lord is a double task. For there are also those who grasp little or nothing of what they say to the Lord. For those who perhaps have had no opportunity to learn the Latin expressed in the Vulgate, any properly-approved Old Testament translation will give them an easy mode of comparison with the Psalms in English. This should be little enough to ask, since we suppose the Lord has given them already a spirit of heartfelt devotion for the Office. Each Psalm that they thus better understand should arouse their devotion immeasurably. They can then declare with the Psalmist: *My heart hath been in awe of thy words. I will rejoice at thy words, as one that hath found great spoil* (Ps. 118, 161f).

But to everyone of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ (Eph. 4, 7). Applying this to our varied abilities in prayer, we should find that we can lift up our hearts and minds to God in manifold methods through the Psalms. Taking the prayer of adoration, the Psalms offer a means for the creature to recognize the Creator, for the human servant to worship the supreme Majesty.

Surely, considering the awesome Majesty of God and our own dependence upon Him, can we not breathe forth to Him the priest's prayer of adoration: *Blessed be the name of his majesty ever: and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty* (Ps. 102, 1). Not only in His Tabernacle dwelling, but anywhere in the firmament of His universe, can we adore our God: *Exalt ye the Lord our God and adore his footstool, for it is holy* (Ps. 98, 5). But the holiness of the altar, where He dwells, welcomes us especially in our office of adoration: *I will come into thy house; I will adore thee towards thy holy temple* (Ps. 5, 8).

The Psalms may also prostrate us in penitent prayer before a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise me (Ps. 102, 19). Real repentance, which signifies a complete change of heart, is expressed implicitly by the determined declaration of the Psalmist: *And I said, Now I have begun: this is the change of the right hand of the most High* (Ps. 76, 11). This conversion transfers and changes our prayer with a prayer of petition, when we contritely beseech God in our daily Psalm-prayer: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy* (Ps. 50, 1). Or in the supplication of the sixth penitential Psalm, where every son of Adam pleads for God to deliver him from his miserable state and to lift him up: *Out of the depths I have cried unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice... If thou, O Lord, wilt not forgive my iniquities: Lord, who shall stand it* (Ps. 29, 1-3)?

Is it not a wonderful privilege to be able to recite these Psalms formally as prayers? Is it not marvelous that the Holy Spirit inspired the author to formulate words wherewith our timid tongues might become eloquent in His praises? In the words of the Psalmist: *My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my works to the king; my tongue is the pen of the scrivener that writeth swiftly. Thy glory is beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in thy sanctuary* (Ps. 44, 2f). No wonder Saint Francis, as a troubadour of God, recommended that his clerical sons should *have breviaries*. He provided that those, who were for some reason impeded from reciting the Office, should have another fulfill it for them. Implicitly, at least, he gave therein a testimony of his deep devotion to the Psalms. The Canticle of the Sun alone, written in a like spirit, subscribed his name in bold letters to every *Benedicite*, to each Psalm of the O

Every prayer, every poem, every song, every narrative of the Psalter must have warmed the heart of that Poor Little Man of Assisi, who loved to sing aloud the praises of his Creator.

From these last few thoughts, at least, we have reason for using the Psalms as prayers of thanksgiving. Grateful for their prayers of adoration, contrition and petition, we should cry aloud with the Psalmist: *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee* (Ps. 102, 2). Finally, searching for a sound spirit of devotion to the Psalms, let us follow the fine direction given in the explanation of the Rule (John Ilg, p. 64) where he quotes Saint Augustine (Confess. IX, cc. 4 & 26): "Oh how fervently I uttered my service to Thee, O my God, when I read the Psalms of David, those breathings of faith, those breathings of piety! How I was set on fire by them; and how I burned to have them recited throughout the universal world, that they might bring the human spirit to thy feet! How I wept over thy hymns and canticles! The words of them streamed into my ears, and with them came the truth into my heart; and piety grew warm within me."

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

### *Reflections on the New Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor*

That a Friar should grow old with the years, Saint Francis might rightly expect. But that a follower of the Gospel-life should grow old in spirit and lose his zest for the things of God, that the Seraph of Assisi would hardly allow. Even when ill in body and near to death he stirred himself to new life: Brothers, let us begin to do good, for up to now we have done almost nothing. Truly *semper novus, semper incipiens*, he expected his children ever to grow closer to Christ in the inner man by prayer and the observance of the Rule and never to tire in the outward radiance of the spirit in the apostolate.

The Order itself, he knew, would grow older with the centuries and

undergo many tribulations and divisions. Yet even as its future was revealed to him, Francis was assured of an inner vitality that would serve his flock in existence and renew its inward vigor to keep it *novus*. If the Friars shared his spirit and followed his example, they would manifest a like newness in every age and clime.

May we not see an example of this in the new General Constitution of the Order of Friars Minor, revised over the past five years and brought into effect this past April? For they are, in words of Pope Pius XII, not content to adapt the Order to the needs of the day, not indeed by changing it but by renewing the spirit and the mind of Saint Francis through a deeper religious life and a more modern apostolate.

#### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As the primitive Rule and the statutes of the annual chapters (1219) had grown into the *Regula non-bullata* (the so-called Rule of 1223), so the constitutions or decisions of later chapters were somewhat modified according to Salimbene, in 1239. The first set of General Constitutions, however, in the form with which we are familiar, is the work of Saint Bonaventure and the Chapter of Narbonne in 1260; these became the model and foundation of almost all later compilations.

The Order through seven centuries, with its various divisions and families, has shown a remarkable vitality in revising its particular constitutions to meet new needs and new situations, without at the same time destroying or abandoning the wisdom of the past. Thus the new Constitutions of Ultramontane Observants at Barcelona in 1451 are famous for introducing specific times for mental prayer; those of Toledo, 1526, for accommodating the Order to the decrees of the Council of Trent. Revision has taken place whenever the laws have not corresponded, in whole or partially, to the necessities of the inner life of the brotherhood and its outward apostolate.

Our modern Constitutions go back to 1897, when Pope Leo XIII effected greater unity in the families of the Observance. Subjected to some revision under Pope Saint Pius X by reason of the modifications he introduced into the central government of the Order, they were brought into agreement with the new Code of Canon Law, approved by the General Chapter of 1921, and published the following year.

But even this compilation was not altogether satisfactory; it was not complete or adequate to the needs of either the religious life or the forms of the apostolate. What the late Father Valentine Schaaf, O.F.M., undertook, his successor, Father (now Bishop) Pacific Perantoni, O.F.M.,

was able to begin, while the present Minister General, Father Augustin Spieski, has brought the task to a happy conclusion.

With the permission of the Holy See, a special commission within the Order began in 1947 the first draft of new legislation. This was transmitted to the Provinces in 1950 for suggestions and revisions. A second plan incorporating the results was presented to the Chapter of 1951, since the General Chapter is the highest legislative organ of the Order. Through committees and general sessions the Chapter reviewed the work accomplished and then approved with certain modifications. Once more the text was studied by the General Definitorium and a new commission of experts, and at last sent to the Holy See at the end of April 1952.

Deeply interested, the Sacred Congregation of Religious soon constituted a special commission of its consultors who again subjected the text to critical examination and inserted some very important changes before the final approval. Among these changes may be noted the following: an imposed passage of clerics to the lay-state (art. 106-107); the erection of custodies or commissariats directly dependent on the Minister General (337); the length of time between both general and provincial Chapters (386, Par. 1; 458, Par. 1); the duration of the offices of Minister General and procurator general (352, Par. 1), and those of the Minister provincial and custos (353, Par. 1); the introduction of general and provincial Congregations (410-12; 482-85) and of delegates to the provincial chapters or congregations (459, Par. 1, n. 4; 460, Par. 1).

According to the express desire of the Order the date of approval was fixed for July 14, the feast of Saint Bonaventure, 1953, to honor the author of the first of such documents. In their promulgation to the Order on October 4, the Minister General declared them in effect from the Feast of the Solemn Commemoration of Saint Francis, April 16, 1954.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE NEW LAWS

The new text presents a remarkable document drawn from many sources: Canon Law and the present-day norms of the Holy See; the Rule and its many papal declarations, the traditions of the Order as embodied in the Constitutions and other documents of the past. In a few instances, as Father Capobianco points out, there may not be complete uniformity of style in the articles, but such a defect is limited to those members of preceding legislation which, because of their ascetical content, were carried over bodily (or almost so) into the new code. We would venture, the Minister General remarks, to call the text a completely perfect document, since all things human are by their very nature imper-

fect. Nonetheless, by reason of the careful and mature study that their formulation and approval, as also of the many hands that at perfecting them—the Order as a whole, the General Chapter, the mittees, the learned consultors of the Sacred Congregation—the laws are far more perfect than any previous codification in the history and thus reveal a genuine step forward. Indeed, for this alone they merit high respect and reverence.

But to appreciate, reverence and observe to the full the and prescriptions of the new legislation, the General continues, one must have the right approach. The letter of the law without the spirit and only the spirit gives life. To acquire this, it should suffice to study the documents bearing on the promulgation.

First, in the Apostolic Brief giving specific approbation to the new text, Pope Pius XII declares that the Friars have contributed to the Church when they have kept the Rule more exactly, and as the Constitutions of the Order, now and in the past, have provided the most salutary aids to that observance. Therefore, after tracing the history of the Constitutions from the thirteenth century, His Holiness declares that the new text is intended to foster a deeper religious life day and to promote a more useful apostolate. He therefore specifically approves and confirms the General Constitutions and commands their observance by each and every member of the Order. By such papal approbation, Father Capobianco notes, the new Constitutions become more together and singly, particular pontifical laws; by it their excellence is made more evident, while they receive greater efficacy and stability.

Again, in a special decree making known the papal approbation of the Sacred Congregation of Religious stresses the double purpose of the new legislation: a more fruitful religious life and apostolate in keeping with new conditions in the world and new legislation on the part of the Church. One would not be rash in concluding that the text reflects the most up-to-date directives for religious life and reflects most fully the mind of the Congregation and of the Church.

Lastly, in an Encyclical Letter marked by a deep tone of true Franciscanism, His Paternity the Minister General promulgates the new Rule to all Friars subject to him and in fatherly fashion expresses his confidence in their importance and above all as to the spirit which must guide them to their acceptance and observance. "The Constitutions," he points out, "offer better ways and means to a more perfect observance of the Rule: for they show the pattern of a truly Franciscan life and lead by the hand, as it were, to the attainment of Seraphic perfection which

# the CORD

VOL. IV No. 10, OCTOBER, 1954

## CONTENTS

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	290
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O. F. M.</i>	
THE SERAPHIC ARTIST.....	295
<i>Fr. Alcuin Weiss, O. F. M., Conv.</i>	
MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION.....	299
<i>Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, O. F. M.</i>	
TWO LITTLE SAINTS.....	303
<i>Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O. F. M.</i>	
A SERMON ON SAINT FRANCIS.....	306
<i>Saint Lawrence of Brindisi</i>	
RUSSIAN SPIRITUALITY.....	310
<i>Frs. Lyle Peyovich and Gregory Francis Smutko, O. F. M., Cap.</i>	
ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION.....	315
<i>Fr. Ignatius Brady, O. F. M.</i>	



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## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

By our vocation to the religious life we were called out of the world to lead a more perfect spiritual life. The election of Israel and its segregation in Palestine from the nations which surround it might serve as a type of ourselves. Palestine was guarded on the North by mountain ranges, on the East and South by desert, and on the West by the Mediterranean Sea. And the special charge was given to the Israelites as we read in Leviticus: *You shall be holy because I, the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine* (20, 26).

We too have been brought by God into a land flowing with milk and honey, the profusion of his heavenly graces. He has put a barrier around us to keep the world out of our lives. It is like the enclosed garden of the Canticle of Canticles, fragrant with the incense-bearing tree, where the King alone should walk with whom he has chosen for himself. *I have separated you from the peoples that you should be mine.*

Here along with the more excellent call, he provided us with the daily abundance of grace and unceasing guidance in the way. We are to walk together with the full light of obedience and the constant correctives and encouragements of superiors and holy angels, and he has given us the consciousness of belonging to him alone. To use a different image, we might quote the words of Isaiah where he describes God's solicitude in preparing his own vineyard:

*My friend had a vineyard*

*On a fertile hill;*

*And he digged it, and cleared it of stones,*

*And planted it with choicest vines;*

*And built a tower in the midst thereof,*

*And likewise hewed out a winepress therein;*

*And he expected that it should yield grapes* (5, 1-2).

And the prophet adds the distressing words, *But it yielded sour grapes*.

When we apply the image, the *sour grapes* would be carelessness and lukewarmness in our spiritual life. It might be profitable to take stock of ourselves. When one becomes lukewarm the will becomes

languid, the exercises of piety are neglected or are performed in a mechanical and fruitless way, meditation becomes a period for day-dreaming, the examination of conscience is not searching and no vigilance is aroused against our faults, prayer is superficial—a mere display of external courtesy with no heart in it, no real pouring forth of love, praise and thanksgiving—spiritual reading is skipped or is pursued as a matter of curiosity and not as a sincere seeking after enlightenment and encouragement.

Yet, all these things are to be a source of spiritual strength; without them one cannot have an exuberant life. In consequence, one becomes more languid and lukewarm because the means that will prevent or cure it are not used. Hence, there is less spirit of retirement, less interior recollection, and greater indulgence is given to the body. Thus the bulwarks that should protect our spiritual life are cast down and we let ourselves open to attack: worldliness, distraction, sensuality—all of them dangerous to the soul. When one is lukewarm one no longer shows child-like candor toward the confessor, there is no humility in receiving his advice, and obedience to his guidance is not what it used to be.

It is easy to imagine the spiritual barrenness. *And he expected that it should yield grapes*, says Isaiah, *but it yielded sour grapes*. Such a one lives under a rule without observing the spirit of the rule. Meditation, Mass, Holy Communion, prayer, all are routine. And what should give an abundance of life is slowly bringing death. While the hearts of others are being inflamed, he is cold—deliberately cold. Others are amassing merits and growing in grace, he is neglecting meriting chastisements and obstructs the flow of grace; others are truly rejoicing in God, he cannot rejoice at all except in a hollow piety; others long for the coming of Christ, he dreads the thought; others have confidence of going to a reward, he is fearful and apprehensive. Still, there is no change while the days and years pass on relentlessly. What a degeneration! The prophet Jeremiah might truly lament, *the noble sons of Sion, and they that were clothed with the best gold: how are they esteemed as earthen vessels* (Lam. 4, 2).

With such a spirit there will be an accumulation of sins. Nature left to itself will produce a numerous progeny. List them: impatience, uncharitableness, selfishness, criticism, back-biting, vanity, disobedience.



dience, complaining, plus lack of spirit of prayer and growth in holiness. This is all very disappointing:

*And he expected that it should yield grapes,*

*But it yielded sour grapes.—*

*What is the meaning that my beloved hath wrought much wailing in my house (Jer. 11, 15)?*

Of course, reflections such as these do not unsettle a lukewarm soul. He has his arguments to defend himself—at least if there is no evident serious sin. “Oh, they are all little things. I know I am in sin when I see it. I’ll leave the future take care of itself.” When he is disturbed, when the Good Shepherd prods him with his goad (perhaps during a reading, or by an admonition, or the good example of others), he laughs at the grace and calls it a scruple. So he continues through the years. He will not turn at God’s reproof, for he is satisfied with himself. But his criterion is unsound. *Measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves* (2 Cor. 10, 12). But God uses other standards. He inspects us round and round and his diagnosis might be terrible.

*From the sole of the foot unto the head,*

*There shall be no soundness in it;*

*Bruises and weals,*

*And fresh wounds,*

*That have not been pressed nor bound up,*

*Nor softened with oil (Isa. 1, 6).—*

*How long will fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves, and the unwise hate knowledge? . . . I called and you refused to hear; I also will laugh in your destruction (Prov. 1, 23-26).*

Each will be judged in his turn. Each will be challenged to his vocation, on the perfection he should have pursued. Will he make a defense of the lukewarm religious stand: “Why, those were little things; those were scruples; I used to laugh at them”? Can he make a retort, *I also will laugh in your destruction*? It will take him a long sentence to atone to wounded Love. There in exile he will rue over the lost years of grace and the levity with which he regarded many things. *What fruit had you then from those things of which you are now ashamed (Rom. 6, 21)?* God, in his goodness, can

as his own, but he lived for himself; He gave grace upon grace, but they were spurned; He gave the hundredfold which he had promised, but the gift was not appreciated; He gave him many brethren whom he should have edified, but he scandalized them; He gave him the many provisions of rule and statutes to urge him onward and upward, but he kicked against the goad.

When the end comes we shall see it. Self-deception is impossible when eternity begins to search you out; just values are again restored. The consciousness of tepidity will be distressing:

*Ingemisco tamquam reus,*

*Culpa rubet vultus meus,*

*Supplici parce, Deus.*

But suppose lukewarmness had led to mortal sin, and that he had become careless even of that and had been taken away in that condition. In the first supposition of venial sin he was saved indeed, but, “as it were through fire.” In the second supposition there is no rescue; the gate of heaven will be closed in his face, *Nescio vos—do not know you not!* What an astonishment in the abyss to see him go down into the depths!

*Sheol beneath is astir for thee,*

*At the prospect of thy coming;*

*It arouses the shades for thee,*

*All the chiefs of the earth;*

*Makes to rise up from their thrones*

*All the kings of the nations;*

*They shall all answer*

*And say unto thee:*

*‘Thou too hast been stricken like us,*

*Thou art become like unto us!*

*Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol,...*

*The music of thy harps;*

*Beneath thee the worm is thy bed,*

*The maggot thy covering.*

*How art thou fallen from heaven,*

*O radiant one, son of the dawn!’ (Isa. 14, 9-12: Kissane)*

That one who was a favorite of Christ should be among the

damned! In life, he was graced with that lovely title; he was taken out of the world and placed in the garden of God which he tended; he was held in esteem by the Church as leading a holy life; even the wicked revered him. But now, all has been changed into his eternal dishonor. *They . . . have borne their shame with them that descend into the pit* (Ezech. 32, 25).

Therefore, if we must admit that we are lukewarm, we must change immediately. Lukewarmness is ingratitude for the graces and mercies of God. God was angered at the Israelites because they were ungrateful for his many favors, and he withdrew his love from them. *The Lord saw, and was moved to wrath; because his own sons and daughters provoked him. And he said: 'I will wipe my face from them'* (Deut. 32, 19-20). We must resume all our former practices of piety and be diligent in observance as in the past, with fervor, notwithstanding the repugnance or the lack of satisfaction which we might experience. Then we shall no longer be lukewarm; if we persevere, we shall not only regain the lost ground, but we shall acquire a new spiritual agility which we did not possess even in the springtime of our religious life, *For God has not destined us to wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Pet. 1, 5, 9).

Heaven must be a conquest. Even the innocent wage war for it—a war unto blood. If the saints labor and sweat for it, how can we get it who rarely even yearn for it? Listen to the admonition of the Apostle Peter: *Therefore, brethren, strive even more by good works to make manifest your calling and election sure. For if you do this, you will not come into sin at any time. Indeed, in this way will be amply proved to you the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and of his Jesus Christ* (2 Pet. 1, 10-11).

Fr. Silvano Matulich,

## THE SERAPHIC ARTIST

"Always was he occupied with Jesus. Jesus he carried in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in all his members" (Thom. Cel. 1, N. 115). Thus the glorious tribute paid to Saint Francis of Assisi by one of his early biographers. In this praise is embodied the masterpiece which "little brother Francis" sought to create from the very first moment of his conversion from the world. Verily, to fashion such a work of art, Francis must have employed a priceless tool. What was it? Love! Saint Francis had discovered what is *hidden from the wise and prudent and is revealed to little ones*, for he found the only way to the perfect imitation of the God-Man—love without limit, the love of the Seraphim. Only seraphic love could produce the replica of Christ which Saint Francis of Assisi was. Only a love that was completely devoid of self, desiring only the interests of the Beloved, could merit the external recognition of oneness which Christ gave Francis in the Sacred Stigmata. Hence the Poverello could justly repeat the stirring words of St. Paul, *It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.* (Gal. 2:20).

But the impression of the Stigmata, as it were, was the consummation of the love of Francis. It was the result of years of constant endeavor to be more like the Jesus Who captivated his heart. His love, indeed, was not seraphic at the onset of his flight to sanctity; he was a beginner in the science of sanctity, a novice. Soon after his initial conversion, his new manner of acting brought abuse upon him from his former acquaintances which forced him to flee and go so far as to hide in a cave. Celano says of him on this occasion. "He was as yet only a novice among the champions of Christ" (Thom. Cel. 1, N. 115). This example proves clearly to us that Francis was not yet seized with the love that was to forever characterize him. His early growth in love cost him dearly, as is indicated by this episode and others, of which perhaps the one most repulsive to his fine nature, yet replete with blessings, was his encounter with the leper. It is easy to imagine the disgust that overtook him, who was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, accustomed to only the best in living, when he realized that he was being inspired by God to embrace a leper—the leper who sig-

nified the nadir of filth and vileness in the mind of those in the thirteenth century. But Francis loved! He loved Jesus and triumphed. He kissed the leper in all tenderness, the result of which was an increase in love, which was another link in the chain that was to terminate in the seraphic degree.

In considering Francis of Assisi and his manner of loving, we well to recall that, born into the race that he was, his very nature was fiery and vehement in the exercise of its actions. Saint Francis was born a lover. We know of his attractive personality, his love to love and to be loved from his early youth. His early life was upon being the leader of the crowd, arranging parties and feasts, desiring to show that he knew "how" to live, and in return expecting that all should acquiesce to his leadership. But God had something to say. He wanted Francis; He "needed" Francis, and when the "Hound of Heaven" pursues us, the chase is the most adventuresome we shall ever know. Thus, in a series of graces, as his dreams and sicknesses, Saint Francis was led to see the fleeting character of this life and the permanence of eternal joy. It is an axiom that fire does not destroy, but perfects nature." This was well verified in the case of the Poverello. Almighty God was not to make his choice of Francis but as *gold is tried in the furnace*, the love which was so much in the heart of Francesco Bernardone was to be gradually and systematically fashioned into a love which was no longer of earth, but angelic in likeness. The refinement of his love was not to be on the part of Francis alone, however, for in addition to his cooperation with God's graces, Francis was not to remain passive, merely awaiting the opportunity of increasing in love, but he was to act in a positive manner, beseeching through fervent prayer, the opportunity of becoming more like his Divine Model in every way.

Since the lover tends to union with the Beloved, Saint Francis gradually became obsessed with the vehement desire to be united to Jesus in all things. Francis' love demanded this; and he found his most powerful recourse in the attainment of his likeness to Christ in prayer. Had not Jesus assured him in Sacred Scripture: *Ask, and ye shall receive; things whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive* (Matt. 21:22)? Concerning his prayer, Thomas of Celano states that in constant meditation he reflected on his words, and with deep

as he pondered on his works" (Thom. Cel. 1, N. 84). Consequently, his prayer became his constant joy, his greatest solace, his strength in trial, his sweetest pastime. But most of all, his prayer rewarded him with love—and with Christ.

As he persevered in constant meditation and prayer, the change from a worldling to a saint was gradually effected in Francis. Urged on by his newly-found desire to become one with his Master, Saint Francis became absorbed in the focal points of the life of Jesus. The "little poor man" began to alter his manner of living as a rich and proud merchant's son to becoming a poor and humble follower of Christ. He saw these two virtues of poverty and humility lovingly portrayed in the birth of Jesus. Thus, Francis grew to love the mystery of the Nativity dearly. The lesson taught by the Infant Jesus at his birth soon became an integral part of the Poverello's spirituality. His love for the poverty of Christ enveloped his whole being as a flower bud encompasses a honey-bee seeking the sweetness that lies therein. Saint Francis' exterior demeanor announced one of the poorest of the poor, in imitation of his Lord, Whose birthplace was an animal's shelter and Whose crib was a manger of straw. The simplicity of the Child-King, wherein He chose to show us that the one who is most simple is most like God, enraptured Francis, and became forever a dominant note in himself and in his friars in turn. Thomas of Celano testifies to this love of Francis for the Infant Christ and also tells us of another major focal point in the life of Christ which most impressed Saint Francis, when he writes: "The humility of the birth of Jesus and the love of His Passion occupied the soul of the Saint in such a measure that he could scarcely think of aught else" (Thom. of Cel. 1, N. 84).

In the Sacred Passion of Christ, the Saint envisioned the life of penance and mortification which Jesus was offering him in place of his former life of ease and frivolity. Henceforward, he was to become crucified. But to be a crucified man, much suffering would have to be borne by him and endless mortification was to refine his nature. Saint Francis, moreover, did not shirk the inspiration of grace, but with a resolute spirit, set about the most difficult task in the world—crucifying oneself so that only Jesus can become ruler of one's soul. Thus he began to pass long periods in fasting, and what

little food he did eat, he would sometimes render insipid by every device he could. His apparel became coarse and poor; he came content to call no refuge his own, for Jesus had said of himself: *The son of man hath nowhere to lay his head* (Matt. 8:20).

As the months and years went on, the marked resemblance between the Beloved and the lover could be felt by any who came in contact with Saint Francis. His growth in love was steady and unvarying, slow at first, but it was truly progress. Just as Our Lord told us that "by your patience you will win your souls" (Luke 21:19), so did Francis patiently and entirely lean upon Christ to lead him along the narrow path to perfection, always aware of his own weakness, but trusting in Him Who is all strength, being convinced of the words of St. Paul, *I can do all things in him who strengthens me* (Phil. 4:13). Celano well formulates this "idée fixe" of Saint Francis when he says, "His supreme endeavor, his most ardent wish, his most principle was to observe the holy gospel in all and in every thing, and to follow perfectly, with all zeal, with the fullness of his spirit, with all the love of his heart, the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to imitate his example" (Thom. Cel. 1, N. 1).

For a space of nineteen years, from the early steps in his conversion, the encounter with the leper, his statement of a profound insight into the life and teaching of Jesus, until two years before his death, Saint Francis' life continued in the pursuit of this "idée fixe"; each year having a deadly toll upon his poor body, but rendering his soul immeasurably richer with a growth in love. His love had become stronger with each act of penance, with each step towards heaven, until finally, physically enervated, his spirit was able to fly to his Beloved.

But he could not leave Sister Earth yet. His love was too great, too seraphic. He had his greatest desire yet to fulfill. On the morning of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 1224, Saint Francis employed once again his unfailing device for attaining his desire: he prayed his most powerful prayer. It was to result in the fulfillment of his greatest longing. "O my Lord Jesus Christ, I pray Thee to grant me two graces before I die; the first, that in my lifetime I may feel in my soul and in my body, so far as is possible, all the pain and grief which Thou, O Sweet Lord, didst feel in Thy most bitter

passion; the second, that I may feel in my heart, as far as possible, that excessive love by which Thou, the Son of God, wert impelled willingly to sustain so great sufferings for sinners" (*Fioretti*, 3a Conterazione delle Sante Istimate). We know Jesus' answer.

From that day forward the now Seraphic Francis, filled with a loving and joyous love, bore in his body the bloody wounds of Christ, and felt along with them the most agonizing pains and sufferings of Jesus; he was the living image of his Master. Now, as completely as possible, "always was he occupied with Jesus. Jesus was carried in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in all his members." He had used his tool well, he had loved seraphically; his Masterpiece was complete. For, there was no longer a Francis of Assisi; there remained only the "Christ of Umbria".

Friar Alcuin Weiss O.F.M.Conv.

## MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION

### Part Two: Co-redemptrix

The Blessed Mother's title of Mediatrix of all graces, as the Franciscan school sees it, follows not only from the fact of her absolute predestination, but also from her office as co-redemptrix. This theme our *Florilegium* of Franciscan texts will unfold its treasures—the exquisite roses cascading from Juan Diego's cloak—before our Lady, Co-redemptrix of the human race.

Some theologians do not care for the title "co-redemptrix." They feel that it attributes too much to Our Lady. In this matter the Franciscans adopt the spirit of Saint Bonaventure when he says: "Diligent care shall be taken that the honor of Mary in no way be diminished; nay—it should be kept intact even if it means we must give our life." The term itself has found favor with Franciscan theologians since the seventeenth century; Luke Wadding, for example, popularized the term in his book, *The Active Redemption of the*

*Mother of God*, and addressed Mary as both redemptrix and trix.

At any rate, it would seem that the controversy over the of the title has been settled—implicitly at least—by the Pop have called Mary “Reparatrix” and are quite plain in asser does Benedict XV, that “it can be truly said that with Ch redeemed the human race. Our Lady’s co-redeeming functi place first in her cooperation in the Incarnation and, secondly intimate association with the entire work of Christ the Sav

#### A. In the Incarnation

Our theologians say first that Mary merited, to a certain (de congruo) the acceleration of the coming of Christ; the her virtue moved Almighty God to send his Son sooner into that so longed for a Redeemer. This was an opinion that championed.

And pondering these things in their hearts, Franciscan would have us realize that Mary was fully conscious of all the consent to the Incarnation would involve. Saint Bernard example, said that her *Fiat* meant that she consented to the fixation of her Son and to His death as the price of superab satisfaction for all sinners and as the means of reparation for elect. Without thought of herself, Our Lady consented, he con not only to the Incarnation but also to her role as co-suffer thereby the reparation and restoration of the entire world m effected and that God might thus be praised and glorified.

Then, with the eagerness of one putting in the last piec jigsaw puzzle, Bernardin concludes: “Through this conse sought the salvation of men and procured it; and by this cons dedicated herself in an altogether special way to the welfa salvation of all men, so that from then on she carried all men heart as a mother does her children.”

Conrad of Saxony, the true author of the *Mirror of the B Virgin Mary*, marvelled at the fullness of grace that the Divin ternity implies: “If she encompassed God in her bosom, how more in her heart? And if the immense capacity of her heart

led with grace, we must necessarily conclude that the grace which led such a capacity was itself immense.”

By the very fact that Mary conceived and brought forth Truth, Saint Bonaventure tells us, “she merited reconciliation for the entire human race.” And in the same context he carries on the traditional comparison of Eve and Mary, a comparison favored by Franciscan writers and frequently met with in the encyclicals of the popes: “That woman, namely Eve, expelled us from paradise and sold our patrimony; but (Mary) led us back and bought it back for us. As a strong and holy woman she paid the price.”

#### B. In the Work of Salvation

It was indeed a great price, but the heart of Our Queen embraced all mankind. Mary offered, in her divinely ordained fashion, the sufficient price for the human race and likewise directly and positively acquired the graces themselves of the entire supernatural economy, and this by reason of her most intimate union with Christ the Redeemer. Saint Bonaventure adds that in the temple “the oblation took as it were its beginnings and foundation in the oblation of the Virgin. . . The glorious Virgin brought much, she who brought to the temple such a Victim which she offered for all.”

In the style of a Saint Luke telling the story of the first Christmas, Ubertino de Casale expressly states that, at the Presentation, “through the hands of the most holy Virgin as from the common mother of the Saviour and of those to be saved, in a common place, that is in the temple of God, to a common person, namely to the most holy Simeon, as to an authorized and rightful procurator for the world, the gift of Jesus Christ, God and Man, was made to the human race, and the Church, the Spouse of God, was introduced into the possession of the gift.”

The offering was later made in full, as Saint Bonaventure writes, when she gave her Son on the Cross. “No one,” says Ossuna, “is ignorant of the fact that Mary, exercising a priestly function and standing beside the altar of the cross, offered a living victim to God for us.” Of course, this sacerdotal character of Mary is to be taken in a spiritual sense rather than in a strict and literal interpretation.

Saint Lawrence of Brindisi explains: "The spirit of Mary, spiritual priest, as the cross was the altar and Christ the sacrifice, and although the spirit of Christ was the principal priest, the spirit of Mary was one with the spirit of Christ; in fact, it was one with Him, one soul as it were in two bodies. Therefore the spirit of Mary together with the spirit of Christ exercised a sacerdotal function at the altar of the cross, and offered to the eternal God the offering of Christ for the salvation of the world."

While proving Mary's right to the title of secondary head of the Mystical Body, Carolus del Moral gives the following beautiful explanation of her mediation: "It is the most special influence of the head upon the predestined, as members of the body of the Church, to merit to offer as one's own the price of their redemption, and such an offering should obtain as a reward their liberty and redemption; but the Blessed Virgin has such an influence on their redemption by her merits, by means of which she, together with her Son, offered the price of the redemption of the predestined, namely her Son whom she offered as her own; because by the maternal right which she possessed Him she handed Him over to the Father for the world, wishing that He should die for men; and thus the intercession of the Mother of God pleased God."

Franciscan writers have meditated on Mary's part in the passion and have come away filled with wonder. Saint Bonaventure says: "because she turned the sorrows and the blows and the oppression of her Son upon herself, she felt them in her own person, feeling which was also in Christ Jesus. She stood beside that Martyr and martyr in spirit, wounded together with Him who was pierced by lance. Saint Bernardin does not hesitate to maintain that "the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was greater than all the creatures of the world could bear, since if that sorrow were divided up and distributed among all living creatures of the world they would fall away. And considering all these things, Leonardo Bello sums up the Franciscan belief: "By all this (sorrow and suffering) the Blessed Virgin acquired after the manner of merit all grace and each single grace for the entire Mystical Body, and by way of satisfaction effected the cooperation in the bringing about of the Redemption."

### C. Conclusion

This second part of our *Florilegium* has high-lighted Franciscan theological thought on Mary Co-redemptrix of the world. But we have besides, our singers of our Lady. Thus the *Stabat Mater* is a typical Franciscan song. What the friars felt, Jacopone da Todi put into words. He said what all the friars had been trying to say:

Quis non posset contristari,  
Christi Matrem contemplari  
Dolentem cum Filio?  
Juxta crucem tecum stare,  
Et me tibi sociare  
In planctu desidero. Amen.

Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, O.F.M.

## TWO LITTLE SAINTS

Far from being the result of chance, and certainly not merely a coincidence, the feast days of two Saints fall yearly side by side in the calendar of the Church. October 3rd and 4th of each year bring back reminders of Saint Therese and Saint Francis. Even if we should forget them for any length of time throughout the year (which is hardly possible), yet Holy Mother Church juxtaposes them very strikingly to refresh our memories. These facts of course do not state anything new; nor are we attempting to achieve a startling statement. Rather, by pointing to the nearness of their Feast days, we would indicate a starting-point that leads to a search for further resemblances.

## TWO TROUBADORS

In her *Story of a Soul*, the Little Flower speaks strongly of her New Canticle. Her purpose was a simple, life-long song of Love to her Beloved. But, besides the Imitation, it revolved solely around the evangelical life of Him Whose Gospels she carried close to her heart.

The way she sang it was by living it. As she tells us, she simply *in the sweet odor of His ointments*. Far from being merely a phrase, she explains, this means opening the pages of the Gospel (especially in time of doubt) so as not to wander along the way. Small wonder, then, that her strides were *like a giant along the way* of perfection. But, before her, Saint Francis too had recognized the straightforward sureness of copying the Christ of the Gospels. Whenever he happened to be, he found very real reminders to sing his graphic love-song to God. The Canticle of the New Testament, whose heart is the Gospel, was his constant companion as he walked the straight and narrow way that leads to Life.

### THEIR LITTLENES

When we emphasize that the whole law of God is contained in the love of God and neighbor, we reach the heart of the matter of sanctity. For verification, we can point to the words of Christ Who declared that on these two Commandments depends the whole of the Law and the Prophets. And we can rightly remind ourselves of the constant sermon of the beloved disciple to his flock at Ephesus, selling them to love one another. But would it not also be well to notice how both the Master and the disciple introduced their courses? In giving His final commandment of love before He died, Christ began: *Little children. . . A new commandment I give you: that you love one another, as I have loved you* (Jn. 14). And the Bishop of Ephesus, the beloved John who counselled the world, began his talk with *Filioli*, 'Little Children.' So the 'how' of learning to love God and neighbor would seem to be after the manner of little children. Certainly, by so acting, people would avoid the error of the Apostles in making comparisons to see who is greater and holier.

Both Saint Therese and Saint Francis had this child-like approach to the law of Love. Small enough to pass through the eye of the needle, their individual littleness made each great in the Eyes of God. And if, like to the Apostles arguing over the greater, we were to point out examples for us, would He not show us a Therese or a Francis? After all, *of such is the kingdom of Heaven*. Not only did she will to become little herself; the Little Flower also wished

to make her example a sure little way for others. And Francis, in doing away with all cumbersome complications, introduced his simple Rule for the little "Lesser Brothers." Rightly then, can the stories of his life and those around him be called "Little Flowers." For, far from belittling himself, his littleness made him realize that he was only so much as he appeared in the Eyes of God and no more. That both of these Saints had hit upon true child-like littleness is evident from the great esteem they enjoy today.

### THEIR SIMPLICITY

Oftentimes the solutions offered to difficulties seem more complicated than the original problems. And this thought is no stranger to the spiritual life. There are involved methods for meditation, planned processes of prayer, and devious diversions from the temptations that beset us. However, this is not stated without fear of contradiction. For a certain amount of direction, explanation and advice can be very beneficial in all three cases. Yet, often one can hardly help but wonder if he is wandering further and further into a maze of labyrinthine windings, when he applies so many "directives" to the development of his spiritual life. Handbooks on the progress of spirituality, for example, often offer stereotyped patterns in going step by step from virtue to virtue. And, to cap it all, they even try to fit the Saints (who would be so bewildered as not to recognize themselves) into the molds which the authors have so cleverly constructed.

But, the Little Flower, for one, would have none of this. Unless we are mistaken, she stated once that she had to put aside those complicated meditation books because, far from helping her, they even made her head ache. And, valuable though discursive mental prayer can be, it is hard to picture Saint Francis going from point to point as he wandered about God's universe singing his heart out for the love of God. The point is: have we become so methodical, and even so logical, that we refuse to let the prayer of simplicity take us straight to the Heart of God? Must we become so spiritually straight-laced that simplicity (a "first attribute" of God) comes last on our agenda, and perhaps never arrived at until the end of our lives? Do we clutter up our minds with book-shelves filled with holy

advice while the book of the Cross gathers dust on the desk of the heart? Have our personal systems of spirituality become like obstructions, obstructing our view and blocking off the simple panorama of direct glance upon the Beauty of God? If so, let us return to the simplicity of Therese and Francis.

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## A SERMON ON SAINT FRANCIS

by  
Saint Lawrence of Brindisi

*I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones, etc. (Mt. 11: 25).*

Little children are always pleasing to God because God is delighted by humility, innocence, and purity of spirit. Saint Francis is pleasing and acceptable to God because he was most humble and pure of spirit. God raised him up because He Who humbles the proud raises up the humble above all measure. *I the Lord have brought the high tree, and exalted the low tree;* (Ez. 17: 24); *for he who humbles himself shall be exalted* (Lk. 14: 11). Because Saint Francis was humble on earth among men, he is now high in heaven among the angels. God raised him up to Paradise because he humbled himself on earth. Francis is great with God because he was little with men. *Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones* (Mt. 11: 25); *but in malice be children* (I Cor. 14: 20); and *crave, as newborn babes, pure spiritual milk* (I Pet. 2: 2). This little Francis is given by Solomon to the true mother: *but that which is above is free, which is our mother* (Gal. 4: 26).

It seems to me that today something happened similar to the story of the two women appearing before Solomon and arguing over the child, each one saying that the infant was hers. But when Solomon asked for the true mother he gave the child to her, and not to the other who had suffocated her child while she was asleep. Saint Paul says that in every man there are two men: the one, exterior, carnal, and corruptible; the other, interior, spiritual, immortal and incorruptible. For he says:

*Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day* (II Cor. 4: 16). The exterior man is this earthly, carnal, and animal body; but the interior man is the heavenly, spiritual, angelic, and divine soul. The mother of this exterior man is earthly nature, but the mother of the interior man is heavenly grace. Therefore, Baptism is called the sacrament of regeneration, as Christ said: *unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit* (Jn. 3: 5).

Today earthly nature, the mother of the exterior man, killed her son in Francis, who is dead according to the flesh, but only in the body and in the eyes of this world; in the spirit, however, by which he is the child of the heavenly Jerusalem, he never dies, but lives immortally with God forever. Indeed, nature often attributes the divine virtues to herself, that is, to a person's make-up or education, to his industry or diligence, or to some other human virtue, but not to heavenly or divine grace. Earthly nature said that Francis was her son because she had brought him forth into the light, she had conceived him, she had borne him, she had nursed and educated him, she had given him life, senses, and reason. "Who does not know," she said, "that man was formed by God in my womb? *The Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth* (Gen. 2: 7). But Francis is a man, and therefore he is my child. Why then is he taken away from me, his true mother, and given to heaven?"

But on the other hand heavenly grace said; "Francis is entirely of heaven in his spirit, virtues, manners, life, and conduct. Therefore, he is my son, for *he who is from the earth speaks of the earth* (Jn. 3: 31), thinks of the earth, and desires the things of earth. However Francis' thoughts, desires, affections, virtues, efforts, words, and all his works are heavenly, as is shown also by his numberless miracles which were worked by heavenly power and which could not have been done except by divine help. How then is Francis an earthly man and not a heavenly man, if in his life and virtues he is wholly divine? I acknowledge that according to the flesh he is your son, but I do not seek him according to the flesh, because according to the flesh you have killed him. In the body he is already dead, but he lives in the spirit. But you did not give him his spirit, you did not conceive it, nor implant it, nor form it, nor educate it; I did all this. Predestination, election, vocation, justification, sanctification, and the perfection of all divine virtues—these are not the works of nature, but of heavenly grace. For Francis was predestined, chosen, justified, sanctified, and made great so that he became like to God and Christ in his life and virtues. Therefore, he is not an earthly man, but a heavenly man, not a child of nature, but of grace according to the



interior man. Do you not see how similar Francis is to Christ? We deny that from such a great and perfect likeness and from their love Francis was a very dear brother to Christ?

Thus Benjamin was the dearest possible brother to Joseph, Prince of Egypt, although he was the youngest of all the brothers who received greater gifts from Joseph than the other brothers did. The other brothers Joseph gave two robes each, but to Benjamin five robes and three hundred pieces of silver; and at the meal a part to each of the brothers, but to Benjamin he gave a much larger part so that it exceeded the parts of the others five times; and the sack of Benjamin did he command that his silver cup be put in as a sign of very special love because this was his dearest brother. They were born of the same mother and father. Thus, I say, Christ to Francis as a sign of His very special love the five wounds of His body, the signs of our redemption, and a much more abundant grace and love. How then could you say that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not my child? If then Christ is my true child and Francis is a very dear and dear brother to Christ, he is, therefore, my child. Let God judge between us, because He is the Judge of truth and justice.

Therefore the child was given to the heavenly Jerusalem, his true mother.

So today the heavenly Jerusalem, receiving Francis' spirit and embracing it, accompanied with a great multitude of angels, took him up into heaven, to the eternal delights of Paradise, to the glory of the heavenly kingdom. As when the beggar Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham, to the place of perpetual consolation, so too when Blessed Francis died, his most holy spirit was carried by the angels of Paradise into the bosom of God, the Heavenly Father, the Father of souls and the God of all consolation (2 Cor. 13: 14) so that together with the blessed spirits he might also praise God forever: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever* (Ps. 83: 5).

When our Blessed Father was close to death, he said: *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the just wait for me, thou reward me*; where the Hebrew says: *Lead my soul out of prison, or out of prison, to praise thy name; the just will crown themselves in because you will reward me, or the just shall crown themselves in because of me, when thou shalt have rewarded me* (Ps. 141: 8). The world was like a prison for Francis and for that reason he desired by which he might leave this world, as a person who is held in prison

for a long time very naturally and earnestly desires his liberty, and as a bird wishes to be freed from his coop or cage to fly through the air. *I desire to depart and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1: 23). Although his body was like a sacred temple of the Holy Ghost whose door was the wound on his side, and the wounds of his hands and feet were like four windows in this temple, yet to his spirit it seemed to be a dark and shadowy prison. *"Lead my soul out of prison to praise thy name with the holy angels and the blessed spirits; for the just wait for me and all the saints in heaven and all the holy religious of my Order will make of me a crown of honor and glory for themselves. For they will glory that they have such a great and perfect Father and Patriarch, since thou dost reward me with such glory on earth and in heaven, in the world and in Paradise."*

## II.

*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me* (Mt. 11: 28-29). Because of the merit of holy Henoch's virtue, God took him from this world to a better and happier life without his having to die. For according to his name he dedicated himself totally to God and walked with God in the way of justice and sanctity and was pleasing to God (Gen. 5: 24). Therefore, we do not read that he died, but that he was taken up by God to a better life, to signify, as Chrysostom notes, that immortality and eternal life are the reward of virtue as death is the reward of sin. For as the Apostle says, *the wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6: 23), and through sin death entered into the world (Cf. Rom. 5: 12). Thus today Saint Francis, on account of the merit of his sanctity, was taken up from earth to heaven, from this earthly world to the most heavenly Paradise, because he had dedicated himself entirely, interiorly and exteriorly, to the worship of God.

As Moses, the leader of the Jews, at the end of his wanderings went up the peak of a very high mountain to view the happy and blessed land of promise, so today Francis went up to heaven to contemplate Divinity itself. For in this contemplation consists the happiness and glory of all the Saints.

Finally, just as Elias was whirled up into heaven in a fiery chariot, so today was Francis, who on earth was full and overflowing with the twofold spirit of Elias. Behold the chariot: *take my yoke upon you*. He is called an ox under the yoke while he is bound by the yoke and pulls the chariot. The fiery chariot is the law of the Gospel because it consists entirely in charity: *In his right hand a fiery law* (Dt. 33: 2); because

nothing is better or sweeter than fire when we feel cold, as the Scriptures rightly say: *For my yoke is sweet and my burden is light* (Mt. 11:30). For this fire does not burn, but illumines and gently warms, as the fire in the bush of Moses.

The fiery chariot is the Gospel of Christ which has as its four wheels the four cardinal virtues. With these the soul easily observes the laws as an ox easily draws a light chariot which has good wheels. Therefore, as a chariot is drawn not by one ox but by two, so a twofold spirit is necessary for observing the divine law. And just as one's eye, as it enjoys perfect vision, can not see anything without external light, and therefore a twofold light is necessary, so there is also needed a twofold spirit for observing the divine law. This twofold spirit, the human and divine, pulls the chariot with extreme ease. It not only makes it run, but makes it fly. This is why we read: *A fiery chariot and fiery horses* (4 Kings 2: 11), for the fiery horses are these two spirits, the divine and human. So then Saint Francis took up this sweet yoke of light burden and with the help of the Holy Ghost he pulled the chariot. And by it he was carried up to heaven and was taken to the Paradise of God.

## SAINT FRANCIS IN RUSSIAN SPIRITUALITY

Saint Francis is one of the few western medieval Saints who have been highly venerated in Russia. Since there is a striking similarity between Franciscan and Russian spirituality, Christian Russia has embraced Francis as her own, recognizing in him her own spiritual life. And even though he is a Roman Catholic, his feast is celebrated throughout Russia on October 4th. The Fordham Russian Center assures us that the immortal *Fioretti* has so captivated the Russian heart that it is the most popular Catholic book in the Russian language.<sup>1</sup> All of Russia knew whom Lenin referred to when on his deathbed he cried:

I have made a great mistake. Our main purpose was to give freedom to a multitude of oppressed people. But our method of action has created worse evils and horri-

<sup>1</sup>The eighth Russian edition has sold out. The Fordham Russian Center would publish a new edition if it could find some assistance.

ble massacres. You know that my deadly nightmare is to feel that I am lost in this ocean of blood, coming from innumerable victims. It is too late to turn back now, but in order to save our country, Russia, we should have had ten men like Francis of Assisi. With ten such men we would have saved Russia.

The core of the Franciscan spirit is Christ, the God-Man. For Saint Francis the life of the Friars Minor is to observe the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Bonaventure, who is considered the foremost exponent of Franciscan spirituality, adopted Saint Francis' view of Christ as the center of all things, not only of philosophy and the sciences, but of theology as well. No one can read Dostoevsky or Tolstoy, the two great thinkers who have succeeded most admirably in expressing the aspirations of the Russian people, without being struck by the thoroughly Christo-centric and Franciscan spirit that moves them. Berdiaev points out with gratification that ultimately Russian mysticism does not differ from the mysticism of Saint Bonaventure.

In her golden book, *The Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought*, Nadejda Gorodetzky shows that one of the most constant features in Russian folk-lore, literature, and theology is the figure of the humiliated Christ. Dostoevsky, who has revealed and immortalized the soul of Christian Russia in his world-famous novels, summarized this attitude in the words: "I have never been able to conceive mankind without Christ." And again: "If it were not for the precious image of Christ before us, we should be undone and altogether lost." In fact, his whole purpose in writing was to bring Christ back into the center of Russian social, political and economic life. In both Franciscan and Russian spirituality, therefore, Christ, is the key to everything.

Whoever is preoccupied with seeing Christ in the center of all things will illuminate the world with his joy. But with what do we associate Saint Francis if not with exuberant joy? We find him saying: "What are the friars but joyous minstrels of the Lord, who move and excite the hearts of men to spiritual joy?" This joy is echoed by Dostoevsky: "Love all God's creatures and pray God to make you cheerful. Be cheerful as children and as the birds." What is remarkable about Franciscan and Russian joy is that it thrives on

suffering. Saint Francis composed his Sun Song while prostrate in illness and almost blind. The Russian people, as Dostoevsky writes, "out again and again, also realize the atoning power of their suffering and with tears of joy bless God and cause others to bless Him."

"With all thy heart love the Love which loves thee, the Love which desires thee, and has created thee to draw thee to Himself" (*Mirror of Perfection*). What more shall we say of the holy Father's love of God? We cannot even picture Saint Francis without some manifestation of this love. Now we see him kneeling for the lepers, his brother Christians, at another time, giving his habit to some ragged beggar; again, with a lark on his shoulder and a lamb at his feet, and the Sun Song on his lips: "Praise be to my Lord, through all Thy creatures. . . Praise be to Thee, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth. . . Praise and bless the Lord, give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility." Dostoevsky, in a like vein, gives words to the Russian soul which might have been sung by Francis himself: "Love a man even in his suffering, that is the semblance of Divine Love, and in the highest love of earth. Love all God's creation,—the whole and every grain of wheat in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything." It is this sublime dogma of love which has made Dostoevsky peerless among Christian novelists and has made the world pay tribute to the all-embracing love of the Christian Russian soul.

What saint has had a more tender devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God than Saint Francis? Celano assures us that he rejoiced like a child over every mark of love and esteem shown to the Mother of God. Saint Francis consecrated himself and his entire Order to Mary. He always cherished Saint Mary of the Angels as the cradle of his life. The beautiful Marian prayers of the liturgy and Little Office did not satisfy his devotion to Mary, which overflowed in hymns and prayers composed in her honor. The most charming of these is the "Salutation of the Blessed Virgin." His children in all three Orders have always cherished this devotion to Mary as their personal heritage. Saint Anthony, Saint Bonaventure, Blessed Duns Scotus, Saint Bernardin of Siena, and Saint Lawrence of Brindisi—all champions of Mary's prerogatives—have burned themselves out to enlighten the Church with their profession of Mary's glory. Saint Lawrence

of Brindisi speaks for the whole Order when he concludes that Mary, after Christ, God's greatest blessing to the Universal Church, the source of blessings, than which none greater could be thought of, since she can do all things for us with God, the Almighty. Francis' devotion to Mary cannot be imagined without this tender devotion to the Mother of God.

Now devotion to the Mother of God is also an essential part of Russian spirituality. The Holy Father in his Marian Year Encyclical calls upon our Russian brethren to unite their prayers with hers, "knowing full well how greatly they venerate the Mother of Jesus Christ and celebrate her Immaculate Conception." The Byzantine liturgy is at once the source and expression of Russian devotion to the Mother of God. It is resplendent with numerous and exquisite prayers to Mary, such as this solemn commemoration:

It is indeed proper to bless thee, Mother of God, the eternally blessed and completely sinless one and the Mother of God. Higher in honor than the Seraphim, who without harm to thy virginity didst give birth to the word of God: thee we extol, true Mother of God.<sup>2</sup>

The Russian liturgy insistently repeats this versicle in the first antiphon: "through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us."<sup>3</sup>

An excellent example of Russian devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, is the veneration of icons. Nearly every Russian Christian reserves a place of honor in his home for an icon of Mary. He keeps a lamp burning before it and kneeling there recites his prayers. Thus, Seraphim of Sarov, one of the latest Russian saints, expired while kneeling before his beloved icon, "The Holy Virgin of Tenderness."<sup>4</sup>

What is the Mother of God? Dostoevsky, groping for words to express the Russian love for Mary, replies that she is "the great Mother, the hope of the human race."

Dostoevsky created a positive type of Russian sanctity in the

<sup>2</sup>The Byzantine Liturgy, Fordham Russian Center, 1953, p. 50

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 20

<sup>4</sup>More examples of Russian devotion to Mary can be found in "Mary in the Eastern Liturgies" by Very Rev. Cuthbert Gumbinger O.F.M.Cap. in the *Encyclopedic Mariology* (edited by Father Juniper Carol, O.F.M.; to be published soon by Bruce Co.)

person of Father Zossima, who has gained literary immortality because of radiant joy and seraphic love. Dostoevsky's model for Zossima was Saint Tychon of Zadonsk, the most beloved Saint of Russia, whose spirituality was centered around the Cross, the sufferings of Christ and Divine Love crucified. Saint Tychon, like Saint Francis, taught this to the people and assured them that through the suffering of the humiliated, crucified Christ would preserve them from sin and lead them to beatitude. Father Zossima so resembles the Russian Saint Tychon that he is called the Russian Saint Francis. Ivan, one of the characters in "Brothers Karamazov," even calls him "Seraphic Father." To believe, is the fundamental reason why Zossima is the ideal Russian Saint and why Saint Francis enjoys such popularity in Russia because they are *seraphic* fathers, one in fiction, one in reality. Pope John XXIII lists love of mankind as "the first characteristic note of the Russian people" (*Life is Worth Living*), and Helen Iswolsky's penetrating *Soul of Russia* shows that every ideology in Russian spiritual and cultural history was formed by love.

No one should be surprised that we have relied to a large extent on literature to reveal the spirit of Russia, for the spiritual culture of every civilization finds its best expression in its literature. This is especially true of Russia, for Soloviev insists that the central idea of Russian literature is a religious and moral one founded on the conviction of the sanctity of human personality and human life.

We have frequently quoted Dostoevsky because his message is the message of Christ, his model is the life of Christ, and his philosophy is the philosophy of Christ. With these three he has been able to portray the Christian spirit of Russia better than any other author. The message, model, and philosophy of Dostoevsky are the same as those of Saint Francis; hence, his great appeal to us Franciscans.

These are but a few of the similarities between the Franciscan and Russian spiritualities which bring us to a greater understanding and love of our suffering Russian brothers. They move us to greater obedience to the pleas of our Mother, pleas that we pray and sacrifice ourselves that Russia soon may be one with us in love, in freedom and in faith.

## ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION

The theory or theology of a vocation, whether to the religious life or to the Priesthood, is by no means a perfectly defined teaching. The controversy during the past fifty years or more makes that clear to us. Nor is the question totally settled by the most recent works on the subject. We do not propose to enter into this in any detail, but to submit the discussion to what is fairly well agreed upon in present-day theological circles.

The adequate concept of a vocation would rightly embrace the following elements: a call from God, the due qualities of soul, mind and body in the subject, and the express invitation or acceptance by ecclesiastical authorities. These would go to make up the complete vocation of a man to the priesthood or to the religious life (or both). Within these, however, we may rightly distinguish two aspects, the antecedent divine vocation, with due qualities in the subject; and on the other hand, the external calling by the Bishop or superior.

In the following pages we shall endeavor to point out the importance of each of these elements; and proceed to practical norms to be followed in accepting or rejecting candidates for the religious life and priesthood. In the latter, we have in mind primarily the choice of candidates for the priesthood in the Order, not those for the lay state.

### PART I. ELEMENTS OF A VOCATION

What many moderns have written on vocations has been anticipated long ago by St. Francis in a few simple sentences of the Rules. Analysis of his words and of modern writers will show that there are two elements, two aspects of a vocation: the material (subjective, internal), on the part of the candidate; the formal (objective, external), on the part of ecclesiastical superiors. Both must enter to guarantee a true and complete vocation.

#### A. THE SUBJECTIVE ELEMENT

A certain amount of controversy has been engaged in on this point, in which some have gone to the extreme in emphasizing the internal vocation; while others have, at the opposite extreme, claimed

that there is no subjective vocation properly so-called, that the vocation is that given by authorities in accepting a man into a religious institute or admitting him to Sacred Orders.

### 1. The Divine Call

However, to limit vocation purely to the external, ecclesiastical vocation would exclude what manifestly belongs in the picture of the action of the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Mystical Body, the Providence of God caring for the growth of the Church. Such a theory would run contrary to the manifest tradition of the Church. For example, St. Francis: "If any one, by divine inspiration, wishes to enter this life" [*Regula prima*, c. 2]; and the words of recent Popes: Pius XI: "God himself liberally sows in the generous hearts of young men this precious seed of vocation;"<sup>1</sup> and Pius XII speaking of the "impulse and invisible action of the Holy Ghost . . . the divine call, etc."<sup>2</sup> Hence we must admit the action of divine Providence and the role of divine grace.

But wherein specifically does this consist? Here theologians do not agree. And here also we meet with some extreme and erroneous views, particularly an extreme predestination theory of vocation, one that is called the "attraction theory."

According to some more ancient theologians, in the centuries immediately after the Council of Trent, there was an apriori determination for each individual, that one must embrace such and such a state of life or else lose his soul.<sup>3</sup> Thus Massillon (1697): "The choice of state of life (fixed by God from eternity) is for us the only way to salvation which God has prepared for us. . . In order to obtain the graces of any state it is necessary that God Himself call us to that state."<sup>4</sup> Even St. Alphonsus can be quoted as holding to such a theory. To it was later added another element, that this antecedent predestination was indicated by an attraction to the priesthood or religious life.<sup>5</sup> That is, some taught that a strong interior attraction was required as a certain sign of this divine predestination, a certain

peculiar supernatural attraction, a strong and permanent inclination, or a sweet impulse which is felt in the depths of the soul and leaves little or no doubt that one has been called by God."<sup>6</sup> In fact, Branchereau, a French theologian (1819-1913), went so far as practically to identify divine vocation and attraction, seeing in the latter "a sort of interior dictate in which we believe that we recognize the expression of God's will for us . . . a secret instinct that tells us that God is calling on us."<sup>7</sup>

Against such theories, we must argue first of all that the absolute predestination theory would seem to destroy the distinction between counsel and precept, and the liberty of choice which God offers us in regard to a state of life.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, overemphasis on attraction can distort the subjective and purely interior element of a vocation in an unnecessary cloak of mysticism and subjectivism. Furthermore, it opens the way to scruples and subjective analysis. And, some opponents argue, were one to carry the principles of this view to their logical conclusion, it would mean that a man had a right to the priesthood or religious life, while superiors would be forced to admit him.<sup>9</sup>

What then can we admit, as we must admit, in the divine element of a vocation? Certainly this, that there is a certain predestination by Divine Providence of certain men for the priesthood (and, to some extent, for the religious life) independently of their personal merits. God does this for the good of the Church, to provide ministers for the continuance of the saving work of Christ. But this is not an absolute predestination, but rather a divine inspiration, an *afflatus*, sown in the heart of a youth, "the seed of a vocation." Hence it is a gift of God which ought to be accepted, yet which may be refused likewise. It is therefore some action of God upon the rational faculties of the soul, producing a special effect of moving these powers to know, to desire, to decide to embrace the religious life or priesthood.<sup>10</sup> But it is not final, rather inchoative in character, per-

<sup>1</sup>Encyclical on the Priesthood, NCWC ed., p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Pius XXII, *Menti Nostrae* (1950), nn. 75-76.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. J. Blowick, *Priestly Vocation*, pp. 19-38.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>J. Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-75; A. Carr, *Vocation to the Priesthood*, pp. 88-93.

Farrell, *The Theology of Religious Vocation*, pp. 10-19.

<sup>6</sup>E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted by J. Blowick, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. A. J. Vermeersch, *Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocation*, esp. pp. 34 ff.; J. Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 87 ff.

<sup>9</sup>On this point, cf. E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 11, n. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

fectible by the formal acceptance, and even previously to be by human agents, parents, teachers, confessors, pastors, superiors, etc.

In what precisely this subjective call consists, we leave others to declare. Fr. Edward Farrell would place it not in grace, nor in any actual grace, but rather in the virtue of faith and even more specifically in an intense act of devotion—God.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Signs of a Vocation (Canonical Fitness)

Now, if God so chooses that a man be called to the priesthood (or to religious life), He will, in His infinite power and wisdom, prepare that subject by bestowing on him (besides divine graces) talents of mind and body as are requisite to such calling. There may be the signs of a vocation, while the lack of a divine vocation may also be manifest by negative signs, by the lack of proper gifts and talents. This is the teaching of Pius XI, in his Encyclical on the Priesthood; of Pius XII, in *Menti nostrae* (76ff), and the tradition of the Church.

These signs constitute "canonical fitness," *idoneitas canonica*, and shall be considered below.

## B. THE OBJECTIVE ELEMENT

After detailing what is required of the candidates, the Council of Trent (our Order proceeds to say that the Ministers may accept them and give them the clothes of probation. St. Francis hereby points to the objective or formal side of a vocation. The canonical fitness, however, were, the potential element which needs must be perfected by the formal principle, the choice by the ecclesiastical superior. It is his duty to pass judgment on the canonical fitness of those who wish to enter, and then admit them if he judge it prudent and opportune.

In the vocation to the diocesan priesthood, the Bishop is the ordinary minister of vocation; his *potestas ordinaria* he delegates in some extent to the officials of the seminary, the rector, faculty, and confessor; the confessors and spiritual directors in the internal forum only.<sup>12</sup> With exempt religious, the Major Superior

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 98 ff; p. 112.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. J. Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-246; and A. Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 ff.

to the ordinary ministers, since they issue letters to the ordaining bishop and have the responsibility by law of the right selection of candidates. In turn, the lectors, masters, spiritual director, etc., share in this duty of judging candidates.

In regard to the religious vocation, the Minister Provincial or other Major Superior is the ordinary minister, since with him lies the final judgment of admitting a man to the novitiate or profession. He in turn entrusts judgment to the lectors, discreetors of the convent, etc., in helping him make a proper selection for the good of the order and of the Church.

Hence we would say that the seed of the divine vocation given to a candidate remains always imperfect and at best inchoate prior to the formal acceptance by the Superior or the call of the Bishop. However, to put forward the thesis that the totality of the concept of vocation lies in this formal element is an extreme view. Yet it was the thesis propounded by the Reverend Canon Lahitton, and accepted by many.<sup>13</sup> Their stand was and is based on a misconception or misreading of a decree of the Holy See giving approval (1912) to three statements in Lahitton's book, *La Vocation Sacerdotale*.

One of the statements approved was that the sacerdotal vocation does not at all consist, at least necessarily and ordinarily, in a certain internal attraction of the subject or in inducements of the Holy Spirit to enter the priesthood. Another statement read that nothing further is necessary in the one to be ordained than the right intention together with suitability, founded on those gifts of nature and grace and confirmed by probity of life and sufficiency of learning, which give well-founded hope that he will be able to fulfill the duties of the priestly state properly and observe the obligations of that state holily.<sup>14</sup>

However, the Holy See did not approve a further statement of Lahitton, that no special divine call was required, that antecedent divine vocation was a fiction. . . . Nevertheless, many have misconstrued the decree to read it as an approval, to maintain therefore that "it has been definitely decided that a priestly vocation consists

<sup>13</sup>For the historical details, cf. E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 ff; F. Duffey, *Testing the Spirit*, pp. 144-154.

<sup>14</sup>Text in A. J. Vermeersch, *op. cit.*, p. 76; F. Duffey, *op. cit.*, p. 146; E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

properly and exclusively in the act of the ordaining bishop a candidate to present himself for ordination. . . .[or] anal[ogously] [that] a divine vocation to religious state [would] consist tot[ally] solely in the act of a superior approving or admitting an aspirant to profession or a candidate to the novitiate."<sup>15</sup>

The decree, therefore, simply dealt the deathblow to the ordination theory—that and nothing more. It did not exclude any divine vocation, an invitation of the Holy Spirit. This would be in accordance with the tradition of the Church. Moreover, it is untenable against the tradition of the Church. Moreover, it is untenable in the light of the recent documents of the Papacy on the priesthood and vocations. At most, Lahitton's position may be accepted from a judicial viewpoint, but it is not acceptable theologically.<sup>16</sup>

*To be Continued*

<sup>15</sup>E. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Thus Fr. Pacificus Perantoni: "Where the previous divine vocation spirit[ual] nature and grace is absent, the mere canonical vocation to the Order, cannot be one's acceptance by the superior upon merely external points of suitability does not bestow a true vocation." (Encyclical, "Franciscan Spirituality," p. 25.)

Fr. Ignatius Brady

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# the CORD

VOL. IV No. 11, NOVEMBER, 1954

## CONTENTS

ALM 129.....	322
<i>Sr. Mary Francis, P.C.</i>	
OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	323
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.</i>	
BLESSED MARIA ASSUNTA.....	327
<i>William J. Manning</i>	
MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION.....	330
<i>Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, O.F.M.</i>	
THE HOLINESS OF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS.....	334
<i>Fr. Valentine Young, O.F.M.</i>	
SAINT ANTHONY AND THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY.....	338
<i>Fr. Antonellus Ostdiek, O.F.M.</i>	
ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION.....	345
<i>Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.</i>	
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF FRANCISCAN TEACHING SISTERS.....	348
<i>Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.</i>	
DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CATHOLICS IN CHINA.....	349
FRANCISCAN BRIEFS.....	349



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## PSALM 129

Out of a bottomless lake of sorrow,  
I have cried to Thee  
With the voices of all lost children,  
With the aching displacement of the world,  
I have groaned in Thy glory.

Until Thou hear me,  
I shall bruise Thy bliss with the fists of my anguish  
And tumble Thy listening down about my cries!

For, if Thou weigh me on Thy justice,  
My soul melts under memory's lava  
And my heart cracks  
Out of the five windows of my senses.

Mercy that rules the business of the Trinity  
Condemns me to be saved to wretchedness:  
I ask it, O God, by Thy Self-fettering law.

For, when the morning discovers my futility,  
Until the night ensnarls me with promises,  
I have been stricken with hope.

Who shall deceive me? Kindness scars Thy Being  
Beyond all recognition, till Thou art Man,  
With pity flowing, crimson, from Thy Heart.  
Thy Love, I know, is fecund with redemption.

Hear me, O God! I will pull the Face of Thy coming  
Down to the dark waters that deny Thee.  
Behold in what depths Thine Israel! and save.

*Sr. Mary Francis*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

In view of the great importance which spiritual writers attach to silence and which our own daily experience confirms, it should be a notable, in this conference, to draw out some reflections on the practice of silence. The rule of silence which is prescribed in all religious institutes has not been created merely as a contrivance to escape idleness and torment. Rather, it derives from the admonition of the Scriptures, from true spiritual instinct, and it has always been justified by its fruits. Saint Ignatius uses the practice of silence as a criterion of fervor: "If you wish to know whether piety and the solid virtues reign in a religious community, you need only to examine whether silence is observed there." It has been said that to reform a religious house which has become lukewarm, nothing more is needed than that the rule of silence be observed perfectly. What is true of a community will be true also of the individual.

Silence is extremely important toward the acquisition of perfection. To be silent is to be recollected. The practice of silence will keep our thoughts from scattering to the four quarters of the earth, and it is apt to keep our mind on an even keel. Silence gives us peace, dignity, self-command. The words of him who has long practiced the silence here described are usually seasoned, impressive, and trustworthy. What he says is well measured, it is matured, it is almost invulnerable because his judgment is not disturbed by haste or levity, nor prejudiced by passion of any kind. He will not utter the first impulse that might invade his mind; neither will he be led by the dictates of mere human prudence. Thus the advice of the saints was always practically always correct because "silence guards the heart, and makes the soul more clear-sighted and intelligent" (Saint Francis de Sales).

However, for the acquisition of such balance it is not sufficient to practice mere external silence, that is, the avoidance of unnecessary words, or heedless talking at forbidden times. This is the mere rudiment of religious silence. In this sense, one might be as silent as a stone yet gain no spiritual profit. The silence we are speaking of is something mechanical such as merely keeping one's mouth shut,



though this is a condition for what is very important for spiritual progress, that is, interior silence.

Of itself, mere external silence is not productive of much. One can be as silent as a tomb on the outside, yet noisy and tumultuous as a storm within. How noisy our soul is when we permit it to be crowded by those many impertinent thoughts; when we let our fancy dwell on useless things, and our memory be busy with unprofitable recollections. What a tempestuous storm is within us when our passions are let loose: the frenzied anger, the rumbling discontent, those dark clouds of melancholy and pessimism, the swirling turmoil, seething and raging behind sealed lips. This is not silence; rather, it is loud like thunder in the soul, and the noise drowns out the voice of God and the pleadings of his grace.

We have never heard of a saint who did not love solitude. We know that when God calls one to a more abundant grace, one of the first attractions he gives to the soul is a longing for solitude, for exterior and interior solitude. The reason is, because then we can speak to the soul, and the soul is more receptive and there is no danger that the grace will be squandered. In the ordinary practice of grace, this sort of solitude is a prerequisite condition for abundant grace. But alas, our misery is that we are so externally extrovert; we live so much on the surface of our souls. We do not dig down deep into the depths to find God, for he is found in the depths of the soul, not on its surface. He is to be found there because he wants peace and quietude, and because he is exceedingly holy to be on the surface of things. By silence, we dig down into the recesses, and the treasure we shall find will be there. There we shall find intimacy, there God manifests himself, there in the hidden depths, not on the bustling highways and byways of the world.

If we do not practice silence we shall waste much time and energy. What thousands of thoughts have flitted through our minds, but how relatively few for God. What endless affections have we poured out, and how few for God. All so earthly, transitory, egoistic and puerile, whereas they should have been glorified with the glory of the divine. Enormous trifles have absorbed so much of our time and energy.

It was remarked above that if anyone controls the tongue he controls the passions. That is true. He controls at least their external

manifestation. He will not give expression to angry words, he will not make no unkind remarks, there will be no vain self-expression, no criticisms, no murmurings, no infractions of charity in speech. And though this is only external control, still it is something; and in the long run, if there is sincerity, the evil root itself will dry up.

The advantages of interior silence, of course, are far greater. It makes it possible for us to control the various movements in our soul; they are not so apt to catch us unawares as they otherwise would. If we practice this interior silence, we know what is going on in our soul; we will not be strangers to ourselves. We will be conscious, for example, of the movement to impatience the moment it stirs itself; we will detect the vanity in our motives immediately, and therefore, we will be in a position to master them on the spot. We will not have to admit so often that we became impatient *before we realized it*. This interior silence attunes the ear to the voice of grace which is ever so tenuous. That voice is not heard in the storm, even in that silent sort of storm we spoke of before; but in the midst of true, interior silence it sounds indeed like the very voice of God. How many graces we have missed because of the clamor within our souls! How often God tried to say to us, *Friend, go up higher*, and we failed to hear the invitation; his voice was drowned out because there was no silence in our soul.

However, by the practice of interior silence we are not to make of our mind a vacuum. Rather, we are simply to disencumber it of those many futile thoughts which would otherwise swarm in it, in order that we might be free to fill it with the thought of God; we abandon useless, temporal interests that we might be free to keep tryst with the God within us, for he is there: *We will come to him and make our abode with him* (Jn. 14, 23); *In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you* (Jn. 14, 20). The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the *Dulcis Hospes animae*, and the soul is his sanctuary, redolent of the fragrance of God. Here, kneeling on this sanctuary stair, we can offer him the worship of attentiveness and of love. Here we should surrender ourselves to him in confidence, for he first surrendered himself, for our sake, with unquestioning abandon into the arms of a young Girl as his Mother, and to us individually with divine gladness, for God

*first loved us* (I Jn. 4, 19). He pours forth his Love into our in gushing streams by his Holy Spirit who is given to us (5, 5) that we might be enabled to love him in return, for *love... and love is from God* (I Jn. 4, 16, 7). Here too he lives in the fullness of his own divine life. He does not disdain to say to each of us "thou art my son," and he is eager to hear our loving response to the filial cry, "Abba, Father!" Here in our soul is the Father who called us, the Son who redeemed us in his blood, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us. Should we not make it the very sum and substance of our life to offer praise, wonderment, love to God in his temple in which we are?

*Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto!... O beata Trinitas!* Thus may you walk worthily of God and please him in all things (Col. 1, 10), singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5, 19). That we might be free to do this we must practice exterior and interior silence.

We must not conclude from the foregoing that we must always speak. No; this silence can be practiced all the long day though you might oblige us to speak all the day. You might have to teach, preach, or nurse, you might be a missionary almost always instructing and catechising, but this is not incompatible with interior silence. The simple question is: what is it that absorbs you? Is it God alone? Things of God? God for his own sake and your neighbor for the sake of God? Then, indeed, you can still practice interior silence. Our Lord labored, how he journeyed up and down Palestine, how zealously he preached throughout the day, how he was jostled and importuned by the crowds! Still, who could have been so absorbed in God as he who from the first enjoyed the beatific vision? What serenity, what peace in his soul! How deeply he was immersed in the thought of his Father! The glory of his Father was always before him and last consideration, and very naturally, for he is the "Well-beloved Son," and he and the Father are one. But we too are well-beloved sons, although by adoption only; yet, we are sons and we too must walk in love before the face of the Father. Therefore we should cultivate this extremely important and fruitful exercise. It will purify our motives, it will transfigure all we do, it will lead us into intimacy with God, for we cannot love God but that he will respond.

In conclusion, let us sum it up in a parallel. Think of a wonderful old-world cathedral. It has large dimensions, the vault of the cathedral towers high, the sunlight filters dimly through the heavy stained glass windows, and massive doors shut out the noise of the outside world. Here, the drop of a pin would startle you. Besides yourself, there is no living presence but our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and he is as silent as the heavens at midnight, and in a ruby lamp a little fire flickers noiselessly. The rumor of the outside world is hushed, there is not a murmur within. Here there is nothing but God and yourself. The universe, which seems to be such a sentient and vibrant thing, is poised with bated breath; time has quietly slid to a stop. What peace! You can pray now! Yet all this can be accomplished within your soul. You can enjoy this whenever you will to your own immense spiritual profit. The means thereto is interior silence. A distracted soul, on the contrary, is like the Jewish temple which our Lord cleansed when he cast out those who were buying and selling there, and said to them in indignation: *My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves* (Luke 19, 46).

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## BLESSED MARIA ASSUNTA

On November seventh, the Venerable Servant of God, Sister Maria Assunta, Franciscan Missionary of Mary, will be declared among the blessed—the only Franciscan so to be honored during the Marian Year. The paradox of sanctity is evident in the life of Maria Assunta to an extraordinary degree. She spent but twenty-six years hidden in this world as one of God's choicest unknown souls, that she might become in heaven one of his elect.

Assunta was a peasant girl, born in the little Italian village of Force in 1878. Her name honored the great feast of the Mother of God which had preceded her birth by five days.

From her most tender years, Assunta learned to love God. As a tiny helper to the village

the day's work murmuring her Rosary, and she would not go home until she had first visited Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the village church. Her love for the Sacrament of the altar was profound and her biographers indicate that her childhood was in untold hours before the Eucharist where she knelt motionless, held in love. Her parish priest remarked that her heart was undefiled by the world, pure as a lily, and ever responsive to the voice of divine grace," a testimony which was often repeated to ecclesiastical authorities by her childhood friends in the proposal of her marriage.

That this pure flower of holiness yearned to blossom in the cloister as a Bride of Christ surprised none. Yet the obstacles to such a life were many—her family desperately needed her at home, and the opportunity for introduction to a community of religious was remote in her village. When every way seemed closed, Assunta's intention, the visit of a distinguished and influential prelate to Force became the key by which Providence opened the door. The cloister of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary to her. Assunta was brought to him, and so impressed was he with her evident sanctity that almost immediately upon his return to Rome word was sent that the Franciscan Missionaries would welcome Assunta.

The Monsignor's estimation and recommendation was all that was needed. For the rest, Assunta proved herself. Her holiness was so well founded, that the new life involved little change for Assunta. From all accounts it merely paralleled the change in her name. Interestingly enough Assunta, the joy and consolation of the hidden village of Force, became Sister Maria Assunta, the joy and consolation of the large community in Rome. Religious life became the opportunity for Assunta to practice the virtues which she had loved since childhood, in the hidden and sacred recesses of the cloister. She entered upon the new life without stint, so much so that her Novice Master remarked of her days in Rome: "I can conscientiously say that throughout the whole course of her Novitiate she never deserved the slightest rebuke in regard to her conduct or the observance of her duties of the Rule."

Her work, her prayer, her recreation, all were occasions for Sister Maria Assunta to grow and increase in holiness. When any work was assigned to her she executed with relish. Hers was

an ability to accomplish the most menial of tasks with dignity—dignity born of the realization that to serve others, in any capacity, is to honor God. She seldom spoke of herself in hours of recreation, and she seemed most to enjoy herself there when the conversation centered on God. Sister Maria Assunta was not a woman of letters, but she carried the distinguishing trait of the truly learned, the ability to listen and inquire and observe. She thought nothing of herself, but she loved her sisters in religion and regarded only their virtues. She appeared unable to criticize others, reserving whatever dissatisfactions she experienced as sources for her own improvement. The chronicles tell us that Sister Maria Assunta was best remembered for her prayer. When she died, her body, severely self-disciplined from youth, emitted a mysterious fragrance, reminiscent of the beautiful odor of prayer which she exhaled in life. The long hours required by her Institute's constitutions in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament were the soul of Maria Assunta's prayer. She went before the Eucharistic Lord to seek love, she learned love there, and she communicated this love freely. She died with only two words on her lips—two words of love: *Eucharist! Eucharist!*

After pronouncing her perpetual vows in Rome, early in 1904, Sister Maria Assunta left Naples on the Feast of Saint Joseph for the Mission of Shansi, China. Four years previously, seven of her Institute had shed their blood as martyrs in the Boxer Rebellion in the mission to which she sailed.

Nine months after her arrival in China, Sister Maria Assunta was dead, a victim of the typhus scourge. She went quickly, not having suffered long. She accomplished little in China, judged by any material standards. About all the language that she had mastered in her few months there were a few simple prayers, but she delighted in teaching and praying these to the little Chinese who flocked about her.

Briefly, but essentially, this is the story of Sister Maria Assunta. It contains little of the glamorous, nothing of the spectacular. Yet it is the story of one whom the Church will approve in a few days reigning with the virgins in heaven.

Blessed Maria Assunta left this earth at a time when every human estimation a long life of fruitful work lay before her.

Yet in her few wayfaring years she fulfilled her divine destiny and accomplished her part in the harvest of souls. She had *mind the eternal years* and thus she was ready, and answered the midnight call of her Bridegroom.

Maria Assunta's life was well summarized in the succorment of her Superior on the missions, who wrote to Rome on her death: "As a Religious she had been a model for all." He preserved the secret of her sanctity—she was a model religious holiness in the most obvious yet often most unrecognized of her vows and the rule of her Institute. She faithfully followed joyfully embraced the way of Saint Francis, and lost herself in it. The beatification of Maria Assunta echoes familiar words: *is the least among you, he is the greatest*; for in innocence, and willingness Sister Maria Assunta entered the Kingdom of God as a little child.

William

## MARY'S MEDIATION IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION

### Part Three: Mediatrix of All Graces

Our *Florilegium*, or compilation of texts from Franciscan writers, comes to its closing—and most important—chapter this month. What has been established previously, our Lady's predestination and royal office of co-redemption, logically leads into a discussion of her mediation.

#### A. Manner of Meriting

Francisco Guerra, a seventeenth century writer, summarizes a common doctrine of the Franciscan school: "In all things that men or angels from the divine bounty which Christ merits *de digno*, there was a notable influence of Mary *de congruo*." Carolus del Moral qualifies this more precisely: "The Mother of God not only transport grace to someone in so far as, by reason of her intercession, God is moved to confer the grace. But this is a moral

at least *de congruo*. Bernardin de Bustis held it to be probable that Mary merited all graces not only *de congruo*, but also by merit of her dignity. He quotes St. Bonaventure to support his opinion: "Through the abundance of grace at the conception, she was found not only suitable but worthy."

Now merit *de congruo* is wholly gratuitous on the part of God. That which is required is that God find a certain fitness or appropriateness; however, the fitness does not demand that God reward it. On the other hand, merit *de condigno* demands a reward in justice. Only Jesus Christ (because He is God) could merit in such a way.

What the Franciscan theologians seem to introduce here is a direct and mediate condition proper to Mary because of her dignity as Mother of God. Others outside of the school in recent times seem to favor this position, too. Carolus del Moral formulates the opinion succinctly: "Mary cooperated with her Son by meritorious acts of piety (*de congruo*) and also by the special value of the grace of her maternity, in the salvation of men and the grace and glory of the angels."

#### B. All Grace Through Mary

As a mother lives to give of her love to others, so it was for our Lady. As our Franciscan writers emphasize, that Mary was given so much grace and merited so much. "The eyes of the Church and the eyes of all," Conrad of Saxony exclaims, "should always look to the hands of Mary . . . For through the hands of this Lady we have whatever we possess. . . . Through her hands we should offer to God whatever we do." Ubertino de Casale similarly affirms: "All things the most generous Son placed in the hands of His Mother as the dispenser of all graces; . . . in her is every grace of the way and the truth, all hope of life and virtue." And that no one may misunderstand, he adds this glowing tribute: "(The Holy Spirit made her) the Queen and Mistress of the angels, the Mother of all the elect, and thus the entire treasury of the gifts of the most Blessed Trinity, so that not a drop of even the smallest grace is to be granted except it pass through the dispensation of Mary."

"The Blessed Mary was made by God and constituted the ladder (or stair case), the portal, the gate of heaven," Bernardine of Siena.

of Pisa tells us. "Wherefore, to whom she wills she opens, and to whom she wills, so that as through her the salvation of men, so also through her we come not only to grace but also to the joy of Jesus Christ, who is the joy and the happiness and the enjoyment of the Blessed."

The stream of Franciscan thought is strong and clear here. John Capistran says: "Whatever good we receive from God we receive from the hand and the grace of the Blessed Virgin." Blessed de Bustis: "All good comes to us from Christ through Mary." Blessed Bernardin of Feltre: "Whatever grace descends from the throne of God must first pass through her."

### C. Process of Dispensation

St. Bernardin has been honored with the title of another because of his devotion to Mary. As a zealous lover of his, he went further than any other person in tracing the descent of grace from God to man. Perhaps he received his inspiration from Bonaventure's statement that the Blessed Virgin is said to be a fountain because of the origin of good in her; this origin is primarily in God the Father, then through Christ, and thirdly it flows through the Blessed Virgin. . . . At any rate, Bernardin sums up his conviction in the famous passage: "Every grace that is communicated to the world has a threefold process: for it is dispensed in right order from God unto Christ, by Christ unto the Virgin, and from the Virgin unto ourselves. . . . For from the time that she conceived God in her womb she had what I might call a certain jurisdiction or power over the temporal procession of the Holy Spirit, so that no creature receives any grace or power from God except according to the dispensation of the Virgin Mother. For since Christ is our Head from whom the influence of divine grace flows upon the Mystical Body, the Blessed Virgin is the neck through which this flow passed to the members of the Body."

One by one, Franciscan theologians have read this, meditated on it and unanimously proclaimed that Mary is absolutely necessary for our salvation.

### D. Habitual and Actual Intercession

Subject to much controversy is the question of the nature of Mary's intervention. In solving this problem, our writers have

themselves be guided by the Scotistic principle that "it is more excellent to attribute to Mary whatever is not contrary to the authority of the Church and of Scripture." Hence Franciscan scholars, their enthusiasm girded by solid reasoning, champion the opinion which gives the most honor and glory to Mary.

The question is this: is it simply and solely *in view of Mary's merits* that we receive grace through Mary; is her intervention therefore simply habitual? Or is her intervention actual; *does she actually intercede for each grace?*

Our School answers that it is both! First of all, her intervention implies her almost infinite merits, the merits in view of which the faithful angels stood firm, our first parents were restored to the friendship of God, the Patriarchs were saved. But it also implies her prayers. St. Bonaventure tells us that we receive grace "by reason of her merit and her example and by reason of the aid of her intercession." Scotus clothed this doctrine in precise theological language, and his eighteenth century counterpart, Carolus del Moral, added the finishing touches.

Scotus tells us that Mary's prayer in heaven on our behalf is both habitual and actual. This prayer he describes as mental, "which is the desire offered to God with the desire of obtaining her wish from God." Her habitual prayer is "constant and general for all the elect;" but her actual prayer is offered whenever she is invoked.

Later theologians, going even further, maintain that by *every* prayer and *meritorious act* we invoke Mary—because all go to Christ through her. For just as the neck enters into active cooperation with the head, del Moral reasons, so Mary actively cooperates with God in the transmission of grace. This moral influence, as he calls it, Mary exerts over angels and men, over all men from Adam to the present, over the faithful and the infidels.

### E. Conclusion

It would be incorrect to say that Franciscan theologians have attributed privileges to our Queen. They have not. Searching Scripture and tradition they have but discovered them. That is why the doctrines of Mary's absolute predestination, co-redemption and mediation are not exclusively Franciscan in origin.

We have, however, received into our ke-

not Mary the Queen of our Order? Happily the present generation of Franciscans is alive to its vocation and heritage. But there is still much to be done. If the universal mediation of Mary is almost universally accepted in the Church, there still remains the task of explaining the full nature of this mediation as well as the promotion of the dogmatic definition of this privilege. Besides this, there is the doctrine of Mary's Queenship, which needs study, development and promotion.

Let us conclude this *Florilegium* with the prayer of our Father Francis to his Queen, a prayer that belongs to every Franciscan heart:

Holy Virgin Mary, there was never anyone like you born in the world among women! Daughter and handmaiden of the most high King, our Father in Heaven. Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ. Spouse of the Holy Ghost! With the archangel Saint Michael, and all the Virtues of Heaven, and all the saints, pray for us at the throne of your beloved most holy Son, our Lord and Master.

Fr. Geoffrey Bridger

## THE HOLINESS OF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

The Marian Year should be of special interest for us as followers of Saint Francis. To spread glory and love to Mary has ever been one of our most noble tasks. The beginnings of this noble task can certainly be found in our Father Francis. Where could one find a more beautiful summary of Mary's glory and prerogatives than in his Salutation to the Blessed Virgin?

Among the sons of Francis certainly John Duns Scotus stands high among the promoters of Mary's glory and prerogatives, especially by his teaching on the Immaculate Conception. What is more,

we hope to see this defender of Mary enrolled in the list of the Saints. But really, this is of secondary importance. John Duns Scotus achieved his holiness by following Francis. This, too, is our life's work. A brief sketch of some of the more outstanding incidents in his life will show how perfectly John Duns Scotus followed Francis, and thus give us an example to follow.

### Early Life

*Quot capita, tot sententiae* could easily be said of the chronological and, to a certain extent, the biographical data concerning Duns Scotus. Many of his biographies, especially in their chronology, are incorrect in view of recent scientific research.

John Duns Scotus, according to this research, was born in 1265-6 in or very near the town of Duns, Scotland. He was probably the son of one Ninian Duns and the nephew of Elias Duns, Vicar General of the Franciscans in Scotland. His parents were middle class landholders and farmers. Of his childhood we have few details.

An important event in his early life took place in the year 1278. In that year the Franciscan Province of Scotland was established and Elias Duns became its first Provincial. After the Chapter Duns Scotus' uncle took the young boy with him to the Franciscan Friary at Dumfries. Here he continued his education which had been started at Haddington. Scotus, being only twelve years old, was not old enough to enter the Order. These years prior to his entry into the Order he spent in study at Dumfries.

When old enough, Duns Scotus received the Franciscan habit, probably in 1281. He realized what it meant to be a Franciscan, for before he entered the Order he used to visit different monasteries around his native land. Here he observed the life of the monks of his time. But it was the humility, the poverty and literal observance of the Gospel which finally attracted him to the Friars. Duns Scotus was ordained March 17, 1291, in the church of Saint Andrew at Northampton by Oliver Sutton, Bishop of Lincoln. The rest of his life he spent as a teacher in England, France and Germany.

Several incidents in the life of John Duns Scotus show his extraordinary holiness and point out how this intellectual giant could also be a faithful follower of St. Francis.

*Prayer Life*

Although John Duns Scotus was of great intellectual ability, still he had difficulties in his studies. For this reason he sought from God and this was how his prayer was answered. One day, he had fallen asleep under a tree in the garden, the Mother of God appeared to him in a dream. She encouraged him to continue his studies and promised him that he would eventually master the sacred sciences. In return she asked him to make use of his knowledge to promote her glory and to defend her privileges. Duns Scotus' entire life shows how well he carried this out.

The life of this great doctor was raised to such a degree of contemplation that even his studies were a constant prayer. Prayer was the source of his knowledge. To prove this, we need only consider some of the sublime prayers which he composed throughout his philosophical and theological treatises. A further example of his extraordinary prayer could be seen during his defence of the Immaculate Conception at Paris. On the day fixed for the controversy, Duns Scotus, Mary's dauntless champion, putting all his trust in God and in His glorious Mother, knelt before a statue of the Queen of Heaven and addressed her: *Dignare me laudare te, sacrata*. Tradition has it that the statue leaned forward to show that his prayer had been answered.

All of this should show us how Duns Scotus kept the exhortation of his blessed Father Francis that the Friars "strive above all to have the spirit of the Lord and His holy operation, to pray continually to Him with a pure heart."

*Poverty*

John Duns Scotus' whole life was one of the highest poverty. When he travelled he took nothing with him. On his journey from Cologne to Paris he did not ride, but begged his way and fully avoided making himself known to those who gave him hospitality. His biographers make special mention of the point that Duns Scotus had the correct notion behind the Franciscan vow of poverty, namely, that it is not something merely negative, but is a positive act of conformity to Christ.

*Apostolic Zeal*

We have few records about Duns Scotus' preaching. But the following is an incident which should show that he must have been quite popular. One day, when he was preaching, there was such a crowd that all could not see him. God showed how pleasing Duns Scotus was to Him by raising him off the ground. And in this manner he preached to the people.

Another incident shows how he was able to bring the word of God even to the unlettered. Scotus was walking one day through a field in England, when he met a peasant who was blaspheming while sowing seed. The saintly friar asked him why he did not sow for eternity by offering his toil and trouble to God instead of losing his soul by his blasphemy. The peasant replied that he did not bother about his salvation, since God had foreseen whether he would go to heaven or not, and therefore there was nothing he could do about it. Duns Scotus then showed him how illogical his reasoning was by asking him why he went to the trouble of sowing seed, since God had foreseen whether it would be a good or a bad crop. The man then realized his mistake and promised to live a better life.

Saint Francis was ever obedient and reverent toward the Chair of Peter. John Duns Scotus is well known for his teaching on the supremacy of the Holy See and the infallibility of the Pope. During the English Reformation his works were destroyed because of his teaching on this point. It was during this period that he received the title "Hercules of the Papists." It is true that believing in something and writing great dissertations on it are no proof of holiness. It is the practical consequences which are all important. Duns Scotus carried his belief into action. He was exiled from France because he favored the Pope instead of Philip the Fair.

In reference to prelates within the Order St. Francis tells us: "The Friars, who are subject, must remember that, for God's sake, they have renounced their own will. Wherefore I firmly command them to obey their Ministers in all things which they have promised the Lord to observe." Duns Scotus' departure for Cologne gives us a good example of his perfect obedience. In 1307 the Minister General sent an obedience to Duns Scotus, telling him to go to Cologne. Scotus was walking near the friary at Paris when the Minister General

the letter from the Minister General. He read the letter and immediately started to leave for Cologne as the letter commanded. The Friars begged him to go back to the friary to bid farewell to his brothers. Duns Scotus replied that the letter told him to go to Cologne and that it did not tell him to return to the friary to bid farewell. Without further ado, Scotus started for Cologne.

### Death

Duns Scotus died at Cologne. The traditional date given for his death is Nov. 8, 1308. Many and varied are the legends concerning his death. The most outstanding among these is that he was buried while in ecstasy. But this legend is based on accounts which appeared about a century later and hence are hardly reliable. Other than the fact that his death was probably sudden, we know nothing about it. Perhaps research will clear up this point for us.

It is very evident that Scotus had impressed his contemporaries by his extraordinary holiness as well as by his learning. This is easily seen from the place where he was buried. Scotus was not buried in the cemetery of the Friars, but in the choir of the Franciscan Church at Cologne. There is no apparent reason for this extraordinary holiness. Thus we see that he who was followed by a leader and master by countless students, began to be venerated as a saint as soon as he died. May the day soon dawn on which John Duns Scotus will be raised to the honors of the altar!

Fr. Valentine Young, O.F.M.

## SAINT ANTHONY AND THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY

In the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore there is a beautiful mosaic of the coronation of Our Lady. The artist, Jacopo di Torso, places Saint Anthony of Padua in the foreground as the official herald of the Assumption. And very rightly so, for Saint Anthony was among the first outstanding exponents of this prerogative of our Blessed Lady.

In the discussions preceding the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption in 1950, citations from our Saint, who had been raised to the rank of Doctor of the Universal Church in 1946, were frequently used by theologians as proofs. So outstanding was Saint Anthony's defense of the Assumption that in *Munificentissimus Deus*, the Papal Bull declaring the Assumption a dogma, His Holiness Pope Pius XII states: "Among the holy writers who at that time employed statements and various images and analogies of Sacred Scripture to illustrate and to confirm the doctrine of the Assumption, which they piously believed, the Evangelical Doctor Saint Anthony of Padua holds a special place."<sup>1</sup> The Holy Father then continues with a quotation from Saint Anthony in defense of the Assumption.

How did Saint Anthony, styled by a biographer as the second "Marian Doctor," merit to be quoted in the Papal Definition of the Assumption? Why was he such a staunch defender of the Assumption? The answer can be found in his love of the Blessed Virgin, for it was from this love that he derived the unction of his Mariology. So strong was this love, so much did his life center completely around the Virgin that his life has been called a *vita Mariana*, a "Marian life."

For the origin of his devotion to Our Lady we must go back to Saint Anthony's birth, which tradition places on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1195. He was baptized in the Church of Saint Mary in Lisbon and placed under the protection of the Immaculate Heart. As a youth St. Anthony dedicated his virginity to his Lady Queen.

On August 14, 1225, while he was staying at the Franciscan Friary in Toulouse, France, Saint Anthony was faced with a dilemma because of his strong belief in the Assumption. If he attended the community recitation of Prime, he would have to listen to the reading of the Martyrology, which at the time described the Assumption as an apocryphal legend. This, he felt, would be giving tacit approval to something which he could not in conscience accept. If he did not attend, he would be disobeying the Rule. His problem was solved when our Blessed Lady appeared to him clothed in the radiance of

<sup>1</sup>Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, as quoted by Marion Habig, O.F.M., in *Everyman's Saint*.



heavenly splendour and with a voice of ineffable sweetness. "Be assured, my son, that this body of mine, which has been the Ark of the Word Incarnate, has been preserved from the corruption of the grave. Be equally assured that three days after my death I was carried upon the wings of Angels to the right hand of the Father of God where I reign as Queen."<sup>2</sup>

Of special interest is the last phrase, the last word which the Lady spoke to Saint Anthony in this vision: "I reign as Queen." We shall examine parts of Saint Anthony's masterful sermon on the Assumption, in which the Queenship of Mary is emphasized. For Saint Anthony, as to all Franciscans, the Queenship of Mary is a logical sequel to her Assumption. To us these two great prerogatives form an inseparable idea, for in the seventh joy of the Franciscan Crown we meditate on Mary's Assumption and Coronation as Queen of Heaven and earth.

### Mary's Queenship

Saint Anthony reasoned thus concerning Mary's prerogatives. They followed each other logically. The Immaculate Conception was a preparation for, a prelude to Mary's Divine Maternity. The Divine Maternity was the *ratio theologica*, the theological reason for the Assumption. The glory for which Christ prepared Mary in the Assumption was her coronation as Queen of Heaven. The Coronation was the culmination of the Assumption, and the certain extent of all her prerogatives. In a few words, his line of reasoning is this: because of her Divine Maternity, Mary was assumed into Heaven and crowned as Queen.<sup>3</sup>

The first medium which Saint Anthony, surnamed the "Preacher of the Scriptures" and the "Ark of the Testament" Pope Gregory IX, uses to portray Mary's Queenship is Sacred Scripture.

<sup>2</sup>Marion Habig, O.F.M., *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup>"Truly the grace of Blessed Mary, which produced the Son through God the Father, was superior to every grace, and therefore on this day she merited to be crowned in Heaven." Antonius Maria Locatelli, *S. Antonii Pat. Sermones Dominicales in Solemnitatibus* (Patavii: 1895). Vol. II, p. 732.

Note: The translations of all quotations from Locatelli with a few minor changes can be found in Raphael M. Huber, O.F.M. Conv., "The Mariology of St. Anthony of Padua." Unless otherwise noted, all references to Locatelli are to the "Sermo Assumptione."

ture. Citing the words of Isaias (60, 13), *I will glorify the place of my feet*, the Evangelical Doctor explains: "The place of the feet of the Lord was the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom He derived His humanity; this place He glorified today because He exalted her above the choirs of Angels."<sup>4</sup>

Adapting the description of the coronation of King Solomon as related in the Canticle of Canticles (3, 11), Saint Anthony bids us come and see the diadem of heavenly glory with which Christ crowned His Mother on Assumption Day. Christ, Who was crowned by Mary with a diadem of flesh, has in turn crowned her with a diadem of celestial glory. Like the cypress, she now rises above all the Angels as Queen of Heaven. To help us visualize the heights of Mary's glory, our Saint compares her to the throne described by Ezechiel (1, 26). The living creatures are the saints. Over their heads is the firmament, or the angels. Over the angels is the throne, the Blessed Virgin; and sitting on the throne is her Son, Christ.<sup>5</sup> Next to Christ the King, Mary the Queen reigns over the angels and saints. Could the mystical theologian, Saint Anthony, have drawn an analogy more poetic, yet as concise?

A further reason for Mary's Queenship, according to Saint Anthony, whose writings contain explanations of every phase of Mariology, is her profound humility. He writes that "in the word of humility, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, she became the Queen of Heaven."<sup>6</sup>

Saint Anthony's second way of illustrating Mary's royalty is the use of several feminine characters of the Old Testament as types of Mary. He especially sees the Blessed Virgin prefigured as Queen in Esther and Sara.

Just as Esther was led to the throne room of King Assuerus, crowned Queen, and placed on a throne, so also Mary, the second Esther, after her Assumption into Heaven, was crowned Queen of Heaven by Christ, the new Assuerus, and placed on a starry throne.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Antonius M. Locatelli, *op. cit.*, p. 730.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 732-33.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 732.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 731-732.

Interpreting the name Sara as "sovereign" and "burning" Saint Anthony calls Mary "our glorious Virgin, our Sovereign Queen, who was enkindled like a coal by the fire of the Spirit."<sup>8</sup>

The third manner in which the Biblical Doctor professes Lady's sovereignty is the use of various names. Naturally the name Saint Anthony uses is Mary. Among the interpretations of the name he lists Lady, or Queen, its literal meaning in Syriac.

He also styles her Princess and Queen, Princess because she was of royal descent, Queen because in the Assumption she was elevated above the choirs of Angels, patriarchs, prophets, and saints in the Kingdom of Heaven, crowned with a royal diadem, and placed on a throne of Eternal Light. The word Queen (*Domina*) occurs frequently in Saint Anthony's sermons.

In his sermon on the Assumption our Doctor also calls Mary the "Ark of Noah." The Saint explains that just as Noah's ark was to rest on top of Mount Ararat, "so likewise Mary, at the end of her life, was taken up into Heaven to rest and to reign for all eternity over the choirs of Angels."<sup>9</sup>

Lastly Saint Anthony designates his Queen as "Star of the Sea." Contrasting angels and men, he states that the angels, safe on the shores of eternity, salute their Queen: *Ave, gratia plena*. We humans, however, floundering in the bitter sea of life, use the invocation *Ave Maris Stella*, for Mary is to illuminate our course as the "Morning Star" and guide us until we reach the safe harbor of eternity where she will be our Queen. In exultation Saint Anthony exclaims: "What is Mary but a star of the Sea?"<sup>10</sup>

The Saint composed this beautiful prayer to the Star of the Sea as the conclusion of one of his sermons:

"We pray thee, therefore, O Queen, our hope, that like a Star of the Sea thou radiate thy light to us, tossed about here below in the tempest of the sea; guide us to the haven; strengthen us in the hour of death with the protection of thy presence, so that through the grace of Him, Whom thou didst have the honor to bear and nurse,

<sup>8</sup>"Sermo In Nativitate Domini," *ibid.*, p. 744.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 730.

<sup>10</sup>"Sermo In Annuntiatione Sanctae Mariae," *ibid.*, p. 836.

we may merit to pass from this prison on earth to an ineffable joy in Heaven above. Amen."<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

Someone has said of Saint Anthony that "on his lips dogma became devotion." This is especially true of his Mariology. So ardent was our Saint in proclaiming the praises of the Virgin that his sermons are literally saturated with references to his Queen, with "clearcut and positive declarations on the mysteries and prerogatives of the Queen of Heaven."<sup>12</sup> Because of the pre-eminence of his Marian doctrine Saint Anthony ranks next to Saint Bernard as Mary's champion. Yet this humble Friar's Mariology was not confined to his doctrine alone—"On his lips dogma became devotion." His Marian doctrine was the basis of his intense devotion to his Mother and Queen, a devotion which permeated his entire life and death. For he not only lived a "Marian life," he also died a "Marian death."

On Friday, June 13, 1231, the Wonder-Worker lay dying in the convent of the Poor Clares at Arcella, outside Padua. After confessing and receiving Holy Viaticum, Saint Anthony began with great devotion to sing his favorite hymn to the Blessed Virgin, "O Gloriosa Domina." Thus invoking the assistance of the Queen who is exalted above the stars, that she who is the resplendent gate of Heaven, would herself give him entrance there, the glorious Saint went forth to meet his Queen. He was buried in the Church of Saint Mary in Padua.

The hymn which Saint Anthony sang at his death is better known to us in its revised form, "O Gloriosa Virginum." In the revision of the Breviary made by Pope Saint Pius V in 1568, the idea of Mary's Queenship was completely left out of this hymn. The Dominican Breviary, however, still retains the original version, which Fr. Marion Habig, O. F. M., has beautifully rendered into English:

O glorious Lady, fairest Queen,  
Exalted high in Heav'n above,

<sup>11</sup>"Sermo In Dominica II In Quadragesima," *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., "St. Anthony the Theologian," an address delivered at the Commemorative Ceremonies of St. Anthony of Padua, Dominican Church, Catholic University, Washington, D.C., 1946.

The great Creator, mighty Lord  
 By thee was nursed with mother's love.  
 What sinful Eve had lost for us,  
 By thy dear Son thou didst restore;  
 The Gate of Heaven thou hast been made,  
 That we may entrance find and weep no more.  
 Through thee the Savior came to us,  
 To be our guiding Light and King.  
 To Christ, our Life, of Virgin born,  
 Ye ransomed peoples praises sing.<sup>13</sup>

A most fitting conclusion to this consideration of Saint Anthony Mariology is the Prayer to the Queen of Heaven with which he concluded his sermon on the Assumption, and to which the Holy Father has attached for a limited time an indulgence of 500 days, and a plenary indulgence once a month under the usual conditions if it is recited daily. With the glorious Saint Anthony, who so ardently sang the praises of his Lady Queen in life and in death, let us pray:

"We beseech you, Queen, glorious Mother of God, exalted above the choirs of angels, to fill the vessel of our heart with the grace of Heaven. Make it resplendent with the gold of wisdom, fortify it with your mighty strength, adorn it with the precious stones of your virtues. Shower down on us, O blest Olive Tree, the oil of mercy and with it cover up our many sins, so that we may merit to be elevated to the heights of heavenly glory, there to be in bliss with the blessed, through the mercy of Jesus Christ, your Son, Who exalted you (this day) above the choirs of angels, crowned you with the diadem of royalty, and placed you on the throne of light eternal, to Whom be honor and glory for all eternity. Let the whole Church respond, Amen. Alleluia."<sup>14</sup>

Frater Antonellus Ostdiek, O.F.M.

## ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION

### Part II. Positive Signs Of A Vocation

By assigning to the Ministers Provincial the ultimate choice of candidates, St. Francis thereby implies and requires prudence on their part. Or to use the phrase of St. Bonaventure, they must be expert fishermen, knowing which are good fish in the catch of Christ, and which are poor and to be rejected.<sup>1</sup> Hence the importance of studying the positive and negative signs of vocation, to know the mind of the Church.

The positive signs are the totality of gifts bestowed by Divine Providence. Thus Father Pacificus Perantoni: "Divine vocation is the invitation our Lord gives to that state which is more suited to each soul. Vocation is a gift of God. Divine providence disposes the souls for it not only with the supernatural gifts of grace but also with the gifts and endowments of nature, because in everything it does Providence always wisely accomplishes its ultimate plan, arranging its gifts, whether of nature or of grace so that the plan will be achieved."<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of ecclesiastical documents, however, we make a distinction between the positive signs of a priestly vocation and those demanded for religious life.

#### 1. Signs for the Priesthood

Pope Pius XI sums these up in his encyclical on the priesthood when he writes: "This (a true priestly vocation) is not established so much by some inner feeling or devout attraction, which may sometimes be absent or hardly perceptible; but rather by a right intention in the aspirant, together with a combination of physical, intellectual and moral qualities which make him fitted for such a state of life. He must look to the priesthood solely from the noble motive of consecrating himself to the service of God and the salvation of souls; he must likewise have, or at least strive earnestly to acquire, solid piety, perfect purity of life and sufficient knowledge such as We have explained on a previous page. Thus he shows that he is called by God to

<sup>1</sup>*Expositio Super Regulam* c. II, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Our Vocation*, ed. cit., p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup>Antonius M. Locatelli, *op. cit.* p. 733.

For the indulgence see: *Franciscan Herald and Forum* (February, 1950), p. 63.

the priestly state."<sup>3</sup> All of this constitutes the "*canonica idoneitas*" of which the Bishop must have positive proofs before Sacred Order (can. 974, 3).

The following, therefore, are the positive signs of a priestly vocation:

(a) *Right intention*: for the service of God and the salvation of souls. Not, as Pius XI goes on to point out, for temporal and earthly gains, as a mere career, etc.

(b) *Physical qualities* making one fit for the priestly work. The candidate need not be a perfect physical specimen, but his general physical health must be such that he can stay on the job, so to speak. Authors especially warn authorities concerning diseases of the eyes and ears, since these organs are so important for studies and priestly work; likewise heart or lung trouble. And, of course, canon law specifies the norm regarding defects of body (canon. 984, 2°). In this regard, also, one must consider the family background, carefully watch for history of mental affliction, hysteria, etc.<sup>4</sup>

(c) *Intellectual fitness*. There should be positive evidence of sufficient talent, common sense and good judgment, a spirit of study. These may be hard to judge in adolescents, but seminary work in the classroom and examinations, etc., will reveal much. Here too the I.Q. is not the only test, for the stress ought to be on common sense and good judgment. A man possessed of careful judgment will make a good priest, even though he is not top man in his class in intellectual accomplishments. A spirit of study is a requisite too, since laziness is definitely a negative sign of a vocation.

(d) *Moral fitness*. Virtue, natural and supernatural, is absolutely required in the candidate for the priesthood. Under this, we embrace general character traits: normalcy of character (reasonable, cheerful, open, manly, able to get along well with others) . . . a steady, practical desire to acquire the perfection demanded by the priesthood. . . a spirit of genuine prayerfulness (not following the schedule only) . . . basic charity toward others, for a man who is selfish can hardly be a zealous priest. . . true spirit of obedience and faith, etc. .

<sup>3</sup>Encyclical, NCWC, ed., p. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. esp. G. Vromant, "De Signis Negativis Vocationis Sacerdotalis," *Periodica*, XXII (1922), 190.

a genuine habit of holy purity. . . In short, of all the virtues that make a real man of God.<sup>5</sup>

In this, we do not demand that the seraphic youth be a saint from the first year of high school onwards; but we must demand that he show basic virtues and strive to acquire the others as they are taught to him by word and example. In fine, generosity and earnestness are important in the young, to lead them to the heights.

## 2. Signs or Requirements for Religious Life

The positive signs for religious life are stated in canon 538:

(a) *The Catholic faith*. Under this, one might discuss the question of admission of converts: how soon after their conversion should they be allowed to enter a seminary or an Order?

(b) *Lack of any impediments*. The Rule, Constitution and Canon Law list the impediments, some invalidating reception, others rendering it illicit.

(c) *Right intention*. The candidate should have the desire to obtain the end of the Institute: the pursuit of perfection through the Rule, vows, way of life of the Order. He may also have some particular and secondary end in view, though I think he should be cautioned that he may not be assigned later to the work he had in mind: e.g., missions, preaching, teaching, etc. On the other hand, if he enters religion chiefly as a means to the priesthood, it were well that he had his concepts set right.

(d) *Fitness to bear the onera of the Institute*. In general, this is the same as the fitness for the priesthood, but should also include fitness to bear the burdens and strain of religious life. Thus, a man may make a good diocesan priest, but be poor material for religious life because he is a poor community mixer, etc.

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.

<sup>5</sup>J. A. Laubacher, S.S., "Helps Toward Determining Vocations in the Major Seminaries," NCEA Bulletin, vol. 44 (1947), pp. 94 ff. Cf. also Archbishop R. Cushing, "The American Priest," *Eccl. Rev.*, 116 (1947), 161-170.

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF FRANCISCAN TEACHING SISTERS

The Third Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods is to be held at Sacred Heart Academy, Main St., Buffalo 21, N.Y., November 26-27 (the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving). Under the auspices of the Franciscan Educational Conference and at the invitation of Mother M. Gonzaga, O.S.F., Provincial Superior of the Holy Name Province of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, the meeting will be devoted to the topic "Mary in the Seraphic Order." This provided the theme for the Friars' division of the F.E.C. at Watkins Glen, N.Y., August 16-17.

After the solemn celebration of the Holy Sacrifice each day at 9:00 (St. Benedict's Church, Main St. and Eggert Road), the Sisters delegates will gather in the auditorium of the Academy to hear and discuss both theological and popular papers touching on Our Lady, particularly as she has been loved and honored and her prerogatives explained and defended in the Franciscan Order. Afternoon meetings will be devoted to sectional topics in Mariology for the elementary, secondary and college levels, plus a division on nursing education.

In summary the program will be as follows: Friday, at 10:00 A.M. a general assembly on the Position of Mary in the Franciscan Theology, Synthesis, and Marian Doctrine of Franciscan Saints. During the lunch hour two showings will be available of a vocational film on the Franciscan Teaching Brothers. In the afternoon (1:30), the sectional meetings. In elementary education: "Our Lady in the History of our Country." Secondary education: "Marian Education in Franciscan Schools," and "Mary in Franciscan Literature." The College division will be devoted to a discussion on Mariology in theological texts for colleges, while the section of Nursing Education will consider "Marian Joy in Nursing." A general assembly will follow at 4:00, to consider Mary as the Queen of the Seraphic Order and to hear reports of the International Marian Congress held at Rome in late October.

All of Saturday morning's general assembly will be given over to a Symposium on the Franciscan Crown of the Seven Joys. The speakers will consider the history of the devotion, the indulgences attached to it for Religious and laypeople, the spiritual value of the Crown in our daily life, and problems and questions that may arise concerning its use. In the last general session (1:30) one paper will delineate the devotion

of Saint Francis to Our Lady, and the final paper will consider "The Role of Mary in the Spiritual Formation of the Franciscan Religious."

After a summary and a report on resolutions, the delegates will adjourn once more to the church, to assist at Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament and to hear a few words from Bishop Joseph A. Burke, D.D., of Buffalo.

Information on the Conference has been sent to the different Franciscan Sisterhoods of the United States and Canada. Further information may be obtained by writing to Sister M. Georgia, O.S.F., Dean, Rosary Hill College, 4380 Maine Street, Buffalo 21, N.Y. Do not write to the Academy. Names of delegates should also be sent to Sister M. Georgia; the Sisters will kindly indicate whether they will be over-night guests and will need accommodations arranged by the local committee. Over-night guests are asked to pay a fee of \$10.00, which will include meals for both days; other guests may also obtain their noon meal at the Academy (\$1.00).

It is hoped that as many Franciscan Communities as possible will avail themselves of this Marian Year opportunity to discuss what proved so interesting a topic at the Friars' meeting, "Mary in the Seraphic Order." The Proceedings will be printed, perhaps as a joint-volume with the August meeting.

The Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting (1952) are available from the Franciscan Herald Press, 1434 West 51st St., Chicago 9, Illinois (\$1.00). The Proceedings for 1953, on "Theology in Daily Life," are on sale at the Seraphic Press, 1501 South Layton Blvd., Milwaukee 15, Wisc. (\$2.00; \$2.25 postpaid). They will provide important and influential additions to a community library. Copies of the Friars' F.E.C. Proceedings may be obtained from Fr. Sebastian Miklas, OFM Cap., Capuchin College, Washington 17, D.C.

## A DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CATHOLICS IN CHINA

The Union of Prayer for the Church of China, established at the College of Saint Peter the Apostle in Rome, observed May 27 as a day of special prayer for the persecuted Catholics in China. The ceremonies were held in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, where

Lady, Help of the Roman People, is greatly venerated. It was a reproduction of this image that was first venerated in China, having been brought there by the early Franciscan missionaries. All exiled Chinese and foreign missionaries and friends of China in Rome were invited by letter to attend the ceremonies. The appeal for prayer and sacrifice, however, is limited to the friends of China in Rome, but to all the faithful throughout the world. Our Catholic Brethren in China are undergoing a persecution of relentless cruelty and diabolical cleverness; it is our sacred duty to help them by prayer for the grace of perseverance, and to implore the divine Mercy that "these days may be shortened."

*Notitiae Franciscanae Missionariae IV, 1954, 4.*

## A LETTER FROM THE PERSECUTED CATHOLICS OF CHINA

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Without doubt you are quite well acquainted with the terrible struggles that have been ours for the past five years.

At the present moment our three and a half million Catholics are undergoing a fearful persecution on the part of the Communist government, for the sole reason that they have refused to break away from the Church of Rome and the Pope.

Bishops, priests, and laity—we have openly proclaimed our love for our country, but also our refusal to have a part in any attack on our Faith by means of favor shown to a schismatic church. For this reason an open and violent persecution has begun: imprisonments, endless questioning campaigns of calumny, popular trials, punishments of all sorts. . . .

Up to the present moment, by the grace of God, Catholic China is making every effort to remain worthy of the Mother Church of Rome and she rejoices in being able to bear testimony to Christ by her sufferings.

In our time of trial it is natural for us to turn to you, our fellow Catholics throughout the world, and to rely on you. *We beg you not to leave us alone in this terrible struggle*, but to uphold us by your prayers.

We ask you *now* to take part in our trials by offering for us your daily prayers and sufferings, so that striving together in the combat, may one day rejoice together in the triumph.

Your Catholic Brethren in China

## PRAYER FOR THE CATHOLICS OF CHINA

O eternal and all-powerful God, Comforter of the afflicted and Strength of those who suffer, grant that, by the intercession of the holy martyrs of China, Thy persecuted faithful may obtain strength in time of trial, peace in Thy service, and the grace to glorify Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

*COUNTED AS MINE.* Sister Mary Francis, P.C. Privately printed for the Poor Clare Nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Route 1, Box 285-C, Roswell, New Mexico. Pp. 32. \$1.00.

It is difficult to write an adequate review of a book of poetry, and it is still more difficult when that poetry appears in dramatic form. This is somewhat the case with *Counted as Mine*. There is so much here to claim a reviewer's attention—profoundly beautiful thought clothed in magnificent free-flowing poetry; solid dramatic structure; delicacy of approach; tenderness and sympathy of touch—one hardly knows where to begin. Briefly, the drama tells the story of Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe. As material for a Marian Year program (and for this purpose it was written) it offers everything a director could ask for. There is music and folk dance, verse-choirs and ballet, and fine opportunities for brilliant costuming. Best of all, for non-professional groups no outstanding histrionic ability is demanded for any of the principal roles—only a good speaking voice and ability to handle dramatic verse.

So much for the play in general. As for the poetry it seems best to offer a few samplings rather than attempt a description. Here are a few lines from the

opening chorus-dance: The God of the Tasselled Corn:

Praise the Little Maid who bore our Savior,

For she is fair as wheat-sheaves in the breeze.

Her lips are bright poinsettias in the winter;

Most gracious little Queen of hills and leas!

Sing to the sweetest Mother of our Savior!

She smiles like morning dew upon the leas.

Our little Queen likes Indians to honor Her tall, brave Son, with songs, and pray to Him.

She walks like gentle winds, and talks like water,

And never in her life did any sin.

The Holy Virgin Mary is our Mother,

And never in her life did any sin.

When Juan Diego, grieving over the death of his beloved wife Maria Lucia, first hears the Virgin calling his name, he is struck with wonderment:

My name was sturdy as my hut, and solid As skins against the wind. Why do I hear it

Fragile as flute-notes on this winter dawn?

I never knew my name is like a star!

My eyes are awakened by it, and my life Is shining like a thousand hunting knives!

I never knew...my name is like a star!  
I cannot find my fears!

Where is my sorrow—

Familiar friend of every winter dawn?

My fears are hidden in a maze of music,

My weariness is tangled up in stars.

Now let the sun-dial crumble; let the  
sand-glass

Splinter and scatter; let the corn meal  
stand

Unneeded and untended! All my living  
Is sweetly tangled in a mesh of stars.

Incidentally, the Roswell Clares have just completed a little building venture in the form of a much-needed chapel for their monastery. Our Lady of Guadalupe will surely be pleased to see *Counted as Mine* presented in her honor during the Marian Year and royalties used for the chapel dedicated to her.

#### DUNS SCOTUS HONORED AT COLOGNE

IN MANY ways this Jubilee Year of Our Lady has brought to the fore the figure of the Blessed John Duns Scotus, the pioneer champion of her Immaculate Conception in the schools of the early fourteenth century.

In Cologne, where Scotus died November 8, 1308, the relics of this Servant of God were given renewed veneration in the past few months. On May 14, His Eminence Cardinal Frings conducted an official recognition and re-authentication of the bones at the famous Cathedral where they had been preserved for the past decade since the destruction of the ancient Minoritenkirche. At that time he assigned an important part of the relics, a bone from the left arm to the Friars Minor, while the rest of the bones were retained

at the Cathedral until such time a original resting-place has been re- This latter task has been undertaken by the Friars Minor Conventual, who set December 8 for the return of the relic.

On the occasion of the translation of this major relic from the Cathedral to the church of the Friars Minor, a special celebration was held in the presence of the Cardinal himself, the Minister General of the Order, friars from Rome (including Fr. Charles Balic, head of the mission to edit the works of Duns Scotus), many Provincials from Germany, England, France, Belgium and Holland, as well as the Universities of Cologne and Bonn participated. After a Solemn Mass celebrated by the Most Reverend Augustin Sepinski, Minister General of the Order, an academic session was held by the University of Bonn. At the latter Doctor Auer, professor of theology at the University of Bonn, spoke on "The Theological Genius of John Duns Scotus." In the late afternoon, after devotion to the honor of Mary Immaculate and an appropriate sermon by the Guardian of the Friary, the relic was joyfully transferred to the crypt of the Church.

May these happy events be one important step toward the beatification and canonization of the Marian Doctor. Let us pray that he whose life was spent in spreading the knowledge of Christ's Primacy and Kingship and in defending the honor of His Immaculate Mother may soon be raised to the honor of the altars.

(Based on an article of Fr. Sophronius Clasen, OFM, in the *Kirchen-Zeitung* of Cologne.)

# the CORD

VOL. IV No. 12, DECEMBER, 1954

## CONTENTS

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE.....	354
<i>Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.</i>	
THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY.....	357
<i>Maximin Behnen, O.F.M.</i>	
SECURITY IN OBEDIENCE.....	363
<i>Sister Maura, O.S.F.</i>	
THE HEART OF HER GIVING.....	370
<i>Sister Mary Francis, P.C.</i>	
THE VENERATION OF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS.....	378
<i>Valentine Young, O.F.M.</i>	
ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION.....	382
<i>Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.</i>	



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## Saint Francis And The Crib

When the inner life is deep and is fraught with the love of it breaks out to the surface. If you have a fire in your heart your will glow. The interior ecstasy of love will burst into spontaneous song, as when David danced before the Ark, and Francis fiddled with two simple sticks because he could not contain his joy. With these sticks he created for himself a violin, and played in measure to his leaping heart. What lovely, childlike charm! He was like a young boy sailing paper boats and thinking that he is in reality admiring all the fleets that sail the seas. In the boy it is uninhibited fancy; in Francis is a creator in his own right, and the universe is his domain. Francis Thompson puts it:

"Then, O Earth, thou rang'st beneath me,  
Rocked to Eastward, rocked to Westward,  
Even with the shifted  
Poise and footing of my thought!  
I brake through thy doors of sunset,  
Ran before the hooves of sunrise,  
Shook thy matron tresses down in fancies  
Wild and wilful."

But in the man, it is sheer rapture. It is something like that inspired exultancy which brought the burning invitation cascading from the lips of the Psalmist (Ps. 150):

*Praise him with sound of trumpet, praise him with psaltery  
and harp.*

*Praise him with timbrel and dance, praise him with stringed  
instruments and organ.*

*Praise him with resounding cymbals, praise him with crash of  
cymbals: Let everything that breathes praise the Lord.*

In ardent love there is a world of serious make-believe when Francis swore fealty to his Lady Poverty, for to him she was very real. This was the reason too for his creation of the Christ in the crib, because he wanted to see with his own eyes this ineffable

of God, and hold in his arms the wonderful Child. Isaias might have done as much had he foreseen the full truth, and had he not so emphasized the majesty (Isa. 9:5):

*For a child is born to us,  
A son is given to us,  
And authority is upon his shoulder;  
And his name is called:  
Wonder-counsellor, Divine-hero,  
Father for ever, Prince of peace.*

But, where the Prophet saw majesty, there Francis saw unspeakable love. Therefore, the Prophet might well have exclaimed with a feeling of dread, *I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts* (Isa. 6:5), but Francis would cry out, "My God and my All!" and sweep him up into his arms.

Francis knew the full truth; he knew the wonder of this Child—God entering into the human race: the Creator come to walk among his creatures. He who is eternal in his divinity has a birthday according to his humanity. The Word of God becomes a wordless Infant. He who holds up the universe must himself be lifted up. He from whom humanity had fled away by sin, comes in loving pursuit. He whom we did not adore in his divinity, hopes we will love him in his humanity. So he was born in a cave and was laid in a manger. Shepherds heard of the wonder of this birth and came in haste, and held in their arms the true Lamb. The Lamb of God received his first welcome into this world in the arms of shepherds, though he himself came to shepherd us back into the arms of his Father. How could Francis not be in ecstasy at the thought of Christ's birth when it was cause of wondrous joy even to the angels, for whom you would think nothing more could be wonderful because they see God face to face? Yet, *suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*'Glory to God in the highest' (Lk. 2:13-14).*

Francis wanted all the lovely scene in pageantry: the grotto, the manger, the Bambino, the ox and the ass, and all of it surrounded with simple liturgy. A man does not play thus at make-believe except he is swept into it by a compelling love. One who was there



witnesses that as Francis was placing the child on the straw there appeared in his arms an Infant of wonderful beauty who seemed to sleep upon his heart. Francis wakened him by kissing him. . . .

"I should think that I would cry  
For my house all made of sky;  
I would look about the air,  
And wonder where my angels were."

Thus speaks Francis Thompson's *Little Jesus*. But this Babe smiled delightedly and began to stroke with love the bearded face of Francis. Amid the flickering candle-lights and the singing of simple Umbrian carols the people lived again the joy of the first Christmas night. Thompson says,

"And all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May;" but our Francis, because of his utter gayety over the Christmas feast, would bid us rub meat into the very walls and scatter grain on the wayside so that man and beast might rejoice together, for truly this is the sweet Lord of both man and beast.

Since that night on the cliffs of Greccio, the lovely pageantry has spread throughout the earth, and at every Christmas time Francis brings the world to its knees, between the ox and the ass to worship in a crib the Father's Son new from Mary's virgin womb. And according to the Franciscan mind, children should tell their elders, on this day, the story of that Baby Boy, or *have you never read,*

'Out of the mouth of infants  
and sucklings thou hast perfect praise'  
(Matt. 21:16).

Francis had a profound devotion to both extremes of Christ's life: the manger and the cross. We are apt to forget his love for the Infant, except at Christmas time, because we are so deeply impressed by the signature which the Crucified wrought in his living flesh when he pierced the Saint with the stigmata on the rocky cliffs of Mount Alverna. But it would be well if we were to remember more his sweet devotion to the Christmas Child. It is an excellent thing for a Friar Minor to be down on his knees with the little Babe, and thus remember that he is to be lowly and candid as a child, with

no complications in his character and no duplicity in his speech or actions, *for such is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 19:14). There too he must learn the engaging charm of complete simplicity which should be the mark of everyone who follows Francis. To us Francis bequeathed the manger and the cross, birth and death. We who often fall so far short of him in his absolute renunciation, and cannot follow him up the heights of Alverna to the piercing of the flesh, perhaps can climb to Greccio and gaze with love and wonderment on the face of a Child. Then, if we cannot shed our blood in heroism, at least we might succeed in shedding our pride, and that will be a great gain, and we can hope that Christ will reveal himself to us, for *cum simplicibus sermocinatio ejus* (Prov. 3:32). The Christmas crib is our devotion; we, above all, must cherish this beautiful Franciscan tradition which has come down to us over the centuries.

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.

## ADVENT ANTIPHONS

From Mary's sweet silence  
Come, Word mutely spoken.  
Pledge of our real life,  
Come, Bread yet unbroken.  
Seed of the Golden Wheat,  
In us be sown.  
Fullness of true light,  
Through us be known.  
Secret held tenderly,  
Guarded with love,  
Cradled in purity,  
Child of the Dove!  
Come!

## THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY ACCORDING TO CONRAD OF SAXONY

Not infrequently in the Middle Ages writers devoted their talents to singing the glories of Mary. The *Speculum Mariae*, which came from the pen of Friar Conrad of Saxony, was especially popular. A treatise on the first half of the Hail Mary<sup>1</sup> in eighteen lessons, it is a masterful combination of deep piety and extensive learning. For many years it was attributed to Saint Bonaventure, but today all critics agree that the author was Friar Conrad of Saxony.

Friar Conrad was a contemporary of Saint Bonaventure, dying five years after the Seraphic Doctor in 1279.<sup>2</sup> He was not without executive ability, as can be seen from the fact that for twenty-three years he governed the Province of Saxony, "wisely, religiously, and strictly," as we are told, holding that office at the time of his death. Just when Conrad wrote the *Speculum Mariae* is not known. Since the Franciscan stand on the Immaculate Conception was not clarified until some years after his death, Conrad does not mention it in his book. Quite humbly he introduces his masterpiece, saying in the words of Saint Augustine: "What am I to say of you with my poor talent, since whatever I might say of you would be short of the praise your veneration deserves?" Then he answers his own question by again quoting Saint Augustine: "Nevertheless we are forced to give praise to her, lest our silence prove us ungrateful."

Guided by the same sentiments, let us consider the Queenship of Our Lady as described by Friar Conrad; sometimes using simply his ideas, at other times his exact words.

We do maintain that Mary is Queen, the Sovereign Lady of the Universe, but merely to maintain a statement does not make it a fact. Evidence is needed to support our statement, and to present the evidence of Mary's Queenship is our aim. First, let us probe into

<sup>1</sup>Only the first half, exclusive of the Name of Jesus was used at the time the work was composed. The book, published in the original Latin at Quaracchi, 1904, as the *Speculum B.M.V.*, has been translated as "The Mary Mirror" by Fr. James Meyer, O.F.M., in *The Franciscan Herald and Forum*, vols. XXVI-XXVIII (Oct. 1947 to July 1949). All quotations are taken from this translation, which also contains references to the Fathers.

<sup>2</sup>J. Meyer, Introductory Note to "Mary Mirror," FHF XXVI (1947), 299.

the Old Testament and uncover the many figures of Mary's Queenship it contains; next, let us consider the dominion which Mary must have in order to be Queen; and finally, let us examine the sovereign attributes of Mary, the Queen.

### *Figures of Mary's Queenship in the Old Testament.*

The noble Esther is a figure of Mary in a two-fold way. First, because when she was escorted to the apartments of King Assuerus, she found favor with him more than any other woman, and the King of Babylon placed the royal crown upon her head, making her queen (Esther 2:16). Thus Esther is a proto-type of Mary, who found favor with the King of Kings, who crowned her Queen.

Queen Esther again foreshadows the Queenship of Mary, when she is described as leaning on one maid, while a second maid carries her train (Esther 15:6-7). Conrad interprets this, saying: "Understand that our royal Lady Mary is meant by the royal lady Esther. The two maids, whose royal mistress Mary is, are the angelic and the human creature world."<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, we read in the Book of Canticles: *Who is she that goes forth thus like the rising dawn?* (Cant. 6:9) She that goes forth like the rising dawn is Mary. The dawn is perhaps the most perfect figure of Mary. For as the light of dawn emanates from the sun, so Mary received grace from God; and as the dawn ushers in the sun from which it has its brightness, so Mary gave birth to the Divine Sun from whom she had her being; and as the dawn becomes day and reigns in the heavens with the sun, so Mary, made bright by the Sun she brought forth, reigns supreme, side by side with the Eternal Sun.

Lastly, in the Third Book of Kings (10:18) we read: *King Solomon made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with the finest gold.* King Solomon here typifies Almighty God, and Conrad emphatically states: "It is she (Mary) who is that glorious throne."<sup>4</sup> The Psalmist adds: *His throne is like the sun before me, and like a moon*

<sup>3</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 47; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVI, p. 346; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

unchanging forever (Ps. 88:38). And again: *The Lord has prepared His throne in Heaven* (Ps. 102:19). The throne referred to each time is Mary as Queen, the seat on which the Divine King reigns forever.

These are just a few of the many figures in the Old Testament which are applicable to Mary as Queen. But, she who is called a Queen must exercise dominion. Let us examine the dominion of Mary.

### *Mary, Queen of Creation.*

"The two maids whose royal mistress Mary is, are the angels and the human creature world." Thus we see that Mary is Queen of all Creation, visible and invisible, angelic and human. Conrad distinguishes three ways in which Mary is First Lady of angels and men and these three ways are nature, grace, and glory.

First, Mary is Queen of Angels. The name Mary can mean light giving or enlightened, and Mary is truly the brightest light of creation because she brought forth the Eternal Ray, the Sun of Eternal Brightness. The Book of Wisdom states: *She is more beautiful than the sun and above all the stars. Compared with the light she is found purer than it* (Wisd. 7:29). Conrad takes the word "light" here to signify the angels who persevered as opposed to "darkness," the demons who fell. So Mary, when compared to "light," the glorious angels in heaven, "is found purer than it." To support this, Conrad quotes Anselm; "O blessed among women for you surpass the angels in purity."

In the example quoted earlier, that of Mary as prefigured Esther leaning on a maid who Conrad says indicates the angelic creation, Mary "leaning" on that maid signifies that she associated intimately with the angels, gives abundantly of her brilliance and glory to the angels, and at the same time rules over them with fullest power. Saint Jerome leaves no doubt in regard to Mary's ascendancy over the angels, saying: "To the rest it was given portions, but the fullness of grace was infused into Mary." Saint Augustine exclaims: "We call her truly the Queen of the heavens because she gave birth to the King of Angels!"

Mary, then, surpasses the Angels in nature, grace, and glory. In nature, because she bore the King of Angels; in grace, because

"the fullness of grace was infused into Mary;" and in glory, because "she surpasses the angels in purity," as the sun giving forth the Eternal Ray.

Secondly, Mary is Queen of Mankind. *Hail, full of grace!* Thus does the angelic messenger greet Mary. He announces to the world that she is full of grace and then adds that the Holy Spirit will come down upon her. Thus will Mary no longer be merely full of grace, but over-full and overflowing. Consider, if you can, the amount of grace Mary will possess. The Breviary addresses Mary saying that "He whom the universe could not contain, enclosed Himself in your womb when He was made man." Conrad then asks: "If, however, Mary's womb was so very spacious, how much more so her spirit? And if a capacity so measureless was full of grace, then indeed the grace that could fill to overflowing a capacity so great, must have been measureless!"<sup>5</sup>

Consider in how far Mary has surpassed also the nature of man, for it is beyond the nature of man that a virgin should conceive and bring forth a child. Not only did the Virgin Mary bear a child, but she bore the Son of God! "A thing," as Saint Jerome exclaims, "that nature could not do, nor the ordinary course of things experience, nor reason discover, nor the mind of man grasp; a thing to make the skies tremble, the earth stand amazed, and every creature in Heaven itself pause in admiration. . . ."

The Book of Proverbs says: *Many daughters have gathered up riches, but you have surpassed them all* (31:29). In glory Mary has surpassed all. "For she is the original virgin," as Conrad explains, "the mirror of confessors, the rose among the martyrs, she of whom the Apostles report and the prophets foretell, the daughter of the patriarchs, the queen of the angels."<sup>6</sup> As Saint Bernard remarks: "It is the unequaled glory and the unexampled prerogative of our Virgin Mary that she was found worthy to have one and the same Son in common with God the Father."

Mary then has ascendancy over all men as well as over the angels, for she surpasses all men in nature, grace, and glory. In

<sup>5</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 144; and Conradus, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVI, p. 346; and Conradus, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

nature, because she as a virgin bore the Son of God; in grace, because she was over-full of measureless graces; and in glory, because she "bore one and the same Son in common with God the Father."

Mention need hardly be made of Mary's dominion over the fallen angels and the souls of men in hell, because not only have we already shown Mary's dominion over all angels and men, but the words of Almighty God to the serpent when Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise leave no doubt as to Mary's dominion over the demons.

To sum up Mary's ascendancy over all creation, Conrad exclaims: "God could have made a greater world, God could have made a greater heaven, but God could not have made a greater mother than the Mother of God."<sup>7</sup> He adds: "The most peerless masterpiece of God is Mary."<sup>8</sup> No other work of the Lord can compare to our Queen, for *there was no such work made in any kingdom* (Ps. 147: 20).

#### *The Greatness of Mary's Queenship*

Conrad enumerates for us four qualities which determine, in proportion to the abundance or lack of these qualities, the greatness of a ruler: power, wisdom, wealth, and unfailingness or permanence. Consider now in how far Mary, our Queen, possessed these qualities of greatness.

The Archangel Gabriel said to Mary: *The Lord is with thee*. The Lord is with Mary in the most intimate way possible, "not only as Creator with creature, but also as child with mother."<sup>9</sup> Who is this Lord who is with Mary in the most intimate way? He is the Lord who is all-powerful, of whom the Psalmist says: *All things whatsoever He would, the Lord has accomplished in heaven, on earth, on the sea and in all the abysses* (Ps. 134:6); and in the Book of Esther (12:9): *O Lord, Almighty King, all things are subject to your sway and there is no one that can resist your will*.

The Lord who is all-wise, who knows all things that have been that are, and that will be. There is nothing that can be hidden of

<sup>7</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 268; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 47; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVIII, p. 15; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

kept secret from Him, which makes Saint Peter exclaim: *Lord, you know everything!* and the Psalmist declare: *There is no limit to His wisdom*.

The Lord who is all-wealthy, for all things visible and invisible are His property; the Lord of whom the Psalmist says: *Yours, O Lord, are the heavens, and yours is the earth*.

The Lord who is utterly unfailing: *of whose kingdom there shall be no end; the Lord shall reign forever and beyond that*.

This is the Lord, the all-powerful, all-wise, all-wealthy and all-unfailing Lord, who is with Mary. And so intimately is the Lord with Mary that Mary is utterly powerful, because He who is All-Power is with her. And Saint Anselm prays to her: "Help me in your utter power." Hence too, Mary is utterly wise, because the All-Wise is most intimately with her, causing Saint Anselm again to say: "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge repose in Mary." She is likewise utterly wealthy, because He who is All-Wealth is with her; and Saint Bernard addresses her: "O Mary, wealthy. . .beyond everyone else, when a little portion taken from your substance sufficed to pay the debts of all the world."<sup>10</sup> Lastly, Mary is utterly unfailing, since the Unfailing Lord is with her so intimately, causing Saint Bernard to say: "In you, O Mary, the angels find joy, the just find grace, and the sinners find pardon forevermore."

Thus we see the greatness of our Queen; we see that no other creature, angelic or human, ruler or subject, can compare to her, the Mother of God and Sovereign Lady of the World. It well behooves us then to pray to our Queen, Mary, in the words of Fr. Conrad of Saxony:

"Oh, most mighty Lady, be our helper in our helplessness. Lady of such utter wisdom, be our adviser in our ignorance. Lady of such utter bounty, be there to enrich us in our needs. Lady of such unfailing virtue, be there in our failing strength to establish us forever in all that is good."

Maximin Behnen, O.F.M.

<sup>10</sup>James Meyer, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 237; and Conradus a Saxonia, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 117-119.

## SECURITY IN OBEDIENCE

Father Guelfi was puzzled. He knew that Sister Veronica was longing intensely for the moment to leave this world and that she was, without a doubt, prepared to go. He himself had administered the last sacraments on June 7, and ever since her agony had begun, three hours ago, around midnight of June 8, he had been praying with her constantly. This was surely that moment to which she was referring those years ago when she confided to her director that it had been revealed to her that she still had thirty-three years to spend on earth, and, also, that her last illness would last for thirty-three days. This was the thirty-third day since she had been stricken with apoplexy; yet, there she lay, looking at him as if begging for something, her eyes pleading for understanding. Then he remembered: Sister Veronica had often remarked to him that she wanted even her death to be an act of obedience. So he commanded, "Sister Veronica, if it pleases God that you should go to Him, leave this world." In immediate assent, she turned to include all the Sisters gathered there in a loving glance, as if in benediction, and bowing her head, she died. Thus was climaxed in this final act of submission her life of study to do only the Will of God. She was sixty-seven years of age, having lived fifty of those years as a religious.

Hers was a life rich in evidence of the peculiar favor of heaven, for wonderful things, extraordinary things, began happening to her at an extremely early age. This youngest of seven daughters, baptized Ursula, was born to Benedetta Mancini and Francesco Giuliani on December 27, 1660; and when only five months old, on the feast of the Trinity, June 12, she climbed down from her mother's lap and walked unaided, never having taken a single step before—to a picture of the Trinity, to stand gazing at it with a look of rapture. Her mother was amazed, but no more so than was the maid, Alexandra, who, the following year, took the little Ursula with her when she went shopping for oil. Ursula was then only a year and a half old, but when the shopkeeper attempted to use a false measure, the baby cried out very distinctly, "Do justice, for God sees you." The feeling was general in the family—with the parents, sisters, servants—that the little one was something very special; everyone was definitely partial to her and, for a time, it looked as though she would be badly spoiled. She was generally irritable when things were not to her liking, stamping her little foot at the slightest provocation.

The home of the Giuliani in Mercatello being a religious one, pictures and religious articles to toys, and was only three years old when she

up her own altar before a favorite picture of the Blessed Mother with the Divine Child in her arms. Not only did Ursula herself spend much of her time decorating it—using the ribbons and ornaments given for her own adornment—but she insisted that her older sisters do likewise; and if they appeared unwilling to join in her devotions, Ursula pounded her little fist on a box, keeping it up until they had to give in. One day, engrossed in their lace-making, they completely ignored her summons, and Ursula was incensed; her sisters were slighting God—they preferred to make lace rather than to pray. She stamped over to the frame on which they were working and upset the whole apparatus. Her determination was just as firm with the objects of her piety. When the Blessed Virgin did not immediately reach down from the picture and put the Babe in her arms to be caressed when she asked for Him, Ursula stacked one chair on another in her attempt to reach up to take Him by force. Naturally, both Ursula and the chairs toppled over; but her bruises were Mary's responsibility and, while she was scolding the Blessed Mother, she told her so, demanding to have her bruises healed—and they were.

Her love for the poor was most extraordinary in such a child; it was a driving force. She was still very small when one day she came upon a little boy almost destitute of clothing. Feeling compelled to help, yet for the moment unable to secure anything more appropriate, she untied the apron she was wearing and gave it to the boy to cover himself. In itself, the apron was, to be sure, not much of a help; but the act was certainly indicative of a beautiful spirit, a spirit which prompted her to put something aside from almost every meal, so that when the hungry and so-called unfortunates passed in the streets she would have something of her very own to give them—which she did in her most engaging manner. The engaging manner soon gave way, however, when the recipients of her bounty failed to evince the piety which she expected of them. It happened once when a hungry little boy showed himself reluctant to recite the Ave Maria before he ate Ursula's gift; her zeal broke bounds and she gave the lad such a push that it sent him tumbling down the stairs—without hurt, however.

Over and above this love for God's poor was her hunger for suffering. Benedetta used often to read the lives of the saints to her daughters; her youngest was always completely absorbed by these tales, and when their sufferings were described, she was intrigued to the point of imitation. St. Rose of Lima held a special fascination for her, and Ursula sought to follow Rose's example in voluntarily suffering identical pain and in dispensing with remedies. One day when she was with

which her mother was cutting a nail on the child's foot slipped and made a nasty cut, the three-year old Ursula quickly controlled her reaction and restrained her tears so well that her mother was deceived into believing it needed no care or medication.

This pious mother, when she realized that she was dying, was really concerned about the five daughters whom she was leaving behind. The two who had preceded her in death were safe in the heart of God, but the daughters gathered about her bed Benedetta fondly blessed, and committed each to one of the Five Wounds of Christ Crucified—her four year-old Ursula to the Wound in His side. In the light of the visions which the child had when she was eight, the recommendation appears to have been prophetic; for during Holy Week of that year Jesus, wounded and bleeding, appeared to her and asked her to make His Sacred Passion the object of her devotion. She not only made it the object of her devotion—she made it her life.

Just before she was nine, the family moved to Piacenza where, at the age of ten, she was permitted to receive her Blessed Lord for the first time. It was the feast of the Purification in 1670, and upon receiving the Sacred Host, her heart was set aflame with love. When this unusual burning continued after her return home, she innocently asked one of her sisters how long it generally lasted. Their failure to understand what she meant made her realize that the intense love which she felt was an unusual grace.

Her great gifts of prayer and contemplation began when she was about twelve years old, and from each communing she would come away more determined than ever to be a nun, for each time her Divine Lord repeated to her interiorly His desire to have her for His Spouse. Her overly-fond father, however, thought differently; and, in his attempt to have her marry, spared nothing, neither the diversion of worldly amusements nor the company and conversation of personable young men, men whom he considered in the light of a possible husband for her; these men were, in fact, far from unwilling, for by this time Ursula was considered a very lovely girl—and her father had money. To these he added entreaty on his own account, and he prevailed upon one of the three elder sisters who had already entered the convent of Saint Clare at Mercatello to have a talk with Ursula about the advisability of her marriage. All to no avail. He finally had to give his consent to Ursula's wishes.

When she made her application for admission to the Capuchin nuns at Citta di Castello, the Bishop, who was their ecclesiastical superior, at first refused her on the plea that there were no vacancies; then,

when she and her uncle returned, her entreaties were so moving that he was inclined to make an exception and began questioning her. Among other things, he asked if she knew Latin, to which her uncle made immediate reply that she certainly did not. Ursula, however, took the Breviary from the Bishop's hand and read with such ease and correctness that her uncle declared it a miracle, for the child had never studied Latin; and the miracle remained in force for the rest of her life. The Bishop having given leave, Ursula Giuliani entered the convent at Citta di Castello on July 17, 1677, and was invested on October 28 of the same year, taking the name Veronica.

At last she was in an atmosphere which seemed the natural environment for her spirit—she rejoiced in the solitude, she delighted in the innumerable sacrifices that the Rule demanded of her will, and, from the very first, it was evident to all that the young Sister Veronica would never require a repetition of a command. As was to be expected, a soul so determined to follow her Divine Leader became a matter of grave concern to the devil; so much so, in fact, that he resorted to his most unusual stratagems in her regard, since the ordinary deceptions failed to distract Veronica from her straight and narrow path. On one occasion he assumed the form and appearance of Veronica, entered the cell of one of the other Sisters, and proceeded with a most confidential air to criticize the novice mistress very severely and unjustly. This religious, for her own peace of soul, informed the mistress of the calumny. Fortunately, she was a very prudent person, and knowing what a very straightforward person Sister Veronica was, she was able to lay the blame where it belonged. Until she died, Veronica was to be subjected to these satanic artifices and attacks.

When, on All Saints Day in 1678, Sister Veronica made her solemn profession, her chief care was to become a saintly member of this Franciscan family, a goal which she set about accomplishing by a most minute observance of the Rule. Her obedience and penance were heroic, and she gave herself to prayer with a fervor that was angelic. Along with these virtues, she submitted herself unreservedly to spiritual directors—the good and the bad, favors and temptations, divine communications, as well as the deceptions of satan, she confided to them.

For seventeen years Sister Veronica fulfilled the various offices of the community—fulfilled them with a scrupulous exactness, and, in many instances, with a more than natural result. Eggs which had been accurately counted were found to have multiplied to meet the needs of the community; with fish, with cheeses, with any need the same. Surely a convenient person to have around! The of the

stores had the same thought for they frequently had recourse to her when demand exceeded supply. To every request her never-failing reply was, "Have confidence in God." It was effective, too!

Because of her generally recognized virtue and sincerity, her ability to cope with a situation, and her prudence, Sister Veronica was chosen as Mistress of Novices when she was just thirty-four years old; and she continued in that office for twenty-two years—evidence sufficient that she fulfilled expectations—until March, 1716, when she was unanimously elected Abbess. It was only in the name of obedience, however, that the fifty-six year old nun could be prevailed upon to accept the dignity. But, even then, recognizing her unique gift for instilling the spirit of the Order into the novices, the Sisters practically forced her to retain the office of Mistress at the same time.

She was the ideal Mistress and Abbess: a mother, loving, but not doting, although one might be tempted to think of her as such in connection with her care of the sick; for in more than one case she procured their return to health at the expense of her own. Her cell was open to the Sisters at all hours, and, no matter what the hour, they were welcomed with cheerful looks and dismissed with kind words. She was ever so solicitous that her Sisters be joyful and happy that she herself took an active part in their recreations. As Abbess, although in her sixties and suffering from dropsy, she would frequently join the novices in a grasshopper hunt, which was their favorite garden game. Continuously she stressed strict observance of community life, the spirit of mortification, and wholehearted surrender of self to Divine Love. She wanted always to have her novices answer her, "I am loving God," when, on meeting them at any time or any place, she asked them what they were doing. Never would she permit the Sisters to be deprived of anything which the Rule permitted, realizing, that if she expected regular observance, good example must be accompanied by prudence in dealing with necessities. In fact, one of her first official acts as Abbess was to enlarge the convent by the addition of a dormitory wing—she thought it the only sensible thing to do since the Sisters were too crowded. For the nuns to be carrying all the water that they needed was an unnecessary inconvenience, too; hence she had a system of leaden pipes installed throughout the convent, at the expense of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Over and over in Chapter she reminded the Sisters that Our Lady of Sorrows was the real Superior and Mother of their community, that she had confided them to her care; and the astonishingly abundant alms given to the convent on every feast of the Blessed Virgin prompted her witty remark that Our Lady was not only Mother but Housekeeper as well at Citta

de Castello. So appreciative were the Sisters, and so earnest in following her guidance, that during the thirty-three years in which Sister Veronica held her post as Mistress, the name of this community of Capuchin nuns became almost synonymous with fervor.

Meanwhile, there was no let-up in her mystical experiences, and the more one reads of them and of the trials to which she was subjected because of them, the more amazing becomes the ease and naturalness with which Sister Veronica approached the practical things of life. From the time she was a little girl of three all through her teen-age days at home, and as a young religious, Veronica had been divinely favored with communications; but just before she was made Mistress of Novices, she was presented for the first time with the Chalice which was to be offered to her so often in visions during the following years. Perfectly aware of its import of suffering for both body and mind, her acceptance of it was always complete, for it promised a certain satiety to her great hunger for suffering. In April of 1694, Jesus presented her with His crown of thorns—visible signs as well as the exquisite pain—and admitted her to the celestial nuptials; in 1696 she received the wound of the heart, and on April 5 of the year 1697, the complete impression of the Five Wounds. Over a period of months, physicians, at the invitation of the Bishop, subjected her to remedies which were so cruel that none of the Sisters could endure to assist with them; yet these so-called remedies only aggravated her sufferings and caused violent convulsions. When the Bishop sent an account of these occurrences to Rome, he received instructions to test her virtue very severely; and His Excellency carried out that injunction to the letter. Sister Veronica was deposed as Mistress; she was not permitted to speak to any of the Sisters; she was allowed no communication with her sister nuns at Mercatello; she was denied attendance at Mass except on Sundays and Holydays; she was refused Holy Communion. Nevertheless, in the report which the Bishop sent back to Rome, he was able to say that she had scrupulously obeyed every one of his ordinances and had shown not the least sign of sadness, but only peace and a joy of spirit. Rome was satisfied.

Veronica Giuliani's life was indeed a life of rare privileges. It was a life filled with apparitions of her Guardian Angel, of Saint Joseph, of Saint Francis, Saint Clare, and others; Holy Communion was often given to her visibly by angels, by our Blessed Lady, and by Christ Himself. It was a life in which the devil had his hand until the very end: beating her, holding her hand over fire until the nails were shriveled and the skin scorched, pounding her head against the wall, and long her in



ice-cold water, and ever so many other physical inflictions. On one occasion the demon threw her to the ground from ceiling-height with such force that her leg was broken. When, at a command from her confessor she asked God to heal the break, He did so immediately; and ever after, with characteristic whimsy, Veronica referred to it as her "limb of obedience and faith."

But this life of exceptional graces is Veronica, the Mystic, the not-to-be-imitated Veronica. The personality, the spirit, the religious who demands a following is the Veronica who can best be portrayed in the name with which she dubbed herself—"Daughter of Obedience." It includes a nun so in love with the Crucified that her imitation of Him was heroic, living a life of all-embracing poverty, possessing a most refreshing humility, sincere and complete; a life permeated by a cheerful subjection to the Will of God as manifested to her through superiors. The world calls such subjection childishness; yet it goes on blindly seeking security, deaf to His words, "He that heareth you, heareth Me." Into security-conscious cloisters with their students of perfection, Veronica Giuliani carries the message that whatever one does through obedience is sure to be the Will of God. And what is perfection but complete conformity of one's will to His?

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

## THE HEART OF HER GIVING

It is pleasant to think of the Mother of God as the type of all ivory-tower "contemplatives." If it robs us of a bosom of compassion, it at least liberates us from the responsibility of imitating an open-eyed and wide-hearted Mother. The Gospel, however, has a way of upsetting comfortable ideas, and pulling our mental chairs-at-the-hearth-of-cozy-notions right out from under us. Thus we are jarred to read that the greatest of all contemplatives reacted to the most staggering message ever sent from Heaven to earth, not by sinking down into an abyss of reflection, but by a very practical act of charity.

Mary was utterly simple. If God wished, of a sudden, to suspend the laws of nature and descend into her ever-virginal womb, she would obey. Mary had the faith that tumbles mountains. Once her

consent at the Annunciation was expressed, she *knew* that Almighty God lived beneath her heart, though there was only faith to tell her so. And Mary was also intensely practical. The angel had said that the aged Elizabeth was with child. Then she, Mary, would bear to her frail cousin the strength of the Omnipotence within her. Mary's first recorded deed after her conception of the Son of God was to bear Him to others, to give Him away. She knew, with the wisdom of holiness, that it is the only way to hold Him. And in this she proved herself the prototype of the authentic contemplative who receives only to give, who receives by giving, and in whom the two finally merge into one perfection.

### *As God's Chosen Ones*

It has become almost a truism—however mentally unabsorbed—that had Christians the zeal of Communists, it would be a question of the kingdom of Christ realizing immense gains of souls in the world today, instead of the kingdom of atheistic Communism making those immense losses of souls which constitute its malign victory. The blue flag of Mary and her Divine Son could supplant the red flag of state-idolatry if more Catholics took the trouble to wave it instead of being content with owning it. What of us religious? A sterile ownership is a precarious security. For we are all really stewards, we Franciscans, and stewards only. And it will be not only to the materially opulent, but likewise to the spiritually affluent, that Mary's Son will one day issue the disconcerting command: Give an account of your stewardship! The inheritors of seraphic love! will we have buried it in the napkin of a narrow, hothouse religious life?

The Mother of God is so imitable that we are apt to believe her way of life unattainable. Mary's example reaches down so intimately into the life of every woman, that we simply cannot grasp the fact. It is the unhappy paradox of a jaded generation with a chromium mental outlook. We are stirred by a Brooklyn boy bearing the Christ into an African bush; and we rally to the story of some nun bearing the good news of the Gospel to tormented prisoners in some remote concentration camp. Such "colorful" Christ-bearers can shake our spiritual lethargy without any permanent injury to the lethargy. The quiet self-sacrifice of the Blessed Virgin Mary is



another thing! Her physical bearing of the Son of God is her unique privilege because of which we have all hailed her as blessed these two thousand years, and will call her blessed for all eternity. Her active and outward Christ-bearing remains far more unique than it should be! Mary's spirit of utter giving is not so much a matter of Scriptural incidents as of Gospel atmosphere. Yet there are specific acts of hers which sound clarion calls to our ennui and to our spiritual provincialism, had we the ears of heart to hear. Her bearing of Christ to Elizabeth is one of them.

### *A Heart of Mercy, Kindness*

Mary had every reason to stay at home. A young girl beginning pregnancy would scarcely be expected to make a difficult and tedious journey through the hill country merely to assist a cousin who had many friends and kinswomen close by to help her. Yet, Mary went; and (we love the endearing human phrase!) she went "with haste." For Mary knew that she could bring Elizabeth what no one else could bring her: the Christ. The results of Mary's initial act of bearing Christ to others had immediate and amazing results. Elizabeth became a prophetess and co-composer of the tenderest and most universal of prayers. Her son was freed from original sin and made a charming attempt to exult into a separate life of his own. We, with our saving burden of *Pax et bonum!* have an exquisite and peculiar legacy; we do well to remember it was left us to be given away. The giving of the Little Poor Man shook all of society.

There is a second ramification, too. The fatigue which small services can impose, the dull weariness of constant fidelity, take on a real splendor when we remember the young Mary riding wearily through the hill country to bring Love to the house of Elizabeth. The priest whose duties pluck the comfortable flesh of spiritual leisure off the unyielding and saving bone of his prayer has for companion the lovely Mother of God. And the nun whose heart pulls her to the choir and whose work pushes her from it, has her own hill country to travel, and a universe full of cousins. Only a true contemplative can afford to be active, for only the contemplative soul has the Christ to give away.

It was the same when poor little Caesar Augustus blew his trumpets and called the roll of his subjects. Augustus was doing

the will of God, for which he has deserved to have his name written in the Gospel, the only pity being that the unfortunate man supposed that he was doing his own will. But what of Mary's plans? We make a fatal blunder if we suppose that our Lady's perfect holiness diluted her woman's nature into some sort of neuter compound. Grace builds on nature, and holiness perfects it. This was certainly patent in Mary, the flower of holiness and the triumph of grace. Her familiarity with the Scriptures made her cognizant of the birthplace of her Son: Bethlehem. Yet she had no notion of how this Scripture was to be fulfilled. So she proved herself again the perfect contemplative, going quietly about the usual and contentedly leaving the unusual to God.

And what was the usual those days? What *could* it be, but the happy hours of singing softly to herself as her slim young fingers worked at the loom and her quick feet beat out a rhythm borrowed from the fountainhead of Song beneath her heart! There must be swathing bands for small limbs, dainty coverlets and soft little sheets. Mary was the most womanly of all women and of all times, and she had exquisite experience of a young mother's joy as she fashioned tiny garments and waited to see the face of her Child. All the joy of motherhood found its perfect fulfillment in hers. Yet she alone of mothers knew what her Child would be: the little Son who would not resemble Joseph.

If the mother of any child awaits her appointed hour like the stretch of a song, what was the waiting of the young Mother of God as she looked with love on the dainty little piles of His garments which her hands had fashioned, as she listened to the quick movements of Joseph in the workshop, watching the happy nimbleness of his fingers and seeing the humble, worshipful love in his dark eyes! This was her little home, and everything in it was arranged with an exquisiteness which must remain peculiar to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Soon the Savior of the world would lie in this crib which Joseph had planed and modelled and caressed with his calloused hands so many times in past weeks and months. But *there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus*. And in one moment, all her woman's plans were shattered, all a young mother's immediate world collapsed. Only a heartless dullard or a great fool could suppose it cost Mary nothing to leave all those "little things" inexpressibly

dear to a woman and particularly to a very young expectant mother.

For Mary, the Scripture was to be fulfilled, not by a direct and sublime intervention of God, but just as our own destinies are fulfilled, by the often irksome, sometimes arrogant, frequently unworthy actions of others. *And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into . . . the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, to register together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with Child.* What infinite woman's pathos is caught up in that brief phrase: *Out of the city of Nazareth!* Out of the warm and ineffable haven her love had prepared for His coming, into the weariness of a long journey on rough roads in winter. Out of the dear familiar world of loom and spindle, into a strange and crowded city, with no thought of the tender luggage her mother's heart longed to take. For her, there was only the sturdy little ass, more famous for endurance than for comfort; and for Joseph, the uneven road beneath his feet. Only the swathing bands could be carried along—clasped, who would dare doubt it, beneath her cloak, against her heart.

So Mary became the Christ-bearer anew. Not to her friends and relatives this time; time enough for them to know of the Love she bore, later on. Now she would bear Him to the humblest and poorest. The shepherds keeping their flocks on the Judean hills knew nothing of how shortly their whole lives would be refashioned. Mary bore the Christ to unlovely, clamorous Bethlehem, just as she still bears Him to our atom-splintering age and to the screaming traffic of our over-crowded lives. And the purpose is the same. *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.* Mary had made them contemplatives and saints. It is what she purposes to make of us all, as she continues to give her Son away down through the centuries, contemplatives of the cloister or of the classroom, saints of the scriptorium or of the television stage. We love to call her: Mediatrix of all Graces. The young Mother who left a precious world of "little things" to bear Christ Jesus to the unlovely and the unknowing was the Mediatrix who won from the small Savior the grace of sainthood for the shepherds.

Her first act after His birth is profoundly significant. We are not told that she clasped Him at once to her own heart. The Gospel is uncompromising: *She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.* After His birth, she would do as she had done

when His physical life was still hers, she would give Him away. She laid Him down in the manger, as if to signify that her one office was to bear Him to all the world, as if she would lay Him on the altar of the universe. And her perfect renunciation of all that was hers, of what we are so fond of calling "one's rights," set a star in the heavens. Three men, afar off, saw the star. Mary had borne the Christ far beyond the confines of Bethlehem.

### *Of Humility, Meekness, Patience*

There would be more journey for God's mother. Her gift of God would find, even in her own death, merely a new beginning. One more signal act of her giving, though, stands out in bold relief in the infancy of the Man-God: that poignant episode which has given Mary a right to the sorrowful title, Queen of Refugees. The flight into Egypt has been falsely handed down to us by art and apocrypha. It was no vacation jaunt which the little Family took into the strange and terrifying pagan land, with frequent pauses under convenient date palms, and the Holy Child busying Himself with the working of charming and useless miracles. Oh, no! Every wearisome mile of the three hundred and more they travelled to the dubious safety of a heathen land was marked with sweat and pain and anxiety. Imagine the sorrow of tender-hearted Joseph to awaken his beloved Mary and the Divine Child in the middle of the night and bid them rise and leave the little home without ceremony! And what of the new heartache for Mary? Any mother would be completely chagrined at a command to set out travelling at midnight with a very young child, with no time to pack the things a woman considers absolutely essential to a journey, no time to reason or even to reflect—time only to give.

Naturally speaking, the commanded journey must have seemed a flight from evil into evil. Herod and his gangsters were a proximate threat, and instinctively the young Mother must have clasped her Baby closer to her heart. But Egypt? The very name conjured up a thousand fears. . . exotic pagan land of blistering desert and hard heathen hearts where they would be utterly friendless, stranded, insulated by custom and peninsulated by tongue. Yet they rose up quickly, roused the sleepy little ass, and were off to give Christ to the land that had never heard His Name nor the prophecy of

His Coming. We do well to remember that Mary's adamant faith is a comment on her utter womanliness, not its negation. Had she not felt her young heart twist within her at leaving her little home once more, at spiriting her Almighty Son away like a criminal, her faith would not be the marvel which that same Son would later laud as her truer claim to blessedness than her Divine Maternity. In her heart, so versed in the prophecies, must have whispered a dark rumor of the day she would not be able to spirit Him away, when He would indeed die a criminal's death on a gibbet of shame.

And the Holy Child, remember, was a child! Not an impassive adult masquerading in baby flesh, but a truly (if voluntarily) helpless and weak little child. He was not accustomed to being suddenly taken up out of His midnight sleep. He must have cried. Surely, in that hour, her own soul a sword did pierce; and Mary heard even then a later and far more terrible cry: *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

But under all the busy horde of little fears racing in her woman's heart was the wonderful peace that characterized Mary as the greatest of contemplatives, and also that joyous willingness to serve that characterized all her actions and made them fecund with salvation. It was to be so all her life. Egypt would forever claim a singular dignity among the nations, for the small Christ had breathed its air and run on its flat sands and learned some of its strange tongue with a child's astonishing aptitude. Egypt remains sacred among the lands because Christ was there. And Mary bore Him to Egypt. Even then, symbolically, she bore Him to all the world languishing in pagan vice and sorrowing in a desert of unbelief.

*His Mother kept all...in her heart*

Mary bore the Christ to Egypt, but at what cost to her own tender mother's heart, at what price of comfort and security, at what toll of exhaustion and anxiety! Small wonder that an adult Christ would gently correct that dear and nameless woman to whom every reader of the Gospel is kin and friend: *Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* It was Mary's faith that bore Him in her soul in a sense just as real and even more perfect (we have the word of Truth Itself) than her virginal body bore Him in the

womb. Yet that word *keep* has a profounder significance than we grasp at first attendance.

If to *hear the word of God and keep it* means to observe it in oneself, there is also another sublime meaning in the term—that piercing and stupendous paradox to which we have alluded before. To keep, in Heaven's synomenclature, is to give away. Mary kept the Word of God because her life of sacrifice uttered it everywhere, whether she carried the Word to Bethlehem or to Egypt; whether she bore It to the aching yearning of lonely old Simeon or back from Jerusalem's doctoral congress to Nazareth, her heart pierced with the new oblation of *His Father's business*; whether she laid her Christ in a manger with her hands, or on the Cross with her soul's acceptance. No one ever possessed the Christ as Mary did and does, for no creature ever so completely gave Him away.

Chesterton has written of the "holy topsyturvydom" of holiness; and he has written well, choosing the same vehicle of paradox for which Christ showed such predilection. To lose one's life is to save it. Poverty is the only wealth. To bear the Christ everywhere is to keep the Word of God in the only secure mode of possession. Perhaps that is our Lady's first message to us all in this Marian year.

It is in the world's darkest season that the April of her compassion puts up its glad shoots and sends out its birdsong of hope. And the best honor we pay her is our emulation of this most imitable of all those saints of whom she is the lovely Queen. The quiet and constant giving which was Mary's vocation is the vocation of every Franciscan, and the challenge which might set the world ringing again with *Pax et bonum!* Without any trumpeting, Mary accomplished more than any other creature ever did or will accomplish. The few signal incidents in her life upon which we have dwelt are the merest handful out of a life that brimmed with giving, until the day when she stood under a dark Cross and gave her Son away to all the ungrateful and errant souls who then became her children by the most unfair exchange the world has ever witnessed. It was a sorry bargain for the Mother of God who became the Mother of men, but it was the birthday of hope for the whole sorry lot of us who are her children.

*Sister Mary Francis, P.C.*

## THE VENERATION OF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

Special veneration given to a saintly follower of Christ by Church and faithful is testimony of holiness. Such is the case with John Duns Scotus, for through the ages special veneration has been paid to him by reason of his sanctity. A historical investigation of the facts will show that the centuries after Scotus' death constantly bore witness to his spiritual greatness. Needless to say, we are not using the term "veneration" in its strict canonical sense as is expressed by the term *dulia*. Nor are we trying to infer that John Duns Scotus has enjoyed an immemorial cult. We shall relate here only those incidents which show the honor paid to Scotus because of his holiness. This veneration has always been given with ecclesiastical approbation.

Veneration can be paid in many ways to a person who during his life has shown great signs of sanctity. Examples of this veneration can be seen through the honor given his mortal remains, through pictures, statues and hymns which celebrate his sanctity.

### *His Tomb*

This veneration was first shown by the contemporaries of John Duns Scotus, for he was not buried in the cemetery of the friars, but in the choir of their church. There is no apparent reason for such an action except his extraordinary holiness. Nor did such esteem for John Duns Scotus decrease, since several years later, about the year 1320, his body was transferred to an even more prominent place in the choir. His tomb was again opened in the year 1509 in order to satisfy the love and devotion of the friars. Wadding mentions some other reasons, the main one being the spread of his teaching on the Immaculate Conception. His remains were then enclosed in a more ornate shrine.

The next records we have concerning special veneration of Scotus appear in the year 1619. His relics were again brought to light at the command of James Montanari of Bagnacavallo, the Minister General of the Conventuals. That this was an official undertaking is seen from the presence of those who witnessed this ceremony, among whom were the Apostolic Nuncio *a latere* to Germany, the

Bishop of Cyrene, suffragan of Cologne, the Minister General of the Conventuals, and many of the secular and religious clergy.

### *Widespread Popularity*

Besides the visitation of his grave, there are several records which also show the veneration paid to Duns Scotus around this time. Nor was this veneration confined to Germany, but was also popular in several other places in Europe. Our first witness to this fact is the great chronicler, Luke Wadding (1588-1657). He writes: "I know that very many in different places, but especially in the Kingdom of Naples, invoke Duns Scotus with great confidence and devotion. Nor do they do so in vain, for they admit that they have experienced his help in various needs and sicknesses. I have seen very many authenticated documents in which men of different age and circumstances wish it to be known that they have received heavenly gifts of cures and other favors through the intercession of Duns Scotus. Many of these show their gratitude by donations, plaques, and large silver lamps. We have such documents with us and are keeping them to be used at the opportune time."

Another witness of his sanctity is found in Spain. Francis Sosa points out in his *Life of the Most Blessed Scotus* (1692) that he saw Duns Scotus with the title of "Blessed" in a picture of Franciscan saints in the choir of the church at Salamanca. He also proves that this picture is more than three hundred years old. Thus we can see that the title of "Blessed" was used already in the fourteenth century. It is unlikely that Scotus had the title of "Blessed" before the people venerated him.

There are also several other outstanding men around this period who praised the holiness of Scotus. Gregory Ruys, the *Qualificator causarum Sancti Officii*, had good reason to say in the year 1613 that many call John Duns Scotus a saint, even though he is not enrolled in the catalogue of the blessed.

Around this time also we have a strong and zealous propagator for the cult of Duns Scotus in the person of Blessed Humble of Bisignano (1583-1637), a lay-brother who lived near Naples and Nola, Italy. Wherever he went he distributed little holy cards on which a picture of the Blessed Virgin and Duns Scotus was printed.

In 1642-3 the fourth opening of the grave of Duns Scotus took

place. After this his relics were placed in the new choir behind the high altar of the church at Cologne. This again was a rather important occasion, as is evident from the presence of such dignitaries as Fabio Chigi, the Apostolic Nuncio *a latere* (later, Pope Alexander VII), together with the Archbishop of Tarsus. The Apostolic Nuncio uncovered the relics, examined them and reverently showed them to those present. Then he placed them in the new tomb and sealed it with his own seal. At this time the place of burial was raised to special veneration and the ecclesiastical title of "Relics" was used to designate the remains of Duns Scotus.

In 1858 there was yet another opening of the tomb, which work was finished a year later. Once again the relics were placed in a more costly shrine and a careful investigation was made concerning his remains, after which a complete list was drawn up of all of them.

The grave of Duns Scotus has consequently throughout the centuries been a place of veneration and pilgrimage. Until the war at least, it was always adorned with flowers and candles.

#### *Present-day Devotion*

On May 14, 1905, the Franciscans and Tertiaries of Cologne marched in procession to the tomb of Scotus. Cardinal Fischer, the Archbishop of Cologne, participated, and gave an address in praise of the greatness and holiness of John Duns Scotus.

Another outstanding event took place in 1906. In that year the Process for the Beatification of Duns Scotus saw the presentation of *Litterae Postulariae* to Saint Pius X. This Process had been started in 1710 by the Bishop of Nola, Italy. All of these letters asked the Holy Father to glorify Scotus because of his holiness. This presentation was occasioned by the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of the Immaculate Conception. There were eighteen letters, signed by hundreds of bishops, many Cardinals and ten Generals of different Orders. From these documents given to the ecclesiastical tribunal it is evident: a) that John Duns Scotus lived a truly holy life; b) that during his life and immediately after his death the fame of his holiness as much as of his learning was universally praised; c) that his virtues and heavenly favors were praised thirty times before, seventy times during, and two hundred times after the Pontificate

of Pope Urban VIII; d) that there exist countless other proofs of devotion and reverence toward John Duns Scotus.

The next event was the erection of the Scotistic Commission in 1927. Its purpose is to publish a critical edition of the works of Duns Scotus. As such it has no direct bearing on the veneration paid to Scotus because of his holiness. Nevertheless, we are safe in saying that one of the reasons for this critical edition is to make Duns Scotus more known and thereby more loved, all of which should help to hasten his glorification. This Marian Year will see the publication of the third volume of this Edition from the Vatican Press.

Besides the veneration paid by thousands, some places also have ecclesiastical approbation to celebrate his feast with an office and Mass. In Dumfries, Scotland, where Duns Scotus received the habit, there is an altar erected in his honor and his feast is celebrated every year, which has been done since the sixteenth century. In Nola, Italy, devotion to Duns Scotus is very popular and a Mass is said every year in his honor. At Duns, Scotland, in the church of Saint Margaret, a large mosaic and the main altar pay high tribute to this holy friar.

In the second encyclical letter of the Most Reverend Minister General, Leonard Bello, O.F.M., dated July 14, 1933, he announced that he was going to visit the tomb of Duns Scotus, and urged all to pray for the beatification of the Subtle Doctor, prescribing that special prayers be recited in every house of the Order for this intention.

The latest veneration paid to Duns Scotus took place this past summer, when the relics were once more officially examined at the Cathedral of Cologne, where they had been removed in 1943 after the old Minorite Church of that city was destroyed during the war. Later, a large relic of the left arm was joyfully brought to the Church of the Friars Minor. The other relics will soon be returned to the Minorite Church which the Friars Minor Conventual have been restoring. (*See The Cord*, November, p. 352).

This Marian year, the centenary of the declaration of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, has reawakened interest in John Duns Scotus. All of us hope that it will further his cause.

We may wonder if there is any chance or probability that he will be soon canonized. In answer to this we can say that there is nothing which would make it improbable. At present his case is being presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. It is impossible for us to know what will be the result. For the time being all that we can do is to pray that God will hasten the day of his glorification and meanwhile try to imitate him, for saints are not canonized for themselves, but for the greater honor and glory of God and the good of the Church. With the sincere desire to be like John Duns Scotus both in his learning and holiness, let us beg God to hasten the day of glorification for His Mother's great champion.

*Valentine Young, O.F.M.*

## ELEMENTS AND SIGNS OF A VOCATION

### Part III. Negative Signs Of A Vocation

Pope Pius XI proceeds in his Encyclical to point out that there are other signs which show that a man is not called to the priesthood. These, with perhaps a few minor changes, would also be negative signs of a religious vocation. According to sound authors we may list the following as *some* negative signs of a vocation, for both priesthood and religious life:

(a) "Whoever had a special tendency to sensuality, and after long trial has not proved he can conquer it" (Pius XI). As authors interpret this, the Pope refers here to the habit of impurity alone or otherwise. Of importance is the proof that the habit has been overcome by long trial, of six months to a year.<sup>1</sup> This trial, for diocesan candidates, must antedate Sacred Orders. With us, it must absolutely antedate Solemn Profession. Moralists stress that no one dare receive the subdiaconate who has not proved he can remain continent; otherwise he would be committing a grave sin, since he is taking on an

<sup>1</sup>On this particular point, cf. F. J. Connell, "The Seminarian's Confessor," *Eccl. Rev.*, 116 (1947), pp. 179 ff; and Jos. D. O'Brien, "Requisite Qualifications for Seminarians with Regard to the Law of Celibacy," *NCEA Bulletin*, 45 (1948), pp. 141-146.

obligation that he knows by experience he cannot observe. But since Solemn Profession carries the same solemn obligation, the norms apply equally to Religious. To some extent, at least, they should also apply to candidates for simple profession.

(b) "Those who are so attached to their own will that they will hardly be found docile."<sup>2</sup> Docility here means the willingness founded on faith, reverential fear and love of authority. One possessed of an habitual spirit of disobedience and independence, one who is "intractable, unruly, undisciplined" (Pius XI), evidently lacks a vocation.

(c) "Those who have a disposition different from that of the rest, are prone to envy or suspicion, or rude in their behavior, and in consequence apt to prove unsociable and disagreeable in a community,"<sup>3</sup> are a danger in view of the need of adaptability in religious and community life.

(d) One who is lazy, lacking in zeal and ambition; or "has small taste for piety, is not industrious, shows little zeal for souls" (Pius XI), has no vocation.

(e) "Those who are so dependent on human consolation that they will most likely fall victims to sadness and dejection in the cloister... persons who are melancholy."<sup>4</sup> Under this, too, we should include general emotional instability: tendency to hysteria, paranoia, excessive anger. Perhaps too, at this point, scrupulosity, ingrained scrupulosity, should be considered: not a transient attack, but a disposition so lasting and habitual that it would impair one's mature judgment. Such a condition is hardly conducive toward proper hearing of confessions.<sup>5</sup>

(f) Flightiness in reasoning and judgment.<sup>6</sup> Not the levity of boyhood, but the levity and lack of balance that carries over to adult years. With Fr. Duffey, we distinguish between an intrinsic lack of judgment (therefore an habitual impetuosity and imprudence) and the levity that is the mere result of immaturity and lack

<sup>2</sup>A. J. Vermeersch, *Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocation*, p. 54

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Cf. F. J. Connell, *art. cit.*, p. 175-176.

<sup>6</sup>F. Duffey, *Testing the Spirit*, pp. 84ff.

of experience. The latter can be overcome. The former is deep-rooted and will carry over into studies, assignments, and later priestly work. Religious life, Saint Teresa remarks, can do many wonderful things to a person, but it cannot give him good sense and understanding. Hence a person who is constantly imprudent, lacking in good sound judgment, is hardly a fit candidate for religious life and much less for the priesthood!

(g) Without further enumeration, we include also as negative signs the lack of intellectual ability, poor family background, and all points included in canon 1371 on dismissal from diocesan seminaries. Whatever negative signs were not included already are caught up and contained in that canon.

Faced with the importance of one's office, the good of the Order and the Church, and the weighty responsibilities of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, we must, as superiors, teachers, directors, masters, "employ ceaseless caution and not be at all sparing in severity when it comes to receiving candidates into the Order, admitting them to profession and to Holy Orders, and examining them in the science of theology, in pastoral and ascetics. *Selectio cum severitate*, that is ... (our) password."<sup>7</sup> For "our obligation is to make a chosen body of men out of these young people, true Friars Minor out of these men, and eventually true apostles out of these Friars Minor."<sup>8</sup>

*Ignatius Brady, O.F.M.*

<sup>7</sup>Fr. Pacificus Perantoni, Encyclical "Our Vocation," p. 39.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40