

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *Living Stones*

Traditionally, the beginning of the New Year is a time of retrospection and resolution, of self examination and serious reflection. We shall be quite in season, then, if we ask ourselves now, at the beginning of the year of grace 1955, "Do I know what I am?" At first blush this seems a broad and easily answered question. But when as religious, and as Franciscan religious, we ask ourselves this question, we are really asking whether we know what we, as Franciscans, are. Then this seemingly innocuous little question may prove mightily embarrassing to our complacency, for it prods us to the ultimate question: "Do I really know what I ought to be?" Obviously, none of us can answer this question with a simple yes or no. Rather, it forces us to a thorough self-examination of our whole life as Franciscan religious, of our aims and ideals and of our shortcomings, of what we ought to be and of what we are not. Accordingly, the monthly conferences for this year will be directed toward helping us measure ourselves against the lofty standards set for us by our Seraphic Father and the Rule of our Order.

By way of introduction, let us first consider our relation to the Order in general. And by Order we mean that particular organization—Order in the broad sense, or Congregation, or even Province—to which we belong. The question is: Just *how* do we belong to our institute? What do we mean when we say we are members of this organization?

#### *1. We and the Order Are One*

It is definitely wrong and harmful for us to view our membership in the Order as something purely external, like membership in the Elks or the Holy Name Society. We are an intimate, integral, and inseparable part of our Order, just as our physical members are part of our body. Yet how often do we separate ourselves from our Order, not by positive declaration, perhaps, but certainly by attitude. We tend to allow our feelings, our outlook, and especially our speech, to betray the fact that we regard ourselves as separate entities, as beings quite apart from the organization we call "the Order." For some of us, perhaps, the Order has become no more than an or-

ganization, or—*sit venia verbi*—a corporation to which we are connected, which governs us, insures our livelihood, and demands certain services from us in return. With but slight exaggeration, we could say that our relation to the Order is pretty much that of employee to employer. Others of us may have a different but none the less oblique view of the Order as identified with a specific group—the higher superiors, let us say, or the unofficial policy makers, or a certain caste. Then quite imperceptibly, the spirit of separation creeps into our thinking, feeling, and judging. The “Order” (that is, a certain caste to which I do not belong) is thus and so, but I, being it known, am quite otherwise. Or, the “Order” (that is, the policy making group) is doing this and that, but I will have no part in any such doings. A further example of the spirit of separation occurs in the seemingly harmless business of boasting about the Order. We shrink from bragging about our own personal achievements, for that, we know, would offend against holy humility. But we do not hesitate to trumpet, with long and powerful blasts, the glories of the great Franciscan Order. Sometimes we even blame ourselves for not telling the world more about this marvellous Order of ours. But let us be sober. In the final analysis, is this not an attitude that reflects our inner divorce from the Order we profess to love? If we were not convinced that we and our institute are separate entities, we would be as cautious in praising the Order as we are in praising ourselves. The same holds for criticism. In general, it is painful for us to criticize ourselves, and more painful still to take criticism from others. But we criticize the Order, sometimes bitterly and viciously without the slightest twinge of discomfort. And some of us are so spiritually askew that we feel positive satisfaction when our institute is lampooned by outsiders. For such religious, divorce from the Order is total.

If each one of us takes time out during this season for a little serious introspection, no doubt we shall all of us find many more attitudes that reflect the spirit of separation from the Order.

## 2. *We Are Living Stones in a Spiritual Edifice*

Let us convince ourselves here and now that we and the Order are not separate entities but a living unity. We are not individuals who once entered the Order and now live our own individual lives

apart from the life of the Order. We are not pious members of a pious union whose membership we graciously increased by joining it. Nor again are we the party of the second part in a formal contract with the Order. What are we then? We are living stones in the spiritual edifice that we call our Order; we are integrated as living parts into a single organism; we are wedded to the Order in holy love; we are the Order, in one living unity. Thomas of Celano beautifully expressed this ideal when he wrote of the Order: “Indeed, there arose, built upon an enduring foundation, charity’s noble structure of living stones gathered from all parts of the world, raised up as a dwelling of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

When we entered the Order we received new life. There was an old custom in the ancient Roman world that when a child was born it was laid on the father’s knees. If the father accepted the child, it would live; if not, it would die. Reminiscent of this is the ritual of our solemn profession. Before God and the representative of the Order at the altar, the candidate repeats the words of the Psalmist: *Suscipe me secundum eloquium tuum et vivam*. Take me up, accept me, and I shall live. And indeed, according to the theologians, our profession has an effect similar to that of baptism, though of course not a sacramental effect. In baptism we died to the old man and we rose with Christ to a new life which was given us through the charity of the Holy Spirit poured into our heart. In our profession, too, we died to the old man forever, we died to this world, we were sacrificed to the Lord. But in dying we received a new life, the life of the Order; and now it is up to us to live this life. We have surrendered our individual life in order to live, as persons, the common life of the Order. We have been integrated into this spiritual structure wholly and entirely, but as *living* stones. This integration was pronounced by us when we took our vows; and as such it simply meant our promise to integrate ourselves into this noble dwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is by no means the Order that integrates us. True, our superiors assign tasks to us, they give us directions, they tell us what they expect from us, and above all they are that we receive spiritual formation by word and example. But we are *living* stones, and therefore we must insert ourselves into the whole and become one with it. Each one of us, with the grace of God,

<sup>1</sup>Vita Prima, I, 38.

must incorporate himself into the organism, he must give himself wholeheartedly to the Order—live its life, share its ideals, rejoice in its successes, suffer in its trials, and work, not *for* it, but *with* it and *in* it. Thus it almost amounts to a contradiction in terms to say: “I *and* the Order.” The only acceptable formula would be: “I *in* the Order.” Let us therefore hammer into our head and heart the uncompromising truth: I am a living member of the Order and therefore everything that concerns the Order vitally concerns me.

### 3. *We Live by the Spirit of the Order Expressed in the Rule*

From the foregoing it is clear that obedience alone is not sufficient to make us living stones in the structure of the Order. We may indeed be painfully obedient, slavishly submissive; we may be scrupulous observers of every paragraph in our Rule and Constitutions, ordinations and customs, and yet be dead stones in the house of the Lord. In order to be living stones, we must actively embrace the life of the Order. We must not be merely stones that are set in place, but stones that place themselves. In the words of Saint Augustine: “God does not build His temple, as it were, of stones that have no motion of their own, that have to be lifted up and set in place by the builder. Not such as these are living stones. *And you as living stones are built and building together in the temple of God* (Ephes. 2:22, and I Peter 2:5). You must be led, but you must also be running.”<sup>2</sup>

We too must run whither we are led; we must lift ourselves up to that new life which we accepted in holy profession that it may both take form in us, and form us, according to the pattern laid down by our Rule. Only then shall we be living stones.

When we returned from the altar after pronouncing our vows, our fellow religious were waiting to embrace us in charity, to give us the kiss of peace and to receive us into the union of this new life. We were not merely an addition to their number, we were brothers and sisters, begotten by the same spirit. And for children of Saint Francis, this spirit is the life of the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful and total following in His divine footsteps. It is this spirit that is described for us in detail in our Rule and Constitutions, the ordinations and customs, that now must govern our life, its growth and its perfection.

<sup>2</sup>Sermo 156, 12; t.38, col. 857.

Have we ever thought of the meaning of our laws—those rules, regulations, prescriptions and admonitions that we stumble so often, that curb our liberty, and plague our conscience when we ignore them? Here again we have to ask ourselves what these laws mean to us. Do we regard them as merely exterior regulations to which we have to conform in order to retain a precarious foothold within the Order? For it is not unheard of that a religious fails to live in the Order—that is, fails to live its life—and yet is unwilling to live outside the Order—which in fact he actually does. If we feel that our laws are only obligations which we are forced to obey if we want to avoid the consequences, we are still stones in the noble structure of our Order, but we are dead stones, and we have yet to be stirred to life. As long as we consider our Rule and Constitutions a set of laws that requires fulfillment—which is certainly required—and nothing more, we are dead stones. Our laws do not only fix limits which must not be trespassed; they not only express how much is demanded of us if we wish to remain within the community; they also formulate our very way of life, they show us the design of the structure in which we are to fit ourselves as living stones. But then it is required that we approach our laws, our form of life, as living beings. We must never approach them as a matter of the letter but as a matter of the spirit. The letter kills, the spirit vivifies. If we wish to become living stones, we must penetrate into the depths of the spirit of our laws and let them come alive in us, make them the form of our life, of our thinking, feeling, and willing, of our appreciating, of our working and praying, of our rejoicing and suffering.

How can we do this? Here are a few suggestions.

First and above all we must cultivate within us the deep conviction that our Rule and Constitutions are the form of our life, that precisely and exactly our own personal life is here at stake.

Then study the laws, not so much with the mind of a lawyer but with the heart of a lover. How many of us ever make the Rule and Constitutions a subject for our daily meditations? If we do this in the right spirit the aspect of “law” will disappear from them and they will become for us what in reality they are meant to be—the form of our life, the guide to our sanctification.

And then we have to pray for the right spirit. Saint Francis re-

ceived the Rule as an inspiration from God. Let us now humbly ask God, daily, that this His spirit be strengthened in us, be stirred up and enlivened.

And finally, let us not forget to help our co-religious who are also living stones in the structure of our holy Order, and let us be watchful of ourselves lest through our fault we endanger this dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. It is *our* structure, and we *are* the structure; it behooves us, then, to do all we can to strengthen it and beautify it and make it a fit temple of the Lord.

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

## COLLOQUY AT THE CRIB

### The Worshippers:

Sleep, little Child,  
For day has gone into her occident chamber  
And the singing night wonders,  
Finding you heedless of lullaby.

Fold now on your warm breast  
The arms stretched day-long wide,  
And clasp the flowers of your reaching hands.  
Close now the shutters of your vigilant eyes.  
Sleep, little Child,  
For we must leave you now.

### The Child:

O, it may be  
Someone will lately come.  
Some restless heart

\*In this series of conferences we shall make use of material offered by Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., freely adapting it to the needs of our readers.

May seek me in the night,  
Or some chance reveller  
See the glow of unshuttered eyes.  
I shall not sleep forever.

### The Worshippers:

But sleep, little Child.  
Your worshippers are gone.  
All they who love you come by day,  
And night is for repose.  
Your feathered carollers  
Are round with sleep.  
The weary ox's dreams are bright  
With angel voices, and the ass sleeps on.

### The Child:

And yet perhaps  
One broken soul will find me  
When the wheeling day has spun to rest.  
If all the night I hold out wide  
My arms, one outcast yet  
May pity me, and lifting me,  
Be saved.

I shall not ever clasp  
My infinite hands  
Nor shall I fold my everlasting arms.  
But if one day, too weary,  
I cannot hold out wide my eager arms,  
On that far day, behold!  
They will be nailed.

*Sr. Mary Francis, P.C.*

## OUR LADY'S TECHNICIAN

Large-scale technical and scientific operations have become so much a part of modern Franciscan life that we rarely stop to wonder anymore if we are still in gear with the Franciscan ideal. It is more than just the problem of not being swallowed up in a sea of air conditioners, electric shavers, and sundry nuts and bolts.

Modern Franciscan life is rather a question of balance without compromise, of efficiency without laxity. Sometimes there is only a hair's difference between what is really useful and what is merely convenient.

God has pointed out a Franciscan of our own day to show us how to gear both our personal and community lives to modern circumstances and big-time operations. The name of this Franciscan is Father Maximilian M. Kolbe, OFM Conv. He learned that progress and poverty can be co-workers. He learned that the racket of machinery need not hinder the spirit of recollection, and that the efficient speed of scientific discoveries can be, after prayer, the first handmaid of the modern apostolate.

The last few Popes have spoken in the same vein about the usefulness of radio, movies, and television.

And this is the whole point of Father Maximilian's life: he joined the products of our century's keenest technicians with the resolve to use them for the Queen of Heaven.

And why not? It is part of the Franciscan way to love God's creatures in a special manner. Francis looked upon them as the reflection of God in nature, Duns Scotus as a part of cosmology, Roger Bacon as scientific phenomena, and Maximilian Kolbe as Our Lady's "*ammunition*," to use his own phrase.

Remember, of course, the effectiveness of ammunition depends on the skill of the marksman. So listen to the story of Maximilian Kolbe and judge for yourself if he was "on target." Remember, too, that his Marian apostolate had a distinctly Franciscan character. The missions he founded were also destined to increase the friaries of the Order. His work was carried out under religious obedience and within the framework of our Constitutions. His personal life, finally, was characterized by his abiding love for Franciscan poverty, by the charm of his Franciscan simplicity, and by that Franciscan fraternal charity with which he asked to die for another man.

We can pass over the events of his normal boyhood in Poland (no army of biographers, I hope, will succeed in making him a plaster saint)

with this single remark. He was moved by four convictions: his interest in things mechanical and scientific, a longing for a military career, a desire to become a Franciscan priest, and—for which history will remember him the most—the determination to champion the cause of Our Lady. Despite his own doubts how to reconcile them all, *she* saw to it that all were fulfilled.

It was while studying theology in Rome that Maximilian found the outlet for his convictions. At that time the Masons were a powerful force in Italy. They would gather in Saint Peter's Square itself and raise banners which depicted Satan conquering Michael the Archangel, all the while shouting curses upon the Pope.

Remember Saint Francis' own desire to convert the Sultan in North Africa? Maximilian had the idea of visiting the Grand Master of the Masons' Roman Lodge to convert him, but the Friar's rector thought it might be a trifle more prudent—and effective—to pray for him instead. Then it was, in 1917, that he outlined to six confreres his plan for winning not only the enemies of the Church, but every soul in the world, till the end of time, for the Immaculate—as he was wont to call Our Lady. With the permission of their superiors and subsequently with the blessing of the Holy Father, the seven Friars pledged themselves to this ideal. Their objective was to make everyone aware of the fact of Mary's mediation in his spiritual life.

This was the origin of the Militia of the Immaculate. Its main requirement is to belong to the Immaculate *without reserve*—so that even our ordinary actions are, literally, graced by the hand of Mary. In thirty-five years the membership has grown from seven to about two and a quarter million, in half a dozen countries.

After his studies Father Maximilian returned to Poland in the advanced stages of tuberculosis, aggravated by the dampness of Rome. He was hemorrhaging so violently that he was finally taken to a sanatorium to die. Although he spent his supposedly last few months in catechizing and counselling, Father Maximilian refused to make long-range plans, lest he seem to anticipate God's will to cure a hopeless case. It seemed as if the Immaculate were trying to impress her servant with his own helplessness.

Father Maximilian was discharged from the sanatorium as a man whose death was near, but not immediate, even though he appeared plump and ruddy. With the characteristic abandon of Our Lady's friends, he asked permission to edit a short bulletin to keep contact with the few members of the Militia. He wrote practically all the first issues. It

was evidently his conviction, rather than any literary grace, that won the hearts of his readers, for he remained a poor writer all his life.

Father Maximilian never got around to dying, but his periodical, *Knight of the Immaculate*—a title reminiscent of Saint Francis' own chivalric ambitions—grew to such proportions that he and his brother-helpers were sent to Grodno to set up shop. They bought a used press, which they called "Grandma." This was the beginning of what became the most expert publishing house of Central Europe.

When Father returned from the sanatorium after a second visit, supposedly to die again, the Polish Prince Lubecki donated a large tract of land near Warsaw to the Friar. This was the beginning of Niepokalanow, or "City of the Immaculate."

Father Maximilian and his brothers began to build a place for their presses; their own living quarters were simply a kind of barracks—as they were always to remain. There was nothing too modern for Our Lady's work, but the Friars themselves were satisfied with less than what the poor could afford. Father Maximilian had to kneel to wash himself, for he considered a table for his wash basin superfluous furniture in his room.

When the war broke out in 1939 and the Nazi Army marched on Warsaw, this is what Niepokalanow had accomplished in just twelve years of its existence. The brothers and priests had created the most expert printery and bindery in Central Europe. In addition, they had built a school for candidates, a novitiate, a hundred-bed hospital, an electric plant, a firehouse, a radio station and an airport. Father Maximilian was also planning to make movies with the best European stars and to operate a TV station, as soon as it became more practical. The last count before the war included over seven hundred Conventual Franciscans in the "City"—the largest religious community in the world. They were printing almost a million copies of the *Knight* every month, plus the *Little Knight*, with 250,000 circulation, for young lovers of the Immaculate. Among their ten periodicals they printed a journal of sports and a daily paper with the latest news service; the newspaper had more than 150,000 daily circulation—and this in a country of only thirty million people. Besides the periodicals, they printed countless pamphlets and books in several languages, including Arabic.

Amid all this activity with "brother ink" and "sister press," as Father Maximilian used to call them in his Franciscan idiom, he insisted that the Friars' personal sanctification be first on the list of things-to-do.

He was not interested in first fervors or vocations founded on emotions; he did not want men ill-suited to Franciscan poverty or temperamentally unfit for community life. But imagine the caliber of the religious! About seven hundred men, for example, applied to become brothers at the City of the Immaculate during the last year before the Nazi occupation; of these barely a hundred were even allowed to try the life of a novice.

Both priests and brothers were trained to keep the spirit of recollection in the midst of the clatter of machines. They did not become robots on an assembly line; they were frequently transferred so that their talents could be used best and so that they would understand all the processes involved in their work, from printing to plumbing. This technique was so successful that the brothers held a large number of patents.

Father Maximilian's intention was to found a City of the Immaculate in every country of the world. In 1930 he left Poland to carry out this ideal, and founded Mugenzai no Sono, or "The Garden of the Immaculate," in Nagasaki, Japan. At present it includes a minor seminary of about a hundred candidates, a major seminary which has begun to produce small classes of Japanese clergy, novitiate classes averaging twenty members, a community of lay sisters dedicated to the Immaculate, and an orphanage which the late Father Flanagan called The Boys' Town of Japan. These orphans are the ones left homeless by the atom bomb blast of 1945—from which the Friars' buildings were preserved intact, although they are within the limits of Nagasaki.

Besides this activity, as well as working in the several parishes established in other cities, the Friars of Japan are currently printing the largest Catholic periodical in Japanese. They are evangelizing the smaller Japanese islands by the modern means of motor launches and movie projectors—a method that would have been much approved by Father Maximilian.

In 1939 Father Maximilian visited India, following a previous visit to China, and arranged with ecclesiastical authorities for a new City in Ernaculum. But when he returned to Poland in September of 1939, he was caught up in the outbreak of World War II.

The tale of his arrest and the dispersal of his religious community and the confiscation of their presses runs like a hundred other stories in Europe. Father Maximilian was accused of underground resistance and was sent to the prison camp at Oswiecim (Auschwitz). With scarcely anything left of his lungs and just recovering from pneumonia, he was sentenced to hard labor, first in carrying sand and stones in a wheelbar-

row, and then in clearing a swamp of trees. After their liberation, his companions told the story of the brutal floggings he received when he stumbled from exhaustion. Yet he warned others not to help him, lest they suffer too; the Immaculate would sustain him, he said. Whenever he had the chance, he braved death to hear confessions and aid the dying.

Father Maximilian was in Cell Block Fourteen when one of the prisoners escaped. In reprisal, ten of the other prisoners were sentenced to die, among whom was a young doctor with a family. When he realized he would never again see his wife and children, he broke down and began to sob. Father Maximilian then stepped from the lines and asked to die in his stead. The commandant granted his wish. They were sentenced to die by starvation.

The Polish orderly assigned to check the death cells daily and remove the dead has left us the touching story of Father's last fifteen days on earth. No curses, no weeping, were ever heard from the cell of those ten men, unlike the other starvation cells near them. Father Maximilian said the rosary with his fellow sufferers, and with their cracked voices they managed a few hymns, too. But they were taking too long to die; the cell had to be cleared for other victims. On August 14, 1941, the Vigil of the Immaculate's own Home-going, the last four prisoners, including Father Maximilian, received a hypodermic of carbolic acid in their veins. Then their bodies were cremated and even the burial place of their ashes passed from the sight of men.

But the memory and spirit of father Maximilian Kolbe has not passed away. A handful of his brothers have continued their work at Niepokalanow under the eyes of the Communist regime. They have been able to print at least a few issues of the *Knight*—but in different cities when and wherever they collect enough paper for the magazine. At present they have themselves completed the construction of a mammoth basilica in modern-Slavic architecture—despite the Communist restrictions—where they carry on perpetual adoration.

Father Maximilian's work has been the subject of countless articles and at least a half dozen books in as many languages. His conviction that the figure of the Immaculate would soon reign above the Red Star on the Kremlin in Moscow has received much currency in Central Europe, including western Russia itself. What is more important, his ideal of conquering every country of the world by a city of the Immaculate has taken root within his own Order. Two more Cities—in addition to Mugenzai no Sono in Nagasaki—have sprung up, where his ideals

are being lived and disseminated, coupling the Franciscan spirit with the Marian apostolate. One establishment is in Italy, the other in Kenosha, Wisconsin (Marytown).

I think Father Maximilian's message to modern Franciscans may be summed up in what he told his brothers, almost in prophecy, even before the war broke out. His words are recorded in Maria Winowska's book, *Our Lady's Fool* (p. 129):

"Fundamentally, Niepokalanow is not so much our visible and exterior activity, be it inside or outside the cloister. The real Niepokalanow is our souls. All the rest—even skill—is secondary. Progress is spiritual, or it is not progress at all! Therefore, even though it were necessary to suspend our work, even though all the members of the Militia abandoned us, even though we had to be dispersed as leaves swept by the autumn wind, we would say, my Brothers that we are truly progressing if the ideal of Niepokalanow continues to shine in our souls."

Fr. Anselm Romb, OFM Conv.

## THE SPIRIT OF MARY IMMACULATE AND THE MODERN TEACHER

It would be incongruous and intolerable if the holy enthusiasm of the Marian Year swept over our souls and left Christian education untouched. What a Marian education might mean, and what it could do, came home to the writer during the Marian Congress in Rome, and began to take shape in my mind as I listened to the Holy Father speak.<sup>1</sup> What question did his allocution pose for us?

Certainly, it is not a question of more "devotions," of any multiplication of external practices in our schools. It is the far deeper and neglected problem of *creating a spirit*, of discovering the secret and sacred springs of motivation in the human heart of both teacher and pupil. It means enlivening that hidden essential relationship between the soul of child and teacher in our modern age and the

<sup>1</sup>The text of the Allocution given by the Holy Father on November first, 1954, is found as "Le Testimonianze," in *Osservatore Romano*, an. 94, n. 255 (Nov. 2-3, 1954).

Blessed Mother, and drawing forth from this live center of supernatural love and power a love of truth, a desire for knowledge and goodness, having, if possible, the force of a holy passion. A Marian education can mean nothing less, essentially, than activating the graces of baptism, of faith, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and making them fruitful in the educative process. How can this be done at all? How shall we approach this kind of problem?

The address of the Holy Father was not merely a discourse on the high theoretical level of general principles. As he warmed to his subject, he struck again and again an intensely practical note: "in the present situation. . . in this hour of history." The timeliness of the new feast of the Queenship of Mary appears as an effective means of challenging the present-day restless world and of compelling it to see a truth "which can supply a remedy for its evils, deliver it from its anguish, and direct it on the way of salvation which it anxiously seeks."<sup>2</sup> Now, if the gracious truth about our Blessed Mother can fulfill this triple function for the world at large, it can do the same for education in the modern world. The word of a Pope is not to be taken lightly.

What then does the Holy Father promise himself and us as the fruits of this new feast? To invoke Mary as Queen, to invite her with the united voice of Christendom to establish her rule over a ravaged and restless world, is itself, first of all, a revival of Christian hope in the divine promises, a bestirring of mankind out of its stupor, a laying of the nightmares of desperation. This new-born hope will surely gain her response. She will not only bring to naught the dark plans of evil men who work to destroy the peace and unity of mankind. Even more, the Holy Father confidently expects that she will bestow upon us *some portion of her spirit*.

The Spirit of Mary and of the reign of Mary! Here is something positive to guide us. The phrase strikes a spark, lights up a vision to fire the imagination, even the imagination of teachers beaten dull by sententious "educational" talk. Instead of omnipotent "methods," we have the Madonna, *mulier amicta sole*! A Marian education then is simply one which has captured the Spirit of Mary Immaculate.

<sup>2</sup>Pius XII, *ibid.*

We are thus compelled to ask: what is this Spirit of Mary Immaculate and how can it transform modern education?

### 1. *The Spirit of Mary Is a Strong and Daring Spirit*

"We understand by this (spirit) *the courageous and even daring will* which, in difficult situations and in the face of dangers and obstacles, unhesitatingly shapes the resolutions which are called for and carries through their execution with indefectible energy, in such a way as to sweep along in its wake the weak, the weary, the doubtful, those who no longer believe in the justice and nobility of the cause for which they should fight." It means to catch the spirit of Mary's *Magnificat*, "a song of joy and invincible confidence in the power of God, on which she counts to produce results and which fills her with a holy daring and with a force unknown to nature alone."<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who sees the facts of modern education will have no difficulty in seeing also the necessity of such a holy daring and of an invincible courage. *For we need to refurbish our confidence in the goal of education.* The most crippling defect of secular education is the lack of a clear and well-defined goal; and as we breathe this air of vague and wandering finality, we begin to grow unsure and vague ourselves; we begin to draw into our souls this crippling lack of purpose, and with it dire and discouraging consequences.

Mary supplies the answer. "The purpose of all education is to form the true and perfect Christian" (Pius XI), just as through her co-operation was formed the true and perfect Christ. Simple, unadorned words which contain a mighty truth, a truth which makes of education a maternal task and privilege. As Saint Pius X says in *Ad diem illum*, as no one can teach us so well about Christ as Mary, so no one can so well fire us with a strong conviction of the purpose which governs all our educative work. ". . . And since it is through Mary that we attain to the knowledge of Christ, through Mary also we most easily obtain that life of which Christ is the source and origin."

Again, *we need to realize that Mary became the valiant woman*

<sup>3</sup>W. J. Dohney-J. P. Kelly, *Papal Documents on Mary* (Milwaukee, 1954), p. 138.



and manifested this holy daring in that decisive moment when she spoke her wonderful *Fiat*. It was her complete dedication of herself to God's purpose and disposition. That moment, says the present Holy Father, illumines her whole person and mission. In that moment she became Mother and Queen, and received the regal office of watching over the unity and peace of the human race. This basic daring dedication of ourselves to God and whatever He may choose to do with us, this wholly courageous and supernatural spirit of adventure, *this alone must be the ever-living source of the Catholic Teacher's unwavering devotion to his or her task.*

## II. Several Related Truths

Applying this thought further to education, this completely personal acceptance and realization of what our divine purpose is, we note several related truths.

First, Mary became Queen when she spoke her *Ecce ancilla Domini*. Before we can hope to teach others to master themselves with purpose and to be above the circumstances of their lives, we must first achieve this mastery in ourselves. "To serve God is to rule." No one can give what he does not possess. And if the children we teach are consistently restless and difficult and distracted, we may well ask whether this unhappy attitude is not a reflection of ourselves, whether it is not their assimilative reaction to our own habitual disquiet of soul. "Tranquillize the minds of the young," said a recent Pope. We ourselves, then, must be vessels of tranquillity, radiating centers of peace. That is, our whole interior life, like that of Mary, must truly be centered on the jewel of a genuine *Fiat*.

Secondly, in the courage of her complete *Fiat mihi*, Mary became the Queen of Peace. This peace of heart in complete dedication to God's purpose for us individually is what the Psalmist means when he says: *Inquire pacem et persequere eam* (Ps. 33, 15); it is what Saint Francis meant whenever he made cautionary remarks about learning, that is, about mere secular learning, a learning not rooted in the tranquillity of a life completely prayerful. This peace, in a more technically theological sense, is what Saint Bonaventure meant when he said *in quiete* and means thereby the whole richness of the interior life, the state of contemplation.

This peace we must have within ourselves before we step into the classroom to civilize and Christianize those lovable little barbarians, our children. And nothing less is required of us than a perfect *Fiat*, a daring daily, hourly *Fiat* of the complete gift of ourselves to God, a never-shrinking willingness to be used as His instrument. "Shine through me (prayed Cardinal Newman), and be so in me that every soul with whom I come in contact may feel Thy presence in my heart; let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus." This is the first and fundamental legacy in us of our Blessed Mother's spirit. It is a spirit of holy daring and divine audacity, for it was from the beginning, as the event proved, a dedication to the Cross, to the Passion. The *Fiat mihi* of the Annunciation is at once the *Fiat voluntas tua* of the Agony in the Garden, of the rock of Calvary, of the Cross.

Again, in the courage of her complete *Fiat*, Mary made her decision once and for all, and accepted all that was to come. In this spirit alone you may rightly step into the classroom. The *Fiat mihi* of your self-consecration to God's purpose is at once acceptance of the classroom difficulties, and this acceptance is new self-mastery and sanctity. You will go to face them confidently because you go with Mary Immaculate, who drew all needed strength from God: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est*. These classroom demands are the instruments of the Passion by which God pierces your heart and enters therein. Then you will be (and should be) to every child struggling with its first efforts on the hard road of knowledge, the very embodiment of the strong, encouraging goodness of the Blessed Mother.

You will achieve this not so much by what you say, but by what you do and are. It is a symptom of unhealthiness in modern education that it feels it must ever be busy about many things. (It talks too much; many school-texts chatter in a way that makes an intelligent child feel sorry for grown-ups.) You will succeed in this fundamental task of conveying the sanctity of purpose in life and in school by what you are. This is the way of Saint Francis, the way of Our Lord who "did and taught." Thus will the child, anxious and frightened (either shrinkingly or belligerently) by its problems,

consistently find in your understanding and compassion a cause of its joy, a gate of heaven, a star of the morning, the health of the sick and even the refuge of sinners!

Lastly, this holy audacity of Mary Immaculate might well induce many of us to have greater confidence in the ability of our pupils (God helps them too!) and, contrary to a contemporary downgrading of the educational process, encourage us to expect more from them. Many teachers today do not, as the Holy Father intimates, recognize to what extent they too have succumbed to a "dangerous psychological depression," to "a kind of weariness, of resignation," and "no longer truly believe in the justice and nobility of the cause for which they must fight." That is, they have forgotten the power of the supernatural in which Mary's courage was rooted. Much educational theorizing, I feel, is only a rationalization of the weariness and resignation inherent in this unconscious naturalism.

The Holy Father goes on to apply to the political world his thought of the Spirit of Mary as a strong and daring spirit. He notes in rulers of men today "a sort of weariness, of resignation, of passivity, which prevents them from advancing and facing with firmness and perseverance the problems of the present moment. They let things drift, instead of mastering them with sane and constructive action. They lack the full awareness of the dangerous psychological depression into which they have fallen." What they need, through Mary, is the grace "to conquer depression and weakness in an hour when no one can permit himself an instant of repose, when, in many places, just liberty is oppressed, the truth obscured by a mendacious propaganda, and the forces of evil, as it were, are spreading over the earth."

Apply this political thought to education: for the heart of a child is a little polity with eternal possibilities. You, the teacher, are to enter this small political world which is the open heart of the child only as a true Madonna, as a woman, clothed with the sun. . . How can you represent that Woman, unless with her you have spoken your *Fiat mihi* with courage, and with her know that within your heart the mystery of God's coming has taken place; and the Word has become incarnate in you and your life—that Word which

is eternal Truth—that He may dwell among the habitations of men. Here lie the supernatural springs of that reverence in which must be steeped every word that is spoken by the Catholic teacher.

### III. *The Spirit of Mary Is a Tender, Loving Spirit*

Pope Pius XII uses no words more readily when he speaks of Mary than the words "tender," "tenderness," or "sweetness." In doing this he is conscious of acting as the mouthpiece of all Christian hearts: "Desirous as we are to interpret the sentiments of the entire Christian world," he says at the end of his address, which then turns into an ardent prayer. And his face, as he greets the pilgrims, shines with the spirit of a great heart brimming with compassion for all men, with an immense, alert and searching solicitude; with constant concern to give himself to alleviate the painful lot of men today. The prayer of the Marian Year breathes the same deep and sensitive affection.

In setting this quality of tenderness and graciousness before us as the second outstanding characteristic of the spirit of Mary and presenting it as at once a contrast and a complement to the first quality of strength and holy daring, the Pope makes the personality of Mary come vividly alive, as he wants it to live in the heart of Christendom. It is this surprising combination of paradoxical qualities which makes every great personality so completely fascinating to us. *Strength and beauty are her clothing* (Prov. 31, 25).

It is this quality of immense mercy which in a special way gives a distinctive character to the Reign of Mary Immaculate. Not power, but pure benevolence, is its very soul. "She continues to pour out," says the Holy Father, "all the treasures of her affection and her sweet concern upon suffering humanity. Far from being founded on an insistence on her rights or on any will to have dominion over others, the reign of Mary knows only one aspiration: to give herself completely with a most noble and complete generosity. This is how Mary exercises her queenly power, by accepting our homage and hearing even the most lowly and imperfect of our prayers."

What again are the implications of this quality of the Spirit of Mary for the Catholic teacher? What, but that in this heavenly af-

fection and tenderness of her rule we have the principle of all true motivation and discipline in Catholic education?

Only out of the trust and confidence engendered by sincere love does the child gain that courage to put forth his best efforts and try the powers of his mind in the enterprise of learning. Only in an atmosphere of loving acceptance and noble unwavering affection can a genuine Catholic discipline of heart come into being. For all true discipline must be radically self-discipline. It is not a force imposed from without and felt as a will to dominate or as an insistence on certain rights. Such is not the reign of Mary, says the Pope; but true discipline is the loving evocation of the unspoiled perseverant good will of the child, responding to pure benevolence and seeking, from within outward, the noblest good. This good has come alive—a radiant and alluring prospect—in the madonna-like goodness of the teacher. The spirit of Our Blessed Mother is a heavenly source of truly powerful motivation, of authentic self-discipline and self-development.

Why is it then that all too often the child grows up with a strong sense of unpleasantness attaching to religion and the religious teacher? Something certainly of the spirit of Mary is lacking in those teachers whose presence in fact or in memory stirs painful experience. Is it not often the lack of that supernatural benevolence and warmhearted affection to which confidence and courage so readily respond? Under the guise of asceticism, personal interest in the child is discouraged or even forbidden in some quarters, as if it were not possible to be mature enough or enlightened enough to distinguish sentimentality from a tender and sincere love like that of our Blessed Mother. "As she enfolds the Divine Child in her mantle," the Holy Father prays, "so may Mary deign to *enfold all men and all peoples in her watchful tenderness*." Then, pointing the way for the teacher, he adds: "May she deign, as Seat of Wisdom, to make shine the truth of the inspired words: *By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things; by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice*" (Prov. 8, 15-16). The two thoughts, of tenderness and of truth, are not casually joined. The modern world, and the modern child, cannot receive the truth unless it comes with manifest love. The tight-lipped

teacher freezes something far more precious than her own ramrod dignity: she freezes the heart of a child.

The spirit of Mary is what the restlessness of the heart of man needs. The spirit of Mary is a strong and daring spirit. The spirit of Mary is a tenderly loving spirit. Modern education, as all modern life, needs the Madonna, and needs all of you who are teachers as so many multiplied madonnas, so many incarnations of the Spirit of Mary Immaculate.<sup>4</sup>

Fr. Pacific L. Hug, O.F.M.

### THE FOURTH JOY—THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

*And entering the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they worshipped him. And opening their treasures they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matt. 2:11)*

Undoubtedly one of the most beautiful, and certainly one of the most highly indulgenced Franciscan prayers, is the Crown of Our Lady's Joys. As members of the Franciscan family we are privileged to gain a plenary indulgence each time we recite the "Crown of Joy." (Ecclus. 1:11 6:32) Although meditation is not required to gain the indulgence, the particular Joys which we commemorate in this prayer provide fruitful subjects of meditation for us. The following is the first of a series of meditations on the Joys of the Crown which will appear at intervals corresponding to the liturgical occurrence of the seven joys of our Blessed Lady.

#### I

In Saint Matthew's remarkably concise and candid account of the visit of the Magi to the Infant King, many points strike the reflecting reader. Perhaps he pauses on the humility evidenced in

<sup>4</sup>This article is the substance of a paper delivered at the Third Meeting of the Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods (Buffalo, N.Y., Nov. 26, 1954). It will be incorporated in the Proceedings of that meeting (to be published soon by the Franciscan Institute).

the scene by the silence of the Child and his Mother; or he may ponder the devotion and determination which brought the wise Kings journeying from the East to Jerusalem; long would he be occupied in fathoming the significance of Christ's manifestation to all the world, a subject which the Fathers never tired of elaborating.

While appreciating the richness of the manifold facets of the story of the Magi, let us search for one particularly meaningful consideration which as Franciscans we may use in meditating on the fourth of Our Lady's Joys.

We do not know the extent of the Magi's appreciation of the divinity which dwelt in the Child before whom they fell down and worshipped. We do know, however, on the testimony of the Apostle, that *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give enlightenment concerning the knowledge of the glory of God, shining on the face of Christ Jesus*. With this knowledge of the glory of God in our hearts we are impelled to render the utmost homage to the King of kings as we commemorate his manifestation to the Gentile world. We are offered a suggestion concerning our worship and gifts to the Christ Child in the Epistle for Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany. There Saint Paul exhorts us to a height of perfection which is characteristically precious to, and please God, preciously characteristic of the seraphic heart: *I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God—your spiritual service*.

In following Christ and Saint Francis we began our *spiritual service*, yet the sacrifice entailed in its perfection continues until the time of our deliverance is at hand, gradually leading us to know the joyful emptiness which permitted Saint Paul to say: *I am already being poured out in sacrifice*.

A search of the history of our Order, from its first Saint, our holy Father Francis, to its last Beata, the humble Sister Maria Assunta, reveals one trait which capsules Franciscan homage to Christ—sacrifice. In final analysis can we chronicle or eulogize Saint Francis with more comprehension or commendation than the words so frequently said of him throughout his Office: *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom*

*the world is crucified to me, and I to the world?* True, in many ways Francis revolutionized a continent, he won thousands to the true Faith, he established friaries to dot all Europe, he enclosed his Second Order and enlisted the greatest spiritual militia this world has ever seen, his Third Order. Yet all these strains that God's own troubadour made his symphony in this world were sustained by the dominant chord of his own self-effacement, self-sacrifice, self-death, and we can conjecture that quite probably his work derives its present vitality from this note alone.

But what of us? It may be said that the whole notion of seraphic sacrifice rests in and flows from the Eternal Sacrifice of the Mass, wherein every day we celebrate or participate in the mystical, unbloody Sacrifice of our redemption. If we are true Franciscans, the Mass courses through our day with the fire and force of lightning, for herein is the Flame of Love which burns out self and enkindles in us the desire to turn to the Babe of Light or the Christ of Calvary, one and the same God, who became incarnate to save us, and was crucified to redeem us. Contrasted to the true source of Franciscan greatness, how foolish and fragile become our great external pretences if they are not protected by the *cross daily*. Our teaching, nursing, parochial duties, whatever our service may be, does it really have any meaning at all unless it be permeated and perfumed with the odor of sacrifice?

## II

The Magi saw the star and they rejoiced exceedingly, so the Evangelist narrates. We see the Star shining forth every morn, with a brilliance which would have blinded the eyes of the Wise Men. Do we rejoice exceedingly? Does the idea of sacrificing ourselves in the Sacrifice of the Mass—becoming therein nothing for the sake of Christ—really mean joy in our hearts, peace in our words, goodness in our deeds? Have we any other heritage to seek now or to leave behind as true Franciscans besides sacrifice? Can we really convince ourselves that souls are looking in us for anything more or less than they found and still find in our holy Father? If we do, well may we reflect the sublime and pregnant words which Holy Church speaks of him in his Office: "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in

my body." Saint Bonaventure tells us that Francis, once converted, lived only the life of the cross—walking in its imprint, savoring its sweetness, preaching its glory.<sup>1</sup> Here is the reproach to our reluctance to enter into the life of Christ, the life of the Mass, the life of personal sacrifice.

For the most part our rules, constitutions, or state of life, if we be secular Tertiaries, indicate how much of the world's goods we may or may not possess. And true, they demand a modicum of abandonment and detachment. But this is something regulated for us—and if we will ever bear the semblance of Franciscans we have no choice but to observe them in degree. Yet there remains a part of us that no rule, constitution, nor precept will govern. For none of these can force us to say from the depths of our hearts with Saint Paul: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross*. Such an assertion, such a dedication, can come only from one's self.

The self-sacrificed religious can be a veritable pillar of sanctity and strength to the whole Order or community, even though by any worldly standard he accomplishes little or nothing. A friar, nun, or Tertiary sacrificed of self with Christ and in Christ and through Christ in his Sacrifice of the Altar may be, and often is, the channel, hidden but mighty, through which flows all the success and blessing of the greatest external works of others. Ultimately, observance means little; but oblation means much. Observance essentially denotes conformity, oblation, for the Franciscan especially, implies configuration. Conformity is required in externals, configuration is from within. The greatest Oblation ever offered is renewed daily on our altars, and the tragedy is that we refuse to lose ourselves in It.

There is one gift of the Magi that captivates our attention, for it symbolizes in a lofty yet concrete way the concept of seraphic sacrifice. Frankincense is rare and costly, yet it must be exposed before it can yield its richest fragrance. So with us. If in the Fourth Joy we offer ourselves to our dear Lord and Mother in the spirit of sacrifice, we will truly be the living spirit of our Order, seraphic love, and

<sup>1</sup> Bonav., *In Epiphania*, Sermo 1 (IX 149a).

thus give off what Saint Paul so magnificently calls the *good odor of Christ*. Disciplines, mortifications, fasts, and the virtues are an integral part of our life, and yet they can mean very very little, in fact they may not escape the nomenclature of mere observance if they are not truly burning with seraphic ardor. No one can *make* a religious take up his *cross daily*, nor can anyone make him love; nonetheless experience reveals that the cross, or sacrifice, is intimately proportioned to love. Without love Franciscan sacrifice is stunted, and Franciscan love is sterile without sacrifice. Love and sacrifice: for the one is the measure of the other.

### III

Having found the Christ Child, the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod. The account does not speak of their sentiments, nor of the conversation that must have ensued during their visit. We do know, however, that they returned *to their own country by another way*. So with us, for our coming to the religious life does not take us from the world. The strictest Franciscan cloister in fact is very close to the world, for therein consecrated souls live and pray and die for the salvation of the world. Just as our coming to the altar every morning to confect or receive the veiled Christ does not mean that we are to become pure spirits, neither does Franciscan life. But both Franciscan life and our daily participation in the great Sacrifice should and do mean that we are to become both spiritually pure and purely spiritual. From both we return to our own *by another way*.

It was by coming down from and leaving their thrones that the Magi arrived at Bethlehem to participate in the new Kingdom. The Seraphic Doctor sagely observes of us that we often wish to come to the Kingdom of Christ, yet we do not wish to drink his chalice, nor to be despised with him, nor to be confounded with him, nor to suffer with him. Yet Saint Bonaventure tells us that if we truly wished to be seated in his Kingdom we must drink the chalice of sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

So often we hold out in this matter of sacrifice, ever reserving the little speck of self for self. Thereby our whole spiritual life be-

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *In Epiphania*, Sermo 1 (IX 149a).

comes crippled, as Saint Bonaventure observes, by our refusal to surrender. We walk the way of Christ on one foot—the way of the world on the other. And so the pure who retain self in pride, the humble who retain self in impurity, the self-styled virtuous, who cannot part with the identification “self.” But there is no middle path, for it is wholly necessary either to walk towards Christ or walk away from him.<sup>3</sup> Every man is capable of directing himself as he wills. If he goes forward to Christ, his staff is sacrifice; if he turns away from Christ, his staff is self. With but little addition then, the story of the Magi reveals again the contradictions of life, the contradictions of self. There were two kings. . . one with his frankincense of sacrifice, who left his throne to reign with Christ—the other with his conceit of self who clung to his throne to reign with satan. Herod raised his haughty head and with soft words sought to kill Life itself to gain damnation, but the wise man fell down to worship, and in silence sought to lose his life, his self, to gain eternity.

Talk of sacrifice can become morbid, but never the thought of seraphic sacrifice. The Adoration is ever a mystery of Joy, and anything less than holy joy in considering sacrifice is hardly Franciscan. The friar, nun, or Tertiary who learns to mingle the few drops of this world's waters of discouragement, insult, disillusionments, ugliness, thanklessness, be it ever so bitter, with the wine that is to become the Precious Blood of Sacrifice at the Altar, knows how truly joyful sacrifice can become.

Well does the solemnity of Epiphany follow on the New Year, the time of resolutions. And well can we keep in mind the spirit of sacrifice in our resolutions as we pray each day the Pater and Aves of the Fourth Joy of the Mother of God. The eleven prayers lend themselves to a like-lettered word, *sacrificium*. Whatever we propose for Christ for the New Year is ultimately unneeded—dare we say unwanted—unless it is purified in the greatest act performed on this earth, his *Sacrificium*. Look about you some time and behold the truly great and holy souls that grace the Order or community. They are the great lovers of the Mass. It is their lives that bring the *fragrance of Christ* into all our houses, the fragrance compounded of

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.*, *Sermo* 5 (IX 162a).

two perfumes blended at the altar, love and sacrifice. Perhaps this is why they understand the Mass so well. The Mass is the *Sacrificium Christi*, and it makes much more sense when said or participated by one who knows how to become a *sacrificium ipsius*.

Today the world holds very little praise, indeed no honor, for true sacrifice. For the most part it cushions us against it and protects us from it. Yet if we would truly *rejoice exceedingly* as wise men destined for a Kingdom, we will ask *the Child with Mary his mother* to teach us how to blend the frankincense of our sacrifice with the seraphic spirit of love, that we may truly become *the fragrance of Christ for God*. In so doing we cannot escape becoming holier and happier Franciscans.

William J. Manning, T.O.F.

## THE LITTLE SHEEP OF GOD

### Stories of Brother Leo from the Medieval *Liber Exemplorum*

Friar P. said that the following story was told to him by Friar Leo, the companion of Saint Francis: When I was newly ordained, I used to prolong the Mass whenever I offered it. For I felt divine consolations and therefore it was a great joy to me to tarry over it for a long time. Then one day the Blessed Francis called me and, speaking to me like a father, said to me: “Friar Leo, my son, will you do what I say? Celebrate your Mass in a becoming manner, and do not delay too long while saying it, but conform yourself to the other priests. If God gives you some special grace, wait until your Mass is finished; then return to your cell and meditate there and enjoy the divine consolations given you from heaven. I believe that it would be better and safer to follow this method. Because of the people present some vain glory or other inordinate tendency might come upon you and the devil could quickly rob you of the merit of apparent devotion. But in your cell, where no one sees you, you can securely give yourself to your devotion and the devil will not so

easily be able to find an occasion for temptation. It can also happen that those who hear such a lengthy Mass may become weary or may sin by judging that priest, who seems to be moved by such devotion, delights in mere appearances." (n. 70)

This incident is told us by Friar John, a friend of Friar Leo, the companion of our Holy Father. For four years Leo had worn a very old winter tunic which had many patches of sack cloth. One day I said to him: "Brother Leo, let me get you a better tunic; that one gives you little or no protection against the cold!" Brother Leo answered: "I feel weaker than usual lately: perhaps it will please God to put an end to my labors. Therefore I do not want another tunic now because I want Sister Death to find me a poor man." Within the year he died, a poor little man with the same poor habit; and we believe that pious and poor he entered heaven rich in virtue. (n. 71)

Friar Bonaventure (perhaps the Seraphic Doctor) says that Friar Leo once told him: "I had a very great desire to know whether by a bad thought, though without any consent to action but nevertheless with passing pleasure, a man can sin mortally. One night when I went to sleep, it seemed to me that I saw on the branch of a tree a beautiful dove with white feathers. But underneath the tree was a serpent watching the dove very attentively. Finally, after a long time the dove looked down at the serpent and immediately fell dead from the serpent's glance, even though they were far apart. Then I began to think and to give thanks to God because He had willed to give me certitude in my doubt. For I thought that the dove was a symbol of the soul which seems pure and innocent, but the glance of the serpent stands for the temptation which the devil sends into our soul, especially in regard to the vice of carnal pleasure through illicit and impure thoughts. And as the dove fell dead merely at his glance, so through impure pleasure in a thought alone, even without consent to the external act, the soul can lose the life of grace." (n. 72)

Friar Leo also had this saying which we should often ponder: "Joy of the spirit is to the soul what blood is to the body. For as the body cannot live without blood, so neither can the soul live without spiritual joy." (n. 145)

Friar Leo said that once he visited the Poor Ladies at the monastery of Bologna. The abbess there had forbidden the Ladies to look out of a certain window, but one of them through levity disobeyed and forgot to confess her fault.

After a while she became ill. While she was sick in bed they carried her into the room where that window was, and looking up she saw a devil there showing her the punishment prepared for her sin. Three times she jumped out of bed but each time she was put back in by her sisters. When the abbess asked the reason for this, she answered that a great punishment was prepared for her because of a sin of disobedience which she had not confessed, adding that she was frightened by the devil and the punishment which he had shown her. After she had made her confession she died.

But she had made a promise to the abbess that she would return. When she returned she told one of the sisters that she was condemned to the pains of purgatory for fifteen days, suffering great heat in a place planted with burning trees through which she had to pass. When the abbess heard this, she was very insistent that the Ladies pray for her only, putting aside all other intentions.

After eight days the dead sister again appeared and said that she was freed and was about to enter heaven, for her punishment had been shortened through the prayers said for her. (n. 133)

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At the recent meeting of the Franciscan Educational Conference a questionnaire relative to *THE CORD* was distributed. About forty answered it, representing (we hope) the opinion of the various Franciscan Sisterhoods. The comments without exception were favorable, and

the suggestions for improving *THE CORD* were quite helpful. We feel encouraged to continue the policy adopted at the beginning of this enterprise, that is, to cling tenaciously to our own Franciscan tradition and heritage, without forgetting that according to the holy Gospels there should be *nova et vetera*. We know that many improvements are still to be made, but we shall conscientiously refrain from making *THE CORD* a fashionable modern magazine.

In response to numerous requests, there will be an index at the end of this forthcoming volume of *THE CORD* covering the first five volumes. Every subsequent volume will have its own index. For this reason the Table of Contents of each issue of *THE CORD* will be found on the inside cover, leaving an extra page for the articles. We hope that this arrangement will prove satisfactory to the librarians.

This change, however, means an additional expense. We are loath to raise the subscription rate as long as we are not really forced to do so. But we need more subscribers. Do we really reach *all* the Franciscan houses? Any help in this regard will be sincerely appreciated. *Nostra res agitur*. If there is a sufficient increase in subscriptions, we may be able to add more pages.

Since *THE CORD* is running so close to the margin, we ask you to help us avoid the expense of unnecessary change of address. We know that many times it is unavoidable, but a certain Superior General has made the following suggestion: When a superior subscribes to *THE CORD* for her house, she should subscribe under her title of "Sister Superior" and not under her own name. Thus when a transfer occurs, "Sister Superior" will still be getting *THE CORD* and we shall be spared the expense of making a new plate for a new name.

Our sincere thanks goes to everyone who has helped to bring you the Franciscan message through *THE CORD*. We are reaching not only the great Franciscan family at home and abroad, but also many other religious Congregations with Franciscan leanings. Thanks to those who have helped by their subscriptions, and to those who do the routine jobs connected with publishing a periodical.

It is our fervent hope that *THE CORD* will make us all more conscious of our Franciscan heritage, and especially that we in turn may give it to the poor suffering world that so badly needs it.

May the Lord give you peace.

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

## FRANCISCAN REVIEWS

**OUR LADY AND SAINT FRANCIS.** Edited by Raphael Brown. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Pp. X-80.

The Franciscan Herald Press is offering this little volume (pamphlet size, paper bound) as the first of a series to be entitled *Saint Francis Texts*, containing passages from reliable historical sources dealing with specific topics in the life of our Seraphic Father.

The present volume is divided into six parts, each of which treats of a certain aspect of Saint Francis' devotion to Mary. All the passages are selected from early sources, and edited and translated in such a way as to form a simple, smoothly-reading text, with the degree of authenticity of the sources unobtrusively but reassuringly indicated. There is also a good bibliography for the guidance of the interested reader.

The well-known and active Tertiary editor, Raphael Brown, is to be congratulated on this first number of the promised series. It is a step in the happy direction of making the historical Franciscan emerge from the sentimental clutter of the fictionalized Francis.

Sister M. Michaeline, O.S.F., has designed the cover, title page, and chapter divisions.

**GETTING WISE IN THE WAYS OF GOD.** Albert Nimeth, O.F.M. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Pp. 64

This is excellent material for the pamphlet rack. Fr. Albert gives a good outline, in pointed language, of reasons for becoming a Franciscan Tertiary and a saint. A few of the chapter titles suggest what the pamphlet covers: "Holiness is for You," "The Third Order—a Means," "Sin—a Betrayal of Love," "Sublimity of

Sex." "Need of Self-Denial," "Getting Down to Cases," etc. Interspersed at just the right places are groups of questions for the reader to answer for himself. They are pertinent and penetrating, and if the reader answers them honestly, the right conclusions will inevitably follow. Especially recommended for college groups and young people in general.

**DEVOTION TO MARY IN FRANCISCAN TRADITION.** Christian Eugene, O.F.M., transl. from the French by Sr. M. Bonaventure, O.S.F. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Pp. 53.

Another booklet in the Franciscan Herald Press' new pamphlet series (this the *Pax et Bonum* series) is this little survey of the history of devotion to Mary in the Franciscan Order. It covers not only the personal love of Saint Francis for Our Lady, but also touches briefly on Marian art and the cult of Mary in general among the Friars Minor from the Thirteenth Century to the present. Sister Michaeline, O.S.F., did the cover and the other little symbolic designs that are scattered throughout the booklet.

**EVERYMAN'S SAINT.** Marlon A. Habbig, O.F.M. Paterson: Saint Anthony's Guild Press, 1954. Pp. xi + xi 195. Illustrated by Sister Mary Jean Dorcy, O.P. \$2.00

The clients of Saint Anthony are counted by the million all over the world, yet perhaps only a few of them know the history of the devotions they love or the many indulgences attached to them. How many of us, for example, know why we put S.A.G. on our letters? How many can explain about Saint Anthony's lilies? Or Saint Anthony's Bread? How many are familiar with the dramatic story behind Saint Anthony's Brief?



The history of these devotions and many more besides, together with the indulgences attached to them, are charmingly presented in Father Marion's book. There are also chapters on Saint Anthony's life and the miracles authentically attributed to him, together with an appreciation of him as a follower and teacher of the Franciscan way of life. Apostolic Letters on Saint Anthony by Popes Pius XI and XII, and an Encyclical Letter from Minister General Valentine Schaaf, O.F.M., complete the book.

This latest work of Father Marion's first appeared as a series of articles in *Everybody's Saint Anthony*, a monthly

periodical issued by the Franciscans in Bangalore, India. Certainly a book on the historicity and authenticity of legends and devotions surrounding Saint Anthony is as badly needed in this country as in India. But lest the reader of this review be led to suppose the book is dry and technical, we must say that it is quite the contrary. The historical facts behind the popular devotions make Saint Anthony seem so real and alive, so attractive and lovable, that anyone who reads this book will surely find himself cherishing and promoting more spiritually sound devotion to Saint Anthony than ever before.

## SISTERS YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE

Because we have learned that so many Franciscan Sisterhoods are strangers to each other (which is a shame, really) we decided to alternate *THE CORD'S* regular biographical sketch with a short history of some one of the various Franciscan Congregations. We have no doubt but that you will do your best to cooperate, for surely you want the rest of the family to know about you as much as you want to know about them. So, here's what to do. Write up an informative, factual, interesting history of your Institute, to the length of about *eight* or *nine* typewritten (pica or elite) pages. Leave an inch margin all around, double space, and indent paragraphs three spaces. Send us the manuscript as soon as possible; or, if you have a printed pamphlet or some other literature on your Congregation, you may send that to us and we'll select what we consider pertinent.

Please let us hear from you soon. The whole Franciscan family is waiting to meet you.

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE THE SPIRIT OF THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION

To be true religious, we must become living stones in the spiritual edifice of our Order. Only as such can we become fully integrated into the Order and partake of its life. But living stones are not passively set in place; they strive to place themselves, to integrate themselves into the organic structure of the Order which has been built as a holy temple of God. Therefore it cannot be said that we partake of the life of the Order if we simply let it surround us; we must actively *live* it by absorbing it into our heart and mind, for only then can we hope to become living stones—which in fact is what our vocation demands of us. Naturally, this presupposes that we are conscious of the spirit that animates our Order. But before we take up this question, there is another and more basic point that we must pause to consider—a point that is really a matter of spiritual life or death for us: What is the meaning of the religious vocation? We do not mean the spirit of our Order, but rather of the religious life in general. The answer to this question is clearly given in the Gospel. The religious vocation is the call to follow Christ in total surrender to God, by separating ourselves from the world, and by carrying our cross daily with Christ.

### 1. *The Spirit of Consecration*

The spirit of consecration to God is basic for the religious vocation. When we pronounce our vows we give ourselves completely to God, not only by an act of worship, not only by a devout promise, but by the sacrificial act of vowing. In virtue of our consecration we are removed from the profane sphere and made holy to the Lord—even to the extent that an injury done to us becomes a profanation and a sacrilege. More than all other creatures of God, more than all other Christians and in a higher sense than these—we are marked with the divine seal as the property of the Great King. Through this consecration we become a constant act of worship, a living prayer, an unceasing immolation.

Now, if this spirit of consecration is alive in us and if it permeates all our activities, we should have no worry about purity of

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intention. Yet we hear so much prattle about the split between religious life and the labors that burden religious—as if those labors were not imposed in virtue of that very life itself. Our consecration makes all our labors holy; whatever we do becomes an act of religion, an act of worship, a truly sacrificial act. If we are assigned to study for instance (and study is the most common cause of tension among religious), will our studying be the same as that of the secular student? Not at all; for we are consecrated to the Lord, and in virtue of this consecration our studying is an act of worship. For the religious who lives his consecration, to study is to pray. If we are truly what we should be, how can we possibly complain of conflict between our religious life and our studies? If we learn to live in the atmosphere of our consecration, we shall have no difficulties with our work, no matter how onerous or time-consuming or ubiquitous it may be. Even if we have to perform tasks that are commonly considered mean or servile, we should be able to regard them reverently for what they are—true acts of worship, transformed by the power of our religious consecration. Awake or asleep, eating or fasting, sweating in a kitchen or a classroom—whatever we do in the realm of our daily life is an act of worship.

Furthermore, our consecration gives us the specific character of sacrificial victim. Unless we live as victims—unless we regard ourselves as living holocausts to be consumed in the fire of divine Love—we are not really living our consecration. Practically, what does this mean? It means simply that we must constantly realize we are the property of God, wholly, irrevocably, and voluntarily. To belong wholly to God means that everything we do, everything we have and are, belongs to Him, and we have no right to take back any part of ourselves or to give any part of ourselves to creatures. We have no right to murmur or complain, or to give way to self-pity. We have no right to seek the easy ways through life, for comfort is not in harmony with the role of victim. We have no right to content ourselves with fulfilling the basic requirements of the vows and virtues and leaving perfection for the zealots; for only a *perfect* victim, a lamb without blemish, is acceptable to the Lord. To belong to God irrevocably means that we hold firmly to the ideal of our consecration without ever looking back on the world we have left, without

any toying with thoughts of “what might have been” or “what still could be.” It means there can be no lapses into pleasant infidelities, no slipping back into the ways of the world, no occasional casting off of the insignia of our consecration to more freely indulge our *gaiete du coeur*. We bound ourselves by vows once for all; we placed ourselves on the altar of sacrifice; it behooves us to remain there.

To belong to God voluntarily means that we give ourselves to Him in the total surrender of our consecration, with the gladness and freedom and generosity of the lover to the beloved. As a reluctant bride distresses the bridegroom, so the unwilling victim, the timorous soul who shrinks from the consuming flames of divine Love, distresses the Eternal Bridegroom. We must be willing victims, ever humbly grateful to the Lord for the sublime part He has assigned to us in the life of the Church.

Our spirit of consecration, then, makes us wholly the Lord's property. We do not live for ourselves, nor for our superiors, nor for the Order, nor for any work or office. We live for God and for Him alone.

## 2 The Spirit of Separation from the World

By consecrating ourselves to the Lord we separate ourselves from the world. Thus an essential part of the religious life is the spirit of denial. We have the words of Christ: *If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast* (Mtt. 19:21). And we also hear Him explaining that this selling of everything entails much more than mere property: *Everyone who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall possess life everlasting* (Mtt. 19:29). Our consecration, then, means renunciation of this world—not simply the world in the evil sense, the world of which Satan is prince—but of everything that ordinarily can become an impediment to our total surrender to God. For the love of Christ we broke all the ties that once bound us to creatures, even in a lawful way, so that we could strengthen the one tie that would bind us to the Lord. No creature has any further right over us; we are the property of God, and if for any reason we turn back to creatures—even to our parents—it can be done only according to the will of God, with His permission, as it were.

This denial and separation from the world must be final and complete. The break cannot be made halfheartedly; it must be made firmly, thoroughly, with a holy radicalism. There is no compromise possible. When the Lord calls, all human voices must be silent. When He calls, we must follow without hesitation, no matter where He leads us, at all times yielding ourselves trustingly to His good pleasure. When the Lord calls, we must leave all things behind us. Like the Apostles, we must leave our little nets and boats, we must leave our relatives with their rivalries and contentions to settle for themselves, and even, if the Lord demands it, we must leave the burial of our father to others. And once we have set our hand to the plow, we dare not look back, under pain of being declared unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Of course religious must take part in worldly affairs. It would be quite absurd for us to go about completely oblivious of the world around us. We are men, not angels; even the cloistered contemplatives are at least aware of the ground under their feet. Furthermore, it is a sure indication of a mean, selfish, and frontiered heart to remain indifferent to the sufferings of the world, to take no interest at all in our friends and relatives and benefactors, especially those who are entrusted to our care. Our attitude must always reflect a heart that is warmly alive to the welfare of others; but at the same time our attitude must reflect the spirit of our religious consecration. If we are called to imitate Christ, we must look upon the world as He did, with tender and loving compassion for its ills and miseries, with sympathetic understanding for its joys and yearnings, with solicitude for its errors and follies. We must put on the mind of Christ, then, we can give the world what He gave, and what He expects us to give in His Name. But first must come the separation, the denial, then the hundredfold return.

### 3. *The Spirit of the Cross*

Our consecration means not only that we give ourselves wholly to God, but that we give ourselves as Christ gave Himself—or, as He *described* Himself, took on the form of a slave, humbled Himself, and even to death. Hence the spirit of the religion is the spirit of the Crucified Christ. We have

His own words for it: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For he who would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will find it* (Mtt. 16: 24-25). This spirit of love for the Cross is essential to our vocation. Do we ever stop to consider how often Christ spoke of the persecutions that would come upon His friends? He not only spoke of denial and separation, but He also very often mentioned persecutions and injustices—a point we are inclined to overlook. *Amen, I say to you, that there is no one who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, who shall not receive now in the present time a hundredfold as much, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children and lands—along with persecutions.* (Mk. 10:28).

This is not new to us, of course; we learned the theory in the novitiate. But lack of the *spirit* of the Cross very often leads religious to nerve-shattering crises. If we have really given up everything for the sake of Christ, if we are totally His own property, if we have answered His call generously and trustingly, then why do we refuse to go His way, and all the way, with Him? Why do we shrink from humiliations? Why do we sink into the quagmire of bitterness and remain there for the whole time of our religious life—perhaps die in it? Or even lose our soul in it? Why do we allow our personality to become warped in the wormwood of resentment? Why do we fail to study the meaning of the Cross and conform our life to it? The Cross is our vocation; have we still the mind of a novice who knows the theory of the spiritual life without yet knowing the implications? If we shrink from the Cross we shrink from our vocation. The spirit of the religious vocation demands conformity to Christ, not to the Christ of the Transfiguration, or to the Christ of the Marriage Feast, nor even to the Christ of the Hidden Life, but to the Christ of the Passion. Our divine Master was unjustly criticized by the rulers of His people; He was unjustly condemned to death by His religious superiors, whose authority, incidentally, He clearly acknowledged (Jn. 19:11). He bore the ignominy of carrying His Cross publicly, like a slave and a criminal, through the streets of Jerusalem. He suffered all the pains that can afflict the human heart—ingratitude, treachery, betrayal of friendship, apparent failure,

ridicule, mockery, physical agony, spiritual desolation. And He died as a criminal between criminals, in the sight of His own Mother. We all know this; we have all meditated on the Passion. Yet—how many religious vocations have been lost because of refusal to follow Christ on the way of the Cross, through real or imaginary persecutions through injuries to feelings, through public and unjust humiliations? These defections were and are the simple and inevitable consequences of failure to recognize love of the Cross and of the Crucified Christ as the heart of religious consecration.

Without a deep and thorough knowledge—and knowledge strengthened with conviction—of the full meaning of the religious vocation, we cannot hope to become living stones in the Order. With the grace of God we may remain in the Order, to be sure, but only as stones—cold, hard, and dead stones. Let us beg, then, for the grace to become living stones. Christ said to the Samaritan woman: *If thou didst know the gift of God, and who says to thee, 'Give me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst ask of him, and he would have given thee living water' (Jn. 4:10).* Have we asked this living water of Him who has called us?

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## ARTIST OF DIVINITY

Hanging among the paintings in the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice is a picture signed Caterina Vigri; another, bearing the same signature—this one a picture of Saint Ursula and her companions, dated 1452—is exhibited in the Gallery of Bologna. That both of these paintings came from the brush of a very clever artist is unmistakable, and there is evidence of a rare delicacy of line and expression; but Caterina Vigri was a person whose perception of beauty extended far beyond the canvas to the ultimate—Divinity Itself—and as a canonized saint, Caterina of Bologna,<sup>1</sup> she is invoked as the Patroness of painters and artists.

This daughter of one of the principal families of Ferrara was born on September 8, 1413 in Bologna—in Bologna because her mother, Benvenuta Mamellini, had returned to her own family for the birth. Prompted

by love and consideration, her husband, John Vigri, who held a doctor of laws degree from the University of Bologna and had been newly assigned to a professor's chair at the University of Padua, had refused to burden her with the added hardships of setting up a new establishment. The child was a talented youngster and her parents saw to it that she was well tutored. To their own training was added that of the tutors of the Court of Ferrara, for, when Caterina was but ten years old, the Marquis of Ferrara persuaded John to send his daughter to Court as maid of honor to his young Princess Margaret. The lovable little Vigri girl soon charmed the entire Court with her beauty and her winning ways, her innocence and her very natural spirituality. The Princess loved her completely and Catherine and Margaret d'Este spent many companionable hours together over their studies, which included not only the fifteenth century essentials for a woman of culture, but also the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and a great deal of Latin. When Margaret married the Prince of Rimini, Catherine had been with her for three years. Contrary to the young bride's hopes, however, she was unable to persuade her much-appreciated Caterina to accompany her to the Court of Rimini. Catherine Vigri had made up her mind to return to her family, for her dreams were of service in a far nobler Court.

She had been home a very short time when John Vigri died, leaving a large fortune to his only child. Beautiful, talented, charming of manner, and an heiress! Fortunately for Catherine's dreams, when the suitors came seeking her hand, Benvenuta refused her cooperation; and before long this lovely fourteen year-old heiress, with the whole-hearted sanction of her mother, had joined a group of young girls who, under the leadership of a devout townswoman, Lucy Mascheroni, were leading a kind of monastic life in Ferrara. These virtue-conscious girls, without benefit of vow or cloister, dividing their time between prayer and good works, were directed in their spiritual seeking by the Franciscan Friars of the Observance.

During her first five or six years with the group, Catherine went through another period of training, tutored this time by Divinity—with a permit for Satan, also—for Providence was preparing this artist-soul for work on material other than canvas. In retrospect, the guidance and purpose of the Master Hand is easily distinguishable in the favors, the trials and temptations which she experienced, for Caterina Vigri was being divinely conditioned to teach souls. There were her visions, her bouts with the deceptions of the devil; there was the time when, delighted at having overcome an especially violent temptation, she taunted

Satan with his inability to deceive her, and Satan-like, he came back at her with deceits so refined that, but for grace, he would have confused her to the point of succumbing. A warning against presumption, and not very subtle one at that! She was subjected to blasphemous thoughts from which she could find no escape, to doubts about the Real Presence and to an overpowering inclination to sleep—she fell asleep everywhere and at all times. It became such a struggle to keep awake that sometime during Holy Mass she would spend the entire time on her knees with her arms extended in the form of a cross. Never once, however, did she give up striving, and after she had successfully passed through her period of preparation, God stepped in with His peace and wonderful gifts.

Deeply edified by the fervor of the life which the girls led, the Princess of Verde set about building a convent for them which, she specified, was to be called the Convent of the Blessed Sacrament.

With this materialization of their hopes in sight, they began to consider adopting one of the established Rules. Lucy favored the Augustinian, but Catherine, who had been following the Tertiary Rule, pleaded for that of Saint Francis. Her presentation of the case for the Poor Clare Rule must have been very convincing, for before long she had won all the others to her way of thinking; and Lucy, seeing the unanimity of opinion, acquiesced.

It was in 1432 that they were invested with the Franciscan habit and were given the First Rule of Saint Clare by the Provincial of the Friars. In answer to their appeal for assistance, the Nuns at Mantua sent them as Abbess Sister Taddea, the natural sister of Princess Verde, along with a little group of very fervent Religious to help initiate the community at Ferrara into the observances of the Rule. Like a soul released, the twenty-year old Catherine ran along the way to perfection; sacrifice and self-denial were the ordinary; so exact and fervent, so imbued with the spirit of their Holy Mother was she, that the others came to regard her as a second Clare.

Her first appointment was that of baker, and to Catherine's way of thinking, it was an ideal one, for it gave her the opportunity of serving the others. Nevertheless, she found the heat of the ovens almost past bearing and when it began to effect her eyesight, very sensibly decided that it was time to do something about it lest she become a blind burden to the community. When the Abbess suggested, however, that she return to the ovens and leave her health in the Hands of God, she did so, unhesitating and cheerfully content.

Conscious all the while that her trials and the extraordinary graces being given her were not meant for herself alone, she began presently to keep a sort of diary in which she wrote of her experiences, thinking that after her death it might serve as a help to others—but only after her death, for her humility could bear the thought that her notes might be read by the nuns while she was still among them. Fearful lest the notebook fall into the hands of her companions, she would, after each entry, sew it inside the cover of the cushion on the chair beside her bed. The Sisters, curious, and suspecting that she was doing something of the sort, searched until they found her account, then inadvertently gave themselves away by the careless stitches they made in their haste to cover up the traces of their indiscretion. When Catherine detected the sewing that was not her own she was greatly disturbed and burned the pages immediately in the bake ovens.

After a while her attempts to deflect attention from herself, to conceal her virtue, her gifts of miracles and visions, became futile and her Superiors, appreciating the worth of this blessed soul, entrusted Catherine with the guidance of the novices—a post for which Divine Providence had so prodigiously prepared her. Since Sister Catherine had already experienced most of the trials and difficulties to which her charges would be subjected, the novices found in their Mistress an understanding heart—that boon which is so inestimable to those who are new to the religious life. She counseled them, she exhorted them; but more effective by far was her own day by day life, for there is no teaching more conducive to desired results than words in action. No matter what their difficulty, there was always sympathy; no matter when, there was always time—she told them once to be sure to awaken her if she happened to be asleep when they were troubled. At one of the annual visitations, Catherine was rebuked for sensuality because it was noticed that at times there were so many egg shells on her plate. But Catherine had kept only the shells. She had begged the extra eggs, shelled them, then given them to those of the novices who were finding it difficult—human nature being what it is—to adjust to the rigorous fasts of the Rule.

Her horror of idleness was innate, and, with a realization of all the dangers which it invited, she often found occasion to warn the Sisters of the value of minutes. For her free time—like all the modern hobby-lovers—she found occupation for both mind and hands; she painted, she wrote, she composed Latin hymns. Much has been made of the breviary which she copied by hand in these odd minutes on parchment-like

paper, illuminating it beautifully in the richest of colors. Never selfish or possessive, she lent it to anyone who asked, and to such an extent that it came to be regarded as common property.

The office of portress followed that of Novice Mistress, and to Catherine's keen soul-sight, this stepping down into the ranks again was not the demotion that it would appear to worldly judges. Without a doubt her Divine Spouse was pleased with her service as portress, for tangible evidence is still in existence today at the Convent in Ferrara. It is a little cup given Catherine by a favorite among the poor to whom she ministered as portress. There was an air about this man that attracted her, and he held her interest by his constant topic of conversation, the Holy Land. He spoke of the places connected with the life of Christ and His lovely Mother as though he knew them intimately, so that Catherine suspected that he must have made several pilgrimages to those sacred spots during the course of his life. One day he made her a present of a cup which, he said, was the one that Mary had often used to give the little Jesus a drink. When it was revealed to Catherine that her favorite beggar was none other than Saint Joseph, the cup became a treasure, and it remains to this day at the Convent of the Blessed Sacrament.

Very much one in spirit with the Seraphic Father, his most cherished devotions were also hers. Catherine's love of the Crucified was so great that Francis manifested his approval of her absorption in this devotion by appearing to her displaying his gift of the stigmata. Her love of the Divine Infant was rewarded with a vision, too, on the Christmas of 1444. Having obtained the necessary permission to pass the night in the Convent Church, she had by midnight completed the thousand Aves in honor of Our Blessed Lady—a goal which she had set for herself—when Mary bearing her little Son, came directly to Catherine and placed the Divine Infant in her arms. Catherine's joy knew no bounds. As she pressed Him close, brushing His little cheek with hers, her very soul seemed to melt like wax before a great flame. She kissed His fragrant cheek, but as she turned to kiss the Divine lips, He disappeared, leaving her enveloped in an aura of love and joy. Ever after, her cheek and lips, where they had touched the face of the Infant, were marked with a very distinguishable whiteness.

As word got abroad—as it has a way of doing from even the most cloistered of communities—of the fervor and sanctity of these daughters of Francis at Ferrara, vocations came to them from every part of Italy, so many, in fact, that it was impossible to accept all of them, and the Superiors decided to make other foundations. Much against her will

Catherine was appointed Abbess of the new establishment to be made in Bologna, the city of her birth. When on July 22, 1456, with a little group of the most fervent nuns from Ferrara, she arrived at Bologna, they were met and made welcome by a procession of jubilant townspeople, led by Cardinals and magistrates. The people themselves had petitioned for the the Poor Clares, and they knew of the sanctity of Catherine Vigri, of her gift of miracles and of prophecy, and they rejoiced at her presence among them.

As Abbess of the newly-founded Convent, called like its parent foundation, the Convent of the Blessed Sacrament, Catherine was all that she had been as Mistress of Novices and more. She was predominantly a kind, considerate, understanding mother and her concern was for the over-all welfare of her daughters. Cognizant of their material needs, she made ample provision—within the confines of the Rule, however, for she was adamant where poverty was in question. In her house must be observed absolute poverty, and to preserve it, she stepped to the front line of battle, side by side with Clare and Francis. She was often heard to say, too, that any nun who during her life was exact in the observance of the Rule would find herself among the confessors and martyrs in heaven. No effort was spared by her to have the Rule lived, spirit-perfect, in her community. That she must have been successful is borne out by the fact that when the election was held at the completion of her first three years as superior, absolutely the only objection raised to her re-election was that by her extraordinary kindness she made the rigorous Rule too easy to observe.

The Abbess Catherine was also a woman of tact. She was remarkably successful in preserving peace and charity among her Sisters, delicately guiding them toward that tolerance which is paramount to mutual understanding, and teaching them the art of imputing good intentions to the acts of others. So well were her principles incorporated into the daily lives of the nuns at Bologna that it was two years after her death before a new Abbess was elected, and then not because a need was felt, but solely because the Canonical Visitor insisted on it—and even at that late date, an Abbess had to be sent from Ferrara, for none of Catherine's daughters could be prevailed upon to succeed her.

At the last Chapter which she held, February 25, 1463, Catherine spoke to her nuns for almost three hours, exhorting them to the practice of virtue and observance of the Rule. Her last request, after she had announced to them that she was soon to die, was that they retain that peace and charity among themselves which were so firmly established at

that time. She reminded them of the all-important items conducive to good community relations—always to speak well of others, to be constant in humility, and never to meddle in matters which were no concern of theirs. Just a few days after this instructive and rather sorrowful farewell address to her daughters, Catherine became so ill that she was obliged to remain in bed. On March 9, having received the last sacraments, she lay on her bed scarcely breathing, but each breath whispered the name of her Beloved. So quietly did she go to Him that the watching Sisters were not aware that she had left them until they perceived that another worldly perfume was beginning to permeate the room, and noticed that her prematurely old-looking features (she was only forty-nine) eased into the beauty and radiance of a sleeping girl.

She had been in the grave eighteen days—and that without a coffin when, because of the unaccountable fragrance and the miracles taking place on the site, her body was disinterred and found to be incorrupt. For over four centuries it has remained in that state of preservation. It can be seen today, in an oratory of the Convent Church behind a glass enclosure and seated on a throne. It seems a bit of a paradox that she who had long ago refused all worldly pomp for the pearl of great price, and whose spirit is now in possession of her Treasure, should be thus exhibited, surrounded by splendid hangings, seated on a richly decorated throne and garbed in a grey dress of costly material. Caterina Vigri, daughter of a popular lawyer and diplomat, maid-in-waiting to a Princess heiress to a large fortune, endowed with unusual physical, mental, and spiritual gifts, made her way to God with a singleness of purpose and simplicity of heart that refuses to be overlooked. She found her way as Poor Clare Nun, and very quickly became the embodiment of that certain and direct path to the Divine Embrace, the Franciscan Rule. With the soul and drive of an artist, she bent all her energies toward perfecting the Image of the God of Beauty, first in her own heart and then in the heart of those entrusted to her care. And those of the Seraphic family who have been commissioned to teach would do well to pause and consider the means whereby she accomplished her task of tracing Divinity.

*Sister Maura, O.S.F.*

<sup>1</sup>More about Saint Catherine of Bologna can be found in Grossetti's *Life of Catherine of Bologna*, Leon's *Lives of the Saints and Blessed of the Three Orders of Saint Francis* and Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

## PROCESSIONAL

My eyes are dim with the tears of Your courtship,  
But You are a gentleness on my thorny crown.

I have put You for a seal upon my sorrow  
And by this garlanded candle,  
I swear to follow where no flowers are.

By voices singing, mark, I vow  
To spend my songs like reckless coins  
And buy some smiling silence in some dark.

By organ peal, by incense curling,  
By rioting candle, and by innocent bell,  
By victim-flowers' spilling scents,  
I here espouse Your blood, Your sweat, Your tears  
(My eyes are dim with the tears of Your courtship  
But You are a gentleness on my thorny crown).

I will scatter my youth like petals  
Before Your face.  
I will pour my grief like balm  
Into Your gaping sorrows.  
I will come before You  
Wearing the streaming robes of my virginity.

Now are my feet turned from the shining valleys  
And my face uplifted to the dark mountain.  
(But You are a gentleness on my thorny crown.)

Now is my soul shut up in a jealous tower  
And my heart bound up in quiet.

Give me the promised crown!—  
The thorns prepared from all eternity.  
For my eyes are dim with the tears of Your courtship  
And every wound is wide.

*Sister Mary Francis, P.C.*

## THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

### A Letter from Saint Bonaventure to a Confrere<sup>1</sup>

My dear Brother:

The blessed Augustine used to speak in this manner to our Lord Jesus Christ: "I know, O Lord, that ingratitude, the root of all spiritual evil, is utterly displeasing to you; like a scorching wind it destroys whatever is good; it is an obstacle to the flow of divine mercy to men; and many evils find their source in this vice, and works that were once alive with merit die from it, never to be revived." Ingratitude, then, is the source of all evil; hence it is necessary that man give thanks for the benefits God has showered upon him. And gratitude must prove itself the more intense according as the blessings received are the more abundant. "For," says Saint Gregory, "appreciation for gifts should grow with their increase." And only by meditating on the magnitude of God's blessings can man recognize the enormity of his debt of gratitude.

See how bounteously God has blessed you. Consider that he has created, redeemed, and called you. Now, from what has he called you? He has called you from a misery-laden world, a world abounding in the snares of evil spirits who seek to draw souls to the eternal pains of hell. And then, why has he called you? Without a doubt he called you that you might praise him and love him. Of all gifts, this is the greatest; it is the office of the angels themselves. For the praise of God is the sole occupation of the angels in paradise. What should be your life, then, you who have been called to the office of the angels! God has called you from the miseries of this world, has set you on and led you along the straight and sure path to eternal life. Indeed, this is the greatest of all graces which God has conferred upon us out of the immensity of his goodness.

Suppose they who are called to enjoy eternal life ask him: "Lord you have created us and called us to the possession of this life. What then must we do to attain it?" To this he will answer: *And I appoint to you a kingdom, even as my Father has appointed to me* (Lk. 22:29). Now consider not only under what conditions the Father allotted Christ this kingdom, but also the path he trod in attaining it.

If we carefully meditate on the life of Christ, who is the mirror without spot, we shall find that he walked, first of all, the road of profound humility; secondly, the path of extreme poverty; thirdly, the way of perfect charity; fourthly, the highroad of unlimited patience; and fifthly, the pathway of admirable obedience.

Over that same road we too must travel if we wish to follow after and attain to Christ. As Saint John tells us: *He who says that he abides in him, ought himself to walk just as he walked* (1 Jn. 2:6). Follow Christ, therefore; his path must be your path.

### Humility

In the first place, Christ walked the way of profound humility. He humbled himself to such an extent as to wash the feet of his disciples. Now if in this menial task the very Son of God, the King of Angels, humbled himself by stooping to the feet of his disciples, what should our humility be? To humble oneself before a superior or an equal is not extraordinary; but to so do before an inferior is a much greater good and most meritorious. In this way a man can speedily acquire abundant grace and become rich in the love of Christ; for to the degree that a man humbles himself, God will exalt him. Believe me, beloved Brother, that if a man were at pains to demean himself, he would acquire more grace in one month than another in forty years.

In *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* it is related that one of them hid himself away in a cell and there led a most rigorous life for many years. After some time a doubt entered his mind about a particular question. He asked God to show him the correct solution. The drift of the doubt was this: Do the blessed in heaven pray for their loved ones? And if so, in what manner do they pray? He petitioned the Lord for a long time but received no answer. Then he said humbly: "I see I have made little progress in the service of God; for that reason the Lord does not show me the solution to my doubt. So I will go to my confrere and ask him to solve this question for me." As he was about to go out the door, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "Know, Brother, that your whole life of seclusion and all your austerities did not merit the help of the Lord in solving this question. But your humility in deciding to seek help from your con-



frere was so meritorious and pleasing to God that he has sent me to answer the question for you. First you asked: 'Do the blessed in heaven pray for their loved ones?' Yes, dear Brother, the just do pray for those whom they have loved in the Lord, and also for those who seek their aid. They pray that their dear ones be protected from evil and freed from the temptations of the world, and, if they are in error, that they be corrected and quickly united with them in heaven. You also asked: 'If they pray, in what manner do they pray?' I tell you their very desire is their prayer; whatever they desire they obtain without delay. Their prayer consists in offering once more to God their former bodily sufferings, or their good works done for the sake of Christ. Still, their prayer is always in perfect accord with the divine will; otherwise they would pray in vain."

Another illustration to the point is the case of a Friar Minor who had great devotion to Our Lady. He asked her to show him how he could best please her Son. "Perform all the menial tasks of the friary," she answered, "and humble yourself."<sup>2</sup>

Then there is the story of one of the Desert Fathers who was asked to explain humility. He replied that it is indeed a great good and a gift of God. "A man comes by humility," he said, "in this way: he should take upon himself manual labor; reckon himself a sinner; subject himself to all; give no heed to the sins of others, but rather with his eyes always on his own transgressions, let him beseech God for pardon."

Similarly, another holy Father of the desert was asked to define progress in perfection. He replied that to progress in the spiritual life means simply to humble oneself.

### Poverty

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ was likewise one of extreme poverty. It was with this in mind that Saint Bernard said: "Examine the whole life of the Savior, from his virginal birth to the gibbet of the Cross, and you will find nothing in it but the greatest poverty." The poorer a man is, therefore, the more closely he conforms to the Son of God.

Someone once asked the blessed Francis what is the surest way of arriving at perfection. He replied that it is the way of poverty.

### Charity

Then again, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of perfect charity. His love for us drew him down from heaven to earth. That same love was the cord that bound him to the pillar when he was cruelly scourged. For he loved us more than he loved himself, seeing that he willed to die that we might live and to be sold that he might redeem us from the dominion of Satan; and thus he gave his soul and body for us. Charity is that mark by which the true disciple of Christ is known. Did not he himself say: *By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another* (Jn. 13:35)? It is charity that makes a man a true son and follower of Christ.

This question was once put to a saintly Father of the Desert. What is the reason why we labor day and night and yet do not arrive at perfection as our ancient Fathers did? To this he replied that the ancient Fathers lived according to the maxim that the welfare of another should be preferred to one's own. Thus it was that they came to such great perfection. But with us, we put forth such labor and yet do not arrive at perfection for the very reason that each of us constantly seeks his own welfare and advancement, not that of his neighbor. So if you wish to attain to great perfection and make it your own, and that in a very short time, exert every possible effort to serve your Brothers, and prefer the welfare and advancement of the others to your own.

### Patience

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ was a model of the greatest patience. No matter how much he suffered, and all the time unjustly, you will never find him complaining. As an innocent lamb he was led about: *who when he was reviled did not revile, when he suffered, did not threaten* (I Pet. 2:23), but like the meekest of lambs permitted himself to be ill-treated. Patience it is that shatters all the insidious snares of the enemy.

We are told that a man once heard some devils talking together. One asked another how he was faring in the endeavor to lead the monks astray. "Well, as for me," he replied, "I cannot overcome

them, because every time I provoke them to anger and discord, one will immediately confess his fault to the other, and thus by his patience he frustrates all my plans."

In like manner, dear Brother, whenever you are rebuked by someone, let this be your ready response: "The fault is mine; next time I shall try to do better."

### Obedience

Finally, our Lord Jesus Christ was a man of admirable obedience. He accepted an obedience that brought him to death, and not to just any kind of death, but to death on a cross—a death more painful, more shameful, more dishonorable, than any other. And because he was so perfectly obedient he was exalted to such heights. Thus, if one wishes to be exalted, he should strive to practice complete and perfect obedience.

It is recorded in *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* that "one of them once remarked that whoever gives himself wholeheartedly to obedience for the love of God acquires more merit than a hermit spending a solitary existence in the desert. This was the reason he gave. Another holy Father had told him of seeing the faithful in heaven divided into four different ranks. The first comprised those who had patiently borne infirmity for God's sake; the second, those who had given shelter to the poor; the third, those who had spent their life in solitude; the fourth embraced all who had been obedient for love of God. He also noted in this vision that those who were obedient were wearing an added golden crown. They had merited more glory, he was told, because what they had done on this earth they had done through obedience, while the actions of all the rest had been tinged with self-will." Of all sacrifices, that of obedience is the most exacting, because it has for a victim one's own will. And so, my dear Brother, if you wish to make great progress in perfection, if you wish to please God, let your whole endeavor be to fulfill in selfless obedience whatever is commanded.

With all this, strive to be a lover of prayer; for it will make you a humble religious, patient and obedient. Through it, you will come to have everything really worthwhile. Indeed, it is prayer that is the key to the possession of God in this life as well as in the next. Did

not Francis remark time and again that as for him it seemed quite impossible for a person to make progress in the service of God unless he were a friend of prayer?

Now if you want to have the spirit of prayer, you must observe silence; and if you wish to observe silence, you had better cultivate a love of solitude. In *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* you will find this example. One of the Fathers, noted for his sanctity, lay on his death-bed. A group of monks came begging him to leave them a final word of advice. His counsel was simply this: "My Brothers, to me nothing seems more beneficial than the practice of silence." Dear Brother, make this your resolution: When time comes for manual labor, do it as well as you can, but always in silence. When the work is finished retire immediately into solitude. But, a warning! Do not be idle when you are alone; for idleness is most dangerous, especially in solitude.

One of the Desert Fathers was once asked how it is possible to please both God and man. He replied: "Let your works be many and your words few."

Again we read of the Abbot Arsenius, who while still living in a palace, made this his prayer: "My Lord, show me how to attain salvation." "Arsenius," a voice replied, "flee the company of men and you will be saved." So he left the palace and embraced the monastic life. When once more he prayed: "My Lord, show me how to attain salvation." Thereupon he heard a voice speaking to him: "Flee, Arsenius; observe silence and be at peace. These are the roots of a sinless life; these are the sources of salvation."

Then in the same book there is the story of Abbot Macrius. He to give this advice to his Brothers: "After the Masses in the church, immediately flee." At length one of the monks asked: "But Father, whither in this solitude can we further flee?" And the abbot placed his finger upon his lips and said: "Such conversation as this is what I would have you flee." And with that he entered his cell, closed the door, and continued in prayer, remaining there alone.

I do not doubt, dear Brother, that if you observe what I have written here, in a short time you will arrive at great perfection. Instead of my personal presence, you have these my words. Read this letter often and whenever you do, imagine that I am speaking the

words written here. Just before you retire each evening, examine yourself as to whether you have lived throughout the day according to the advice I have given you in this letter.

Greetings in the Lord. Pray for me.

Fr. Mel Brady, O.F.M.

Fr. Kieran Quinn, O.F.M. (Transl.)

<sup>1</sup>*Opeara Omnia* (Quaracchi ed.) vol. VIII, pp. 449-503.

<sup>2</sup>It is difficult for the modern American religious to fully appreciate this association of humility with so-called "menial" tasks. The medieval attitude, and even the present day attitude in many parts of the world, makes a sharp distinction between social classes and the work proper to each. The fact that Saint Bonaventure washed the friary dishes may not strike us as the very powerful example of humility that it actually was to his contemporaries.

## THE DAY AFTER

In the Franciscan ceremonial for the religious profession of women, it is prescribed that the young Sister recite the beautiful and significant words of the Breviary: *Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum saeculi contempni, propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi: Quem vidi, quem amavi, in quem credidi, quem dilexi*. This is difficult to render in English. Perhaps the best translation would be something like this: The kingdom of the earth and all the pomp of the world I have despised, for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have seen, Whom I have desired (literally, "loved," though desire is implied), in Whom I have believed, Whom I have loved (and here "loved" implies choice).

Perhaps the young Sister does not realize that on this solemn day of her spiritual espousals she is mapping out in these few words the entire course of her religious life. We can hardly blame her for lightheartedness. The day is so bright, the chapel is so radiant with lights and flowers, her heart is so filled with glowing excitement that she cannot possibly stop to ponder over the deeper significance of the ritual's texts. The whole day is tense with gladness; the community receives her with the kiss of peace, her parents and relatives and dearest friends embrace her with joy and holy pride. The only tears shed that day are tears of the purest happiness. Only on the morrow, or perhaps much later, when the young Sister finds

herself at her new post or assignment, she may stop to ponder over the words she spoke on that day of all days.

And let us hope that it really is the day of all days for her; that this one day proves to be not merely a glittering symbol but a fixed and stable pattern of all the days that are to come. Soon she will find that the poetry of the novitiate has changed into the uneven, unsteady, if not totally bewildering prose of routine community life. Soon she will learn that love is not the pretty thing of pat sentiment and pious attitude that she may have mistaken it for in the novitiate. Love is a passion; and if it is to be strong and genuine it must be fed on sacrifice. Saint Paul has exactly this in mind when he tells us that *strength is made perfect in weakness* (II Cor. 12:19).

But now, let us briefly analyze the quotation we began with. The Latin text is much more to the point because it is more precise. We all know that the religious despises the world and its pomp for one thing only—"the love of my Lord Jesus Christ." But the course of the religious life is set off by different stages. The first is *Quem vidi*—Whom I have seen. This is the period of early youth when the first stirrings of our vocation began to be felt. From the Tabernacle came the calm but insistent call of the Master, and we responded to that call through the series of steps that finally led us to religious investiture. Thereafter the word *vidi* gradually changed to *amavi*. The Latin word *amare* connotes impulse, feeling, affection, passion. It is distinguished from the more sober and much weaker *diligere* which carries more the idea of love by deliberate choice and voluntary election. If you compare the Latin text of the Gospel of Saint John (21:15-17), the difference between the two words will become clear. The Lord asks Peter: *Diligis me? Dost thou love me more than these?* Peter, impulsive and fervent by nature, immediately answers: *Amo te—Thou knowest that I love thee*. And so the play on words continues, the Lord using the former word until the third time when He asks: *Amas me?* He advisedly uses the strong term last—*Amas me?*—Dost thou really love Me with thy whole heart?—to teach Peter that this supreme love is not attained unless it be tried in the crucible of sacrifice, that is, until our *diligere* has become *amara*—bitter. Peter understood. The bitter Passion of his divine Master had taught him the meaning of love. Therefore he was grieved when this question was put to him for the third time. This is the lesson we all have to learn, especially the novices who are delighted to repeat over and over again the answer of Saint Peter: *Yes Lord, thou knowest that I love thee—quia amo te*. But this is not yet perfect love, tried and trustworthy. We must earn our *amo te*

(pure, supreme, delightful love) by our *diligo te* (love tested by trial and sacrifice and faith). And this brings us to the next stage in the religious life.

This period has over its entrance gate the inscription: *In quem credidi—In Whom I have believed*. Faith is the foundation of the spiritual life, whether in the cloister or in the world. We know that the life of every Christian is and should be a life of love, for love is perfection. But there are times, even for religious, when faith alone seems to remain; when troubles and trials overwhelm us; when those who should help us fail, and our friends no longer understand; when our inmost soul seems frozen, wrung dry, completely abandoned. The glamor and glory of our former hopes and aspirations grow dim, beclouded. We seem to be going backward. We struggle on merely because we have vows to keep. Our work has lost its appeal and interest. There are treacherous sands beneath us, threatening clouds above us, and the mountain myrrh and the hill of frankincense (Cant. 4:6) seem endlessly far away. This is the time when we must find strength in the Master's words to Peter: *Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail* (Lk. 22:31-32). And there comes to mind another of our Savior's words: *Blessed is he who is not scandalized in me* (Lk. 7:23).

But then, is religious life a paradox? A paradox it is, and one of the mysteries of divine grace. But did we not despise the world and all its pleasures for love of our Lord Jesus Christ? Can it be that love has departed from us? By no means. Read our text to the end and you will understand: *In quem credidi, quem dilexi*. Do you notice that the word is *dilexi* and not *amavi*? Perhaps on the day of profession both terms seemed alike. There was enthusiasm in the word *amavi*. But now experience has taught you to use the more modest term *dilexi*. Peter had to learn this lesson; why should we be spared it? We have to learn the love that is based on trust, on experience, on sacrifice, on deliberate and often difficult choice. Note the words of the Canticle: *Fortis est ut mors dilectio—love is strong as death* (Cant. 8:6); and note that the word is *dilectio*, not *amor*. This is the love of the life of faith; it will carry us through every trial until the day when in heavenly bliss it will become beatific love or the love—*agape*—of the Seraphim.

And now you ask, what does all this mean? It means that we must prepare for the day after; for the day when the spiritual consolations, the hopes and aspirations, the enthusiastic resolutions of the novitiate will have lost their primitive zest and spirit. This is bound to come, for

it is the Master's way. We must learn to carry the cross after Him if we desire to become worthy of Him.

De we ever stop to think how much faith means in our life? Not the faith of the *Credo*; nor the articles of revealed truth; but that living faith that penetrates to the innermost depths of our being, that faith that is our total dedicaion, our rock-fast loyalty to our Divine Master, the Shepherd of our soul, the Spouse of our heart. Our entire outlook is anchored in faith, our destiny, our love—love that never reveals itself in outbursts of effusive emotion but remains quiet, hidden, and *strong as death*.

And how can we, and must we, prepare for this when, as the saying goes, "the iron is hot"—that is, during the novitiate? This is the paramount question that concerns the Mistress of Novices as well as the novices themselves. In fact, it is the one truly vital matter of novitiate training, for if it fails, the prime purpose of the novitiate fails, and the young religious soon sink into soporific mediocrity or return to the world. For this reason the medieval name "tirocinium" was more appropriate than our modern word "novitiate." Etymologically, the latter denotes a newness in a state or manner of life, while the former denotes a time of practice, experience, and apprenticeship, and carries with it the age-old saying that we should learn not for the school but for life. As the instruction of a pilot concentrates chiefly on the manner of steering a ship through dangerous waters, and as the training of a soldier must prepare him for active combat, even so must the training of a good soldier of Christ Jesus (II Tim. 2:3) ever keep in sight the day when the young religious will echo the cry of the Psalmist: (41:11): *My bones are being crushed, while my foes taunt me, while they say to me daily: Where is thy God?*

Saint Francis used to tell his friars that they should carry their cell with them into the world. And Saint Bernard advised his monks: "Keep the Rule, and the Rule will keep thee." It is easy to understand these wise admonitions, but it is not easy to find the key to them or to express in one word all that they imply. Yet somehow the word "responsibility" appeals to us. For in speaking of "key" there comes to mind the admonition which the Bishop gives to the young cleric as he ordains him to the first of the Minor Orders, that of Porter. While he hands him the keys of the church, the insignia of his office, he says: "So fulfill your office as it behooves men who must give an account to God (*quasi reddituri Deo rationem*) for the things that are kept under these keys." This is responsibility, pure and simple.

Responsibility is a big word. Have you ever tried to fathom its full

meaning? Let us pause for a moment and examine its etymology, after the manner of the learned, and perhaps we shall understand it a little better. The word is derived from the Latin *respondeo*, which in turn goes back to the Greek *spena* or *spendo*, meaning "to pledge oneself." The Latin verb has the same meaning, and from it are derived words such as spouse, sponsorship, and the like. The prefix *re* brings out the full meaning—"to answer for a pledge made or a duty or obligation assumed." This brings us right to the heart of religious life. By our vows we have taken upon ourselves certain duties and obligations, and we are answerable for them not to our superiors but to God, and to God alone.

Responsibility is not numbered among the Seven Virtues, nor among the Seven Gifts. Did the Holy Spirit forget it? Not at all; responsibility is rather an essential to all the gifts and virtues, for without it they lose their energizing sap, so to speak, they lose their freshness and flavor, they wither and die. Unless it penetrates to the very marrow of our being, unless it is the driving force behind all our endeavors, our spiritual life is in danger. Responsibility is a broad term, and a strong term. It includes the strong virtues of faith, fidelity, loyalty, and everything else that signals the man who stands firmly for a conviction and has the courage to live and die for that conviction. Our Lord pointed out this wonderful quality in John the Baptist when He asked the Pharisees the incisive question: *What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind* (Mtt. 11:7)? He did not wait for the answer; everyone knew it. But the Master's powerful figure of speech clearly indicates that responsibility is the first and foremost requirement for anyone who aspires for a place in the Kingdom of God. The Order of Deaconship is conferred with the words: "Receive the Holy Ghost unto power and unto resistance of the devil and his temptations. In the Name of the Lord." Here the Latin word for "power" is *robur*, which means, literally, an oak. This is the language of the Church. She makes it clear that anyone who is to serve in the sanctuary or be engaged through the holy vows in the service of the apostolate must have that admirable quality of oak-like responsibility.

Saint Bonaventure, in his beautiful book, *The Six Wings of the Seraph*, speaks wryly of certain religious who are neither very good nor very bad. They are at peace with their confreres, with their superiors, with themselves, with the whole world. They do little or no harm to anyone, and are loved. They should be called, as he suggests, "baptized babies." Here the Franciscan Doctor gives a striking example of the type of religious—all too common in his own day as well as in ours—who are totally lacking in the sense of responsibility. Now, Canon Law insists that no Order

receive candidates unless they give promise of becoming useful members of the Institute. This is especially necessary for Institutes of religious women. A Congregation that is made up primarily of responsible women and only a few "baptized babies" can do great work for the Church; but one that is made up primarily of "baptized babies" and only a few responsible women will have to be regarded by the Church as little more than a kind of pious nursery. Saint Francis had scant affection for irresponsible religious. The useless friar was immediately labelled "Brother Fly" and invited to seek his comfort elsewhere. Every religious—priest, Brother, or Sister—should dedicate himself wholly and entirely to the service of the Order, which means the service of Christ and of the Church. It is a sorry sight to see religious standing by listlessly, not to say stupidly, without so much as moving a limb when there is so much work to be done. The person who finds nothing to do in or around the convent, beyond what the superior commands or strict necessity obliges, simply does not belong there. Some religious almost seem capable of invoking the latest Labor Union laws. They do their work—perhaps well, perhaps not so well; but always with an eye on the clock, always on the watch for a chance to slip away, always reluctant to go an inch beyond the line of strict obligation. No, this is not the spirit of Christ, nor of any of the saints, nor of anyone who has the welfare of the community at heart. That welfare should be the pride and glory of every religious; they should feel responsible for it, and responsibility cannot be measured by clocks or superiors.

And now let us go back to the novices. How shall we help them to acquire the spirit of responsibility? First of all, the young religious must learn to look upon her vocation not merely as a cloak or a garment; not merely—to use the language of the mystics—as the *pearl of great price*, but as another Self. The Scriptural terminology "to put on Christ" means precisely this, the transformation of self into Christ so that with Saint Paul she can say: *It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). This means, in essence, that her vocation has wrought a complete change in her existence. It has set her a new goal, a new outlook; all her attention, her hopes, her loves, her labors, her interests, are now to be directed toward Him in whom she has believed, and whom she has loved. She must be taught to regard this new objective with the utmost seriousness, regardless of who sees her, or helps her, or guides her. To put on Christ is her own personal task, her own personal responsibility, and she must be made to see the religious life in this light and in no other. A sound, solid basic training in responsibility, stripped of all the

pretty fluff and sentimental clap-trap of artificial piety, is a must for every novitiate. And for the children of Saint Francis—the most uncompromising of realists—it is a *sine qua non*. For responsibility is realism. This is what Saint Paul meant when he repeated after the Prophet Habacuc: *He who is just lives by faith* (Rom. 1:17). He meant that sense of responsibility that keeps our faith in the Divine Master constant, unwavering, unshakable, no matter what the world, the flesh, and the devil may do to us. Here again the young religious must learn to take her stand with the indomitable Paul of Tarsus who defied all aggression, all temptation, all suffering because, as he confides to Timothy: *I know whom I have believed* (II Tim: 1:12).

This sense of responsibility must strike deep and strong roots during the time of the novitiate. Training in obedience is necessary, and self-will must be broken; but at the same time a sense of responsibility must be cultivated. Novices should be taught to stand on their own. This does not mean unwarranted freedom or license; it means simply that the young religious must learn to think and act for themselves, mindful at all times that they and they alone are responsible for their conduct. Furthermore, novices should be taught how to use their time. It is really distressing to see religious frittering away hour after hour in useless occupations, busying themselves with matters that are of no benefit to mind or body, to themselves or to the community. An integral part of novitiate training should be the art of making oneself useful. Sometimes we seem to forget that among the greatest gifts our Creator has bestowed upon us are our two hands. The *Pontifical* calls the human hands the tools of intelligence, the handmaids of the intellect. Marvel at the form, the structure, the flexibility and adaptability of our hands. And then let's put them to work.

Perhaps all this sounds rather too solemn and serious for the novices. After all, the novitiate is the hey-day, the springtime, or we may say, the honey-moon of religious life. We quite agree; and we hasten to add that it would certainly be a calamity if our superiors were to quench this spirit of joy and insist on sternness and austerity on every eager young face. The novitiate should be the brightest, gayest part of the entire religious house. There should be life of every kind—luxuriant plants, gleaming gold-fish, a warbling canary or two—and if at all possible, a cuckoo clock. The Psalmist says: *Serve ye the Lord with gladness: come into his presence with exultation* (Ps. 99:2). After all, the Mistress of Novices is raising flowers for the Lord, not pickles. And the Sisters appointed to work with the novices should be of a pleasant and cheerful disposition.

Any Sister who cannot produce a wholesome smile and a rippling laugh that is neither squeezed by the corners of a too decorous mouth or dimmed by a too rigid eyebrow should be taken from the midst of the novices and advanced to a higher office. Just as the plants and the fishes and and birds all need sunshine for healthy growth, so the young religious need the sunshine of cheer and spiritual joy. Then they will learn to appreciate the Psalmist's words: *O Lord, I love the abode of thy house and the place of the tabernacle of thy glory* (Ps. 25:8). They must keep their ears attuned to the voice of Saint Peter who wrote to his neophytes—after he himself had learned the hard way: *Crave, as newborn babes, the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow to salvation; if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is sweet* (I Pet. 2:3).

But milk alone will not do. The novice must learn to eat the bread of the strong. She must prepare for the day of crusts and crumbs; the day when work is work and more work and her body aches and her head swims; the day when she finds herself in the midst of unruly youngsters, the butt of their pranks and cruel jokes and the bewildered object of parental wrath. She must steady herself now for the time when her ears will be ringing with the cries and complaints of the sick, the wailing and the nagging of the aged. There will be days of wrestling with pots and pans, brooms and mops and pails. There will be times when the coffee is too strong for some, too weak for others, and the soup too hot or too salty, and the whole meal that she spent hours to prepare will be greeted with looks of faint disgust. And other temptations will come, too. The world she left without a tinge of regret will somehow come to look very attractive now. Perhaps her friends will achieve success in the career that she herself once thought about, and old ambitions will arise to taunt her. Perhaps when she finds the going especially rough and no one seems to understand, the security of married life may appear to her as a haven of love and joy. She may find her talents disregarded by her superiors, her hopes and dreams frustrated by assignments she dislikes. Then what? Unless as a novice she became rooted and grounded in Him in whom she has believed, unless she developed a strong sense of responsibility, she will become a soured and embittered religious, or a useless, lackadaisical religious, or she will simply fail to persevere as a religious at all.

I still remember my first lesson in responsibility. It has stood me in good stead throughout the years. When I was a small boy, my mother announced one evening that we were having company for supper. Being a good hostess, she began to prepare a luscious batch of potato pancakes. She knew my weakness for those crips little cakes, and being busy else-

where, she allowed me to watch the frying. It was the old-fashioned method of cooking in a large pan held over a blazing open fire. She showed me how to turn the little cakes when they were sufficiently browned, and left me in charge. I was enormously proud of my responsibility; and, as if to share in my new dignity, our little Spitz came over and sat at my right, while our cat, another friend, sat wistfully twitching her whiskers at my left. Boy-like, I began to wonder what would happen if I set the two a little closer together. I picked up the cat and placed her beside the dog, and forthwith a battle ensued. When the battle was at its height I suddenly remembered that something had to be turned. But in my hasty excitement I turned over, not the pancakes, but the whole pan—and the prospective banquet lay smouldering in the flames. I shall never forget the lesson in responsibility my mother taught me that night; I can still feel it.

But now let us be serious again. The novice who learns to realize what responsibility means has learned a lesson of primary importance. It will give her steadiness and mastery in the trials that lay ahead. If she can bring the smile of interior joy and exterior equanimity from the novitiate into community life, she has acquired the greatest of all arts. And if she has learned to take her work seriously, but not herself, she will advance rapidly in the service of God. After all, it is very great wisdom—and very rare wisdom—to realize that others can and will do your work better than you; that you are only a tool, and it is the work, not the tool, that counts. Strive to be the best possible tool in the Hands of the Master, but never forget that He has many other tools, and can easily dispense with all tools. Finally, the novice must be made to understand that there will be changes, within her and without her, for that is life; and she must be prepared to meet them. It is precisely these changes that will test her responsibility. And she will meet with those who tell her she is no longer a novice—which is simply another way of saying: Take it easy. Others may hint that the Rule and Constitutions were fine for the Middle Ages but hardly practical for modern America. And she will be hurt time and again by those pests of community life, the backbiters, the tale-bearers, the gossips, the minders of other peoples' business, the nervous and the irritable. She may find her superior cold and unmotherly; the members of her community uncongenial. And then you may be sure someone will show her the way to the Spiritual Dispensary where she will find all kinds of bottles and boxes. One will be labelled: **DON'T BOTHER WITH TRIFLES**; another, **WORK IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PRAYER**; another, **SAVE YOUR HEALTH AND ENERGY**

**FOR THE EVIL DAY**, and the most dangerous of all sedatives, **I CAN'T HELP BEING WHAT I AM; GOD MADE ME THIS WAY**; and the ultimate, **WHAT'S THE USE OF TRYING? I HAVEN'T THE MAKINGS OF A SAINT**.

Yes, there are plenty of analgesics and sedatives in this Dispensary. But do you know that the back door opens out onto the Biblical Broadway? Yes, the Bibles speaks of Broadway; Saint Matthew describes it for us as the broad way of secularism, indifferentism, the broad and easy way of those religious who have lost the spirit of the Order and the sense of responsibility. And it leads to eternal ruin. But the narrow path that leads to life (Mtt. 7:14) is the steep way of faith, fidelity, loyalty to your Master and Spouse. Take it now, right at the beginning of your religious life, and keep to it faithfully. Let holy prudence direct you; let the wisdom of the Holy Spirit inspire you; let the oaken staff of personal responsibility support you, and some day you will be able to say with Saint Peter: *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee —quia amo te* (Jn. 21:17).

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

## QUERIES AND REPLIES

Since any priest having the ordinary faculties of the diocese can impart General Absolution to Franciscan communities, is it permissible for such a priest to use the short formula?

Although the short formula suffices for the valid imparting of General Absolution, nevertheless it may be used only in a private way, that is, in connection with the Sacrament of Penance. What, then, is to be done in case the priest, for some reason or other, fails to impart the Absolution to the community? It may be of help to know that the Indulgence can be validly imparted not only on the day appointed, but also on the entire previous day; and, in case a religious is legitimately impeded on these two days, the Indulgence can be received during the seven

days immediately following. Hence it is recommended that if the Absolution was not given publicly or if a religious was legitimately absent, the Absolution should be asked for from the confessor in the confessional. The short form may then be used. This procedure, however, in case it is general for the community, should have the endorsement of the higher superior. (See Bonzelet, O.F.M., *The Pastoral Companion*, nn. 163, 164.)

Since there seems to be some variety of opinion as to the proper vestments to be used at Sacramental Benediction, the question is: What is the duty and responsibility of the Sister Sacristan in this matter?

The *Ceremoniale* of the Friars Minor prescribes that for the Benediction of the



Blessed Sacrament, when the Sacred Host is to be exposed in the monstrance, the priest should wear amice, alb, cincture, stole, and cope. Since, however, it seems to be the prevailing custom in certain places to use only the surplice and stole under the cope, the Sister Sacristan will do well to put out all the vestments and leave the choice to the priest, who after all carries the responsibility.

**What procedure is prescribed for a Franciscan community that desires to make changes in the ceremonial for religious investiture and profession? Hitherto we have been following the Franciscan Ritus.**

It is assumed that the contemplated changes have to do not with an occasional alteration or omission, but with permanent changes in important ceremonies, customs, or prayers, especially if they involve changes in the Constitutions. In such matters permission ought to be obtained from the source of the original approval. Aside from this general rule, it is well to consult a canonist in particular cases.

**If the Constitutions prescribe the recitation of five decades of the Rosary daily, can the Franciscan Crown be said instead?**

There are two considerations involved here: the Constitutions and the Indulgences attached to the Rosary. As to the first, it would not be right, of course, to change the Constitutions arbitrarily and permanently, even though there may be a greater spiritual gain. As to the second, Indulgences are attached to certain objects with very definite and precise conditions, which conditions have to be strictly ob-

served in order to gain the Indulgences. Now it is a fact that the Franciscan Crown gains for each recitation a Plenary Indulgence; the other Rosaries do not. Nevertheless the substitution can hardly be recommended except for the sake of a temporary expedient or for some laudable purpose. And it should be kept in mind that the Indulgence attached to the recitation of the Dominican or Crozier Rosary cannot be gained by reciting the Franciscan Crown, because the conditions laid down for the Indulgences are different for each.

Naturally, members of the Franciscan family should say the Franciscan Crown or Rosary of the Seven Joys daily, and for this purpose the Constitutions might well be amended. Meanwhile, since no beads are required for the Crown, and since the entire seven decades need not be recited at one time but may be said at various intervals throughout the course of the day, no child of Saint Francis should lightly forego the rich gain derived from daily recitation.

**Should candles be lighted on the altar during the recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin in choir? Is there any official ceremonial prescribed for such recitation?**

There is no official directive or prescribed ceremonial for the recitation of the Little Office. Since it is of simple rite, however, candles may well be lighted. In general Franciscan communities should strive to adapt their practices, as far as possible, to the Franciscan *Ceremoniale*. To avoid confusion and arbitrary changes of doubtful validity, it is well that for all community exercises the approval of the proper authority be sought.

## FRANCISCAN BOOKS

**JESUS OF NAZARETH.** Hilarin Felder, O.F.M. Cap. transl. by Berchmans Bittle, O.F.M. Cap., Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953. Pp. xii — 353. \$4.75.

When Bishop Felder died in 1951 at the age of 84, he could offer to the Divine Master a life spent entirely for Him in the arduous labor of teaching and writing. Among the last of his works to be published is this present volume, *Jesus of Nazareth*, a reissue of an earlier work that appeared in 1938 but was destroyed during World War II. The present edition has been thoroughly revised and brought up to date, with new notes and modern American references.

Originally, *Jesus of Nazareth* grew out of a series of lectures delivered by Bishop Felder at the University of Freiburg. The audience—university students and professors from all departments and other intellectual groups—showed a lively interest in these lectures and at the close of the series a prominent professor of natural science urged the Bishop to make his lectures more widely available in book form. So many of Bishop Felder's learned friends expressed a similar desire to know more of Christ, His divine personality, the fundamental features of His humanity, that he consented to write a book that would appeal to these people. The present work is the result. It is written for educated laymen, but not necessarily for the scholar; it takes into account Biblical scholarship, but mainly accents the human and divine nature of Christ and appeals to the heart of the reader, stirring him to a deeper appreciation of the magnificent personality of the Son of Man.

The author admitted that he wrote this book from his heart, and the reader cannot fail to realize with every page that

this is truly a work of love. It is also a work of sound and solid scholarship, erudite without the least trace of pedantry, vivid without unwarranted supposition or addition of imaginary details.

The first part of the book deals with the Higher Criticism of Christ. The next five parts are devoted to the personality of Jesus, the fulness of His virtue, His messianship, and His divinity. The last part looks into the beliefs held in the early Church concerning the divinity and messianship of Christ, not only as set forth in the synoptic Gospels, but in the Pauline Christology and Johannine Theology as well.

In every respect, this is a book of wide and deep appeal.

**HOLINESS IS FOR EVERYONE.** Martial Lekeux, O.F.M., transl. by Paul J. Olligny, O.F.M. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953. Pp. 150. \$2.50.

Here at last is a book for those of us who think the very idea of our becoming a saint is just too absurd to be even funny. Fr. Martial Lekeux, whose sister Maggie died a few years ago in the door of sanctity (Fr. Marion Habig wrote a book about her called *Maggie*), sets about systematically dispelling all such comfortable notions of ours. Every man alive, insists Fr. Martial, can, if he will, reach perfection—his own personal perfection. In twelve brief, succinct, and lively chapters the author shows us not only how to go about the business of sanctifying ourselves, but also why we absolutely must do it.

Primarily, the book is intended for the layman, and is written in the form of a dialogue between the hesitant Christian and the insistent Friar. All the usual



objections raised to striving for higher perfection are neatly met and demolished, leaving no room for further argument.

Holiness is for everyone. Religious know that; but they might like the book to give to their friends who think sanctity is something for priests and nuns exclu-

sively. Teachers in high schools and colleges would do well to keep the book within easy reach of their students. It is written in a way that will keep young minds interested and alerted to the fact that perfection is the duty and right of every follower of Christ.

## IT IS PART OF FRANCISCAN LIFE TO HELP OTHERS CARRY THEIR BURDENS

*The Exiled, The Hungry, The Homeless, The Destitute*

*Over one-half million gallant Vietnamese  
—90% of them Catholics—are now added to the 40,000,000  
dispossessed around the world!*

To lighten their overwhelming burdens of hardship  
in the coming year, an appeal will be made on  
*Laetare Sunday, March 20th, for the*

**BISHOPS' WELFARE AND EMERGENCY FUND**

Homeless and hunger are still burdens, too, for the destitute  
in other war-shattered lands:—

- 3,000,000 in South Korea whose homes were destroyed or cut off in the Communist North;
- 3,500,000 refugees from Red China still seriously crowded in Hong Kong and Formosa;
- 2,000,000 flood and drought-stricken refugees in India and Pakistan;
- thousands of Escapees who still flock to Berlin every month, and millions of Expellees who are still unintegrated in West Germany;
- Italy's overcrowded, landless millions in the southern provinces;
- the border areas of the Near East where almost 1,000,000 Arabs are still unresettled!

*Won't you help carry their burdens a little of the way  
during this coming year?*

**BE GENEROUS ON LAETARE SUNDAY, MARCH 20th**

Call their need to the attention of your parishoners, your  
school children, your friends and benefactors

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE THE SPIRIT OF PENANCE

When the first Friars travelling through Italy and preaching the holy Gospel were asked: "Who are you?" they answered: "Penitents from the city of Assisi" (*Legenda III. Soc.*). And when they preached in simple words the Gospel of penance, what else were they doing but following the instructions of Saint Francis: "In all the preaching you do, admonish the people to penance. . ." (*Epist. ad Custodes*). Penance indeed was the pivotal point of the new religious ideal of our Seraphic Father. When shortly before his death he looked back at his life, he saw that its true beginning was penance. "The Lord," he wrote, "gave it to me thus to begin to do penance. . ." (*Test.*). Penance was the keynote of the new song that came from Assisi, as it was the keynote of the good tidings that came from Palestine. We hear it in all the words and writings of Saint Francis, we hear it resound in his life and in the lives of the first companions, and we still hear its echo in the name given to the members of the Third Order—the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

Penance, therefore, must be in the center of every Franciscan life worthy of the name. However—and this is all important—it must not be just *any* penance, but *Franciscan* penance, and this means it must be the penance of the holy Gospel.

### 1. *What Franciscan Penance Is Not*

It is unfortunate that the word "penance" has assumed, or rather has been narrowed down to, a meaning that makes it easy for us to disregard its full significance. Usually when we speak about penance we have in mind the Sacrament of Penance, especially contrition and atonement for sin. But this is rather repentance. And who would deny that we must repent our sins, that we must confess our guilt and ask pardon, and offer some kind of reparation? There is no doubt that we must repent our sins, but the penance of holy Gospel is something much deeper.

A more dangerous form of misunderstanding Franciscan penance is to distort it into the idea of penance as mortification. Yet again, this is a common usage of the term. When we speak about our penances or about doing penance we are usually thinking of exterior

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acts of mortification such as fasting, restricting sleep, denying comfort to the body, or inflicting on ourselves various kinds of physical pains. To say that these works are not penances would be ridiculous. To deny that they are necessary for everyone, at least to a certain extent, would be quite perilous. For every man has to gain control of his body; every man must deny himself even in things that are indifferent, if he hopes to keep a safe distance from forbidden things. It is, we might say, a sacred duty to inflict pain on our body and accept the sufferings God sends us in order to complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. There are many reasons, therefore, that should induce us to love and embrace penance in the sense of mortification; not the least would be that our holy Father Francis himself gave an example of great mortification. Indeed, he was so harsh to his body, his poor "Brother Ass," that toward the end of his life he even asked pardon of it.

Nevertheless, it would be a serious misunderstanding were we to identify the Franciscan ideal of penance with a life of bodily mortification. Unfortunately, there are religious who never reach a deeper understanding of their ideal. Small minds that they are, they display great zeal for mortification and self-laceration of all kinds; but they fail to see that they are only satisfying their immature desire for being "good religious." It is not so much that they want to be good in the sight of God; they want to be good in their own sight. The works of mortification help them to that, for these acts can be felt, they can be known, counted, and measured, and thus they can give one the deep satisfaction of having accomplished something. Such religious have never learned that penance is essentially of the inner man, and that exterior mortifications can—of course we do not say *must*—go hand in hand with Pharisaic pride. Has our own Order been secure against this pride? We have had reform movements in our ranks that sprang from the true spirit of penance and received the blessing of the Church; but we have also had movements that sooner or later found themselves in conflict with the Church. Pope John XXII had to remind the stout defenders of Franciscan poverty that poverty without charity is of no value. The Spirituals, with their tenacious clinging to the letter, ended in condemnation; and during the last century an indiscreet zeal inspired

by the Alcantarine rigorism brought the leader in open conflict with the Church and severe punishments upon his blind followers.

Would God that this indiscreet zeal for mortification—which is only a kind of disguised pride—would be restricted to the novitiate and there taken care of. But it is all too often carried far beyond the novitiate, and sometimes with disastrous results. At best it is a sign of spiritual immaturity; and if it is clung to tenaciously even against the will of the superiors, it is outright disobedience; and if it is carried to the extreme of being imposed, by means of impassioned rhetoric or biting criticism, upon one's confreres, it is plainly against charity. Even Saint Bonaventure had to endure the attacks of such narrow-gauged minds. Many of his own most highly respected confreres could not understand why he, who so admirably fulfilled the other requirements they demanded of a saint, failed to be a model in the matter of physical mortification. He answered them, of course and quite humbly; it was simply that for him his delicate constitution and the life of study to which he felt called ruled out the extreme bodily penances that had characterized the life of Saint Francis and his first followers; nor indeed, he insisted, were such penances the essence of the Franciscan ideal. But Saint Bonaventure never denied that mortification is necessary, and that in general we are inclined to do too little in this direction rather than too much. It remains true, nevertheless, that the works of mortification are not our salvation; they must be carried out with discretion, and above all they must flow from the true spirit of penance.

## 2. What Franciscan Penance Is

Franciscan penance is the penance of the holy Gospel. There in the pages of Sacred Scripture Saint Francis discovered his ideal, his form of life. There he listened to the good tidings, the overwhelming goodness and mercy of the Father, whose kindness appeared in the Incarnate Word, and whose boundless love gave us the Only-begotten Son—and with the Son, pardon and life and the promise of eternal beatitude. But there in the Gospel Francis also heard the Voice in the wilderness announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God: *Do penance!* Then he listened to the Word of God telling him that no man can be saved unless he does penance. Francis understood that

penance was the answer God expected from him. He knew well that he—like all of us—had gone astray on the broad highroad of his own will, and not on God's way. He knew that he had erected idols in his heart, forgetting that God is the Lord; that he had been seeking his own interests and ambitions; that he had not placed the love of God in the center of his heart; that he had shown little or no care at all about his Eternal Father's business. What then could his answer be but to turn around on his highroad and go back to God his Father to break himself and to admit that he had done wrong and had been blind and ungrateful, to put off the old man and to rid himself of his illusions and little idols and restore to God the central place in his heart. Clearly, the penance of Saint Francis is the *metanoia* of the Gospel, the change of mind and heart completely away from self and the world, and completely toward God.

There can be no doubt that in this sense Francis understood penance. For as he tells us in his *Testament*: "The Lord gave me to begin penance in this way: When I was still in sin it seemed bitter to me to look at lepers, and the Lord himself led me in the midst of them and I did mercy to them. And when I came away from them what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of mind and body for me. And after that I did not wait long and left the world." Here was the beginning of the penance of Saint Francis, his change of mind, of outlook, of heart and feeling, of his entire life. Francis broke himself, for he denied himself, said "no" to himself, and by denying himself he found something—or rather Someone—who from then on would fill his whole mind, his whole heart, his entire personality. With utter radicalism he accepted the Master's invitation: *if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For he who would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will save it* (Lk. 9: 23-24).

Franciscan penance, therefore, is certainly negative in the beginning, for it is the emphatic "no" to the old man and his ambitions and interests. But it does not rest there; it is also, just as strongly, an emphatic "yes" to God. Franciscan penance is a turning back with the whole heart and mind to Him who is the only meaning of life. Franciscan penance is the dethronement of self and the

enthronement of God; the complete renunciation of all worldly things and the complete embracing of the one thing that matters—God and His holy will. And thus it was that the "penitent" Francis, who with holy radicalism chose the life of penance, who in the sight of men gave up everything of this world, regained everything in the Lord. It was the "penitent" Francis who tasted and found how sweet the Lord is, and it was the "penitent" Francis who discovered his Lord in creatures and rejoiced with them in the Lord. It was the "penitent" Francis who, because he was completely absorbed in God, had such great and tender love for all the children of God.

In this connection it is good to read the last chapter of the First Rule of the Friars Minor (*Regula non Bullata*). It is really the song of the whole life of our Seraphic Father. After enumerating the *magnalia Dei* in creation, in the work of redemption and salvation, and after addressing the entire celestial hierarchy and the whole Church, all states and nations, and finally his own "lesser brothers and useless servants," he "begs and entreats that all of us may persevere in the true faith and in penance, for there is no other way of salvation for anyone." Then he continues: "With all our heart and soul and mind and strength and fortitude and understanding and all our faculties with all our endeavor, affection, and yearning; with all we desire and will, let us love God the Lord, who has given and still gives us our whole body and soul and life, who has created us and redeemed us, and only in His mercy will save us; who has done and keeps doing everything good to us, miserable and wretched, corrupt and foul, ungrateful and wicked as we are. . ."

Franciscan penance, therefore, is the complete breaking of the man who is called by God's mercy, and who, out of gratitude, turns around, changes his mind and heart, and resolves with our Seraphic Father: "Let us desire nothing else, wish for nothing else, take pleasure and delight in nothing else but our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. . ." And when he has completely turned to God: "Let nothing hinder us, nothing keep us apart, nothing stand in the way. All over, everywhere, at every hour and at any time, day after day and without ceasing, let us all believe in Him with a true and humble faith, cherish Him in our heart, and love, honor, adore, serve, praise, and bless Him. . ."

### 3. Our Life in Penance

There can be little doubt, then, what the life of penance must first and above all mean to us. We cannot take it in the sense of exterior and interior mortification alone; nor can we take it even in the sense of denying ourselves—for that would be only a half-turn, not a complete *metanoia*. We must take it in the sense of a full turn—completely away from ourselves and completely toward God. The Franciscan penance is that form in which we realize the spirit of our vocation. The habit and the cord do not make a Franciscan; only the spirit of penance and of complete conversion can make us true sons and daughters of the Seraphic Father.

There is the great danger in our religious life that it may never have occurred to us that we must do penance, that we must break ourselves and let ourselves be broken, that we must lose ourselves in order to gain ourselves in the Lord. Most of us are inclined to consider the religious life—our Franciscan life—a placid continuation of our former more or less pious life in the world. We willingly accepted the mortifications and hardships entailed in the observance of the Rule and Constitutions and in community life. Our conduct may be quite exemplary, as far as externals go; and we may honestly think we have reason to be pleased with ourselves. So may our life be low-religious. We may even have been placed in positions of trust and far-reaching responsibility in the Order. But let us be thoroughly honest now. Is it not true that the old man is still alive in us? that our ideals and ambitions have changed but slightly if at all? Are there not still the little idols of our adored Ego—our selfishness and our selfishness, our unwillingness to give to others, our desire to be something in the eyes of men, especially in the eyes of those above us? Are we not still striving for the first places? still very much concerned about our well-being on a purely natural level? We want to be loved and to be loved; we want to be respected admired; we want to be known and be known, to see and to be seen. Perhaps we are determined to refrain from boasting, but how much does our contentment depend on praise and flattery, on success in our work and enviable achievements? If we have the courage to look deeply into our hearts, we shall find many idols there to which we still sacrifice freely.

If such is the condition of our heart, can we really say that

we are doing penance? The spirit of penance that our Seraphic Father expects from us is diametrically opposed to any kind of worldliness. A worldly religious is nothing else but one who has not made the complete change of mind and heart that causes all things apart from God to lose their value. A truly penitent religious, on the contrary, is one who has set God firmly in the center of his life, in the center of his very being, who is turned to God in every respect, always and everywhere. In all his decisions he first asks what the Lord wills; in all his judgments he asks how the Lord would judge; in all the love he gives to men, it is God's love that he gives; and he desires only the things that the Lord wills him to desire.

Although the logical place for effecting this change, this *metanoia*, is the novitiate, how few in fact really accomplish it there! Usually a religious has to begin his life of penance as Saint Francis did. The call to penance may come in a severe test. God may take away something very dear to us and demand our unconditional surrender to his will. Perhaps a transfer, a difficult situation in the community, misunderstandings, dislike, slanderous reports, a broken friendship, a breach of confidence—all such things may come as tests of our true conversion to God. But the call to penance may also come to us in the gentleness of prayer, in reading or conversation, or in spiritual instruction. It then comes to us as an inner light in which we perceive how much our little Ego rules our life, how selfish we are even in a religion, how ardently we pursue happiness in the service of God and how sluggishly we pursue the God we serve. We then see ourselves in the full foulness of our ingratitude, in the contemptible folly of our efforts to straddle the fence between worldliness and penance. We see there is no purity in us, only misery and wretchedness. When this light is given to us, it is a great grace. We need only the courage to open our soul wide to its searching rays, to face ourselves squarely and admit the truth of our timorous half-measures, of ourpicable double-dealing, of our selfishness and ingratitude. Then surely we will be given the greater courage of the complete *metanoia* that our vocation demands of us. We will then be doing penance by turning ourselves away from ourselves and giving ourselves to the service of our heart.

If we live this life of penance, it is a sure sign that love of God

is thriving in us, the radical love that makes us able to say with the boy Jesus; *I must be about my Father's business* (Lk. 2:49). And then we shall have that purity of mind and heart that our Holy Father expects of his children: "They are pure of heart who despise the things of this world and seek only heavenly things, never ceasing to adore and to contemplate the true and living Lord God with clean heart and mind." If we have this purity, then we are truly possessed by God, completely turned to Him, we are then what Saint Bonaventure called our Seraphic Father: *Homo Dei*—a man, or woman, of God.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE

The roots of this comparatively young congregation actually go back to the time of our Holy Founder, Saint Francis. Toward the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, pious people organized into groups which later on became tertiary groups. Virgins and widows who so grouped themselves became known as Beguines and spread rapidly over all Europe, especially Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and the German-speaking regions.

The Beguines (also called Forest or Field Sisters), did not pronounce regular vows, but they did promise obedience and chastity for the duration of their membership in the organization. They earned their livelihood by means of sewing, weaving, teaching, nursing, and other such works, and dedicated themselves to diligently performing their religious exercises. Many practised great self-denial and rigorous penances.

Their rapid growth was soon followed by a decline as the spirit of laxity and comfort gained a strong foothold among them. To correct the abuses which had arisen, Clement V, in the Council of Vienne (1312) dissolved the institute of the Beguines (Waldschwestern) and they were commanded either to revert entirely to secular life or to enter an approved Order. Many of the Beguines requested admission to the Third Order of Saint Francis.

Several of the Beguine houses which had accepted the Rule of the Third Order of Saint Francis went a step farther in their zeal and changed the former promises to vows properly so called. There was an

other reason, though external only, which persuaded so many of the Beguines to pronounce vows. After the Council of Vienne had declared all communities of Beguines dissolved, several Bishops went to the extreme in enforcing this Decree of Dissolution—they also enforced it in the houses of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, because they were not recognized as members of the Third Order; they were living in communities and were placed on the same level as the Beguines. A veritable storm of opposition arose against these Tertiaries during the fifteenth century, and with the threat of the severest form of ecclesiastical punishment upon them, they were obliged to dissolve.

In order to save themselves, the Tertiaries, in addition to their Third Order promises, began taking regular vows. Thus, they were recognized as true religious before any tribunal. Considering the confusion of the time, we can see how these rash measures, although not universally carried out, led the Beguines first to the Third Order and then to true religious profession during the two-hundred year period after the Council of Vienne.

As a result of this historical development, Leo X made it obligatory for Tertiaries living in community to pronounce vows, and a special religious rule was set up (1521) for the seculars. The Council of Trent (1563) and Pius V (1566, 1568, 1570) brought the monastic character of the Tertiary houses to fruition by subjecting them to the laws of enclosure.

In this way, under the guidance of Mother Church and through the external influences brought to bear upon it, there gradually developed a new type of Third Order membership, that is, one with vows and life in a monastic community. The Tertiary ideal so perfected spread widely and was introduced into many localities. Thus, in the hands of Divine Providence, the bann imposed by the Council of Vienne became the source of a renaissance of Franciscan life.

One of the monastic communities affected, the Franciscan Nuns in Pfanneregg, Switzerland, had developed in this manner and flourished in the middle of the fifteenth century. Its interior spirit seemed to give every indication of a brilliant future. Meanwhile the Protestant Reformation broke out. In 1520, a certain Moritz Miles went to Wattwil, to which Pfanneregg belonged, as pastor, but he worked wholeheartedly for the Protestant Reformation and succeeded in drawing nearly the entire parish over to it. He also endeavored to effect a breach in the convent. He succeeded all too well. In the convent were two blood-sisters of Zwingli, and the reformer himself not only came from Zurich, the seat

of the reformation, but forced his way into the Forest-Hermitage and in a short time caused his two sisters and twenty-three other nuns to turn their backs upon the convent and their religious profession.

During the years of sorrow and suffering that ensued only eight sisters remained faithful. For nearly forty years they were without Holy Mass, without the Sacraments, without priestly care! That they persevered in spite of all redounds to their glory, but still more to the mercy of God. That they became lax is not to be wondered at. The ecclesiastical authorities tried to stem the growing abuses. The disalced provincial Jost Schussler, as visitor, tried to save Pfanneregg and lead it back to its pristine fervor. But his efforts (1573) to effect a reform were without success. Conditions came to such a pass that he and the Abbot Otmar Kunz of Saint Gall thought seriously of completely suppressing the entire rebellious convent. Their last hope was placed in the efficient Sister Elizabeth Spitzli, who was elected superior in 1575. Although she had good will and excellent qualities, she was not able to banish this bad religious spirit; and the convent chronicle sadly acknowledges that even she had erred far from "the true spirit and aim of the Order."

On September 14, 1586, Einsiedeln celebrated the Feast of the Consecration of the Angel (Engelweihe) with great pomp and ceremony. To cope with the throng of persons desirous of going to confession, two confessors were called from the newly-founded Capuchin monastery at Lucerne to help. The younger was a convert, Ludwig von Sachsen, a hereditary baron and the only son of the Grand-chancellor of Sachsen.

As Father Ludwig discharged the duties of his holy office in Einsiedeln, a nun approached his confessional. But, was it really a nun? Was it not rather some elegant lady wearing rings and bracelets, and with a silver buckle on her belt? After her confession, Father Ludwig asked her to what order she belonged. Imagine his surprise when she claimed to be "a child of the Order of Saint Francis," and stated that she was the superior of the convent at Pfanneregg and had come on a pilgrimage to this feast with her whole convent. So serious and full of the Franciscan spirit was Father Ludwig's talk to her that the penitent, with tears of sorrow, promised real amendment and placed herself under his direction. Elizabeth Spitzli went home with the firm resolution to carry out a reform in the spirit of the Capuchin Order, first in regard to herself and then in the convent. But her path was no easy one. Half a year elapsed. Father Ludwig visited Pfanneregg and found the superior firm in her resolution. He then fashioned for her a coarse brown dress according to the pattern of the Capuchin habit. This she joyfully donned in

place of the soft ashen-gray garment she had been wearing. The other sisters were by no means willing to follow the example of the superior and to abandon their comfortable mode of life. Thus matters stood; the courageous superior, with her plans for reform but without followers, wore the coarse brown habit *alone* for two years. Gradually, however, grace triumphed in the hearts of the sisters. Finally, in April, 1591, Father Ludwig, with the help of Brother Jacob, prepared the brown habit for all the sisters and presented it to them. The work of the reform was complete!

Father Ludwig led the "reformed" sisters still deeper into the spirit of the holy Order. In his guidance of these sisters, he was governed by the exact regulations which the Council of Trent, in its twenty-fifth session, had made for all religious. Through loyal adherence to these regulations and to those of the Constitutions of the Capuchins, he gave the convent its own laws which were later expanded and published with the approbation of the Apostolic nuncio (1599, 1607) and received the seal of approbation from the highest authority, Urban VIII (1625).

The renown of Pfanneregg soon spread. The people spoke of the "transformed sisters" with admiration. Soon petitions were sent to Pfanneregg from all localities asking that sisters be sent to introduce the reform. In a short time, many convents in Switzerland and in Germany followed the Pfanneregg reform and were called "Capuchins" not only by the people but by the Church also. They not only adopted the habit, but also the spirit of the Capuchin Order.

In recent times the movement has not ceased. Alstatt (1600, reformed 1609?) proved to be a blessed foundation; two little branches arising there developed into flourishing mission societies: Gaissau-Cartagena (North Colombia) and the other, Tubach-Pasto (South Colombia). The one of Gaissau-Cartagena was founded by the venerable servant of God, Bernarda Butler (1928). The Congregation of Pasto honors Mother Charitas Brader (1943) as its foundress. 1888 found Mother Bernarda Butler, Mother Charitas Brader, several other professed sisters, and several novices leaving the cloistered convent at Alstatt to answer the plea of Bishop Schumacher for volunteers to teach in his diocese in Ecuador. The sisters labored zealously among the Indians and Negroes for about seven years. They lived in direst poverty and suffered indescribable privations. They not only taught the children, but with special care they prepared hundreds of adults for the reception of the Sacraments. By the end of 1892, threatening clouds of persecution appeared on the horizon of Ecuador. But God always watches over His chosen ones, and a place

of refuge was offered to them in the neighboring republic of Colombia then under a Catholic government. With the permission of the Most Reverend Manuel Caicedo, Bishop of Pasto, and with the approval of the Government, Mother Charitas, under the guidance of the Missionary Capuchin Father Gasper de Cebrones, left Ecuador with six religious for Tuquerres.

Tuquerres, the cradle of the Tubach-Pasto Congregation, tried to help the newcomers in every way, but Lady Poverty reigned supreme in this house. Barley soup and potatoes were the sisters' daily food. They slept on straw sacks on the ground, but without sufficient blankets to keep them warm. However, a boarding school was opened in September and in October they took over the public school for girls. In the meantime, they started making vestments. This work not only enabled them to earn the wherewithal to keep body and soul together, but also helped them to keep up their courage. The Motherhouse was soon moved from Tuquerres to Pasto, the See City itself.

The religious persecution broke out in Ecuador in all its fury in 1895. Priests and religious were expelled. The little group which was still working in Ecuador also went to Colombia, but to Cartagena, an Atlantic seaport in the North. Thus the original branch which had set out for Ecuador was divided into two completely independent branches.

Due to the fact that the new work of the congregation was so different from that pursued by the original cloistered convent, the Holy See was requested to make some modifications in the Constitutions and also to allow the congregation to become a Pontifical instead of a Diocesan Institute. This request was graciously granted by His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, and the *Decretum Laudis* was issued in 1922. Final Papal approbation of the Institute and of the Constitutions was obtained in 1933.

The Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate came to the United States in 1932 after the late Archbishop Rudolph A. Greken, D.D., then Bishop of Amarillo, had begged the Rev. Mother Foundress, Mother Charitas, to give him teachers for the children in the far separated parts of his diocese. Some sisters were sent to colleges in the United States and from there to teach in some of the schools of the diocese. They now teach in parochial schools in Texas, New Mexico, and California.

The Sisters number over six hundred members. They have schools in Colombia, Panama, the Canal Zone, and Ecuador, besides those in the United States. They also have missions among the Indians of South America, and on the islands of San Blas, east of the Panama Canal. In all they instruct more than 12,000 children.

## THE DIES IRAE

The sun was spreading its rays over the rugged Abruzzi hills as I stood with my confrere Father Paschal, later Archbishop and Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, at the tomb of Blessed Thomas of Celano. We said a silent prayer and exchanged casual remarks on the world's greatness and the tomb's littleness. Blessed Thomas rests under the high altar in a little chapel outside the town of Tagliacozza. A missal and sundry other articles he is said to have used may be seen in the sacristy.

Everything about the shrine is poor and humble. Even the simple folk of the neighborhood who keep his memory alive and sacred seem concerned about naught else but to say a hurried prayer to one who, as the story goes, was a saintly man. Witnessing this scene one cannot help but feel the impact of the everlasting lesson, that all earthly greatness must be buried in the dust before it can rise to eternal greatness, on the day of wrath—*dies irae, dies illa*.

That Thomas of Celano was the author of this singularly powerful composition has been fairly well established. He was one of the first companions of Assisi's Poverello, and in those ranks the purest mysticism sought and found expression in matchless poetry of majestic power and exquisite charm. Besides the Seraphic Father, himself a poet both by nature and grace, we find Caesar of Spire, author of the rhythmic hymns in honor of Saints Francis, Anthony and Clare; Brother Pacificus, known as the King of Verse; and Jacopone da Todi, author of the immortal *Stabat Mater*. It was in those ranks that the genius of Thomas of Celano, whose facile pen gave us the *Lives* of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, as well as other notable works, found ample material and lofty inspiration.

It is not our purpose to present here a critical analysis of this superb composition or an evaluation of its literary form and worth. Rather, having been requested by persons who are aware of its tremendous spiritual power, we merely wish to set forth for the benefit of those who desire to meditate and reflect on these monumental stanzas, the thoughts, fears, and hopes that may have motivated the writer in putting them into verse.

The *Dies Irae* is one of the few sequences that have survived, and that still adorn our sacred liturgy. Its solemn, majestic lines now resound like distant echoes from the Age of Faith at our Masses of Requiem. Originally, however, it was used on the First Sunday of Advent. There it fitted perfectly. This Sunday, being the first of the Ecclesiastical Year, shares with the last Sunday of the Year, the Twenty-fourth after Pentecost, an atmosphere of sternness and solemnity. Mother Church has wisely



ly appointed the reading of the Last Judgement for these two Sundays. While the last Sunday features the account of that tremendous event by Saint Matthew (24:15-35), the first brings the parallel account by Saint Luke (21:25-33) which strikes a somewhat milder tone because it ushers in the Christmas Season.

Thus the two Sundays, the first and the last, like mighty sentinels raise their towers on high to give warning to mortal man to always *remember thy last things* (Eccli 28:6). At the same time we hear the Saviour's gentle word: *Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last* (Apoc 1:17). The Latin Proverb *Finis coronat opus* (The end crowns the work) underlies what the Church has in mind. The Last Judgment will decide man's fate for eternity. That should be our first thought and our last.

A mountain of literary works has been raised around this remarkable poem of Thomas of Celano. Many have tried, and have confessed their inability, to render it adequately into English verse. They acknowledge their failure to reproduce the full power, charm, and feeling of the original. From the classic writings of Cicero, Virgil, and Horace the author culled the best he could find, but instead of setting his words to the flowing, mellow rhythm of pagan imperial Rome, he chose the strong, sturdy and stalwart lines of his own day. What these may lack in grace they gain in power. It would seem that the supernatural light of revelation, of which the author has a firm and sure grasp, imparted new life and vigor to the language of *Roma Aeterna*. Sense and sound are made to harmonize and the plain trochees move forward with measured step, each one giving forth a peal of thunder or a flash of lightning as they march forward, turning neither to the right nor the left, but steadily onward in the path traced out for man by the Almighty.

"The *Dies Irae*," to quote Daniel, (*Thes. Hymn.*), "is by the consent of all the highest ornament of sacred poetry and the most precious jewel in the Latin Church." No wonder Michelangelo, in his masterpiece of the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel, Goethe, in his world-famous *Faust*, and many other masters have borrowed the dramatic intensity and the overwhelming force of Thomas of Celano in their artistic conceptions. Although their views of life and eternity may have lacked conviction, they felt nevertheless that these verses, which were born in an age when the masses needed strong language to turn them away from strife and warfare and forgetfulness of the last things, carried a message of eternal truth—a truth that fits every age and people.

Do we need to translate this poem into modern tongues? Do the faithful need this translation when they hear it sung at the Requiem Mass? We hardly think so. The Latin words have so deeply impressed

themselves on our hearts and minds, and our Gregorian plain-song carries the thoughts with such overwhelming force, that the very melody urges the devout listener to meditate upon the truth conveyed, even though his mind may not grasp every word. He cannot help but sense in the three verses of every strophe, each one closing on the tonic, the slow and solemn tolling of the bell in the lofty tower. In a more realistic way the Germans call them the "triple hammerstrokes"—most effective in arousing genuine remorse in a guilty conscience.

Such "hammerstrokes" would fade and flow away like water when rendered in the smooth or clipped sounds of our modern tongues. Brother Thomas knew the force of consonants, the tones of vowels, the beauty and expressive faculty of rhyme and rhythm. With all these devices he seems to have played, blending with the greatest ease the word of revelation with the best of man's creation. Thus the immortal sequence of the humble friar stands before us *terrible like an army set in array* (Cant. 6:3).

The *Dies Irae* changes from the description of the Last Judgement in the first six stanzas to lyric meditations and heart-rending prayer in the remainder. The description is set in logical order: 1) the day of wrath; 2) the entrance of the Judge; 3) the sound of the trumpet; 4) the rising of the dead; 5) the Book of Life; 6) the judgement seat.

In Medieval days the holy Bible was in control of religion and life in the Christian world. There was no separation between Revelation and Creation. God's work manifested his power, truth and beauty; his word manifested his will. Such was the conviction of Saint Francis and his First Companions; such was the driving power of his seraphic love. Thomas of Celano sets into focus the end and destruction of God's work at the call of God's will. God is the Creator of all and the Judge of the destiny of all his creatures. The Son of God announced the final judgement and concluded with this solemn sentence: *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away* (Matt. 24:35). This sentence weighed on the sensitive and believing soul of the poet when he penned the *Dies Irae*. The Last Judgement is an event of world significance; it marks the end of the universe, of God's magnificent handiwork and of man's labor and craftsmanship as well. Both are doomed because the creature thwarted the Creator's plan and purpose. The doom was forecast in the Almighty's malediction, and the echo of this curse reached the tribes and nations of old. The poet rises to a commanding height when he calls to witness both the sacred and the pagan worlds. The latter's testimony are the Sibylline Oracles of ancient Greece, which portend in obscure and mysterious language the day of a universal wreck-



age. The former are the voices of the Prophets written on the sacred pages of the Old Testament. David, the royal prophet, and type of the Saviour of the world, is quoted by Celano as the spokesman for all the Prophets. We can still sense in his lines the holy fright and dread that must have overwhelmed him as he read some of the chapters of the giants in the ranks of the prophets. Of all the inspired Seers of old, Sophonia is the most realistic. Thus he speaks: *The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift. The voice of the day of the Lord is bitter, the mighty man shall be there with tribulation. The day is a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high bulwarks* (Soph. 1:14-16). In the light of these graphic lines we should read the poet's stanzas.

Dies irae, dies illa,  
Solvat saeculum in favilla;  
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Day of wrath—that day  
Shall grind the world to dust  
David and the Sibyl have foretold it.

Celano took his first words verbatim from the Latin Vulgate: *Dies irae, dies illa*. One cannot but sense the ominousness of the words as they were spoken in the guttural tones of the Hebrew tongue: *Jon ebrah jom hahu* (Soph. 1:14). The very sounds make one shudder, because they foretell the direst tragedy the world will ever witness; and the reason for this tragedy is the sin of man. The enormity of man's transgression is reflected in this outburst of divine wrath. God had made the world for his own glory and man's happiness. The harmony in creation first resounded in a majestic major key, but man's disobedience changed it into a mournful minor. The climax is the day of wrath.

From his high station the poet visualizes the devastation and ultimate destruction of God's domain. *Saeculum* means the world, the universe, but in particular the life upon it. As the Saviour prophesied: *For these are days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled. . . And there will be signs in the sun and the moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations bewildered by the roar of the sea and waves. . . For the powers of heaven will be shaken* (Lk. 21:22-25). In the distance we seem to hear the crashing of the gates of Paradise as they are flung shut with the Lord's malediction: *For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return* (Gen. 3:19). The poet adroitly expresses the crumbling of the universe into tiny particles of dust by the soft feminine *favilla* rhyming with *illa* and *Sibylla*. On the day of wrath man and all his makings will crumble. It is the contrast between God's omnipotence and man's frailty.

How humble and contrite we should feel, how wretched and con-

temptible, as the solemn melody of this stirring sequence fills the Church. What would the corpse in the coffin before us say if he could speak. "Remember," he would whisper, "the four last things, and thou shalt never sin." "Look at me," he would continue, "*Hodie mihi, cras tibi*—What has happened to me today, will happen to you tomorrow."

Quantus tremor est futurus,  
Quando judex est venturus,  
Cuncta stricte discursurus!

What a trembling there will be,  
When the Judge makes his appearance,  
Rigidly to probe all things

Consternation will seize the nations as the Judge appears. Listen to his own words: *And then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then will all the tribes of the earth mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty* (Matt. 24:30). Saint John, who had heard these words, confirms them in his own solemn manner: *Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him. Even so. Amen* (Apoc. 1:7). No wonder the imagination of the poet is arrested as he cries out: *Quantus tremor!* The nations are bewildered and men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things that are coming on the world (Lk. 21:25-26). But the physical pains do not compare with the anguish of soul and the sting of conscience. For this is *the day of tribulation and distress, of calamity and misery, of darkness and obscurity* (Soph. 1:15). There is weeping and wailing. The Judge is *the searcher of hearts* (Apoc. 2:23) who will require *the last farthing* (Matt. 5:26). Strictly and rigidly he will scrutinize everything. The word *cuncta* permits of no exception, no indulgence. Literally the verb *discutere* (derived from *disquater*) means "to tear apart, to pierce." Since nothing unholy can stand before God, there will be a tearing into, a piercing of the heart and its most secret recesses; a searching of every motive of our words and actions. Meanwhile the multitude await in fear and anguish. Powerfully Celano describes this scene through the drawn-out ending of *futurus, venturus, and discursurus*.

The lesson is, that the time spent every day in a thorough, honest, and searching examination of conscience will be well spent, and will lessen our anguish on the day of wrath.

Tuba mirum spargens sonum

The trumpet scattering round a startling sound

Per sepulchra regionum,  
Coget omnes ante thronum.

Over sepulchres in every clime  
To summon all before the throne.

The tuba or trumpet had an important part in Hebrew life. It was the common signal for summoning the people, whether for joyous festivities, military exploits, or days of mourning and imminent danger. The Judge, so the Saviour announces, *will send forth his angels with a*

*trumpet and a great sound* (Matt. 24:31). With rare ingenuity Thomas of Celano dramatizes this scene and makes it live and stir with action. The three verses, each one sustained by the threefold *O* or *U* sound, strike the ear like three measured blasts of the mighty trumpet. The blasts are scattering (*spargens*) over the hills and down the valleys, far into distant lands (*regionum*). The sound penetrates the sod or the stone of every sepulchre, for all shall hear the voice of the Son of Man. There is no pause, no hesitation; an irresistible force presses action. The call goes out to all, good and bad, for the Lord will also *gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other* (Matt. 24:31). And as Saint Paul warns: *For the Lord himself with cry of command, with voice of archangel, and with trumpet of God will descend from heaven* (I Thess. 4:16). Saint John carries the sound of the trumpet still further when he writes of his vision on Patmos: *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged, each one according to his own works* (Apoc. 20:13). *Coget omnes ante thronum*: There is firmness, force, and finality in these words. Like a mob of criminals the souls of all mortals are huddled before the throne.

This verse shows us the tremendous importance of the grace of graces—a happy death. Of what value, of what purpose is life if at the last moment it is a failure? And how do we know that we will be granted time to set matters aright? For, warns the Judge: *I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I shall come upon thee* (Apoc. 3:3). Yet he promises that: *He who overcomes, I will permit him to sit with me upon my throne* (Apoc. 3:21).

Mors stupebit et natura,  
Cum resurget creatura,  
Judicanti responsura

Death and nature stand aghast  
As the creature comes to life,  
To give answer to the Judge.

With a bold stroke of genius the poet turns from the animate to the inanimate world, from man to the physical forces which he commands. But there are two of these forces over which he lost command when he first sinned. In fact it was the hope of conquering this dreaded power of nature that prompted man to sin. Listen to the tempter's lying words: *No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened* (Gen. 3:4-5). And listen to the penalty hurled down by the Almighty: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken* (Gen. 3:19). From that moment on there was a league between death and the earth. The earth claimed man as part of its dust, and death was her agent and minister.

But now man, condemned by the Almighty, rises from the tomb. Death and nature stand aghast; they look upon risen man in wonderment and stupefaction. It is too soon to echo Paul's scornful cry: *O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?* (I Cor. 15:55), for the verdict has not yet fallen. First an answer must be given—an answer complete and truthful—to the Judge who is *the searcher of hearts*.

There the creature stands in all his naked humanity. And nature feels that it has been deceived because what it had claimed as its prey returns to life. The poet pictures nature as if blaming death for this loss, for death was to consign this mortal to the grave, and it had failed.

But the creature minds neither nature nor death. He has to render an answer to the Judge, an account of his stewardship. The light beaming from the Judge's countenance floods his whole being and penetrates every crevice and recess of his soul. What will the answer be? What, indeed, will our answer be?

Liber scriptus proferetur,  
In quo totum continetur  
Unde mundus judicetur.

Then is brought the book, all written,  
In which is recorded all  
Whence the world is to be judged.

There is a lull in the poet's mind. He senses a quiet expectancy spread over the multitude, for angels, God's messengers and friends, appear. The scene takes on the nature of a court procedure. The angels are bearing the ancient Book—the *liber scriptus* that contains the entire history of every man and of all mankind. The Book of Life figures prominently not only in the writings of the Old Law but also in the earliest traditions of the New. Saint Paul speaks of the Book of Life (4:3) and Saint John mentions it in numerous variations. *I saw the dead, he writes, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. And another scroll was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the scrolls, according to their works* (Apoc. 20:12). One scroll contained the records of the elect; the other, of the reprobate. Thomas of Celano comprises both in the *Liber scriptus*. Saint John was ordered to *take a scroll and eat it up, and it will make thy stomach bitter, but in thy mouth it will be sweet as honey* (Apoc. 10:9). By sweetness we understand the mercies of God; by bitterness his curse and the evils that follow. The word *amarus* (bitter), often used in the Mass and Office of the Dead, is the one word that adequately expresses the feelings of mortals on the *dies magna et amara valde*, the great and most bitter day. The sinful human soul which was created for God and which bears his image, feels entirely abandoned by him and by all that is good, sweet, and beautiful. The

damned bewail the loss of what should have been their eternal blessed possession—and this loss is all through their own fault. Abandonment, remorse, grief, and utter hopelessness come upon them like a stream of ugly waters from the Dead Sea. This is bitterness of soul in the extreme, which tears cannot quench. Now all is too late. There is a presentiment of the place *where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched* (Mk. 4:5).

The Book of Life symbolizes divine Omniscience. The omniscient Eye of God sees all and penetrates the most secret recesses. All these things are laid bare in the Book of Life—*unde mundus judicetur*. And now the poet describes the coming of the Judge.

Judex ergo cum sedebit,  
Quidquid latet apparebit:  
Nil inultum remanebit.

When, therefore the Judge is seated,  
Whatever hidden is laid bare:  
Naught shall unavenged remain.

With adamant consequence this scene follows the prophecies of ages carrying the message of the Lord's wrath. The *ergo* used in philosophical syllogisms clinches the argument. The word *sedebit* is the unrelenting fulfillment of the Saviour's own words: *And the Son of Man shall sit in judgement*. There lies a large and ominous order in the words *quidquid latet* (whatever is hidden). A man may hide his misdeeds from his fellowmen, but there is nothing hidden in the sight of the omniscient God. Our sins, though forgiven and not to be charged against us, are nevertheless known to the Almighty. They are in his eternal mind, but the Saviour's redeeming grace has cast its radiant glow over them, and from marks of iniquity they have become tokens of divine mercy. *If your sins be as scarlet, exclaims Isaias, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool* (Is. 1:18).

In an almost casual way, Celano writes down what is of tremendous consequence to us poor mortals: *Quidquid latet apparebit*. And, as if the words flowed naturally from this sentence he adds: *Nil inultum remanebit*. Are there sins on our soul that were deliberately hidden in the Holy Sacrament of Penance? Are there sins omitted out of cowardice, shame, or carelessness? faults or habits that we are loath to lay bare before the voice of conscience, lest the full realization of them force us to surrender and to make a clean breast of all? Are we afraid of ourselves? are we restrained by a misguided self-love? by a hidden pride or human respect? When the Judge appears—*Judex ergo cum sedebit*—all these foolish fears and shames will fade away before his vengeful ire. Thus with another bolt of the hammer upon the unbending anvil of divine justice,

our poet gives the final issue: *Nil inultum remanebit*—Naught shall remain unavenged. *Nil* is a bitter word, but it reaches the very depth of a guilty soul. Nothing, absolutely nothing shall escape the searching eye and the avenging lips of the Eternal Judge.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M

(To be continued)

## THE FIRST JOY—THE ANNUNCIATION

*Now in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary. (Luke 1:26, 27)*

Our meditation on the first of Our Lady's joys coincides with her March feast, the Annunciation. In the beautiful words of the Evangelist St. Luke, describing the events of the angel's coming to a little girl in Nazareth with the divine decree of her destiny to be the Mother of the Savior, there is one phrase which sparkles above all others for the Franciscan eye. St. Luke tells us that Mary said to the angel: *How shall this happen, since I do not know man?* Underneath these words is hidden a great note of dedication, for inclosed in this significant phrase is the vow of her virginity to Him whom she called *God my Savior*.

The angel's message struck deeply into the heart of Her who was but a child. We know that all Israel's maidenhood dreamed the dream of mothering Him who would be *King over the house of Jacob forever*, and Mary's answer to the angel was but a profession of her dedication to the ideal of Israel—her dedication to a *spiritual service*, presenting herself to God, as St. Paul would later so beautifully describe, *a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God*.

In becoming Franciscans, each of us professed the same dedication manifested by the maiden of a town of Galilee whom we are

now so privileged and happy to call our Blessed Mother. The whole ideal of religious life can be summed in the one word—Dedication. Many think of us as *bound* to three vows—poverty, chastity and obedience—and yet do we not feel in our heart of hearts that we are dedicated rather than bound to these vows and that the depth of our spirit of dedication and love is the measure of the golden chain that links us through the hands of our Holy Father St. Francis to Christ's Church and through His Church to Christ himself? Bonds and fetters are ever the trappings of the prisoner. He some day hopes to shake them off for freedom, and yet our vows do not imprison us, rather they unite us.

Lost of the spirit of dedication, Franciscan life can suffer many of the tragedies of the world: boredom, discouragement, laxity or routine. Yet quickened with love and wisdom, which is but another way to say dedication, our vows become as three keys opening the house, the interior of which *eye has not seen*: releasing the celestial music which ear has not heard; unfolding the treasures of those things God has prepared for those who love Him. The apostle asks: *For who among men knows the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him?* Before others we may well appear to have the mind of Christ and yet be filled with the foolishness of worldliness which closes the ear to spiritual things. Yet the truly dedicated Franciscan is the *spiritual man who judges all things*, and knows he has *received not the spirit of the world but the spirit that is from God*.

When we first entered Holy Church in Baptism a foundation was laid, which is Christ Jesus. When we embraced the Franciscan way of life we can picture that a veritable Portiuncula was constructed over this foundation; its three walls our holy vows, the loving protection of the Queen of our order its little roof, but the door of this little house was left unlatched so that into it might continually pour the grace of the *Spirit of God* whose temples we are. The little house as we have described will not be closed up until our eyes one day are shut to all on this earth, and our souls brought before the just Judge. Further, the fact that the little house we have described remains unhinged should ever be a reminder to us that by dedicating ourselves to God in the spirit of St. Francis *we have been made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men*.

The doors of our Portiunculas are also left open that we may

suffer the same perils, labors and hardships that have sanctified holy men and women of God from apostolic times. Through the open portals may come *contentions, envyings, animosities, dissensions, detractions, gossiping, arrogance, disorders*, and yet these are the means which allow a dedicated Franciscan, with Saint Paul, to glory in his infirmities, *that the strength of Christ may dwell in him*.

When the spirit of dedication and love for everything Franciscan is strong, each of our imagined Portiunculas of grace and dedication draw our whole family together. Then it is that any soul may look at the building constructed by us and say with truth: *You have become imitators of the churches of God which are in Christ Jesus*. We are dedicated to leave strong monuments as a heritage to the other sons and daughters of the poor man of Assisi who, too, would follow in his footsteps. The love with which we work in making strong these memorials will be rewarded when one day the Lord our God will move each little Portiuncula on this earth *into a good land of brooks and of waters, and of fountains: in the plains of which and the hills deep rivers break out: a land of wheat, and barley, and vineyards, wherein fig trees and pomegranates and olive yards grow, a land of oil and honey. Where without any want we shall eat our bread and enjoy abundance of all things*.

Often St. Bonaventure turns our attention to the models that we have in developing a true sense of Franciscan dedication. Is there any more touching spirit with which we may accept Franciscan life, with all of its hardships and joys, than the sentiments of a Ruth: *for whither soever thou shalt go, I will go: and where thou shalt dwell, I will also dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die: and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me, and add more, if aught but death part me and thee*. Let us pray God that the love and devotion with which we embraced the precepts of our holy Father St. Francis may ever dwell so deep in our hearts that we might say to him in Ruth's words: *Holy Father, the Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee*. No less beautiful is the example of the child Samuel ministering in the temple of God with such devotion and dedication that his thrice uttered—*Here am I*—gave cause to God to reveal to him the future. Well may we reflect, too, the priests who carried the ark

of the covenant into the middle of the Jordan when, under Josue the tribes passed through its channel. If every word of Sacred Scripture is fraught with meaning, as we know it is, let us attend that the priests stood there *in the midst of the Jordan till all things were accomplished which the Lord had commanded Josue to speak to the people, and Moses had said to him.* May it ever be said of us that we have stood as faithfully, and may we never despair or grow tired in the way of the Poverello until all things are accomplished which the Lord has commanded us to speak to His people.

This insistence on a great spirit of dedication to the life we have embraced may seem overemphasized and yet if we turn our glance to the Master *sitting on the Mount of Olives*, His words cannot but enkindle in us a deep realization of the necessity of embracing completely the way that He has led us to gain salvation: *Take care that no one leads you astray. . . many false prophets will arise and will lead many astray. . . iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold. . . false christs and false prophets will arise, and will show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

Considering those who reign with The Word of God in Heaven, the Evangelist St. John tells us that *the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and pure* follow Him on white horses. St. Bonaventure tells us that the word *armies* has a special significance in this context; for those who are joined to the armies of heaven are those who have freely followed Christ; divorced of earthly and temporal desires and dedicated to heavenly and eternal.<sup>2</sup> The Seraphic Doctor also tells us that we who are dedicated with devotion and perseverance to the Franciscan way of life merit to be included in the commendation which the apostle addressed to the Galatians: *Whoever follow this rule, peace and mercy upon them.*<sup>3</sup> This peace shall not only be of this world but eternal, for one day we shall move from the Portiunculas of grace and devotion which we have built in this world and *we shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and wealthy rest.* No one of God's creatures is better able, nor more willing, to protect the devotion and dedication with which we would surround our Franciscan days, than she who mur-

mured to an angel of the Lord the simple, wholehearted, all-embracing words: *Be it done to me according to thy word.* When we pray the Aves of her first joy, may the Mother of God beseech Him to grant us that all our Franciscan days be lived according to the Word to whom she gave birth.

Fr. William J. Manning, T.O.F.

## THE KITCHEN OF THE HEAVENLY KING

(Berthold of Regensburg: Seventh Sermon to Religious)

*This sermon of Berthold's is a delightful and striking example of the non-technical Medieval sermon. Simple in manner of presentation, completely uninhibited in metaphor and application, it goes straight to the point. It is not a sermon for the overly-squeamish, but for those who can relish Medieval directness it offers excellent spiritual food for Lenten chewing. (Editor's Note.)*

*And though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality* (Wis. 3:4). In this world the Lord has many different kinds of kitchens. Religious who suffer trials are, as it were, being prepared in the kitchen of the Lord to be carried by the angels to the table of the heavenly banquet; and there are certainly many kitchens in which they are thus made ready, that is, the various religious Orders of the heavenly King.

Now, when animals are taken to the kitchen of their masters, they are afflicted. So too are Religious in religion. But after they are prepared they sometimes come into great honors. For they are borne by knights and servants on gold or silver platters to the table of the lord or king or emperor, to become part of their bodies. In like manner you Religious, if you wish to be honorably borne by angels into heaven to the banquet and table of the Lord, must suffer in patience while you are now being completely prepared for the Lord. For just as the animals are first skinned clean, the Religious are first cleansed by poverty of all attachment to things, that nothing which

belongs to the world may remain to them. As (in the Old Testament) the hide belonged to the priest and now in the courts of the lords it belongs to the cook, so our "hide" belongs to our superior. And as a man who stole a hide or part of a hide from a cook would be a thief, so is a Religious a thief if he receives anything of his own. Of such an act he must be very wary because there is a sentence against thieves, as Solomon says: *If a thief be taken he shall restore sevenfold, and shall give up all the substance of his house.* (Prov. 6:31) That is, he shall give up all the good which he has merited in heaven and which he is doing on earth. Furthermore he shall restore both sevenfold because, for that small act of self-will, he must burn as a thief for a great theft on all Sundays, which will ever be for all eternity.

Let us note moreover that the head is somewhat more difficult to skin than the other members. By the head, which is the higher part of the body and more important than the other members, is signified some possession which is more difficult to give than any other. What is the greatest of all possessions? In religion it is one's own will and feelings which among all things are most highly prized and which therefore must certainly be entirely given up, because whatever man does against the will of his superior merits him absolutely nothing. Indeed, Saint Bernard says: "Nothing burns in hell except one's own will; let self-will cease and hell will no longer be." And note that if the hide would remain on the platter set before the King, he would pluck the eyes out or something like that. The Lord likewise will never receive such a thing at his banquet table. Therefore, by all means disobedience is to be avoided lest it happen to you as it did to Dathan and Abiron and all those with them. For when their superiors commanded them to come, they answered: *We will not come . . . wilt thou also pull out our eyes?* (Num. 16:12-14). And there follows: *Respect not their sacrifices* (Num. 16:15), and they were swallowed up with all their possessions. So God does not respect the sacrifices of such Religious, but they will be swallowed up in hell. Beware, therefore, not to keep any of the "hide" of your own will, and the Lord will give you *skin for skin* (Job 2:4), that is, His eternal Will for yours, as happened to Christ, Who said: *Not my will but thine be done* (Lk. 22:42).

Religious again, just like the animals in the kitchen, after the

are skinned, are cooked, roasted, fried, salted, peppered and the like. They are tried by infinite labors. To one this duty is given, to another that; now they are sent out for one task, now for another. It is good to bear these things patiently because the better you are prepared, the more delight the Lord takes in you. Moreover, now you are tried by God with infirmities and dryness of heart; by your superior through difficult obediences; by the Order through fasts, vigils, abstinences, silences, and the like; by the devil through various temptations; by the flesh through involuntary concupiscences; by the brethren through mockery, detractions, accusations and reproaches; and also through various other crosses. But bear all things patiently because this tribulation lasts but for a short time. *Now for a little while, if need be, you are made sorrowful by various trials* (I Pet. 1:6). Through such cookings you escape the roastings of hell; and these cookings may even be so many that you will escape the roastings of purgatory also. Each day bear the cooking or roasting of obedience, or else you will not escape cooking in purgatory. Therefore suffer gladly, and you will merit the joys of more than ten years and escape more than ten years of suffering. And because much glory is thus merited—*for our present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepares for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all measure* (II Cor. 4:17)—therefore gladly permit yourselves to be well prepared, because when you are completely done, you will be set before the Lord. *And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast* (Mtt. 25:10).

Many do not know whether they would be well prepared if God should summon them by His angels and death, as He does quickly; and if they should die, whether they would be presented to the Lord. There are three signs among others that show whether they are well prepared or not, and whether they have made any advance in religious perfection or not—the same signs that show whether the meat is well prepared and cooked to perfection: first, if the blood has been drained off properly; second, if the meat can be torn apart with the teeth or finger-nails; third, if the meat can be separated from the bones.

Now as to the first sign, that is, whether you have advanced to any perfection, and whether you would be presented directly to the Lord or be sent to another kitchen a hundred or a thousand times

hotter and crueller, note well that the blood has been drained out of the flesh and dried, the blood, that is, which signifies sin—the blood may be for an expiation of the soul (Lev. 17:11)—if a religious person does not love sin but thoroughly detests it. For thus, dried up from self-will in his love and his desires, I say not in temptation but in love, the blood of all pride, envy, rancour and the like will have been drained from his soul. For the flesh with blood is unclean to the Lord, as Moses said, because God is not like a dog or a wolf that he should enjoy blood.

The second sign is this: if the soul and heart are tender and ready for correction and reproof, we know that a Religious is thus prepared and perfectly cooked, that is, that he has made perfect progress in religion. *Patience has its perfect work* (Js. 1:4). And note what went before: tribulation begets patience. The person who has not been tried may seem to himself and others to be patient, but it can not be known for certain whether he is patient or not, because quiet, pleasures, and the like are not a real test. So trouble begets patience. For as much patience as a person has in tribulation, so much has he and no more. Patience is known in tribulation. Blessed Francis says: As much patience as a person has when his friends are a burden to him, only so much does he have." (See *Admonitions* n. 13). The Psalmist experienced this when he said: *They have spoken against me with deceitful tongues; and they have compassed me about with words of hatred; and have fought against me without cause. Instead of making me a return of love, they detracted me; but I gave myself to prayer* (Ps. 108:3-4).

The hearts of some Religious are like the meat of an old setting hen. Yeal even like that of an old goose of the woods. They can hardly be cooked. Once, at our place someone caught a woods-goose which could not be made tender in any natural way, even after it was boiled for three days. It was so tough that it could not be cut with a knife, and even the beasts would not bother with it. Are you surprised that some people in religion, even you yourselves, have been cooked in a kitchen for nine years, or ten, or twelve, or thirteen, or thirty, and you are still as hard as ever; yes, so hard, so impatient, that it may be said of you: *You are the man* (II Kings 12:7). *The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed: and health shall not follow him* (Prov. 29:1). *A hard heart shall fear evil* (Ecclus. 3:27). You, however, according

to thy hardness and unrepentant heart, treasure up to yourself wrath on the day of wrath and of the revelation of the just judgment of God (Rom. 2:5). *Your cruelty has reached up to heaven* (II Paral. 28:9). Those who are so impatient that they can not be bitten into with teeth, that is with words, or by finger nails, that is by some hard facts and deeds, cannot be presented to God but must be cooked a second time; and this second cooking will be much worse than the first, for it is that of purgatory. Such people indeed who will not bear correction have the sign of reprobation. *Consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom he hath despised* (Eccles. 7:14). *The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed: and health shall not follow him* (Prov. 29:1). Therefore such people are stupid, although to themselves and to others they may seem otherwise. He that *hateth reproof is foolish* (Prov. 12:1) - And on the other hand it is said: *Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee* (Prov. 9:8). No matter how good a horse is, if it will in no way put up with anything, neither saddling, nor bridling, nor rubbing, nor feeding, nor spurring, nor anything else, it would be of little value. And so it is with an impatient Religious, no matter how much virtue he has. Because it is written in Hebrews 10, 36: *You have need of patience*. But you say: "I am naturally impatient. I can't overcome myself." I answer: "The fact is, that although you are perhaps tempted somewhat more than certain others, you can easily overcome it, if you will resist it." The Apostle says: *God will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength* (I Cor. 10:13), and in Genesis, *the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it* (Gen. 4:7), because to resist manfully is to conquer. *This is the victory that overcomes the world* (I Jn. 5:4), not to answer in kind to injuries heaped on you after the example of Sara, who (as we read in Tobias 3, 7) when she received a reproach from one of her father's servant maids, she went to God and commended herself to Him. And Chrysostom: "The best kind of victory is to be conquered in many things." It is better to conquer a vice than a person, because as the Lord says: *By your patience you will win your souls* (Lk. 21:19). Therefore, do not be like a dog who has an arrow in his thigh.<sup>1</sup> *At the hearing of a word the fool is in travail, as a woman groaning in the bringing*

<sup>1</sup> In Ecclus. 19; 12, Berthold seems to have read *canis* for *carnis*.



forth of a child. As an arrow that sticketh in a dog's (man's) thigh so in a word in the heart of a fool (Ecclus. 19:11-12). You should not be like a dog that runs back and forth howling out; but you should be like a lamb which is always silent, even when it is bitten by wolves.

The third sign is when the meat is easily separated from the bones, that is, when a man has come to such perfection that he says with the Apostle: *I desire to depart and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23), namely, when he lives patiently and dies gladly; when groaning deeply within himself he says with David: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!* (Ps. 119:5).

Why do the perfect desire to depart? First, because in death they find him whom they have not ceased to desire in their whole life, that is, God. The second reason is because this world is full of danger and troubles, but death is the end of all of these. *Better is death than a bitter life* (Ecclus. 30:17). Thus Bernard: "The small number of those who reach the goal and the multitude of those who perish gives proof of life's danger." And although there are many dangers on the sea, there are yet more on land. The third reason is the immortality that follows. As Cicero remarks: "One should not weep over death which is followed by immortality." *The day of death is better than the day of one's birth* (Eccles. 7:2). We have the example of the death of Christ: *Let us run with patience to the fight set before us; looking towards the author and finisher of faith, Jesus who for the joy set before him, endured a cross, despising shame* (Hebr. 12:1-2). So Augustine: "The fact that Christ went voluntarily to death is a most certain argument that the servants of God should not fear death." The fourth reason is that death is the door through which man leaves all evils and enters into all good. Therefore, Ecclesiastes says: *The day of death is better than the day of one's birth* (7:2), because on the latter we entered into many evils, but now we enter into many goods. Therefore the Apocalypse says: *Blessed are those who die in the Lord* (14:13); and the Psalms: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Ps. 115:5). Therefore they desire death as I have already stated. *Men will seek death* (Apoc. 9:6). They are like captives who await their liberation when they have a strong reason to hope for it. They always stand at the door of the prison. As a penned-up dog always stands whining at *A hard heart shall fear evil* (Ecclus. 3:27). You, however, according

the door, scratching with his claws and trying to get out, so it is with the just at death. But the lovers of the world, who fear that they will be led to a gibbet or to torture, seek for delays and leave unwillingly. Nor is it surprising if a sinner fears his release from prison, since he is branded for robbery. Such spiritual brands are the marks or stains of sin upon his gnawing conscience. Of them the Apostle says: *They have their consciences branded* (1 Tim. 4:2). *He is pricked as it were with a sword of conscience* (Prov. 12:18). *Whereas wickedness is fearful, it is given over to all condemnation: for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things*: since (according to the Interlinear Gloss) it does not have tranquillity or serenity (Wisd. 17:10). *Their conscience bears witness to them* (Rom. 2:15). For people who go out of prison branded this way expect nothing except hanging or burning in hell. These people are to be advised that before they leave prison they should be on good terms with the judge, as Mardocheus did with the queen when he was to be hanged, not as some people do who in no way provide for themselves. Or they should be like Joseph who was on good terms with a friend of the king, and therefore, when he was brought out of prison and his clothes changed and face shaved he was presented to the king and greatly honored by him.

Therefore, strive always to come to this state, that you will desire to be freed from prison. O how well prepared was he who said: *Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. 7:24); and he who said: *Bring my soul out of prison* (Ps. 141:8). Therefore, O death, see how bitter you are to the evil and how sweet to the good! For a person shall find you just as you shall find him. If he finds you good, you will find him good; if he finds you bad, you will find him bad. Therefore, Ecclesiasticus says: *Have a familiarity with death* (9:20). He does not mean a familiarity with death only because it spares no one, but he means it as a man is said to be familiar who knows how to adjust himself to the manners of everyone, who is a merchant with merchants, a cleric with clerics, and the like. Such is the true familiarity with death. It is grievously evil to sinners because it finds them grievously evil: *The death of the wicked is very evil* (Ps. 33:22). But for the saints it is precious because it finds them precious: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Ps. 115:5). And this will lead us to



the heavenly festivity where there is always joy, brightness, and the like. And when you are thus prepared for the Lord you will be presented to him in glory and happiness by the angels whom the Lord shall send for you at death.

Let him who wishes to be cooked quickly, strive after the three points mentioned above. That this may happen very quickly and that a man may also very quickly come to perfection and may beat easily all difficulties as though they were very small, let him do as good cooks do: let him put thick glass next to the meat, that is, the clean Christ who suffered much hotter and more violent things for us. Further, let it be a clean and beautiful glass, that is, let him always have in mind the things of the spirit and the rewards of heaven. Let him always remember that for one day of tribulation we will have thousands of years of consolations; for one difficulty, infinite joys. *For our present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepare for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all measure* (II Cor 4:17). So John in the Apocalypse says that the heavenly fatherland is pure gold and pure glass and that its streets are the same: *The city itself was pure gold, like pure glass, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were, transparent glass, and I saw no temple therein* (Apoc. 21:18, 21:22). Therefore he calls it glass because it is transparent. Metals are not transparent because in them there is too much earthiness, but in glass there is little although more in one than in another. Therefore one is clearer than another. Such is that glory, in which are none of the miseries and difficulties which are here on earth. No hunger, thirst, or any other affliction; and John also teaches that he who here has less earthiness will be more brilliant there: *And I saw no temple therein* (Apoc. 21:22). That is a place of petition and sacrifice—as the Gloss explains—which will have no place there. For there we shall not make petition, but everyone will receive what he wishes, and there we shall not offer sacrifice to God but He will offer to us everything that we wish, these and many other things as well. This is for us. Amen.

Frs. Fintan Warren, O.F.M. and Marian Douglas, O.F.M.

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### THE GRACE AND THE GRACE OF THE INCARNATION

We have meditated on what penance must mean for us, and we have discovered that it means loving ourselves that we may gain ourselves in the Lord. It also means, as a necessary consequence, that we must learn to regard the things of this world as valueless apart from God, and to make God our one and only value—our God and our all. This was the Gospel message that Saint Francis, in all simplicity, heard and lived. He found the exhortation to penance in every word of the Good Tidings, for every word revealed to him the *Magnalia Dei*, the great things God has done for us. But he was overwhelmed by one of these Great Things above all others—the Incarnation of the divine Word, the truth that God became man, that the love of the Father gave us the Son as our brother. This overwhelming goodness of our Father and the utter humility of his Son irresistibly forced Francis to answer the call to penance with all the strength of his ardent young soul.

#### 1. Christ Is the Incomprehensible Gift of Our Father

In his *Letter to All the Faithful*, our holy Father Francis wrote: "The Most High Father announced through his holy Archangel Gabriel to the holy and glorious Virgin Mary that this Word of the Father, so worthy, so holy, so glorious, was coming from heaven; from her womb he received the true flesh of humanity and our frailty."

When Saint Francis experienced in his heart and mind the incredible mystery of the Incarnation, he did not think primarily of the lovely Infant lying in the arms of his Virginal Mother and surrounded by all the tender and jubilant poetry that adorns the Feast of the Nativity. These are but accidentals—and although Francis by no means despised them, neither did he center his devotion on them. What he really experienced, and what he wanted to see and hear and even to feel with his bodily senses, as one overwhelming fact, so simple yet so incomprehensible: God became man, God took upon himself the weakness of our flesh, was born a helpless child,

grew up like one of us, dwelt among us, spent his life doing good us, and finally sacrificed himself on the Cross for us. It was this fact as Francis repeated in the words of Saint Paul and Saint John (*Admonitiones*, 1.), that the Father who dwells in inaccessible light who cannot be seen by man, nevertheless made himself visible among us. *Philip said to him: 'Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.'* *Jesus said to him: 'Have I been so long a time with you and you have not learned who I am? Philip, whoever sees me, sees my Father.'*

Why did the Father leave his inaccessible light to manifest himself, to show us his love? Indeed, why does he love us at all? From the human point of view, we are utterly unworthy of any love, much less of the love of our Creator against whom we are in constant rebellion. Truly, no man can understand this love of God for us, it is simply beyond human comprehension. God certainly has no need of us poor miserable creatures. He is total bliss, he is eternal joy, abundant delight, supreme satisfaction and rest—all in himself. What need can he have of our poor love? Nevertheless it is a revealing truth that God does love us, that he wants others to love with him—*vult alios condiligentes*, as Scotus expressed it. He loves us as a human father could ever love, for he gave himself to us in his only begotten Son, clothed him in our flesh, humbled him to our lowliness, and made him our brother that in him we might be made his children. And all this for us, contemptible wretches that we are who have turned away from our good Father, who have gone our own way, despising him who made us, preferring our own little man-made gods and idols.

It was this mystery of God's love in Incarnation, this incomprehensible—humanly speaking, impossible—love of our Father in heaven, that touched the heart of Francis. How great must be the love of such a Father, to give us his only Son as our brother. How humble and meek must be the Son of God, who did not disdain to become our equal. With headlong exultation Francis cried out: "O how glorious, holy, and great it is to have a Father in heaven! . . . O how holy and dear, how well-pleasing and humble, how peaceful and sweet and amiable and desirable above all things is it to have such a Brother!" (*Letter to All the Faithful*, 12).

## 2. Christ Is Our Truth

Once Saint Francis understood with the simplicity of his soul this overwhelming truth of Christ's Incarnation, it wrought a complete change in his mind and heart. It effected in him a true *metanoia*. This truth struck his soul like a bolt of lightning and in its wake he heard the thunder of the Word, saying: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is near. Do penance* (Mk. 1:15).

Thus Saint Francis became the penitent of the Incarnate Word. How completely had he once filled his mind and his heart with the things of this world. How greatly had he cherished earthly ideals and honors. How much had he enjoyed the glamor and gaiety of the world. Even his generosity had been more or less guided by human considerations. Of course he had been a believing Christian, firmly rooted in the Faith; but religion had been more or less an accidental thing in his life; it had been a comfort to him, as long as it did not demand too much. But how he had filled his life with dreams of earthly fame and glory! Then came the realization of Christ's Incarnation. The Eternal Word, the Son of God, God from God, Light from Light, through whom all things were made, deigned to become our brother solely for the purpose of winning our love and binding our hearts close to his. This tremendous truth, crashing through the mind of Francis, shattered his pretty dreams of worldly glory and left his heart bereft of all earthly desires. With an ardent heart and an eager mind he then set about unlearning the past and learning the new things of the Good Tidings. Celano tells us: "In untiring meditation he pondered the words of the Incarnate Word and in penetrating contemplation considered his deeds" (*Vita* I, 84). "Above all his mind was filled with the humility of the Incarnation and the love of the Passion of Christ, so much that he could hardly think of anything else." (*Ibid.*).

Thus our Seraphic Father found his ideal, the life of Christ, the *vita Evangelii*. He was filled with Christ who is the Wisdom of the Father. Christ, therefore, the Son of God clothed in our humanity, the Word that dwelt among us, is the ideal of every Franciscan in a special sense. We have not yet done that penance that characterized the penitents of Assisi if we are not truly filled with the words and

deeds of the Incarnate God. This lack, if we are aware of it in ourselves, will not be remedied by any sentimental devotion to the Child Jesus nor to the Passion of Christ, nor to the Sacred Heart (the truly Franciscan form of spirituality which unfortunately has been reduced to the empty emotionalism expressed in so many sentimental prayers and mawkish pictures). It is rather for us to find the true Christ, the Christ of the Gospel; we must find him in his own words and actions, as he actually was, according to the testimony of the Evangelists, and not as he appears in our emotional dreams, must he enter our mind and heart. The Evangelical life must become our ideal, our food, our very life..

Let us be honest. There are so many meditation books in this world, many of them in English. There are also many so-called Franciscan meditation books. To be sure, none of them contain anything against faith and morals. But how many of them contain the Christ of the Gospels? Much of the misery we suffer through the prescribed daily meditation, much of the time wasted in reading or listening to human words rather than to the Word of God, could be remedied if we could find our way back to the Christ of the Evangelists. There is no better meditation book for a Franciscan than Sacred Scripture. Saint Francis needed no other book. Why cannot we make the Scriptures our meditation books as well? But we must read as Francis read. We must meditate on this holy Book with a penitent heart, that is, with a heart that longs to be filled with the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word. And that means we must meditate with the heart and mind of a lover. What we read in Sacred Scripture must be so dear to us, so precious, that it will cause us to sell everything we have and are, all the faculties and powers of our body and soul, to gain him who is our only Treasure. Such meditation requires no theological training, no specialized education; but it does require a loving heart and an eager mind. We must approach the Gospel with the simplicity of our Seraphic Father; then our meditation will bear abundant fruit.

Perhaps some of us, as we begin to grow wiser in the way of Franciscan living, wonder why better training was not given to us when we were young. We look back across the years and feel somehow that they were wasted. How much more fruitful our religious life could have been if we had been taught right from the start how

to find and follow Christ according to our Franciscan vocation. Such feelings are natural, and perhaps not entirely unjustified. But let us not blame others for what they omitted; it behooves us rather to begin now to fill our mind and heart with the Incarnate Word. Let us begin to do the true penance of the Gospel and forget all other things; for us but one thing is necessary—to know Christ and him crucified. He is our way, our truth, and our life.

### 3. Christ Is Our Form of Life

It would not be enough only to read the Gospel and to meditate on the words and actions of Christ. Our Seraphic Father knew that quite well. He had read the Scriptures avidly; he was filled with Christ; he so loved to meditate on the Gospels that once he tore apart a copy and distributed the sacred pages among his brethren so that each one might read a little. Yet we know that at the end of his life Francis refused to read any more because he felt bitterly how far short he had fallen from doing all that he had read. Mere reading and meditating is not the end; our life in Christ is the end. If the Franciscan finds his ideal in the Gospel, in the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word, he finds his life in the practice of this ideal. The penitents from Assisi preached the Gospel not so much by their words as by their lives. And so it must be for every true Franciscan; his life is to be the *imitatio Christi*, the representing of Christ or the re-living of Christ. It is Christ brought down from the world of words and ideals to the world of actual human society. There is no other Order in the Church that has this special task of living the Christ of the Gospel in the most literal sense. For this reason the Popes have expected, and still expect, so much from the Franciscan movement, especially in our times when society is torn between capitalism and communism, and has been poisoned with the deadly poison of a secularism that has placed millions of people beyond any need of religion. Against this background of a money-mad world, we Franciscans have to live the poverty of Christ; against the background of a world torn by social strife and unrest, deadened soulless relief action and legislation, we must live the simplicity of Christ and his selfless, humble charity—charity open to all and radically cutting through the boundaries of race and nation and religion; charity that never asks how worthy a person may be, but how needy he is. We

Franciscans have to live the Gospel message of Christ our brother who made us children of the Father. We have to show to this world of ours that is so wise, that has planned everything so cleverly, insured us against practically every mishap, and is nevertheless at the very hour being shaken to its deepest foundations—to this world we have to show the Gospel of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air which are the special concern of the Father in heaven. And we must not only preach the Gospel, we must first live it. This is a grave obligation, as grave as the obligation to re-live the life of Christ.

In the coming conferences we will go deeper into this. Here only a few hints must suffice. There is, however, another aspect of the life of the Gospel as the ideal of Saint Francis that needs a word of clarification. If Christ, radically re-lived in our own time, is the essence of the Franciscan ideal, then our life cannot be a mechanical routine prescribed by a legal machinery. Christ, whose every step was guided by the will of the Father, who lived the example of humble obedience, uttered his devastating "woes" one after the other against the Pharisees' external observances of man-made regulations (cf. Matt. 23). Not less in danger of Christ's condemnation will be the rigid exterior practice of certain exercises or an exact observance of the Rule and constitutions, held up as the fulfillment of the Franciscan ideal. We are not imitating a book, we are following Christ. He has not asked us to observe the Law; he presupposes that we are observing it; and he was pleased when he heard from the young man who wished to follow him that he had observed it from his youth. But Christ expects much more from us. He demands that we give everything, always, and follow him everywhere—the *sequi vestigia Christi*—in every respect; he expects that we re-live him and re-present him to our own age.

Hence the Franciscan way of life is not so much an observance of certain regulations as it is a forming, or rather a transformation into the life of the beloved Master who is our brother. For us, therefore, there cannot be any question of what is prescribed or not prescribed, of what may be allowed or forbidden, of what is mortal and what venial sin. Such casuistry was against the very heart of Francis. He wanted his ideal, as laid down in the Rule, to be understood simply and glossa: "And I strictly command all my brothers, both clerical and lay, in obedience, not to put glosses on the Rule nor on these words

saying: They are to be understood thus. But, just as the Lord has given to me to speak and write the Rule and these words simply and purely, thus simply and purely are you to understand them and with holy practice to observe them to the last" (Testament, 10). As life is destroyed when it is analyzed and separated into parts, so an ideal is killed when it is codified and restricted to precepts. Saint Francis was aware of this, and it seems to be true, as has been pointed out by historians, that it was perhaps the greatest sacrifice of his life when he had to write his Rule—not so much the first Rule, which was more or less a compilation of Gospel texts, but the final official Rule, where he had to submit his ideal to the judgment of an experienced canonist and was forced to press it into legal formulas.

We should learn from this at least that we must not restrict our ideal and life to that which is laid down in legal documents. Every Franciscan worthy of the name will be a faithful and loving observer of the Rule and Constitutions; but he will never be satisfied with that. His real Rule and his final and ultimate regulations will come from the life and words of the Incarnate God himself. There he will find the impetus to realize daily life in poverty, chastity, and obedience, in patience charity and humility.

But all this must come from a grateful and enthusiastic heart. It is love, it is gratitude, and as such it is true penance, that turns our heart and our whole life away from ourselves and toward the One who is our Way, our Truth, and our Life.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## MOTHER MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA

FOUNDRESS OF THE FELICIAN SISTERS  
(Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix)<sup>1</sup>

### I. The Portrait

Sophia Truskowska was born on May 16, 1825, in Kalisz, Poland, then under Russian rule.<sup>2</sup> Her father, Joseph Truskowski, was a lawyer trained at the University of Warsaw. Her mother, the former Josephine

<sup>1</sup>Official name: Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, Third Order of St. Francis.

<sup>2</sup>Main sources for this biographical sketch are S. Maria Bronisława Dmowska, *felicjanka, Matka Maria Angela Truskowska, Założycielka Sióstr Felicjanek*, 1825-

Rudzinska, educated by the Visitandines, was a God-fearing woman whose main interest lay in the virtuous upbringing of her four girls and three boys.

The deeply cultural and religious atmosphere of the Truskowski home exerted the first beneficial influence on young Sophia. Her soul further matured and mellowed under the private tutorship of Mrs. Anastasia Kotowicz and later during her four years of training at Madame Leumann's exclusive private school in Warsaw, whither the family had moved in 1837. Also influential in the growth of her inner life were the wise spiritual directors to whose guidance she showed unfailing docility ever since her adolescent years.

Sophia, eldest of the Truskowski children, though not externally attractive, was richly endowed with gifts of mind and heart. Her rather severe and melancholic features were compensated for by keen intelligence, genuine piety, and tender sensitivity to the needs of others.

But she had her faults and weaknesses, too. Impulsive of temperament, she would once be domineering and impatient and at other times diffident and secretive. In her spiritual life she was frequently given to fears and to exaggerated self-analysis. Yet despite frequent emotional disturbances and bitter interior trials, she steadily trod the path of God's Will.

Sophia was attracted to religious life from early childhood. A year's stay in the Swiss Alps for her health further intensified her desire for solitude and contemplation. She frequently spoke of religious life with her cousin Clothilda Ciechanowska, who also longed to dedicate her life to God. The thought crystallized in Sophia's mind during long hours of prayer before the tabernacle and in the quiet of her room.

Finally convinced that she was called to the contemplative life, she determined to enter the Visitandines. Her plans were crossed by the illness of her father, whom she had to accompany to the mineral springs of Salzbrunn. On their return trip they visited the cathedral of Cologne where in silent prayer Sophia understood that God was not calling her to the Visitandines—yet where, she did not know.

Back in Warsaw, Sophia now in her twenties enrolled in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, where she could satisfy her growing desire to do good to others. Her days were spent in visiting the poor and sick in the

1899 (*Mother Mary Angela Truskowska, Foundress of the Felician Sisters* (Buffalo, 1949) and *Historja Zgromadzenia SS. Felicjanek na Podsta Rekopisow (History of the Congregation of the Felician Sisters Based on Manuscripts)*, (Krakow, 1924, 1929, 1932), Czesc I, II, III.

homes, to whom she brought renewed hope as she ministered to their needs. On her daily errands of mercy through the poorer districts of the city, she became painfully aware of the sad plight of orphaned and neglected children whom she met so often in the street. She realized that these children would be lost for God unless they were withdrawn from bad companionship and given the religious and moral training which their homes could not provide.

After fervent prayer and deliberation, encouraged by the president of the Society and aided materially by her father, Sophia gathered a number of the poorest children and provided for them a rented two-room flat in Warsaw. During the day she instructed them in religion and in the common branches of knowledge and attended to their needs; for the night she entrusted them to the care of an elderly woman. Sophia's cousin Clothilda soon joined her in this work of charity. Thus in 1854 came into existence the "Institute of Miss Truskowska."

When the Institute was transferred to larger quarters the following year, Sophia and Clothilda decided to leave their homes and to live permanently with their charges. On November 21, 1855, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the two young women, kneeling before an image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, solemnly dedicated themselves to Her service. This is considered the founding date of the new religious community. Soon a number of other young women joined the charitable undertaking.

The provincial superior of the Warsaw Capuchins, Father Benjamin Szymanski, observed this growing group of women with keen interest. Knowing of their desire to lead a life consecrated to God, he undertook the task of formally organizing them into a religious congregation. After having obtained the necessary ecclesiastical approval, he appointed one of the friars, Father Honorat Kozlowski, to be the director of the young community and to guide its formation. Father Honorat thus became the co-founder of this new religious family.

After a year's trial of communal life, the first ten novices were invested with the Franciscan habit on April 10, 1857. Sophia Truskowska became hereafter known as Sister Felicia.

The sisters gave no thought to the naming of their Congregation. They were called the Sisters of St. Felix or briefly the Felician Sisters, by the interested inhabitants of Warsaw who, frequently saw them praying with the orphans at the altar of St. Felix of Cantalice in the Capuchin church. The sisters accepted the patronage and adopted St. Felix as their patron. They were especially fortunate in this choice, as St. Felix, a six-

teenth century Italian Capuchin, was considered the special patron children.

During the first years, Mother Angela declined the office of superior in the Congregation. She remained only the directress of the Institute, which capacity she revealed remarkable pedagogical ability and special aptitude for organization.

In 1858, however, through obedience she accepted the duties of superior general and mistress of novices. With the aid of Father Honorat she now began to mold the spirit of her young Congregation. She trained her daughters in Franciscan humility, poverty, and seraphic love, stressing self-denial and obedience so necessary for the life of prayer and active charity. The external activities of the Congregation also expanded at this time beyond the confines of the Institute. The sisters began to undertake social work, teaching, and catechetical instruction both in the city and in rural districts.

At the urgent request of many sisters, a strictly contemplative group was formed with the Congregation. On October 4, 1860, the twelve sisters chosen by ballot were solemnly enclosed and began an austere life of prayer and penance according to the primitive rule of St. Clare. In obedience to Father Honorat, Mother Angela spent two years in the cloister, then returned to active life as superior general of both choirs: the contemplative and the active.

The young Congregation wanted the firm hands of its Mother, for it was to live through trying times. In the year 1863, marked by the blood of insurrectionists, the Felician Sisters opened their institutions at rural centers to wounded soldiers, making no discrimination between their countrymen and enemies. This participation in the patriotic movement served as a pretext for the suppression of the Congregation by the Russian government on December 17, 1864.<sup>8</sup> The cloistered sisters were transported to the Bernardine convent in Lowicz, while the others were ordered to remove their religious garb and to return to their families.

Outwardly the Congregation did not exist. Yet, like the crucifixion of which it was part, it lived in spirit. The disbanded sisters lived the life of the catacombs, gathering for community prayers whenever possible and performing works of mercy in obedience to Father Honorat and to Mother Magdalen Borowska, whom he appointed as superior of the active group. The spiritual vitality of this "underground" congregation

<sup>8</sup>S. Maria Bonawentura Szlezek, *felicjanka, Początki Zgromadzenia Sióstr Felicjanek (The Beginnings of the Congregation of the Felician Sisters)*, (Unpublished M. A. thesis, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, 1951), 153.

clearly manifested itself, when in 1865 the novices that were invested the preceding year came to Warsaw and secretly made their first profession.

Mother Angela, who had accompanied the cloistered choir, stood bravely beneath the cross and sustained her daughters in loving submission to God's Will. But her heart was transfixed with pain. Her moral suffering was so great that it undermined her health, leaving permanent effects.

In this dark night of sorrow a new hope dawned on September 8, 1865, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Late in the evening of that day Mother Angela was notified that, through the intervention of Bishop Galecki, the Ordinary of Krakow, the Austrian Emperor had granted permission for the establishment of the Congregation in Austrian Poland, where the sisters were already conducting a nursery. Although Mother Angela had to remain yet for some time in Lowicz because of ill health, she summoned the sisters from all parts of Russian Poland, ordering them to gather in Krakow.<sup>4</sup> On November 21, 1865, the first Mass was celebrated in the provisional motherhouse in Krakow, thus marking the date of the second founding.

When her health had improved somewhat, Mother Angela set out for Krakow in May 1866.<sup>5</sup> Once again as superior general she shouldered the burden of reestablishing the Congregation. Nurseries, orphanages, and schools were soon entrusted to the sisters, and new vocations swelled the numbers of the community. In the meantime, Father Honorat had begun to formulate the constitutions and was submitting them in parts to the sisters for their criticism and suggestions. On November 21, 1868, Mother Angela made the profession of her perpetual vows, the first in the Congregation to do so.

<sup>4</sup>Several sisters remained in Russian Poland and under the direction of Father Honorat continued to lead their religious life though dressed as seculars (*skrytki*). They taught catechism to children, directed tertiary groups and other religious organizations and performed works of mercy. Outstanding among these hidden Felician Sisters was Mother Elizabeth Stummer, who remained in Russian Poland until her death in 1902. Cf. *Ojciec Honorat z Białej Kapucyn (Father Honorat, Capuchin from Biala)*, (Warszawa, 1938), 214-20.

<sup>5</sup>The cloistered sisters remained in Lowicz until 1871. In that year they moved to Przasnysz, where the only house of the Order exists today. Known as the Capuchin Sisters of St. Clare, they maintain contact with the Felician Sisters, whom they consider as their "elder sisters," since both choirs claim Mother Angela and Father Honorat as their founders. Cf. S. Maria Bronisława, *op. cit.*, 285-9; also Letters of the Capuchin Sisters to Mother Mary Simplicita, superior general of the Felician Sisters, dated November 6, 1952. Archives of the General Motherhouse.

Aware that her ever-growing deafness and general ill health handicapping her efficiency, Mother Angela begged to be relieved of duties of superior in 1869. These last thirty years she had led a hidden life, leaving an eloquent example of the virtues which she most desired to see in her daughters. She conceived it to be her mission "to pray for the sanctification of the Congregation that it might fulfill God's desire and to entrust it unceasingly to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary."<sup>6</sup>

She spent her days in the choir at prayer, or in the garden tending flowers for the altar, or in the community workroom sewing church vestments. Her humility prompted her never to interfere with the government of the Congregation which she founded. But with the prayerful interest of a true mother she followed all the events of the subsequent years, of which these especially gladdened her heart: the decree of commendation issued by the Holy See on June 1, 1874; the opening of the first mission in America on November 21, 1874; the privilege of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Krakow motherhouse chapel granted in 1881 or 1882<sup>7</sup>; and the decree of final approval of the Congregation with a temporary approval of its Constitutions, issued July 1899.<sup>8</sup>

Mother Angela's days were drawing to an end. The illness, diagnosed finally as internal cancer, had been progressing steadily and confined her to the infirmary in the summer of 1899. Physical pain was augmented by inner desolation, but Mother Angela suffered in silence, pressing the crucifix of her rosary to her heart. The holocaust was complete. Tuesday, October 10, 1899, shortly before one o'clock in the morning she quietly breathed her last sigh and went to meet her God.

She who for thirty years was hidden from the eyes of all, now at death was honored by bishops, clergymen, sisters and seculars from all parts of Austrian Poland. By special permission her body was laid in the mortuary chapel at the motherhouse in Krakow. The governor of Galicia extended this unusual privilege to Mother Angela as to one "distinguished in the service of the country, because Her Congregation served the good of society in an exceptional way."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Letters of Mother Angela to Father Honorat, December 18, 1870, quoted in S. Maria Bronislawka, *op. cit.*, 182.

<sup>7</sup>Exact date uncertain. Cf. S. Maria Bronislawka, *op. cit.*, 200, 290, 322.

<sup>8</sup>The Constitutions were finally approved on March 22, 1907, and again on December 17, 1920, after revisions were made in accordance with the new Code of Canon Law.

<sup>9</sup>*Historja Zgromadzenia*, III, 386.

On October 28, 1949, fifty years after her death, the ecclesiastical authorities of Krakow initiated the informative process as the first step in the cause of her beatification. All persons knowing Mother Angela directly or indirectly were examined, her writing and letters were collected and scrutinized, and her body was publicly exhumed on May 23, 1950. This stage of the process was formally concluded on January 12, 1951.<sup>10</sup> The following January, despite many difficulties, the documents were transported to Rome where they have been committed to the Postulator of the cause by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

While we await the decision of the Holy See, the life and heroic struggles of this humble Servant of God can illumine our way toward peace and happiness. To those engaged in the apostolate of charity, Mother Angela carries a special message. By word and example she teaches that souls can be gained for Christ only by those who themselves seek intimate union with God. The good accomplished by Mother Angela through her own works of charity and those of the Congregation can be traced to the virtues which adorned her soul and which she impressed on her spiritual daughters.

The radiating and converging point of Mother Angela's spirituality was a very pronounced devotion to the Will of God. She conceived the whole of life as a service to this Divine Will. Continually referring to it in her letters and writings, the Foundress exhorted her daughters to cherish the least sign of loving conformity to God's Will above spiritual consolations and ecstasies.

From this fundamental concept flowed an all-embracing humility, which in the life of Mother Angela reached the very depth of self-annihilation before God and men. The spiritual edifice of the Congregation likewise rested on this bedrock. It took genuine humility, especially for the first members recruited mainly from the Polish aristocracy, to minister to the simple peasant or the neglected child.

Flourishing from the roots of humility was obedience, the virtue most dearly prized by Mother Angela, because of its direct relationship to God's Will. She kept her own dominating personality under reserved obedience to her spiritual director through a special vow. Unquestioning obedience, too, she demanded of her daughters and considered it a test of fitness for life in the Congregation. She did not destroy initiative but required that individuality be expressed within the frame of obedience.

Clearly and ever more painfully feeling her insufficiency, Mother

<sup>10</sup>The informative process in the cause of beatification of Father Honorat Kozminski, co-founder of the Felician Sisters, was also concluded that very same day in Warsaw.



Angela leaned on God in prayer. This need of communion with God is seen in her early desire of contemplative life, a disposition that found an echo in her first spiritual daughters and created the cloister. How jealously she guarded the prayer life of the active sisters is seen from her repeated warnings that spiritual exercises, especially mental prayer, should never be neglected because of work.

But on the other hand, she regarded an exaggerated desire for the contemplative life as a temptation. The Felician Sister was to lead a mixed life of contemplation and action. Intimate converse with God was to overflow into active charity embracing the poor, the infirm, the little ones, and the morally derelict—that all might be won for Christ.

To many sisters in these formative years—and even later—the sacrifices imposed by a life dedicated to charity were a greater death to self than the austere penances of the cloister. Hence arose the need of continual self-abnegation, which both Mother Angela and Father Honorat considered as the distinctive feature of Felician asceticism. The sisters were to maintain a holy indifference to the place or the type of work assigned, ready to suffer privation, strenuous physical exertion, uncongenial surroundings, and wearying responsibilities. At the continual service of others, they were to disregard their own comfort and their personal likes and dislikes.

However, this self-immolation was not to rest merely in humanitarian aims. It was to return to the source whence it came. The Felician Sister was to offer her life of sacrifice through the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Eucharistic Christ in loving reparation for the ingratitude of the world. This expiatory spirit, which was the outgrowth of Mother Angela's tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, became the specific characteristic of the Congregation.

Truly Franciscan in spirit through her burning love of God and neighbor and her desire of doing penance for the world, Mother Angela gave rise to a new vigorous branch of the Seraphic Order. Following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, the Felician Sisters were to help restore the Church of God in souls.

Death stilled the great heart of Mother Angela, but her charity proved stronger than death. Through more than 4,000 daughters in the Congregation of the Felician Sisters, Mother Angela lives on and continues her mission of doing good to the least of Christ's brethren.

## II. *Mother Angela's Influence In Poland*

The fruitfulness of Mother Angela's life and virtues is best manifested in the development of the Congregation which she founded.

In Poland, the Felician Sisters were the first religious community of women that added social action to a life of prayer and penance.<sup>11</sup> As such, they were especially fitted to answer the need of the times.

The policy of denationalization and progressive religious suppression that followed the Insurrection of 1830 resulted in general moral and religious laxity. Fortunately, some of the nation's noblest sons in exile and at home began to rouse slumbered consciences. They pleaded for action as a means of regeneration from within. The challenge was answered by a number of lay and religious groups that began initiating a variety of projects for the intellectual, social, and religious rebirth of the nation.

One sublime expression of this spiritual awakening was the founding of the Congregation of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Rome. In Poland the Capuchin Friars made renewed efforts to revive religious fervor, especially through tertiary groups. Outstanding among the lay ventures was the charitable activity of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

It was in the midst of these crosscurrents of indifference and of spiritual renaissance that the Congregation of the Felician Sisters arose, clearly a product of its times. Flowering from the soul of Sophia Truszkowska, who was both a Franciscan tertiary and a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, it was only natural that the Congregation should blend active charity with intense spirituality.

The subsequent history of the Felician Sisters in Poland shows how Mother Angela contributed to the religious and social regeneration of her country.

First, it must be observed that the early activities of the sisters exhibited several specific characteristics, which in their historical development molded the physiognomy of the Congregation and determined the scope of its influence.

Worthy of note is the fact that even though charitable work among neglected children and aged women gave rise to the Congregation, the Foundress and the first sisters considered educational and religious training as indispensable for social and moral reform. Next, there was ever the Franciscan preference for service to the poor and the underprivileged together with a readiness to undertake difficult and thankless tasks refused by others. Finally, even though the sisters worked primarily among the Poles, they also extended their mercy to different national groups.

The entire future apostolate of the Felician Sisters can be traced to the activities of the Congregation prior to its suppression in 1864. Not

<sup>11</sup>S. Maria Bronislawa, *op. cit.*, 36.



having its scope of activity yet limited by the Holy See, the young Congregation undertook all types of works prompted by the zeal of its members or suggested by ecclesiastical authorities and patriotic lay groups.

In the first motherhouse in Warsaw, the sisters conducted an orphanage for girls, a home for aged women, and a forty-bed hospital.<sup>12</sup> Combined with the Institute was a school for the orphans and for day students from poorer families. Girls from six to ten years of age were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism, and bible history. Those in the older group, from ten to fifteen, were trained in household tasks and later placed in wealthier homes as domestic servants. In this manner the sisters provided the girls with a means of livelihood and prepared scores of Christian servants.

In 1857 the sisters were entrusted with the direction of the Franciscan Third Order Secular for women. Trained in the faithful observance of the rule, the tertiaries contributed greatly to the renewal of religious fervor among the laity of all classes. Alongside the names of humble servants and seamstresses, the first registries list teachers, public officials, and even women from the aristocracy, such as, Countesses Zamoyska, Lubinska, and Potocka.

Added in 1859 to the activities of the motherhouse was a catechumenate for Jewish girls and those of other religious denominations desiring instruction in the Catholic faith.

The sisters also undertook the care of two other institutions in the city: a convalescent home for poor women and a Magdalen asylum for delinquent girls and fallen women. In addition to these works of mercy, the sisters directed various religious organizations, conducted retreats for women, prepared children and adults for the reception of the Sacraments, visited the sick and the poor in their homes, and brought consolation to the imprisoned.

This wide range of activities was confined to the city of Warsaw until 1859 when the Agricultural Society requested the sisters to undertake work among peasants.

Sister Mary Tullia Doman, C.S.S.F.  
(to be continued)

<sup>12</sup>"Klasztor Sióstr św. Feliksa," *Dziennik Warszawski* ("The Convent of the Sisters of St. Felix," *Warsaw Daily*), (Nr. 12, 5 (17) stycznia, 1865), 107-8, quoted in S. Maria Bronisława, *op. cit.*, 271

## ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Father Augustine Sepinski, member of the Province of St. Paschal, Minister General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, and humble servant in the Lord—  
To the Very Reverend Delegates General, Ministers Provincial, Independent Custodies, Superiors of Mission, all Religious, Sisters and members of the Third Order, and to any others subject to Our care anywhere on the earth serving the Lord piously under the Immaculate Patroness—  
health, peace and the plenitude of all consolation in the Holy Spirit.

Dearly beloved sons in the Lord, and  
most dear daughters:

On the occasion of the blessed ending of the Marian Year, a year dignified by the loving kindness and the name of the Immaculate Mary, the sparkling dawns of which daily clothed the sky with royal purple, the heart of your Father is moved with overpowering joy, viewing the happy spectacle of his sons coming with joyfulness carrying their copious sheaves, the glorious results of his encouragement last year on December 8th, when he urged them to run to the odor of the sweet ointments of the Mystic Lily, that they might gather the best fruits from the garden of her who calls, saying: *I have brought forth the fruit of honor and riches; come to me, be filled with the fruits of the spirit which are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, meekness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity* (Ecclus. 24; 23-26; Gal. 5; 22-23).

Therefore, Our heart rejoices greatly to see our children who in so many places and in so many ways approached that enclosed garden where the everlasting and beautiful olive flourishes, where the cypress stands erect, where the cedar spreads out its branches and the elm tree abounds with foliage, where the cinnamon, the rose, and the lily send forth their sweet odor. What pen, or what voice or tongue, could recount the fruitful results obtained during the Marian Year concerning the Immaculate Virgin, from so many manifestations and lasting monuments of piety and love, of devotion, doctrine, and art? Filled with happiness, we note that the Friars Minor used watchful and filial care, lest in any assemblage of the faithful they be given second place in a study which certainly should inflame militant Christians to venerate the Queen of the heavens and the universe, the Queen beautiful without sin.

Among the innumerable manifestations of piety and doctrine which the members of our illustrious Order everywhere on the earth diligently celebrated during the Marian Year, it would be fitting to recall those at least at which We, not without great happiness and joy, were present namely:

- 1) the National Franciscan Convention, held in California in May;
- 2) the academic convocation at the University of Cologne on July 4th, in honor of the Subtle Marian Doctor, and the translation of his relics to the crypt of our conventual church at which His Eminence Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, presided;
- 3) the solemn pilgrimages of the General Curia, of our International College of Saint Anthony, as well as of all the other convents in Rome twice accomplished devoutly and in common, to Saint Mary Major; at one of which, on November 8, 1954, with an excessively large crowd of Friars present, the renowned Protector of our Order, His Eminence Clement Cardinal Micara deigned to be present and to graciously deliver an allocution, making the day doubly auspicious;
- 4) the International Mariological Convention held at Rome, October 24 to November 1, 1954, which was promoted, arranged, and regulated by our own International Marian Academy, to the very great approval and joy of all present; this group, also at Rome, prepared and ordered the exhibition of a Marian book, as well as of pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary, both of which are outstanding artistically.

The Immaculate Virgin, our most sweet Mother, to whom the Redeemer Himself, dying on the cross, gave the guardianship of his children as a last will and testament, is always present with us. Even though the Marian Year is closed, she has established a certain more binding intimacy and loving association with us, because she has called forth a voice, and she has given us a gift as well. She has spoken through the mouth of her Son's Vicar, to whom she committed the gift, for surely the Encyclical Letter on Holy Virginity should be accepted as a Marian gift, given as glad tidings on the feast when peace and joy were announced to all the world by the Angel Gabriel.

But now, most dear Sons and Daughters, if perchance anyone should ask Us in what one manner above all others it would be fitting to honor worthily our most pure heavenly Mother; on that to spend every care and industry in order to imitate her every word more closely; if anyone would seek from Us a word which would contain as it were the essence of Our exhortation on this solemn festival of the Immaculate Virgin,

Patroness of our Order, at the happy ending of the Marian Year, we certainly think that our Priests, Religious and every servant in the Seraphic Family should be incited and encouraged, before all other things, to study her beautiful virtue.

\* \* \*

In the present condition of worldly matters, the disturbed and roving minds of men allow themselves to be easily carried away by dangerous opinions. Therefore, it is greatly to be lamented that, urged by the fervor of the dynamic activity peculiar to our times, opinions flourish which contend that some forms of life, e.g., the celibate and continent lives of Priests and Religious, have become superfluous and no longer harmonize with the demands of modern living. Almost daily, it is loudly proclaimed that nowadays above all there is need of action, that one must be continuously free for action, without the impediments of celibacy and continence which like iron fetters hinder the progress of men in the universe. We, however, thinking with the Church and cleaving to the doctrine of the Apostle who, as we have mentioned above, concluded his enumeration of the gifts of the Spirit with continence and chastity, unwaveringly proclaim that chastity can most efficaciously advance one's own perfection and that of others.

*Brethren, let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God.* (I Cor. 7:24). Two years ago, on the 26th of October, 1952, on the Feast of Christ the King, reviewing some suggestions and exhortations with paternal care in a letter reserved to our Priests, we loudly complained of the misleading and variant pretexts by which petitions for obtaining secularization or reduction to the lay state were accustomed to be justified. Nor are there lacking, others, even outside of those who had recourse to the Apostolic See, who heaped up reasons attractive to listen to, concerning the impossibility of the virginal or continent state from a psychological or hygienic standpoint, or concerning the uselessness or rather the impediment of the celibacy in carrying out the duties of the apostolate, in helping to solve the social problems or in applying himself usefully to the sciences and various burdens of the ministry. Opinions are spread about far and wide which aver that it is scarcely possible to preserve constant virginity, that chastity everywhere impedes a person from becoming complete and absolute, that married persons show a more effective skill in the work of the Lord's vineyard than the unmarried. Other opinions of this same type are foolishly preached, as is suffi-

ciently evident, under the guise of a pseudo-pedagogy, a pseudo-science, and a pseudo-apostolate.

Now under the guidance and tutelage of experience, it is obvious that minds which are disturbed by erroneous opinions are drawn to a true knowledge of religious and civil wisdom by a life fragrant with the odor of virginity.

If we have become a spectacle to the world, if we draw the admiration of all upon ourselves, it is beyond doubt because of the life we lead, so opposed as it is to worldly enticements. The people, seeing us, voluntarily say to themselves: "O most admirable man, who although living in the flesh, walks in the spirit, thoroughly hating whatever would stain his life" (Office of Saint Peter of Alcantara, October 19). Nor is such praise untrue, or such commendation vain; otherwise, what is the reason for their frequent greetings in public, for their very devout kissing of our hand or of our holy habit, for their demonstrations of love and good-will toward persons consecrated to God and separated from other men by the bond of chastity, if not that such men, though dwelling on earth, live a life that is almost angelic? Dearly beloved Fathers and Brothers, most dear Sons and Daughters, are not these most fitting and pertinent words of the Seraphic Doctor Saint Bonaventure of great help to you: "Through virginity, the soul becomes as it were the friend and sister and spouse of Christ, and in a certain manner the mother of Christ?"<sup>1</sup>

Well advised, therefore, by the best of helpers, we considered that it would be an excellent thing to carefully publish the Marian gift above praised, that is, the Apostolic Encyclical *On Sacred Virginity*, in such a way that we might, though briefly, offer you the essence of that encyclical for reflection. We have already manifested our mind somewhat in the reserved letter already mentioned; we now repeat this important pronouncement of the Vatican in such a way that you would be permitted to contemplate, as though catalogued, not only the infallible truth, the evident importance and the gravity of the ideas and words, but the dissolution of errors and the explanation of objections as well, and the representation of virginity which, in that Encyclical, our Holy Father has skillfully designed. If you will peruse that sketch, you will certainly express disapproval of a negligent and dissolute life, and on the other hand, you will love more and more deeply the chaste life. "Holy virginity, and that perfect chastity which has been consecrated to divine service, is without doubt accounted as the most precious treasure which the

<sup>1</sup>*De perf. ev.*, qu. III, art. 3, ad 9, vol. V, p. 179.

Founder of the Church left as an inheritance to the society he established."<sup>2</sup>

After reviewing praises of virgins, found among pagans and the peoples of antiquity, the Holy Father goes on to say that because the Fathers proclaimed the glory and merit of virginity, "it should be an invitation, a support and a help for all to persevere immovably in their offered sacrifice;" for indeed it is on perfect chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven that "one of the three vows in which the religious state consists, is based."<sup>3</sup>

From the very lips of her Divine Spouse Himself, the Church draws her doctrine concerning the excellence of virginity and the preeminence of this angelic virtue over matrimony. Therefore, it is proper to acknowledge the following rich fruits:

- 1) it gives freedom from the various anxieties which beset married people, and the many grave obligations and duties which burden them; and this is confirmed by examples of abundant good works in the lives of the Saints;
- 2) it offers a pleasure which is consecrated in the satisfactions of spiritual life, for the use of matrimony draws the mind back from being completely absorbed in the service of God;
- 3) it renders the dispensers of holy things more worthy and more fit for serving the altar and for carrying out their apostolic obligations;
- 4) by infinitely extending the duty of paternal care and increasing it immeasurably, it encourages one to help a neighbor encumbered by many urgent needs and suffering great infirmities, while the father of a family very often can concern himself only with his own circumstances;
- 5) moreover, it fosters fervent supplications and prayers, day and night, for the salvation and for the good of others; it urges one to tolerate inconveniences willingly for the same reason; it instills a spiritual strength in souls which can lead one even to martyrdom if need be, as is clearly demonstrated by the multitude of virgins from the time of Agnes of Rome to the Twentieth Century Agnes, Maria Goretti;
- 6) finally, virginity, which is fittingly called angelic, produces the richest fruits, for not only among those who are good, but also amongst those who are entangled in sordidness of vices, virginity diffuses a certain desire, or as it were a yearning, to imitate the better gifts, gifts which elevate the soul, which shape one's course toward true calmness, which look up to the stars of heaven, gifts which give beforehand a taste of the happiness which surpasses sense.

<sup>2</sup>*A.A.S.*, vol. XLVI (1954), p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163.

The Vicar of Christ has deigned to publish, to review and to censure various errors which are circulated under the masked appearance of truth, errors which We also have previously examined briefly, e.g., the error concerning the natural instinct for not being confined so that a balance might be preserved in the unfolding and development of life; or the error which considers matrimony as the only means of fostering the natural development and completion of the human person, so much so that it is to be preferred to virginity; the error concerning the mutual help which is considered to aid married persons in attaining some measure of sanctity, as opposed to the difficulties of solitary life which are supposed to vex virgins and celibates in both heart and body; or the error concerning the harm done to society in being deprived of good men, because as it is foolishly said they cannot be of any use to society who being separated from it and having an aversion to matrimony, lead a completely egotistical life.<sup>4</sup> But immediately He detected and reproved the pernicious "error of those who in turning young men away from Seminaries and young women from religious Institutes, attempt to inculcate in their minds the thought that the Church needs more the help and the profession of Christian virtue of those who in matrimony lead a life in common with others in the world, than the virtues of priests and holy virgins who because of their vow of chastity, are as it were, separated from human society."<sup>5</sup>

Against all these false and erroneous teachings, the Holy Father opposes the teachings of the Holy Church concerning the use of reason and of grace to move the instincts and energies of nature, and concerning the blessings which as history shows are poured forth daily upon society by virgins and by the group of those who profess chastity. But on the other hand, because virginity is not necessary nor is it the only way to reach Christian perfection, it should be noted that God does not command all to embrace virginity; perfect chastity demands a free choice; the free gift of a holy vocation is given by the Father in heaven, an unceasing gift of the protection of divine grace. But because virginity is a difficult virtue involving a continual sacrifice, it demands strong souls of great nobility prepared to conform themselves to the image of Christ crucified by continuously struggling to become victorious over the devil of concupiscence.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, he proposes very effectual aids to preserve perfect chasti-

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 174-177.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

ty, which consist especially in a continuous watchfulness over the movements of the passions and the senses, and a voluntary strictness of life and chastisement of the body. Such would help us to realize that we should vigilantly guard against worldly allurements in order to flee from them according to our strength, rather than to control them by struggling against them. Indeed, it is necessary to take flight from such temptations; and those are just as mistaken who claim that "all Christians, especially the sacred ministers, should not be separated from the world but should be closely associated with the world,"<sup>7</sup> to test their chastity in order that it might be evident whether or not they have the ability to resist, and a solid clerical vocation. They would readily "allow the eyes to freely gaze on whatever is presented to them, to attend moving pictures, to carefully peruse even obscene periodicals, and to read amorous novels. But that is precisely the reason why a young cleric, because he must be educated in the spiritual life, and in religious and priestly perfection, should be separated from the tumult of the world before he goes out to do battle with it." Certainly, no gardener would expose to storms and tempests his choicest plants which are as yet weak, in order to try their strength. Therefore, the greatest prudence must be used in matters concerning chastity.<sup>8</sup>

In this matter of guarding virginity, Christian humility is worthy of great consideration since it is the best gift which descends from the Father of lights. Regarding this, the Seraphic Doctor says: "Do not think that virginity would please God without humility."<sup>9</sup> Yet such helps could be of scarcely any avail unless one made use of those means "which entirely surpass the powers of nature, namely sincere prayer to God, the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and fervent devotion toward the Most Holy Mother of God, the Queen of Virgins."<sup>10</sup>

It pleases us to mention these things again, briefly and prayerfully. That celebrated short statement of the Mellifluous Doctor Bernard comes to mind: "Everyone is considered perfect, in whose soul these three things seem to agreeably unite: that he know how to lament for himself, how to rejoice in God, and at the same time, how to be greatly helpful to his neighbors: pleasing to God, distrustful of self, useful to others."<sup>11</sup>

(to be continued)

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>9</sup>S. Bonav., *De perf. vit.*, II, 3, vol. VIII, p. 100. Cf.: "Virginitas mixta humilitati sicut gemma auro superaddita." *Ibid.*, II, 8, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup>A.A.S., I.c.; p. 187.

<sup>11</sup>S. Bern., *Serm. in Cant. Cant.*, LVII, 11; P.L. CLXXXIII, 1055a.

## THE SIXTH JOY—THE APPARITION OF OUR LORD TO HIS MOTHER AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

*But God raised him from the dead on the third day; and he was seen during many days by those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem; and they are now witnesses for him to the people. (Acts 13:30, 31)*

From the Seven Joys of Our Lady, the sixth beams forth as a radiant jewel of hope to her devotees. Hope is one of the most touching and beautiful of all the virtues; perhaps this stems from the fact that its contrary is so tragic, yet more likely its beauty flows from the Lily, Whose blossoming on Easter morn gave fullness to the lonely depths of anticipation that dwelt and dwells in the hearts of all this earth's wayfarers.

The Apparition of Our Lord to His Mother has been one of the most cherished memories of our Franciscan heritage. She whose heart was pierced on Calvary knew no such thing as desperation nor despair; rather she was filled with a holy sense of longing for her Son to return to her. The skeptic may question the silence of the Sacred Scriptures concerning the apparition—but then again the skeptic would question the veracity of the story even were it recorded in Holy Writ. We do know this—considering the awful immensity of the meeting of Rabboni and the Magdalene, there is little to wonder at in the reticence of the Sacred Writers to speak of the intimate reunion that took place between the Son and His Mother on Easter morn. From the Cross our dear Lord spoke: *Son, behold thy Mother*, to his beloved John—that is recorded; and yet there is something too tremendous in the logical Resurrection salutation: *Mother, behold thy Son*, to be shared. Perhaps that is why the Lord used the word *Woman* in addressing his Mother from the Cross when he committed all of us to her maternal arms in the person of Saint John.

Again, perhaps the Mother is not mentioned in the Scriptural account because it was she who stayed the blessed hope of all those who are mentioned as having seen the Lord. Could they have relied any less than we on her whom we invoke throughout her Litany

with paeans of holy hope: Star of the Sea—Health of the Sick—Refuge of Sinners—Help of Christians—Consolatrix of the Afflicted—Queen, that is, advocate to the King, for our whole Order, for all Franciscans. Saint Bonaventure tells us that with the Resurrection the most abject of women—the Mother of our sweet Lord Jesus, now becomes the Queen of the World,<sup>1</sup> and the loveliest vocation of our Queen is to obtain grace and mercy and pardon for us.

How glorious is the tradition of those who from apostolic times, even to the latest holy ones of our own Order, not to mention the Universal Church, who have held to the holy virtue of hope. Matthew, publican and petty politician, is made a disciple, for was not hope working in his soul when the Master murmured to him: *Follow me?* Paul, the silent and smug spectator at the stoning of Stephen becomes an Apostle, his conversion and conquests all inspired by holy hope, telling us to *regard the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation as we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to his, Christ's, promises*. The soldier at the crucifixion, so soon after the heinous deed performed, acknowledges *truly this was a just man*. The thief, with the flame of holy hope burning in his heavy heart, is prompted to plead salvation, and receives the divine pardon: *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. The Magdalene, infamous and rotten, is speared by the sword of holy hope, and becomes the special lover and the specially loved of Christ.<sup>2</sup> All of these, our glorious forebears, our brothers and sisters in Christ, had one special acquaintance, our Mother Mary, for we know from Scriptures that each of them at least saw her. We know some knew her well, some only saw her for a moment at the Cross, but just as we pray to her with confidence and trust, could one glance from the eyes of the most beautiful of all women have failed to impart a ray of supreme consolation to those who only trusted, that is hoped, in her and her Son?

This world carries its share of disappointments, trials, and tribulations for all who walk on it, and well do we speak of it as a "vale of tears" in the beautiful invocation with which we hail our Holy Queen, our Mother of Mercy, our Sweetness and our Hope, after

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *Opus X, Vitis Mystica, Additamentum VI* (VIII 227a)

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *Opus. II, Soliloquium, c. 1, n. 3* (VIII 38a).

morning Mass. We may desire many things on this earth and receive none, and it may be that we will never receive our wants, even our needs here; yet holy hope buoys us up to the fulfillment of all our desires in the world to come. Saint Bonaventure tells us this very succinctly.<sup>3</sup> He asks us to consider our earthly desires in the light of the eternal reward which we will purchase with holy hope. If you desire beauty, he says, consider that *the just will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. If you desire length of years, consider that *the just shall live forevermore*. If you long for health, consider that *the salvation of the just is from the Lord, and he is their protector in the time of trouble*. If you desire to be filled, consider that you *shall be satisfied when the Lord's glory shall appear*. If you thirst, consider that you shall be *inebriated with the plenty* of the kingdom of heaven. If beautiful melodies delight you, consider that you will hear untold choirs of angels singing without end the praises of God. If you yearn for friendship, consider that in heaven the Saints love God more than themselves, their neighbors as themselves, and God loves them more than they love themselves. If you seek peace and concord, know that in heaven all are of one will because all wills are one with God. If you desire riches and esteem, consider that one day you are to hear: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy master*. In a word, the man of hope is the man of love, who can sing with King David: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: The Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in him will I put my trust. My protector and the horn of my salvation, and my support."

In appearing to His Mother after His Resurrection, Our Lord teaches us the reward which was hers, and which will be ours, in return for sacred and unswerving trust placed in Him. In cultivating this trust, or perseverance, we do well to remember what Saint Bonaventure tells us, namely, that holy hope crowns all virtue and no one appears glorious before God without it. In this, Saint Bonaventure calls upon Saint Bernard, who says that final perseverance, or trust, or hope, is the crown of the virtues, the food of heavenly mer-

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *Opus VI, De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores*, c. VIII (VIII 126b).

it, the means of attaining the reward of heaven.<sup>4</sup> Well may we mention here the loving words of Saint Bernard which are woven throughout Saint Bonaventure's writings. In the midst of profound theological tracts, as well as in his simplest sermons, the Seraphic Doctor cries out Saint Bernard's confident recommendations to the Mother of Holy Hope:

When the storm of temptation arises, when you are midst the reefs and shoals of tribulation, fix thy gaze upon the Star of the Sea, call upon Mary. If tossed by the rising tide of pride and ambition, if lost upon the troubled waters of scandal and contention, look then at the Star, invoke her name. Do the billows of anger, of avarice, of lust batter against thy soul, cast thine eyes upon Mary. Does the greatness of thy crime fill thy Soul with terror, does thy wretched conscience beat thee down in shame and the fear of judgment paralyze thy heart, then, when about to sink to the depths of despondency, to plunge headlong into despair, then think of Mary. In perils and in sorrows and in fears think of her, call upon her name. Let her name be ever on thy lips and the thought of her be ever in thy heart. Follow her that the power of her intercession may attend thee; imitate her, for in her footsteps thou canst not go astray; call upon her and thou canst not despair; think of her and thou canst not fail. If she holds thee by the hand how canst thou fall! Under her protection thou shalt know no fear; under her guidance thou shalt not falter; under her patronage thou shalt surely reach the goal.

In reflecting on this Joy of our Lady, well can we consider the consolation that was hers in seeing the Body of her beloved Son, but a few days ago lacerated, bleeding, and wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our sins, as it were a leper, now so glorious and luminous in the Light of His Resurrection. How inspired we should be by this scene when we are faced with the tragic occasions that God has permitted on this earth. The deformed, the lepers, the mentally ill, the agonizing—every last one of these we should meet with the blessed hope of their being restored to perfect health of mind and body in that day when there shall be no mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, that day when *the former things have passed away*. It is this holy hope that brings sense and meaning to all human tragedies that a reason-seeking and seething world can find no answer to explain. Whenever we observe tragedy in this world we should ever revert to Saint Bonaventure's words that in the general resurrection all corruption will be removed through the gift of impas-

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., *Opus VI, De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores*, c. VIII (VIII 125a).

sibility, all deformity and obscurity through the gift of clarity, all hesitation and impossibility through the gift of agility, all infirmity and sickness through power and subtilty.<sup>5</sup> God knows that there is purpose to everything that he allows to happen, and even though every human analysis fails, and our duties or obligations seem insurmountable, then it is time for us to recall the consoling words of Saint Peter: *One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord does not delay in his promises, but for your sake is long-suffering.*

Does any one of us think for long that our Immaculate Mother could have endured the sorrowful death of her Son, the trials of His infant Church, were she not the Queen of Hope, and could we endure the trials of His Church today, or our own anxieties and pressures and disappointments, without the beacon of light which she throws out to lead us to the port of heaven?

On Easter morn one great Alleluia will rise out from the heart of all Christendom, and from the hearts of all Christians, proclaiming that the Lord *has risen even as he said!* Well do we recall in this Joy of our Lady that that Alleluia first rang in her heart. In praying the ten Aves of the Sixth Joy we reecho her own Alleluia, and join our hope of one day seeing her Son in Glory with her joy in seeing her Glorious Son. She is now in heaven and she knows that *from the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears: the eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee.* That wait for thee!—that wait for thee filled with holy hope. Our Mother knows this, and she invites us to share this heavenly home with her help in the holy, hope-filled words that Mother Church places on her lips in the Epistle on the Feast of her Immaculate Heart:

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. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. My memory is unto everlasting generations. They that eat me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink me, shall yet thirst. He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me, shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasting.

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., *Sermones, Dom. I Adventus, sermo 3* (IX 29h).

Saint Bonaventure prays to Our Lady thus: O Most Beautiful Queen of Heaven pray for us to God and to Our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may participate in His Resurrection in the present through grace, and in the future through glory.<sup>6</sup> No one of us knows the day of his Easter, but every one of us knows that by remaining close to the Virgin Mary in this life, he will receive the grace to be gathered into the arms of her Son in the glory of heaven.

Let us beg and beseech her every time we pray the Sixth Joy an awareness of the meaning of her Son's Resurrection. Let us ask her, now and always, the grace to be filled with blessed Hope. We may speak to her thus: O Immaculate Mother of Holy Hope obtain for us always to realize that we *have risen with Christ*, and give us to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.* Let us ever *mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.* Give us to die to this world and all its snares, and grant that we so live in this world that our *life is hidden with Christ, your Son, in God.* Turn our eyes to that day, once and forever, *when Christ, our life, shall appear, when we too will appear with him in glory,* that day when we shall fall asleep to awaken to your beautiful smile in heaven, and be taken in your arms to the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

William Marming, T.O.F.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. XX, Omnia Opera, Tom VI, pp. 507ff).

*But Mary was standing outside weeping at the tomb. So, as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb, and saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They said to her, "Women, why art thou weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."*

*When she had said this she turned round and beheld Jesus standing there, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said*

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., *Opus. VII, Rhythmica, V, Corona B. V. M.* (VIII 678a).



to her, "Woman, why art thou weeping? Whom dost thou seek?" She, thinking that he was the gardener, said to him, "Sir, if thou hast removed him, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" Turning, she said to him, "Rabboni!" (that is to say, Master) (Jn. 20, 11-17).

Saint Bonaventure remarks that there are certain things to be pointed out in the manifestation of Christ to Mary Magdalen. We might first notice her *desolation*. This very desolation compelled her to remain, even when the disciples had left. This act of implicit hope characterizes Mary as a religious person who perseveres even when all—whether through trial or in—seems lost. The tears that fell at this moment were first those of *compunction*, reminding her of her first repentant turning to Christ (Luke 7. 38). But she was also weeping tears of *compassion* with Christ (Jn. 11, 33). Yet, perhaps most of all, they were tears of *devotion*, as if pleading that she might not again be separated from the God Whom she had formerly lost through sin, but had found by mercy and grace: *My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?* (Ps. 41, 4). Answering her three-fold, tearful desolation, Christ offers her the consolation of His veiled Presence and His spoken Word: *She turned round and beheld Jesus standing there, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why art thou weeping? Whom dost thou seek?"* (Jn. 20, 14f).

When Christ asked, "Why art thou weeping?", he began to show her that this was not a time for sorrow, but for joy. But, because she had only turned outwardly toward Him, He kept His identity hidden: *And she did not know that it was Jesus* (Ibid. v. 12). So too, in the beginning one will hardly see Christ, if he merely turns to Him weeping because he is disgusted with worldliness. Nor will the tears of the Religious soul (for *whatever reason!*), who pities self rather than Christ, avail to open her eyes to see Him truly. And yet this first sorrowful turning to Christ, like Magdalen, can be either an occasion of disaster or of profit. If, at this trying time when Christ hides Himself, the person accepts mere human consolation, much can be lost. That is why Mary refused to let one, who appeared to be the gardener, console her. So one embracing Religion on a more or less human level, which is satisfied with externals, will receive

only outward returns from Christ. But more could be gained. That is why Christ asked: "*Whom dost thou seek?*" Seizing the opportunity, Mary asked only directions from the gardener, not human consolation: "*Sir, if thou hast removed him, tell me where thou hast laid and I will take him away*" (Jn. 20, 15). So she was consistent. Because, realizing that the cause of her sorrow was the loss of Jesus, she was determined to find Him Who alone could console her. This is a stern reminder for the Religious that only God, at least through a lawful intermediary in the Sacraments, is the consoling director of the soul. The words of the Old Testament about Jacob apply here: *The Lord alone was his leader* (Deut. 32, 12). The Psalmist experienced a loss like that of Mary: *My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God . . . Will God then cast off forever? or will he never be more favourable again* (Ps. 76 3, 8). And Jeremias lamented this loss: *Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water: because the comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me* (Lam. I, 16).

The directness of her search was so evident that Mary did not even mention His Name: "*Tell me where thou hast laid him*" (Jn. 20, 15). Gregory observed that Magdalen believes everyone ought to know Whom it was that her soul loved. Moreover, she said: "*I will take Him away*" (Ibid.). Here she wanted to be like the lover who found God: *I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go* (Cant. 3, 4). Her attitude now shows us (as Christ knew) that she had finally turned to Him from her soul. So, whereas He answered her outward turning with the word 'Woman,' later He spoke to her heart: 'Mary.' Calling her by name means that Christ manifested His identity to Magdalen. Saint Augustine observes: One, turning outwardly to Christ, only thinks he sees Who He is (as Magdalen thought Him to be the gardener); whereas one, turning to Christ with a true heart, knows Him as He truly is.

And this conclusion brings us to our final point: it was only when Christ spoke (by name) to her heart that Mary Magdalen truly recognized her Beloved. Her recollection may have reminded her that previously Martha had called her attention to His Presence: "*The Master is here and he is calling for thee*" (Jn. 11, 28). Must we also be reminded that His Sacred Presence continually keeps Him here



calling for us? Even if reminded, do we merely turn outwardly to the chapel when obedience calls? And then, do we give no more than a kind of lip service, which cannot evoke a revelation of His true identity? If we must admit this, can we not strive to turn our soul to Him, in the hope that He will manifest Himself to our heart? May His constant calling to us not fall on deafened spiritual ears, but upon our awakened and opened inward senses. These, turned to Him, will cause Christ to manifest Himself openly to us: in faith and love, here; in vision and love, hereafter. When we effect this, by the help of His manifesting grace, let us call out our cry of true recognition: "Master"!

Fr. Owen Colligan, O.F.M.

## EASTER SONG

### I.

between the talking fingers  
of the trees  
the light speaks clearly:

the far land near of promise  
is both there and here—

will you through moved leaves follow  
or still stay silent

while through rain and green  
the singing glistens?

ROBERT LAX

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### FRANCISCAN PENANCE IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

To live the Franciscan life is to follow Christ in the way of Gospel perfection, in the way of Christian *metanoia*. And we must follow this way of life not for ourselves alone, but for the world as well. True penance cannot be a half-measure; it cannot mean that we begin to turn to Christ in heart and mind and action, and then lose courage half way and fail to complete the turn. Such cowardice would make us unworthy of Christ, unworthy even of the name Franciscan. For as Saint Francis wrote in his Rule, quoting Saint Luke (9:62), nobody putting his hand to the plow and looking backward is fit for the kingdom of God. There must be courage, a holy and youthful radicalism, in our penance, and it must be inspired by the deepest love and the uttermost trust in the grace of God. It is remarkable that the Apostles, *when they were now on their way going up to Jerusalem* and *Jesus was walking up in front of them*, were astonished and followed him in fear (Mk. 10:32). They could not understand why he went to his passion and death, and it is true that practically all of them left him in the hour of his greatest humiliation; but it is equally true that when they began their line of true penance, their apostolic life, they followed him to death without hesitation or fear, for having been sealed with the fire of the Holy Spirit, they realized the glory of being found worthy to suffer for the name of their Lord. Thus it is evident that Franciscan penance, the penance of the Gospel, must be lived under the shadow of the cross.

#### 1. Franciscan Meditation on the Cross

It was after his experience with the leper that Saint Francis died to himself and to the world. Then, shortly after that, the Crucified spoke to him from the cross at San Damiano and asked him to restore his Church. This was one of the greatest moments in the life of our holy Father. The Lord had told him what he wanted of him, and although Francis did not immediately grasp the full significance of the words coming from the cross, he did immediately realize that the message of his mission came from the cross. The Beloved had

spoken, and the Beloved was the Crucified. Suddenly the cross was no longer a mere symbol for Francis, no longer a pious picture for remembrance; it was a vivid reality for him, a reality that took fire in his soul and melted it. "From now on," as Celano tells us, "Francis could not help but weep; with a loud voice he bewailed the sufferings of Christ which he had constantly before his eyes. . . Always he contemplated the countenance of the Man of Sorrows full of misery" (II, 11 and 85).

There is hardly need to prove that the heart and mind of Francis were filled with the sufferings of our Lord, that he loved to meditate on the passion, that he responded to it with a burning desire to suffer with Christ, and that the love with which he surrendered himself to the embrace of the Crucified brought forth tears of contrition and gratitude. There is, however, a need to warn against a possible misunderstanding of our Seraphic Father's meditation. Affective though it was, there was nothing sentimental about it. His tears were by no means the natural reaction of an emotional personality, nor was his compassion the mere outpouring of maudlin human sympathy. Neither were the tears of Francis the pitying and ineffectual tears of the women of Jerusalem that brought a gentle rebuke from the Lord; they were tears of true love, sealed and approved by Christ himself with the holy stigmata. The meditation of our Seraphic Father was deeply affective, but never emotional. It was stirred by the overwhelming love of the Son of God for us, who was given to us by his Father, and who in his love went so far as to let himself be put to death for us, to suffer all the tortures and humiliations of his passion and shameful crucifixion, for no other reason than because he loved us. It shook the depths of the heart of our holy Father to realize that the Love who loved us to the end died for us between robbers in public infamy. He did not need to, nor was he inclined to, conjecture all the cruelties that the innocent Lamb suffered, or to use his imagination in picturing the various pains of the deeds of the crucifixion. His devotion was not the kind that finds satisfaction in counting the wounds of Christ and spinning out elaborate prayers to each wound. For Francis, the simple story of the passion as recounted by the Evangelists was quite sufficient. The immediacy and directness, the unadorned matter-of-factness of the

Gospel narrative was all he needed. Even the sign of the cross, or two sticks lying crosswise, was enough for him.

With that stark and simple immediacy so characteristic of our Seraphic Father, he meditated on the passion, grasping in an affective way the central religious idea in our Lord's sufferings. It was not so much the doctrine or the dogma, but the reality of our salvation and redemption, that he saw in this fire of passion. It overwhelmed him with pain and joy. He saw his Friend dying, his Brother, God, and the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, murdered by men but also a victim for men. For it was not alone the unworthy rulers of the Jewish people that caused the sufferings and death of Christ. It was all sinful humanity that arrested and bound him, that shared in his mock trial. We too scourged him and crowned him with thorns and laid the heavy cross of public infamy on his shoulders; the sins of all mankind helped to pierce his hands and feet with nails; our infamy murdered our God, our Friend, our Brother. And yet this same God-Man sheds his blood for us, his enemies; he redeems us and makes us children of his Father.

It was this simple and dogmatic meditation that drew tears of compassion from Saint Francis. And not tears of compassion alone, but tears of love and contrition, of gratitude and joy as well. Not only did Francis refuse to be comforted when he wept because Love is not loved; not only was he moved to tears when he saw a lamb brought to the market reminding him of the innocent Lamb of God sacrificed for us; he also rejoiced in the passion, and in overflowing gratitude composed a hymn of thanksgiving and praise which we know as the *Office of the Passion*, weaving together texts of the Psalms that culminate in the beautiful praises at the end:

O clasp your hands, you nations all, acclaim your God with a voice of exultation.

For the Lord is high and worthy of awe, the great King over all the earth.

For the most holy Father in heaven, our King, before time sent his beloved Son from on high and he has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth (Vespers).

This is the way our Seraphic Father meditated on the Passion of our Lord, and this is the way we too should meditate. If we contemplate with our Seraphic Father the supreme love of him who has called us to follow him, then the cross will become a reality in our heart and mind as it was in his. The effect will be that true wisdom of the cross through which all things on earth will change their value for us, through which we will come to judge as loss what we once counted as gain. In other words, it will enable us to put on the mind of Christ. Here we may pause to ask ourselves how much we, penitents of Assisi, are striving to fill our heart and mind with the passion of Christ, how much we are striving to crucify our thoughts and ambitions and desires. If we are truly sincere in our inquiry, we shall probably find that actually our mind and heart are quite empty of all that pertains to the shame and glory of the cross, and quite filled with the mundane trivia that crowd our life. As a practical detail, let us ask ourselves how much we really cherish the passion and cross of Christ, not only in our meditation, not only in the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, but in our actual daily living. Is our meditation that penetrates to the depths of the soul inevitably bringing about that turn which is the *metanoia* of our Franciscan life. But how far have we succeeded in this? When we were received into the Order, we were given a crucifix, and with more fervor than understanding we repeated the words of Saint Paul: *Far be it from me to glory in anything save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. But what do we glory now? Around what do our thoughts and our love revolve? Have we forgotten that we must follow Christ on his way to Calvary? There is a very fine test for proving whether Christ's passion is anything more to us than a touching story or a theme for holy pictures; the test is this: Have we found the answer to the religious life in meditating on the way of the cross? It is there and there alone that each and every religious must find the answer to his own personal life. All the frustration, all the seeming waste and fruitlessness, all the suffering and shame and apparent failure that sooner or later fall to the lot of all of us, can find significance and justification only in the shadow of Calvary. If we look for the answer to our life anywhere else, we may be very wise according to the world, but we will not be wise according to the wisdom of the cross. Only

the *via crucis* can we learn to know for ourselves the Truth and Humility that humbled Itself to death on the cross. Only there can we learn patience and mildness, charity and understanding, readiness for sacrifice, poverty, obedience, and the penetrating vision that discerns the loving hand of God guiding us through all the agony of life. Only there can we learn the secret of our Franciscan vocation.

## 2. The Life of the Cross

Once Saint Francis understood the meaning of the passion and death of his beloved Lord and Master, his meditation on the cross became his own *via crucis*. Christ had invited him to leave everything behind and to take up his cross daily and to share his life. With all the radical ardor of his intense personality he ran to the call. And he ran not only because his Master had invited him, but because his heart and mind impelled him to it. Filled as he was with the sufferings of our Lord, it was this tremendous love that transformed his life into that of the Crucified (*Legenda maior*, IX, 2). Love strains toward unity. Thus it was that Francis began his life of penance "in the footsteps of the Crucified;" thus it was that he became crucified to the world and the world to him. His life was changed so much that Celano could write: "The pleasures of the world became a cross to him" (II, 2.). The Crucified formed his humility, marked his poverty, sealed his obedience. His entire life was determined by the cross; he lived it under the shadow of the cross.

When we think seriously of the life of our holy Father, so completely determined by the life of Christ, we cannot fail to realize what a far cry our life is from his. Of course, it is easy to criticize others, and perhaps it is easy to criticize ourselves, too, for having fallen so short of the true Franciscan ideal. But criticism alone is not enough. If we are to profit from it, we must try daily to realize what we ought to do, and what we are failing to do, as followers of the Crucified. Let us not be dead stones in the edifice of our Order that do not even see their task, lifeless blocks that through negligence or despair or worldliness shirk the demands of their vocation. Let us rather be living stones who constantly push toward their ideal despite the weaknesses and failures that beset our poor humanity. Indeed, as Franciscans we have no other choice. Nothing less than the life

of the cross is demanded of us; in no other way can we fulfill our obligation to God, to the Church, and to the world. The cross is our only need.

If the thought of Calvary terrifies us, let us at least go to Calvary. Let us go to the agony in Gethsemani. If we can go with Christ to the agony and accept with him whatever the Father wills for us, we are truly walking the *via crucis*. If we can steel ourselves to say with Christ: *Father, not my will but thine be done*, God will strengthen our willing heart and strengthen us to complete the *via crucis* of Calvary. For us, the *via crucis* may mean many things. It may mean that we are willing to let ourselves be denied and betrayed by those we called our friends, forsaken and condemned by those we loved and helped. It may mean to let ourselves be bound by the fetters of charity, bearing the burden of the reasonable demands of others, or relinquishing our freedom to avoid offending the weak. It may mean that we are willing to bear the injustice, calumnies, misjudgments, criticism from within our community and from without, from friends and enemies, from brothers and confreres. It may mean that we are willing to bear public infamy if the Lord demands it of us, and to carry the cross through the streets of our communities. We may be unjustly slandered and seduced—for thus they called Christ, too—*ille seductor*; we may be unjustly subjected to public punishments. But the *via crucis* also may mean that we are willing to struggle along in bodily weakness, falling with Christ under the cross but always rising again, dragging the cross of all our imperfections toward the goal. Christ fell three times under the cross, but he kept going toward Calvary; so for us every fall under the cross makes us more humble and more confident of our Master's help. The cross may also mean that we are willing to accept in all our suffering the kind of consolation that can be so sweet and so painful at the same time—the understanding love of one who shares our pain and is unable to relieve our pain. Or it may mean that we accept the unwilling help of those who by obedience or the love of God are bound to help us. What religious does not know the value of just permissions grudgingly granted, care or assistance tenderly given? And how many are the crosses hidden in the

of hearts of misjudged and mistreated sick? Nevertheless, we have accepted the cross as our lot, and promised to glory in it on earth. Whatever befalls us in our Franciscan life has significance for us only if we have learned the wisdom of the cross. Let us not only meditate on the *via crucis*, but let us live it. As long as we keep trying, no matter how often we fall beneath the burden of the cross, we can be sure that we are the children of Saint Francis, true followers of Christ who find glory through the shame of the cross.

### 3. The Perfection of the Cross

The Franciscan ideal goes far beyond the mere life of the cross. It soars aloft to mystic heights in the perfection of the cross. The children of the Seraphic Francis must follow Christ not only in the lowly love, not only in humble and patient bearing of the cross, but in the footsteps of Christ; they must also climb all the way to Calvary, where Calvary becomes Thabor as well. *For those whom he has foreknown he has also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son* (Rom. 8:29). We know where Saint Francis found his Calvary-Thabor. It was on the wind-swept heights of Alverna that the flame-winged Christ impressed into his hands and feet and side the stigmata as outward signs of that ecstatic love in which he surrendered in a flash of burning pain to the love of the Crucified, and he entered for a little while into the bliss of the ocean of joy. Are we only to admire our Seraphic Father in this? Are we not called to be conformed to the image of the Crucified? Saint Francis has no doubt that here, in this ideal of ultimate union with the Crucified, in the rest of complete surrender, is the ideal of the Franciscan. We have no right to seek excuse in the fear of the cross; it is the sound teaching of theologians that precisely this union is the goal of every Christian life. The truth is that the enthusiasm and the courage that would bring about this union would hurl us into the burning embrace of the Crucified. This Calvary-Thabor is none other than the way of the cross, as Saint Bonaventure reports, makes clear to

us. It is the *amor Crucifixi* that prepares us for the last stations of the Way of the Cross. It makes us able and willing to suffer the stripping of everything that is dear to us, even our good name; makes us able to rid ourselves of every covering of vanity and pride to have done with that selfish prudence and cautious calculation that so conveniently covers our cowardice and half-heartedness with respectable names. It makes us willing to be exposed in our naked weakness and misery, to appear in the sight of men just as we are in the sight of God. To use Saint Bonaventure's striking simile, it makes us like drunken men who do not care whether they are covered or not. The *amor Crucifixi* makes us willing to suffer these things, and that without trying to take matters in our own hands. A true lover of Christ Crucified is one who allows himself to be stretched out upon the cross and in radical obedience to be nailed through hands and feet and abandoned there. Not only the body but even the mind must be nailed to the cross; and there will the true lover remain, unable to make any move but what the cross and obedience allows. This is the ideal to which every Franciscan is called. When we have reached that goal, then, and only then, can we truly say that Christ lives in us and we in him. Then there will remain only that he lift us up on the cross with him, and that we there become one with him who in his supreme sacrifice surrendered himself to the Father. Completely "dead to the outside world, but experiencing, nevertheless, as far as possible in this present wayfarer's state, that which was said to the thief on the cross clinging to Christ: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise*—this also was given to the blessed Francis to see, in the transport of contemplation on the mountain height. . . when the six-winged Seraph fastened to the cross appeared to him. . . Here he passed over into God in transport of contemplation, and he was set forth as an example of perfect contemplation, just as he had been a model of the active life like a second Jacob-Israel. And thus rather by example than by word God would invite all truly spiritual men to this passing over and this transport of the soul." So wrote Saint Bonaventure at the end of *The Journey of the Soul to God*.

And now we understand why the desire for martyrdom is so in-

timately connected with the ideal of the penitents of Assisi, and perhaps we also understand why Saint Francis broke forth in jubilation and exultation when he heard of the martyrdom of his brethren in Morocco. They not only became one with Christ on the cross in final reality, they became the first true Friars Minor, true brothers of our Seraphic Father. With a cry of exultant joy he exclaimed: "Now truly I can say I have five brothers!" (Anal. III, 21).

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## MOTHER MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA FOUNDFRESS OF THE FELICIAN SISTERS

(Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix)

(Continued from preceding issue)

In 1858, the Felician Sisters, under the leadership of Count Andrew Zamoyski, began to work among the peasants through the newly-formed Agricultural Society. This Society was a part of the general movement toward social regeneration. In addition to its specific aim of improving agricultural methods, the Society sought to better the lot of the masses through education, economic aid, and the eventual granting of citizenship and land proprietorship. In this manner the Society hoped to expiate the century-old sins of Polish nobles, who deliberately held the peasants in serfdom and ignorance.

The Felician Sisters were requested to conduct the social centers (*ochrony*) which the Society planned to organize in a number of rural districts of Russian Poland. Mother Angela readily heeded the plea, and in the span of four years (1859-1863) she sent sisters to staff twenty-seven such centers.

Three sisters were assigned to each center: an infirmarian, a teacher, and a sister for domestic work and general maintenance. A school building was made to serve a number of purposes. One room was used as a medical clinic where the infirmarian treated the minor ills of peasants, trying at the same time to cure them of their many superstitions. The teacher gathered her pupils in another room and instructed them in the rudiments of knowledge and catechism. Young children, brought in

for the day by mothers who worked in the field were occupied with games, while those in their teens were taught handicrafts, gardening, and other useful skills.

In the evenings and on week-ends the building was transformed into a community center for youth and their elders. Religious instruction, spiritual reading, congregational singing of church hymns, the rosary stations, examination of conscience—these filled the hours varying with the liturgical seasons. Long deprived of such spiritual care and often removed from the parish church, the simple folk crowded the school rooms to hear the word of God.

In their pristine zeal the sisters engaged in any activities that could arouse the people from their lethargy. They prepared children for the sacraments, organized pious societies, directed church choirs, served the peasants with advice, visited their homes, and often settled differences between neighbors.

Won by the self-forgetfulness and devotion of the sisters, whom the affectionately called "Little Mothers" (Matki), the peasants began to amend their ways. When the members of the Agricultural Society inspected the centers after one year's existence, they were astonished by the manifest improvement in morals and in mutual relations between the peasants and their lords.

In districts inhabited by Ruthenian Uniates, the sisters were preparing future martyrs. The continual efforts of the Russian government to draw the Uniat Catholics into the schismatic church were climaxed by violent persecution following the Insurrection of 1863. Many Ruthenians heroically preferred death to apostasy. The survivors later admitted with sincere gratitude: "If it weren't for our Little Mothers, maybe we wouldn't have persevered."

The disbanding of the Felician Sisters in 1864 and the closing of their institutions was apparently a death blow to the life work of the Foundress. However, this trial only served to extend Mother Angela's charitable mission to the southern provinces of Poland.

With the rebirth of the Congregation in Krakow in 1865, Mother Angela labored to instill in her daughters the spirit of loving reparation and active charity, which would determine their influence over souls. Her successor, Mother Mary Magdalen Borowicz, trained in the school of the Foundress as one of the first members, preserved and strengthened that spirit during her forty-four years as superior general of the Congregation (1871-1915).

During this half-century, the sisters ministered to all sections of Aus-

trian Poland. They conducted urban and rural schools, nurseries, private academies, student resident homes, sewing centres, orphanages, asylums for the aged, and catechetical centers. As in former days, the sisters also organized and directed various religious societies, particularly sodalities, tertiary groups, the living rosary, and the apostleship of prayer. A rather unique work of mercy was inaugurated in 1872 in Krakow with the opening of "Caritas," a free kitchen for the poor and homeless. A special development of Caritas was a separate serving kitchen for students, which to the present time daily serves a free noon meal to hundreds of poor students attending local trade schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher learning.

The outbreak of the first world war interrupted many of the activities of the Congregation. But as in the days of the 1863 uprising, the charity of the sisters found a new outlet in ministering to wounded soldiers in their own institutions or in neighboring hospitals.

With the creation of a free Poland after the war, the Felician Sisters resumed their social and educational work in those sections of the country formerly held by the Russians. The growing number of orphanages, nurseries, social and catechetical centers led to the formation of a separate Warsaw province in 1921 with the motherhouse located in suburban Wawer. Here a secondary school and a junior college (European gymnasium and liceum) were opened for resident and day students.

On the eve of the second world war, the Congregation numbered more than 800 sisters in the three provinces of Krakow (1865), Lwow (1910) and Warsaw (1921).

When the war clouds finally broke over the nation anew in 1939, the sisters again treaded the way of sorrow with their countrymen. Once more their institutions sheltered wounded soldiers and homeless refugees. Twelve sisters were confined in Nazi concentration camps, and the Lwow province was disbanded during the Soviet invasion.

Following the Allied victory in Europe, the sisters undertook their work with fresh vigor in war-torn Poland. The Lwow province was reorganized in Przemyśl. A general chapter of the Congregation convened in Krakow in the fall of 1946 to elect a new general council. The new superior general, Mother Mary Stanisława, an American, issued directives to all members of the Congregation, urging that the Community's spirit of reparation be renewed. Perhaps never before was the plea so timely.

The curtain of Communism soon fell on Poland and hid her fate from the eyes of the civilized world. The activities of the Congregation were gradually curtailed. The sisters were barred from schools with the

exception of their private institution in Wawer, an apostolate in orphanages, nurseries, homes for the poor, for catechetical instruction and social work.

The future of the Felician Sisters in Poland was in jeopardy. The refusal of the Communist government to renew the citizenship of the sisters was followed by an order of dismissal from the country. This action resulted in the temporary transfer of the Felician Sisters to the United States, to Poland, in the spring of 1950. Three years later, in May 1953, the Holy See, the Congregation of the Felician Sisters, sent generalate in the heart of Christendom—Rome, the building selected for the new general motherhouse. Very Rev. John Mickun, pastor of St. Mary's parish, was the first American to be elected superior.

The influence of Mother Angela, perpetual superior, was felt not only in Poland but also in America. Many of her countrymen took refuge in the mission.

Nevertheless, the impact was not entirely negative. Bread and freedom they found here, but the customs, and modes of thought were a disheartening contrast. There were few Polish parishes in the 1860's and 1870's, ministering to the rapidly growing settlements. The sisters of God in their native tongue or to cleanse their souls of peace, the immigrants stood in danger of relaxing their faith.

In this difficult period of adjustment, Mother Angela was to play a significant role under the leadership of Father Dabrowski, one of the early masterbuilders of the Congregation.

Well educated and alert, Father Dabrowski, one of the burning needs of the time was the establishment of Catholic schools for the children of immigrants. A religious community of Polish origin was equal to any foreign religious order. . . does not understand the needs of the nation." The Congregation of the Felician Sisters was well suited for this mission. He had become a superior while visiting with his mother in Krakow, Poland. In 1874, after having organized his first school where he himself taught with the aid of Mother Angela, Dabrowski appealed for sisters to Mother Angela's Congregation.

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Five sisters arrived in Polonia on November 20, 1874. They began their apostolate in this first American mission on the following day—the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which thus for the third time became a founding date in the history of the Congregation.

On December 3, 1874, two weeks after their arrival, the sisters began teaching in the two-room parish school with an initial enrollment of thirty children. Five days later the first candidate applied for admission to the Congregation, but being too young for the postulancy, she remained at the sisters' home to continue her schooling. Thus began the first juniorate, a preparatory school for young candidates of high school age. When several months later, an eighteen-month old orphan, Mary Kudla, was entrusted to the sisters, the Congregation initiated its child care history in America. April 16, 1875, marked the entrance of the first postulant, Valeria Reczek, who began the flow of vocations from Polish-American homes.

The increasing enrollment in the school and orphanage was paralleled by the steadily growing number of candidates to the juniorate and novitiate. Consequently, in 1876 permission was obtained to open a novitiate, and in the following year the first American province was formed in Polonia, with Mother Monica as provincial superior.

Remarkable in this development of the Congregation in the United States is the fact that it grew through native vocations, never recruiting teaching members from Poland beyond those in the pioneer band of five. On the contrary, the American provinces began sending sisters to Poland beginning with the year 1904 and in greater numbers after the formation of the new Warsaw province in 1921.

In America today, the Congregation numbers 3,620 sisters in seven provinces, engaged in educational and charitable activities in thirteen archdioceses and forty-three dioceses; in twenty-seven states and in the District of Columbia; in Ontario, Canada, and in Brazil, South America. The membership of the American provinces surpasses more than four times that of the mother community in Poland.

This growth of the Felician Sisters in America can be attributed mainly to the vigorous inner life fostered in the early Congregation by the pioneer sisters and their director, Father Dabrowski. Mother Monica, the first provincial superior and mistress of novices, molded the religious life of the sisters in the spirit of Mother Angela, by whom she herself was schooled. Strict observance of the rule, love of poverty, a spirit of prayer, fortitude in the apostolic life, and childlike obedience—these were the traits she labored to form in the sisters.

In 1915, the opening of a ninth grade at St. Josaphat school in Detroit marked the entrance of the Felician Sisters into the field of parochial secondary education. A decade later they began to staff an increasing number of high schools.

The sisters had already been conducting a private academy and normal school at their motherhouse in Detroit since 1882. Incorporated as the Seminary of the Felician Sisters, the school was intended for the academic and professional education of candidates.

To provide educational training for its own members, the Congregation has secured charters for a number of higher institutions. In 1922 the Lodi province opened the Immaculate Conception Summer Normal School, which in 1941 was incorporated as a Junior College, offering two years of general education, with the addition of courses for teacher certification. The Detroit province, after having moved to the new motherhouse in Livonia (1936), twenty miles beyond the metropolitan area, organized Presentation Junior College in 1937. Ten years later this institution became the four-year liberal arts Madonna College for women, both religious and lay.

More recently two provinces have opened higher institutions of learning for their own members. In 1945 the Enfield province organized Our Lady of the Angels Teacher Training Institute, which in 1950 became a Junior College. The Chicago province opened the Felician Junior College, in June 1953.

Simultaneously with their educational apostolate in the United States, the Felician Sisters undertook numerous charitable works whose main object was the neglected or the underprivileged child. It was only fitting that they should serve the "least" of the little ones, since the Congregation had taken its origin from Mother Angela's mercy toward the street waifs of Warsaw.

When Mother Monica accepted the first orphan girl into the sisters' home in 1874 she gave the beginning to St. Clara Orphanage in Polonia. Within the next fifty years the Congregation undertook work in nine other orphanages.

To meet a special social need in the United States, the sisters also opened St. Rita Home for Mentally Deficient Children in Getzville, N.Y., in 1941. The only Catholic institution of its kind in the country, the home admits feeble-minded, idiot, and imbecile children under the age of five. Since its opening until 1949, the home provided care and special training for 166 children until they reached the age at which other institutions would accept them.

In September 1942, the sisters began operating a Psychological and Child Guidance Clinic in Buffalo, N.Y., for the diagnosis and treatment of children who show signs of emotional disturbances. The Clinic is under the direction of a sister specialist trained in psychometry and psychology.

Nursing was added to the sisters' apostolate in America, when in 1937 the Chicago province took charge of St. Mary's Hospital in Centralia, Ill. Today the Congregation conducts six additional hospitals.

Three continents, more than 4,400 Felician Sisters doing good among thousands of souls and spending a combined total of approximately 20,000 hours daily in prayer of adoration, petition, and atonement for the world—these are the fruits of the humble spirit of Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska.

In the perspective of a hundred years since the founding of the Congregation (1855-1955), it is possible to appraise more truly the influence of Mother Angela. Her Congregation has met definite needs both in Poland and in the two Americas. Her life, her virtue, her writings, and her ideals have served as a guide in the historical development of the Felician Sisters. As an abiding inspiration for their apostolate in the modern world, Mother Angela has bequeathed to her spiritual daughters the distinctively Felician ideal of Eucharistic reparation through the Immaculate Heart of Mary—an ideal permanently embodied in the motto of the Congregation: "All through the Heart of Mary in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament."

*Sister Mary Tullia Donati, C.S.S.F.*

## ENCYCLICAL LETTER

*(Continued from preceding issue)*

But this is not the only gift which the most blessed Virgin has conferred through the Vicar of her Son. Another appropriate gift has been bestowed during the Marian Year on the Franciscan Family; for

The rich Franciscan nursery  
Puts forth a tender blossom,  
Whose very pleasing odor  
Fills all the world with gladness.



Our Blessed and Immaculate Virgin has filled the hearts of all of us with the greatest happiness in the beatification of Sister M. Assunta Pallotta. That fruitful branch of the seraphic tree, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters who enjoy the protection and the name of Mary, has begotten most precious fruit.

You know, of course, that a most sweet odor diffusing itself throughout the cell of Maria Assunta following her death, and emanating from her grave, became the first extraordinary sign of her sanctity. Because of the presence of this lovely odor, rightly consider that the Lover of Virgins wished to extol the lily-whiteness of His humble handmaid with a most vivid commendation.

Perhaps some of you, most dear sons and daughters, weakened with continuous struggling, thwarted with arduous difficulties, and considering the heavy weight of perfect chastity, might dare to say: "Do you believe that we can do this?" Or with a weary mind, to lament: "Why were we not able to do it?" Here then, as a help, is Blessed Maria Assunta, from whose sweet and tender smile you learn the secret of virginal life; for what did this humble Franciscan Missionary Sister of Mary do? Our Holy Father Pius X revealed the secret to Sister Assunta: "Faithful observance of the Holy Rule; this is indeed true sanctity." Surely the way which leads to sanctity is hard and rough, abounds with thorns, but it is nevertheless easy as is shown by the "little way" which Assunta Pallotta followed.

Who would be afraid to imitate such an easy example of virtue, which progresses along the way of sanctity by the simple fulfilling of daily duty? Hiding our lives in Christ, chastising our bodies and bringing them into servitude, praying continuously that our body might be protected from loss and from the flames of hell, and that our hearts might be made immaculate, we also will be, as was Blessed Assunta, *the good odor of Christ* (II. Cor. 2:15).

What a very sweet odor is continuously diffused by the young boys growing like lilies in the fruitful gardens of our Seraphic Colleges, by the Novices in the secluded gardens, by the Brothers in their daily work, by the Clerics in their classrooms, by the Priests in their ministry, by the Sisters in the cloisters and their works of charity. This indeed is the precious fruit of the Marian Year and a most pleasing offering to the Patroness of our Order, the Immaculate Virgin, who during the space of that year has been daily contemplated by us as *entirely lovely and without spot*. We are continually encouraged to practice that beautiful virtue which makes us like unto the angels, by the saintly men and women whose children we are, for example, Anthony of Padua offering the

lily in his hand, Louis of Toulouse the Lily of Virginity, Bonaventure who appeared so pleasing in form that it seemed Adam's sin had not affected him,<sup>12</sup> and Clare the mirror unclouded by any shadow.

And what might we say about the exhortation of our Holy Father Saint Francis, who was so concerned about the purity and chastity of his children that in his Rule he openly recommends that there should be not even the occasion for suspicion so that there would be no grounds for scandal.<sup>13</sup> He was very exacting in the discipline he observed for his own protection, and took the greatest care for the purity which should be observed by both men and women. Consequently, at about the time of the first beginnings of his conversion, he would often plunge himself during the winter time into a pit full of ice in order to fully compel the enemy to be a servant for him, as well as to preserve his white cloak of purity from the fires of pleasure. He would say that it was incomparably more tolerable for a spiritual man to sustain freezing cold in the body than to perceive even the least warmth of carnal pleasure in the mind. Whenever he felt the breath of him whose breath makes coals burn, a great temptation of the flesh would seize Francis. But as soon as this lover of chastity would perceive it, he would take off his habit and begin very strongly to beat himself with a cord.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, our Seraphic Father used other helps which speak eloquently of his efforts to preserve purity, for example, the thorny rose-bushes at the holy cave of Subiaco and at Saint Mary of the Angels in Assisi, his cleverness in building himself a wife out of a mound of snow, his custody of the eyes in the presence of the very pious matron and her daughter. Nor should it be lightly passed over that Francis constantly refused the dignity of the priesthood after his vision of the angel who showed him in a jar of the most clear water a symbol of the cleanliness necessary in Priests.

Much, indeed, can be read here and there in the biographies of the saints about their constant watchfulness and continual toil against temptations, and about the diligent anxiety needed to preserve holy chastity. However, in our opinion, that very famous painting of Giotto's has very happily interpreted the mind of Saint Francis on this point. This painter has cleverly arranged the marvelous life of the Patriarch in brilliant colors on the walls of the richly decorated Basilica on the Hill of

<sup>12</sup>Salimbene, *Catalogus Generalium*, edit. O. Holder-Egger, in *M.G.H.*, Script Vol. XXXII, p. 664

<sup>13</sup>Reg. FF. MM., Cap. XI

<sup>14</sup>S. Bonav., *Leg Maior*, V. 3, vol. VIII, 517

Paradise (in Colle Paradisi) at Assisi, so that the noble arts wonderfully combine to exalt the humility of Saint Francis. There are four paintings decorating the space over the high altar of the Lower Basilica, signifying four allegories; the most famous allegory expresses the Triumph of Chastity in the life of our Father. The entire composition of the painting is at once expressive of lofty art and profound signification. The most conspicuous part of the picture is occupied by a glorious castle solidly constructed on all sides with decorated walls. At the corners, there are four imposing towers, but a still more lofty tower stands out in the center topped with a white banner, signifying the triumph of Chastity. Chastity is depicted as a woman of most beautiful features, living in the tower with her head veiled, her hands joined, and above her the inscription: Holy Chastity. Two angels with outspread wings offer her a crown and a palm. There are nine armed men who guard the Castle, at the walls of which is seen a contrite man receiving from an angel, at the baptismal font, the waters of purification on his head. To this penitent, Holy Cleanliness is giving a white banner, and Holy Fortitude offers a shield. On the left hand side of the painting, the meek and humble Francis extends his paternal hands to three persons (a Friar, a Poor Clare, and a layman) inviting and helping them to take refuge in the Castle. Over on the right side, angels in armor and an old man cowed and armed with a whip on which is inscribed Penance, make war on the winged demon named Love, who is equipped with a bow adorned with human hearts. Fleeing from the sight of Penance is depicted the demon Uncleanliness, and the skeleton called Death; but in the center dominating all the figures is Holy Chastity, secure in the tower of her noble castle.

Most dear sons and brothers, beloved Sisters, it is necessary to vanquish Death and to keep one's mind on the Triumph of Chastity; our beloved Father Francis extends his paternal hands and calls us to the safety of the defended Castle. Let us therefore go quickly to the fortified Castle. Let your intellect take refuge there, and your will, and your body with all its senses; make it an absolute and total giving of all to your Spouse, Christ. Our Immaculate Patroness, and Francis, will make all of us safe.

To this end, we earnestly, in the Lord, exhort Superiors, Masters, Professors, Educators, to zealously take care that nothing harmful be acquired or contained in the religious houses, as regards books, magazines, pictures, moving-pictures, or even meetings or outside traveling. Let them take precautions concerning talk which can corrupt good morals, always keeping before their eyes the warning of the Apostle Paul: *Al-*

*uncleanness or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becomes saints* (Eph. 5:34). Each one of us should have as though written on his forehead: "We are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit." (Cf. I Cor. 6:15-19). Listen to how the Seraphic Doctor opportunely warns us: "A man should love cleanliness because of himself, because of his neighbor, because of his God, and because it is his duty."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, our Holy Father the Pope warns that everyone according to his ability, ought to reproduce the features of his Mother's face in himself, so that the light of her face might shine upon her sons.

But someone will say: "I am afflicted above my powers, and I know that this fact does not escape you." Listen to what Saint Francis says to you: "Believe me, my son, for that very reason, I consider you to be a greater servant of God, and the more you are tempted, just that much more know that you are loved by me; but I say to you that no one should consider himself a servant of God, except insofar as he has passed through temptations and tribulations; do not be afraid, because not what you do, but what is done to you, will bring you to the crown."<sup>16</sup>

And another may object: "We cannot remain safe in that well-fortified Castle because our holy Founder himself urges us to daily go forth into the world and preach goodness and peace." Rest assured, my sons, that there is a most imposing battle-line to help you obtain the Triumph of Chastity. There are certainly many faces and hands raised in zealous supplication to God for you, and by reason of Our office We have always been solicitous in seeking spiritual contributions from the auxiliary Franciscan battle-line. Therefore, on this memorable occasion, just as Saint Francis commended his Order to Sister Clare whenever he needed help, We earnestly beseech you, most dear Daughters, Poor Clares, Missionary Sisters, and all Franciscan Sisters, who day and night spend many sweet hours in the presence of your Spouse in the Most Holy Sacrament, praying, contemplating, and loving; do not rejoice in an egotistical manner that the many delights experienced in the enclosed gardens of your oratories, your houses, and your cloisters protect you from the allurements and flatterings, the temptations and dangers of the world. Remember that the Priests, on the other hand, are surrounded by those things and by all the others mentioned by Saint Paul (Cf. II Cor. 11: 26-28). Remember how Peter, even when he was bound with chains, enjoyed true liberty through the help of the prayers which the Church offered to God

<sup>15</sup>St. Bonav., *Col. in Ioan.*, XIII, 51, vol. V, p. 200

<sup>16</sup>Celan., *Vita II*, pars II, c. LXXXIII et LXXXIV in *Anal. Franc.*, Vol. X, p. 200 et 203

without ceasing. (Cf. Acts 12:5). Do not enjoy for yourselves alone the best part which you have chosen, like Mary at the feet of Jesus in Bethany. Hasten to the assistance of the Friar warring against enemies who press them hard; call upon your Eucharistic Spouse in behalf of the Friars; lift up your hands in zealous supplication, that He might grant them aid and bring them help; pray for them continually, not that He might take them from the world, but that He might preserve them from evil. (Cf. John. 17:15).

Most dear Daughters and Sisters, we write to you on this solemnity of December 8, 1954, in the sight of the Woman clothed with the sun crowned with the stars and with the moon at her feet. The thought of her comes to mind, as she appeared on the joyous December 8, 1854, not one hundred years ago, the day on which she conferred such great joy on the entire world. There comes to my mind also, the vision of our blessed predecessor offering a mystic lily to the Vicar of Christ. Last year when we announced the beginning of the Marian Year, we expressed the desire of renewing that well-chosen obligation by offering to Christ the whole Order, enduring as it is, flourishing and increasing and diffusing like a white lily the most sweet odor of virtues. Most dear Daughters, help us to happily realize our fond expectation.

It is a source of great pleasure to us to bring these things to the attention of our Sons and Daughters, and to display publicly the fruit of that affluent vine, which with our Virgin Patroness giving the increase flourished so abundantly in the Franciscan vineyard during this Marian Year which we conclude today, and which set the Mother of God before us to be watchfully heeded as a shining example for our imitation. "For the life of Mary was such that it can serve as a model of all lives. Therefore, for each of you, let the life of Mary be virginity depicted in a likeness which mirrors in a most glowing manner the beautiful form of chastity and the lovely appearance of virtue."<sup>17</sup>

Yet the great happiness which touches the heart of your Father, seeing his sons returning joyfully and carrying the sheaves of the abundant harvest, does not release us from our obligation to render heartfelt thanks to one and all, both superiors and subjects, who in any way contributed to the various manifestations of the Marian Year, as regards piety or doctrine or art, or as regards preparing for, or addressing or

<sup>17</sup>St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, lib. II, c. 2; PL XVI, 208, 210

sisting in pilgrimages or gatherings, missions or processions, or any one of the manifold demonstrations of love and regard for the Mother of God. May the Lord bless you, and may the Immaculate Virgin protect you. With the desire of augmenting our gratitude and our blessing even more, we freely grant to the Religious of our Order who enjoy the dignity of the priesthood on this last day of the Marian Year, the faculty of blessing the Franciscan Crown of the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As the joyful festivity of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ approaches, we pray that the Immaculate Mother will deign to show you the blessed fruit of her womb, her Son Whom she placed in the manger. May the year 1955, under the loving patronage of the Infant Jesus and his most pure Mother, be a happy and prosperous one for you; may it preserve and increase what "you have both learned and received and heard and seen" in the Marian Year; may it also preserve and increase "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame. (Phil. 4:8-9.)

Most dear Sons and Daughters, these are the wishes and desires of your Minister and Servant, Who in the name and with the heart of your Father Saint Francis, bestows permanently the Seraphic Benediction on one and all.

Given at Rome, at the convent of Blessed Mary the Mediatrix, on the solemnity of the Immaculate Virgin, glorious patroness of our Order December 8, 1954, the last day of the Marian Year.

Fr. Augustine Sepinski,  
Minister General, O.F.M.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. XX, Omnia Opera, Tom. VI, pp. 511ff)

*When it was late that same day, the first of the week, though the doors where the disciples gathered had been closed for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be to you!" And when He had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. He therefore said to them again, "Peace be to you! As the Father has*

sent me, I also send you." When he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20, 19-25).

In our Gospel reading, we notice a definite order in Christ's manifestation. The gathering of the disciples sets the scene: the apparition of Christ centers the focus of all eyes upon Him; His speech alerts their ears to His message of Peace: and His palpable manifestation to Thomas (elsewhere noted) confirms their faith. First, He appeared to the gathered disciples. Not only must this have assured them, but His Presence should also reassure us. But, like them, we must perseveringly pray in unison to Him. Even as for the disciples so for us, Christ was confirming His own admonition: "For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18, 20). Secondly, He appeared to them as the central Figure. His Presence in their midst means that He is the living Intercessor for all; *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus* (I Tim. 2, 5). Enlightened by a working belief in Him, we can also behold Christ present in our midst. May His apparition not be presented to eyes blinded by lack of faith and works. The Baptist's words to those who had closed their eyes to Him should be a stern warning to us: "In the midst of you there has stood one whom you do not know." (Jn. 1, 26). Therefore, fixing our eyes on Christ, let us invoke the mediation of Him always living to make intercession for us (Heb. 7, 25).

Thirdly, His kindly speech surely was a source of comfort to the disciples: "Peace be to you" (II. 19-21). Chrysostom maintains that His living voice stilled their troubled minds. They may have been reminded, appropriately, of His stilling the waves on the sea. At an earlier occasion, again offering them His Peace, He had counselled them: "Do not let your heart be troubled, or be afraid" (Jn. 14, 27). When we have harmonized our daily thoughts, words, and actions so that they constantly call attention to His Presence in our midst, then we make a pact with His subscribed by His words: "Peace be to you" (v. 19). But the tranquillity of order, denoting His peace, is no easy task. Not only must we compose the outward man with the befitting bearing of religious dignity, but we must order our soul to harmonize with His Will. Without this essential order of doing the Divine

Will, every other personal sacrifice is meaningless: *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire. . . Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart* (Ps. 39, 7-9; Heb. 10, 6f). His Peace rewards such an ordered soul.

Finally, showing them His hands and side (later touched by Thomas), He gave an evidence of a palpable manifestation to the disciples. Christ did not appear to them in Spirit, but His was the selfsame Body which had suffered and died—although now glorified. Where the wounds were, the marks remained. He had identified Himself for our sake as well as for theirs. Surely He has given all of His followers ample certification of His risen Person. We have no excuse for failing to recognize Him. But, perhaps, we should emphasize another recognition. As Priests and Religious, do others recognize His marks in us by our fidelity to the three vows? Like His wounds, does our observance of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience mark us out, as if by signs of identification with Christ? Even if some should fail to see Him in us, must we still face the greater fear that we may arise from the tomb on the last day—unmarked by avowed signs for His recognition? In the sermon on the Mount, Christ forewarned such Religious: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you" (Matt. 7, 23).

Our last point is like a consequent to his manifestation; it is the mission of the disciples: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." (v. 21). The Seraphic Doctor suggests that Christ prepared them in three ways: He made them *suitable* for the task; He gave them *authority*; and, lastly, He clothed them with *power*. In making them *suitable*, or fit, for the work, once more He bestowed upon them His peace: "Peace be to you" (v. 21). Unless the Apostle possesses this tranquility of order, he is not suitably equipped for his mission, much less ready for possible persecutions. As Chrysostom remarks, the peace of Christ's commission is comparable to the consequent conflict. Without the one, the missionary is hardly ready for the other. Next, He gave *authority*: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (v. 21). Here Christ indicated that even His own authority was not given by Himself, but by the Father. Like the Master, missionaries receive authority from the proper Source.

This is contained in the Apostolic meaning of the word 'mission': *How are men to preach unless they be sent* (Rom. 10:15)? This sending connotes the proper authorization of the one sent. Whether priest or religious suffice it to say that we should question that zeal—in ourselves or others—which acts on its own authority.

Finally, Christ gave the Apostles power: *He breathed upon them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit"* (v. 22). Saint Augustine remarks that His act of breathing signified that the power came from the Father, as well as from Himself. Moreover, when He said *"Receive the Holy Spirit,"* He was here specifically referring to the priestly power of the keys. It was the true power of valid absolution: *"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained"* (v. 23). He was now bestowing upon all of them the power He had previously promised to Peter: *"And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"* (Matt. 16, 19). In transferring the power of God to these men, the God-Man was corroborating His assertion when He had cured the paralytic (to prove His right to that power): *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"* (Matt. 9, 6). His own confident authority and power now became that of His Apostles. Every properly-approved priest bears this authority and power with confidence.

But, what is also of great importance, every sincere penitent should be awesomely convinced of this power. To believe in it and humbly to make use of it, is a heritage given by Him, reassuring us of His peace. But to *appreciate* (in the finest sense of the word) this power, is almost beyond us. Probably, as religious, we could evaluate best the privilege of Confession by a negative approach. We might simply ask ourselves: 'What would our life be like, without the words of Christ through the mouth of the priest? Appraising it positively, we should confidently prize His pardon of Peace in the Confessional as a supreme treasure. Because we know that the "Confide, fili," addressed by Christ to the paralytic, now applies authoritatively to us: *"Take courage, son, thy sins are forgiven thee"* (Matt. 9, 2).

Fr. Owen Colligan, O.F.M.

## EXHORTATION TO DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

By Fray Melchor de Cetina, O.F.M. (1618)

Fray Melchor de Cetina was one of the early apostles of the devotion known as the Slavery of Mary. The following sermon was the first of a series preached to the Conceptionist nuns of the Convent of Santa Ursula in Alcala in the year 1618, explaining the principles of the *Esclavitud Mariana* and guiding them in the practice of the devotion.

### I. On the Excellence of the Mother of God and of Her Power to Draw All Hearts to Herself

The excellences and the prerogatives of the Mother of God and of men are so far above any human understanding that the loftiest geniuses cannot reach that height. The sum of all our capacities would still fall short of such grandeur, and he who thinks he can explain this mystery with his human intelligence will surely fall far short of it. Thus Cardinal Peter Damian, in a sermon on Our Lady, confesses: *Nul- lus humanus sermo, in laude Virginis invenitur idoneus, et impar est illi omne humanae laudis praeconium.*<sup>1</sup> No speech of man is sufficiently eloquent to be fit for the praise of the Virgin, nor can any enhancement of the human language be equal to her grandeur. And in the second sermon for the same feast, the Cardinal says further: *Quid mirum si haec ineffabilis Virgo, suis laudibus modum humanae vocis exsuperet, cum ipsam humani generis naturam, excellentium meritorum dignitate transcendat?* What wonder if this ineffable Virgin surpasses in praise the manner of human speech, since by the dignity of her excellent merits she transcends human nature itself? Neither the eloquence and facility of the rhetorician, nor the subtle arguments of the logician, nor the acute ingeniousness of the philosopher can suffice to utter her praises. Such, in part, are the words of the Cardinal with which he declares the inability of human genius to render fitting praise to the Queen of Heaven. And the glorious Father Saint John Damascene makes the following observation in his discourse on the Assumption: *Nec si omnes toto orbe dispersae linguae in unum coeant, eius laudes oratione consequi possent.*<sup>2</sup> Not only the tongue of any man alone would be insufficient, but even the tongues of all men in the world gathered together as one would be insufficient to praise Our Lady worthily. Not even the angels offer fitting

<sup>1</sup>De Nativit. B.V., serm. 2.

<sup>2</sup>De Assumpt. Mariae, orat. 2.

praise to her, as Saint Bernard says: *Quaenam poterit lingua etiam angelica sit, dignis extollere laudibus, Virginem Matrem, et Matrem non cuiuscumque, sed Dei?*<sup>3</sup> What tongue, even though it be an angel's, can extol with worthy praise the Virgin who merited to be a Mother, and Mother not of just anyone, but of God Himself? And considering this to be impossible, Bernard addresses the Virgin as ineffable and unutterable, because there are no words that are equal to the praise befitting her dignity.

The powerful Hand of God was so liberal and generous in bestowing graces upon His mother, giving her privileges and concessions above all other creatures, that the glorious Father Saint Bernard, repeating the words of the Angel Gabriel: *Et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi* (and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee), doubted whether the Virgin herself could understand the glory of the favor God was granting her. But if Bernard had doubts, Saint Augustine had none at all. Thus he says in his *Exposition on the Magnificat*: "I dare say that even the Virgin herself was not able to explain completely all the great things she was able to receive. *Audacter dico, quod neque ipsa Virgo plene explicare potuit quod capere potuit.* Thus neither men nor angels, nor even Our Lady herself, can explain the praise that is due to her; only God Himself can do that. As Andrew of Crete says in a prayer to Our Lady: *Quam Dei tantum est, laudare pro dignitate.*<sup>4</sup> It belongs to God alone to praise her because of her dignity. And the reason is clear. We cannot praise worthily what we do not know fully; and therefore I say that no mere creature, not even the highest among the Seraphim, will be able to praise the Virgin in proportion to her dignity, because to do this would mean to comprehend God, Who is incomprehensible. The dignity of the Mother ends in God—that dignity which she enjoys through the singular mercy of God. Wherefore it follows that only God, Who alone knows Himself and the grandeur of His Mother, can praise her fittingly. *Quam Dei tantum est laudare pro dignitate.*

From this arose the reverential fear of Saint Bernard when he had to preach or write about the grandeur of Our Lady, and this is why he said in the above-mentioned sermon on the Assumption: "There is nothing that give me more pleasure than speaking about the Virgin and praising her, yet there is nothing that makes me more fearful and troubled." (*Nihil est quod magis delectet; sed neque quod magis terreat, quam de gloria Virginis habere sermonem.*) In the saintly Doctor there was a

<sup>3</sup>Serm. 4 de Assumptione.

<sup>4</sup>De dormitione B. M. Beatæ Mariæ, orat. 1.

struggle between the love and the fear that he felt for Our Lady; the love that he had for her delighted him when he praised her, and like David, he would say to her: *Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua, super mel ori meo.*

But on the other hand, the reverential fear that he felt made him pause and give expression to his feeling by saying that the combined voices of all men and angels would not be sufficient to praise her worthily.

But although it is true that all the saints confess the inadequacy of human genius in relation to the worthy praise of the Virgin, they have not for that reason ceased praising and loving her. They have said all they felt, while still realizing and humbly accepting their poverty compared with the lofty grandeur of the Heavenly Princess. For her dignities are so many and of such a kind that only God Who gave her these dignities can know them fully and adequately esteem them. Saint Anselm, meditating on the loftiness of being the Mother of God, confessed that this is the highest glory imaginable, after the glory of God Himself. But for all that, Anselm advises us never to cease contemplating Mary and to address ourselves to her as much as we can; and if we are unable to comprehend her because of her greatness, it is not therefore denied us to think about her and to gather from her greatness whatever we in our littleness can discover. "*Nam tametsi comprehendere non sit datum, ruminare non est negatum.*"<sup>5</sup> This has encouraged me to discuss here the devotion we should have toward Our Lady, and to speak to you about the excellence of her sanctity. For although I realize that my knowledge of this subject is insufficient and that I have not learned all that the sage Doctors, aided by the grace of God, have said in praise of Our Lady, nevertheless I will try to say, in some way or another, a few of the many great things that could be said of the exalted Sovereign, our Heavenly Queen.

The source and beginning of all the graces that God bestowed on Our Lady, the summit in which are gathered all the prerogatives and favors that she received from His powerful Hand, and that placed her above angels and men, is this, that God, from all eternity, chose her to be His Mother. This is the reason for the lofty sanctity, the inviolable virginity, the fullness of grace and the immeasurable glory and all the other privileges that the Virgin has—that she could deserve to be the Mother of God. The Angelic Doctor Saint Thomas, in speaking about the dignity of the Mother of God, said: *Hic titulus, ut admirabilis est, ita admirabilis sanctimoniae universae virtutis postulat.*"<sup>6</sup> Thus, as this

<sup>5</sup>De excel. Virgin. c. 2

title of Mother of God is admirable, so it requires all the riches of sanctity. Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris, commenting on the words of Saint Matthew, Chapter 1, *De qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus*, said: "From these words there follows a principle of faith that the Virgin is the Mother of Jesus Who is called the Christ, and consequently she is the Mother of God, because Jesus Christ is God."<sup>7</sup> And from this principle we can derive another, that the Virgin, being the Mother of God, must be so pure, as Saint Anselm says, that under God there could not be a purer being imaginable. "*Decuit Virginem ea puritate nitere, qua maior sub Deo nequit intelligi.*"<sup>8</sup> From these two principles, as Gerson says, as from a most fertile seed-bed, we can gather praises to the Virgin. For there is no grace, no favor, no privilege granted to any creature that is not found in an eminent degree in the Virgin, the Mother of God, in whom God perfected all that is good in the nature and in the gifts He has given us; all that is good in angels and in men is found in the Virgin, but more fully and more perfectly.

The theologians agree that the most excellent gifts of humanity are in Christ. It was fitting that the Sacred Humanity of Christ, of this Man Who is the Son of God, should be adorned with all celestial and divine gifts above every creature. Now the title *Theotocos*, Mother of God, which in the Council of Nicea\* the Fathers of the Church gave to the Virgin, Our Lady, against the impiety of Nestorius, is the highest and most glorious title after that of God. In view of this we cannot but agree that Mary must be adorned with the loftiest divine graces after Christ her Son Himself, as befits the dignity bestowed upon the creature who is Mother of God. Dionysius the Carthusian says: "After those most holy gifts of grace that were bestowed upon the Sacred Humanity of Christ, the highest quality of excellence is found in those that were bestowed upon His Mother. And thus in the gifts of grace *gratis data* as well as in those gifts, habits, and works of grace *gratum faciente*, she holds first place after her Son."<sup>9</sup> Dionysius says that from this we gather that she who is so close to God that she shares in His gifts and holds first place after His Son, she who has these gifts in such abundance and in an heroic

<sup>6</sup>Q. 27, a. 1 ad. 1

<sup>7</sup>Serm. de nativitate Mariæ.

<sup>8</sup>lib. De conceptu virginali c. 18.

\*The Author is mistaken: it was not the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) which condemned Nestorius and declared the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, but the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431).—Ed.

<sup>9</sup>lib. I De laudibus Virginis.

degree, is a sea of grace, as the interpretation of her name suggests. For Mary (*Mar*) means sea, and as the sea is a mighty gathering of waters and rivers, so Mary is a mighty gathering of graces and a sea of such depth that no human power can exceed her.

Saint Thomas, in the first part of the *Summa*,<sup>10</sup> confirms this, saying that the humanity of Christ, by being united to God, and beatitude, by being the enjoyment of God, and the blessed Virgin, by being the Mother of God, all have a certain infinite dignity which proceeds from the infinite Good that is God. And for this reason nothing can be better than any of these three, because nothing can be better than God. This is what Saint Thomas says. And Saint Bonaventure in his book entitled *The Mirror of the Virgin*,<sup>11</sup> speaking of the dignity of the Mother of God, affirms that the Virgin was such a mother that God could not have made a better. Although God could have made a better heaven and a better world, He could not have made a better mother than the Mother of God. And the Saint says this of the Virgin not that as a particular person, but that as Mother of God she could not be more perfect, because her maternity looks to her Son, and she is like Him; and as God could not have made a better Son, neither could He have made a better Mother. Such, then, is the dignity and excellence of the Mother of God that in regard to grace and natural gifts she holds first place after her Son, and the dignity of the Mother of God is such that the divine Omnipotence could not extend Itself to make her more perfect.

From the same principle of her being the Mother of God it also follows that she is the person most intimately united with the person of the Savior Who is the author of grace and glory and the Just Dispenser of all good; and consequently, she partakes of all these more fully than anyone else. For as he who is closer to the sun receives more of its light, and he who is closer to the fire receives more of its warmth, so the most holy Mother receives more of the gifts of Christ because she is so united and joined to Him that the two cannot be separated or considered apart from one another. Nature created a strong tie between the body and the soul, but death loosens that tie sending the body to the grave and the soul to the Judgment of God, where it receives punishment or glory, according to its merits. But even before death comes, love can have the same effect on body and soul, for, as Aristotle says, the soul sometimes leaves the body to which she gives life, so that she can go to the one she

<sup>10</sup>1, q. 25, a. 6 ad 4.

<sup>11</sup>*Speculum B.V.M.* lect. 10. This work is not by Saint Bonaventure but by Conrad of Saxony.



loves and enjoy him: *Amantis anima plus est, ubi amat, quam ubi animat*. Whence Solomon came to say that *love is strong as death*, because both have the same effect of separating the soul from the body, no matter how closely united they may be. The union of the Word with His Sacred Humanity was so intimate that although the Savior's soul left His body when He died, His Divinity remained united to both His soul and His body. But there is no theologian who denies that if the Word had used His absolute power, He could have loosened the tie and dissolved the union. Nevertheless, the union between the divine essence and its attributes is so close that, as the dictum of the schools expresses it, *in divinis omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*. Among the Divine Persons, then, there is a difference only because their relation to one another is different. In nothing else is there any difference; there is only unity, peace, and harmony. But in spite of this, our understanding can make a distinction so fine that it sees a difference and says that although in essence all that is in God is God, nevertheless, formally justice is not mercy, nor is knowledge volition, and that the actions of each are different, for the Father engenders with knowledge and not with volition and He inspires with volition and not with knowledge; and although in the highest unity and real identity there is nothing greater than that of the essence with the divine Persons and attributes, nevertheless, for all that, reason can make a distinction and consider one without the other. Ultimately, there is no union so intimate that nature or at least reason cannot make a distinction and a division. We will find that only the union between mother and child, between maternity and sonship and the likenesses in their relationship, are so intimate and close that not even the finest distinction can separate them, for they are mutually dependent. The child depends on its mother, and the mother depends on her child, so that the one cannot be without the other. The mother will not be a mother if she has no child, and the child will not be a child if it has no mother. There is such a strong union between mother and child that nothing can destroy it. From this principle we can deduce something of the excellence of the Virgin above all creatures; for if the Mother of God is closer to her Son than anything else, so close that she cannot be separated from Him even by a process of reasoning, and as the Son is the fountain of all godness and holiness and the origin of grace and glory, it follows that after the Son, the Virgin is the one who most fully enjoys these gifts, she who is most blessed, holiest, and fullest in grace; she who enjoys immeasurable glory and prerogatives that set her far above angels and men. From what has been said we can now under-

stand the reason for loving the Virgin and for placing our devotion in her; for if the object of volition is the good, and if it is not lured with this bait truly or at least apparently, never will the beloved object fall into the arms of the lover; whence in Mary there is the highest good imaginable after God Himself, the reason being that after God she is the most beloved one. Because God is the Supreme Good. He is to be loved above all things; but after God, the goodness of His Mother is the greatest, and therefore is to be loved above all after God. This is the power that the Virgin, Our Lady, possesses of drawing hearts by the lure of her supreme goodness. For as the magnet draws iron, so the Virgin, like a divine magnet, draws to herself the hearts of men, no matter how erring they may be. Even when they are hard as steel, the sweetness of the most loving Virgin softens them like wax and presses into them fervent desires of serving God and herself. And why would she not attract the hearts of men when the first one to love her was God Himself, Who says of her in the *Cantic* that she has wounded His heart? *Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa, in uno oculorum tuorum et in uno crine colli tui* (Cant. 8). God addresses His Mother with the titles of sister and spouse to make us understand, as Saint Jerome says, the purity of His love for her, that it is spiritual and not carnal. The love of God for His spouse is not in the order of our carnal nuptials; it is a pure love, chaste and limpid, something like the love between brother and sister; and it is this love that the Celestial Bridegroom describes when he says that it has wounded Him: *Vulnerasti cor meum*. And giving the reason, He says that one of her eyes cast darts at Him and wounded His heart, and with a lock of hair that fell about her neck she bound Him and drew Him into her womb to make Him man. *In uno oculorum tuorum*, by which Saint Cyril of Alexandria<sup>12</sup> understands the singular faith of the Virgin, according to the words of Saint Elizabeth at the Visitation: *Beata, quae credidisti, etc.* The faith of the Virgin was the arrow that pierced the heart of God. *Vulnerasti cor meum*. And *in uno crine colli tui*, by which the holy Doctor understands the humility of Our Lady, which drew God down to her level. And the common opinion of learned men is that at the very moment that Our Lady spoke those words of such great humility, *ecce ancilla Domini*—at that moment the Divine Word became incarnate in her womb. The Heavenly Bridegroom was wounded by those virtues of Our Lady, her faith and her humility. *Vulnerasti cor meum*, or, as Symmachus translated it: *Excitasti me cor*. The merits of the Virgin stirred the bowels of the Divine Mother so that He took upon Himself

<sup>12</sup>Super Ioan. 1. II. c.9.

the flesh of our humanity. Thus as Zachary says: *Per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri in quibus visitavit nos* (Lk. 1: 78). And thus theology teaches that as the Incarnation is such a tremendous grace that it is beyond all possible meriting, nevertheless in the Saints of the Old Testament and especially in the merits of His Mother, God found such worthiness that it drew Him to become man and to hasten the moment of the Incarnation. He was wounded by love for this Celestial Princess. *Venerasti cor meum*. And this drew Him to become man. We can find support for this thought in the translation of the Seventy (Septuagint) which reads: *Abstraxisti a nobis cor, soror mea sponsa, rapuisti nobis cor, uno oculorum tuorum, et in uno ornamento colli tui*. There are the words of the Most Holy Trinity addressed to the Virgin. "Thou hast stolen our Heart, conquered by thy singular virtue." According to Saint Clement of Alexandria, the Eternal Word is the Heart. For as the heart is the principle of corporal life, so is Christ the principle of spiritual life. *In ipso vita erat, etc.* (Jn. 1:4). And this Heart, as God says, the Virgin stole on the day that the Word came from heaven to take flesh in her womb. Now, to return to my original theme, if the merits of the Virgin robbed God of His Heart, who would be so rebellious as to deny her her own heart? Who would not place his love and devotion in her? For she is the beginning of all our good, and through her intercession we are made able to enjoy the merits of Jesus Christ. We must declare that we are defeated by the love of this sovereign Queen, confessing to her the words of the angel to Jacob: *Si contra Deum fortis fuisti, quanto magis contra homines praevaleris* (Gen. 32)? If thou hast vanquished God, what can we do but declare ourselves vanquished also? And moved by this among other reasons that I hope to discuss later, I say that devotion to the Mother of God is a sure sign of predestination for heaven.

Maria A. Laughlin (transl)

<sup>18</sup>Sum. Theol. 3, q. 2, a. 2.

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND FRANCISCAN PENANCE

Our Seraphic Father's radical turning to God in a life of penance was his answer to the humility and love of the Incarnate Word, a humility and love that climaxed in the sombre spectacle on Calvary where the Love that loved us without end died in utter shame and dereliction. But this love of the Incarnate Word was not to be limited in space and time; before our Lord entered upon the agony of his supreme sacrifice of love, he perpetuated his bloody immolation on the altar of the cross by the living memorial of the Holy Eucharist. It was natural, therefore, that Saint Francis, whose heart was filled with the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word and who refused to think of anything but of him who spoke to him from the Cross, should center his religious life upon the Holy Eucharist. Let us, therefore, turn to the meaning of the Holy Eucharist for a further understanding of the Franciscan life in penance.

#### 1. *The Living Remembrance of the Lord's Passion*

It is hardly adequate to say that our holy Father Francis had a great devotion to the Eucharistic Christ. This could easily create the impression that Francis had only a great veneration for the Blessed Sacrament—which in any case is true—but that he was primarily overwhelmed by the fact that Christ is present on our altars, dwells in our tabernacles, and lives in our midst under the species of bread and wine, and consequently adored him and offered him continual praise and thanksgiving, surrounded him with all exterior splendor, with lights, flowers, and incense, and offered him private and public adoration in many forms. There is no doubt that Francis urged this veneration of the Blessed Sacrament; indeed, he entreated his brethren and all the faithful to have a great reverence and a most tender respect for the Body of our Lord. He himself cleaned neglected churches, and in his *Testament* he made clear to his children what he expected of them: "And I want these most Holy Mysteries above all else to be honored and venerated and kept in choice places." But this does not give us the *reason* for his love

of the Holy Eucharist. For this we must look more deeply into the writings of our Seraphic Father. Two texts of his lead us to the heart and basis of his devotion. In his first Rule Francis admonished the brethren: "Thus with contrition and after confession let them with great humility and reverence receive the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, remembering what the Lord said: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting; and: Do this in remembrance of me" (I Rule, c. 20). With even more emphasis our holy Father urged the Rulers and Magistrates (Epist. IV): "Hence I advise you strongly, my lords, that you set aside all care and worry and that you readily receive the most holy Body and the most holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy commemoration of him." Thus it is clear that to Saint Francis the Eucharist meant first and above all to come to the living remembrance of Christ's passion and death and resurrection through adoring his mystical presence on the altar and through receiving him sacramentally. For to receive the Holy Eucharist is not merely a symbolic act or memorial commemoration of the supreme sacrifice and victory of the Incarnate Word; it is the *reality*.

There seems to be a danger that our modern religious subjectivism may sometimes lose sight of that which was such a deep conviction for Saint Francis, that the Holy Eucharist is primarily and essentially to commemorate the Lord by receiving his Body and Blood. An unsound emotionalism may easily creep into what we nowadays call Holy Communion—an expression that can lead us to see in the reception of this Sacrament primarily union with Christ. As a consequence it can tend to make us create a forced devotional atmosphere, a whole routine of emotional acts of salutation, gratitude, humility, joy, love, and so forth. There is nothing dogmatically wrong in this; on the contrary, if it is done with sincerity and discretion and a love that first seeks the union of will and life, it can be wonderfully fruitful for our religious life; but it is not the deepest meaning nor the ultimate purpose of the Sacrament. The deepest meaning and ultimate purpose is to commemorate the Lord's passion and death. In receiving the Body and Blood of our Savior we come in living contact with his passion and death, *announcing his death until he comes*, not simply by thinking of him and piously remembering him, but by the *real remembrance* of his death which

in an unbloody manner is repeated as a sacrifice upon our altars. It is Christ who again celebrates the Passover with us, at whose table we sit in the Upper Room; it is Christ who breaks bread with us and gives us the chalice to drink, who takes us with him to his agony in the garden, to his arrest and trial and condemnation, to his scourging and crowning with thorns, to his weary way of the cross and to his death on Calvary. It is a *real* remembrance, for Christ is *really* present.

Saint Francis could never forget this. Thus he wrote in his *Letter to All the Faithful*: "With his suffering near, he celebrated Passover with his disciples, and taking bread he gave thanks and blessed it and broke it, saying: Take and eat, this is my Body. And taking the chalice he said: This is my Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many for the remission of your sins. Later he prayed to the Father, saying: Father, if it can be done, let this chalice pass from me. And his sweat became like drops of blood dripping down on the ground. Still he placed his will in the will of his Father, saying: Father, thy will be done; not as I wish, but as thou wishest. Now such was the will of his Father that his glorious blessed Son, whom he gave up to us and who was born for us, should offer himself up in his own Blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross, not for himself through whom all things have been made, but for our sins, leaving us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps. It is his will that we all should be saved by him, receiving him with a pure heart and a chaste body."

Do we have the same attitude toward the Holy Eucharist as our Seraphic Father had? Are we also inspired by the Holy Gospel, and do we see in the receiving of the Body of Christ primarily the real commemoration of his passion and death? If this is our attitude, then we are in real communion with Christ and our life of penance will receive its ultimate sacramental blessing and sanctification from the Eucharist. Penance means to die with Christ to our own will as he died to his will in the garden. *Father, not my will be done, but thine*. And with him and in him and through him we will accept whatever chalice the Father gives to us. We will accept it as Christ did, for we are not alone. He who drank the chalice first is with us. What else then can we do when we return from the table of the Lord but live in the sincere commemoration of his passion and

death, and with fidelity and determination follow the footsteps of the Crucified, drink our chalice daily, and desire nothing but the cross.

## 2. The Exhortation to Purity

As the culmination of our life in penance, the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ demands and leads to purity of heart, Saint Francis understood it. We know what he meant by purity of heart from the letter he wrote to the General Chapter. He addressed himself mainly to the priests of the Order, but his words apply to everyone receiving the Holy Eucharist: "I likewise beg in the Lord all my brothers who are now and will be and wish to be priests of the Most High, that when they wish to celebrate Mass they should do so pure and in a pure and reverent manner perform the true sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with clean and holy intention, and not for any earthly return or out of fear or love of any man, *as if to please men*. But let all their will, far as the grace of the Almighty favors, be directed toward him in the desire to please with it the sovereign Lord alone, because in it alone *as, as it pleases him*."

From this it is clear what Saint Francis meant by purity of heart: he meant purity of intention, the clean breaking with the world and the unconditional turning to God in simplicity and directness of heart. For him to be pure in heart meant "to despise earthly things and to seek only heavenly things" (Admonition 16.) In the Holy Eucharist we meet our God who in utter humility, in his passion and death, shows us by his example the worthlessness of the mundane things we cherish, the follies we seek with an impure heart, the empty pleasures we indulge in to the forgetfulness of him who desires to possess our whole heart. What a contradiction, what a lie for us to meet our Lord at the Last Supper in living commemoration of his death, and at the same time to be governed by human respect by worldly favors, by loves that can never fill our heart! It is true when we enshrine our Lord in gold and jewels, we use the most precious material for the vessels that will contain his sacred Body and Blood—but that is only a sign of our reverence; the reality they contain is the commemoration of his passion and death, and this reality de-

mands the clean vessel of the heart, detached from all earthly desires.

Franciscan penance, therefore, is really a Eucharistic penance. It takes its inspiration from the Incarnate Word and its direction from his passion; but its life it takes from the reality of the Incarnate Word and the Crucified in the transformation into the life of Christ. Here our pride is shattered not by the stirring account of Christ's life and death, but by the facing of Humility itself in reality. If we can understand this, then we can understand with our heart and mind and our whole personality in true *metanoia* the words Saint Francis uttered, not as a pious effusion but as his everlasting experience: "Let the whole man stand in awe, let the whole world tremble, and let heaven exult, when Christ the Son of the living God is there on the altar in the hands of the priest! O admirable dignity and amazing condescension! O sublime lowliness! O lowly sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, should so humble himself as to hide under the form of a morsel of bread for our welfare. Look, brethren, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before him. Be humbled yourselves so you can be exalted by him. Do not keep anything back for yourselves, so that he may have you altogether as his own who puts himself altogether at your disposal" (*Letter to the General Chapter*).

## 3. The Pledge of Our Eternal Glory

When we celebrate the real commemoration of our Savior's passion and death we meet our Lord who for us lived this *metanoia*, this radical penance, in its deepest sense by despising utterly the things of the world and by choosing the things of eternity, that is, the will of his Eternal Father, or as Saint Francis said so emphatically, "he placed his will in the will of his Father." It was through this radical penance in the fulfillment of the will of the Father that Christ became our victorious Savior. For he *humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend* (Phil. 2:8-10).

Thus Saint Francis also understood the Holy Eucharist. Not only as a real commemoration of the immolation of Christ but also

as his own co-immolation with Christ. Celano reports that "he frequently received Holy Communion and so devoutly that he made others devout. With every reverence he followed that which demands reverence, offering the sacrifice of all his members, and receiving the immolated Lamb he immolated his spirit with that which was constantly burning on the altar of his heart" (*Vita* 201). Thus Saint Francis himself became a sacrifice, became a victim in the sacrifice of the Mass together with the divine Victim. He celebrated Mass with the priest, the ordained instrument; he offered himself, his body, his spirit, his whole life, by uniting himself with the Lamb whose immolation was being renewed on the altar, in this co-immolation he received the pledge of his future glory. What Saint Augustine said about Christ, "he was victor because he was victim" (*Victor quia victima*), Saint Francis clearly understood for himself and all those who become victims in holy Mass. In union with the passion and death of the Crucified lies our real hope for life everlasting; here lies our real victory over death and sin. For though we are commemorating the death of our Savior in the Holy Eucharist, it is not Christ in his mortality and suffering which is concealed under the morsel of bread. Saint Francis explains that we receive him "not now as going to die, but as going to live and be glorified forever, whom the angels learn to gaze upon" (*Letter to the General Chapter*).

It is true, we are not yet victors, but it is equally true that if we are now victims with Christ, we will also be victors with Christ. In our mortal state we must grow into him as he was in his mortal state and that means first and above all to be united with him in total immolation in that sacrifice which he constantly renews on our altars. Here our death to the world must take its daily beginning, here our striving for perfection, our constant turning to ourselves, must receive its strength and blessing; here our daily carrying of the cross must be sanctified. But the more we grow into him in this immolation, becoming true victims, the more the seed that is planted in us will grow and be strengthened, the pledge of our final victory, the promise of eternal life, and the hope of our everlasting glory. To the Sacrament of Penance we owe the remission of sins; but confession is not the pledge of eternal life and resurrection. It is only in this Holy Sacrament of the Altar that the pledge of life everlasting is given. Hence

Saint Francis repeated the words of the Savior: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting" (*Admonition I*). The Holy Eucharist, Mass and Holy Communion, is the Sacrament of our hope in Christ. Do we think of this and really act according to this hope? We worry so much about our eternal destiny, we scrutinize our conscience, we wonder whether our sins are forgiven, we may begin to doubt and lapse into that futile battle with scruples and the uncertainty that any human action entails. As long as we base our hope on confession or on our so-called "good conscience," we can be sure that we are on very shaky ground and are enjoying a very doubtful security. The pledge of our future salvation, of eternal life, of the resurrection of the body, is given only in this blessed Sacrament. Only here is true peace and reconciliation to be found, the true hope that will never let us be confounded. Why not take it where it is placed at our disposal? Why neglect to make this most

## REQUIESCAT IN PACE

With deep sorrow the members of the Franciscan Institute announce the untimely death of our beloved Director, Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. Sometime after midnight, Sunday, May 22, coronary thrombosis ended the earthly life of a man who was a true Friar Minor, a great scholar, and a faithful friend.

Father Philotheus, was born on February 17, 1901, in Lichtenau, Westphalia. He entered the Order of Friar Minor in 1920 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1927. He had been stationed at Saint Bonaventure University since 1939 and had been director of the Franciscan Institute since its founding in 1940.

The passing of Father Philotheus is deeply regretted by those who knew him and loved him for his genuine greatness. Yet there is consolation in the knowledge that his earthly life of selfless charity, of scholarship devoted to the clarification of truth, and above all his priestly zeal for the things of God, are surely meriting a glorious and everlasting reward.

essential part of our spiritual life the pivot of all our activity? When we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, when we are with him in real remembrance of his passion and death, with him who himself rose from the dead and now reigns forever, let us surrender all our insecurity and all our worries and all our scruples to him who has made this his Supper, made his table the place of eternal life for us. Let us therefore take to heart the words of the holy Father Francis to the Chapter: "Hence I entreat you all my brethren, with a kiss of your feet and whatever charity I can, let you show every reverence and every honor, whatever you can, to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which the Lord is ever in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and has been reconciled with the almighty God."

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## THE FOUNDING YEARS OF THE SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

*Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and to the uttermost ends of the coast is the price of her (Prov. 31:10).*

Whether a soul turns to or from God in a given moment is, in the words of Dr. Anton Pegis, incomparably more important than the explosion of the atom bomb. Nowhere can the significance of this conversion be more clearly understood than in the history of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania who, on the ninth of April of this year, celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of their foundation.

That moment so fraught with extraordinary consequences was given to Marie Anna Bachman on the fourteenth of September, 1851, as she knelt in an agony of grief beside the mangled form of her young husband. How could she know, so young then, so insignificant a figure in the crowded life of burgeoning Philadelphia, that at that moment she was placed on the crest of time; that that movement of the soul would echo and thousands touched by her decision out, far out, into mysterious spiritual depths or back, slowly back, into the shallow and snug shoals of security and spiritual mediocrity?

What were her thoughts, this Anna Bachman, aged 27, poor immigrant wife of Anthony Bachman, late of Wenigumstadt, near Aschaffenburg, Bavaria, as she knelt there beside her husband, mortally wounded in the quarry where he worked outside of Philadelphia? Did she foresee herself destitute in a strange land, the mother of four little children, the youngest not yet born? Did her mind sweep back, perhaps, to the familiar security of Aschaffenburg where her husband was coachman to King Ludwig of Bavaria? Or did she, in a stunned and awesome wonder, turn searching eyes upon the inscrutable designs of God?

Two points of evidence now tell us that in that moment when eternity reached out to trouble the peaceful current of her life, Marie Anna Bachman raised up her stricken heart to God in an act of utter abandonment. Far from turning in upon herself in a confusion of misery and self-pity, this frail woman with the instinctive strength of the soul already closely united to the Divine Will, bowed meekly before the designs of Almighty God in an act of heroic love and trust.

We spoke of evidence. In the chronicles of the community there is related that the Sister on duty in Saint Joseph Hospital where Anthony Bachman died that day approached the young wife to console her. But the heavenly calm of the clear blue eyes that looked up from the still form, the intensity of the prayer that illuminated her face and hushed all natural signs of grief, told that Sister Nurse, as she later recalled, that her words of solace would have been an intrusion.

More tangibly, the history of the Glen Riddle Franciscan Sisters testifies in its one hundred years of dedicated service to God and humanity that in that moment of sorrow Marie Anna Bachman turned to God with results that have been, in the spiritual and social order, incomparably more important than the achievements of nuclear science that have shaken this generation.

A spiritual writer has said, "The source of the waters of interior joy is not on earth; the mouth of desire must be opened heavenward—utterly empty." In the days that followed, Marie Anna Bachman learned more and more deeply that for her earth was devoid of joy. Unerringly, she turned to Christ Crucified, and in His Passion found strength and peace.

In sympathy for her sister, Barbara Boll took up residence with Marie Anna in the simple home at 253 Apple Street in Philadelphia. Barbara had already revealed to her confessor, the Reverend John Hesperian, C.S.S.R., of Saint Peter Church, her desire to become a religious. He had even, at his direction, made application to the School Sisters of

Notre Dame. The sudden death of Anthony Bachman led her to believe that for the present at least she was needed by her widowed sister. Nevertheless the call to religious life was so persistent that Barbara sought Father Hespelein. By this time she was convinced that, for serving God must take some form of service to her suffering neighbor. Aware of the conditions in the Bachman home, Father Hespelein desired Barbara to remain there, practice charity towards her little orphaned relatives, and subject herself to her sister as she would a religious superior. He urged her, moreover, to spend much time in prayer and spiritual reading. Beyond that, Divine Providence in due time would guide her.

For Barbara, amazement must have mingled with joy when Mrs. Anna divulged that she too felt the call of a religious vocation. Not aware of her duty towards her children—indeed, filled with the motherly love for them—this young woman yet felt that God desired of her total immolation. Never impetuous in speech or precipitate in action, Marie could await quietly the unfolding of God's Will. With Sister Bernard she knew that He Who is the source of all holy desires provides the means to fulfill them. Wisely, she turned to her confessor, the Reverend L. Coudenhove, for guidance.

The prudent Redemptorist was slow to counsel beyond recommending much prayer to the Holy Spirit. As a possible step in the direction of their desires, he suggested that they convert their home into a hospice for working girls' home. Interpreting this arrangement from the removal of one hundred years, perhaps Father Coudenhove anticipated a different result: the nominal fee paid by the residents would assist the young women financially, yet in such a way as to exercise them in the realities of poverty—self-denial and sacrifice.

It is recorded by early members of the community how happy the women were at what they believed was the first step toward their goal. The little dwelling on Apple Street became the "Holy Family Home." For it, Fr. Hespelein drew up a definite rule of life sufficiently liberal to enable everyone to follow its directions. In the serenity and austerity of that little "convent" the first two members of the Community began the social service work by which they hoped to sanctify themselves and work for the spiritual and temporal good of their neighbor. Each day began with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Saint Peter Church at Fifth and Girard Avenue. In spiritual reading and quiet meditation they entered, as Father Faber has so well described it, "...the world of thought where we most often meet with God, walking as in the shades of ancient

Eden." In that holy atmosphere, their desire to serve God took deep root. However, before God saw fit to embark them formally upon the sea of religious life, He had determined that another soul must join them. That soul, so privileged by God to contribute notably to the spread of the Church in America, was meanwhile leading the simple devout life of a Tertiary of Saint Francis in her native village of Casseldorf in Bavaria.

About 1853 one of the young ladies who resided in the Holy Family Home returned to Germany for a family visit. In the group of interested friends who listened raptly to her tales of America was the young Tertiary, Anna Dorn. Particularly inspiring to her youthful and pious imagination must have been the story of the "gentle Widow Bachman," as the visitor called her. The narrator's statement that in all probability Mrs. Bachman would found a religious order, since the tenor of her little home so closely approximated conventual life, fired Anna's earnest soul. She would go to America and join Mrs. Bachman! Scrutinizing the incident from the century's distance, one must see in Anna Dorn's sudden decision youth's impetuous enthusiasm. Nevertheless, that facile interpretation does not explain fully ensuing events. One wonders: If the missionary life in America so attracted Anna Dorn, why did she not join the German Sisters of the Precious Blood who had settled in Ohio in 1844? (Her good parents must have urged it.) Or, perhaps, the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Ratisbon? Their coming to Brooklyn in 1853 may well have reached Anna's ears. Naturally speaking, Anna Dorn's decision looks overhasty. Mrs. Bachman was unknown to her; her plans were both tentative and vague. What was there, then, in the villager's account that so persuaded her to forsake the security of her humble home? How well those know who have served God's mysterious and adorable ways with man that His "...counsel is not in man's power," "...neither is there any searching out of His wisdom." In the passing conversation of a returning emigrant, the Holy Spirit spoke His will.

"With haste," to use the phrase that charms us so in Saint Luke's account of the Visitation, Anna journeyed into a far country. Her quest for Mrs. Bachman was delayed upon arrival in Philadelphia by the promise she had made her parents to repay her passage. As this young woman emerges in Community history, it is delightful to observe with what simplicity and spontaneity she moves. Evidently Anna Dorn was a woman of action: decisive and courageous. One finds those characteristics illuminated in all the little incidents that recall her early history. For her, the thing to be done must be done at once! In her first situation,



her employers object to attendance at Sunday Mass. She leaves immediately and finds work with a tailor. The first day there, a fellow-worker asks: "Will you join me at lunch?" Characteristically, Anna accepts the notes, with shrewd self-reliance, of the modest boarding house to which her friend had led her—its other-worldly atmosphere, the simple gentleness of the owners, their unabashed spirituality. Informed that this is in fact the Holy Family Home she intended to contact later, Anna at once requests an interview with Mrs. Bachman. That evening we find her leaning upon the woman who had inspired her to leave home and come so far behind. In the light of faith, this remarkable coincidence is but another manifestation of the loving care with which God was moving to bring about the Philadelphia foundation of the Sisters of Saint Francis. In leading Anna Dorn to Marie Anna Bachman, it was as though the Holy Father and Our Father were impatient now that she be about His work. "He led me about and taught me: and He kept me as the apple of His eye," Anna might have paraphrased the sacred writer in thinking of her vocation.

In the interview that followed, Anna revealed her pious aspirations for her daring journey. Marie Bachman marveled how God had brought them together with such singular explicitness. The information that Anna was a Tertiary of Saint Francis pleased Marie. Indeed, she regarded that as an inspiration from Divine Providence that the incipient community be enrolled under the protection of Saint Francis of Assisi, but, with temperateness that would serve as a prudent foil to Anna Dorn's quick decisiveness, she asked counsel of her spiritual guide. The answer was Marie Bachman the true and humble daughter of the Church who sought Wisdom from her Mother's hand.

Describing their meeting many years later, Anna Dorn, then Mother Mary Bernardine, wondered at the impression of profound spirituality that the young Mrs. Bachman even then created. Mother Bernardine recalled the stark poverty of the little bedroom where the interview occurred. A small table was there on which rested a crucifix, a spiritual reading book, some stationery. An old chair stood nearby. On the wall hung a large framed certificate of the family's enrollment in the Holy Family Association, a gift of Mr. Bachman to his family. Anna was convinced that Mrs. Bachman, like many another saintly soul, slept either on the floor or in the rude chair. But of that Marie revealed nothing.

Well satisfied that in the Holy Home she had found those kindred spiritual desires that had prompted her to cross the ocean, Anna Dorn arranged to move into the Home and join the two sisters in their plan to dedicate their lives to the service of God. All this was in the year 1854.

### *His Holiness, Pope Pius IX, desires a Franciscan Community*

Now that God in His wisdom had fitted together the triform cornerstone on which to erect the present Franciscan Community, factors external to the lives of these young women began to hasten the work. It was necessary for two great and holy ecclesiastics to cooperate in God's plan: the Venerable John Nepomucene Neumann, fourth bishop of Philadelphia, and His Holiness, Pope Pius IX.

In the year 1854, Bishop Neumann accepted the invitation of the Holy Father to be present at the solemn ceremony of the definition of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception. As his biographer, the Reverend Michael J. Curley, C.S.S.R., records, Bishop Neumann also used the occasion for his *ad limina* visit to Rome. In his report to the Holy Father, Bishop Neumann mentioned that he wished to introduce the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Dominic into Philadelphia for the large German immigrant population there. In the Holy Father's response one again sees the Providential hand of God pointedly indicating His pleasure in the desires of Marie Anna Bachman, Barbara Boll, and now Anna Dorn. Although sympathizing with the Bishop's need of sisters, His Holiness thought it wiser for him to found his own community. The Holy Father suggested, moreover, that it be Franciscan. As a Tertiary of the Third Order, Pius IX was well schooled in the essential Franciscan spirituality and he believed that the Franciscan spirit could best adapt itself to the needs of the country.

Although the gentle prelate was a man of intense faith and tried humility, this change in plans must have been disturbing. He knew of no women qualified for this serious and noble undertaking. Where could he turn? The same Divine Guidance that had led him to enlarge the scope of the charitable work of his diocese had already prepared for the good Bishop the means to conform quickly to the Holy Father's wishes. In the mail from America, he found a letter from Father Hespelein concerning the three young women who were requesting episcopal approbation as Franciscan Sisters. It was at once manifest to the venerable prelate—and it has ever since been manifest and consoling to the members of this Community—that the foundation was the undoubted will of God voiced by His Vicar on earth. In the ardent desires of the three founding members Almighty God had prepared the means to carry out the Holy Father's wishes.

Bishop Neumann then wrote to Father Hespelein bidding him continue his direction of the three women and to instruct them to pre-

pare for their clothing in the holy habit upon his return to America. Meantime the Bishop also communicated with the Franciscan Father in Rome to obtain permission to receive and profess members of the Third Order of Saint Francis.

Bishop Neumann landed in New York on the 28th of March, 1841. He went directly to his see. In the interview with Mrs. Bachman and her companions that occurred shortly thereafter, it is apparent that Bishop was highly pleased for the clothing ceremony was set at once for Easter Monday, April 9.

That first Investiture, so different from the carefully formal and solemn ceremony now held annually on the feast of Saint Clare, took place in Saint Peter Church after Vespers. Bishop Neumann presided, a few members of the parish, perhaps attracted by the presence of the prelate, perhaps knowing something of the story of the Holy Family Home, remained to witness the investing. What were the emotions of those three holy founder? Since there is no written record, it is difficult to tell. "I have desired to go where springs not fail," the poet says of a young nun taking her veil. That verse veils more than reveals the sacred emotions that no nun would have dissected. What is evident from the events that so quickly followed is this: the Holy Spirit filled those young souls with many graces. Those of fortitude and a humble daring were not least among His gifts.

#### *Early Trials of the Founding Sisters*

Mrs. Bachman, now referred to as the Foundress, received the names of Sister Mary Francis. Barbara Boll became Sister Mary Margaret; Ann Dorn, Sister Mary Bernardine. A fourth member, Mary December, called Sister Mary Otillia, did not persevere. The Bishop's appointment of Sister Mary Francis as superior of the little group simply voiced the spontaneous choice of all. Mother Francis' leadership had been evident from the start. Turning to her mature judgments and thoughtful decisions, the Sisters found in her quiet assumption of authority a stabilizing force that early produced in the Community a mental environment of calm and purposiveness.

From the vicissitudes of the past four years Marie Anna Bachman had emerged noticeably greater in spiritual stature. There was about her now a strength and buoyancy that follow upon a great spiritual crisis. The well-developed gifts of prudence and temperateness already noted, she had grown in a love of God distinguishably Franciscan in character. Mother Mary Francis evidenced a marked attraction toward penance

in union with the suffering humanity of Christ and an extension of her love of humanity at once valorous and benign. We find her—and for many years the early members of the Community—fasting and abstaining on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and conforming to the long fasts of Advent and Lent. To this were added the daily rigors and privations that followed upon the total poverty of their lives. Through discerning spiritual reading and daily meditation, her interior life had been further deepened so that she walked as one never quite removed from an active awareness of the presence of God. Gracing this personality and softening what might well have become austere asceticism, there was about Mother Francis a maternal benignity that found expression in a tender and vocal solicitude for her Sisters' spiritual and physical well-being. Thus it is that we find her writing from Utica, New York, in September of 1860, with unaffected tenderness:

My dearest Sisters: Only God knows how much I love you!  
Would that I in my youth had been as fortunate as you to  
dwell in the house of God. . .

Then, after exhorting them to flee temptation and live in interior recollection and prayer, with the touching concern of the true mother, she says:

Write soon and let me know how you all are. I embrace you  
all in the loving Heart of Jesus your cherished Spouse, and  
again bless every single one of you.

Hardly had the three women donned the brown habit of a Tertiary than they were denounced for appearing in it. An explanation for this lies in the social-political-religious atmosphere of the Philadelphia of the fifties. Nativists and the Know-Nothing Party had harried ecclesiastics and the faithful into a disturbed state of mind timorous of further persecution. The appearance of the three in religious garb touched off a kind of hysteria. It was some time before the recriminations of the laity and even the clergy ceased to cause them humiliation and sorrow. Father Hespelein, their spiritual guide, solved the difficulty, at least for those who objected to the habit, by ordering the Sisters not to appear in it in public. Sister Bernardine and Sister Margaret later recalled their deep humiliation at this obedience. There is something so human—feminine—in their reaction. Mother Francis, with the insight that sorrow gives, penetrated beyond accidentals to unchanging values. She accepted the situation with equanimity and no recalled comment. It was not until

October, 1858, when the Sisters began teaching in Saint Alphonsus School, that they again donned a religious habit. By then, the Minor Conventual Fathers had been introduced into the diocese for the express purpose of guiding the spiritual formation of the young community. Like that of the Conventuals, the new habit of the Sisters of Saint Francis was a simple black serge with identifying Franciscan cord from which hung, then, a five-decade rosary. A black veil and white linens, much as they are worn today, completed the garb. Sister Bernardine, it is interesting to note, the former tailoress, made the habits with expert skill.

Fast upon this trial came another much more disconcerting to Mother Mary Francis. Sister Bernardine, who had evidently been undergoing some scruples about her vocation, was directed by Father Hespeler to enter a community more firmly established. Contemporaries recalled Mother's stricken silence at the news, her, "Sister, repeat what you have said. I do not think I understand you." This blow was particularly hard upon Mother. Perhaps more than she realized, she had depended upon the vigor and youthful courage of Sister Bernardine. Rightly, the other foundresses had looked to Sister Bernardine to be with them a pillar of strength for the three postulants who had already joined them. Seemingly as the trial was, it did not last long. Sister Bernardine could not content herself in any convent except the poverty-stricken little home on Apple Street, and with no religious companions except the gentle Mother Francis and the faithful Sister Margaret. She begged Father Hespeler to permit her to return. He did so, and Mother Francis welcomed her back with simple joy: "Sister, I knew that you would come back to us."

Thus was their novitiate year spent in the Holy Family Home. In their welfare, the Venerable Bishop exercised great paternal concern, visiting at intervals to encourage and instruct them in those religious principles that he himself observed with heroic virtue. Of his interest in the Sisters of Saint Francis, his biographer observes that "he lavished the utmost care" upon them. He received, on the 26th of May, 1856, the vows of the three Sisters in his private chapel, now an office in the Cathedral Building at 18th and Summer Streets. Father Hespeler was present. The words of a member of the Community, now with God, may well recall that event:

Of earthly splendor there was none at this ceremony. There was nothing of the greatness that might attract the votaries of the world in this little group; but the one great Lord

beheld with pleasure their vows registered in the Book of Life; and heavenly melody filled their souls as the first great chapter of their lives as religious closed.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Bishop Neumann handed Mother Francis a Rule of Life, written in his own hand, a copy of which is still preserved in the archives of the Community. He said:

Take this Rule, which is small in form but which, if faithfully adhered to, will lead to great ends.

When the Bishop's plans to build a convent for the Sisters near the Seminary of 18th and Race Streets did not materialize—he had hoped that they would help in the care of the Seminary—Mother Francis found herself in a quandary in that she had, anticipating the move, allowed the lease on the Apple Street house to lapse. It was necessary to place in private homes the Sisters and the novices until other quarters suitable for their needs could be found. These temporary measures were taken, Sister Margaret departing with the Bachman children to her sister Cunigunda's home. Cunigunda—to digress momentarily—with her widowed mother and sisters Baraba, Louise, and Walburga, had come to Philadelphia in June, 1849, at Marie Anna's urging. After her mother's death Cunigunda, by then Mrs. Bielefeld, had settled in Tacony. The arrangements should have eased Mother's mind, for in the hospitality of the Bielefeld home Sister Margaret was free to care for the children and at the same time earn a modest living sewing. Instead, the arrangement precipitated a crisis that caused both sisters keen mental suffering. Alone with her own thoughts, the loyal and good Margaret began to doubt the reality of her vocation. It was a presumption, she reasoned, for her to think of establishing a religious community. More, she had deterred Marie Anna from her sacred obligation to her little children. In her tortured thinking, Sister Margaret resolved to remain with Cunigunda and care for the Bachman children. Mother Francis, she concluded, must solve the problem for herself.

This untoward development became known to John Geisenhoff, husband of Walburga Boll, when he imparted the news that Mother had located a suitable home at 1517 Apple Street (now Lawrence). It is a testimony to Mr. Geisenhoff's firm faith and sound judgment that he reproved her rather than sympathized with what he probably saw were the protestations of a distraught soul. Providentially, Mother Francis arrived on the scene to calm Sister Margaret's fears. The next day Mother

er arranged that her two boys remain with the Bielefelds and that her two little daughters continue to live with her at what would now be Saint Clara Convent.\*

Again Mother Francis had been called upon to weather a crisis in the establishment of the community. In the light of her evident obligations to her children, Mother's unwavering conviction that this work was the will of God seems clearly a divine inspiration. In her struggle and suffering one is reminded of two other noble American mothers of her century—the long-suffering Cornelia Connelly, the valiant Elizabeth Seton. What this incident cost Mother Francis, touching as it did so personal a question as her duty to her children, is only hinted at in the annals. From afar, one pictures her on the Feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis as she admits with gentle old-world courtesy Father Hespelein to Saint Clara Convent for the formal blessing of this new cradle of Francis can life. Do her lovely quiet eyes move in poignant reflection from the children of her youth and love to this cherished new life that she feels constrained to bring forth in so much pain? "What does he know who has not been tried?" one asked before her. But nothing escapes the sensitive lips. They keep their wordless vigil over an agony of spirit that is learning anew the complexity of sorrow and joy Saint Francis felt when he cried, "My God and my All!"

*Sr. Jeannette Clare, O.S.F. ✓*

*(To be continued)*

## WORKADAY RELIGIOUS

We religious talk about acts of love as fundamental motives for our work because we are a very special type of people, laboring for the perfection of our soul. We want personalities modeled on God's, Who is love. For His glory and our sanctification we seek to do His will, and we know that His will for us is that our faith bring forth the fruit of good works. Dogmatic insistence on good works

\*God's care of Mother Mary Francis' children is striking. Her two daughters became Sisters of St. Francis. The younger, Cunigunda, is still living at the age of 103, the venerated Sister Francis of the Buffalo Community. Her boy, John Frederick, died for his country at 17, a soldier in the Civil War. The other son, Aloysius, became a priest and labored with great piety for over fifty years in the Albany diocese.

also remarks that such works must be consecrated by the right motive. Though fatigued and burdened by the effects of sin, we know that as religious our labor has a God-given dignity, blessed as it is by the spirit of obedience and submission to the will of God.

Daily tasks lose nothing of their rigor, but they do gain in meaning, when we consecrate them by offering them as works of the children of God. We often think that it would have been happiness itself to have walked with the historical Christ, to have ministered to His needs, to have worked in the ministry under His eyes. Then we would really have felt that we were cooperating in God's work. But is the daily task imposed by obedience less a participation in the work of Christ? The living reality of Christ in His Church calls for men to continue His mission. It is for the Church to offer still a sheepfold of security to all men, to administer the means of grace, to keep the faith pure and perennial. Those of us who live the life of the Church dwell in an aura of grace, ever striving both to earn more and to pass the great gift on to others. We learn very early in our novitiate life the fact that we have not been admitted to religion for a purely personal, and perhaps selfish purpose. Nor does being a religious mean being immured in a secure monastic cell for a yogi-like existence of inert contemplation. For Christians, the religious life—be it active or contemplative—is a life combining prayer and labor. If we fail in one or the other, we fail totally in the religious life.

Ideals we all have by the bookful. Most of them revolve around compliance to the will of God, which is all very fine. But the translation of these ideals into reality remains to be done. And it must be done wholly, in the spirit of our Order, without any decline from the first fervor to a comfortable attitude that casually sidesteps the monotony of daily duties and onerous assignments. No fear should be felt that the early ideal was a bit on the ascetical or impractical side, as we might be tempted to call it. It may seem so now, but only because we have allowed our first love to cool, because we have yielded to compromise with self, because we have let the world tell us what is practical and sensible. But when we were young in religion we interpreted things in relation to the Gospel and the Rule. We immersed ourselves in the writings of Saint Francis and made every effort to conform to his spirit. We loved the ideal of prayer

and work because he had loved it and told us in his *Testament* how he and his first companions lived. "We who were clerics said the Office like other clerics, the lay members said the Our Father, and we were quite happy spending the time in churches. And we were plain people and at everybody's service. And I worked with my hands, and I wish to work; and I wish earnestly to have all the rest of the brothers work at employment such as conforms with propriety. Those who know none should learn, not from any desire to earn the price of their labor, but for example's sake and to repel idleness. And of course there is the Rule: "Those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working should work faithfully and devotedly in such a way that with idleness, the enemy of the soul, excluded they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which everything temporal must be subservient."

If we have come to think, after so many years in religion, that the Rule is somewhat out of place in the modern world and need not be followed too literally, we might do well to recall that the Rule was approved over the objections of many princes of the Church. They called it a dreamer's document, beyond the power of ordinary men to observe. But Cardinal Colonna recalled the source of Francis' inspiration—the Gospel itself—and remarked that he thought it blasphemous to call the evangelical life impractical. So we have our Rule, which we know to be guaranteed as a perfect standard of life. And if our activities are to reflect the spirit of the Rule, we must not allow secular attitudes to condition them.

A famous industrialist said recently: "You can buy a man's time, you can buy a man's physical presence at a given place. But you cannot buy enthusiasm; you cannot buy initiative; you cannot buy loyalty. You have to *earn* those things." It is ironic that Americans—the world's most advanced people technically, mechanically, and industrially are just beginning to inquire into the most promising source of productivity: the human will to work.

Pope Leo XIII had something to say about labor in his *Rerum novarum*: "A man's labor has two characteristics. First of all it is personal, for the exertion of individual power belongs to the individual who puts it forth, employing the power for the personal profit for which it was given. Secondly, a man's labor is necessary, for with-

out the results of labor a man cannot live; and self-conservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey."

Applying this to our state of life, we can very easily conclude what profit we want from our labor. The whole of our religious personality is directed toward the fulfillment of the will of God. We have gone far beyond working for mere necessity. Our labor is that of love. Far from disobeying a law of nature, we see a greater fulfillment and fuller development of our personality through our individual activity. We labor, but we elevate work to an act of love.

How do we do this? We do this by making our work productive, by applying to a human act of will a meaningful right intention, the kind we meant when we took our vows. Then we had enthusiasm, initiative, loyalty. If anything has happened to our attitude since that time, we have but to reinstate our vows as the motivating forces of our activity. Idleness—laziness—such words can have no part in a truly Franciscan life.

Recall that our Seraphic Father addressed the few bitter words he ever spoke to Brother Fly, the one who just coasted along, fattening on the labor of others.

It is not unusual to find Franciscans asking themselves in all seriousness just how much they are getting out of the Order. With any kind of honesty, we all have to admit that even on the purely natural level, the hundredfold is ours. But what about asking ourselves how much the Order is getting out of us? How much are we contributing to the common welfare? How much are we doing to make the Order the great power for good that the Church expects it to be? As Franciscans, we are expected to work. And not only are we expected to work, but we are expected to work in a particular way. If we have any doubt about the prescriptions of the Rule being obsolete, we have a recent and quite authoritative voice to state the contrary. Our former Minister General, Fr. Pacificus Perantoni, in his encyclical *Divina Providentia*, speaks blastingly: "There are several classes of religious whose labor is altogether futile. Some just about settle down to work, and then if any difficulty arises, they lose heart . . . Some, again, feel the need to work under human approval and compensation; let us understand that we must always keep active even if human applause is lacking, since we shall receive the full re-

ward for it from God in heaven. For that matter, even among us mortals at times one may do the sowing while another does the reaping.

"Others do not loathe work, and they occupy themselves usefully. . . but on condition that they suffer no annoyance or inconvenience from the work, nor have to change the usual very restful tenor of their life; there must be no overcast skies, no storms, but only general peace about them. No reason, they say, to worry about finishing today; tomorrow is another day. Saint Philip Neri would tell us in his humorous way that Paradise does not go to the comfortable."

We can perhaps flatter ourselves into greater effort by recalling that the Church depends on our varied works to build up her treasury. The personal satisfaction of our work is needed by the Church for the still unfinished task of bringing Christ to all. Speaking to the priests of Christ, Pope Pius XII in his *Menti Nostrae* listed the responsibility of each minister in a very precise order: "The good of the Church, personal sanctification, and the sanctification of the faithful." The day we get around to realizing all of these perfectly will be the next time we can, conscientiously, be lazy.

Religious profession is not a meaningless ceremony. Each of us can recall the words of the formula we repeated. Then we asked for admittance to profession *ad agendam poenitentiam*—to do penance. We said not a word about being comfortable. We said nothing of being praised for our labor, or finding it interesting. All we had in mind was to go out and do what we were told to do, to the best of our ability, in the spirit of humble obedience. We felt commissioned as co-laborers with Christ and we left the altar steps filled with newly-consecrated ambition. There were no shades of practicality in our will then. We were filled with the desire to do God's work and for His sake alone, not ours, nor our superiors', nor our confereres', nor any other creatures'. We need no re-consecration; just a realization of what we promised to do then and the will to do it now.

By way of checking up on our spirit, it may be helpful to make a list of the personal qualities that effect our labor. The following is merely a suggestion—at least pardonable in this day of psychological testing.

The answer to these and similar questions may help us to see

<b>Disposition:</b>	Cheerful?	Usually pleasant?	Irritable?	Impatient?
<b>Ambition:</b>	Real desire for achievement?	Normal?	Get by?	
<b>Loyalty:</b>	Willingness to face opposition?	Actively contributing to the welfare of the community?	Passive; no flagrant violations?	Questionable?
<b>Relation to Fellow Religious:</b>	Friendly?	Liked by those who know you?	Avoided and avoiding?	
<b>Cooperation:</b>	Helpful to all and always?	Work well with those you like?	Unable to work with others?	
<b>Attitude toward Criticism:</b>	Welcome it and profit by it?	Accept 't without reaction?	Resent it?	
<b>Quantity of Work:</b>	Always ready for extra tasks?	Do regular assignments?	Do only what is necessary?	
<b>Perseverance:</b>	Always see things through?	Tend to lose interest and let others take over?	Stop in face of difficulty?	
<b>Punctuality:</b>	Always on time?	Frequently late?	Habitually "too busy?"	

our shortcomings more clearly, and consequently to remedy them. In any case, it is well for us always to keep in mind that we are laboring for our own sanctification, for the benefit of the Order, for the good of others, and above all, for the honor and glory of God. Then without doubt our labor will be fruitful.

Fr. Anselm Hardy, O.F.M. ✓

## UP UNTIL THIS TIME WE HAVE DONE NOTHING

If the statement that not to advance in the spiritual life is to retreat, is a cliché, it nevertheless remains a truth. Movement is so essential to the religious vocation that where progression ceases, retrogression begins. It is an awesome consideration but one not without its own peculiar consolation. For it is our poignant and paradoxical comfort to have the doors of nature's comfort shut against us. When we might desire to settle for a comfortable degree of holiness and nestle down into the rewarding warmth of our own regular observance, our own spiritual tidiness, our own convenient brand of "charity" which preserves continual serenity by the simple expedient of never rousing ourselves on any count!—we find this cozy chamber locked and bolted. No heart has ever yet found its own fulfillment short of eternity, but the religious vocation plants a seed of unrest more pregnant with power than the slimmer seed that is the common heritage of all men. Strangely, this unrest is our single genuine solace. Our inevitable failure ever to arrive at completion marks our dignity as the children of God, wandering in a land of exile but with the hope of returning one day to our Fatherland.

What is this progression in the spiritual life? More precisely, what is it in the life of a Franciscan? Deprived of the odorous ease of stagnation, we should at least like to envision progress as a measured march from good to better to best unto Heaven. The pious shops go on renewing their stock of those precious little pictures which show the religious, hair and draperies streaming, on the stairway to perfection. Invariably, our dear and long-suffering Lord is depicted as a trim-bearded Figure in the background urging this languid lady to take another step, perhaps from humility to charity, or maybe another dainty advance from self-abnegation to patience. Each step is always neatly labelled. And we may safely infer that we shall become more delighted with ourselves on each new rise. Actually, nowhere is the piercing paradox of the spiritual life more stark and painful than in this consideration of spiritual progress.

We need not live long past our novitiate to begin squirming under the deepening instinct of what real progress is: the unfolding of our multifarious miseries, the revelation of our utter poverty of

virtue, the acceptance of ourselves as wholly unlovable. We made a clean break with the persons and things we most cherished. We put on a poor habit and a common cord to testify we were the humble sons and daughters of the poverello and wanted no part of earthly riches or greatness. We signed a solemn compact, with Holy Church for witness, giving over our rights to carnal love, proprietorship, and the direction of our own persons. Surely these heroic folk who showed such unmistakable courage, who clung to such shining convictions against odds often heavy enough, who willingly gave the very core of their humanity into the open palm of the Divine Master, are persons to be trusted. They are men and women fitted to follow through to perfection such an auspicious beginning. What do we discover instead? The exact opposite.

Painfully, ashamedly, and then agonizingly we find ourselves out for tricksters and shamsters. We attain with little show of scholarship to the aching knowledge of our utter untrustworthiness. We discover the traitor in our own flesh and mind and spirit, the clever enemy who unravels all our resolutions and trips our stride at the very moment we had thought ourselves secure.

Here is the first interior crossroads. If our spiritual cheeks flame with embarrassment at discovering our essential meanness, then we shall never discover our essential greatness. We shall work so assiduously at discovering excuses for all our faults, at finding some others with whose conduct our own will compare excellently well, at taking refuge from the vision of our own failings in a pious surprise at the sins and faults of others, that we shall throw our whole spiritual gaze out of focus. It takes heroic courage to face oneself for what one is. The alternative is self-deception, which throws a kind of mental tarpaulin over the field of spiritual combat in the soul, making it impervious alike to the sunlight of God's love and the rainfalls of His grace. On the other hand, if by strength of prayer and the superhuman effort which grace makes possible, we can force ourselves to accept ourselves for what we are, then we are immediately rewarded. Taking no step at all, we are set by God Himself on the first low rise of humility. The religious who does not realize himself to be capable of any sin and every fault has not even the first faint glimmer of humility. Conversely, the religious who has such a realization has



indeed the preparation of soul necessary for the seed of humility, though *he* does not think so! It takes heroic courage to face oneself for what one is? Yes. But the reward is almost overpowering. It is peace, contentment, song.

Our father Saint Francis would never have needed a psychiatrist even had such services been as handy and accepted in his day as in ours. He never tortured his mind nor bedeviled his soul with the complex considerations of those who refuse to face the first and greatest of all natural realities—themselves. Surely no man ever suffered more poignantly over his own sins and the sins of the world, than did the little Poor Man. Surely no man had a more penetrating spiritual vision than he. Yet his conclusion was as calm as it was sound: "Lord, Who art Thou!—and who am I!"

It is small wonder that our seraphic Father could never seem to exhaust the meaning of the few words in that famous outcry of his. They express everything: our dignity and our ignobleness, our glory and our shame. They constitute a flaming protestation of love, and that particular kind of amazement which has always characterized Franciscans. They also betoken a humility whose profundity no other saint has plumbed more completely.

The Franciscan who refuses to face himself and the Sister who will not call her faults by their true names, will make that cry of our holy Father a mere pious mouthing as far as they themselves are concerned. We may address our Lord as, "Who art Thou!" and bow our heads with a, "Who am I!" and still be snowbound in our righteousness, secretly satisfied that we are not as cruel as Sister X nor hot-tempered like Father Y, and never guessing that our pride is far noisier than any chatter of tongues, and our complacency like foul water turned on the ardor of Love. "Never guessing" is indeed the final outpost in the desert of spiritual blindness concerning ourselves. We see this manifest all about us.

The young religious who cannot face herself builds up a leathery scar tissue on the wounds of correction and reproof until she is quite unfit for saving spiritual surgery. By the time she has grown into a middle-aged nun she is like a frightened suspect of cancer who refuses to see the diagnostician for fear of hearing the name of her ailment. How often do we not hear an old religious heartily decalre:

"Oh, I have my faults, but I am certainly not jealous-curious-proud-etc." Trace it, whatever it is, down the long litany of human ignobilities; and we shall find that this base of "innocence" is the snug stronghold of that religious' predominant fault. Contrariwise, the humble religious is always sure that she is proud. The loving Sister who delights in the joys and successes of others is the first one to admit to the jealousy inherent in us all. The mortified religious is always trying to guard his senses. And only the very pure fear greatly for their purity.

"Who art thou, Lord? And, Lord, who am I?" The Franciscan who is mature in the spiritual life poses those rhetorical questions as a true prayer, based on a self-knowledge which has fitted him for humility. There is nothing so disheartening as trying to direct a soul entrenched in an elected self-ignorance, nothing so futile as attempting to enlighten a religious who finds his bliss in blindness. Actually, it is stupor, not bliss. Something more akin to bliss is reserved for the soul stricken less with its own meanness than with the grandeur of a God great enough to find such meanness lovable.

If the greatest saints thought themselves the greatest sinners, it was not because they were blind nor foolish. They had nearly perfect vision, whereas we often suffer from a mild form of the spiritual astigmatism which afflicted the famous (or infamous) "praying" pharisee in the temple. As does everything else in the spiritual life, this knowledge of ourselves revolves on a pin of paradox. It is only when we recognize ourselves to be utterly unlovable that God can find us a fit object for His love. It is when we are no longer surprised at anything we find emerging in others, nor hiding in the scented folds of our own self-esteem, that God can surprise us with that kind of joy which sent our Father Francis singing down the Umbrian lanes. We can never be free of the treachery of our own nature unless we feel the weight of its chains. And surely all of us, at scattered and splendid moments, have tasted the mysterious and heady happiness of knowing it is the very chains that endear us to a compassionate God. At such moments, we kiss the chains of our ignominy and learn what Saint Therese of Lisieux knew so well: that we cannot lay claim to God's saving mercy unless we know ourselves desperately in need of that mercy. "The best way to insure God's mercy," said Saint

Therese, "is to come before Him empty-handed." If we are like him, clutching at scraps and patches of self-justification to cover the baseness of our spirit, always printing counterfeit money of excuses to swell our own exchequer, what is left to God? Yet He will work the miracle of mercy to justify a soul that never justifies itself. God will not fail to find excuses for the religious who has no excuses for himself.

"Up until this time, my brothers," our seraphic Father likes to repeat, "we have done nothing. Now let us begin." This humble and undespairing cry is a spiritual escutcheon for all his sons and daughters. Having failed so often, seeing each day some new baseness in this self we perhaps once thought impeccable, we sink into the depths of our ignobility only to find there the key to our only nobility: a strange, splendid dignity as children of a God Who never stoops quickly to our misery as when the taste of it lies most bitterly recognized on our soul. Indeed, we have done nothing, we poor little creatures so easily unmanned in our most idealistic and resolute hours by the untiring enemy within us. But now let us begin. For now we have swung the full, pendulumed paradox-arc of sanctification to find our unlovableness loved by God, our naked and admitted shame covered with His mercy, and our protestations of guilt drowned in the thunder of His forgiveness.

The sturdy old pious books were fond of inviting us to seek contempt and to glory in being despised by others. For the contemplative soul,—which every true son and daughter of Saint Francis must be,—there is a far more exquisite suffering than the contempt of others: the knowing that we are indeed contemptible, but finding ourselves loved instead. In the moments of our most acute self-knowledge, the contempt of others would be something of a balm on the aching twist of sorrow and remorse in our hearts! Indeed, we are encompassed at that precise moment with the unspeakable love of God. This is the keenest suffering of the contemplative, and also the apex of her joy. There, we begin. And at that point, we shall one day hope to end.

Sister Mary Francis, P.C. ✓

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH ST. BONAVENTURE

(*Comment. in Joannem*, ch. VI, *Omnia Opera*, Tom. VI, pp. 33f.)

*Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever (Jn. 6, 54-59).*

First of all, from the words of Christ, we see the necessity of receiving the *Corpus Christi*. For, as the Seraphic Doctor states, without receiving the Holy Eucharist there can be no spiritual health: *You shall not have life in you* (v. 54). Eucharistic Reception is the 'sine qua non' of truly living. Christ emphasized this, saying: *Amen, amen I say unto you* (v. 54). Those emphatic words mean that He was insisting upon the following statement as the absolute truth: *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man* (as true bread) *and drink his blood* (as true drink) *you shall not have life in you* (v. 54). This life refers to the life of grace. We behold Christ's gracious Presence in us from a following text: *He that eateth my flesh. . . abideth in me* (v. 57). This Sacramental living the life of grace in the Body of Christ is a prerequisite for eternal life: *He that eateth this bread, shall live forever* (v. 59). Upon giving Holy Communion to the well-disposed soul, the priest breathes this prayer: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus guard your soul unto eternal life."

So, secondly, we notice the usefulness of receiving the Body of Christ. This utility benefits the recipient in both body and soul. First the soul is vivified: *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life* (v. 55). 'Hath' means the possession of merit for eternity; but, it also means 'beginning to have'—which is like a foretaste of eternal sweetness. Sacred Scripture foretold this usefulness: *Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your*

soul shall be delighted in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the faithful mercies of David (Isa. 55f). This gratuitous Gift of God, well-received, enters the soul upon an eternal covenant with Him. Its reward is endless. Moreover, the body also benefits from this Refection: *And I will raise him up in the last day* (v. 55).

Besides the necessity and utility of the Eucharist, Christ makes us aware of the truth of the refection: *For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed* (v. 56). Literally, the Eucharist is true food and true drink. Can we not take Him at His Word? Or will we rebel against the Truth of His Nourishment? Some of those present on that occasion revolted: *Many therefore of his disciples, hearing said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?* (v. 61). They were too much taken up with carnal craving, as He had told them: *Amen, amen I say to you, you seek me not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled* (v. 26). Their perception was only flesh-deep; hence, they had difficulty arising at the spiritual level of refreshment. May the Truth of His Refection not become a stumbling block for us. Put to the test, He asks us, He asked them: *Doth this scandalize you? . . . It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life* (vv. 62, 64). On any occasion of his Eucharistic Presence, we are on safe ground if our conviction of His True bows our souls as well as our knees. This is especially true upon the reception of His Sacramental Sustenance. For, then, we must not only acquiesce to His Body by opening our mouths, but we must agree with His Words by opening our hearts to believe His lasting Presence in us by grace. As He said: *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him* (v. 57). Our state of grace assures us: *God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God is him* (I Jn. 4, 16).

The Eucharistic life is a kind of divine life. So much so that Christ compared It to His own and to His Father's life: *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me* (v. 58). The importance of sharing in the Father's and in His life cannot be over-emphasized. His Word

to Philip were also meant for us: *Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also. . . Do you not believe, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?* (Jn. 14:9f). So in somewhat the same way as He shares the Divine Life with the Father—analogously, we share also His life in the Eucharist: *He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me* (v. 58). Hence, upon worthy reception of Holy Communion, we can be truly said to live *on account of Christ*.

The last verse, comparing the Eucharist with Old Testament manna, brings out the dignity of this Holy Sacrament. For the Eucharist excels that food of their fathers, which the Jews were always praising. The Sacramental Body of Christ surpasses that manna because it is *more noble* and *more permanent*. It is more noble, because: *This is the bread that came down from heaven* (v. 59). Previously, Christ had contrasted this Bread with the manna: *Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven* (v. 32). Hence, the manna is of the earth, but the Eucharist is a heavenly Food. Behold the surpassing nobility of the Holy Eucharist! Further, this Sacrament is more permanent than the manna. For the manna gave temporal strength alone; whereas the Body of Christ conserves one eternally: *Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever* (v. 59). We should often eat this eternal, life-giving Bread.

This life gives us radiant personalities in the proper sense. Nowadays, one often hears the dubious praise: "He (or she) has such a wonderful personality!" Just what is here meant, frankly, is hard to determine. But Saint Bonaventure gives us a sound standard for the meaning of "personality." He claims that it is based on two qualities, God-given to the soul. They are *dignity* and *nobility*. The one proceeds from the fact that the soul is made to the image and likeness of God; the other gives to human souls a supremacy over the rest of this world's creation. They are properties of the spirit; they belong to our souls. Consequently, no amount of external care will give them to us nor preserve them in us. However, the Holy Eucharist can—and will—help keep them resplendent with the life of grace. Our dignity and nobility of soul flourish with the Sacramental Presence.

Saint Bonaventure has elsewhere said: "The soul has been cre-

ated so delicate and noble by her Spouse, the Author of all, she cannot be without love. Whence it is necessary that we delight either in the highest or in the lowest love." "The soul is called to the image of God, because just as God is love (I Jn. 4:8) so also she has from His own Being when she is in use of free will a certain inborn aptitude to be loved and she can never be without it. Because it is necessary for her either to love the unchangeable Good which is God, or the changeable good which is the world. But the dignity and nobility of our personalities demand more of worldly love. Made to the image and likeness of God, they have an aptitude (from the affective appetite) to embrace a love which is out of this world. The love of which our souls are worthy is the Love of God, found in the Holy Eucharist. Being so priceless, cannot afford not to nourish our souls with His Body? Will we refuse His continual, Sacramental life of grace? His Body and Blood make us perfect personalities. For the dignity and the nobility of the Holy Eucharist is the only work of the Nourishment for our hungry souls. Receiving Him, we truly cry out: 'Emmanuel, God with us!'

St. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

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## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### FRANCISCAN OBEDIENCE

When our Seraphic Father Francis meditated on the earthly life of the Incarnate Word, when he pondered the mystery of the divine presence in the Holy Eucharist, he saw clearly that the only way to the perfect imitation of Christ is the way of unlimited loving obedience. His *metanoia*, therefore, his radical turning to God, began with an eager listening to the voice of the Father in whose will he saw the perfection and fulfillment of life. With the words of Christ in his heart: *Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God* (Mtt. 4:4), he bowed his head to God in humility, silenced the voices of the world and of the flesh, and threw open his listening soul to the voice of the Beloved.

Our life in penance, then, is essentially a life in obedience; and without a clear understanding of what obedience meant to our Seraphic Father we can hardly hope for a clear understanding of our Franciscan vocation.

#### 1. Holy Obedience and the Franciscan Vocation

To grasp fully the importance of holy obedience in our Franciscan life, we need only look to the words of our Holy Father Francis: "Holy obedience puts to confusion all bodily and carnal desires and keeps its body mortified for obedience to spirit and to brother, and makes a man subject to all men in this world, and not only to men, but also to all beasts and wild things, so that they can do with him whatever they want, as far as is given them by the Lord from on high" (*Salute to Virtues, Opuscula 20*). If we study this passage in connection with the liturgy from the beginning of Lent to Pentecost, we shall see that Francis understood obedience as the Church understands it—as the power that prepares the soul for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Obedience loosens the crippling bonds of fear and timidity, banishes self-seeking, puts out all striving for the things of the world, and opens the soul to receptive listening to every word that comes from the mouth of God to every word that is spirit and life. As the obedience of Christ conquered Satan and redeemed the

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world, so too the obedience of every follower of Christ overcomes evil and heals the ravages of sin.

From this it is obvious that our Seraphic Father conceived of obedience as something quite different from what is usually understood by the religious vow and virtue. We need not go into the latter point here; every well-trained novice knows what the religious vows and virtues are, what they allow and what they forbid, and what—more or less—their purpose is. Suffice to remark in passing that Saint Francis never regarded obedience as a kind of steel-barred cage where the soul is broken and beaten raw until it has no will left at all, or where it can prove its capacity for blind self-annihilating sacrifice. Quite the contrary. For him obedience meant not only sacrifice but also, if not primarily, profit and gain; it meant not utter self-annihilation but fullest life and freedom and growth to perfection. Obedience was both the goal and the pivot of his turning to God in penance.

Plainly, then, if we are to live our religious life in the spirit of the Gospel, we must see obedience not as a pattern or a mould set before us according to which we must allow ourselves to be cut or formed regardless of any violence to our nature, but rather as a most precious gift, a means to a new and abundantly fruitful life. We are "received to obedience" (*I Rule*, 2), while at the same time we pray: *Take me, O Lord, according to thy word, and I shall live* (Ps. 118:8). It may be said in all truth that the basic value of our religious life lies in the power of our capacity for obedience. The strength of soul that comes to the obedient man is both a reward for his own acts and a gift of God's grace; and while the gift of grace is infinitely more than our own acts, nevertheless Saint Francis could assure his brethren: "I know what the blessing of obedience is, and that none of that man's time passes without gain who has put his neck under the yoke of another" (*II Celano*, 151).

In the last analysis, obedience and the religious life are synonymous terms in the writings of Saint Francis; and obedience is nothing less than the loving observance of the law of God. Thus he wrote in the First Rule (C. 5): "And let all the brothers understand that if at any time they should turn from the commandments of God and wander outside the bounds of obedience, they are under a curse

outside of obedience, as the prophet says (Cf. Ps. 118:21), for as long as they knowingly remain in such sin. And when they persevere in the Lord's commandments, to which they have pledged themselves in the holy Gospel and their way of life, let them understand that they abide in true obedience and are blessed by the Lord." It is well to note that the disobedient brother is under a curse not because he has withdrawn himself from obedience; the curse lies in the very state of being withdrawn. On the other hand, the obedient brother is blessed by the very state of remaining in obedience. To the mind of Saint Francis obedience is not so much a good act as a reward; disobedience is not so much a sin as a punishment.

## 2. *The Mystery of Holy Obedience*

We know from the life and writings of Saint Francis that he prized obedience above all other virtues and practiced it almost to the point of folly. But do we know why he so loved obedience? Do we know why he so often spoke of it, so strongly insisted on it for his brotherhood? Certainly it was not because he saw in obedience a means of binding his somewhat erratic brethren into a unified group; nor was it because, as a one-time aspirant to knighthood, he knew the military advantages of obedience; and still less was it because he regarded obedience as a means of strengthening his Order and increasing its efficiency in the work of God. None of these reasons, however objectively valid in themselves, would answer the question of why Francis loved obedience, for he was never a man of ulterior motives. Our Seraphic Father was obedient simply because Christ was obedient. He needed no other motive. The clarity and immediacy of his spiritual perception assured him that the imitation of the life of Christ is the only way to the honor and glory of God and to human salvation. He heard the voice of the Master saying: *Follow me*. That was enough. He followed, keeping the ears of his spirit alert to the words of the Lord, walking faithfully in the footsteps of his Beloved; and in so doing he found his deepest joy and peace. But to Francis obedience was more than this; it was the means of his being nailed to the cross with Christ, of his becoming one with his beloved Master in the ultimate sacrifice of Calvary. As "our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his life rather than fail in obedience to

his most most holy Father" (*Letter to the General Chapter*), so "that man gives up everything he possesses, and loses body and life, who keeps himself wholly ready for obedience at the hands of his superior" (*Admonitions*, 3).

But even with this we have not yet reached the deepest mystery of obedience. If Franciscan obedience means the perfect imitation of the human life of Christ, it also means the birth and growth of a new power in us, a new being. For "we are brothers of Christ when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven" (*Letter to All the Faithful*). Let us pause here for a moment and consider this. It is precisely at this point that Franciscan obedience can be seen not as an action emanating from our will to submit, but as forming power acting upon us. It is divine power, and when it operates in us it ennobles us immeasurably; for what greater nobility could be given us poor creatures of dust than the nobility of being made brother of Christ.

This leads us to a still deeper mystery contained in the words of our First Rule (5): "Let them (the brethren) through charity and spirit willingly serve and obey one another. And this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see that Franciscan obedience is much more than a noble act of the will; it is more, even, than the following of Christ; it makes us not only brothers of Christ but bearers of the mystery that Christ lives anew in the obedient man. *Abide in me, and I in you. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.* (Jn. 15:4; 10). Where a man is truly obedient, there he sets forth the obedience of Christ; with the Apostle he can justly say: "I am obedient, now not I, but Christ is obedient in me." Christ's work of salvation, his obedience to his Father's will, appears in us and through us when we are obedient with him. Our obedience, therefore, derives its fullest value not from the fact that it is the way of our own personal salvation but from the fact that through it the whole world is made to share in the saving work of Christ. Obedience restores Paradise; for "Adam could eat of the fruit of any tree in Paradise, and he committed no sin so long as he did not act against obedience" (*Admonitions*, 2). Adam's disobedience brought original sin into the world with all its consequent evils. Christ, the second Adam, redeemed the world by becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. The obedience of religious

life is this "true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ," and by its divine power operating in us and through us we can bring peace and healing to the rebellious, suffering world. The obedient religious shares in the redeeming power of Christ—this is the point we should always bear in mind. If we meditate deeply on this mystery we shall come to realize that the power to bring peace and security to our threatened civilization is indeed ours, but only through obedience. This is the purpose of our Order, this is our role in the world.

### 3. The Boundaries of Obedience

If we are to see religious obedience as the saving obedience of Christ renewed in us for our own and the world's salvation, it is immediately obvious that obedience ends where anything contrary to salvation begins. Therefore Saint Francis was quite explicit in saying that his brethren must obey their superiors "in matters that concern the welfare of their soul and are not contrary to our way of life" (I Rule, 4). This does not mean that obedience must be followed everywhere except where there is question of sin; actually, where sin begins obedience ceases to exist. Saint Francis never said that obedience *must* not cross the boundary into sin, but that it *cannot*. "If, however, any one of the ministers commands any brother to do anything against our way of life or against his conscience, the brother is not held to obey him; for that is not obedience if a fault or a sin is committed by it." (I Rule, 5). It follows, obviously, that we can be truly obedient only if we understand obedience with the mind of our Seraphic Father, as a mystery of salvation, "the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We see, furthermore, that Saint Francis had no illusions about the so-called "grace of office." Superiors hold authority from God, but they are not God themselves, nor do they speak with the voice of God, nor is the will of God necessarily manifested through their will and commands. We must always be sober in this matter. A religious who obeys his superior should be aware that he is not obeying God, but obeying for love of God. Thus Francis admonished his brethren to consider in their superior not the human person but him for whose love they are subject. The more insignificant the one who resides, the more acceptable the humility of the one who obeys"

(II Celano, 151). And should a superior give an unwarranted command that cannot be obeyed, the brethren must not disown their superior for that, and even if they suffer persecution from him as a consequence, they should love him the more for love of God. "For he who would sooner suffer persecution than be parted from his brethren certainly abides in perfect obedience, since he is laying down his life for his brethren" (*Admonitions*, 3).

It is significant—and unfortunately we so seldom catch the significance—that Our Seraphic Father always spoke of love and obedience as companions and equals. Obedience could only be "loving obedience;" and "holy Lady Charity" was greeted with "her sister holy Obedience." (*Salute to the Virtues*, *Opuscula* 20). This takes us to the source and origin of obedience—love of God and of his divine Law. Love and obedience are one. Both bow to every wish and command of the brethren; both desire the welfare of all men as Christ desires it. "For obedience is true and in keeping with holy charity when it satisfies both God and neighbor" (*Admonitions*, 3). Love gives even the commanding superior the virtue of obedience. And where love is equated with obedience it follows that our love as well as our obedience will be poured out for the welfare of all mankind. Because our Holy Father Francis was so completely filled with love of God and with reverence for the mystery of holy obedience, he loved all creatures and desired to be subject to them, for they in turn were obedient to their Lord. It was because of his deep admiration for the power of God operating in the forces of nature that once when his coverlet caught fire and he quenched the flames, he immediately blamed himself for discourtesy in not letting Brother Fire finish eating it (*Mirror of Perfection*, 177). He felt that he had interfered with Brother Fire's obedience, for it is the will of God that fire should burn. Such an attitude, charming though it may be, is highly exaggerated and not a little bit foolish—from the standpoint of human prudence. No one is obliged or even advised to carry obedience to such lengths. Yet—was not the exaggerated obedience of our Seraphic Father something like the divine obedience of Gethsemani? of Calvary? of the Holy Eucharist? Was not the folly of his love something like the folly of the Love that died on the cross?

Let us think of this, ponder it deeply, and strive with all our strength to follow the obedience of Christ as our Seraphic Father so urgently bids us. With the grace of obedience we can speak of victory. Let us turn our mind in true *metanoia* to hearken to the words and the will of God. Let us immerse ourselves in the joyful depths of the life-giving mystery of holy obedience. Then God will come to us and make his abode with us, and we will experience the beatitude of our Father Francis: "Blessed is the servant who obeys."

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## THE FOUNDING YEARS OF THE SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

*Continued from the June Issue*

*St. Clara Convent—The Plague Year*

Once settled in their new convent, the Sisters in accordance with the original plan of Bishop Neumann, devoted themselves to the care of the sick poor. Father Naier, C.S.S.R., then rector of St. Peter Church, asked that they visit the sick of his parish. They did so, ministering to each patient with the spontaneous self-sacrifice of dedicated souls. The Sisters, still in the lay attire of the poor, call at some humble home. One Sister is equipped no doubt with a rudimentary nursing kit; the other, with the necessary articles for the administration of the last sacraments. Of course healing comes. If at times it is denied to the body many are the returns to the Church, conversions to the Faith, edifying acceptance of God's Will under trial and affliction.

For this service to Christ suffering in their brethren, the Sisters accepted no recompense. With Franciscan optimism, they faced the problem of providing for their frugal needs if not with ease certainly with resilience, sewing, doing fancy work, making the artificial flowers then quite popular in church decoration. Despite their industry, they were at all times very poor. The annals tell that at one point they had in the community purse three cents. At another time, it is related, a hungry little postulant, in search of a piece of bread, could find only a few crumbs in the box.

Another familiar account of that period is told of a Sister who ex-



plained in all earnestness to Bishop Ne  
fuel for the fire there was often no food, a  
was no fuel.

"There, dear Sister," said the holy pr  
"is a book. Read it; meditate upon it. It  
help you to bear your cross."

Then, with a charity practical as well  
with a benevolent twinkle:

"As I usually distribute medals amon  
to do so now. But today I am giving you

The fifty dollars in gold that he slipp  
seemed like a fortune to the little commu  
both fuel and food met in a more equita

Despite the rigors of their lives, the  
Convent with that pure joy that comes fr  
tent. "In His Will is our tranquillity,"  
Two more postulants entered: Mother's  
Sister Joanna; and Frances Schoenenber

The Minor Conventuals who were  
Parish in 1858 requested that the Sisters  
directors they had become, staff the par  
gave immediate consent.

For the Sisters teaching in St. Alp  
at first found a house on the corner of R  
herself took over the task of teaching wi  
with this, so in other missions opened  
Francis went first, learning the problems  
ing the first heavy burdens, injecting int  
dedication that ennobled all the weary

The St. Clara Convent was becomin  
munity. Mother saw the need of establis  
Novitiate. On Reed Street, above Fifth  
seemed to answer her needs. Although  
financial assistance, he encouraged her  
generously did the people respond that  
had but three cents at her disposal, w  
build an additional three-story house.  
Francis of Assisi, the establishment was  
28, 1858. That day was also notable for th

n they had  
e food there

the crucifix,  
rials; it will

her Francis

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Francis' hand  
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in St. Clara

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Alphonsus

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the renowned Mother Agnes. In 1871 the Novitiate was transferred to  
its present site, Glen Riddle; the Motherhouse, in 1896.

During the winter of 1858 smallpox raged in Philadelphia. The  
work of the Sisters was already well known in St. Peter and St. Michael  
Parishes and in the southern section of the city. It was natural that the  
people should turn to the Sisters in their sickness and terror. With  
courage and generosity the little band (at this time there were only  
twelve members, eight professed Sisters and four novices) went out to  
nurse the sick. Often they brought the sufferers into St. Clara and St.  
Francis Convents for care, especially the working girls evicted from their  
places of employment because they had contracted the dread disease.  
Sometimes, it is recorded, the Sisters were on volunteer duty for as long  
as three nights in succession. They were not afraid, but gave unstintingly  
of their youthful strength and pure love. Even of their little portion of  
worldly goods they gave, for much of the expense for those poor sick  
people had to be met from their scanty income. They welcomed it all:  
the fatigue, the danger, the privation—with a wonderful cheerfulness.  
And even today it is a living tradition and a matter of record that the  
people of Philadelphia rejoiced that they had in their midst those who  
would bring to them, with gladness, the mercy and the charity of Christ.

#### *St. Mary Hospital: the Sisters Undertake the Care of the Orphans*

An aftermath of this period of affliction was the development of two  
important types of fraternal charity: the care of the orphan and the care  
of the sick in hospitals.

Since the St. Clara Convent could no longer accommodate all the  
sick who were brought there, Mother Francis sought a more spacious loca-  
tion. She found this at Fourth and Girard Avenue in a roomy old mansion  
that rented for \$500 a year—a reasonable price even in those days but a  
fortune to Mother Francis and her Sisters. She was convinced that in the  
care of the sick the Sisters of St. Francis could do much for God and  
souls; therefore, trusting in Divine Providence, she signed the lease. A  
Quaker physician who had admired the work of the Sisters during the  
plague offered his services gratis. By December 10, 1860, the twenty-bed  
hospital was opened under the title of St. Mary. Again it was Mother  
Mary Francis who headed the staff. She nursed the patients with delicate  
consideration and maternal concern. It is told how she delighted in serv-  
ing every tray herself, buoying each patient with words of encourage-  
ment and holiness. Now, from those early beginnings, there has grown  
the present far-flung and highly specialized work of this Community in

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thirteen hospitals in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Florida, Oregon, the state of Washington and Ireland.

From the beginning Mother Francis and her companions were concerned with the welfare of the dependent children and orphans of Philadelphia. Early in 1859, February 28 to be exact, the Sisters undertook the care of St. Vincent Orphanage in Tacony. Sister Bernardine, Sister Angela, and Sister Agnes were in charge. Although the work there was terminated by December 6 of the same year, it initiated the Sisters into that particular form of charity so pleasing to the Father of Orphans. Today, the Sisters of St. Francis staff seven homes in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

#### *The New York Mission:*

##### *Their Separation from the Philadelphia Foundation*

In the spring of 1858 the Reverend Commissary Leopold Moczygemba of the Minor Conventuals asked Mother Francis for teachers for two of their New York parishes. Bishop Neumann consenting, Mother promised to send Sisters when the schools were ready. Meanwhile, God suddenly called that saintly prelate to his eternal reward on January 1, 1860. His co-adjutor, the Most Reverend James Frederick Wood, succeeded to the see of Philadelphia. In him, as in his revered predecessor, the little community enjoyed true spiritual leadership. His visits were frequent and full of consolation. It is an undoubted fact, however, that had Bishop Neumann lived a long episcopal life, subsequent events in community history may well have been different.

In March of 1860, the Conventual Fathers sent for the Sisters to staff the school in St. Mary Assumption Parish in Syracuse. Mother left with Sisters Antonia, Angela, and Isabelle. Later she returned for more recruits for St. Joseph School, Utica. On April 10, Sisters Bernardine, Alphonsia, Petronella, and Josepha became the pioneers there.

In these new ventures Mother Francis and her Sisters were encouraged at what they believed was the enlarging scope of their work. The assumption of duties in New York did indeed lead to a wonderful flowering of Franciscan life there, but in a manner in no way anticipated by the founding Sisters.

On a canonical visitation, Bishop Wood learned that the deed to the Reed Street property was in the names of Mother Francis and her two consultors, both laboring in the diocese of Albany. Later events revealed that His Lordship did not think this legal arrangement wise; he feared differences with the New York Franciscan Fathers under whose

spiritual direction the community had been placed. The Philadelphia prelate's solution to what he foresaw might result in a problem brought about the unusual development in Community history already alluded to.

For the first public profession in the order, November 21, 1860, Bishop Wood instructed Mother Francis to invite her two consultors to the ceremony when he would accept the vows of Sister Aloysia and Sister Teresa. The ceremony over, Mother and her consultors were invited to the Bishop's residence for a business meeting.

When the Bishop explained his concern about the deed, the Sisters immediately conformed to his wish, deeding in proper legal procedure the property to Mother Francis and the diocese of Philadelphia. His Lordship then invited the New York Sisters to return to Philadelphia if they so wished. It is hardly possible that the Sisters understood the implications of that statement. Addressing Sister Bernardine and Sister Antonia, Bishop Wood announced that he was separating the New York foundations from the Motherhouse in Philadelphia, and that he was requesting Bishop John McCloskey of Albany to affiliate them into his diocese.

Hard as that blow was to bear for all the Sisters, particularly the three founders, history reveals that it was God's way of bringing into existence the Syracuse foundation that He had destined for a particularly noble work of charity. Upon being informed of Bishop Wood's decision, Bishop McCloskey consulted with the Reverend Father Moczygemba and through him affiliated the Sisters teaching in Syracuse and Utica with the Second Order of St. Francis of Assisi. This separate community, now numbering approximately 500 members, is famed for its work with the lepers begun by Mother Marianne, true spiritual daughter of the intrepid Anna Dorn. It may well be doubted, had those Sisters continued under the Philadelphia generalship, whether they would ever have entered into that unusual sphere of charity. In God's plan, the abrupt severance served a great end.

##### *The Buffalo Foundations*

In 1861, Reverend Father Kleinenden, C.S.S.R., rector of St. Mary Church in Buffalo, asked Mother Francis for Sisters to engage in social service work in his parish. He had already heard of their good work in St. Mary Hospital, and desired that his parishioners have the benefits of their ministry. This permission was obtained from Bishop Wood, and Sisters Elizabeth, Bonaventure, and Magdalen, as well as Mother's own daughter, Johanna Bachman (now a postulant), were sent there. Sister Margaret, one of the foundresses, was in charge.

October 10, 1862, was an auspicious date for those Sisters. On that date they moved into their first convent at 337 Pine Street from a little house on Minor Street which had followed upon a few rented rooms. That day was also memorable for the fact that Mother Francis brought her little eleven-year old daughter, Cunigunda, to Buffalo to live. At that point in Mother's history, both her daughters and her sisters were in the New York missions. New members began to enter. On December 28, 1862, five postulants received the holy habit from Father Claessens, C.S.S.R., then rector of St. Mary's, who had been delegated by Bishop Timon to preside at the ceremony.

About this time, Bishop Timon offered the Sisters a property in East Eden, a community about ten miles east of Buffalo, if they would staff a school there. The fifteen acres of ground surrounding the old house, and the remote situation, attracted Mother Francis. It is generally believed that she would later have transferred the novitiate there. Sister Joanna, Mother's sister Louise, was placed in charge.

#### *Death of Mother Mary Francis*

On February 22, 1863, Mother Francis returned to Philadelphia from Buffalo in anticipation of a reception of Philadelphia postulants. A letter written on October 27, 1862, from Buffalo, reveals that she was already in poor health. She refers to the fact that her health "has grown worse since my arrival here. I think the raw air and the intense cold are largely to blame for this." Then, casually, she announces what must have been apparent to her, her coming death. Her words emphasize the whole tenor of her life with lucid eloquence—the motion of the soul in loving trust toward God:

He (the doctor) diagnosed my condition as tuberculosis in the worst form. This did not alarm me, however, for God knows that I would rather be sick than well, and that an early death would be my greatest gain. But, Lord, Thy will be done.

Then, with that splendid factualness about personal cares that reveals to the thoughtful the sound integration of her personality in God, she said:

I am writing this, not for sympathy, but so that in case my return is delayed you may know the reason.

Despite intense pain and exhaustion, Mother Francis insisted upon assuming the responsibilities of the Investiture. During the ceremony she collapsed and was taken to St. Francis Convent, later to St. Mary's

Hospital. Sister Agnes, the novice mistress, took Mother's place in the investing ceremony.

On June 29, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, Mother Francis was dying. Sister Agnes and Sister Aloysius remained with her during the long night, assisting her to dedicate the last painful moments in acts of love of that God whom she had served with such heroic fidelity. All the calm endurance and holy resignation that had sanctified her life she displayed in the hour of death. Before noon, on the 30th of June, 1863, Mother Mary Francis turned peacefully, with the prayers of the Sisters echoing in her soul, "to the God of Love," as she had said, "Who inflames my heart with His sentiments."

On the feast of the Visitation, Mother Francis was buried from St. Peter Church. Clothed in her religious habit, she lay barefoot, in a plain pine coffin, upon shavings covered with a white cloth. Her remains, first interred in St. Peter Cemetery, were taken to the convent cemetery in Glen Riddle in 1875.

In considering the special vocation Mother Mary Francis had to religious life and to the founding, in conjunction with Sister Margareta and Sister Bernardine, of the Institute of the Third Order of St. Francis, one must remember that she followed the normal ways of thought and prayer. As far as is known, she had no visions, no ecstasies, no revelations. In the difficult beginnings when she, more than Anna Dorn or Barbara Boll, had reasonable cause to question the validity of her vocation, she never wavered in the firm conviction that the establishment of the community was the will of God. The gift of prudence, which could well have cautioned her against the practicality of the step she was taking, actually was a strong factor, enlightened by grace, in the successful formation of the order. In her is manifest how far supernatural prudence differs from mere earthly caution, and in the history of her Community during the last one hundred years one sees how great can be the consequences of a movement of the soul toward God in complete trust and abandonment. Actually, only eight of Mother Mary Francis' thirty-nine years were spent as a Sister of St. Francis, yet in that period of time she carried the Community through the most difficult years of establishment and laid, in broad outlines, the work of the community even as it is carried out today: social service, teaching, the care of the orphan, the care of the sick and the aged.

#### *The Buffalo Foundation Becomes Independent of the Philadelphia Institute*

Mother Mary Francis' death brought about the separation of the

Buffalo Sisters from the Philadelphia foundation. Informed of Mother's death, Bishop Timon of Buffalo notified the Sisters there that they would elect their own superior general in Buffalo since the Rule of their Institute made no definite reference to elections. The Sisters felt obliged to accept the severance, and Sister Margareta became the first Superior General. Thus, in the course of eight years, each of the founding Sisters had become the General of a religious institute. The Buffalo foundation, now numbering approximately 400 members, has done remarkable work for God and souls in its schools, hospitals, and home for the orphaned and the aged.

The Philadelphia foundation, deprived as it was of all three of the founding Sisters, was blessed by God in the appointment of Mother Mary Agnes who governed the Community for forty-two years. But her long and fruitful leadership constitutes another chapter in the history of the Sisters of St. Francis.

Today, the Glen Riddle Franciscan Sisters number almost 1600 professed Sisters. Their scenes of labor extend from New England to Florida, from the state of Washington to California, and across the Atlantic to Ireland where St. Patrick Hospital was opened by them two years ago. Adapting themselves to the technical and social pressures of the present age, to the highly specialized requirements of educational and social work, fundamentally they function still in the spirit of their founding Sisters: that this Institute is the will of God and that in their complete abandonment to His Providence they will find the means and the grace faithfully to execute His designs in their lives and in the lives of all those whom He sees fit to be touched by their Franciscan vocation. As the Community enters upon the second century of its existence, it is the prayer of every faithful member that in their Order and in their lives God, in His goodness and His mercy, may be glorified!

*Sister Jeannette Clare, O.S.F.*

### FATHER PHILOTHEUS BOEHNER, O.F.M.

When a dear and familiar figure is suddenly snatched away by death, the shock usually dispels all remembrance of whatever human imperfections may have plagued him in life and presents him to the memory in the full glory of untainted holiness. But somehow it is different with Father Philotheus. Those who were closest to him and knew

him best are remembering him now exactly as he was in life, with all the little weaknesses that made him so endearingly human. Perhaps this is because "his unassuming simplicity covered what was a real and deep holiness. Like a true Franciscan, he was one who dared to be perfectly himself with our Lord."<sup>1</sup> It would be something of an affront to his memory if we were to attempt to describe him now as a paragon of perfection, nor would it be a true description, for he was a man of flesh and blood, with a great mind and a very great soul, who made the mistakes that all men make who try to accomplish great things. So this is not to be read as a panygeric but as a portrait sketch; as true to life as a loving memory can make it.

Heinrich Boehner was born in the little Westphalian town of Lichtenau, February 17, 1901, the youngest of the seven children born to Franz and Maria Boehner. His early childhood was pleasantly uneventful—except for the problems that arose over his lack of interest in study and his frequently-indulged preference for unscheduled excursions into neighboring fields and woodlands. He was always vaguely puzzled by what went on in the classroom, yet every year he somehow managed to get himself promoted. Life for him was what it is for most boys—an agreeable succession of parental caresses and punishments, of intramural skirmishes with brothers and sisters, of winter skating and summer swimming, spring hiking and autumn hunting. And then came the call of the Lord. His "vocation," however, was much more a matter of expediency than of piety, for it was the result of a battle with a schoolmate. Young Heinrich had beaten his opponent so badly that inter-parental feelings ran high, and his long-suffering father, always a prudent man, thought best to enroll his son in another school. The only suitable alternative was the Franciscan Seraphicate at Brakel, and thus it was that Heinrich Boehner found himself on the way to becoming a Friar Minor.

The new environment effected little change in him. He was still very poor in his studies, still very vague about things in general and especially about what it meant to be a Franciscan and a priest. It was not until the last years in the clericate that Heinrich—by then Frater Philotheus—gave evidence of any outstanding ability. An inspiring teacher of botany awakened him to the joy of scientific study, and from then on, to the amazement of everyone, he distinguished himself in all the courses of the clericate. The only exception was canon law which, characteristically, he despised and barely passed.

Meanwhile the tuberculosis that had already carried off two of the other Boehner children attacked Frater Philotheus. He fell so ill that he

had no hope of being ordained; but he willingly submitted to treatment and prepared himself for death by translating Etienne Gilson's *La Philosophie St. Bonaventure* into very good German. It is somehow typical of Father Philotheus—he was a man of so many seeming contradictions—that he should have begun his scholarly career in the face of death, and that he should have begun it by translating from French, the very language he failed in for three successive years. Against all expectations he finished the book, won the battle to have it published (it appeared in 1929 under the title of *Der heilige Bonaventura*), regained his health and was ordained to the priesthood in 1927.

From then on Father Philotheus was recognized as a very brilliant and promising young man, and it is to the credit of his superiors that every advantage was given him to develop his ability. From 1929 to 1933 he attended the Universities of Munich and Muenster to work for the doctorate in biology. Not only did he produce an outstanding doctoral dissertation ("Ueber die thermonastischen Bluetenbewegungen bei der Tulpe," in *Zeitschrift der Botanik*, 26. Band, 1933, 65-107), but also found time during those busy years to translate Gilson's study of Saint Augustine, giving it the title of *Der heilige Augustinus, Eine Einfuehrung in seine Lehre*. It was during these years also that he formed a friendship with the noted German philosopher Peter Wurst that lasted until the latter's death in 1940. From 1933 to 1939 Father Philotheus served as lecturer for his province (Holy Cross Saxonia), but from time to time his superiors sent him abroad to such centers of study as Quaracchi, Rome and Paris. In 1936 he completed the translation of Gilson's work on Saint Bernard, under the German title of *Die Mystik des heiligen Bernhard von Clairvaux*. These translations had been bringing Father Philotheus in closer contact with Professor Gilson, and within the span of ten years the moribund young cleric had developed into a scholar of such dimensions that Gilson was willing to collaborate with him on a history of Christian philosophy. The book first appeared in German as *Die Geschichte der christlichen Philosophie* in 1937. The second edition (1954) bore the title: *Christliche Philosophie, Von ihren Anfaengen bis Nikolaus von Cues*, and the latest revised edition, published in 1954 bore the same title. Meanwhile a warm friendship had grown up between Father Philotheus and Professor Gilson, based not only on their mutual interest in medieval philosophy but also on a sincere respect and affection for each other. Father Philotheus always recognized Gilson as his father and master, and it was a source of keen suffering to him when,

later years, the misguided zeal of others threatened to disrupt their friendship. That Father Philotheus began his life-work, the critical edition of Ockham now in progress, was due primarily to Gilson's inspiration and encouragement, and that he left Germany in the spring of 1939 was also due to Gilson, for it was on his invitation that Father Philotheus went to the Pontifical Institute at Toronto to lecture in palaeography. However, his stay there was brief, for with the outbreak of World War II in the September of that year his friends advised him to leave Canada. He found himself in something of a quandary. To return to Germany would have been suicidal. The Nazis had already devastated Holy Cross Province, and since Father Philotheus had openly expressed his opinion of their origin and end—"They have come from the devil and they are going to the devil!"—he could hardly expect to survive long in his own country. But where to go? The answer came from Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., then president of Saint Bonaventure College, who invited him to lecture at the college in Franciscan philosophy. Thus it was that in the summer of 1940 Father Philotheus began to lay the foundations of what was eventually to develop into the Franciscan Institute.

Among his first students were Thomas Merton and Robert Lax. It was their interest in Franciscan philosophy that encouraged Father Philotheus to go on with his plans for the Institute; and he did need their encouragement, for there were few then who were able to visualize what such a research center could mean to a college. The first years of his sojourn at St. Bonaventure were difficult ones. Being a foreigner, he made the usual mistakes of a foreigner in a strange land. Despite his best efforts to conform to the bewildering ways of his adopted country (he was an American citizen), Father Philotheus was not always understood by others. Nevertheless it is especially the work he accomplished at Saint Bonaventure that has established his fame as a scholar both in the United States and abroad. In 1944 he published *The Tractatus de Successivis Attributed to William Ockham*, followed in 1945 by *The Tractatus de Praedestinatione et de Praescientia Dei et de Futuris Contingentibus of William Ockham*. In 1951 and 1954 he published *William Ockham, Summa Logicae (Pars Prima and Pars Secunda et Tertiae Prima)*. In collaboration with a friend he was working on a critical edition of the monumental *Logic* of Albert of Saxony, and was just completing a treatise on *suppositio* for the North Holland Publishing Company when death called him. In 1952 the University of Chicago published his *Medi-*

*eval Logic: An Outline of Its Development from 1250 to C. 1400*; Thomas Nelson of Edinburgh will soon have ready his *Life, Writings and Teachings of William Ockham*. His edition of *Walter Burleigh Puritate Artis Logicae Tractatus Longior with a Revised Edition of Tractatus Brevior*, is currently in press and due to appear this year.

His most important project, however, and the work on which fame will most probably rest, is the critical edition of Ockham. In 1941 he began the work with his publication of the first *Quaestio* of the *Summa* of Ockham's *Ordinatio*. He intended to continue with the *Commentary on the Sentences*, but the war destroyed his plans. In coming to the United States he was able not only to resume the work but also to find an excellent collaborator in Professor Ernest Moody of Columbia University. Thus plans were made for a critical edition of the *Opera Omnia theologica et philosophica* (*Opera non-politica*), a work that will include twenty-five volumes when completed. Although the edition was to have remained primarily in the hands of Father Philotheus, he nevertheless surrounded himself with a staff of highly competent collaborators, including Professor Moody, Father Gaudens Mohan, O.F.M., and Father Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M., who is also co-editor. When the first volume went to press a few months ago (*Expositionis in libros artis logicae prooemium et Expositio in librum Porphyrii de praedicabilibus*, Ernest A. Moody), Father Philotheus saw the realization of his cherished ambition. The critical edition of Ockham was at last under way.

Besides these major works, Father Philotheus wrote numerous articles and reviews for such publications as *Franziskanische Studien*, *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, *Archiv fuer Philosophie*, *Recherches de Theologie ancienne et médiévale* (Louvain), *Traditio*, *Review of Metaphysics*, *Franciscan Studies*, *Rivista di Filosofia neo-scolastica*, and many others. He wrote the article on medieval logic for the forthcoming edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and was also revising the article on William Ockham for the *Britannica*.

In 1941, together with Father Thomas Plassmann, Father Philotheus reorganized *Franciscan Studies* on a more scholarly basis. It is now going through its fifteenth year in the revised form, and has been steadily growing in reputation and influence. In 1950-51, with Sister M. Francis S.M.I.C. as Assistant Editor, Father Philotheus launched *The Cord* for the purpose of bringing the wealth of traditional Franciscan spirituality to the untrained Franciscan reader. We are happy to say that the enthusiastic response of Franciscan Sisters to *The Cord* was one of the brighter spots in the last years of his life.

Father Philotheus was not only a distinguished logician. He was also an excellent lecturer in the philosophy of Saint Augustine, Saint Bonaventure, and the Franciscan school in general; and his courses in epistemology and psychology were highly valued by those who were capable of following them. Lecturing in English was always something of a trial to him—he never mastered American speech, though he possessed a formidable vocabulary. Yet in spite of the accent and characteristic stutter, there was such charm in his manner of presentation, such sureness and mastery of subject, such subtle humor in pointing out disconcerting facts, that his courses were always a delight to the students who were equal to him. He was much sought-after as guest lecturer by the big universities in the United States and Europe; but his pride and joy was the invitation he received last year to lecture to the Jesuit scholastics on the logic of Ockham. In the standard Franciscan manner, he pretended to disapprove of everything connected with the Jesuits, but in reality he cherished a sincere admiration for the Society of Jesus and counted several of his closest friends among its members. Jesuit interest in Franciscan doctrine was to him the happy sign of wonderful things to come.

Besides his work in medieval philosophy, Father Philotheus always devoted some of his time to his beloved botany, the *scientia amabilis* of his youth. He was especially enamoured of bryology, primarily, as he used to say, because mosses are both beautiful and useless. (Utilitarianism of any kind was essentially distasteful to his Franciscan soul; he regarded the good pleasure of God as the sole reason for all things in creation.) He delighted in the prodigality of nature, in the abundant and purposeless variety of exquisite forms, in the humorous oddities of the plant and animal world. Those who were his companions on field trips through the wooded hills and the glacial swamp and rock deposit areas of Cattaraugus County remember that he reveled in nature like a boy on a glorious holiday. And to see him clambering up and down rocky slopes and giant boulders, sloshing through swamps and bogs, a stub of a cigar clamped between his teeth, a huge knapsack fastened to his shoulders, one would indeed think him a boy who had never grown up. It was characteristic that the play theory in psychology should appeal to him, and that he should try to bolster it by quoting the Book of Wisdom: *I was with him, forming all things, playing before him at all times, playing in the world*. Those who knew him best know that despite the burdens and the sorrows that weighed upon him, his soul was ever at play before the Lord. But Father Philotheus was no mere nature-lover; he was a scientist through and through. He looked upon the lovely things

of creation not only with the eye of the enthusiast but with the trained and appreciative eye—aided by the microscope—of the man of science. Thomas Merton's recollection of him is quite descriptive: "One thing none of us will forget about Philo was his truly Franciscan ardor and insight into the creatures of God. He was a true scientist, for whose natural beings were only a step on the ladder by which a soul rises to the contemplation of God. And he certainly had an eye for the smallest of God's creatures. I will never forget once when we were driving in a car through one of those narrow wooded valleys near Allegany, and we were going too fast for the trees to be more than a blur, when Philo suddenly shouted: 'Stop! Stop!' and blurted out some unintelligible name of a rare moss. He hopped out of the car and was half way up the side of a small mountain before anyone knew what was happening. He came back with something I wouldn't have seen if I had been standing dead-straight in front of it. Now that he has exchanged the 'evening knowledge' of God in creatures for the 'morning knowledge' of creatures in God, he need no longer fear getting lost and wandering all night in a cranberry bog—which was, I believe, another mishap that attended his pursuit of science during my stay at Saint Bona's."

Aside from the field trip escapades—and the tales of these are legion among his friends—Father Philotheus was a respected and well-loved member of Saint Bonaventure's biology department, and was frequently asked to give special courses in botany. He was becoming known in the United States as a competent bryologist, and his articles in Saint Bonaventure's *Science Studies* and his collection of mosses gathered within the area of Cattaraugus County are distinguished contributions to bryology.

The Franciscan Institute, meanwhile, had been steadily growing. In 1948 it was formally recognized as a *studium generale* or interprovincial house of advanced studies and research in Franciscan theology, philosophy, history, and missiology. With the approval of its statutes by the Definitorium Generale in Rome, the Institute was firmly established and empowered to grant the titles of Lector Provincialis and Lector Generalis to members of the Franciscan family; and with its approval by the State of New York it could confer the degrees of Master of Science, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy. It was largely because of the Institute's high level of scholarship and its research library of some 10,000 volumes that Saint Bonaventure College was raised to the status of university in 1950.

But when all has been said of Father Philotheus as a scholar, only

small part has been said, for he was a priest above all, a Franciscan especially, and always a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. Perhaps his most characteristic quality was his genuine, unaffected simplicity. He was so completely unpretentious that hardly any of the collegians at Saint Bonaventure even knew who he was. Certainly there was nothing about his appearance that bespoke a great scholar. He was a powerful man, strong, muscular, well over two hundred pounds, but his posture was unimpressive. In manner he was sometimes quick, sometimes vaguely quizzical, sometimes sure and determined and stubborn as only a Westphalian can be, and sometimes completely befogged. A typical "absent-minded professor," it was nothing for him to put the lighted end of a cigar in his mouth, or to spend ten minutes or more looking for the glasses he was wearing. He was always shabby and usually in need of a hair-cut, although his red-blond hair had long since been reduced to a mere fringe curling about his ears and neck. The little black solideo that kept slipping off his head was as much a part of him as his patched and mended habit.

His room at the Institute was a sight to behold. It was always in total disorder, yet he used to defend himself by insisting that he maintained "philosophical order," that is, he kept order in his mind, because he knew where everything could be found when he wanted it. Yet it is related that once he spent several minutes ploughing through the debris on his desk in search of a bottle opener. His room was a desert of books and papers, and as far as human comforts were concerned, he was as poor as the proverbial church mouse.

Essentially, Father Philotheus was a happy man with a keen and boyish sense of fun. Habitually jovial, he reserved his best wit for a chosen few. In the right company his humor was spicy, subtle, and cultivated; in argument it was pointed and devastating. He was a master in the art of small talk and nonsense, with an almost Gallic skill in repartee. There was nothing he enjoyed more than bandying insults with his friends. He was a wonderful companion anywhere. Like a true son of Saint Francis, he appreciated the good things of the Lord and enjoyed them when he could. A mild cigar (usually a gift from the Poor Clares), a glass of wine, a well-roasted duck, a potato baked in a camp-fire—all such things he accepted with undisguised pleasure and simple gratitude. His mortifications—which were many indeed—were never of the kind that would chill the warmth of fellowship. If he was abstemious he was never obviously so; but he respected the restrictions of Franciscan poverty and the dignity of his priesthood.

In spite of all appearances to the contrary, Father Philotheus had a



deep appreciation of the fine arts. Many an artist and poet received sound criticism and practical encouragement from him. As a boy he had tried his hand at painting and had even sold a few pictures. He never developed his talent, but he always retained a delicate sense for color and line. He loved literature and read widely, especially the works of the great French writers. And he was one of the few men left in our day who could quote nice things from the Greek and Latin poets.

Intellectually, culturally, and spiritually, Father Philotheus was a thoroughly Franciscan. His whole personality was formed and nourished by the writings of Saint Francis, Saint Bonaventure, Duns Scotus—and Ockham, for whatever else may be said of that great logician, he was a religious thinker of remarkable precision. Intimate association with the saints and doctors of the Order gave Father Philotheus a spiritual breadth and depth, a freedom of action and a clarity of vision that is traditional to the Franciscan but rarely found in this day of ours. He deplored fuzzy thinking everywhere, but nowhere so much as in the religious sphere. There was no sentimentality, no emotionalism in his spiritual makeup, yet he was a man of wonderful tenderness and deep sympathy. No one in grief or trouble ever approached him without feeling the warmth of his paternal heart. He was never too busy to hear a confession, to give a word of consolation, or even to spend several hours with anyone who needed him. The burden of spiritual direction weighed heavily upon him and consumed much of his time, yet he gave himself freely, as a loving father, to all who sought his help. Every week he wrote an average of from twelve to fifteen letters, almost all of a personal nature. It was a continual mystery to those who worked with him how he managed to accomplish so much in so many directions. The answer to the mystery lay in his clear sense of values, in his reverence for the gift of time. He knew that because he had received much, much also would be demanded of him, and like the good and faithful servant of the Gospel, he traded as well as he could with all the talents entrusted to him.

Ironically enough, it was largely because of his work in the care of souls that he was most severely criticized. Certainly he lacked human prudence; but when there was question of helping another he never hesitated to expose himself to rash judgment or ridicule. He took long chances and played for high stakes. Sometimes he won; sometimes he lost; sometimes he never knew the outcome. Yet he never slackened his efforts. Once in a moment of depression he confided to a friend that the fruits of his labor for souls seemed very small. Father Philotheus never worked for his own satisfaction but solely for the love of God and the good

of the souls that clung to him. His charity never led to self-satisfaction; rather it led to self-sacrifice, and not infrequently to bitter humiliation.

The death of Father Philotheus came as a severe shock. He had been suffering from pains in the chest for over a year, but since the doctors could find no evidence of anything alarming, he tried to dismiss the pains as due to some passing indisposition. Physical check-ups showed that he was "abnormally healthy," and despite an increasing tendency to tire easily, he seemed as strong and vigorous as ever. On the evening of May 21, a Saturday, he complained of extremely severe pains and retired earlier than usual.

Apparently Father Philotheus had no premonition of approaching death. His room was in its usual disorder. Ockham manuscripts lay on his desk; on his bedside table were the unidentified mosses he had collected two days before, his microscope, and a few opened copies of *The Bryologist*. He was busy to the last hours of his life.

Then, sometime after midnight, May 22, coronary thrombosis ended his life. No sound had come from his room, no sign of struggle was in evidence when his body was found Sunday morning. He had slept away peacefully in the Lord.

There is a line from Rilke that Father Philotheus especially admired: "O Lord, give to each his own death." As we look back upon the life of our departed friend and confrere, we realize how beautifully his own was his tranquil death in the silence and solitude of night. He had gone through life as a wise and loving child of the Eternal Father, playing before Him, laboring for Him, desiring only to please Him. Then like a tired child at the end of day he fell asleep in the arms of his Father the contented smile of eternity on his lips.

*The Editors*

<sup>1</sup>These are the words of Thomas Merton, taken from his letter to Fr. Thomas Plassmann on hearing of Fr. Philotheus' death. We have chosen to quote his letter here and further on (though we could have taken similar passages from any number of letters from other friends) because we feel that the readers of *The Cord* will appreciate it.

## THE SECOND JOY—THE VISITATION

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in  
God my Saviour.*  
(Luke 1:46-47)

The most beautiful song of love ever heard on this earth was Magnificat. The joyful paean of praise and glory that flowed from lips and soul of the Virgin Mother of God in the home of her cousin Ain Karim has remained unsurpassed throughout the centuries. The whole scene which occasioned the Magnificat—the Visitation—is indeed one of great moment. Elizabeth's salutation, the wondrous communion between the Precursor and the Messiah, the Canticle of Mary, the delay in the little hamlet west of Jerusalem, each provide material for reflection and meditation. Yet in our endeavor to find one general seraphic characteristic in each of our Lady's Joys, we pause on the heavenly-sounded keynote of her words to Elizabeth. That key-note is *love*.

She who carries Love in her womb goes to her cousin to share magnificent good tidings of what has happened within her. She sings a song to express her unrestrainable joy, and in that song Franciscan finds its soul of love.

The prelude to Mary's words were the touching salutation to Elizabeth, exclaiming the honor paid her by a visit from the Mother of her Lord. Another display of love was Jesus' going to his friend Joseph in order that, as the office of the feast of the Visitation tells us, Joseph might take on his labor of love even though barred by the flesh. Saint Ambrose reminds us that the Greater went to the lesser, an act which was to be often repeated in the life of our Lord.

Saint Bonaventure writes that love is the virtue of virtues; he who does not have love is poor, pitiful and pathetic. Love alone opens heaven; love alone gives hope of salvation; love alone makes us lovable in the eyes of God.<sup>1</sup> Well does Saint Bonaventure comment that we are unable to obtain perfection and its reward of heaven without this precious gift of the Holy Spirit. However, he cautions us that we can never measure our love because, regardless of our length of days, we will never be able on this earth that we possess either the gift or its fullness.<sup>2</sup> In other words, love is never exhausted on the way to heaven, for we can never love God enough. Truly then we are poor men, if not in a material sense, always in a spiritual sense.

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., Opus. VI, De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores, c. 7 (VIII 124a).

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., Opus. XI, Apologia Pauperum, c. 3 (VIII 25ob).

How foolish it would be for us to think that the Mother of fair Love exhausted her praise of God, her gratitude, her love, in the Magnificat. It is important for us to realize that Mary *lived* the Magnificat, for she breathed forth love until God carried her home to heaven, where the only communication is love to Love.

As Franciscans, our love for God takes the form of all love, but it is inflamed with something greater—and that is why we are called a seraphic order. Above all others God has a right to expect a *burning* love from us; a love modeled on that of our Queen. Even as her love was only intoned, as it were, in the Magnificat, so our love was only intoned in the promises we made when we were received into the company of Saint Francis. It remains to see if that love will remain on the same key when the *trumpet of God* drowns out the canticles, harmonious or discordant, which our lives are playing on this earth.

### I

Our first obligation is to love God. Saint Bonaventure indicates this to us when he tells us that it is outrightly impossible to proceed in love of neighbor unless we first strive for perfect love of God. That love will prompt us to love our neighbor because he is lovable on account of God.<sup>3</sup> The true lover of God, the Seraphic Doctor says, desires not only to enjoy his sweetness and to adhere to him, but he also loves to embrace his worship and hold high his honor; for he wishes God to be known by all, to be served by all, and especially to be honored by all.<sup>4</sup>

Even though we cannot find adequate measure for our love, we can, nonetheless, examine the works which produce love. Following Saint Bonaventure we may first ask ourselves if we love God above all—or is there something that separates us from his love? This question is best answered by comparing our love with the Saints' description of the true lover of God. Do we enjoy, unlike the true lover, only the sweetness of the religious life, and thus cling to God only in moments of sentimental delight or loneliness? Do we take joy only in the beauties of our religion, shunning the cross; and, shame of shame, do we pretend to hold high God's honor, while inwardly seeking our own esteem and not his?

Each of these questions can in turn be answered by inquiring of ourselves whether we have the perfection of love found in Saint Bonaventure's qualifications distinguishing selfish love from perfect love. Perfect love desires that God be *known* by all. It spares no pain in acquiring a deep and serious knowledge of the truths of holy religion in

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., Opus. I, De Triplici Via (VIII 10a).

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., Opus. VIII, De Sex Alis Seraphim, c. 2 (VIII 134a).

proportion to one's obligation to know. Thus the priest seeks ever to increase the knowledge of God imparted to him in his theological studies; the brother or sister will endeavor to build up the knowledge received in the novitiate. All of us will read wisely and avidly and seriously the great truths of our holy faith. We will all endeavor to observe and know God in the marvelous harmony of creation and revelation.

Perfect love desires that God be *loved* by all. Thus in communicating itself, it will not display itself in the noisy, sensual blares of the world but in deep faith and reverence. It becomes a truly silent testimony of the holy joy and gladness which reside in the company of God and his saints, and all the world observes it as this and nothing else.

Perfect love desires that God be *served* by all, and it prompts others to his service not so much by command as by example. From the lips of our blessed Lady, only one command passed in all her days—and that was the simple: *Do whatever he tells you*. Not do as "I" tell you, but as "He"! How often in our encounters with our fellow men does the "I" overshadow the "He"?

Perfect love desires, finally, that God be *honored* by all. Thus, it seeks to honor God in all things, and attributes all to God. It is built on a complete emptying of self. No matter what the accomplishment or the effort put into it, all credit belongs to God. Thus it truly draws men to admire the handiwork and goodness of the Creator of all, and to honor him thereby.

Each of these qualifications of Saint Bonaventure is emphasized by the totally inclusive word *all*. Thus in desiring that God be known, loved, served and honored, we do not limit our efforts; rather we go forth with the message of Mary—that the mercy of God is *from generation to generation*. We may observe in this regard that although the Magnificat was sung only before the aged Elizabeth, its message was for the world.

In loving God we have a perfect model in the Virgin Mary. Through her she may direct our love we pray to her:

Mother of God, no sooner had your cousin's wonderfully inspired inquiry left her lips than it was returned by your Magnificat, which attributed all your glory, all your blessedness to *the Lord*. Give us to rejoice always with you in God our *Saviour* and teach us to mirror your priceless knowledge, love, service, and honor of God. You above all, O blessed Mother, loved God for himself, for you carried him in the tabernacle of your body which with his coming became the House of Gold. Teach us that we cannot rightly call you our Queen unless we put aside all our foolish pretenses and sophistications—so worldly and vain—and

love only God who is Love himself. Imprint deeply in our hearts the meaning of the words, daily recited by the whole Franciscan family: *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Imitating you, let us therefore love, because God first loved us.*

## II

Love's second obligation belongs to self. Love of self is a dangerous, if not poisonous concoction. Perhaps no virtue can so easily be turned into vice, and no vice become virtue with such difficulty as love of self. Yet love of self plays a necessary role in our salvation. By a certain divine irony, self-love, if it is true, is really proven in hatred of self. For true and meritorious self-love can be directed only to love of God. It directs all the good in self to God, all the evil to self; and it constantly endeavors to rid itself of the evil, the better to love God. True self-love will always direct us to love ourselves only insofar as we can merit salvation by it. True self-love is fed on a hatred for anything which would mar in any way the beauty of our souls in the eyes of God. Like love of God, love of self must be a silent virtue, an unknown quantity, even if a very real one, in the soul.

Let us ask God's Mother to lead us to perfect and meritorious love of self:

Dear Lady Mary, your Magnificat indicates that you had a right love of self, for you said: *My soul magnifies*, and *my spirit rejoices*. May we never be blinded to the fact that your soul magnified *the Lord* and your spirit rejoiced *in God*. Rid us of all the small and mean expressions of our personalities which proclaim to men that we magnify ourselves and rejoice in ourselves. Teach us the great price by which our souls have been purchased, and lead us to know that love of self is base and rotten unless it reflects *God, who commanded the light to shine* in our darkness. Teach us your lowliness, and let us love ourselves best when we are humbled, despised and insulted by men. Teach us that true love of self is ever seeking *the things that are above*, and that it is purified by the barbs and bitterness of the world.

## III

The third obligation of love is related to our neighbor. Saint Bonaventure tells us that we best realize the purpose of this love if we realize that it is begun *in via*, and terminated *in gloria*.<sup>5</sup> These are important words, and we should weigh them well. They mean simply that whatever love we have in this world, if it be worthy of God, it is to be returned to

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., Breviloq., p. 5, c. 9 (V 262a).

him in heaven. Saint Bonaventure's words carry a tremendous weight and a wonderful consolation. They warn us that whatever our love, it is only a sharing of our love for God, and God will not have our love shared unless it be for his own honor and glory: *The Lord is a jealous God*. Their consolation is to be found in the fact that our love for neighbor, even though interrupted in this life, will be eternal before the throne of God.

In hastening to Elizabeth, our Mother manifested to us the beauty of human love, and in this meeting we find the qualities of true human love as expounded by Saint Bonaventure. He tells us that it is true that human love is to will the same and not to will the same, yet it is something more than this. It is to think the same in intellection, to will the same in affection, to act the same in consummation, and to intend the same in perfection. For Saint Bonaventure, our love of neighbor is our neighbor's love for us find their source in a mutual effort to attain God. In a word he echoes Saint Paul and directs us to *walk in love as Christ also loved us*.

Sad to relate, the world has difficulty in understanding love, and perhaps that is because so much of its love is directed away from God. If the word "love" has lost the beauty of the love, which is in Christ, then it is time for the world to reevaluate its love, and not for us to reevaluate the word given us by the Master, in the greatest and the first commandment, as our key to salvation.

As Franciscans we are professed to become imitators of a man who had nothing but love in his heart and on his lips; a man, who, next to our blessed Lord, inflamed the hearts of his time, and still inflames the hearts of our time by his love. Saint Francis was no politician, no diplomat, nor was he a weak pacifist; he was simply a man who knew how to open his heart to others, and that is why his own age and all ages since have opened their heart to Christ through him.

How we measure up to this flower of Christian virtue does not take long to ascertain. Saint Francis desired that his Order dwell in unity, and that is why he called its members "the brethren." Saint Bonaventure repeats this desire of our holy Father when he tells us that those who are united by the bond of love are united to Christ as the body to the Head. Both reflect the truth that *God is love*; and God the Son prayed that *all may be one*. All are one in the unity of love.

The beautiful words *pax* and *bonum*, now so long a second motto of

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., Sermones, De SS. Philip. et Iacobo Ap (IX 531-32a).

<sup>7</sup>Bonav., Breviloq., *ibid.* (V 262a).

our Order, are easily telescoped into the one word *amor*. For love is the soul of Franciscan zeal and devotion and dedication. In striving to perfect our love for our fellow men, the Queen of our Order will lead us. May we ask her to awaken in our hearts a great and burning love for our neighbor, for ourselves, and for God, as we address her:

O beautiful Virgin Mary, lead us to see your Son in all men, even as your cousin Elizabeth beheld him in you when the child John leapt in her womb for joy. Especially teach us to love all our brothers and sisters in our holy Father Saint Francis. Give us a deep realization that their successes, their failures; their hopes, their disappointments; their lives and their deaths are ours also, for we are all the lesser brethren of the man of love—the seraphic Francis. Teach us to put aside all envy and jealousy, and every thought that intones discord among our brethren. By word and thought and deed may we promote the happiness and holiness of our brothers and sisters. This, that our Father may behold his children from heaven, and exclaim to God: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity and love*.

In imitating you, the Mother of Love, may we pass through this life as true sons and daughters of the little man of Assisi, keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life everlasting.

Fr. William J. Manning, T.O.F.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH ST. BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, Opera Omnia, Ch. XIX)

*The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other, who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.*

*And he who saw it has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he tells the truth, that you also may believe. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not a bone of him shall you break." And again another Scripture says: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn. 19:32-37).*

The Old Testament tradition forbade that the bodies of crucified

men remain on their crosses after the day of their crucifixion (cf. Deut. 21). Since Jesus and the two thieves were crucified on a Friday, it was deemed doubly unfitting that their bodies should remain suspended over the Sabbath, for the Jews believed that this would profane the day made holy by the Lord. Saint Augustine explains in reference to the two thieves (*In Ioan. Evang.* tr. 120, n. 4): "Therefore their bones were broken, so that they would die and could be removed from the wood, lest hanging on their crosses they might defile the great feast day by the horror of their enduring agony." From these words we can infer that it was thought improper to remove the bodies while life was still in them. "Therefore their bones were broken, so that they could die and then be removed." And thus it came about that the legs of the two thieves were broken, so that they would die and could be taken down.

But it was different with Christ. For, *when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs* (v. 33). Saint Bonaventure remarks that it was proper that the Lamb be so distinguished from the others. Inasmuch as He alone was free from sin, His integrity demanded that His bones be wholly preserved. The entire human race, save Mary, must admit its sinfulness and misery, crying out with the Psalmist: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled* (Ps. 6:3). All men must trace their weakness, their fear and tribulation of soul, to original and actual sin. And all men, too, hanging on the cross of life, will eventually be broken. But this breaking will be a great good and a passage to eternal joy if it is accepted with unconditional surrender to the will of the Lord.

The legs of Christ were not broken because *he was already dead* (v. 33). If the soldiers could hardly hasten the death that had already taken place, what was left for them to do but to drain the Sacred Body of the last drop of Its Precious Blood? *But one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.* (v. 34). Isaias speaks of a wounded Christ: *He was wounded for our iniquities* (Is. 53:5). But John the Evangelist, the eye-witness of the scene, refers not to the wounding but to the *opening* of His side. Saint Augustine calls attention to this opening and then goes on to comment that the soldiers opened His side as if opening the floodgate through which the Sacraments of the Church should pour forth.

The Gospel adds: *and immediately there came out blood and water.* (v. 34). Saint Augustine goes on to say that there is mention of water besides the blood to signify the washing and cleansing power of the Sacraments, as well as the healing of our spiritual infirmities by the

Precious Blood. And this explanation is borne out by the words of the Apocalypse: *He washed us from our sins in his own blood* (Apoc. 1:5) and by the words of Saint Paul: *Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water* (Ephes. 5:25f).

The next two verses of our text are mighty reminders that Saint John—eagle Evangelist that he was—not only soared to the height of heaven to gather truths from the very bosom of God, but also had an eagle's care for the fledgling Christians he was raising up in the Church of Christ. He tells them what he saw with his own eyes, and solemnly testifies to the truth of his statement that they may believe and receive eternal life from the death of Christ. If we ourselves desire to strengthen our faith against the seductive skepticism and half-truths that threaten us in our modern world, let us fix our eyes upon the Crucified Christ, the pierced Lamb of God, as the soldiers were forced to do: *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced* (v. 37).

A final question. Why was the side of Christ opened, not before, but after death? Saint Augustine says that as Eve was taken from the side of the sleeping Adam, so too Holy Mother Church was formed from the side of Christ sleeping in death. Saint Ambrose offers another explanation. He tells us that Christ wished to show us His divinity as well as His humanity, for although the body of Christ was by nature mortal like ours, yet it was unlike ours by some special grace. After death the blood in our bodies congeals, but from the incorruptible body of Christ life came forth, blood and water poured out in a fresh, life-giving steam. Not only did Christ, by His death on the cross, give us that love *greater than which no man hath*; but He left this love with us, pouring forth grace from his opened side through the Sacraments.

A humble leper asked Jesus to cleanse him, and by a simple word he was made clean. Will we ask for less? Or, will we refuse to ask at all, preferring to remain in the leprosy of sin rather than be healed by the Precious Blood and restored to the health of divine grace? A Samaritan woman asked for a drink from which she would never thirst again. Will we refuse our parched and barren souls the life-giving waters from the side of Christ? Rather, let us implore: *Soul of Christ, sanctify me! Body of Christ, save me! Blood of Christ, inebriate me! Water of the side of Christ, wash me! Passion of Christ, strengthen me! O good Jesus, hear me! Within Thy wounds hide me, that with Thy saints may I praise Thee forever and ever. Amen.*

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### MISSION NOTES

**BELGIAN CONGO: LULUA.** The Marian Year brought an abundant spiritual harvest to this Vicariate Apostolic. All the schools are filled to capacity and new applicants are constantly coming in. The normal and professional schools are especially flourishing. There are many more applicants than can be accommodated with our limited space, teaching facilities, and personnel.

In Kamina the primary school numbers 1700 boys. During the past year several young men entered the major seminary to prepare for the secular priesthood. Another small college that prepares candidates for the Third Order Regular reports that some of the boys have returned to their families, but ten have happily persevered.

The native Congregation of Sisters Auxiliatrices of Mary Immaculate now number six professed religious, two of whom are studying at the normal school. There are two novices and several aspirants.

New buildings are going up fast. The construction of the minor seminary is progressing well, and the residence hall for the students has been considerably enlarged. In Kayeye, the leprosarium has been expanded to include one hundred new cubicles for the patients. In Kamina, where the seat of the Vicariate Apostolic is now located, a new episcopal residence is under construction. The former residence in Luabo is being remodeled for young men aspiring to the religious life. In Mutchatcha a large chapel has been erected and blessed.

**BOLIVIA: CUEVO.** Conditions in this Vicariate Apostolic are satisfactory and there is evidence of steady if moderate progress in the religious life of the people. A beautiful little church dedicated to Our Lady was blessed at the end of the Marian Year by the Vicar Apostolic. The church took three years in building. Other churches and chapels also were erected during the past year; nevertheless there has also grown up, during the past year, a strong Protestant influence. The Protestant sects have numerous and well-trained ministers—about 10 for every 1000 members of their congregations—and abundant material means.

**CHIQUEIAOS.** The Pilgrim Virgin came to Concepcion where the spiritual fruits surpassed all expectation. The Vicariate was blessed with a special grace during the Marian Year—the coming of nine Mexican Sisters whose example of piety and apostolic zeal and fervent charity has been a powerful factor in bringing the people back to a truly Christian way of life.

In the city of San Ignacio-Velasco the Catholic Action group opened a center where the poor can obtain whatever they need in the line of food, clothing, and medicine. The center has been established to meet the increasing propaganda—not wholly unjustified—of the Communists and also of the Protestants. Although the Protestant missionaries have entered Bolivia in large numbers and have abundant financial means to support public charitable enterprises, they are not making any permanent gains in this Vicariate. Apparently the people's deeply-rooted devotion to Our Lady and the Saints makes Protestantism essentially distasteful to them.

## POEM I.

there was a king  
who lived among the willows:  
his realms were wide-cast,  
he called his lords  
by twisting  
on a grass-blade;  
dissolved  
his parlement,  
casting a seed-pod  
from him.

slow as seasons  
were his edicts published  
falling to earth  
and taking root  
like rain;  
he drifted wind-borne  
like the seeds  
of autumn:  
yet his kingdom  
prospered as the sun.

he wandered often  
at the bands of rivers  
wistful,  
drifting,  
listening for a song.

ROBERT LAX

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## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

## FRANCISCAN POVERTY: THE PLEDGE OF ETERNAL RICHES

Everyone knows that Francis of Assisi loved poverty with passionate ardor, that he fought a long bitter battle to make it the basic foundation of our Order. We know, too, that in the exuberance of his love he personified the virtue of holy poverty, calling her his Lady and his Bride. Indeed, love of poverty is so essential a part of the Franciscan ideal that without it no one can justly call himself a child of Assisi's Poverello. But what, precisely, did Saint Francis mean by the virtue of holy poverty? Exactly what was it that he loved when he embraced his fair and noble bride, the Lady Poverty? Was he simply acting out a charming allegorical romance to satisfy the demands of his poetic nature? Very obviously not; for we have been to examine his life and writings to learn what poverty meant to our Seraphic Father, and what it must also mean for us.

I. *The Meaning of Franciscan Poverty*

When we speak of the three vows of religion, we usually refer to them as: poverty, chastity, and obedience. But Saint Francis did not use the word "poverty" when he wrote his Rule; he said: "The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity" (I Rule, 1). It is not without significance that our Seraphic Father expressed poverty as living without property; in fact, it is from these words, primarily, that we come to the heart of the Franciscan way of life.

It goes without saying, of course, that every religious knows the meaning of the vow of poverty in general. But do we not all of us tend to make a distinction between the negative and the positive aspects of the vow? To be free *from* something—that holds little appeal. We regard it only as a preliminary, only as a step to the positive aspect, to be free *for* something. This, we like to tell ourselves, is the fulfillment of the vow, and on this we should concentrate our efforts—greater freedom for greater activity. Saint Francis, however, viewed the matter differently. He considered living without property as setting oneself free *from* something, as being already of positive value

just as much so as chastity and obedience. Not only did he renounce ownership of temporal goods, he actually feared it, for he saw that the man who calls anything in this world his own is in danger of making his possession a part of himself. Our Seraphic Father understood that man is made to the image of God, and that his only valid property is the treasure of immortality. Consequently, the man who becomes so entangled in material possessions that he sees them as his real and ultimate good is in danger of making them part of himself, thus obscuring and distorting the image of God in his soul and exposing himself to the inroads of vice. For this reason Saint Francis so strongly argued with the Bishop of Assisi against holding property in the Order: "My Lord," he explained, "if we were to own anything, we would have need of weapons to protect ourselves. That is what gives rise to contentions and lawsuits, and so often causes the love of God and neighbor to be interfered with. For ourselves, we are resolved to possess nothing temporal in this world" (*Legend of the Three Companions*, 9). It follows, too, that the man who is attached to his property is easily hurt, for when his goods are attacked it is he himself who feels it, and when he defends his goods it is himself that he is defending. Here Saint Francis uncovered one of the main causes of human struggles. In consequence, he made the decision for himself and his followers against the possession of temporal goods; and he made it with a joyful heart, seeing it as a step toward spiritual freedom.

Time and again Francis spoke of *temporal* property. The implication is obvious. What men commonly claim as their property has only a temporal and a temporary value; at best it can be possessed only as long as life lasts. When a man enters into eternity all his earthly goods are stripped from him, and if he has so attached himself to them that they have become part of him, he suffers real and eternal loss. Because he saw this so clearly, Saint Francis warned us in our Rule that "the Brothers are to take nothing as their own, neither house nor place nor anything;" and the reason for this is simply that we are "pilgrims and strangers in this world" (II Rule, 6). Our earthly life is but a short journey through a strange country; and it is expedient for us to discard whatever might jeopardize the speed and safety of that journey. Franciscan poverty, then, can be



equated with a Christian sense of values. The ultimate destiny of our earthly life is eternal life. Seen from this point of view, the things of the earth are valueless. Not that "our sister, Mother Earth," is a creature of no value, or that her gifts to us are in any way detrimental to our eternal glory. Quite the opposite; but she *awaits with eager longing the revelation of the sons of God* (for she too hopes to be delivered from slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), before she will allow us to embrace her as our good mother. The earth gives her love only to those who pass over her as pilgrims hastening to glory, who have no desire to possess her, who do not seek to establish themselves upon her. It is only the pilgrim and the stranger, the totally poor man, who possesses the earth in the ultimate and only valid sense. We see this exemplified in the life of our Seraphic Father. Creation obeyed him because he loved it without desire. The man who has turned himself wholly to God in true *metanoia* will strive to possess only those things that can be his in eternity. Thus again Our Seraphic Father speaks to us in our Rule, urging us "to attach ourselves wholly to poverty, and to wish in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to have nothing else under heaven forever" (I Rule, 6.)

## 2. What Franciscan Poverty Includes

The boundaries of Franciscan poverty are not defined by the Constitutions of our Order. Our statutes tell us only what is required of us to remain Franciscans. If we wish to be true followers of the Poverello whom we are so proud to call our father, then we must be willing to go with him far beyond the legal prescriptions of our statutes.

The words of our Rule are clear—we are to live *sine proprio*—without anything we can call our own. There is no room for compromise, no chance for half-measures. Franciscan poverty must be total poverty. Thus our Seraphic Father praises Holy Lady Poverty as "putting to shame all grasping and hoarding, and the worries of this world" (*Salute to the Virtues*, Opusc. 20). But this does not mean that poverty routs desire for material possessions only. The danger that covetousness, as the dark power of original sin, might lead toward other desires confronts the poor man especially. He who

has no material security invariably seeks to gain some other kind of security. The fact that Francis demanded the renunciation even of just earnings is significant, for it marks the first step from the material into the spiritual realm of self-security. It is precisely here in the spiritual realm that Franciscan poverty reaches its greatest depths, and here also it becomes obvious that the pharisaical externalism of material poverty is not true poverty at all. In fact, renunciation of worldly possessions is not even basic, not even a first move in the right direction; it must be a consequence of spiritual poverty or it is not even a virtue at all. Therefore Francis demanded complete interior detachment from all that is not God. If a man allows himself to become so much a part of any creature that separation involves a painful tearing away, that man is not truly poor. This does not mean that love of creatures must be excluded from our heart. It means only that we must learn to love without desiring to possess, that we must learn to separate ourselves, calmly and without distress, from the persons and things we love when God determines the time for separation. This aspect of detachment extends also to offices and activities within the Order. The mind of Saint Francis on this point is quite clearly expressed in the Rule: "Let no minister or preacher appropriate to himself the ministry of the brethren or the office of preaching; and if at any time it is enjoined upon him to give up his office, let him do so without the least contradiction" (I Rule, 17). In other words, no one should become so attached to his office or work that it becomes a part of him. This, of course falls under the virtue of obedience also, but in the opinion of our Seraphic Father it is very difficult for a man to submit to an obedience that demands separation from some office or activity if his heart clings to it as to a part of itself. On the other hand, such obedience is easy for the man who has never at any time set his heart on these things.

But the virtue of Franciscan poverty extends even beyond such matters as offices and activities; it reaches into the inmost depths of the soul and sweeps it clean. The truly poor man is a beggar in the spirit. He stands before his Creator empty-handed, destitute, pleading for mercy and help. He sees no treasure of merit stored up in his soul; he sees nothing in himself that would elevate him above the lowest of criminals. Since he is accustomed to viewing his own

spiritual misery, he is never shocked at the like misery of his fellow mortals. The religious who acts as if he had swallowed a mouse whenever he hears of the sins of others is certainly not poor; for he is either stuffed with self-righteousness, or he is seeking to impress others—and in either case he has his reward.

The man who is truly poor realizes that he is but a tool in the hands of God, and that tools have no right to claim as their property what the master-hand of God effects upon them or through them. This is the secret temptation of the religious man—to seek to oblige God to himself by accumulating an abundance of merit. Saint Francis, however, had no use for the security of the spiritual bank account. He would claim nothing as his own but his sins. "Let us know for certain," he warned his brethren, "that nothing belongs to us but our vices and sins" (I Rule, 17). Saint Francis never said that man can do good of himself, but only that God does good through man. Therefore whatever good a man does must be returned to the Lord, the rightful owner. This working *una cum gratia Dei* could hardly be expressed more beautifully than in the words of our Seraphic Father—*reddere omne bonum Deo*. But we are not merely to admire the felicity and beauty of the phrase, we must make it function in our own spiritual life. Since our merits are not our own, we can hardly make them our security. In the last analysis, our security with God is God.

Franciscan poverty, then, means not only to relinquish the things of the world, but to relinquish ourselves, to walk out of ourselves completely. Therefore the admonition of Saint Francis: "Blessed is that servant who returns all the goods he has to the Lord God. For whoever withholds anything for himself hides his Lord's money on his own person, and therefore that which he thinks he has will be taken away from him" (*Admonitions*, 19). Consequently, "whatever is good let us return to the most high sovereign Lord God, and let us acknowledge everything good to be his, and let us give thanks to him from whom all good things come. As the most high, sovereign and only true God, let him possess and have tendered and rendered to him everything there is of honor and reverence, of praise and benediction, of thanksgiving and glory, since everything good is his by right *"who alone is good"* (Rule, 17). This is the summit of sub-

lime poverty, that we return all good to the Lord, and stand before him as naked beggars in the spirit.

### 3. *The Glory of Franciscan Poverty*

Franciscan poverty is man's last parting with self. But it would not be Christian poverty if it were to end at this purely negative goal. Parting with self can never be an end in itself, nor can parting with human security be an end in itself. If ever Lady Poverty found a faithful lover, it was the Poverello of Assisi; yet his love did not rest in her, but passed through her to the joy and glory of the following of Christ. "It is poverty," he tells us, "that makes us kings and heirs of heaven" (II Celano, 72); "for we possess a regal dignity and a distinguished nobility when we imitate the Lord, who, rich as he was, became poor for our sake" (II Celano, 73). Poverty is the "royal virtue," since it shone forth so marvellously in Christ the King and in Mary the Queen (II Celano, 200), and since it gives us true dominion over the earth and the only valid claim we can have to the treasures of heaven. In renouncing human security we gain the infinitely greater security of God.

It is this security, consequent upon total poverty, that places us where the things of the world cannot touch us, where the malice of men cannot hurt us. In this security we find joyful confidence and absolute freedom, and our desires are turned only upon possessions that serve for our ultimate benefit. It sets us free from everything that does not necessarily belong to a child of God. How much human energy is wasted in gaining property and defending it. How much energy do religious waste—and how much guilt do they pile up for themselves—in seeking appointments to coveted offices, in striving for the praise and esteem of others, in gratifying their own self-esteem. Poverty frees us from all such fruitless striving and directs our energies toward God alone. Once a man is delivered from the need of taking care of himself, he no longer circles about his own personal security but moves freely in all directions. No longer crippled by fear of losing his possessions, he grows spiritually strong and active. Viewing all things with love but without desire, he is filled with holy joy and equanimity. Precisely this joyful equanimity is the distinguishing characteristic of the true children of the Poverello. "Where there is poverty borne with joy," he tells us, "there is

neither grasping nor hoarding" (*Admonitions*, 27). And once we have renounced all grasping and hoarding of both material and spiritual possessions, we begin to acquire the freedom of the children of God, the perfect freedom that is based on the security of God's love for us. Thus Francis assures us that "poverty is a choice way of salvation; the fruit it bears is manifold, and rare are they who know it well" (II Celano, 200).

Through the virtue of holy Poverty, the Franciscan way of life becomes the life of redemption, of resurrection with Christ. There is no question here of that mistaken asceticism that seeks only assurance of "progress." The privilege of sublime poverty was not granted to our Order to enable us to judge and measure our actions with an eye to amassing merit or to making heaven certain for ourselves. Our certainty of heaven rests in the infinite mercy of God toward our utter destitution. While we must always be aware of how much we have yet to do in our soul, we must always be equally aware that without God we can do absolutely nothing. This is the ultimate meaning of the *celsitudo altissimae paupertatis*—that even in the religious sphere we renounce the worldly, too human desire for security and cast all our care and desire on God alone. Thus the way of Franciscan poverty is the way of death to self and all things created and resurrection to a new life where God is all in all. "So let us continue to live in holy poverty, because that is the way of perfection and the token and pledge of everlasting wealth" (*Fioretti*, 2nd Stigm.).

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CALAIS

The Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Calais began in the year 1854 with the union, in the north of France, of seven autonomous communities, all of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis: Saint Omer, Aire, Montreuil, Bethune, Lens, Arras and Calais. The last three proudly traced their origins to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries respectively.

These communities were located in the diocese of Monseigneur Paris, Bishop of Arras. It was he who gave the impetus toward unification and entrusted the project to an energetic and devout priest, Monsignor Adolphe Duchenne, chaplain at the Hospice of Calais. Invoking the intercession of St. Francis by entering the Franciscan Family as a Tertiary, Monsignor Duchenne saw his task happily accomplished after a few slight difficulties. On October 26, 1852, he obtained for the new Institute a document of affiliation with the Franciscan First Order from the Capuchin Provincial, Father Laurence of Aoste.

Accompanied by the Vicar General of the diocese of Arras, Monsignor Duchenne visited each convent, put his plans before the Sisters and pleaded the case for the new Congregation. He was completely successful. Before the end of the year (1852) the seven communities above mentioned were by their own consent united into one religious body. On the 10th of April 1854 an Imperial decree of Napoleon III granted civil recognition to the Congregation. On the 30th of May of the same year the Bishop of Arras gave it canonical status and named Mother Louise first Superior General. She was a woman of great humility—strong-willed and yet of a very gentle and sweet disposition. To her prudence and kindness and zeal the young Congregation owed much of its success: her wise rule has outlived her and still inspires the community to this day.

The novitiate was placed in Calais—not in the Hospice, but in a new convent in the suburbs. It was named *Little Bethlehem*. Soon twelve novices had received the habit, and the new novitiate was too small. In Calais—Rue Eustache de St. Pierre—the Hotel Burbon was acquired by the Sisters; it was renovated and enlarged and renamed *The Monastery*. This was ready in 1856, and here Mother Scholastica of the Angels, the first Mistress of Novices, trained the young Sisters in solid piety and generous self-sacrifice. The fine tradition which she fostered by word and example soon showed its fruits in the rapid growth and spread of the Congregation. Like Mother Louise, she too left a lasting influence for good. Soon *The Monastery* had fifty novices and almost as many postulants. In ten years Mother Louise gave the habit to 175 postulants, admitted 115 novices to profession, and opened twelve new convents.

In November 1866 the Constitutions were submitted to the Holy See so that the Congregation might be raised from Diocesan to Papal status. The Constitutions were highly praised. Temporary approval was granted and after the customary period of probation the Sisters were definitely and permanently admitted to the rank of a Papal Congregation.

The Rule of the Franciscan Sisters of Calais is the Rule of the

Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi—the observance of the Gospel with common life and the three vows of religion. The spirit of the Rule is the spirit of Christian charity with the special Franciscan note of joyous and generous love of God and unselfish love of one neighbor expressed in works of mercy. The Constitutions are concise and practical and abounding in common sense, with emphasis on essential things and allowing a wide freedom of spirit. There are no extraordinary penances; interior mortification is required instead. Sound rules are given for prayer, Holy Mass, the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, the Franciscan Rosary, the Way of the Cross, Spiritual Reading. To the splendid Constitutions is due in no small measure the special characteristics of the Congregation: its great corporate sense and its versatility. The Sisters have a great bond of unity which shows itself in the rapid growth of foundations, in good teamwork and in adaptability and efficiency. They are ready to undertake any work of Christian mercy, however difficult. Their apostolate includes care of the sick, the aged, the phans, the mentally afflicted, the deaf and dumb, and lepers. They conduct schools of every kind.

The Sisters have entered the Foreign Mission field where they are working with conspicuous success in Djibouti, Madagascar, Mozambique and Abyssinia.

During the two world wars the Sisters did heroic work in France caring for the wounded and the homeless refugees, and in 1918 several Sisters gave their lives in nursing those affected by the epidemic of influenza which was particularly severe in northern France.

*The Monastery* of Calais, cradle of the Congregation for so many glorious years, was completely ruined in the second world war. In 1940 the novitiate was removed to Caffiers, but in less than a year the Sisters were forced to leave again. For three years the novices were trained at Fruges. Expelled again, they moved to Saint-Laurent, and finally to Desvres on September 15, 1945. This is now both Mother-House and Novitiate in France.

The two world wars inflicted grievous losses on their Community in France built up with supernatural patience and toil. It is heart-breaking to see the work of many years ruthlessly destroyed in a few hours of bombing. Yet the Sisters are not dismayed. The Congregation has survived the anti-religious laws of hostile French and Portuguese governments. Persecution is one of the marks of Christ's followers, and suffering is a sign of predestination to heaven. This flourishing Institute has a spirit that cannot be conquered and it has resources that will not

The persecution of the Church in France did not discourage the woman who was then Mother General, Mother Marie Anna. Rather, it incited her to dreams of new foundations. Mother Marie Anna as a young girl had spent several years in Illinois, where the mortal remains of her father were laid to rest. It was in the United States that she desired to establish a foundation. She was primarily motivated, no doubt, by the great opportunity which this land of liberty would offer toward missionary effort and spiritual growth. In 1911 a small group of Sisters set out for Alexandria, Louisiana. They had no money but they did have determined wills, generous hearts, and willing hands.

A venerable Priest, Reverend Ludovic Enaut, donated his personal fortune and a very valuable piece of property in the city of Monroe, Louisiana, for the purpose of building a hospital. Plans were prepared and a building started. In the meantime the Sisters lived in a frame house near the hospital site and devoted their time to the care of the sick in the city homes and in the surrounding countryside. Trained nursing Sisters were scarce in those days. Although the area was largely non-Catholic, the services of the Sisters did not go unappreciated. The members of the medical profession were most grateful for their assistance.

In 1913 the new hospital opened to receive patients. It was dedicated July 22, 1913 by Bishop C. Van de Ven and named St. Francis Hospital. The Seraphic Father, the gentle St. Francis of Assisi, has held his hand in blessing over the Institution since that day. A wide field of action was opened to the charitable devotion of the Religious, a field which, for more than forty years, they have not ceased to cultivate with devotion and success. (The original building has now been replaced by a modern hospital dedicated February 6, 1955 by Bishop C. P. Greco.)

The second foundation of the Congregation was made in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In the year 1921 Right Rev. Msgr. Gassler came to Baton Rouge as Pastor of St. Joseph's Church, and no sooner had he arrived when two leading physicians of the city pleaded for a community of nursing Sisters who would establish a hospital. Monsignor Gassler learned from his friend, the kind-hearted Bishop of Alexandria, Cornelius Van de Ven, that the Franciscan Sisters had previously promised the Bishop of Lafayette to staff a hospital in that city, thus indicating their willingness to extend their field.

A letter to the Mother General brought a favorable response. In October of the same year negotiations began. A desirable site was selected which the owners sold for a nominal sum. The good citizens of Baton Rouge gave in addition a cash donation to start the building of the new

hospital. In November 1923 the late Archbishop Shaw dedicated the first Catholic hospital in Baton Rouge, Our Lady of the Lake, with a capacity of one hundred beds.

Eighteen years later, in September 1941, His Excellency Archbishop Rummel with a number of Domestic Prelates, members of the Clergy, Brothers and Sisters, assembled for a ceremony that marked the completion of a modern, attractive, and well-equipped annex to the hospital offering an additional 115 bed capacity.

It is one thing to build an institution, another to give it a living spirit. The Sisters strive to radiate the Franciscan spirit of love even as it glowed in the Poverello of Assisi. They strive to give to their hospital that atmosphere which should make religious institutions distinctive and attractive.

In 1947 an automobile accident, oddly enough, opened the way for the establishment of a Catholic hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana. Monsignor Jules B. Jeanmard, Bishop of Lafayette, and the late Monsignor A. F. Isenberg, victims of an automobile crash, were brought for treatment to Our Lady of the Lake Hospital in Baton Rouge. The Monsignor was the more seriously injured and remained three months in the hospital. During this time discussion was renewed concerning the establishment of a hospital in Lafayette. The result was that the Reverend Mother General offered a small group of Sisters. Five volunteers from the existing communities in the United States opened Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana.

It was on July 16, 1949 that His Excellency, Bishop J. B. Jeanmard of Lafayette, dedicated the Catholic Hospital in his episcopal city. The Sisters continue the work dear to the heart of Christ and our Holy Father St. Francis, truly missionary work, consoling and challenging.

The need for vocations to this Franciscan community is great. The three Louisiana hospitals at present are to be greatly enlarged. God grant that the growth of the present communities may keep pace with the physical expansion of their hospitals.

The standards for hospitals in the United States are high; but the Sisters' hospitals are in the front rank. The principal American foundation is at Baton Rouge, where the novitiate for the United States is located. The Sisters have convents, hospitals, and schools as well as Formation Houses in Portugal and Argentina. They are also in Ireland (Morttenotte, Cork City) and in England at Carlisle.

The Sisters require a postulancy of six months during which the candidate becomes familiar with the religious life and prepares for a

mission to the novitiate. In the two years of noviceship they are trained to pray and to practice virtue and prepare themselves for their profession of personal holiness and works of Christian mercy.

*The Franciscan Sisters of Calais* ✓

## PIAN D'ARCA AND WALDEN POND

On the road to Bevagna, in Italy is a place now called Pian d'Arca. It was there, over seven hundred years ago, that Francis of Assisi preached his sermon to the birds. He called them his brothers and sisters, and told them how much they ought to thank God for all He had given them. After he had spoken to them and blessed them with the sign of the Cross, the birds all at once flew into the sky, singing their praises to Heaven.

One evening, some six hundred years later, Henry Thoreau of Concord walked alone by the shores of Walden Pond. He felt that the whole body was one sense, imbibing delight through every pore. He felt himself identified with the earth, that indeed he might be partly leaves and vegetable mold himself.

Pian d'Arca and Walden Pond. Thus epitomized, we may consider two views of the natural world in which we live. Now it is altogether reasonable that we should consider the various phenomena, the loveliness, the mystery of the earth around us, for Nature with a capital N has long engaged our attention. Poets have praised her beauty; scientists have scrutinized her ways; philosophers have contemplated her existence. (In fact, some philosophers have contemplated her existence so strenuously as to deny the existence of Nature in the first place). It is enough to say that numerous cults and strange philosophies have sprung up around this something we call Nature, have sprung up helter-skelter, like mushrooms in a dark forest. One of these mushrooms, quite larger than the rest, is called Pantheism. Contrary to some opinion, Pantheism is not a dead system by any means, but actually dominates much of our thinking today. It is with this question, then, that we must deal: whether man is part and par-

cel of Nature, and nothing more; or whether he stands unique in the whole realm of life.

Thoreau, it is true, cannot be neatly classified as an out-and-out pantheist. This, perhaps, for the simple reason that he cannot in the first place be recognized as a genuine philosopher. (Not, indeed, that one demands the other; quite the contrary). What is meant is simply that much of Thoreau's so-called pantheism can be attributed to a certain amount of poetic excess. Although he wrote in clear and vigorous prose, he was first of all a poet. More than this, he lacked discipline and hard reasoning of the true philosopher. For even some philosophers are plainly illogical, they all at least to some degree, express a recognizable and consistent pattern of thought. Thoreau's thought was of the mood and moment. If he said at one time, "I am part and parcel of nature," he also said at another, "I am not wholly involved in Nature," and so on. And yet in spite of this, it must be admitted that Thoreau sometimes indulged in what Joseph Wood Krutch has chosen to call *a kind of pantheism*. Professional philosophers might well take issue with the precise meaning of such a phrase, and they would of course be right in doing so. But since Mr. Krutch is esteemed as one of our more discerning critics, and since so many moderns belong to the part-and-parcel school, there seems no special harm in using *a kind of pantheism* as a general point of departure.

The case for *a kind of pantheism* can be put quite plainly. It means, when you come right down to it, that there is nothing especially important about man; he possesses no "qualitative uniqueness" that sets him apart from other living things; he is simply going along for the ride, so to speak, with the rest of nature. It means that man is not a creature-plus-something-else; he is, of course, a man and not a but one whose existence has no more ultimate meaning than that of a fish or a cat or a dog. Man unique? Nonsense, they say, let us take man down a peg or two, and put him where he really belongs.

To compensate for the chilliness of such a view, the part-and-parcel professors have come up with a neat little something called "empathy." Borrowed from psychology, the term empathy, when applied to *a kind of pantheism*, is supposed to indicate an emotional state in which one feels "that warm and sympathetic sense of oneness

that escape from the self into the All. . . ." As one might guess, it is not made clear just what this *All* really is. (But if All means simply everything, then how can the self, necessarily included in the All, escape into something of which it is already a part?) Anyway, whatever this vague and nebulous conglomeration may be, you are supposed to feel quite chummy about it.

But the question, of course, will not stay down: just *how* can one feel warm and sympathetic towards this undefined All? The half-way pantheists are not at a loss for an answer. You can, they say, indulge in this emotional sense of oneness, because of *colloid*. For colloid, we are told, is the basic stuff of life. Furthermore, it is this jelly-like substance which forms the bond of kinship between all living creatures. Life itself is the bond, "rather than something still more mysterious called the cause of life." Thus we witness the leveling of man's place in creation through protoplasm, colloid, empathy, and the great embracing All. Such are the ingredients that go to make up the case for *a kind of pantheism*.

It would be an almost wearisome task to answer item by item the careless profusion of these pantheistic ideas. They are, after all, just another manifestation of the modern cult of scientism, this time in the form of pseudo-mystic philosophy.

Take colloid, for example: all living creatures possess this substance; therefore, colloid is the basic and enduring bond between all living creatures. It is this kind of scientism and logic that Anthony Standen humorously lampooned in his book *Science Is a Sacred Cow*. Here is the example he gives: ". . . A man gets drunk on Monday on whiskey and soda water; he gets drunk on Tuesday on brandy and soda water; and on Wednesday on gin and soda water. What causes the drunkenness? Obviously, the common factor, the soda water." The parallel of soda in mixed drinks and colloid in living creatures is plain enough.

Or take empathy and the All. Pantheism deifies nature. But reason points out that while God is *immanent* in the world, He is not wholly absorbed by it. Neither, at the other end of the scale (which is deism), is God wholly excluded from the world. Here again the commonsense philosophy strikes the balance between extremes. Pantheism abstracts the truth that God is in the world, but does not

know when or where to stop. This is like a man who would keep one piece of a jig-saw puzzle, throw all the others away, and then exclaim that he had solved the puzzle. A truly scientific attitude and a genuine philosophy can reduce pantheism, or any variation of pantheism, to the sentimental idiocy that it actually is.

But the best answer to a *kind of pantheism* is the answer of St. Francis himself. He does not rise to meet the question; he rises above it. His generous spirit, the vitality of his innocence (in the best sense of the word) put to rout all the tiny noises of false philosophies. In a life brimming with affirmation, he chanted the praises of God.

There is, however, one point of difference between St. Francis and Thoreau that cannot be overlooked. It concerns an attitude, or as the critics would say, an "intellectual difference." "Thoreau could feel as he did, not so much because he was tender toward inferior creatures as because he did not think of them as inferior; because he had none of that sense of superiority or even separateness which is the inevitable result of any philosophy or religion which attributes to man a qualitative uniqueness and therefore, inevitably, suggests that all other living things exist for him. St. Francis preached to the birds; many moderns have hoped, on the contrary, that the birds would preach to them." At least that is the opinion of Joseph Wood Krutch. And it is pure nonsense.

The fact is we are faced with a paradox. For while St. Francis instinctively recognized God's creatures as lower in the hierarchy of life, he treated them as equals. But the modern "nature lover," while claiming the equalization of man and creatures, treats them as inferiors. There is something condescending about Thoreau's having "a little fishy friend" in the pond. But there is genuine love in the salutations of Francis: Sister Swallow, Sister Cicada, Brother Hare, Brother Fish, and so on. Even the inanimate received his love: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water. And it was an individual love, not an abstraction of everything all rolled into one and labeled Nature.

The real difference between St. Francis and Thoreau is not an out-and-out intellectual difference, as Mr. Krutch would have us believe. The difference is an intellectual one only insofar as the intellect is involved in an act of love. Therein lies the real distinction.

the indisputable point which inevitably separates the world of Pian d'Arca and Walden Pond. For the life of St. Francis was an Act of Love.

Realizing this, it is academic folly to force a comparison between St. Francis and Thoreau. This does not disparage Thoreau any more than it disparages all of us whose lives are less than filled with Christian sanctity. Consider, too, the historical life of St. Francis. People commonly have the notion that saints live in vacuums. But the life of St. Francis had practical and extraordinary results. He threw open the windows of the world. The world was never the same after he had lived in it, and you cannot say that of many men, or even many saints. In him were the beginnings of a new and vigorous poetry. His sermon to the birds literally breathed new life into painting, gave it form and color and movement. And it was that same sermon to the birds which opened the eyes of medieval man to the natural world around him. And so it is no surprise to learn that Roger Bacon, who is called the father of modern science, was not only a medieval man, but a Franciscan as well. True science, therefore, may trace its origin to the Christian concept of nature. Now such a statement may cause rollicking laughter in the ranks of scientism. But whether we like it or not, the choice must be made. Either we look to protoplasm and blind chance or to God and Divine Grace.

The choice is Franciscan in its simplicity. But even here St. Francis transcends the realm of debate. For him there is no choice, because there is no alternative. Christ is the center and circumference. So it is not empathy that matters, but Love; not protoplasm, but the Blood of Christ; not the cosmic All, but God as He is in Himself. All of this, if not stated in literal terms, is certainly implicit in the life of St. Francis. He sang about it in the sermon to the birds; he sang about it in the Canticle of the Sun. His theology could not help but burst into song. St. Francis was the kind of troubador who would put the world in tune. And that is exactly what he did. For he restored to nature and to human nature something of the innocence that once was known in Paradise.

Thomas P. McDonnell, T.O.F.



## SAINT BONAVENTURE, MODEL OF RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS

Next to Saint Francis himself stands the Seraphic Doctor, Saint Bonaventure, as one of the most illustrious figures in Franciscan history. Much indeed has been written about this beloved son of Francis, so that one may wonder if there is much to add. It also is difficult to find original material since no contemporary biography has come down to us. Notwithstanding these difficulties Bonaventure has been extolled as a philosopher, theologian, mystic and saint. But the point we wish to touch upon here, if ever so lightly, is Bonaventure as the Minister General of the Franciscan Order. The saint has been called the second founder of the Order, but the eminent historian Pere Gratien of Paris, O.F.M. Cap., has shown that very much of the credit given to Bonaventure for organizing the Order belongs to his predecessor such as Haymon of Faversham. True it is, nevertheless, that Bonaventure came at a time of stress and saved the Order, while continuing the process of organization begun by the former generals of the Order. This success, humanly speaking, was due primarily to his realization of what the duties of this office entailed.

Among the many profound and beautiful works of Saint Bonaventure we find one that is especially useful to us in drawing a pencil sketch, as it were, of our saint. It is a little work called *The Six Wings of the Seraphim*. (Opera Omnia, vol. 12, pp. 132-157.) In it he outlines the virtues necessary for a good religious superior. Each virtue corresponds to a different wing of a Seraph. Like the true Franciscan he was, he did not merely write down the rules, but actually lived what he wrote. By showing how Saint Bonaventure conformed himself to these six wings, we shall try to draw a picture of the second greatest general of the Franciscan Order, the model of religious superiors. The six wings of the Seraph are: zeal, compassion, edification, prudent discretion, and devotion. We shall consider them now individually and in order.

"The first wing of a director of souls is zeal for justice, by which he cannot bear to see any injustice in himself or in others without

interior protest." A prominent example of this virtue presents itself in the trial of the Ex-General of the Order, John of Parma. First, however, we must go back a few years before the trial in order to realize the significance of the example. The Order at this time was divided into two factions. The one wished to observe the rule of St. Francis literally, while the latter accepted the interpretation and certain dispensations of the Holy See. Unfortunately, the first group were involved with the heretical teachings of Abbot Joachim of Flora. John of Parma, although a saintly man and even later beatified, was infected with the errors of Joachim. Shortly after Bonaventure became General, John was called before a tribunal and accused of heresy. The new General had to preside. We can understand Bonaventure's plight when we realize that it was John of Parma who had sent him to study at Paris and nominated him for General at the chapter in which he was unanimously elected. The account of Angelo of Clareno, who was also a Joachimite, says that Bonaventure became incensed and cried out, "If it were not for the honor of the Order, I should have him publicly chastised as a heretic." Gilson, who relates the incident (*Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, p. 19), says that even if Clareno's story is not true, he would not be surprised if Saint Bonaventure had been roused to indignation. So great was his zeal for justice!

"The second wing of the ecclesiastical superior is pity or fraternal compassion. As the love of God inflames him with zeal for justice, so fraternal love should imbue him with affection." The compassion of Bonaventure is characteristic of his whole reign as General. He well appreciated the weakness of the brethren. The faction of the strict observance accused him of being too lenient, but Bonaventure defended himself by appealing to the manner of Saint Francis who always was most kind and gentle to the erring. Bonaventure realized that there is more to the spiritual life than mere external asceticism. Since he himself was not strong physically, he was careful to provide for the sick brethren as earlier Francis had cared for the lepers. He says that pity and compassion must be shown to the sick for they are afflicted by the Lord. Wadding assures us that Bonaventure was meek and benign in the administration of his office (*An-*

*nales Minorum*, vol. 4, p. 14). His method was one of exhortation and admonition rather than one of threats and the bitterness of punishments.

"The third wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is patience and forbearance. As the roof of a tent catches the dust, rain, and wind, that the interior may remain clean and neat, so superiors who faithfully defend their subjects must often bear the brunt of adversities. A seemingly small incident will show Bonaventure's patience. He often it is that we are able magnanimously to withstand some large trial, but fail in the many little vexations that catch us off guard. When the saint was holding chapter it happened that a certain Brother Fulginus wished to see him but could not because of the important business of the chapter. Finally the brother met Bonaventure on the road one day and asked to talk with him. Bonaventure acquiesced and took the brother off to the roadside. They sat there on the ground talking for a long time. When finally Bonaventure came back to his companions, they asked him why he had wasted so much time with the brother. The saint answered, "It is not permitted for me to do otherwise: I am the minister and servant; he is my lord" (Wadding, *op. cit.*, p. 332).

"The fourth wing of a religious superior is an exemplary life and edification. A superior ought to be a model for his subjects and to teach by example as well as by words." So great was Saint Bonaventure's appearance of holiness that even in his student days his master, Alexander of Hales, said of him, "It seemed as though Adam never sinned in him!" Indeed, not even those who opposed him could deny his saintliness. Although he was not able to perform extraordinary mortifications, yet he kept his soul free from the spirit of the world. The many works he wrote in the midst of the pressing cares of governing the Order witness the good use he made of his time. He esteemed preaching so highly that he continued to exercise this office even after he became General. Finally, what an example of humility he gave when the legates of the Holy Father came bringing the Cardinal's hat. They found him helping with the dishes!

"The fifth wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is prudent discretion and thoughtful consideration of the things to be undertaken

In seeking an example of Bonaventure's prudence we can do no better than to turn toward his teaching on the Rule of Saint Francis. No matter how beautiful the Rule of 1221 may have appeared to him, Bonaventure realized that the Rule of 1223 or the *Regula Bullata* was the only one that had the approbation of the Holy See. "To add nothing to it, to subtract nothing from it, this was to be the program of his whole life" (Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 48). Yet Bonaventure realized that such a short rule must have a commentary. Gilson shows how clearly Bonaventure perceived the mind of Saint Francis when he says of him that "he considered the life of the Friars Minor less a rule than a spirit" (*Op. cit.*, p. 43). One more instance of the saint's prudence lies in the stress he placed on making visitations of the various friaries. Individual interviews were especially important in his eyes. "He knew at the cost of what sacrifices, what struggles, what daily bitterness, the difficult edifice of religious perfection is built up, and all his desire was to alleviate the pain of his dear children" (L. C. Skey, *Life of St. Bonaventure*, p. 138).

"The sixth and last wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph, without which the others can accomplish nothing, and which is, therefore, the most necessary of all, is piety or devotion to God. It incites zeal for justice, infuses loving compassion, strengthens patience, sets up an edifying example, and enlightens discretion." Instead of decreasing devotion, the duties imposed on him by his office increased his spirit of prayer. He strove all the more to unite himself with God because, as he said, "a superior is a mediator between God and his brethren." Accordingly, besides the ordinary exercises of regular observance, he set aside special time for meditating on the love of God. But when business took him from his devotions, he strove to keep his thoughts with God as much as possible. Who can fail to see the devotion of Bonaventure shine forth in his beautiful *Journey of the Soul to God*? The saint composed this work while contemplating on the Mount of Alvernia where St. Francis had received the stigmata.

The story is told that one day Saint Thomas Aquinas came to visit Bonaventure while the latter was working on his *Life of Saint Francis*. Thomas looked into the saint's room and saw him raised

above the floor in ecstasy. The Angelic Doctor immediately withdrew saying, "Let us leave a saint to work for a saint." Again we see that his work could not keep Bonaventure from union with God.

What can be said in conclusion except the obvious? Saint Bonaventure was a true and noble son of Saint Francis who, to spirititely, practised what he preached. There was no discrepancy between the writings and the life of the Seraphic Doctor. Indeed, this is another glorious proof that mystics are not impractical dreamers but rather men whose contemplation overflows into great deeds for Christ. Truly, Saint Bonaventure is a model for all religious superiors.

Fr. Borromeo Jackson, O.F.M. Cap.

### THE SEVENTH JOY—THE ASSUMPTION AND CORONATION

*Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my  
beautiful one, and come. (Cant. 2:10)*

The great feast of Our Lady's Assumption is a fitting conclusion to the garland woven her in the Franciscan Crown, and this last rose fixed into that Crown truly completes the Franciscan Marysong.

The seventh, and last Joy of Our Lady places the Franciscan heart in the very chambers of heaven; for the Queen of our Order is hereby returned in body and soul to the Throne whence her magnificent, pre-redeemed soul blossomed. The Assumption and Coronation of the Mother of God echo, as it were, the Ascension of her Son, and thus become an additional hope for us who labor for his and her name on this earth. Heaven—this is our home, and even as the Son of God led the way there in his Ascension, so he decreed that his Mother should depart this earth in a like manner. The Assumption song: *Maria Virgo Assumpta Est*, is truly a refrain of the triumphant: *Ascendit Deus in Jubilatione*.

So often our labors on this earth seem in vain—clouded by the shadows of loneliness, misunderstanding, and thanklessness. Yet

it is the vision of the Mother of God taken from this earth to her home in heaven that gives a new hope, a new strength, to the Seraphic heart and spirit. We above all others are Mary's children, and her exaltation should ever be for us a mirror of our own.

Saint Bonaventure tells us that heaven is the celestial city where we will need neither sun nor moon; for the Lord, the Son of Justice, the Splendor of Eternal Light is its Light,<sup>1</sup> and it is this Light which will one day make bright our sometime dreary days. For this reason, in our days or even life of trial, we may look home to heaven as a place of rest without labor, of life without death, of eternal youth without age, of light without darkness. For God has promised that his people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest.

Our work for God's Church may truly seem insignificant in human terms. A life consecrated to him in the scullery, the classroom, the hospital, the confessional, or in any one of the myriad tasks which we are called upon to fulfill at times may well defy purposefulness or meaning. Yet the answers to all our queries of the import of our work below are found in the simple *Sursum Corda* of the Mass we say or participate in each morning. For in lifting up our hearts we behold the reward of our labors—*Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed*. Here we shall see the King in his beauty, and the lowly one whom he has exalted—our Mother, his Queen.

In our religious profession we disclaimed all human rewards, for then we became children of another world—heaven. Today security is the great cry of the world we left behind. This cry is evidenced by the thousands so anxious to work for the government, the millions invested in such "safe-securities as bonds, annuities, and the like. All the world yearns for something to rest its hopes on, and yet the only Hope is in heaven—for the Mother of Good Hope and her Son are there.

Heaven may seem very distant to us. Saint Bonaventure was quite aware of this when he wrote that in this world we are proved by temptation, overcome by persecutions, and infested by tribulations of various kinds. Yet the Seraphic Doctor reminds us that these are

<sup>1</sup>Bonav., *Opus. II, Soliloquium, c. 4 (VIII 59ab)*.

the very things by which God gives us the means in this world to merit our heavenly home in the next.<sup>2</sup>

If heaven is the reward for all our labors in this vale of tears then we should often make it the subject of our meditation. The days may be very long here below, the obstacles to our work insurmountable, the human consolations nil—yet there is always heaven. If we are poor here, there we will be affluent as we delight in the glorious and eternal vision of God himself. If we are given bitter tasks to accomplish here, there we will only enjoy the sweetness of him whom we contemplate—God himself and the glorious Court of heaven, where our Mother, our Queen, holds singular place. If we are lonely here for the comfort of friends and loved ones, there we will ever have before our eyes the perfect vision of all God's creation. Thus our heavenly home is an astounding and admirable object for our contemplation; a delectable and divine object for our consideration; a joyful and unutterable object for our anticipation.<sup>3</sup>

Saint Bonaventure learned a great thing from his master, Saint Augustine. And well may we remember it when our hearts are torn the most for human consolation and understanding. Consider, he writes, that one hour's vision in heaven would make all the happiest and most joyful days of earth seem as nothing.<sup>4</sup>

At times, no doubt, we are afraid to think of heaven, because we fear to think of a reward for our work. However, on the words of the Master himself, heaven is one reward which we are ever free to hold before us. Indeed it is the fruit of all that we work for below, the substance of our life as religious. Do we not proclaim to live in another world? Consider the charge of Our Lord for the apostolate: *Preach the message, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand?"* Or again, the words which we so often repeat throughout our waking hours: *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* And did he not tell us: *Make for yourselves . . . a treasure unfailing in heaven. . . For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

In considering our Mother's reward, let us ever be mindful of the price that she paid for the glory of her Assumption. This is the

<sup>2</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.* (VIII 58b).

<sup>3</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.* (VIII 65b).

<sup>4</sup>Bonav., *Ibid.* (VIII 66ab).

same Mary who knew coldness and indifference as she *brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.* This is the same Mary who knew hatred and uncertainty when she *arose by night, and withdrew into Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.* This is the same Mary who knew loneliness and sorrow when the *boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents did not know it. . . And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him—in sorrow.* This is the same Mary who knew heart-break and emptiness when she stood by the side of a Cross and received a disciple for the Master, a servant for the Lord, a friend for her only and dearest Son. But now the Mother who beheld him *despised and the most abject of men beholds her Son glorified and exalted above all forever.*

No man knows the hour that he is to fall asleep to all the glories of this world. He may go in poverty or riches, in sickness or apparent health, in glory or in dishonor, and yet whatever the world judges, it is only the judgment of God that will matter then. The searchings of the *Searcher of hearts* will then be made evident. Please God that our devotion and love for his Mother will be the greatest asset that will be unfolded in our hearts to the scrutiny of God, the judge of all.

Saint Bonaventure designates the eighth star in the crown of the Virgin Mother as a symbol of her being the *Gate of Heaven*, and he goes so far as to tell us that this is so because no one enters heaven unless he goes through that same gate by which the Son of God willed to appear incarnate on this earth.<sup>5</sup>

God knows that the world misunderstands our devotion to Mary. Great bodies of men meet to disclaim her and to criticize our love for her. We do not become incensed by these pathetic misunderstandings, rather they are occasions to increase our love for the Mother of God. Much of this misunderstanding of the self-styled twentieth century of light, is due to its ignorance of the "dark age" of the thirteenth when a man wrote: "God has willed that nothing pass to us, unless through the hands of Mary."<sup>6</sup> And that voice differed not

<sup>5</sup>Bonav., *De Assumpt. B. M. V.*, sermo 6 (IX 705b).

<sup>6</sup>Bonav., *In Nativ. Dmni.*, sermo 1 (IX 103a).

in message from the voice which was heard in the beginning of grace when the Incarnation split all time, and an Angel told a Virgin that she was to become the Mother of God.

In this life it is to be expected that all our hopes and successes be seen *through a mirror*; then we will see God as he is *face to face*. In this life we possess only accidentally the Supreme Good; in the next we will possess the substance, God.<sup>7</sup> We do well to recall this when the routine of life tempts us to sloth. Sadness, suffering, and sorrow are but a shadow in the mirror of which Saint Paul speaks; the rest is to be made clear in heaven. This on the promise of the Master: *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

Oh how wonderful will be the day when we receive our heritage from our Father, as, with inestimable joy we are taken to the Throne of the Eternal King to be introduced. There we will meet the most beautiful of queens. There we will exchange the spices of our virtues for the treasures of our good works, the apparel of our earthly desires for the eternity of heaven. Then, truly, we will be able to echo the words of Saint Peter: *Lord it is good for us to be here*—here with our dearest ones and our brethren.<sup>8</sup> Yet we must always remember that heaven will be a day of consummation, and we cannot well speak of the consummation unless we have first known and been fired by a love that makes heaven a reward.<sup>9</sup>

So often in our Franciscan years we have ended our days by praying the seventh joy of Our Lady. At the end of our lives we may hope that our Mother will remember this, and take up the last sigh of our devotion to her. For in heaven we will behold the deified clarity of the Queen of heaven and the glorified humanity of her most blessed Son. This vision of the Mother of Mercy and the Queen of Loveliness, says Saint Bonaventure, will surpass our most wondrous anticipation.<sup>10</sup> However, that anticipation leads us to pray to her.

Dearest Mother of God, God's own Gate to Heaven, listen to your wayfaring children. We know that when *the earthly house which we dwell be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house*

<sup>7</sup>Bonav., *Breviloq.*, p. 7, c. 7 (V 288b-289a).

<sup>8</sup>Bonav., *Opus II, Soliloquium*, c. 4 (VIII 62ab).

<sup>9</sup>Bonav., *De Assumpt. B. M. V.*, sermo 5 (IX 696a).

*not made by human hands, eternal in the heavens.* We have dedicated our lives to the glory of your Son's name here, and thus we have placed ourselves under your patronage and protection. Hear us in our sorrow, in our joy, in our hopes, in our disappointments, from this vale of tears. Ever teach us as we meditate on your Assumption and Coronation that we are destined to meet you in heaven. We pray God that you may be the one to introduce us at the Throne of your Son, and that you, O Virgin Queen, may lead us to *that dwelling of ours which is from heaven.*

May we fall asleep to all the cares of this world to awaken to your glorious smile in heaven and sing with all the choirs of that celestial haven the glories of Jesus and Mary. With your help may we *come into Sion with praise, and may everlasting joy be upon our heads.* Grant that we may *obtain joy and gladness, and see sorrow and mourning flee.* In a word, when the shadows retire may we simply hear the blessed word: *Come!*

Fr. William J. Manning, TOF

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

S. Bonaventura, Sermo V, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae; Opera, Tom. IX, pp. 699f.)

*Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned* (Cant. 4, 8).

The Seraphic Doctor maintains that the above text describes the glorification of the Virgin Mary in her Assumption into Heaven.

He divides his thesis into three parts. The first refers to the *merit* of Mary; the second, to her *reward*; the third, to the interval of her *passage* from merit to reward. And this last is often spoken of in Franciscan tradition by a parallel phrasology as her *dormition*.

First we mention the *merit* of Mary. This is indicated in our text by the word 'Libanus.' For Libanus is interpreted by the Latin

<sup>10</sup>Bonav., *Opus II, Soliloquium*, c. 4 (VIII 66b).

'candidatio,' This means a supreme spotlessness, found in the unstained soul of Mary. And the word is appropriate: because perfect merit of soul consists in her perfect candor. Mary is guileless in an eminent degree. Moreover, her candid stainlessness is threefold; for Mary possesses the candor of *continence* with respect to herself, the candor of *innocence* with respect to her neighbor, and the candor of *wisdom* with respect to God. Continence brightened her flesh; wisdom, her mind; and innocence brightened both her mind and her flesh.

The brightness of continence is designated in the brightness of the flower: *I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys* (Cant. 2, ff.). Mary possesses this bright candor in speech, in affection, in thought and in the incorruptibility of her flesh. How fitting this is! For anything else would be an insult to Christ himself. And that is why Saint Bonaventure elsewhere states: "Christ is the Son of virginity. Beyond all that can be said, He rendered this virtue commendable because He, the Saviour of the human race, was pleased to be born of the most pure Virgin, and He Himself remained a Virgin". . . "Virginity was so pleasing to Him that He chose the virginal womb for His spiritual abode, wherein He celebrated the nuptials of His assuming of human nature."

Rightly then can Mary be called the *lily of the valleys* (Cant. 2: 1). The Seraphic Doctor interprets: "A lily is radiant and beautiful. By the lily is symbolized the wholeness of purity which makes the soul beautiful." That Mary possessed this candid radiance is evident from the words spoken about Esther, who pre-figured the Blessed Virgin: *She was exceeding fair; and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all* (Esther 2: 15). Applying this text to Mary, Saint Bonaventure says: "Such, I say, was the most glorious Virgin, who pleased the Angels of God and the eyes of the heavenly Spouse because of her extraordinary beauty and loveliness. Whence Bernard exclaims (*Homil. 2, super "Missus est," n. 2*): "Adorned with jewels of virtue and resplendent with the twin graces of mind and body, known in the heavens for her beauty and loveliness, this queely Virgin drew the glance of the heavenly court upon herself, so that she inclined the spirit of the King to desire her and to send to her the heavenly messenger from on high". . ." How true it is, then, that Mary possesses perfect merit.

For she dwells, unstained, upon Libanus; and there she appears in the sky above the Church militant as the embodiment of the candor of continence, innocence, and wisdom.

In the second place, our opening text applies to the reward justly due to the Virgin Mary through her Divine Son: *Thou shalt be crowned* (Cant. 4: 8). Mary is rewarded with the triple tiara of a glorious, luminous, and precious crown. This coronation corresponds to the triple dignity on the part of her merit. She hastens to be crowned with the crown of glory, by which she becomes conformed to the majesty of the eternal Father: *And thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God* (Isa. 62: 3). Whence it is that Mary is said to reign, 'as Queen of Heaven, at the right hand of the Eternal King: *The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing* (Ps. 44: 10). And her glorious coronation resembles that of her Son: *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, O Lord* (Ps. 8:5).

The second reward of Mary is a luminous crown, wherewith she is graced by the clarity of her only-begotten Son: *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars* (Apoc. 12: 1). The sign, appearing in heaven, is Mary who is clothed with the goodness of her Son, the true Sun of Justice. *The moon under her feet* signifies the earth, the footstool of God. The twelve stars are the Apostles, about whom Daniel speaks in prophecy: *They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity* (Dan. 12:3). And justly do the erudite Apostles appear as stars in the crown of Mary: for she instructed them about the mystery of the Incarnation and illumined them by a revelation of the hidden mysteries of God from all ages. Therefore her resplendent and luminous crown is wrought from the enlightening inspiration upon the Apostles, like twelve stars; and indeed, upon the whole Church Militant. For Saint Augustine wisely teaches that Mary's inspiring instruction has nurtured the Catholic Church, from the days of her infancy in swaddling clothes in the Catacombs to the present time, so that she grows in wisdom, age, and in grace like her divine Spouse, Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Mary's reward is a precious crown, by which she is conformed to the charity of the Holy Spirit: *Thou hast set on her*

head a crown of precious stones (Ps. 20: 4). This crown is hewn from the most precious of all stones, Christ, Who is the Rock and the Cornerstone of the whole Church, militant, suffering, and glorious. And this crown of Christ upon the head of the Virgin is set with the gems of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and with the jewels of His Gifts. The lustre of His charity adorns this glorious, luminous and precious crown of Mary.

Finally, even as Mary had a threefold merit and reward, so too she enjoys a triple transitus into eternity. That is why the word 'come' is thrice repeated as triple invitatory. Her passing from misery to reward is witnessed in three aspects. First, she leaves this place of misery: *Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come* (Cant. 2: 13). She departs from life like the bird from its nest—into the blue of heaven: *Come. . . my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall* (Cant. 2: 14). No longer will the miseries of life beset you, Mary: *For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone* (Cant. 2: 11). Secondly, leaving this life, she passes through the heavenly hierarchy: *Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come* (Cant. 2: 10). This second 'come,' like the invitatory of the celestial chorus, is the transitus of the Blessed Virgin Mary through awed Angels and Saints of the Church Triumphant. And each order of the eternal echelon of the Blessed wonders aloud: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array* (Cant. 6: 9)? In the 'eternal now,' at awed attention, the lined legions of Angels and Saints behold Mary surpass them, order above order, in heavenly rank.

Her final passing or transitus, is her ever-present and ultimate entrance into the Garden of Divine Delights: *I am come into my garden, O my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh, with my milk: eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved* (Cant. 5, 1). Here at last, in the Garden of God, Mary is refreshed and inebriated with the richness of the House of God and by the torrent of His Delight. To which happiness may her blessed Son lead us, through her, forever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS MISSIONARY NOTES

**PAKISTAN.** New York's War Relief Services is making possible the daily distribution of liquid milk in more than forty centers, from 600 to 800 persons in each center. Most of them are Mohammedan refugees. This work has enabled our missionaries to create a strong bond of friendship and good will between themselves and the Mohammedans.

At the beginning of this year the diocesan seminary was opened. There are now ten students. A school for girls, dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima, has been opened and entrusted to the Sisters of the Paris Congregation of the Immaculate Conception. On August 14, 1954, two lay Brothers received the Franciscan habit.

**TAIWAN (FORMOSA).** Sung-Shan, now part of the city of Taipeh, has five factories, but no priest was there until 1953 when two priests from the Belgian Province of Saint Joseph went there. They could find no place to live except a hotel. This was not suitable, for the Fathers found it impossible to take care of the factory workers in such a place. Finally a certain Catholic from Taipeh spoke to a friend who had a private kindergarten in Sung-shan, and arranged for the Fathers to live in a room there and celebrate Mass daily in the school hall. Soon the Fathers realized that this large industrial center, with so many Catholic workers, needed a church. Toward the end of last year (1954) the church was completed and blessed by Archbishop Joseph Kuo.

Meanwhile one of the Fathers opened a new mission in Nan-kang, leaving Fr. Martin alone in Sung-shan. Another station was opened shortly after that in Hai-chih, so that now the Belgian Friars are apostles along the entire road (about 30km) between Taipeh, the capital, and the port of Keelung.

**CHINA: MORE FRANCISCAN MARTYRS.** A Communist newspaper announced that Fr. Franciscus Li, O.F.M., Vicar General of the Diocese of Laohkow in China, was shot to death. It seems that he was executed toward the end of 1953.

In 1951, together with the other Fathers but in a separate room, he was imprisoned in the convent of Tcha-yuan-kow, called the "Alverna of China." He was continuously urged to write letters to the faithful denouncing the foreign missionaries as well as declarations of allegiance to the Communist regime and letters of self-accusation. He did in fact write many letters and declarations, but they were always orthodox and the Communists would not accept them. When they told him openly what they wanted him to write, he replied by retracting everything he had previously written. He was then subjected to repeated appearances before the People's Court and finally his own sister was forced to accuse him and to act as if she were denying her brother.

The accused, because he had defended himself against thieves and Communist intruders, was finally arrested together with the leading Catholics of the district and transported to another Prefecture. There, after long imprisonment and subjection to overwhelming physical and mental tortures, he was put to death. The leaders of the Catholic Action group of Tcha-yuan-kow and Fr. Bonaventure Hu, O.F.M., were executed at the same time.



Fr. Franciscus Li was born in Tcha-yuan-kow December 5, 1904, in an Old Christian family. His grandfather, who lived to be over a hundred years old, gloried in the fact that he had hidden in his home the blessed martyr John Gabriel Perboyre. His maternal uncle is a priest, and his paternal uncle, Franciscan, died in Fiesole near Florence. His younger brother and his cousin are secular priests. Fr. Franciscus entered the Order in his second year of theology and was ordained to the holy priesthood in 1932.

The Bishop of Laohkow, Alphonsus Ferroni, O.F.M., and two of the foreign Franciscan Fathers—and as it seems, several Chinese secular priests—are still in prison. A year ago some of the missionaries were expelled from Laohkow but they could give us very little information. The expellees were only that once in a while they had been able to catch a furtive glimpse of the bishop and one of the Fathers. Nothing more is known.

NOTITIAE FRANCISCANAE MISSIONARIAE V, 2, 1955: p.

An interesting note has recently been added to the story of Fr. Franciscus Li. In 1923 the seminary at Pienza, Italy, decided to take up a collection every year for the purpose of "adopting" a seminarian in some mission country. The young man assigned to them for adoption was John Li of Tcha-yuan-kow. Not a few were the sacrifices made by those twenty seminarians to raise the money required for the adoption, but today they are rejoicing in the fact that the boy they protected became a Friar Minor, a priest, and a martyr, and is now their protector in heaven. With loving devotion the Seminary is keeping as a kind of relic a book by Fr. Lazzeri, O.F.M., entitled *Sei mi col Dragone Rosso*, which Fr. Li gave them before leaving Italy to return to his native land. In his own hand Fr. Li wrote in Italian and Chinese: "To the venerable Seminary of Pienza in token of love and gratitude. May 21, 1932."

Perhaps other seminarians would be interested in making a similar bargain?

NOTITIAE FRANCISCANAE MISSIONARIAE V, 3, 1955: p.

**VIETNAM.** Our French and Vietnamese confreres are engaged in strenuous apostolic activity, but they still manage to conduct a large number of retreats for the secular clergy and religious women. The Vietnamese Fathers are becoming ever more adept at this kind of work, and their success has been remarkable. The Third Order Secular is flourishing. It is under the direction of Fr. Peter Baptiste Bo, O.F.M.

Besides the parochial duties connected with the Friary at Saigon, and the work of the *Apostolatus Maris* at the port of Saigon, the Fathers also conduct a *Foyer des eurasien*s where they take care of adolescent orphans born of Vietnamese and French alliances. This extremely difficult and delicate work is under the guidance of Fr. Bertin Bresson, O.F.M.

The Commissariat also maintains a small leprosarium and a clinic.

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### THE VIRGIN THINKETH ON THE THINGS OF THE LORD

If the distinguishing characteristic of Franciscan spirituality is devotion to Christ in evangelical *metanoia*, devotion to the Mother of Christ follows as a necessary consequence. It was under the protection of Saint Mary of the Angels that our Seraphic Father began his life of penance; it was under the sheltering mantle of the Queen of Heaven that he placed his brotherhood; and it was again at Saint Mary of the Angels that he welcomed his gentle Sister Death. We know from the testimony of his first companions that his devotion to Our Lady was truly extraordinary, and we have the further testimony of his own writings. When we address Mary, then, as "Queen of the Order of Friars Minor," we are giving expression to a profound mystical truth—that Mary, the Mother of God, must also be our mother in the deepest sense of the word, if we are to strive for the total imitation of Christ that our Franciscan vocation demands.

#### 1. Holy Mother of God

Perhaps the most perfect tribute of our holy Father's love to Mary is his *Salutation to the Blessed Virgin*:

Hail, holy Lady! Most holy Queen!

Mary, Mother of God, yet a virgin forever!

Chosen by the most high holy Father in heaven, and by him with his most holy beloved Son and the Spirit Paraclete consecrated!

Thou in whom there was and there is all the fulness of grace and everything good!

Hail, thou his palace! Hail, thou his tabernacle!

Hail, thou his home! Hail, thou his vesture!

Hail, thou his handmaiden! Hail, thou his mother!

Ultimately, there is nothing more to be said of Mary than that she is the Mother of God. Everything else that can be said in praise of her, all the graces and glories that adorn her, all the power and sovereignty that rest in her, must always be returned to the final dignity: her divine motherhood. Because he so clearly understood this mystery, Saint Francis began his salutation to Our Lady by

praising her as Mother of God, continuing his song with variation on the same theme—"Hail, thou his palace! Hail, thou his Tabernacle! Hail, thou his home! Hail, thou his vesture!" and at the end he returned again to the words: "Hail, thou his mother!" This title alone contains the plenitude of Mary's blessedness and the pledge of her love for us, on which our hope and confidence find basis.

Every true child of the Seraphic Father takes pride in the fact that our Order has always taken the lead in honoring the Mother of God. The history of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption is largely a history of our Order, a history of the efforts of our holy and learned confreres to promote the honor of Mary. And when the Angelus bell summons us to meditate on the Incarnation of Christ and to greet his Virginal Mother with the words of the Archangel, we may well rejoice in the thought that this is a gift of our Order to the Church. But we cannot rest content with merely recalling the work of our Order in past ages; we must continue that work in our own age. Never before has Mary appeared so strongly in the Church as the Morning Star of man's hope, as Mediatrix with God, as his solace and security against the dark power of evil that threaten him on every side. It is for us, then, especially in our own day, to continue the Marian tradition of our Order, to labor unceasingly to draw all men to the Mother of Christ, to deepen their love and their trust in her.

We need have no fear of overemphasis; he who finds Mary for his Son. She is always and utterly the handmaid of the Lord, and she will always lead us only to the Lord.

Beyond question, devotion to Mary is one of the great glories of our Order, and we may well thank God that it is. Yet we must be watchful lest our own efforts in behalf of our Lady's honor be motivated by fear that other Orders may surpass us. We must take care lest we be motivated by the mere fact that devotion to Mary is the tradition of our Order. Rather our labor for Mary's honor, in whatever form it may assume, must stem from a childlike desire to please her. This is the only valid motive: the greater honor and glory of the Immaculate maiden who is truly the Mother of Christ and our own Mother as well.

## 2. *Mother Most Pure, Pray for Us*

We address Mary in the Litany of Loreto as "Mother most pure," and beg her to pray for us. With this title of "Mother most pure" we offer her transcendent praise. But we do not utter the words simply in awe and wonderment; we add the petition to pray for us. This petition is nothing else than a prayer that through her intercession we too may be granted the grace of a pure heart, that like her we may become pure and follow her in purity to the vision of God.

It is understood, of course, that without grace we cannot become or remain pure. Yet in this, as in everything else, we are faced with the strict obligation of striving to cooperate with grace. We must pray for purity and strive to be pure at the same time. Purity is above all else necessary for our sanctification, for without it all other virtues are but vices in disguise. We are not speaking here of purity in reference to the sexual appetite exclusively; this would be applying much too narrow a meaning. Without in the least underestimating the power and potential danger of our sexual instincts, however, we can safely dismiss the matter with this, that we know the purpose and the legal obligations of the religious vow of chastity; for the rest it is largely a problem for the individual conscience—if it is a problem at all. But do we know the meaning of purity as Saint Francis understood it? As Christ himself understood it, when he blessed the clean of heart and promised them the vision of God? Do we know what makes us really impure in the eyes of the Lord? Surely if we think of impurity only in reference to the Sixth Commandment we are running the risk of falling into very great impurity without ever so much as suspecting it. Saint Francis defined the pure man as one who simply ignores, as of no value whatever, the passing things of earth. The pure man is absolutely detached from all that is not God. He labors for no temporal gain. No thought of human praise, no desire for self-aggrandizement, ever motivates his actions. His sole desire is to please his eternal Father in all things, to despise the ephemeral goods of the world and to seek the everlasting goods of heaven, and "ever to adore and contemplate the true and living Lord God with a clean heart and mind" (Admonition 16). This is the true chastity of the pure religious. What danger for us, then, to

fall into impurity in our daily life! What danger for the impurity of self-seeking to pollute even our holiest labors, even our priestly ministry at the very altar of God! Precisely for this reason our Seraphic Father warned his friar priests, especially at the celebration of the Mass, to guard the pure intention. "I likewise beg in the Lord all my brothers who now are and will be and wish to be priests of the Most High, that when they wish to celebrate Mass, they should be pure and in a pure and reverent manner perform the true sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with a clear and holy intention, and not for any earthly return or out of fear or love of any man, as if to please men. But let all their will, as far as the grace of the Almighty favors, be directed toward him, in the desire to please with it the sovereign Lord alone, because in it he alone acts, as it pleases him" (*Letter to the General Chapter*). Here it becomes evident how carefully we must watch our motives, how thoroughly we must root out the noxious growths of egoism, if the full radiance of chastity is to be ours. For whoever indulges in self-seeking of any kind and in any matter to any degree whatsoever, in the eyes of our Seraphic Father he is, to that same degree, impure. Surely this gives us something to think about. And it should become clear to us, also, that our vow of chastity is not limited merely to the observance of celibacy and of the prescriptions of the Sixth Commandment. The vow of evangelical chastity, if it is to fulfill its purpose in us, must inform our whole life and all our activities.

The chaste man is truly the "empty vessel" that the grace of God would find. Saint Francis assures us that this above all is what God seeks, for purity is not simply one virtue among others, but is the necessary condition for the acquiring of other virtues. The chaste man has removed from his soul all obstacles to the indwelling and free activity of God; the flow of divine grace is unhindered. He directs all his energies solely toward union with God, and desire for God becomes the driving force behind all his endeavors. His will seeks perfect conformity to the Divine will, and the little idol of his ego is thoroughly and irrevocably banished to give place to the God of his heart. Thus the chaste man is filled more and more with God whom he adores and contemplates ever more ardently. Then the promise of Christ is realized in him: *Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.*

The ultimate fulfillment of our vow of chastity is this purity, this cleanness that shines forth with unequalled splendor from the figure of the blessed Mother of God. When we come to understand holy chastity in this sense, we see that Mary's virginal purity, which she retained together with her divine maternity, is not so much a miracle of grace or a *mysterium* of God's omnipotence, but rather that her purity was actually the ground and basis for her motherhood. None but the chaste soul is fit to receive the fullness of divine life, and God perfects by his coming the chastity of that soul. Let us, then, consider well what we ask for when we say: "Mother most pure, pray for us," and let us make every effort on our part to attain to it.

### 3. Holy Virgin of Virgins, Pray for Us

Holy virginity is so closely associated with the Mother of God that we often refer to her simply as the Virgin. She is indeed, the virgin above all virgins, virginity in its fullest perfection. But here again there is danger of our equating her virginal excellence with the negative idea of renunciation of physical union or denial of sexual fulfillment. If we see only this narrow negative aspect as the sole aim of our vow of chastity, we are in danger of falling into the great loneliness that inevitably spells disaster. The terrible words: *Vae soli!* may very well become our epitaph. It is an undeniable fact that celibates very often become victims of a most repellant kind of singularity. This is due, perhaps, to a certain tendency to draw back too far from the borders of what is forbidden. It is a sad and frequently proved fact that a religious can observe the vow of chastity without ever fulfilling it; and it is precisely in this—observance without fulfillment—that the peril of celibacy lies. Is it not true that most of the warped and repressed characters we meet in religious life are actually victims of celibacy? It is no exaggeration to say that we cannot become true religious or develop a truly religious personality unless we pass from negative observance of the vow of chastity to positive fulfillment. For the vow of virginity is stronger than the other vows in its effect upon the whole personality; in its ultimate fulfillment it is the one vow that must be lived by the whole man or not at all.

Perhaps it is because the vow of virginity in its full and ultimate glory penetrates so deeply into the personal sphere that our Seraphic

Father spoke so little of it. Yet there is no doubt that he clearly understood it, for the most beautiful and tender fruit of virginity is the bridal union of the soul with Christ, and of this he spoke much. "O how holy, fair, and lovable it is to have a Spouse in heaven!" (*Letter to All the Faithful*). Certainly it was his own personal experience that he described in this jubilant cry; and can we not gather from this something of the glory of virginity? Does it not show clearly that the fulfillment of the vow floods the soul with joy and delight?

We should give frequent and serious thought to the meaning of the vow of virginity; indeed, we should test our whole religious life against it. We need only set before us the words of Saint Paul: *Virginitas cogitat, quae Domini sunt* (I Cor. 7:34), for this thinking of the things of the Lord is the form and content of the Franciscan way of life. Our Franciscan formula: *sequi vestigia Christi*, is but the masculine version of *cogitare quae Domini sunt*. In the form of life Our Seraphic Father drew up for the Lady Clare and her sisters, he definitely equated the life of the Gospel with bridal union to the Lord when he said: "You have espoused yourselves to the Holy Ghost by choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel" (*Rule of Saint Clare*).

The virginal soul centers on God alone. But love drives the lover to imitate the beloved, to strain toward likeness and unity of will and purpose and final mutual possession. Obviously, then, the fulfillment of the vow of virginity is a life formed and motivated by love of the Incarnate Word, and consequently it is a life wholly directed toward following the footsteps of Christ. The highest created love—the love of the Seraphim—is used to symbolize the spirit of our Holy Father Francis and of the Order he founded. As members of the Seraphic Order we are obliged to a life of love; the fulfillment of our vow of virginity—indeed, of our vocation itself—lies in the perfection of our love.

When we consider the words of our Seraphic Father that echo the joy of bridal union with Christ in holy virginity, we easily pass on to the words of Saint Clare to Blessed Agnes of Prague. For Saint Clare, the vow of virginity not only espouses us to Christ, but makes us co-workers with him in the still unfinished work of human salvation. "And to use the words of the Apostle in their proper sense,

wrote Clare, "I hold thee to be a co-worker of God himself (Cf. I Cor. 3:9) and a support for the frail and failing members of his glorious body" (III Letter to Agnes of Prague).

Let us therefore follow the further admonition of Saint Clare: "Cling to his most sweet Mother." For Mary is given as a second Eve to the Second Adam, as the first Eve was given to the first Adam, as helper and co-worker. We can do no better than entrust our soul to the purest Virgin and implore her to teach us to think only of the things of God, to center all our love and desire on God alone. And let us pray to her in the words of our Seraphic Father "who honored the Mother of God with a love so great that it cannot be expressed in words:"

"Holy Virgin Mary, there was never anyone like you born in the world among women—daughter and handmaid of the most high King, our Father in Heaven, mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ; spouse of the Holy Spirit. With the Archangel Saint Michael and all the Virtues of heaven and all the saints, pray for us at the throne of thy beloved most holy Son, our Lord and Master" (*Antiphon for the Office of the Passion*).

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

## LORD JESUS

I, thine unworthy servant, undeserving of all Thy goodness, wish to enter into the view of thy treasury; may it please Thee, Thou center of all knowledge, to lead me thereto. And grant me to know Thee and to love Thee. But grant me to love in the same measure as to know; and do not allow me to know more than to love. For to no other purpose do I wish to know Thee save only to love Thee.

(With this Franciscan prayer the late Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., used to begin his theological lectures in the clericate.)

## SISTERS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF THE MISSION OF THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN, CONVENTUALS OF THE THIRD ORDER

In about the middle of the nineteenth century the names of two holy priests appear on the shining pages of American Church history—the Venerable John Nepomucene Neumann and the Reverend John Christopher Drumgoole. To the Venerable Bishop Neumann is due the introduction of American founded Franciscan Sisters. His Sisterhood established at Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania, spread out, reaching the Archdiocese of New York. The Buffalo branch became independent of the original foundation, but all its members endeavored to apply in their daily lives all that the good Bishop counseled as necessary for the erection of the edifice of perfection.

The Sisters of Saint Francis from Glen Riddle were requested to enter the diocese of Buffalo in the year 1860. There, they labored unstintingly in the service of God's poor little ones and God crowned their work with success. However, as communications in those days were rather difficult, it became very trying for the Sisters in Buffalo to keep in contact with the Mother House in Glen Riddle and it became clear to authority and to the Sisters, that if the work before them which God had called them to do was to be accomplished, new arrangements would have to be made. Accordingly, in 1863 the Buffalo branch severed its connection with the Philadelphia Mother House to attach itself to the diocese in which it worked. A new Mother House was established at Buffalo. This branch was likewise blessed with an increase. In 1882 when the Reverend John C. Drumgoole opened his new home for destitute children in New York City, he requested the Buffalo Sisters to assist him in this charitable undertaking. The Sisters were granted permission to help through Bishop Stephen Ryan of Buffalo, a personal friend of Father Drumgoole. As time went on, it was deemed imperative that a separate branch of Franciscan Sisters be formed in order to work in the new harvest into which they were called with its special demands and circumstances. Again, after prayer and deliberation, a new Mother House was established for the new group of souls in the Lord's vineyard.

With the inspiring words *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*, (Ps. 109, 5) still echoing in his ears, Reverend John C. Drumgoole was given the opportunity of imitating the Master in His special love of children and the poor. At that time, 1871, he was placed in charge of a small home for newsboys on Warren Street, New York City. This praiseworthy work had been begun a few months pre-

vious by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, but lacking the leadership of a zealous priest, it seemed doomed to failure. At this critical juncture, Father Drumgoole was assigned to the work, and no one could have been better fitted or prepared for it than he by struggle and endurance. From early youth he was acquainted with poverty; perseverance in prayer through years of trial had won for him at the age of fifty-three the desired goal of priesthood.

Genial and easy to approach, the new priest at the newboys' home soon endeared himself to all his charges. He lived for them alone. Inspired by our Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph and assisted and encouraged by the clergy, the zealous Father Drumgoole founded in 1876 St. Joseph's Union—a modest financial project which has worked wonders and still exists for the support of the work then begun.

Hardly four years after the founding of St. Joseph's Union, Father Drumgoole was able to purchase property at the corner of Lafayette and Great Jones Street, New York City, not too far away from the Warren Street home. Shortly afterwards, work was begun on the ten-story structure. The cornerstone was laid by the Very Reverend William Quinn, V. G. December 16, 1879.

When the new home was completed, the children were transferred. It was at this time that Father Drumgoole was granted the favor of obtaining the Sisters of Saint Francis through the kindness of Bishop Stephen Ryan of Buffalo. The Sisters quickly won the love and admiration of the boys. A home-like spirit prevailed in all the departments of the house. It was evident that the little boys had found in the Sisters friends, counselors, and mothers.

With the increase in attendance at the home, Father Drumgoole soon realized the need of more spacious accommodations for his charges. He sought a place suitable for their physical exercises and growth and God blessed his desire with land on Staten Island. After the purchase and as soon as circumstances allowed, the younger children were transferred to the new country home.

The home on Staten Island was dedicated to Our Lady of Loretto and the foundation was called "Mount Loretto." Boys alone were admitted to the mission; later, when affairs were somewhat organized, girls were taken in.

In order to maintain satisfactory working conditions, it was necessary for Father Drumgoole's successor, Reverend John C. Dougherty, to effect a big change relative to his co-workers, the Sisters of Saint Francis.

Shortly after Bishop Ryan of Buffalo had permitted the Buffalo

Sisters of Saint Francis to go to New York, their Rule was revised. The new Rule was sent to the New York congregation in the year 1893. In the true spirit of Franciscan cheerfulness and obedience, the Sisters immediately began the new observance. Finding the observance impracticable in caring for the orphans, after prayer and due trial, the Sisters deemed it advisable to accept Father Dougherty's suggestion to form an independent Community. When all the proper legal procedures had been completed, those Sisters who remained at the mission formed the nucleus of the Community which was henceforth to be known as "The Sisters of St. Francis of the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, Conventuals of the Third Order." Mount Loretto, Staten Island, was chosen as the site of the new Mother House.

Father Drumgoole's foundation remains today high on the New York Archdiocesan honor roll of charity. It is a veritable "city of children." Every advantage is given to the children (ranging in age from 6 years to 18 years) for a well rounded spiritual, mental, and physical growth and development.

The Mother House and Novitiate were at Mount Loretto until the year 1900 when Reverend Mother Mary Joseph, with the permission of the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Community, was able to purchase property at Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. Here a private boarding school, St. Clare Academy, was opened and shortly after, the Mother House and Novitiate were transferred there.

The Sisters responded to the call of the clergy and accepted parish schools and hospitals. The Mother House and Novitiate were again transferred to Mount St. Clare, Wappingers Falls, New York, in 1922. However, in 1943 it was deemed advisable to relinquish this property and the Mother House and Novitiate returned to Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. A new Mother House and Novitiate were built and dedicated in 1954.

Now, again in Westchester, the novices are preparing themselves for the active life of Sisters of Saint Francis. Since the Community is a combination of the active and contemplative life, young ladies from sixteen to thirty years of age, not debarred by any legitimate impediment, who are inspired by a right intention, and who are fit to bear the burdens of religious life of the Institute, may be admitted.

The period of postulancy must be of at least six months duration during which the aspirant attends all the religious exercises and is taught principally by example, the beauty of religious life. If the subject is capable, she may pursue higher studies; if not, opportunity is given to

to develop whatever other talents or aptitudes she may have. Upon the expiration of the period of probation, a public reception takes place. During the ceremony a religious name is given and the young lady is clothed in the habit of the Order. The dress of the novices is the same as that of the professed Sisters, with the exception of the veils which are white and the cords which are plain. (The professed Sisters' cords have three knots, signifying the three holy vows of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity). At the time of profession a crucifix is received which is worn around the neck.

The noviceship is for a period of two years. The training of the novices is entrusted to a professed Sister who bears the title of Novice Mistress.

During the first year, the novices do not take part in the active work of the Community, nor do they follow secular courses in education. Their time is given over to the study of Religion, the Vows, the Rule and Constitutions of the Order. The life of every novice is well-regulated, following exactly the contemplative life of the professed Sisters. Since "the first and principal end of this sisterhood is the sanctification of the individual members who undertake to live in community, and to observe, not only the ordinary precepts, but also the evangelical counsels, by means of the Vows of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity," special classes are held for the novices in which they learn the means of attaining sanctity. The study of the Rule and Constitutions, pious meditations, and assiduous prayer, instructions on those matters pertaining to the vows and virtues, suitable exercises in rooting out the germs of vice, in regulating the motions of the souls, in acquiring virtues, constitute the training during the first or Canonical year. The special end of the Community is "the exercise of Christian charity towards the sick, the aged of either sex, especially such as are destitute, and the Christian education of children in orphan asylums, parochial schools, and boarding schools." During the second year of noviceship, the Sisters are instructed in the duties pertaining to this special end of the Congregation.

After the ceremony of profession, the new Sister is assigned to active work. At the end of each year for two years her temporary vows are renewed and at the completion of the third year, again participating in a public ceremony, she undertakes for life the three holy vows of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity. She then follows her vocation in one of the mission houses of the Order.

*Sisters of Saint Francis*

## THE CHARITY OF CHRIST PRESSETH US

It is not easy for the young standing at the crossroads of life to sacrifice dreams and ambitions in favor of a manner of life completely repulsive to their inclinations. Margaret Lekeux could well bear witness to that. How she rebelled! She had no desire to give up her satisfying studies to assume the duties of a teacher in a grammar school; she longed to live in an atmosphere of learning and culture, to associate with the intellectually elite, and to earn their acceptance by her own wit and learning; her very soul revolted at the monotony of teaching the fundamentals over and over, at the idea of spending night after night checking scarcely readable papers—"a detestable existence," she called it. Yet what could a young Belgian girl of the early twentieth century do about it? Her father had been an invalid for years; her mother, beside caring for the home, rearing ten children, and guiding the fortunes of a small furniture factory which they had established, taught part time in a grammar school, in a girl's academy, and in a school of domestic science in the evenings. Margaret, at nineteen, realized that having successfully passed the required teachers' examination, she was in a position to ease the too-heavy burden that her Mother was carrying; but the battle between dreams and reality was not an easy one for the lively young girl. She sought an ally in her usual counselor, an older brother who was then preparing to join the Friars Minor. With not too much persuasion, he convinced her that although she would be entirely without her rights to follow her own desires, yet it was by just such a sacrifice of self that genuine love of God is won. The result? Repugnant though it was, Margaret felt impelled to adopt the "detestable existence."

Self-willed, self-centered, talented Margaret, with her very independent disposition, was given as her first assignment a class of almost impossible children in one of the worst sections of Liege, a suburb notorious for its immorality, where Christianity was almost nonexistent, and where only the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul dared establish a school. Twenty-year old Maggie was the only secular teacher on the faculty and was fated to live alone in a room off the convent sacristy, separated from the Sisters and from all other companionship. No friend in whom to confide, no fellow teacher with whom to exchange the problems of the day, no companion with whom she might just relax and laugh away the tensions, creating incidents of her all but intolerable class. True, she used often to step over into the chapel, to confide her difficulties to her Eucharistic Neighbor, but the loneliness, the discouragement, the constant "fighting

against the goad" took its toll and Margaret was forced to resign. However, as often happens, once away from the stress and the strain and the constant frustration, Maggie made a quick recovery, and with the return of health she was able to make a better mental adjustment. Meanwhile her love of God had increased to such a point that it had to run over into loving-kindness for His creatures; hence this time she was all eagerness to return to teaching.

Having heard of a vacancy in the school of the Sisters of St. Mary which was near her home, she made application; and, judging from the enthusiasm and spirit with which she assumed her duties, the ordinary observer would never have guessed that she was but taking up again a repugnant cross. In her heart, Maggie knew that she had been called to this work for the purpose of leading the little ones to God; and following this very definite philosophy of education, she insisted that her pupils be taught to seek first of all the kingdom of God, at the expense, if necessary, of the rules of grammar. Their hearts having been easily won by the spirited and sympathetic Margaret, their love for her demanded their compliance with her every wish; she was, therefore, able to lead them to obedience, to diligence, and to piety. In fact, she was with them a short time when the greater part of her class was receiving Holy Communion daily and the Mass which Margaret attended with them was her second of the day. The presence of God had come to be so constantly in her thoughts that she introduced Him into all her lessons—nor did she mind cutting corners on some of the other subjects to make up for a "long" religion period. Not that she ever neglected the other subjects, for Maggie was far too conscientious for that. Even though teaching was her cross, it was also her love-gift, and she was determined that it be a perfect offering, cheerfully given, so that she never spared herself in seeking new ways for improving her teaching. Many nights she worked so late over her preparations that her Mother, fearing for her health, sent her off to bed.

Since the opportunities of the ordinary teaching day did not satisfy her zeal, however, she assumed the responsibility of preparing the younger children for the reception of their First Communion, instructing them in their catechism at special after-school classes. In the evenings and during vacations she canvassed the city for children who should be in the Catholic school, using all her powers of persuasion on their parents. In some of these homes she met with such misery, both physical and moral, that it occasioned the beginning of her apostolic work, for Margaret could not see misery without doing something to alleviate it. Even at the



beginning, these endeavors were so all-embracing that the pastor of the Church smilingly called her his third curate. This was in the year 1913, the year in which Margaret Lekeux joined the ranks of the followers of Saint Francis in his Third Order Secular, thereby securing the ideal patron for the work in which she was soon to become engrossed, the ideal model for her life of lavish self-spending and near-angelic love of God.

It was as natural for Maggie to succeed with the children as it is for a bud to flower, and, perhaps, just as natural that this should engender envy on the part of her fellow teachers. The fact that she was praised by outsiders as being the best teacher in the school, and pointed out by the supervisor as a model teacher, did nothing to augment her popularity with the others. Her friendship with one of the Sisters—a friendship which was sincere and professional—was reported to a principal who was already more than a little provoked at Margaret for constantly introducing new things on her own. This incident wrote “finis” to her work there for she found it necessary to resign at the end of the school year.

The following term she secured a position with the Benedictine Sisters where the tale was practically a repetition with little variations—her zeal, her successes, her friendliness, once more made her the object of jealousy. A word must be said, however, in defense of her co-workers. Margaret had been so intent on her own interior progress and on her work for others that she was never too much concerned with her exterior shortcomings. Being of an excitable temperament she would frequently put an end to a disagreeable conversation by a shrug of the shoulder. She was natural to a fault, and so unaffected that at times she made jest of what others considered good breeding; established customs were ignored if they impeded her work; impetuous, yet competent, she usually neglected to consult with anyone, superiors or otherwise, about her innovations. Nevertheless, the superiors were always kept well-informed on her activities by her fellow teachers; and when Margaret was reproved or checked, there was never a word of self-defense, despite her natural bent to take quick offense at the slightest reproach.

In May of 1914, Margaret undertook the direction of a Flemish choir, one of the many projects which the priests of the friary just opposite the Lekeux home had initiated in their attempt to reclaim for the Church as many as they could of the 50,000 immigrant Flemings in Liege. It was a difficult work, for these Flemish immigrants, resentful after having been exploited and made victims of wretched economic and social conditions, were sullen and suspicious. When Margaret took over

the choir, the group would certainly have taken no awards musically; and so off she went once again on a round of visitations, this time to enlist new members for the choir. The miserable conditions in which these poverty-stricken families lived, and the even more deplorable state of mind and soul into which they had fallen, moved her compassionate heart to such a degree that she determined these souls were to be won back to Christ at all costs—she would get them together and under the influence of the Franciscans whether they could sing or not. Although the many rebuffs she met in her efforts at times all but crushed her spirit, she went on, giving of herself unstintingly, accepting the rudeness and the failures as part of the suffering for which she had petitioned the good God, and hoping against hope to be able to break down the awful wall which kept these poor people outside their Father's House. Thus she became more and more involved in works of mercy among them, while one thing led to another.

Many were the misunderstandings that arose with her parents over what they considered her excessive zeal and imprudence; they complained of the type of people with whom she associated—tramps and beggars—and of her bringing them into the house; they scolded her for spending herself so prodigally and for dispensing to these outcasts everything she could put her hands on. They resented for themselves, but more so for Margaret, the gossip of which she became the target—gossip which questioned a virtue most dear to her, for Maggie was sincerely and utterly pure. Having the natural and unaffected manner of the very innocent, her attitude toward the soldiers whom she began to nurse in 1915 was that of a loving younger sister. Grateful for her ministrations, a few wrote to her after they had returned to duty, and had the letters forwarded through neighbors. This was just the sort of thing to set the scandal mongers going; they accused her of being flirtatious, or worse. When the talk reached her ears, she was so upset by it that she began to doubt her own freedom from guilt. For over a month she endured this torment of shame and doubt, not wanting to speak of it to anyone, until one of the Friars was able to make her judge the entire incident in the light of the crucifix. Her complete innocence, however, must have prevented her from sensing the situations in which others would see harm, for not long after the aforementioned incident, she was once again making herself the object of gossip in regard to her conduct with a young man whom she was training for a part in the choir. Maggie had asked him to come to her home for practice. The third day of this practice session happened to be his nameday—a great opportunity for Margaret to play the gra-

ceeding Sunday found new converts in a church that had at first been practically empty; in fact, shortly before Margaret died they had to carry several hundred additional chairs into the church to accommodate them. If one or other of her penitents was hesitant, Margaret herself accompanied him to church, remaining in the back praying while he made his confession.

Maggie watched her parents become daily more depressed and saddened about their three sons who were off to the war. Her mother worried and wept; her father sighed disconsolately, for they were certain that the boys would not return. To Maggie, it was one life for three—and two of those preparing for the priesthood—so she made her supreme sacrifice. She begged the good God to accept her life as ransom for her brothers at the front. She must have had an assurance of some kind that her sacrifice had been accepted; for when she promised her parents the boys would come home, her tone was so positive that hope began to grow in their hearts.

Knowing now that her days were numbered, she began dropping little hints—at school, to the family physician, to her mother, to Joan—that her stay on earth was just about over. She even practiced the Requiem with her choir, for they had never sung one before. This certainty of approaching death, far from making her fearful or melancholy, made her increasingly zealous to become yet more holy before her time was up. In order to give some external evidence of her willing oblation, she made application to the Sisters of the Holy Cross and the date set for her entrance was Easter of 1916; although as she herself remarked, it was a mere formality, for she would not be with them on that day.

On March 8, 1916, Ash Wednesday of that year, after having had only a slight fever during the day—one which the Doctor said was no cause for worry—she called for her Mother shortly after ten o'clock, and as Mme. Lekeux took her in her arms, little Maggie, twenty-three years and seven months old, gave up her life to the One to Whom she had already given her love.

There is no doubt but that this frail little school teacher who in the space of four years personally visited and supported close to a thousand families, who converted so many people in so short a time, had found the answer to a question that must often perplex the harried teaching Sisters—how to unite the work of a Martha with the contemplation of a Mary, how to live to the full that so-excellent way of life, the “mixed way.” Her contemplation did not make her remiss in her many duties, for, as she said, “The more I sense His Presence, the more I am at pains

to do things right that He may be satisfied with His little school-teacher;” on the other hand, she had surrendered herself so unreservedly to God that, instead of impeding her love, her labors only became acts of love. There are no other words that can so perfectly tell the story of the soul of Margaret Lekeux as do the words that are chiseled on her tombstone—words which she quoted often during those four years in which she spent herself so lavishly—“Christ must reign!”

*Sister Maura, O.S.F.*

### “THE CHRIST OF UMBRIA”

In the little Church of San Damiano just outside of Assisi, Francis Bernardone received his first invitation from Christ. At that moment Francis was told to go and repair Christ's house which was falling into ruin. His first thought was of the fabric of the building, with very little concern for any adapted sense the words might have. Likewise, in the great task of imitating Christ in his own life, he did not accept the glosses or the theologians' interpretations of the Gospels, but tried with his early companions to follow Christ even to the smallest details of daily life. It was this endeavor, this striving after the literal imitation of Christ, that came to be so characteristic of Saint Francis, and earned for him the encomium “the Christ of Umbria.” Then the time came when the Crucified found the life of His servant so like to His own that He deigned to pierce the hands, feet and side of the Little Poor Man with the marks of His sacred Passion.

To Brother Elias we owe the first description of the nature of the wounds imprinted upon Saint Francis on Mount Alverna. His account is contained in a circular letter addressed to Gregory, Minister of the Friars in France, announcing the death of our Seraphic Father. The following excerpt from the letter is of special interest: “I announce to you tidings of great joy and a new miracle. From the foundations of the world such a sign has not been heard, save in the Son of God, Who is Christ the Lord. Not long before his death, our Father and Brother was seen, as it were, crucified, bearing in his body

the five wounds which are the marks of Christ. His hands and feet had the piercing of nails fixed on both sides, exposing the scars and manifesting the black appearance of nails. His side appeared to have been lanced, and often emitted blood.

"While his spirit still remained in the body, *there was no beauty in him, but his look was despised*, and no limb remained without exceeding pain. Due to the contraction of the nerves his limbs became rigid as of one dead. But after his death, his countenance was more beautiful, shining in wondrous splendor, and making glad those who beheld it. And the limbs that before were rigid, became exceedingly supple, so that they could be moved in any position quite like those of a tender infant.

"For this reason, my bretheren, bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all men, because He has shown His mercy to us. Be mindful of our Father and Brother Francis, to the praise and glory of Him who has exalted him among men, and glorified him in the sight of angels. Pray for him, even as he requested of us before his death, and pray to him that God may make us partakers with him in His holy grace. Amen."

Brother Elias wrote this letter within a few days after the death of Saint Francis. Its original purpose was to make known this wondrous event of the stigmatization which many have called "The Miracle of the Middle Ages."

Describing the stigmatization in a meditative way, Saint Bonaventure relates (*Legend*, c. 13) that "two years before his death Saint Francis retired to Mount Alverna in order to observe the fast of forty days in honor of Saint Michael. During this time of penance and contemplation, he felt his whole soul filled with such heavenly sweetness, that he longed with an ardent desire for a more perfect union with Jesus crucified. These seraphic flames of love absorbed him completely; his heart was filled with a tender compassion for his suffering Saviour, who by an admirable excess of charity, delivered Himself up to death for the salvation of mankind.

"One day about the Feast of the Holy Cross, as he was praying on the mountainside, he beheld a seraph, radiant with six luminous and flaming wings, coming down from the highest heavens, and in

great speed hastening to the spot where Saint Francis knelt. There appeared between his wings the form of one crucified, having his hands and feet extended and fastened to a cross. His luminous wings were so arranged that two were elevated above his head, two were extended as if in flight, while the remaining two enveloped his whole body. This phenomenon filled Francis with admiration and wonder, and awakened a strange feeling of joy and sorrow in his soul. For he rejoiced at the kindly look of Christ in this form of a Seraph, but the sight of Jesus crucified penetrated the very depths of his heart with a sword of keen-edged sorrow. Greatly did he marvel at the sight of such a vision, then comprehending how the sufferings of the Passion could in no way measure up to the immortal nature of a Seraphic Being.

"While he was completely absorbed in this celestial vision, an inner voice seemed to whisper to him that though pain and suffering cannot affect an angelic spirit, nevertheless, the presence of a crucified Seraph was given him to the end that he might come to the realization that not actual martyrdom, but a mystical consuming of divine love within his soul, would make him the living image of Jesus crucified. Upon this mysterious conversation with the Saint, the vision faded away, leaving not only a burning sensation in his heart, but also the seal stamped on his flesh. Immediately his hands and feet had the marks of the nails, just as he had witnessed them in the Crucified One.

"His hands and feet were pierced to their very center with nails; the heads of the nails were visible in the palms of the hands and the upper surface of the feet, and the points protruding on the under side. The crowns of the nails in the hands and feet were round and black, and their points somewhat long and bent, as if they had been turned back. On the right side a bleeding wound was noticeable as though transfixed by a sharp lance. From this wound his holy blood flowed in such copious streams that it thoroughly saturated his habit."

The moment Francis saw the miraculous marks appear in his flesh, his first impulse was to conceal them. "Because it is written," as Saint Bonaventure observes, "that *it is good to conceal the secret of the King*, therefore, this man, so fascinated with this royal secret, tried to conceal its sacred origin from the eyes of all men." Not long

after, when Francis had completed the fast of Saint Michael, he and his companions returned to Saint Mary of the Angels. Here at the Portiuncula, Francis, still burdened with his secret, could hardly resist the curiosity of his brethren regarding these mysterious wounds in his flesh. It was then that Francis came to realize that these signs were ultimately destined to become common knowledge. With the wounds so apparent, might he not be acting against the will of God in hiding them? Perhaps the Lord intended them to be a source of comfort at least to his conferees!

The anxiety remained, and we find Francis calling together his brethren and putting the question to them, whether secrecy should be retained or the goodness of God made known by revealing the miracle. Respected for his wisdom, Brother Illuminato replied, "Not merely for your sake are heavenly secrets revealed to you, Brother, but also for others. That is why it seems to me that you should forgo concealing whatever has been given for the benefit of many, for you should be condemned for hiding the talent committed to your care." Upon citing these words, Bonaventure makes the observation that the holy man, rather inclined to keep the secret himself, was moved by the statement of Brother Illuminato that he burst forth with the awesome details of the entire vision. He added that the Seraph revealed to him other things, but these he could never relate to any man.

After the stigmatization Francis took to wearing shoes and was careful to have his hands covered. In spite of such precautions, however, was anything but successful in hiding from public gaze the wonder God had wrought in him. And as his bodily ailments intensified, the Friars took him to Siena for treatment from a famous physician. His illness proved beyond cure. Under great difficulties they brought him to Cortona and then to Assisi. The report of his condition and imminent death was spreading rapidly throughout Umbria, and the cities of the district were eagerly watching to claim his body. Cortona would scarcely let him beyond its gates, and Assisi had a military guard on hand to see her Saint on his last journey home.

It was at the Portiuncula that Francis died. His farewell to his brethren was simple and beautiful. Then he blessed them and calmly waited for the end. On the 4th of October, he had his companions

sing the "Canticle of the Sun," and with a tremulous voice he began the 141st Psalm: *I cried to the Lord with my voice.* As the last words faded out, and the sun having just set, the Seraph of Assisi died.

It is significant that the life and writings of Saint Francis are so filled with the mystery of the cross. From the crucifix in San Damiano came the call to rebuild Christ's Church; with a cross he marked his first garb of poverty. In a certain vision he had seen the thousands that would follow him, signed with a cross. With the sign of the cross he blessed his disciples and sent them forth into the world; and with the five wounds of the Crucified he himself was marked before his death.

The folly of the Cross has always been the wisdom and the glory of our holy Order. Meditation on the stigmata of our Seraphic Father shows clearly that for us, his children, there is no other way to salvation but the way of Christ crucified.

Fr. Alcuin F. Coyle, O.F.M. ✓

## HYMN TO ST. FRANCIS

Heart of Francis, winged with love,  
Lift us to Christ's charity.

Soul of Francis, weaned from pride,  
Plunge us in humility.

Mind of Francis, pure as light,  
Illume our lives with chastity.

Then, dear Francis, rich we'll be,  
Vested in His sanctity.

SISTER M. FRANCELYN, F.S.P.A. ✓

## SERAPHIC MARTYRDOM

On the Cross the Sacred Heart of Jesus was pierced with a lance and from this opened Heart, as from a burning furnace of charity burst forth consuming flames of mercy and grace. *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled* (Lk. 12:49). Would that we might catch at least a spark of this divine charity. Charity, as we well know, is the perfection of the Christian life, and, in a special manner, the central virtue of our seraphic spirituality. Yet martyrdom is the perfection of both charity and fortitude. Martyrdom is a very special grace of election, one which cannot be strictly merited, a grace which conforms the chosen one in the highest degree to Jesus Christ Crucified, the Model and Strength of martyrs, the King of martyrs. We now live His life; we should beg to be conformed to Christ in His Passion in our death! *But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how distressed I am until it is accomplished* (Lk. 12:50)! What could this mean other than our Saviour's martyrdom of blood?

From the first instant of His Incarnation, our Blessed Lord ardently desired to pour out His Most Precious Blood for the eternal praise and glory of His heavenly Father, and to win back the love from our selfish hearts. In His mercy Jesus wants to see us, the members of His Mystical Body, perfectly conformed to Himself, for the servant should be like his Master. Down through the ages and for all time to come, therefore, He will grant to specially chosen souls the priceless grace of martyrdom. Consider the glorious retinue of martyrs: Saint John the Baptist, Saint Stephen, Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Agnes, Saint Cecelia, and the white-clothed host of others. Christ ever seeks generous members of His Mystical Body, especially those bound to Him by religious vows, in whom He can suffer and die. And we, on our part, owe Him this return of love; we ought to be victims for the love of Christ. We are made for Him. He owns us by so many titles. Therefore we should joyfully offer ourselves, our all, life itself, totally for His greater glory!

The martyrs have always been regarded as one of the highest classes of Saints, and their blood has ever been the seed of the Church. They are the most glorious trophies of Christ. *I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness that they bore. . . And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow-servants, and their brethren who are to be slain, even as they had been, should be complete* (Apoc. 6:9-11).

Saint Francis had a profound regard for the martyrs; he often visited their tombs in Rome. He himself vehemently desired to go to the Orient in order to convert the Sultan and possibly win the crown of martyrdom for the glory of God and His Church. The Poverello had caught a spark from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and, within his own generous heart, this spark had burst into seraphic flames. When Francis had heard about the first Friars Minor who had been martyred in Morocco, he cried out that now he truly had five brothers! Saint Anthony of Padua was attracted to our Order because the bodies of these Franciscan martyrs had passed through the monastery where Anthony had lived. Kindled with the desire for martyrdom, Anthony immediately sought and received entrance into the Franciscan Family. Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen prayed daily for the grace of martyrdom, especially when celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The fact that our Seraphic Order has been blessed with so many martyrs shows that God has a special love for us. The martyrs of our Order win special graces for the weaker members of Christ's Mystical Body and for the members of the Franciscan Family; they also win graces for the conversion of others. We, on our part, ought to have a particular devotion and love for our martyred brethren, since they have washed their stoles in the blood of the Lamb, and now they bathe in the torrent of His love. They are powerful heavenly advocates for us, pleading before our Blessed Mother, who in turn, presents their prayers to her Son, the Lamb of God.

To increase our knowledge of and desire for martyrdom, we, with prayerful attention, should read about it in Holy Scripture, in the Fathers and also in the lives of the martyrs of our own Order. Meditating on the Common of Martyrs, particularly in Paschaltide, in both the Missal and the Breviary, will likewise prove profitable. But most of all, this ardent wish for martyrdom should be brought to our Eucharistic Lord, the King of Martyrs, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when Christ is both Victim and Food. We receive from Him in Holy Communion the strength to live out the day, each and every hour of the day, in the spirit of martyrdom, awaiting, if it be His will, the grace of bloody martyrdom.

This crucial theme of martyrdom, with all of its varied ramifications, may be fruitfully contemplated for a whole day, or even an entire month, and for some, a lifetime, so that all one's actions are consecrated to the love of Christ and the grace of martyrdom. It can be the central link, unifying all the prayers and deeds of the day, permitting each exercise, each duty, to find some relation to this theme. For example, this theme of

martyrdom may be brought to each Station on the Way of the Cross where we may meditate on the message of martyrdom in the particular step of Jesus' Passion with relation to some personal need or circumstance in our own lives. Contemplate the parts of Holy Mass under the aspect of martyrdom, and note the enkindling and enlightening results. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi had offered her life in martyrdom for the glory of the Faith every time she bowed over for a *Gloria Patri* at the end of each Psalm. The Martyrology read each morning at Prime provides us with another powerful reminder of the greatest acts of love. Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, will inspire generous souls with fresh and ever flowing applications.

We should assuredly beg our Blessed Mother to prepare us as she prepared the Lamb of God for the slaughter. *Unto this, indeed, you have been called, because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps: Who did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. Who when He was reviled did not revile, when He suffered, did not threaten, but yielded Himself to him who judged Him unjustly; Who Himself bore our sins in His body upon the tree that we, having died to sin, might live to justice; and by His stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls* (I Pet. 2:21-25). Sealing our witness with our own blood is a most purifying baptism. It prepares us immediately for our heavenly home where a true martyr receives an aureola and a very special degree of glory because of the close conformity to Christ Crucified. God does not judge the martyrs, rather they sit in judgment with Him and judge the world at the end of time.

Some may say that this is all fine and good, but how practical is the desire for martyrdom here and now; how does it effect us personally? The age of martyrdom is again being renewed in the Church of Christ and it is well to desire and to be prepared for such a grace: *if they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also* (Jn. 15:20). The sincere and constant desire of martyrdom for the praise of God and His Church has also a reward in heaven, even if actual martyrdom is not realized; moreover, one does not usually receive the grace of actual martyrdom unless he first ardently desires it. Furthermore, by this very desire, we prove to God that we love His glory more than anything else, more than our health, more than life itself. We exalt Him by our death: . . . *he who loses his life for My sake, will find it* (Mtt. 10:34). Of course, relying merely on our own feeble strength, none of us would be able to stand the sufferings of martyrdom, but we can do all things in Him. His strength strengthens us.

Then too, here below, in this land of exile, martyrdom is the perfection of charity, as our Lord Himself declared: *Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends* (Jn. 15:13). Thus the earnest desire for martyrdom cannot but help us to grow in charity, since we want to make the supreme return of love to Christ. *He who has persevered to the end will be saved* (Mtt. 10:32). Martyrdom is the perfect end. Therefore praying that we might give witness with our own blood, the perfection of the gift of fortitude, makes us continually grow in fortitude. Moreover, our wills become inflamed with divine love, which sanctifies our actions with charity. This desire for martyrdom makes smaller sacrifices to be accomplished more freely and generously. It gives perpetual joy of spirit, opens the mind more and more to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, so that He may operate more completely in us.

Oh! guide our minds with Thy blest light,  
With love our hearts inflame;  
And with Thy strength which never decays,  
Confirm our mortal frame.

Our union with Christ becomes more intimate, fervent, seraphic, intense, more continual; we grow in detachment from the miserable things of this world, especially our own selfish tendencies. We run in the spirit of the Beatitudes, the heart of the Gospel life: *Blessed are you when men reproach you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you, for My sake* (Mtt. 5:11). If we would only become imbued, saturated, with this doctrine, we would become more humble, docile, a harp of the Holy Spirit confident in Christ—in a word, ardent victims with Christ. "The souls of the Saints, who have followed the footsteps of Christ, rejoice in heaven; and, because they have shed their blood for His love, therefore do they exult with Christ forever." And let us not forget to pray daily for all those who are facing the opportunity of bearing witness to Christ with their blood. Our turn may come sooner than we expect!

Our daily religious life, the hourly living out of our seraphic vocation, a continual white martyrdom of charity, chastity, and the religious life are types of spiritual martyrdom, as Popes Benedict XIV and Pius XI have pointed out. Moreover, the religious life is the best preparation for a bloody martyrdom. By daily putting to death our proud wills, Christ will reign more fully in us. *Rejoice and exult for your reward is great in heaven* (Mtt. 5:12).

Jesus, our King and center of all hearts, has promised that if we ask for anything in His holy Name, which would be for the greater glory of God and the good of our souls, it would not be refused. Therefore in the

holy Name of Jesus, through His Blessed Mother Mary, the Mediatrix of all Graces, the Queen of the Seraphic Order and Queen of Martyrs, we ought to beg for this grace of actual martyrdom with humble, ardent and continuous prayers. JESUS CHRIST, KING OF MARTYRS, HAVE MERCY ON US!

Fr. Stephen Mannie, O.F.M. Cap.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. VIII, vv. 3-11, Opera Omnia, Tom. VI pp. 354f).

*And the scribes and pharisees bring unto him a woman taken in adultery: and they set her in the midst, and said to him: Master this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou? And this they said tempting him, that they might accuse him. But Jesus bowing himself down, wrote with his finger on the ground. When therefore they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, he wrote on the ground. But they hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest. And Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up himself said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more (Jn. 8; 3-11).*

According to Saint Bonaventure, the Pharisaical petition (about the woman caught in adultery) was a *malicious question*. Both the Scribes and the Pharisees were setting one more trap for Christ. The Scribes looked with envy upon His Wisdom; the Pharisees cast the evil eye of jealousy upon His Goodness. But our Lord had anticipated this warped internal vision in His Sermon on the Mount, saying: *And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? . . . Cast out first the beam*

*out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye (Mtt. 8: 3-5).*

On their part, the basis of their claim against this unfortunate woman was the Old Law itself (cfr. Levit. 20:10). The adultery was but the test case or the puppet which they deceitfully danced before Him (v. 3). Should He uphold the Law, His Mercy (indeed forgiving seventy times seven times!) had found its limit. On the other hand, if He passed over the Law, how could the Old Testament find its fulfillment in the Gospel of Love? Indeed, the dilemma seemed to leave Him no loophole for a mediate solution.

But, when they called Him 'Master,' they were not led by a desire to learn from Him as disciples (v. 4). Hence, He gave them at first, no verbal answer: for they did not rightly want to know, but wanted only to trap Him in speech. So with a kind of sublime prudent modesty, He deliberately stooped down and wrote with his finger upon the earth. This act was a friendly delay, to give them time to repent of their deceit (v. 6). His bending down also indicated the highest humility whereby He took on Himself human flesh to heal our infirmities. Had He not, time and again, reminded them He had come to call, not the just, but the sinners to repentance? And, when they came to Him, (the Gospel records it!) were they not all healed of whatever spiritual infirmity they labored under? And yet, on this occasion, His quiet waiting failed—on their part, not His—to evoke an admission of their deception.

Hence, He then arose from His act of quiet humility and tacit refusal by offering them the decisive balance of His Justice: *He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her* (v. 7). On the Mount, He had commanded the removal of the beam first; now, in answer to their dilemma, He placed the decision squarely before them, provided they decided on the basis of their private probity and personal sinlessness. Since they could not, at least, follow out this solution to its bitter conclusion, there was but one course left for them: *They went out one by one* (v. 9). And if only they had been honest, they would have made a wiser decision to stay with Him and learn better. This better part was: not to give away. For, from the Old Testament which had been the source of their dilemma, God spoke (Jeremias 17:13): *O Lord, the hope*



Israel; all that forsake thee shall be confounded; they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth: because they have forsaken the Lord, the living waters.

And now, by providential propriety, the one who had been the object of derision and malice stands suddenly in the sunlight of the Divine Presence: *And Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing* (v. 9). This is the *una solitudo*, spoken of by Saint Augustine, where the penitent soul must remain alone with her God. As God Himself declares (Osee 2:14): *Therefore, behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.* The holy soul goes willingly, for her only Leader is the One alone Whom she has not offended: *"To thee only have I sinned, and I have done evil before thee"* (Psalm 50:6). As Saint Augustine beautifully says,—"Two alone remained: the woman and Christ, misery and Mercy" (*In Joannem Evangel.* tr. 33, n. 5). And he concludes: "No one should despair of the kindness of God, because the mercy of God is greater than our misery" (*On the Soul and the Spirit*, Bk. 2, ch. 6).

The Seraphic Doctor notices five things when Christ looks at this fallen woman—when Divine Mercy beholds human misery. First, there is the *liberation* of the accused woman. But since there was no case against her, He merely asks her: *Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee* (v. 10)? If there remain no accusations, then there is no case left. Secondly, she receives a *liberation* from *man's judgment*. And, by this liberation, she could truly answer: *No man, Lord* (v. 11). She rightly realized that it is not proper for man to condemn her, since judgment belongs to God. *Judge not, that you may not be judged* (Mtt. 7:1). Thirdly, she received His Personal, merciful and *divine liberation*: *Jesus said to her, neither will I condemn thee* (v. 11). This is the Mercy of God, giving that confidence of which Saint Paul speaks (Rom. 8:31): *If God be for us, who is against us?* Fourthly, she received the *liberation* of *leave*: for Justice and Mercy have absolved her. But, fifthly, the *liberation* is not the *freedom to return to sin*: *Go, and now sin no more* (v. 11). On these last two liberations, Saint Augustine distinguishes liberty from freedom. Freedom is not much more—or less—than license. But the true liberation, which makes us free as children of God, is *libertas*. This liberty means the controlled ability to choose

only the moral good, under God. Very likely it is in this sense that the Blessed in Heaven retain their free choice, yet are able only to choose the good God. At any rate, having been liberated from every human and divine cause against us, having heard that neither will He condemn us, having been told—and having resolved—to go now and sin no more, let us fight for that true liberty which enables us to choose only the morally good—with the help of the grace of God.

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M. ✓

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### CORRECTION, PLEASE

"We were extremely interested in reading 'The Founding Years of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis' written by Sister Jeannette Clare, which appeared in the June issue of THE CORD.

"However, the footnote on page 178, which states that Father Aloysius Bachmann labored in the Albany diocese, is an error. Father Bachmann, brother of our late Sister Mary Francis (R.I.P. June 6, 1955), was ordained June 7, 1873. After his elevation to the Sacred Priesthood, he was sent to Saint John the Baptist Parish, Elmira, New York (then a city in the diocese of Buffalo), where he labored until August, 1874. Father Bachmann was made pastor of Saint Francis of Assisi Church, Tonawanda, New York (Buffalo diocese) and remained there in that capacity until his death January 27, 1923.

"The above information can be found in the Chronicles of our Community and in the parish history of Saint Francis Church, Tonawanda. In case someone were to use the article for some future research, we felt that the error, slight though it may seem, should be corrected."

Saint Mary of the Angels Convent  
Williamsville, N.Y.

Rev. Mother M. Priscilla, O.S.F.

### BOOK REVIEWS

**LA CONQUISTADORA.** The Autobiography of an Ancient Statue, by Angelico Chavez, O.F.M. (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1954. Pp. viii, 134. \$2.00)

Our Lady is interwoven deeply in the history of our land, though unfortunately too many of the traces of early devotion to her have been obliterated by later explorers and map-makers. But here is the story of a Lady who links the present with over three hundred years of western history, for before Davy Crockett and the cowboys La Conquistadora ruled the Kingdom of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis, and is still enshrined in the Cathedral of Santa Fe.

The author, descendent of pioneers and first Franciscan of their stock, has chosen to tell this history under the form of the autobiography of the statue. A gentle wooden Lady, as she admits, she can calmly and poignantly review her life-story and the history of her kingdom, and thanks to the researches of her scribe can capture the spirit of the past and yet lay at rest some degree of legend.

This is, then, a delightful contribution to the Marian history of our country and to some degree at least of one aspect of Franciscan history. The author has, in all humility, neglected to say anything of his own contribution to the present popularity of La Conquistadora. (I. C. B.)

✓ **ON LEAVE FROM HEAVEN. A Reverie, by Abel Moreau; translated by Flavia Frey, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1955. Pp. viii, 191. \$2.50)**

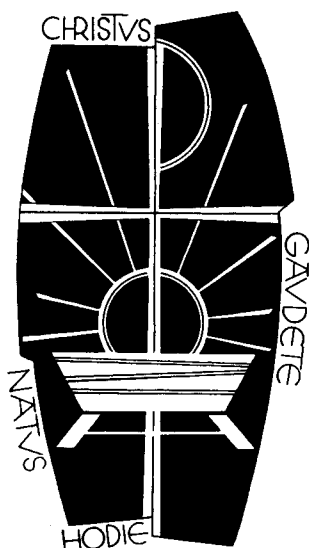
No Franciscan can read this book without his (or her) heart being uplifted and flooded with joy. Yet none can close the book without being faced with the questions: how can this story be re-enacted in my life? and, how can I in America make it come true in the lives of those for whose souls I labor?

This is the story—a fantasy, of course, yet not so fanciful—of Saint Francis come back to earth and of what he wrought in the two years he abides in a parish of France. He had tried to go to France in 1217, but was kept in Italy by Cardinal Ugolino; to the France he loved "because she was a friend of the Eucharistic Body of Christ." Now he comes at last, poor and unknown, and helps the ancient M. Abbot to bring his flock back to Christ and achieve in the twentieth century the Christian revival of the thirteenth.

What matters if the story is laid in a sleepy little town of France! We are stirred by it to wonder what might happen in a parish of our country, in a religious community too, in a school, if Francis came among us in person and gave us his spirit. But we must bear in us the image of our Father and be to others the embodiment of his spirit walking his way and using his means: "love, poverty, humility, obedience, and joy of heart, these are the only weapons we need to master all the souls on earth."

It is not too much to say that as this book, long overdue in an English version, will delight the children of the Poverello, it will also cause them to meditate, to ponder and pray that Francis will be among us too on leave from heaven. The individual Franciscan might even use this for spiritual reading; the teacher will be glad to read it to her class (or do teachers still do that?); and a superior of childlike heart may even cause joy in community by using it for table-reading! (I. C. B.)





1 (A) Red on white; (B) Green on ivory  
each .15; 12/\$1.75; 100/\$10.00  
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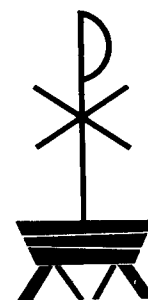


C-15 Red and brown on tan  
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Saint Francis

C-109 Red and black on ivory  
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single fold; 5 by 7; no message



If you seek purity  
you will find  
an Infant

If you seek poverty  
you will find him  
wrapped in  
swaddling clothes

If you seek humility  
you will find him  
lying in a manger

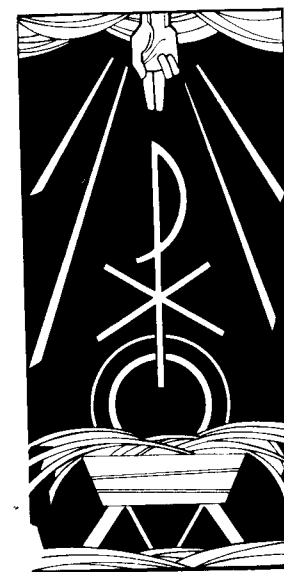
Saint Bonaventure

C-18 Red and black on gray  
each .15; 12/\$1.75; 100/\$10.00  
single fold; 5 by 7; text  
as shown above



IN THE BEGINNING WAS  
THE WORD  
AND THE WORD WAS  
MADE FLESH  
AND DWELT AMONG US

C-13 (A) Red and black on chartreuse  
(B) Red and black on ivory  
each .15; 12/\$1.75; 100/\$10.00  
single fold; 5 by 7; message



C-11 (A) Red on white; (B) blue on  
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HOLY MOTHER OF GOD SWEET  
AND FAIR PRAY FOR  
US TO THY MOST SWEET SON  
OUR LORD JESUS +

C-22 Red on ivory  
5 by 7 with or without message  
each .15; \$1.65/12; \$7.50/100



C-21 Green on ivory  
4 1/4 by 5; no message  
each .10; \$1.60/12; \$7/100

Nos. C-22  
137  
C-21  
C-20  
are folders



Correspondence Card No. 1  
\$5.00/100

This is the first time the Franciscan Institute is making its Christmas cards generally available. All the designs are originals by Sister M. Frances, SMIC, and hand printed on quality paper. Since the quantity is limited, orders should be placed as early as possible.



C-20 (A) Brown on tan  
(B) Green on tan  
4 1/4 by 5; no message  
each .10; \$1.60/12; \$7/100

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE FRANCISCAN SIMPLICITY

Whenever we preach or write about the personality of Saint Francis, we are pretty sure to say something of his wonderful simplicity. But strangely enough, when we are faced with the challenge of imitating his simplicity in our own Franciscan life, we shy away from it. The ideal of *minoritas* is difficult enough; *simplicitas* is just a little too much for us. Perhaps this is because we have come to associate holy simplicity with what is properly called unholy stupidity; we tend to equate the simple man with the simpleton. If this is the only reason for our difficulty, it is relatively easy to eliminate, being merely a question of semantics. But there may be, and very probably is, another and much deeper reason for our avoiding the challenge of simplicity, and the reason is that we are afraid of the radical attitudes holy simplicity will demand of us. There is no point in quibbling; the fact is that Franciscan simplicity has gone out of fashion among Franciscans. Yet it is an absolutely necessary ingredient in the formation of a true Franciscan religious, and to eliminate it is to devitalize our entire spiritual life. Without simplicity we cannot effect a true *metanoia*.

### 1. The Meaning of Holy Simplicity

Saint Francis made it quite clear to his brethren that a Friar Minor must be a lover of holy simplicity. "The spirit of the Lord," he wrote, "aims toward humility and patience, and pure, simple, and true peace of mind." "We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh (I Cor. 1:26), but simple, humble, and pure" (*Letter to All the Faithful*). And he greeted the Virtue of Simplicity together with Wisdom, the Queen of Virtues: "Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save thee, with thy holy sister, pure Simplicity" (*Salutation to the Virtues*).

These few words of our Seraphic Father show us that simplicity is an integral part of Franciscan spirituality. Its importance is best made clear to us by Celano's story about Brother John the Simple. Brother John had great reverence for Saint Francis, and strove to imitate him as closely as possible. "Whenever Saint Francis stood

somewhere contemplating, John forthwith assumed the same posture and imitated it exactly. If Saint Francis spat, he spat too; if Saint Francis coughed, he coughed too; if Saint Francis wept and groaned, he did the same; when the Saint raised his arms toward heaven, John raised his. He looked upon his model and copied everything he saw. The Saint observed this and asked him the reason. John replied: "I have promised to do everything you do. It would be dangerous for me to leave anything out." And Celano adds: "It is part of pious simplicity to live according to the advice of greater men and to rely on the examples and principles of the Saints."

This story of Brother John invariably provokes laughter. But if we look more deeply into it, we see how very seriously holy simplicity must be taken. "I have promised to do everything you do. It would be dangerous for me to leave anything out." Dare we doubt that we must say exactly the same thing? We agreed to embrace life under the law of total following of Christ. Christ, through his servant Francis, has summoned us to follow him in the way of evangelical perfection. We have the Gospel to guide us—the pattern Christ set for us in his own earthly life. With the example of our Master clearly before us, we have to admit that it is dangerous for us to leave anything out. We have but to recall the Gospel story of the Rich Young Man to see how very dangerous it is indeed. Christ looked upon the innocent youth and loved him, and invited him to become his disciple. This young man had been observing the Law faithfully, and sincerely desired to do still more. But he lacked the spirit of holy simplicity. He could not, simply and unquestioningly, do everything Christ asked of him. He omitted something. This was dangerous for him. He failed, and the pitying gaze of Christ followed him.

"It is part of pious simplicity to live according to the advice of greater men and to rely on the examples and principles of the Saints. The greater man according to whose advice we are bound to follow and upon whose example we are to rely is our Seraphic Father Francis. Through imitating him, we come to the imitation of Christ. Then can we be said to fulfill the obligation of our way of life, the way of evangelical perfection. Our vocation to the Order of

Francis is not an accident; it is a sign that God wills us to serve him as Friars Minor and as nothing else. When we first felt the stirrings of our vocation and responded to it, we already had something of the sense of holy simplicity. Then we saw our Seraphic Father as the greater man before us, and we were drawn by his example. We entered his Order with the firm intention of being like him in all things. If we have since fallen away from the spirit of youthful simplicity, let us pray God to renew it in us now. And let us convince ourselves beyond any shadow of doubt that total, unconditional, unquestioning, imitation of our Seraphic Father Francis in the way of Gospel perfection is the will of God for us, and that it is dangerous for us to leave anything out.

## 2. *The Demands of Holy Simplicity*

God will not give us the spirit of holy simplicity without wholehearted cooperation on our part, nor will that spirit remain alive in us of itself. Certain conditions and attitudes are required of us to make the virtue of simplicity vigorous and effectual in our spiritual life.

The greatest danger to simplicity, as to every other virtue, is our own ego. We see Saint Francis as the "greater man" whose example we are to follow, on whose advice we are to rely; but we hesitate. We are unwilling—consciously or unconsciously—to surrender ourselves completely to another, even if the other is Christ himself. And we hear the voice of Christ speaking to us from the pages of the Gospel or the Rule, we begin to grow wise in our own conceits and resort to rationalizing. "Did Christ really mean this to apply to me? Am I really obliged to take all this seriously? There must be a way out—plus a legitimate excuse." So we go along, interpreting the word of God to suit our clever little ego, taking it apart and turning it around, holding "reasonable thoughts" against it, and eventually we are right back where we started from—if indeed we ever moved at all beyond the first impulse of grace. Then, perhaps, in one of our better moments, we wonder with mild distress why we are still so very unlike our Seraphic Father, why we hardly seem worthy, even to ourselves, of the name Franciscan.

Not without reason did Saint Francis so frequently mention

simplicity and purity together. We have to stand before the Eternal God in total nakedness of radical simplicity and purity and humility. We dare not allow the least obstruction to separate us from direct contact with the divine will. The word of God must reach unhindered and unimpaired by even the thinnest wall of egoism. Actually, the arch-enemy of simplicity is sophistication. Of course, sophistication is in vogue in our modern world, but a sophisticated mind can never be a simple mind, for it is incapable of moving in a clean direct line from precept to practice. It wants to weigh and measure, to ponder expediency and profit, to consider advantage and gain for the ego. It never moves with the swift clean directness of simplicity. So the moment we find ourselves hesitating and rationalizing, we may be sure that simplicity has little or no part in us.

"Holy, pure simplicity frustrates all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh," said Saint Francis (*Salutation to the Virtues*). Whoever wants to meet the Lord directly must put an end to self-seeking according to the world and the flesh. He must reform his thinking and rid his mind of the twisted sophistries of worldly cleverness. He must remake his desires and aspirations according to the will of God. Then God will have power over him and will speak and act through him. To make room in oneself for the thoughts and activities of God is the greatest wisdom, for then it is the omnipotent Wisdom of God himself that rules the soul; and this is the greatest security man can have—it is security forever. Therefore Saint Francis could speak of "peace of mind" as a direct consequence of pure simplicity.

Of course, none of this is new to us. We all know well enough how to write and preach about Franciscan simplicity. The difficulty lies in acting according to our knowledge. If we would only realize how important it is for us to have the spirit of holy simplicity! At least we can and should do this much: make an honest effort to transform ourselves in simplicity. The words of the Gospel come to us often enough—we hear them, we read them, we study and teach them, we preach to others about them—then let us educate ourselves to act in harmony with them. Once we have learned to take the direct and immediate step from knowing to doing, the power of simplicity will grow in us.

We would do well to watch ourselves once in a while, to note how we act in the face of a clear precept from the Gospels, a definite restriction of our Rule. We shall find, perhaps, that even though we know exactly what we *should* do, we do not *want* to do it—at least not right away. And we procrastinate, and gradually our memory dims, and before long the impression of the words is gone and we have not obeyed. This habitual disregard is fatal to religious perfection. Unless we become men of one Master only, we shall always be struggling with discrepancies between our thinking and our doing, between what we are supposed to be and what we actually are. It is strange that we all see this clearly enough, yet we all, in some measure, try to get around it. There are precious few religious among us who are sufficiently unsophisticated to be easily and deeply impressed by the word of God, and who have the radical courage to pass directly from hearing the word to putting it into practice. Yet this is precisely the meaning of simplicity.

It is ironical that our Seraphic Father, in his last and most serious document, his *Testament*, should have had to warn against deviation from the way of simplicity. But if his stern and solemn words were needed in his own day, among his own contemporaries, how much more are they needed in our day. "And I strictly command all my brothers," he wrote, "both clerical and lay, in obedience, not to put glosses on the Rule or on these words, saying: They are to be understood thus; but just as the Lord has given it to me to speak and write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so you are to understand them simply and purely and with holy practice to observe them to the last." This is what our founder and model expects of us above all else—the spirit of pure simplicity. The Church, too, expects this of us. Our vocation is to be the *simplices* in the Mystical Body, men whose direct, straightforward, and uncompromising following of Christ is to guide the faithful through the tortuous maze of modern sophistication to the pure simplicity of radical Christianity.

It may help us to reach or regain the path of simplicity if we think back to the day of our religious profession. Then we made our unconditional surrender to Christ. Let us make it again, and meditate a little on the beautiful words of the Psalm: *Lord God, in the*

*simplicity of my heart I have joyfully offered all things to thee. God of Israel, keep this will.*

### 3. *A Reflection on the Importance of the Franciscan Life*

Since holy simplicity has such a powerful bearing on Franciscan life, we may do well to consider briefly how much more important it is for us to *be* than to *do*. Not long ago, in Germany, a group of secular and religious priests together with several ecclesiastical dignitaries met to discuss the problem of growing parishes. The discussion passed on to the question of how to obtain pastors for the many new parishes that would soon have to be established. One of the secular priests suggested: "There are so many priests in the monasteries. We could secularize them and put them to work in the parishes. That would easily take care of the problem." The discussion ended at that; it was of private nature only, and represented the opinion of relatively few clergymen. But that such an opinion should be openly expressed by the secular clergy in the presence of religious priests, both friars and monks, and of members of the hierarchy, is little less than shocking. It must make us suspicious of how serious the matter may be discussed when members of the regular clergy are not present. It is up to us to face the matter squarely. It is quite possible that we religious priests have so fallen away from the purpose of our way of life that we have become mere question marks to our secular brethren. Perhaps we ourselves are responsible for this unspoken conviction that the activity of religious Orders is the most precious gift to the Church, and that every means should be used to increase that activity. Perhaps it is our fault that the spirit, the ultimate reason for being of religious, is relegated to a position of negligible importance.

Let us have the simplicity to ask ourselves a few pertinent questions. Just how much of the spirit of our Order do we reflect in our daily life? What face do we show to the secular clergy, to the faithful, to the world at large? We rush like mad into any and every form of exterior activity, and as long as something visible is accomplished, as long as something tangible is produced, we feel justified before God and man. But we seem to know nothing about our life as religious, and consequently, neither does anyone else. Whenever we are faced with the "why" of our way of life, we point to our accom-

plishments and explain how much more effectively a religious priest can work, backed by the power of his Order, than a secular priest alone. How, then, are others supposed to see that the spirit and life of his Order is always the first and highest value of the religious priest if he himself fails to realize it? It is a matter for serious thought.

However, we are not supposed to jump back head over heels into the spirit and life of our Order merely to save our *personal* existence. Self-protection can hardly be a valid motive. If we admit that living the Franciscan life is our task in the Church and at the same time our gift to the Church, then we must realize that we dare not fail, not for our own sake but for the sake of the Mystical Body of Christ. A man in a religious Order does not live for himself alone. He may be at the height of public fame or buried away in a jungle mission; it is still his Franciscan life that is of importance to the Church. We have to play the record over and over again to force this conviction deep into our consciousness. We believe too faintly in the importance of our way of life. If activity, even Apostolic activity, were the purpose of religious Orders, then we would never be able to tell people anything more than: "*Consolamini*, brethren; our work is possible only because you exist."

There is one more point to be considered—the matter of religious vocations. If we truly love our Order and believe in its value, its growth and vigor will be of vital concern to us. But no Order can grow or even continue to exist if its spirit is dead or dying. A glance at the history of our Order will make us realize that whenever it enjoyed periods of great development and fruitful activity, there was a period immediately preceding of intensive contemplation and spiritual vigor. As long as the ideals of our Seraphic Founder flourished in the Order, the work of the Order flourished proportionately. But a dead ideal is of no use to the Church. Here each and every one of us faces a personal responsibility. Either we are Franciscan in spirit or we are masquerading in the religious garb. Either we are living our ideal to the full, or we are as good as dead to the Church. Either we are following the way of life set down for us by our Seraphic Father, purely, humbly, with radical simplicity, or we are following our own way—in which case no one can be blamed for suggesting that we be secularized.



Let us begin now to educate ourselves in the holy simplicity demanded of us by our vocation. Let us make simplicity our security. Simplicity will strip us of nothing but our vices and failings, and will clothe us with nothing less than peace and joy and holiness.

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

## FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF BLESSED KUNEGUNDA

There is no doubt that each religious community, be it an offspring from an established congregation already existing in the United States, or be it a branch of European origin, has been founded with the inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost. Studying the history of the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda, one is convinced that the Sisterhood, which blossomed and grew into a sizeable congregation on American soil, is the work of God, inspired and guided by Divine Providence.

In the designs of God, whenever a shortage of laborers in His vineyard occurs, a sacrificial soul, burning with love of God and humanity, chosen to fill the gap and leave behind a rich heritage of noble deeds and examples for other God-loving souls to follow. So too, in the case of a zealous soul filled with compassion for the handicapped, crippled, aged, and destined to become Mother Mary Theresa, do we find God's plans materializing in the foundation of the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda with its Motherhouse in Chicago. In her great humility, she never dreamed of becoming a member of a community, much less the foundress of a religious congregation.

Josephine Dudzik, a seamstress by trade, often wondered how the Christian ideals in the aiding of the less fortunate, the helpless, and the homeless aged, could be realized. She had made the sacrifice of caring for her aged mother when her two younger sisters entered the convent. Josephine desired to include other needy souls and opened the doors of her home to a crippled woman. This acceptance limited her generosity due to her mother's strong objections. She prayed for God's holy will and was inspired to share her views with other young noble minded ladies of the parish. She suggested they join their meager savings and help the poor emigrants and aged with shelter and food.

In 1893, Josephine made efforts to house the poor and engaged

help of an intimate friend, Rose Wisinski, ten years her senior. Rose, a Franciscan Tertiary member of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church, Chicago, of whose group Josephine held the office of President, applauded the idea but prudently suggested that Josephine give a year's test to this impulse of charity. Should Josephine still feel the same zeal about sheltering and providing for the needy, she would come to her assistance, both physically and financially.

A year of anxiety, increased enthusiasm, and prayer spent in closest association with God determined the way for Josephine. In 1894, she presented her idea to the Tertiary group, with an immediate response from six of its members who were willing to become co-workers with Josephine and Rose. Somewhat disappointed, for the zealous soul had expected a larger number to be interested, Josephine presented the plan to the Reverend Vincent Barzynski C.R., her confessor and pastor of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Parish.

Father Vincent, a pastor ever mindful of his flock, had foreseen the urgent necessity of helping the homeless and poor. When Josephine presented her heart's cravings, he very graciously approved, and understanding human frailty added, "You will not attain your purpose unless all of you bind yourselves with the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, that is, become members of a religious community." Being a man of vast experience, Father Barzynski even then so very early in the embryonic stage of the community, foresaw the hardships Josephine had to endure later. Bewildered at his reply, Josephine managed to ask, "A religious community? But...who is going to found it?" Father Barzynski wished to entrust the task to her. In all sincerity Josephine confessed she had no conception of religious life. Father Vincent assured her of his genuine interest, guidance, and leadership in the entire project. However, he stipulated that she promise to persevere in her ideals and high objectives, regardless of what might befall her, be it defections of her followers, ingratitude of those she helped, or lack of the necessities of life and even persecution. This promise Josephine made unhesitatingly, for in her fervor little did she foresee what the future had in store for her.

With the approval of the Most Reverend Patrick Feehan, the Archbishop of Chicago, the new community was founded on December 8, 1894 in the home of Josephine Dudzik, at 11 Chapin Avenue, today 1341 Hadden Avenue, on the Northwest Side of Chicago. Although the eight Tertiaries did not begin life in common until December 23, 1894, December 8 is considered the birthday of the community, for that day Father Barzynski made the final decision to establish the new congrega-

tion. Since they had belonged to the Third Order of Saint Francis, they called themselves the Franciscan Sisters. They selected Blessed Kunegunda as their particular patroness because during her lifetime she had sheltered the homeless and the crippled. Father Barzynski also encouraged the choosing of Kunegunda as patroness because of his great personal devotion to her, and also because Rose Wisinski's mother, whom Father Barzynski held in high esteem, bore the name of Kunegunda.

The group of eight, God-inspired women began the religious life by changing their Baptismal names to those they had received as Tertiaries, adding the name of Mary. Thus Josephine was known as Sister Mary Theresa, Rose Wisinski as Sister Mary Anna, Constance Tapolski as Sister Mary Angeline. Only these three staunch and steadfast souls of the original group persevered. On this day Sister Mary Theresa was elected the Superior of the congregation, which office she held until October 4, 1898.

Under the ardent spiritual guidance of Mother Theresa and that of Father Barzynski, and occasionally prompted by Sister Mary Levia SSND, Mother M. Theresa's sister, the small group began their life of prayer and labor, gradually developing into a contemplative-active religious congregation.

Saint Joseph's Home for the Aged was first opened to a friendly destitute centennarian and a blind woman. Because the influx of the needy was so rapid, Sister Mary Theresa, to provide adequate facilities, rented three four-room apartments from Mr. Lewandowski on Ingraham Avenue, today 1354 Evergreen Avenue. In a short time, twelve aged and a legless boy were the occupants of the new place. Meanwhile, the Sisters' only means of sustenance was the sewing and laundering of church linens, cleaning the rectory, and eventually soliciting in Saint Stanislaus Parish.

The work of the community was progressing, with Sister Mary Theresa drinking the bitterness of her chalice sooner and much more deeply than she had expected. Father Barzynski's predictions had been fulfilled—first came the disappointments in her co-workers who abandoned their ideals; then the dissatisfactions of those whom she sheltered and finally the catastrophe Sister Mary Theresa feared most, that of hunger, for all the inmates were charity cases and sufficient funds were lacking for further operation.

Supported by grace and by financial help from the neighboring parishes, and contributions from the Women's and Young Ladies' Rosary

Sodalities of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church, in October, 1897 the cornerstone of a new building on North Hamlin and Schubert Avenues was blessed. On March 23, 1898, the foundress, Mother M. Theresa and Mother M. Anna along with other Sisters and their charges moved into the new building at 2649 N. Hamlin Avenue, which serves as a Mother-house for the community to the present date.

After five years of being garbed in dark-colored uniforms, the Sisters hoped to receive the religious habit. In 1898, Father Barzynski obtained the necessary faculties from the Archbishop of Chicago to invest the Sisters with the religious garb. Before the appointed date, Father Barzynski died, and Father Spetz, C.R., appointed by Father Barzynski as his successor, invested the four Sisters on Pentecost Day, May 25, 1899, with habits designed by Mother Mary Theresa.

At the end of the canonical noviceship on Pentecost of June 3, 1900, the first Sisters made their religious profession. The community then consisted of four professed Sisters, eight postulants who became novices the following day, and four aspirants. The inmates had increased to twenty aged and eighty orphans.

Upon the appeal of the Bishop and priests for nun teachers in the parish schools, the foundresses responded to the cause. They engaged private tutors to prepare them to face the task. In 1901, the Franciscan Sisters took over their first mission school at Spring Valley, Illinois. The following year, on the Feast of Saint Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr, the first Chicago school was accepted. The same year Saint Casimir's School in Cleveland was staffed, and later followed schools in the Dioceses of Fort Wayne, Cleveland, Youngstown, Altoona, and Belleville. In the Archdiocese of Chicago the Sisters conduct four parochial schools, and Madonna High School opened in 1951.

Back in 1905, Mother M. Antonina and Sister M. Benigna initiated hospital work in the congregation. Today, the community prides itself on the efficient and able staff at their own Saint John's Hospital in Huron, South Dakota, which includes a nursing school. All of the other four hospitals operated by the community are located in the west. In 1940, the community took over the office work and domestic department at Boystown, Nebraska.

Since 1904 the Sisters are engaged at Saint Elizabeth and Guardian Angel Day Nurseries in Chicago.

Always conscious of the original aim of the foundresses—the care of the aged—the Sisters are now in charge of five such homes: the original

Saint Joseph's Home for the Aged in Chicago, Saint Anthony's Home in Crown Point Indiana, Madonna Hall and Saint Joseph's Home in Cleveland, and Alvernia Home for the Convalescent in Parma, Ohio.

In 1924, the community purchased a vast territory on the outskirts of Chicago in Lemont, Ill. This magnificently terraced country site is the present home of the novices. On the same premises in 1936, a home for emeritus Sisters was constructed.

In 1939, the Holy See granted final approval to the Rule and Constitutions of the Congregation. Today, it numbers four hundred members engaged primarily in teaching, nursing, and caring for the aged and children in day nurseries.

Under the efficient guidance of the present Superior General, Mother Mary Jerome, who resides at 2649 N. Hamlin Ave., the community is fulfilling the ideals of its Foundress who was sincerely convinced that the founding of the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda was truly the work of God.

*Sister Mary Clareta Urbanowicz, O.S.F.K.*

## THE LETTER OF SAINT BONAVENTURE TO AN UNNAMED MASTER OF ARTS AT PARIS

1. TO AN unnamed Master, I cordially wish the spirit of understanding the truth. You desire, my dear man, the solution of three questions on the Rule of the Friars Minor, points which for several reasons cause you to hesitate, namely, regarding poverty, manual labor, and the studies of scholars and masters.

Thus, since the Rule states that "the Friars may not accept money of themselves or through an interposed person," and again that "they

The above letter is most interesting both because of its author and its recipient. On the solid evidence of manuscripts and contents, it is recognized as the work of Saint Bonaventure during his regency at the Franciscan Studium of Paris, most likely in the year 1254, while the Master cloaked with anonymity seems to be Roger Bacon. It is very possible that Bacon and Bonaventure were fellow-students in the Arts-faculty of Paris before the latter entered the Order of Friars Minor.

From the contents of the *Letter* we gather that Bacon's proposal to join the Friars Minor (which he carried out about this time) had met with opposition on the

shall appropriate to themselves neither house nor place nor anything," you think the Friars are disregarding this part of the Rule, as they appear to be receiving money through an interposed person and to have books and houses although they are unable to point to definite owners of such things.

Also, in the manual labor enjoined on them, as you think, by precept, they strike you as being guilty. For neither do the laics perform manual duties nor are the clerics engaged in copying books themselves. Rather, they have them copied at great expense, just as if they had masters of the mint in their very midst.

Lastly, you condemn the Friars engaged in the teaching and study of philosophy. Though the Rule says that "those who are ignorant of letters should not be anxious to learn," the Friars as a whole, students as well as masters, and even those who as laymen pursued little if any philosophy, now study and avidly read and write; moreover, they attack, refute and construct all manner of doctrine. You are of the opinion likewise that the title "master" cannot belong to men who profess such great humility, since in the Gospel the Lord seems to forbid this name to His Apostles whose imitators, as professing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we claim to be.

These things, as you assert, beget anxious scruples for you regarding the state and welfare of the Friars and disturb your peace of mind. To this, moreover, you add the statements of certain persons who have tried to force upon you such an evaluation of the Friars.

2. Mind therefore what I am going to say: for through the intercession of the glorious Virgin and the Blessed Francis the Lord will give you a right understanding in all these things. You feel the Rule commands poverty, commends labor, and forbids idleness. I agree with you. As a result you detest those who receive money, or who act as though they owned books and houses. I also censure such abuses. Indeed, all of us

part of the Friars Preachers. Perhaps they hoped that Roger, already a famous Master of Arts in the University, would come to them and ably succeed his uncle Robert Bacon, a Dominican of advanced years. Perhaps they cast a jealous eye on the Franciscans, who had attracted so many doctors and masters to their ranks. At any rate, the *Letter* mentions the "scruples" which such a campaign had awakened in Bacon's soul, and offers him light and counsel in his dilemma.

Evidently the *Letter* brought matters to a head between the two great Orders. On February 2, 1255, the two Generals, Blessed Humbert de Romanis, on the part of the Preachers, and Blessed John of Parma, agreed on a measure of peace. Thereafter members of their respective Orders would beware of attempting to change the resolution of anyone who was determined to enter the other Order.

firmly forbid and condemn such things. So far we agree. But that you believe the Friars are such, or if you do not believe it, that at least you are suspicious of it: in this we surely disagree. For I neither believe nor suspect this but hold the very opposite to be true. I am not saying that there may not be such a Friar in the Order who could not be blamed for such abuse, since not even among the twelve Apostles was this to be found. But I have undertaken to defend the true tenor of our way of life, and you too understand it.

3. Consider therefore what you should think about the acceptance of money. I call on God to be my witness that in all that follows I will speak the truth as my conscience dictates. I do not believe you have any doubts whatsoever that no matter what degree of poverty they may have vowed the poor are allowed to accept alms, unless they wish to commit suicide; if then the latter is forbidden, the former is allowed to the Friars. No one of sound mind would deny this argument. It is consequently not against their profession if some rich man ministers alms to them by his own hand. But if he would not wish to give it in person, he may take care of the alms through his servant. To go a step further, if the servant were indisposed and wished to delegate another, there seems to be nothing wrong in using a third party. Therefore, why should there be any fault in having as many as ten persons involved? Again, if the rich man has the money but does not have at hand the food or clothing needed for the Friars, cannot he himself buy them? Why then can he not give the purchase-money to another and thus through many agents expend it on behalf of the Friars to relieve their wants, without involving the Friars? Does any sane man doubt this? The money still belongs to the owner; even though he gives it into the hands of an intermediary it is just as if the owner had kept the money in his own possession. Of course, someone could perhaps be so foolish as to say that because the money was handed to a servant, it thereby passed into the ownership of the latter and no longer belonged to the owner. This, surely, is absurd.

4. If you say that the owner intends to give it simply and unconditionally to the Friars, I would say that no sane person means to give anything to them except as in accord with their Rule and profession. Who would give them alms to make them lose eternal life? The alms then is given in the manner permitted the Friars; that is, by committing it to another who in his own name will use it for those things which the Friars may accept. Thus, no matter through how many hands the money may pass, it belongs in no way to the Friars because it always remains the possession

of the first owner. It is evident from this that the Friars receive money "neither of themselves, nor through an interposed person." Before God I confess that in the consciences of the Friars this is the true outlook.

5. If perchance you do not believe me, by all means believe the Pope himself, who, learned in both civil and canon law and zealous for both our Order and Christian perfection, himself testifies that he assisted the Blessed Francis in forming the Rule and that he thus had a deeper insight into the Saint's intention. At the request of the Friars, the Pope gave this declaration: "To those who wish to make them an alms the Friars can present one of the faithful to receive it. The one thus presented is not their representative even though he is presented by them; rather, he is the representative of the person at whose command he makes the payment or of the one receiving it." These are his very words. Who is so foolish as to conclude that if I say to a person: "That man will faithfully carry out or watch over what you commit to him," thereby whatever he receives becomes mine? Even though these words may not always be expressed, they are always in our mind and we trust they are always thus accepted by others. Who, therefore, is so evilly inclined as to dare assail this truth which is confirmed by the sane and discreet moral sense of so many men, by such great evidence of fact and, that nothing be lacking, by the Apostolic See? I am sure that such a man will bear the penalty, whoever he may be.

6. Hear me now on what I have to say about books and tools needed for work. The Rule sets forth in no uncertain terms that the Friars have the right and duty of preaching. To my knowledge, this is not found in any other Rule. Now, if the Friars are not to preach fables but the words of God, and these they cannot know unless they read and cannot read if they have no tools, then it is most evident that it accords with the perfection of the Rule for them to have books as well as to preach. Again, as it is not detrimental to the poverty of the Order to have missals for singing Mass and breviaries for reciting the Hours, so also it is not detrimental to have books and Bibles for preaching the Divine Word. The Friars are therefore allowed to have books.

7. But does not the Rule contradict itself when in another part it commands the Friars not to have anything? God forbid that there be contradiction in it, just as there is no error, since it is wholly drawn from the well-springs of the Gospel, as would be easy for me to show. On this point I say that the use of these things is granted to the Friars, but the

ownership is forbidden. For the Rule here does not demand that the Friars have nothing nor use anything, which would be unreasonable; but rather, "that they appropriate nothing to themselves." To whom then, is the ownership to be attributed? My answer is this, that whosoever it is, it is not mine nor that of the Order; and this satisfies the purity of my conscience. Not to appear to evade the question, I say further that the power, authority, and care over such movable objects have been entrusted by the Lord Pope to the Cardinal who is governor and protector of the Order. For thus the Lord Pope declares: "The Friars may not sell movable things nor exchange them outside the Order nor alienate them in any way, unless that Cardinal of the Roman Church who is the governor of the Order shall have given authorization or consent thereto to the General or Provincial Ministers."

8. But you may ask: "Surely those who give Bibles to the Friars do not do they, intend to give them to the Pope or even to the Cardinal?" To this I answer: does a father who gives his Friar-son a Bible intend to besmirch the Order and make his son a son of the devil? Your answer will surely be no. Hence in giving it to his son he has no thought to sully the poverty of the Order, but that thereby the Order should have the use of the book while its ownership rests with him who has been designated by the shepherd of the Order and the Church. Do you not believe that if a father could give a book only through the hands of one whom he could rightly suppose to be not a despoiler of his son but rather his shepherd would he not indeed give it that his son might have the use of it? Such an arrangement indeed, by the providence of God, is far better for the Order. For if the ownership of books were to remain with the parents the ministers would then be unable to take them away from the Friars and they would, as it were, be perpetually at their use for life. As it is they do not appropriate anything to themselves in matters of books, since on the one hand the ministers cannot sell or alienate the books by their own authority, while the Friars on their part who are subject frequently give them back and books are given to them and taken away from them at the will of their ministers. I am certain that this is the conscience of the Friars.

9. That no stone remain unturned, let us discuss houses. I maintain that houses do not belong to the Friars. But if you ask about the ground on which they stand, I say it belongs to the donors and patron. If your question be in regard to the buildings, for like reason they belong to those who built them or to those who own the land, because (according to civil law) a building erected on another's property belongs to him who owns the land; thus they belong to one if one builds, or to more than

one if several build. I am right in this because the Pope has said (that the Holy See would own all), "saving the ownership of those places and houses whose owners are known." By "places" he understands ground; by "houses" the buildings erected on the land. Whence we neither appropriate to ourselves a "place," since we say it belongs to those who have paid for it, or it accompanies the ownership of the ground. Neither do we appropriate the use, save in accord with the will of those who concede such things to the Friars. I am certain that this again is the conscience of the Friars. Nor is it an obstacle if sometime you have seen the contrary, which I do not believe, for the indiscretion of one should not be twisted to the condemnation of all.

10. If you say that as "strangers and pilgrims" we ought to go from house to house, God spare him who first thought up such foolishness! Did not the Blessed Francis build places? Or do you think that like a pilgrim he tramped the roads all day? Or did the Blessed Peter, when he says in his first Epistle: "I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims, etc.," mean that everyone should go from house to house? Since Ecclesiasticus says: "It is a miserable life to go as a guest from house to house," both Peter and Francis as well would have imposed not a holy life but a worthless one on their sons and disciples if they had bidden us be like pilgrims according to the foregoing interpretation. But understand this saying, not in an extremely literal sense, but as meaning that we are not to cherish or consider our own the houses we live in, just as the pilgrim travelling toward his homeland does not love a half-way house as his own, but uses it as something belonging to another. Who perceives the matter otherwise shows by his own foolishness that he perceives nothing at all. For how could there be any government or hierarchy of superiors, which is definitely demanded in the Order of the Blessed Francis, if none had an assigned place but could roam the world at will? No one thinks thus, save him who has no concept of an Order.

11. I now come to manual labor, on which you are greatly concerned whether it is a counsel or a precept. The Blessed Francis, to my mind did not wish either to command, counsel or admonish us to do manual labor. Rather, given the admonition of the Apostle, he provides the manner of working for such Friars as were too greatly or too little solicitous about labor. Certain ones were so taken up with manual work that the devotion of prayer was killed in them. Because this was so dangerous, since the active life must serve the contemplative, the saintly Father gave them this formula, that those who wished to work and knew how and were capable of it should so labor as "not to extinguish the spirit of holy

prayer and devotion." This phrase follows immediately in the text of the Rule. Note, then, that he does not say "I command" or "I counsel" the Friars to work; nor does he say that the Friars who are able to labor or who know how to work, should work. Instead, he says: "those to whom the Lord has given the grace of working," which not only includes the ability but also the will to work. If, in like manner, he were to say that the Friars to whom the Lord has given the grace of tears should weep moderately, so that they do not lose their eyesight, he would not be commanding them to weep. So also he understands the present point.

12. Francis put small value on manual labor, save as a means of avoiding idleness. Though he himself was the most perfect observer of the Rule I do not believe that by his hands he ever earned as much as twelve pence or their equivalent. Instead, he greatly admonished the Friars to prayerfulness, nor did he wish that they extinguish that grace for any material profit. It is the duty therefore of the Ministers Provincial not to permit their Friars to be idle. And I agree with you that if there are such Friars they should be rebuked and chastized as wicked and lazy servants. Yet let not the Order displease you, because in it you will find an abundance of labor both in the pursuit of truth as well as in the exercise of piety, humility, and all the other virtues. For the Friars have the task of seeking alms, of cooking, serving the sick, washing the dishes, and of working at many other menial duties, all of which are far sweeter to them than many offices of dignity.

13. But what shall I say of those who take the professor's chair, since the Rule declares that "those who are ignorant of letters should not seek to be called masters?" I maintain that the Rule does not forbid study to the literate, but to the lay-brothers and to those who do not know letters. For, according to the Apostle, Francis wishes that "every man remain in the calling in which he has been called;" so that no laic is to desire to enter the clerical state; nor does he wish that clerics become lay-brothers by rejecting study. Otherwise Francis himself would have been a transgressor, for, though he was not deeply schooled in letters as a youth, he afterwards advanced in learning in the Order, not only by praying but also by reading. And that you may appreciate how much the study of Sacred Scripture delighted him, let me tell you what I heard from one of the Friars who witnessed what happened when once a New Testament came into his hands. Since no more than one could use it at a time, Francis divided it by folios and distributed it among them all, that each might study it and none be a hindrance to the other.

Moreover, the clerics whom he received into the Order he held in greatest reverence, and at his death bade the Friars venerate the doctors of Sacred Scripture as those from whom they received the words of life. If he thus venerated the name of "doctor," he must have understood that the Gospel does not forbid this. Otherwise too, Paul the Apostle would contradict the Gospel, for he calls himself "the teacher of the Gentiles" in his first Epistle to Timothy; and this seems much more like boasting than if he were called this by others.

14. I say that according to the words of the Gospel all ambition and ostentation regarding this name must be condemned and is in no wise to be sought after, but that the duty or office must indeed be assumed. For whom does it more befit to teach the Gospel than those who profess and observe the Gospel? Since the Gospel says: "Whoever carries them out and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven," who of right mind would say that our master and brother Alexander (of Hales) should, when he was rich, have preached and taught: Blessed are the poor in spirit," and when he himself became poor should have kept silence on such a text? Surely, if it becomes the Friars to learn the Divine Words and to "chew them over" like "clean animals" and if they are able to supply themselves with teachers, who is so stupid as to say that the doctrine which it befits them to do and to teach they must like beggars obtain from those who do not carry it out? I therefore condemn, as you do also, any show of pomp in the office of master, but I commend the office itself; I condemn the presumptuous Friar and maintain that he is entirely unworthy of the magisterium; but I would praise the diligent Friar-student, since I believe that to such a one above all belongs the authority to teach the Gospel of Christ.

15. One thing remains, my most dear friend: that we add something about Friars who profess philosophy, that here as in other things we may likewise be in agreement. Let me say that as curiosity displeases you, it also displeases me, indeed, it displeases the Friars of virtue and displeases both God and His angels. I do not defend those who waste time over useless writings but detest them just as you do. One thing I advise for both of us, however: that we have zeal according to knowledge and do not despise more than behooves or does not behoove us. Perhaps curiosity should be reckoned among the petty and venial sins. For the grain can scarcely be gathered without the chaff and the Divine Words without the human. These are separated by the fire of compunction and devotion, which separates the wheat of truth from the chaff of words. And perhaps

some seem curious who are instead studious. For if anyone were to study the doctrine of heretics that by avoiding their teachings he might better understand the truth, he would not be curious, nor a heretic, but a Catholic. But if the words of the philosophers are sometimes of much value in understanding truth and confounding errors, we do not depart from the purity of faith if we sometimes study them, especially since there are many questions of faith which cannot be settled without philosophy.

16. Wherefore, if we are too strict in our judgment, we shall perhaps accuse the Saints themselves of being curious, which would indeed be irreverent. Thus, no one describes the nature of time and of matter better than Augustine as he searches into and discusses them in his *Confessions*; no one has explained the origin of forms and the development of things better than he in *Super Genesim ad litteram*; no one has better treated questions on the soul and on God than he in his book *De Trinitate*; and no one has better explained the nature of the angels and of the creation of the world than he in the *City of God*. To put it briefly, the masters have set down little or nothing in their writings that you will not find in the books of Augustine. Read Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, wherein he shows that Sacred Scripture cannot be understood without familiarity with other sciences. He shows moreover that as the children of Israel carried off the vessels of Egypt, so also the doctors of theology should make their own the teachings of philosophy. Many things, then, which we have not learned from the philosophers, even of the maxims of philosophy, we learn from the Saints. You should not therefore be astonished if those who enter with little knowledge acquire much knowledge in the Order.

17. But suppose that these things were reprehensible and to be punished: you would not be rebuffed by this, that he is not rejected by the Order but is rather the more esteemed who scorns such things; nor do the superiors command such deeds, but rather punish those who go to excess. Nor should you think badly of many innocent persons because of three or four evil ones. And if some abound in books for a time, these can be divided among other more needy Friars, as there are many more who lack books than have them.

18. Nor should you be disturbed over the fact that in the beginning the Friars were simple and unlettered. This ought rather to strengthen the more your faith in the Order. I confess before God, that this is what has made me love so deeply the life of the Blessed Francis, that it is like the beginning and perfection of the Church, which first began with

simple fishermen and afterwards progressed to such brilliant and learned doctors. You will find the same thing in the religion of the Blessed Francis, that God may show thereby that it was not effected through the prudence of men but through Christ. And as the works of Christ do not become less but grow, this work is proved to be of God, since learned men have not disdained to join themselves to the company of simple men but have heeded the Apostle: "If any one of you thinks himself wise, let him become a fool that he may come to be wise." I beg you, dear friend, not to appear too great in your own eyes, nor believe yourself more prudent or better than all those whom the Lord has called to this state; and if He has called you, do not refuse Him.

19. I have not reviewed in detail each point that you advanced, both because this seemed too lengthy a task and because the foregoing would show that some of them at least, if you consider carefully, rest on false suppositions. I firmly believe that once you have begun to regard the Order with love and admiration, these things will be seen not as solid reasons against it but as figments of someone's phantasy. If you would find it pleasing, I shall show you face-to-face how invalid they are.

20. Concerning those men of whom you say that they have persuaded you of such things, I prefer to say nothing save God have mercy on those who out of malice, or more likely I think, out of ignorance have not hesitated to pass such rash judgments. This I know, however, that the greater and better among them claim they have the best and happiest opinion of the state of our Order. Hence they lie either to us or to you, and in either case would not be worthy of belief. Yet I have never seen any among them stubbornly rooted in such convictions save one, and he was a "white-washed wall" and, as we know full well, convicted by his own brethren of many lies. I know too that the Minister Provincial of England questioned their Master General; and the latter answered that he had given no authorization nor had he such an opinion of us; that instead such a procedure was completely abhorrent to him. From this the Minister concluded to himself: "Either he is lying or we are." But it seems more credible that that manifest and treacherous slanderer lied rather than such a great man worthy of our trust. We are given to believe moreover, that that detractor by reason of his slanders, for love of which he did not observe the obedience imposed upon him, has been expelled by the Friars as rebellious and incorrigible. I know too that many of his brethren had a very bad opinion of him for this very reason, and said that they did not know how to excuse him from mortal sin.



21. If all this suffices for you, give thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Francis. If anything remains to be said, I beg you not to hesitate to speak to me directly, that I may show you more fully and plainly not only that such objections are nil but also that the Rule of the Blessed Francis, which is so perfect, so moderate, so wisely given, is no equal as a sure way to heaven and is, in a word, nothing else but the law of the Gospel in shortened form.

Forgive the length of this, for a long question needs must have an answer; nor should we spare the parchment when the salvation of a soul is at stake, since Our Lord Jesus Christ poured forth His Blood in atonement for our salvation. Farewell in Christ. Amen.

The End of the Letter of Bonaventure which explains certain Articles of the Rule. Thanks be to God!

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

## THE FIFTH JOY: THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

*...and his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart.* (Luke 2:51)

Before the institution of the Feast of the Holy Family, it was the custom of the Church to designate the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany in honor of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. In spite of the change of the feast, the Mass of this Octave Sunday retains the same Gospel—that of Saint Luke, recalling the finding of the Christ Child amidst the doctors. Interestingly enough, we find the same Gospel recounted in the beautiful October Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus it would seem that the unfolding of the loss and subsequent finding of the Child bears a unique connection with the Maternity of Our Lady.

And yet the Feast of Our Lady omits a phrase shared by the other feasts. For the Franciscan heart, this short phrase pierces and engraves itself in its very substance. *In corde suo!* "And his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart."

Perhaps the phrase is dropped in the feast of the Maternity because the time is not fitting to reflect on all that would be kept in the heart of the Mother of God. The singular prerogative of

Motherhood of God is too early to reflect on the great sorrows which would be hidden in her maternal heart. Yet in meditating on the fifth joy we do well to attend on the import of the words: *In corde suo.*

It is truly tragic and tragically true that few in the world today have a love for solitude. Yet solitude is the virtue that cries from the simple statement: *in corde suo!* How few today can sit in solitude, in silence; how few can bear to be alone with themselves, alone with their thoughts. Yet the Mother of God spoke only seven times in her life, and God knows that her heart harbored seventy times seven and then more thoughts of the events which unfolded in the mission of her Son. She spoke only seven times—and then only concerning heavenly things.

In contrast to Mary, how much we murmur, criticize, declaim, and deride—and all these faults and vices are but manifest contradictions to the virtue of silence, of solitude.

We will never be able to fathom the silence and the solitude of the Mother of God, especially at the Cross. Throughout the Passion and Death of her Beloved, not a word crosses her lips. She is at the Cenacle for the Advent of the Holy Spirit—and yet she is there in silence and solitude and all gather around her to share the depth of her understanding. She is simply there. How difficult it is today to find a true confidant, one whom we know will not betray our heart to the world. How few are the ears ready to listen to—to understand in silence—the daily cares of men.

Saint Bonaventure tells us that we cannot pray without silence; but what is more, he further says that it is impossible to have silence without having solitude. He then relates the story of one of the fathers who approaching death left only these salutary words: "Brethren, I see nothing better than silence." Truly there is a great message hidden here. How many times in our own lives have we not regretted the word spoken in hatred or haste. How often have we not had to say: If only I had not spoken!

## II

Yet we must be cautious lest our seeking of solitude does not become a cloak for idleness, for such solitude is exceedingly dangerous. On the contrary, let the solitude and silence that we seek be that of

the holy man, who when asked how best to please God and men, replied: "*Speak little and do much.*" To these observations we might reflect how seldom would we speak if we were working hard, and how much work we would accomplish if we seldom spoke. In the silence of her work and the work of her silence, the Mother of God became the Co-redemptrix of all mankind. It is given to each of us to be the co-operators in our redemption by imitating her in this.

How often rumors—whether malicious or facetious—can upset the religious life. How many hours are wasted in idle discussion of rumors which have no more substance than a child's bubble. Truly Saint Bonaventure cautions us well when he says: "Flee rumors, lest by your repetition you author another."

Saint Peter directs us: *If anyone speaks, let it be as with words of God.* Our Blessed Lord had set it down conclusively: *Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.* How magnificently this is seen in the life of Our Lady. Can we read any of her few words, without realizing that she spoke *as with words of God*—and do not her words prove the depth of her heart? Here are no idle rumors, no wasted words.

How much does the great silence of the night mean to us. Saint Bonaventure says that night automatically should silence the voice of a true religious, for the night is a time of silence and quiet. How fraught with meaning are the words of Wisdom in this respect: *When all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne, as a fierce conqueror.* How often have our hearts and souls been too busy with the world to allow the Word to plant in the wilderness of the night?

### III

Most of us, perhaps, feel that our contacts in the world must be of the world in order to be effective. Yet the admonition of Deuteronomy, cited by Saint Bonaventure, is none the less true of our day: *For it is a perverse generation, and unfaithful children.* How thoroughly frank and wise is Saint Bonaventure's caution in our dealing with the world. "Beware lest you speak any but useful and decent words with seculars. Even should the conversation of the world or of wars or of other useless things be introduced by them, never follow them, even if you are more wise in these things; but let your words

be with the Psalmist: *My mouth has not transgressed in the manner of men; I have kept the ways of the law.*" What a perfect model in this respect is Our Lady at Cana. Truly she reveals herself to all her followers here as one in the world but not of it.

Again, how great should be our discretion with words before the world, for even *a parable coming out of a fool's mouth shall be rejected, for he doth not speak it in due season.* Well does the Seraphic Doctor say that the wise man prudently considers when he must be silent and when he must speak.

### IV

What one of us, young or old, cannot look back on great accomplishments he or she had promised God at one time or another for the salvation of souls? How many of these have remained undone, a result of the loss of silence, the loss of solitude? Saint Bonaventure tells us the cause of this in the words of Saint Gregory: "The mind, which does not have walls of silence, is easily penetrated by the spear of the enemy." And how the enemy joys in the chattering, gossiping religious, with his idle rumors, carping chatter, caustic criticism—*especially* when all these bring the affairs of the monastery, convent or home, before the eyes of the world. Well do we consider that to belittle our own or other religious is to portray ourselves as far from being *steadfast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.* Would to God that we had the same silence before speaking the word, as that silence which the word evokes from us on its return.

Each one of us as Franciscans can find much food for meditation in Saint Bonaventure's terse commentary on the few words spoken by Our Lady at the Finding: "She spoke little, as becometh a virgin." This is nothing more than to say that those who are dedicated to God have, or should have, little time other than for God.

The lack of silence can many times be a salient indication of the lack of prayer in our lives. How often when we hear of tragedies in the Order or among our loved ones do we not hear the lament: "If I could only say a few words." One wonders if this desire were replaced with the actuality of a few prayers, would not many situations right themselves.

A true love for the virtue of silence and solitude never with-

draws us from reality, and we can be sure that Saint Bonaventure not advocating an Order of catatonics. It is unfailingly true, however, that those who are most alone with God—who know and love silence—have, with the Mother of God, more time than we can understand to give to those who need them. These souls know that *all things have their reason, and in their times all things pass under heaven* and thus there is truly *a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*.

Surely we have no better silence to keep than the silence of Christ—no better solitude to love than the solitude of Christ. In meditating on the Fifth Joy we find that same silence and solitude in his mother—in *corde suo*! Let us pray to her:

O Beautiful Lady of Silence, whose heart was filled with joy in the Temple when you beheld him who was lost, teach us the solitude of silence and the silence of solitude, that our hearts may be disposed to know even as you knew that *"the wisdom that is from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, moderate, docile, in harmony with good things, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. Teach us that the fruit of justice is sown in peace to those who make peace, and grant that our tongues may only bless God the Father, and never curse men, who have been made after the likeness of God."*

Your humility—your silence and solitude—was exalted by God. Teach us to *be silent before the face of the Lord God and to sit solitary and hold our peace*, that we may know him and him alone.

May the profound words spoken of you: *in corde suo*, inspire us to love silence and solitude that we may keep all the good things that we know of Jesus carefully in our hearts. Give us the great grace of knowing that *the tongue is a little member, but it boasts mightily . . . a fire, the very world of iniquity*. Help us to withdraw from the noise and carelessness of the world in order that our hearts may ever ponder and proclaim with you the *perfections of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*.

Lastly, O Virgin of Solitude, learning your solitude and silence may we better prepare ourselves for *the marriage supper of the Lamb*, proving that we love not *in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth—in cordibus nostris*.

Fr. William J. Manning, T.O.F.

## IF THIS MIGHT BE . . .

(To Brother Francis from Sister Clare)

If thou as shining light  
And I was warming flame  
(Begot of Him Who is  
The everlasting Lamp of Truth  
The all-consuming Fire of Charity),  
Might destined be,  
Here in this vale of darkness and of tears,  
To glow and burn  
Unitedly  
In this adorable sweet Name:—  
If by the Spirit's breathing  
Thou and I together brought  
Might give ourselves  
As luminous flame  
And loving light  
To rout  
From blinded minds the night of error  
And the gloom of doubt,  
The demon of despair, the fiend of paralyzing fears  
From hearts where love is dead  
Or starved  
Or yet unborn. . .  
If this might be,  
Beloved one in Christ,  
If this might only be  
Our Heavenly Father's will  
For thee and me!

Sister M. Rose Agnes, O.S.F.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. XVIII, vv. 33-37, Opera. Omnia, Tom. VI, pp. 488f)

*Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (Jn. 18: 33-37).*

According to Saint Bonaventure, there are four significant sections of this text treating of the Kingship of Christ: the *inquisition* of the *origin* of the inquisition, the *answer or response* to the inquisition, and, finally, the *breakdown* or (discussion) of the inquisition. As a prelude to this examination by Pilate, the Seraphic Doctor merely mentions here the previous betrayal by Judas and the subsequent handing over of Christ by the Jews to Pilate.

First there is the *inquisition* itself. Immediately we notice that Christ is questioned *directly* as to the cause brought against Him. This is unusual, for ordinarily the accusers advance the reasons for the cause against an alleged criminal. Further, there should be at least two witnesses to the crimes of the accused man: *By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die that is to be slain. Let no man be put to death, when only one beareth witness against him (Deut. 17:6).* Or again: *One witness shall not rise up against any man whatsoever the sin or wickedness be: but in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand (Ibid. 19:15).*

However, in the case of Christ, there was no conclusive evidence that He was a criminal. Previous to the present inquisition, Pilate had tried to find evidence of some crime: *Pilate therefore went on to them and said: What accusation bring you against this man? They answered, and said to him: If he were not a malefactor, we would*

*not have delivered him up to thee (vv 29f).* That they were merely begging the question is evident from the fact that they answered with a hypothetical "if." Thus Pilate's answer gave the lie to their subterfuge: *Take him you, and judge him according to your law (v. 31).* Their deception became clear when they tried to evade his challenge; for they pretended to invoke a Roman law forbidding them to condemn a man to death: *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death (v. 31).* Here they tricked Pilate, who thought they appealed to Roman legislation. Had he known the Old Law, he would have realized they were prohibited by it from killing without the required witnesses. Restrained by this, they would not have dared break the Law of God by directly trying to kill Christ.

So Pilate perforce returned to Jesus and questioned Him directly: *Art thou the king of the Jews (v. 33)?* This question was like a bait or a lure: for if Christ answered in the affirmative, Pilate had a case against Him. He could accuse Him of setting Himself up against Caesar, who ruled the Jews. But Christ answered with a question: *Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me (v. 34)?* Our Lord knew the right answer. But, He asked the question because, by the query and its response, the evil source of His examination would be brought to light.

Pilate's reply is the *origin* of the inquisition. Pilate answered: *Am I a Jew? (v. 35),* as if to say: "I did not impose this on Thee." And he continued: *Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee up to me (v. 35);* which statement was an admission of the *origin* of the inquisition. And yet, even though they had originated the heinous proceedings, the Jews were powerless to conclude the cause; for they had no proof of any crime of Jesus. And so, ridiculously, in the absence of any factual accusation, Pilate the Judge must ask the accused: *What hast thou done (v. 35)?* In modern law, the judge would be morally bound to dismiss the accused—both for lack of a cause and for lack of evidence. But Pilate, weak and bewildered, asked Christ why the Jews had accused Him. What a perverted jurisprudence! The judge must ask the supposed criminal for a reason or cause to condemn Him! But, where a criminal would seek a way out, Christ answered with the all-pervading truth of His Kingdom.

And this answer of Christ is the third part or the *response* to the inquisition: *My kingdom is not of this world* (v. 36). In *response* the Saviour immediately confuted the depraved intention of the Jews. For they sought, through their trickery, to provoke Pilate against Jesus. They were unable to word it directly, but they hoped that Pilate might infer that Christ was setting up a temporal kingdom against Caesar. But our Redeemer dashed their hope when he excluded a worldly reign: *My kingdom is not of this world* (v. 36). Saint Augustine asks: "What more do you want, Jews and nation? Christ is not impeding your worldly domination; for His is an other world Kingdom." And Christ indicated how they should recognize that His Kingdom was not of this world: *If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews* (v. 36). This is His major premise; that He is not an earthly King. And His minor premise is contained in the message, that is, *no one* now defends Him. And, logically, since He is alone and now so defenseless, He can consistently conclude: *but now my kingdom is not from hence* (v. 36).

This is a timely reminder for any servant of God who might be tempted to seek worldly power. At such moments, like the disciples expecting a temporal kingdom, we ought to ask God: *Lord, teach us to pray* (Lk. 11; 1). And the message of the Master, echoing down through the ages, teaches us to pray: *Thy kingdom come* (Ibid. v. 13). We should be ever conscious that our Kingdom is in the next world. To this end, the Beloved Disciple warns us to despise the things of this world: *We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness* (I Jn. 5:19). Saint John also points out the value of being always aware of our eternal inheritance: *Who is it that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God* (Ibid. v. 5)? And, conclusively, Christ Himself reassures us of our safety in awaiting His Kingdom: *In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world* (Jn. 16, 33).

Pilate was forced to admire the cogent reasoning of Christ. And he expressed his wonderment aloud: *Art thou a king then* (v. 34). The Seraphic Doctor says that Pilate seemed to be asking Christ why He professed to be a King; for, from His words, it seemed that He wished to reign. Thereupon, Christ gave the *breakdown* to

examination by establishing His position. For, as the King of all Truth, He shatters any further inquisition against Himself: *Thou sayest that I am a king* (v. 37). In other words, Christ answers Pilate: "I do not deny that I am a King." And what is this Kingdom? It is Truth: *For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice* (v. 37). But: *What is truth* (v. 38)? Saint Bonaventure concludes that Pilate should have waited for Christ's answer. For, in His own words, He is Truth: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (Jn. 14, 6).

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### QUERIES AND REPLIES

**QUESTION:** We are building a new hall at our College and should like to dedicate it to Saint Clare but in doing so should prefer to use her family name. Can you give us the historical information needed?

**ANSWER:** It is quite definitely established now that Saint Clare had no family name! In the past, several biographers have said that she was a daughter of the ducal Scifi family, but this has been disproved. In a parallel attempt to give Saint Francis a noble origin, seventeenth and eighteenth century writers claimed he was descended of a noble house from Lucca, and that the Lady Pica was of a famous family of Picardy.

Undoubtedly, Clare's family was noble and rich, but without any title of nobility. Moreover, it was not the custom in Italy at the time to use family names. Children were called after their parents and grandparents. Hence Francis would be Francesco di Pietro (his father) di Bernardone (his grandfather); Clare would have been called Chiara di Favorone di Offreduccio.

Ref: Cf. Arnaldo Fortini, "Nuove notizie a S. Chiara d'Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, XLVI (1953), pp. 4-19.

Sophronius Clasen, OFM, "Furstin der Armen"—*Neuerscheinungen zum Klara-Jubiläum 1953*, *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, XVII (1954), 81-98.

I. C. B.

**QUESTION:** Did Saint Francis compose the prayer known as *Absorbeat* ("Let the sweet fire of Thy love. . .")? Can the *Adoramus Te*, which Franciscans use so much, be certainly attributed to our Founder?

**ANSWER:** The first of these prayers is known only through the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* of Ubertino da Casale (d. 1305) and the Lenten series *De Evangelio aeterno* of Saint Bernardin of Siena, who manifestly took it from Ubertino. It is not found in

any of the ancient collections of the writings of Saint Francis. Nor does Ubertino expressly say it is an authentic prayer. Hence on the side of manuscript evidence it may be rejected. Furthermore, it is redolent of twelfth-century Benedictine and Cistercian writers, and seems to be the work of a scholarly mystic. In fact, it is found in great part at least in the *Liber Meditationum*, c. 35, once ascribed to Saint Augustine. If possible, of course, that Saint Francis knew and adopted the prayer as his own.

The *Adoramus Te* is found in the Testament of our Seraphic Father: "The Lord gave me such faith in churches, that I would simply adore and say: We adore Thee, most holy Lord Jesus, (here and, *words not in original text*) in all Thy church throughout the world, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast deemed the world." Saint Francis does not claim that he composed the prayer or was inspired to compose it; and liturgical scholars would, no doubt, point out that in part it was already to be found in the liturgical books. One finds part of it also in what seem to be twelfth-century directives on religious life, the *Documenta vitae religionis* (*Patr. Lat.* 184, col. 1177), in which the monk is told that as he approaches the cross on entering the church he should say: "Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi, etc." Until evidence is found, however, that the complete prayer existed before the time of Saint Francis, we may surely hold that its Franciscan form comes from the Seraphic Patriarch.

Ref: 1) For Absorbeat:

Jacques Cambell, OFM, "Les ecrits de S. Francois d'Assise devant la critique," *Franziskanische Studien*, 36 (1954), pp. 261-63.

Fred. ab Antverpia, OFM Cap., "De fontibus litterariis vitae S. Francis Assisii," *Collectanea franciscana*, I (1931), p. 440.

2) Adoramus Te:

Kaj. Esser, OFM, *Das Testament des hl. Franziskus* (Munster, 1949).  
Jacques Cambell, OFM, *art. cit.*, 205-207.

I. C. B.

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### AND ALL YOU ARE BROTHERS

"And wherever the Brethren are located or meet one another, let them act toward one another like members of a family. And each should with assurance make known his need to another; for if a mother nourishes and loves her child in the flesh, how much more eagerly ought one to love and nourish his brother in the spirit? And if any one of them should fall into illness, the other Brethren ought to serve him as they would wish to be served themselves (II Rule, VI)."

These words of our Rule are certainly familiar to us. We have read them so often and heard them so often that we know them by heart. But if we pause to ask ourselves how we fulfill them in actual practice, we will very probably find ourselves embarrassed for an answer. It is an old Franciscan dictum that a man knows only as much as he does. If we apply it here, most of us will have to confess that we know very little about the meaning of Franciscan brotherhood.

#### 1. *And all you are brothers* (Mtt. 23:8)

It is not in any way surprising that we should call ourselves brothers, nor is it anything especially remarkable that we should speak of our Order as a brotherhood. Anyone who takes his Christian life seriously normally thinks in terms of brotherhood, for we are brothers not primarily because we belong to the Franciscan Order, but because we are all baptized in Christ.

Frequently and in various ways Holy Scripture speaks of the new life that is ours through baptism. When, for example, we are told of the union of the baptized with each other and with Christ, we are given the figure of the vine and its branches. Saint Paul speaks of the mystical body of Christ, in which the faithful are the members and Christ himself the Head. And again we have the words of Our Lord explaining to us: *One is your Master, and all you are brothers* (Mtt. 23:8). These words have certainly not been forgotten by the Church; she uses them again and again throughout her liturgy. But one cannot help wondering at times if they have not been forgotten by Catholics. We cannot deny that non-Catholics—even non-Chris-

tians—display a much deeper and much more sincere and practical spirit of fraternal charity than we do. There is a definite tendency among us to separate ourselves into self-contained little groups. The laity, the clergy, the religious—each group tends to lead its own exclusive life, and if we do not encounter mutual hostility among the groups, we do encounter a disturbing degree of mutual indifference and ignorance. We hesitate to speak here of race prejudice and nationalism; but we could perhaps test something of the genuineness of our Christianity by noting our reaction to the sufferings of fellow Christians in distant parts of the world. The degree of our indifference is the degree to which we have fallen from the Christian spirit. This tendency toward exclusiveness and indifference to other groups is a grave evil. The Church *must* have a strong fraternal spirit among her children; she must not allow love to grow cold. For salvation is not with the clergy alone, nor with the faithful alone, but with all Christians as organically united members of the Church under Christ. This is precisely the mission of the Order of Friars Minor: to embrace the spirit of evangelical brotherhood and to preach it, by our words and by our living example, to the whole Church.

Christ said: *All you are brothers*. He did not say that we should *become* brothers, but that we actually *are* brothers. He did not speak of brotherhood before us as something for us to desire and strive for, but as something we can attain to by daily practice. The followers of Christ are by very nature brothers. There is no question of choice for us. We are not free to choose whom we shall recognize as our brothers and whom not; by the simple fact of baptism we *are* all brothers. Just as a child must of necessity recognize the other children of his father and mother as his brothers and sisters, whether he likes them or not, so every Christian must acknowledge all other Christians as his brothers and sisters in Christ. The spirit of brotherhood is absolutely essential to the Christian life; in fact, no man can be called a Christian who lacks this spirit. We have the uncompromising words of Saint John to dispel any illusions to the contrary: *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are made known. Whoever is not just is not of God, nor is he just who does not love his brother* (I Jn. 3:10). *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides*

*death* (Ibid. 14). And there are not only actions to be accounted for, but even thoughts and feelings—for a thought against love is as evil as an act: *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer* (Ibid. 15). We cannot be content to avoid sinning against love in a merely negative way, by refraining from hatred; we must fulfill the law of love by positively loving. *My dear children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth* (Ibid. 18). If love is not the ruling power behind all our works, they count for nothing; they are the works of the dead; *for he who does not love abides in death*. There is no alternative; we must choose between love and death, salvation and damnation.

Is it not strange that we speak so much about love of neighbor, and so little about fraternal love? Certainly Christ himself often spoke of love of neighbor, but his remarks were always directed toward the Pharisees and had reference to the Old Law. When he spoke in terms of the New Dispensation he spoke of brotherly love. He told his disciples: *All you are brothers*. And how well they remembered that. Notice the frequency of the term *fratres* in the Epistles they wrote to the faithful. But actually, the term is on our own lips with equal frequency. In every *Confiteor* the priest says at Mass, he confesses to the brethren and asks for their prayers—*et vobis, fratres. Imitamini quod tractatis!* Let us make this admonition apply here—let us make our life conform to the law we profess and practice the doctrine we preach.

Perhaps it would help us to deepen the spirit of brotherhood in ourselves if we would take notice of how many times, and in what contexts, we use the word *fratres* in the liturgy. Perhaps the usage has become mechanical with us, so that we utter the word with little realization of its implications. But let us try to use it consciously. For instance, instead of thinking "congregation," we could think "brothers and sisters." Instead of loving our "neighbor," let us try loving our "brother." At first blush this may seem a little childish, but if we set our mind to it seriously we shall soon notice a change for the better in our mental habits and attitudes toward others. Fundamentally, the problem for us is this: to strive to realize that Christian life is life in a brotherhood, in a family, and to make this realization visible and effectual in our daily thinking and acting.



## 2. The Order of Lesser Brothers

We are accustomed to say that the religious state is the long of the faithful for the primitive Church, for those days when *multitude of the believers were of one heart and one soul, and one of them said that anything he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.* (Acts 4:32). But never, perhaps, had it so long come so close to fulfillment as in that time when God, through his servant Francis, brought forth in the Church the Order of Lesser Brothers. Francis knew the words of Christ, *all you are my brothers*, and he gave them a position of primary importance in his first Rule. He saw in those words an essential demand of the Lord on his young community; therefore he took the title "Brothers" as the official designation. Our name, then, contains within itself a command incumbent upon all of us, the command to be in reality what we are in name. "Lesser Brothers" is more than a mere title; it is a confession. Through our name we have exemplified in the Church for seven centuries an essential requirement of Christian living; for, therefore, there can be no problem about *becoming* brothers; if we are not already what our name signifies, what are we, then? The children of Saint Francis are possible only as brothers and sisters. But it is undoubtedly significant that in almost every country of the world today we have lost our title of Lesser Brothers among our people. Only our official title of Friars Minor remains to us. Particularly, we are now simply Franciscans. We can account for this, of course, on quite legitimate social and historical grounds; but it would be good for us to ponder a little on the fact that the people no longer think of us in terms of brotherhood, whereas the contemporaries of Saint Francis could hardly think of him and his first followers as anything but brothers. And the reason is simply that to Francis it was completely self-evident that all who followed him actually *were* brothers. Else why would they have joined him?

To understand fully and clearly the deepest meaning of the Franciscan spirit of brotherhood, it is necessary to think in terms of grace and super-nature. We have all been baptized to a new life, born again as children of the one Eternal Father. Christ by his death purchased for us this rebirth; as man he became our brother, and died for us as our brother. Thus our redemption becomes a sign of brotherly love, from which it follows that we simply cannot be anything

else but brothers to each other, even as we are to Christ, through our adoption as sons of God. Now the question is: Do we really take this doctrine seriously enough? Do we let it form our thinking, guide our attitudes, and control our relations with our fellow creatures? We poor mortals always tend to consider the life of grace and super-nature as not quite real. We easily take the **transitory and the mundane** as much more factual. But according to the words of our Rule, we must learn to revise our thinking: "for if a mother nourishes and love her child in the flesh, how much more eagerly ought one to love and nourish his brother in the spirit?" This demands supernatural thinking; and if such thinking is difficult, it is none the less obligatory. Our role in the Church is exactly this: to make the supernatural the greater and stronger reality, to make our fraternal love felt as a greater and more powerful force than any love that arises from the natural man.

When we were received into the Order, we passed along the row of our fellow-religious to receive the kiss of peace, while the choir sang the beautiful words: *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum.* How good and pleasant indeed it seemed to us then, for brothers to live together in unity of mind and heart. But soon came the routine of daily living, and we began to wonder if we were *really* all brothers. Somehow we changed our terminology. Our "brothers" became our "confreres," and eventually, merely "the friars." If the closest relation we admit is that of confrere, then we can hardly expect genuine fraternity to thrive among us.

It was a beautiful custom in our Order for the friars to embrace each other in greeting and in farewell. The custom has all but disappeared among us now; in fact, we almost consider it unmanly. But in former times the friars were not quite so reticent about showing their fraternal affection; on the contrary, they used every means to express it and to strengthen it. In modern friaries the greatest concern seems to revolve around keeping the proper distance from one another; and the distance becomes so very proper at times that the arrival and departure of a friar can go completely unnoticed by the community. In the last analysis, it would seem that the passing of the fraternal embrace is but a symbol of the passing of the fraternal spirit among us. We have to convince ourselves again and again that

all who belong to the Order are our own brothers and sisters. Then let us act toward our fellow-religious as toward members of our own family. What is your brother doing? What assignment has been given to him? Are things going well with him or badly? Does anyone know? Is it entirely his fault if no one knows? Perhaps he really is a man with a mind like a key-ring, who keeps all his doings under lock and bolt. But perhaps he is not secretive but merely cautious; and perhaps you have given him reason to be cautious. Most likely, however, you do not ask about him because you simply do not care. Whatever he does is all the same to you.

In an Order like ours, there are two things to avoid; we must avoid being merely inhabitants of the same building, and we must avoid forming cliques and political parties. Fraternal love should draw us together; fraternal reverence should protect us. If we sincerely want to discover what degree of fraternal love we possess, we might check ourselves on some of the following points: the departure and arrival of our fellow-religious; the common use of things; the cells of others; anniversaries and feastdays, illnesses and deaths. All these things are of relative importance, to be sure, and our salvation will probably not hinge on our attitude toward any or all of them; nevertheless our attitude toward them will determine the answer to a vitally pertinent question: Are we still a brotherhood? Or have we become a mere pious organization?

### 3. *Brothers of All Men*

If we are called the Order of Friars Minor, it is not solely because we are to live together as true brothers, but because we are to be brothers to all men—and, if we are perfect imitators of our Seraphic Father, brothers to all creatures. Through our Order the *one heart and one soul* of the early Christian family remains alive in the Church of today. If we truly live as brothers within the bosom of the Church, the spirit of fraternal love will diffuse itself throughout the entire Mystical Body of Christ.

But there is another point to be considered. Ever since the time of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, there have been religious whom the people called Brothers and Sisters. Today when we speak of Sisters, all the daughters of the Seraphic Father are included in the term. But

when among the friars a distinction is made between the Fathers and the Brothers, we must remember that the Fathers are none the less Brothers because of their priesthood. To the Brothers of the Order alone this beautiful Franciscan name still remains, but the priests of the Order must *live* the name as fully as if they too bore it. In fact, it is especially through the priesthood that so many opportunities arise to manifest our fraternal love. The people have a fine sense for such love, especially the poor and the social outcasts who find so little understanding in the world. It is to the glory of our Order that the lowly and simple folk have ever sought us out for help and comfort in their needs. They have always felt that the way to us must be easy, for they recognize in a son of Saint Francis a brother to all men. The poor still love us and look upon us as their own, because they have never forgotten the love of the Poverello for them.

It remains for us only to strive for a deeper realization of our brotherhood, after the example of our Seraphic Father. The beginning of his *metanoia*, of his complete turning to God, lay exactly in this, that he sought out the poor and the needy and called them his brothers. His love for God led him among the miserable, and in ministering to them his love found satisfaction. We have his own words to this effect: "When I was in sins it seemed exceedingly bitter to me to look upon lepers, and the Lord himself led me in among them and I practiced mercy toward them. And when I came away from them, what seemed bitter to me was changed to sweetness of soul and body for me" (Testament). "Christian brother," he addressed the leper. And in his day, to be a brother to lepers was the ultimate of Christian love. But where shall we find the equivalent in our own day, and in this healthy and wealthy country of ours? Are there none who need us? Indeed, there are thousands who stand in crying need of us, and we have only to lift up our eyes to see them. The important thing is: when we see them, do we recognize them as our brothers and sisters?

Certainly, fraternal charity can be abused. Beggars and vagrants are seldom Saint Benedict Joseph, nor are they above taking advantage of our kindness. But Saint Francis never inquired whether or not a man was worthy of help. When robbers asked for food, he called them his brothers and commanded that they be fed—and the robbers

were converted. But what about ourselves? When we serve the vagrants who come to the friary door, how do we do it? What face do we present? What spirit do we show? Let us not say: "That is not my assignment; I have no contact with the poor." Perhaps not; but the spirit of the Order as a whole is bound to manifest itself, in one way or another, in every individual member.

We owe fraternal love not only to our fellow-religious, as we have said, but to all men. And not only love, but fraternal reverence as well. Let us always remember that. Loving reverence will never permit a cold, crude, or rough manner toward other men, nor even toward other creatures. It is difficult to be both lovingly fraternal and reverently fraternal, but it is necessary. We have the example of our Seraphic Father to guide us, the most courteous and gracious of men and the most lovingly and tenderly fraternal.

We know how desperately our modern world needs the example of brotherly love. Surely there is no dearth of talk about the universal brotherhood of man, but there is precious little evidence of its reality. Let us, then, look to our vocation as Friars Minor, as Lesser Brothers, and live it to the full. This is our mission, our destiny—show the world what brotherhood means in actual practice. Let us not lose sight of it. Only as brothers and sisters can we be true children of Saint Francis. "So let us begin, my Brothers; for up to now we have done nothing."

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

## BLESSED MARY ASSUNTA

"Observance of the Rule is real holiness. . . . When anyone tells me about the extraordinary I am the most incredulous man in the world. But when holiness results from the practice of virtue and the observance of the Rule, I believe in it." These were the words of Pope Saint Pius XII when he first heard of the very unobtrusive sanctity of Sister Mary Assunta Pallotta. Sister Mary Assunta, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary, died in China on April 7, 1905, at the age of 26. On November 7, 1954, she was beatified by Pope Pius XII. The nature of her sanctity is quite precise-

expressed in the words of Saint Pius X. During her life she worked no miracles, had no visions, and was not known for severe physical penances. Hers was a real sanctification of the ordinary duties and difficulties of daily religious life. Her sanctity, simple and distinctly Franciscan, is so very reminiscent of the Little Flower's way that she has been called the Seraphic Flower. Her life demonstrates very vividly how easy the way of sanctity can be, even in the uneventful humdrum of daily life.

Blessed Assunta was born in August 20, 1878 at Force, a little town in the Marches of Ascoli-Piceno, Italy. At Baptism she was given the name Assunta Maria Liberata. Her parents, Luigi and Euphrasia Pallotta, were poor people; and the pinch of poverty made itself felt early in the girl's life. After she had been in school for only two years, untoward circumstances took her father away from home. The little family, deprived of his support for a while, had to struggle along on its own. Assunta, although an exemplary little student, had to leave school and devote herself to the housework and the care of the family's four younger members. After she had grown a little bit older, she began to work for wages in the town and surrounding countryside. Her work included a variety of things, even some that we Americans would hardly expect of a woman. Besides being employed at dressmaking and house-keeping, she worked as a day laborer in the fields and even as a hod-carrier for a construction crew. But in all her work she maintained a dignity which forced even the rough masons to watch their language when she was present. Her life touched the basic warp and woof of human existence but she gave it an exceptional beauty.

From these earthly surroundings her soul mounted upward. In the midst of countless daily distractions she developed an intense love of the Blessed Sacrament. Every evening she would run off to the church for a while, even after the most fatiguing day's work. She was allowed to receive her First Communion only at the age of twelve, as was the custom in those days before Saint Pius X. After receiving this Sacrament which she had long desired, her already fervent piety grew by leaps and bounds. Her devotion to Christ was very direct and personal, a real communing between the Master and His disciple. It was accompanied and strengthened by a deep attachment to His Blessed Mother. The Rosary was her constant companion. She fingered it frequently during her labor at home and in the fields, and even far into the night.

Assunta did penance, too, though she probably had few sins of her own for which to atone. In imitation of the saints, she used to fill her bed with bricks or pieces of stone or wood, in order to make it less comfort-

able. When this came to her mother's attention, there developed a little wordless conflict between the two of them, the mother always throwing the things out, the daughter just as unfailingly putting them back.

In regard to food Assunta had developed a deep mortification motivated by charity. Since food was never very easy to obtain, she willingly ate the unappetizing items so that the others could have what they would relish more. Or she would ask her mother to put more water into the soup so that there would be some extra for a neighbor girl who had none.

But not all of life was seriousness. Although by disposition Assunta was quiet and retiring, her mother thought it best for her to attend the masked dances at Carnival time. We do not know how much she enjoyed these occasions, but we do know that God used one of them to bring her religious vocation to a head. Assunta was twenty. On the closing evening of the Carnival, she, her mother, and a girl friend attended a masked dance in the town. When Assunta removed her mask, her innocent beauty showed forth in all its youthful radiance. A young man approached her in the crowd and said, "Assunta, you are beautiful. I would like to embrace you." Assunta was upset at this and asked to leave the dance early. The next day she told her friend, "Unless we become Religious we cannot be saved; at least, I cannot." Her vocation had made itself felt through the simple occurrences of daily life, just as her whole sanctity was to come from God through the ordinary.

Several problems immediately faced the aspirant. Her mother said that her help was necessary for the support of the family. But Assunta's desire was so strong that this contradiction affected her health. When her mother found out the cause of the illness, she gave her consent.

Next, there was the problem of her poverty. A dowry was out of the question: she had nothing to give but herself. Anxiety over this difficulty racked her soul for several months and she despairingly thought that God must not want her. Fortunately her case was brought to the attention of the Superior General of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, who agreed to accept her without any consideration of a dowry. So, on May 4, 1898, she lovingly said farewell to her family and departed for Rome. There, on May 6, she was received into the convent of Saint Helen.

The six years of Blessed Assunta's religious life in Italy were spent in three convents. Three months of her postulancy were spent at Saint Helen's convent in Rome, where she worked in the kitchen. Next she rendered three years of humble service in the fields and farmyards of the novitiate-house at Grottaferrata, not far from Rome. She received the

habit on October 9, 1898 and made her profession of vows on December 8, 1900. Her religious name was Sister Maria Assunta, an inversion of her baptismal name. The two years preceding her departure for China in 1904 were given to household duties in the convent at Florence.

During these years her spirit was growing strong and firm in virtue. Her goodness was not a self-conscious type, but she was certainly conscious of trying to develop it to heroic proportions. During her novitiate she had heard of the quick strides to sanctity made by Saint Gabriel of the Seven Sorrows. She told her companions that, with good-will, everyone could reach a perfection equal to that of the young Passionist. With such a noble ideal in her mind she set out like a giant to run along the road to holiness.

Her whole life was centered in awareness of God. She tried to live in His presence from the beginning of the day to its end. Confidence in the guiding care of Providence, conviction that His hand directed the happenings of daily life, recognition of His presence in her soul by grace—these simple and direct dispositions led her along an ascent to God so quick and quiet that it was unnoticed even by many of those who lived in the same house with her. This direct relationship with God found its completion not in visions and ecstasies but in a gladsome effort to be united to God in all the actions of her life. In a letter written to her family in 1903 she expressed her ambition very simply: "I ask God for the grace to make known to the world purity of intention, which consists in doing all things for the love of God, even the most ordinary actions."

This effort was evident first of all in her spirit of recollection and prayer. Silence was her constant companion. It was such a treasure to her that, even in giving directions to her helpers at work, she was careful not to harm it. Going to and from her work, she always kept her eyes lowered so that her inner silence would not be disturbed. Prayer was often on her lips during the day. She took advantage of every stroke of the bell to remind herself and her co-workers of the presence of God.

In the convent her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament had a yet greater opportunity to express itself. As a community the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary are especially dedicated to Eucharistic adoration. In this regard Sister Assunta was certainly no laggard. Her periods of adoration were times of intimate, personal communing with Christ. She would kneel motionless, her eyes fixed on the Host. If her companion complained afterwards that the time was long, she would answer, "Oh no, Sister, it is so short! How can we find the minutes long when we are

at the feet of Jesus, the source of grace, ready to give us whatever we wish for our souls?" Whenever she passed the door to the chapel she would kneel for a short prayer before hurrying on to her occupation. In order to be constantly close to her Divine King, she made frequent Spiritual Communions. In this way she extended the effects of her morning's Communion through the whole day and repeatedly tapped its rich stores of grace.

Her devotion to the Blessed Virgin also found a new outlet in the convent. The Franciscan Rosary, the Crown of the Seven Joys, is worn on the habit of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. This key to spiritual joy was often in her hands, opening the door to the deep joys of Christianity. During many a spare moment it was the means that united Maria Assunta to Mary, Queen of heaven.

From these deep inner springs there naturally poured forth an abundant fountain of good works. Assunta saw God's hand working in all the incidents of her life. In joys or difficulties her favorite expression was, "It is all the same." In other words, since everything comes from God, it is all good.

This spirit made her an example of obedience. She realized that, in the ordinary course of events, there is no more direct way to know God's designs than through the commands of a religious superior. Her obedience gave her spiritual balance. Her carefulness in regard to the rules of her community would have easily become scrupulousness, had it not been for her obedience to her confessor. Cheerful naturalness in obedience endeared her to her superiors. She was described as the kind of religious who always comes to the superior's mind when there is an extra job to do. And like all such religious, she was overburdened with work. But when one of the sisters remarked with wonder about all the work Sister Assunta did, she answered cheerfully, "It's very easy. I do only one thing at a time, as if I had only that to do, and do not think of anything else. I say to myself, this is my charge and it must be done as well as possible."

But, in spite of all her services to the community, she never liked to put any burdens upon it. In fact, she was happiest if she could give up something to another and least willing to set forth her own needs. Though a complete equality existed among the sisters, she always considered herself the least worthy of anything good, since she had brought no goods with her to the community. She wore old clothes with honor and lent dignity to patches. With her Seraphic Father, she saw in poverty a blessing of the Lord and His poor Mother.

Her consciousness of God's presence enabled her to see Him especial-

ly in her sisters in religion. They were the virgins consecrated to Christ, His favorite daughters. Her love for them showed itself in her cheerful attitude. They later said of her, "Her thoughts were all for Jesus, her smiles all for her sisters." One of her companions remembered seeing her lose her smiling composure only once. This happened when an impulsive friend of the sisters gushingly exclaimed, "You are a saint." Sister Assunta blushed and then became very pale.

She loved the company of her sisters and cherished the happy moments of relaxation with them during their recreations. But she looked for their enjoyment rather than for her own. Whenever there was some extra job to be done during recreation, she was at the community's service. Once, while she was at the novitiate, one of her superiors found her alone doing all the work of the poultry yard, while the others were recreating. The superior started away to get the forgetful helpers, since Sister Assunta was doing the work of three. But Sister Assunta begged her not to disturb their recreation, saying, "It's really nothing; I can finish it all myself."

Her consideration for others led her to accept serious pain rather than hurt them. When she was doing the laundry in the house at Florence she once ran a pin deep into her hand, but she said nothing about it. She was afraid that she might embarrass the sister who had forgotten to remove the pin. Later her hand became seriously infected and had to be lanced. While the operation was going on, she did not complain, even though the pain caused tears to roll down her cheeks. When the doctor apologized for hurting her so much, she replied with a smile, "Oh, Jesus suffered much more in His Passion."

During her short religious life in Italy Sister Assunta became a dear model to all who knew her. But she also imbibed deeply the example of those who had gone before her. On July 9, 1900, seven of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were martyred at Tai-Yuan-Foo in China, victims of the Boxer Rebellion. This incident stirred up the missionary aspirations of Sister Assunta, so that on January 1, 1903, she wrote to the Superior General from Florence, asking to be sent to China. The answer was a long time in coming, but finally in early March 1904 word came that she was to depart with the next group bound for China. Her destination was Tong-Eul-Koo, a small town about seventy miles distant from Tai-Yuan-Foo, where the seven martyrs had given their lives. She was overjoyed at the news of her assignment but, as she told her superior, "If Jesus had preferred for me to stay in Florence, it would be all the same to me."

The departing sisters gathered at Rome, where they received the blessing of Pope Saint Pius X. The humble Sister Assunta was so taken aback in the presence of the humble pope that she tried to escape notice behind the others. It was almost by force that she was finally brought forward to kiss his hand and receive his blessing.

On March 19 the little group of ten sisters boarded a boat at Naples bound for India. The trip to Bombay took seventeen days, with the sea rough and stormy. Sister Assunta showed herself quite human by becoming sea-sick. After a few days' stop at Bombay the sisters went by way of Singapore and Hong Kong to Chefoo, then inland through Tientsin and Peiping to Chengting, where the railroad ended. From here they had to ride for six days in palanquins, a kind of sedan chair carried by two mules, one in front and one behind. In this joggy, swaying fashion they traversed the last mountainous lap of their journey and finally arrived at their destination. It was June 21, 1904. The trip had taken three months and a lot of patience. Sister Assunta had stood up wonderfully under the test. Her superior for the trip wrote later: "I do not remember ever having heard her complain. By her unfailing good humor and simplicity she was a very agreeable companion."

At the mission Sister Assunta continued to develop those quiet virtues she had shown in her native Italy. She was always perfectly obedient to her superior. She carried out with complete fidelity even commands that others would not have taken seriously.

The missionary sisters at Tong-Eul-Koo took care of 330 orphans and gave attention to many sick people who daily visited their dispensary. Sister Assunta was assigned to work in the kitchen. She did her work faithfully and well, practicing the many little economies which are very valuable in so large an institution. The sisters were often surprised that she could make so little go so far. The heat and inconveniences of kitchen work were borne gladly, since she was happy to have something to offer to God.

The sight of so much paganism in this new world deeply grieved her heart, which was so zealous for God's glory. This gave her a great eagerness to learn the native language so that she could help with the catechizing. Among the first things she learned were the prayers of the Rosary, which she would say with the young Chinese girl who helped her in the kitchen. This girl had witnessed the death of the seven martyred sisters. Hearing her recount the story of their heroism gave Sister Assunta great joy.

But life was not always a smooth road for the little sister. In China God allowed her to be deeply disturbed by scruples. She was in great torment of soul, imagining that she might still be guilty of certain faults, that she was useless for the work of the mission, that she had not lived up to the graces of her vocation. But the more God left her in this darkness, the more did her soul strive toward Him. She made a vow to perform all her actions for love of God, offering to the Sacred Heart all her thoughts, words, and deeds, as well as all the prayers to be said for her after her death. After she had borne her trials for a while in patience, God restored her soul to its usual peace.

Things were going rather smoothly at the mission. Then in 1905, toward the end of an exceptionally severe winter, typhus struck the region. From all sides the sick poured into the mission for help. Some of the orphans contracted the disease, and the weaker ones began to die. The sisters, their resistance worn down by overwork and constant contact with the disease, soon began to feel its effects. It claimed its first victim in their community on March 19. That day was the first anniversary of Sister Assunta's departure from Italy; it was also the day on which typhus forced her to bed. The doctor analyzed the case as not too serious, but Sister Assunta felt sure that she would die soon. Fervently she made a general confession.

A few days later, March 24, a second sister was dying in the room next to that of Sister Assunta. When the superior came in, Sister Assunta asked whether she might offer her own life to God in order to save the other sister, whom she considered much more valuable to the mission than herself. But the superior told her to leave that to the will of God, and Sister Assunta obeyed without another word. Minutes later the other sister died.

This death affected Sister Assunta deeply. The next day she asked to receive the Last Sacraments. When she was told that she was not sick enough to be anointed, she insisted that she would die soon and that she wanted to receive the Sacraments while she still had full use of her faculties. The priest, faced with such insistence, decided to comply with her request. She begged pardon of the assembled community for all the bad example and scandal she imagined she had given. Then she answered the liturgical prayers and received holy Viaticum with exemplary fervor.

Three days later her condition took a serious turn for the worse. Her suffering became intense but she offered it all for others. As the sickness progressed, she fell into a delirium, in which she frequently called upon

God and the saints. At one time she repeated over and over in Chinese, "Eucharist, Eucharist." But she was unable to swallow. Spiritual Communion, which had so often supported her during life, had to be her assistance at death.

Her suffering ended just at sunset on April 7, 1905. Her soul went home to God. At that same moment a wonderful perfume filled the whole sick-room. One of those who experienced it described it as "a delicious odor of balsam and incense, of roses and violets." No natural explanation was found for it. The same fragrance accompanied her body to the grave and was present for several days in the three rooms Sister Assunta had occupied at different times during her illness. It was evident not only to the missionaries but also to the people, who came in crowds to witness the prodigy.

On April 8 Sister Assunta's body was carried to the grave. Here her story might have ended had not God taken her case into His hands. She had thought only of Him during life; He would not allow her to be forgotten in death. In 1913 the bodies of the sisters buried at Tong-Eul-Koo were exhumed and transferred to Tai-Yuan-Foo. When the body of Sister Assunta was removed from the grave, it was found to be preserved in the same state as when it was buried.

It was this fact which brought her case to the attention of Saint Pius X. When he heard she had done "nothing" but observe her Rule and carry out all her simple duties, he took special interest in opening the proceedings for her beatification. The long and pains-taking process advanced with surprising rapidity. In 1923 the cause of her beatification was formally introduced and in 1932 her virtues were declared heroic. The public seal of apostolic approval was given to her life on November 7, 1954, when Pope Pius XII declared her Blessed.

Why did God raise up this sincerely humble and straightforward soul for our reverence and imitation? Pope Pius XI answered that question on the occasion when he declared her virtues heroic. He stated that strife in the world arises from three powerful currents: "the unceasing search for material pleasures, the insatiable greediness for riches, the arrogance and pride of life in all its relationships." "How opportunely," he continues, "the humble virgin of Force comes before us. With the example of her brief and humble life, which is yet very noble, and now glorious she speaks clearly to everyone. She tells us that with divine grace not only can one resist those three currents, a fact which many worldlings deny so as to justify and excuse themselves, but she also shows us that

one can walk against the current. And one can do this with such success as to arrive at the triumphant exercise of obedience, chastity, and evangelical poverty, satisfying—supreme glory for a creature—not only the precepts but also the counsels, that is to say, the highest and most intimate desires of the Creator."

Fr. Fintan Warren, O.F.M. 

## ON SEEING. . .

how to nail down  
for the future generations  
the absolute wildness  
of a bird-track in the snow  
is more or less  
my problem.


not that as a sign  
this (same bird-track)  
is in itself unreadable,  
but that a mark  
of such importance  
should be left, so—  
on the roadside,  
is at least a foot-step  
closer to  
the issue.

what the transient  
wrote  
was plain  
confusion:  
heel-print

of creature  
wondering where to  
turn—

yet  
in the snow  
and sunlight,  
how resplendent!

how firm  
and delicate  
at once:  
how memorable  
and transitory;  
how worthy to be  
(as it will)  
carried  
from age to age:  
this moment  
here recorded,  
of a winged-thing  
at the cross-roads.

ROBERT LAX 



## THE DIES IRAE (II) \*

We now come to the turning point in this immortal poem, The climax of the drama ends with the sixth stanza, and the last line, "naught shall unavenged remain," sounds like distant thunder that moves across the mountains of eternity. One senses how the phrase *nil inultum* would throb on and on in the recesses of a guilty heart. But now the next stanza ushers in an introspective mood, lyrical in its transition from fear to hope. First we find the soul, bewildered and confused, entering into herself.

Quid sum, miser, tunc dicturus,	Then, wretched me, what shall I say,
Quem patronum rogaturus,	What advocate shall I invoke,
Cum vix justus sit securus?	When even the just is not secure?

The soul stands before the severe and relentless Judge who will demand an answer to the order he himself issued when he was with us on earth: *Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer* (Lk. 16:3). "Oh, that stewardship of mine," the soul laments, "now I see its tremendous value and importance. My long life, my vocation, those mountains of graces, of blessings and opportunities, that I neglected, if not squandered and abused. But now it is too late. Oh, terrible word—too late! The day and hour have come and passed, and now I stand before the judgment of God in all my naked humanity, deformed and bowed under the heavy load of sin."

Unable to endure the stern countenance of the Judge, unable to utter a word in her own defense, the soul looks about for help. Is there no one to plead her cause, to say something that would at least relieve this agony of tension? Where is Our Blessed Lady, the Mother of Mercy? Where is Saint Joseph, the kindly foster-father of Jesus? Where is the Guardian Angel to whose care the soul has been committed during life? Yes, they are near and willing to help, but the soul realizes that there will be a moment—a terrible moment—when the pleadings of others will be of no avail—that moment when the lips of the Eternal Judge will open to pronounce final and irrevocable sentence. That moment has come now for the soul, and with it this unbearable suspense. "Even the just man is barely secure," the soul groans to herself, and the thought is re-echoed by a thousand voices that ring forth from the pages of Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints. Even the "Vessel of Election," the great Saint Paul, comes forward to sustain this truth with his inspired confession: *Nay, I do not even judge my own self. For I have nothing on my con-*

*science, yet I am not thereby justified: but he who judges me is the Lord* (I Cor. 4:4).

But as the soul lifts her agonized gaze to meet the piercing eyes of the Judge, there comes to her tormented memory an ancient song, or rather a refrain that runs like a melody of golden flutes through the pages of the Old Testament: *The mercy of the Lord endureth forever*. What did Saint Paul mean when he spoke of the *unfathomable riches of Christ, and the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God* (Eph. 3:8-9)? In Celano's time the devotion to the Sacred Heart had not yet been promulgated, but the mystery of mercy was known to the faithful from the very dawn of Christianity, even as the twilight shadows were falling on Golgotha. Who can tell what happens in an anguished soul when all hope seems lost and when she grasps frantically, as it were, at the proverbial straw? This is precisely the state that the poet tries to depict as the soul in her desperation, despite the unrelenting countenance of the Judge, makes a direct appeal to his Heart.

Rex tremendae majestatis,	O King of tremendous majesty,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,	Who freely saves those who are to be saved,
Salva me, fons pietatis.	Save me, O Fount of Goodness!

In a remarkable statement, Saint Paul, writing to his disciple Timothy, after confessing to him "*that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief*, bursts forth into the glorious anthem praise: *To the king of ages, who is immortal, invisible, the one only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen* (I Tim. 1:15-17). The Judge is King—King of glory and mercy. At the thought of this an illuminating ray of hope comforts the bewildered soul. With a mighty impulse she tears herself away from the despairing terror that has held her in grip and casts herself upon the mercy of her Judge. "For is not my Judge also my Saviour?" she cries out in hope. "Did he not come into the world to save all men? And has he not spared multitudes of our fallen race?" There is new strength and confidence in the penitent soul as she boldly, almost commandingly, addresses her Judge. Her first words still reflect the awe and dread of what has gone before. "Rex tremendae majestatis" means awe-inspiring majesty. But in the next line the soul expresses the relief that fills her, for salvation is in sight; and the last line ends in comforting hope and love.

This stanza pictures the Throne that has three steps. On the highest step stands the King of awful majesty; on the second, the Savior whose record of saving souls is an open book, on the third and lowest, the same

\*The first part of this study appeared in the March 1955 issue of THE CORD.

Savior bends down in the attitude so beautifully described by Saint Paul in his letter to Titus: *But when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared* (Tit. 3:4). Celano calls the Savior the Fount of Goodness. No more appropriate and meaningful title has been or can be found to convey all that the great Heart of the Savior of mankind possesses. The word "pietas" is frequently misunderstood. It does not mean piety or devoutness, nor is it covered by our terms sympathy, kindness, or gentleness. It comprises all these, to be sure, but fundamentally it denotes the relationship that exists between parents and children, between the members of a loving family. Thus it connotes that spiritual relationship that exists between God and his great family. The term "salvandos" is a bold expression implying that we *must* be saved, for how can a father forget his child? As the Savior said to Nicodemus: *For 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).

Recordare, Jesu pie,  
Quod sum causa tuae viae;  
Ne me perdas illa die.

Call to mind, O kindly Jesus,  
That I caused thy bitter way;  
Do not cast me off that day.

What a marvelous change the Fount of Goodness has wrought in the soul! The dread, the anguish, the horror of the previous scene are being dispelled by the aurora that rises slowly in the eastern sky. It is the aurora of redemption, of the loving kindness of Jesus, the God-Man. The soul catches the last line of the previous stanza, "Salva me, fons pietatis," and makes a direct personal appeal to the Judge who is also her Savior. A kindly light suffuses the stern countenance of the Judge, a light that he cannot and will not conceal. For the Judge is still Jesus, the Infant Mary bore in Bethlehem, the boy of Nazareth who called Joseph the carpenter his father, the young man who for three years preached the kingdom of God and *went about doing good* (Acts 10:38), the loving Master who spoke the unforgettable words: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest* (Mtt. 11:28).

With exquisite feeling the poet here places the most holy Name of Jesus on the penitent's lips. Never before, perhaps, has the soul realized the tremendous power and ineffable sweetness of this Holy Name, sent from heaven and first committed to the Immaculate Mother and Joseph, her holy spouse, and as the centuries rolled by, passing from tongue to tongue, from heart to heart, extolled among the Fathers, Doctors, and Saints of the Church. No wonder that this Name *that is above every name* (Phil. 2:5) stirred Paul of Tarsus to the highest flights of eloquence, aroused Bernard of Clairvaux to the sweetest verses of sacred poetry, and inspired the two great Franciscan preachers, Bernardin

of Siena and John Capistran, to proclaim and thunder it from all the pulpits of Europe until Mother Church accorded it a place of honor and dignity in the calendar of the ecclesiastical year. "Call to mind, O kindly Jesus," pleads the penitent soul, and with a fine touch of compassion and gratitude she emboldens herself to continue, "call to mind that I was the cause of thy bitter way to Calvary." The soul has penetrated the deepest mystery of the God-Man's mission on earth, the real motive of his passion and death. "Remember," the soul pleads, "that I was the cause of all thine anguish and agony, of thy heavy cross and bitter chalice. All this was done for me, thy creature, whom thou hast made to the image and likeness of God, cleansed in thy blood, nourished with the ever-flowing graces of the Holy Spirit. Great indeed was the price thou hast paid for me—an infinite price. And although I was a miserably poor bargain and totally unworthy of the purchase-price, still I dare plead with thee. There must be justice, but hast thou not said through thy prophet: *Mercy is founded forever* (Ps. 88:3), and is it not the refrain of all the Scriptures that *the Lord is good, his mercy is forever, and unto all generations his faithfulness* (Ps. 99:5)? Therefore, not for my poor sake, but for thy glory, O kindly Jesus, do not cast me off on that day of wrath."

Quaerens me, sedisti lassus,  
Redemisti Crucem passus;

Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Seeking me, thou didst wait, fatigued;  
Carrying the Cross, thou didst redeem me:

Let not such labor be wasted.

The soul, hopeful now and courageous, eagerly presses her point, recalling other scenes from the Savior's life. She puts him in mind of what happened at Jacob's well. Saint John tells the story: *Arriving with his disciples at the well, Jesus, wearied as he was from the journey, was sitting at the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a Samaritan woman to draw water. A long conversation with this woman, who was a public sinner, followed, and the Master did not dismiss her until light and grace had touched her heart. Meanwhile the disciples returned from the city. They had brought food and begged him to eat. But he answered: I have food to eat of which you do not know* (Jn. 4:5-15). Has her Judge forgotten this incident, the soul queries? Indeed not; and would he who, though wearied and fatigued from his long journey, spent hours on that hot afternoon to gain the soul of that woman, would he reject one who after all is close to him by sacramental bonds and by a faith that, though weak and defiled by sin, is still burning? Then the soul turns again to the mystery of the Cross, for that was the supreme test of Christ's love for man. As one of the Fathers so beautifully put it: "*Aspice crucem; tan-*

*tum enim vales, O anima Christiana;*" "look at the cross: there, O Christian soul, is thy price!"

The story of the Passion is the Book of the Seven Seals, which only the Lamb of God can open. He opened it on the sorrowful way through the streets of the Holy City up the barren hill of Calvary. "Carrying the Cross," or rather, "suffering the Cross," the penitent soul recalls with emphasis, and in these words expresses one of the greatest truths of our holy faith. Ever since the first Good Friday the Way of the Cross has held the attention and devotion of the faithful; it has peopled monasteries and hermitages, brought thousands to the life of penance and contemplation. The Royal Way of the Cross has become the highway of sainthood throughout the Christian world, because the Cross is the proof and the symbol of love.

The final line of this stanza is a masterstroke. Here the penitent soul clinches her argument: "*Tantus labor non sit cassus*"—even though the object redeemed is not worth much, the labor of redemption was enormous; "let not such labor be wasted."

*Iuste Judex ultionis  
Donum fac remissionis  
Ante diem rationis.*

*Just Judge of vengeance,  
Grant the gift of remission  
Before the day of reckoning.*

The soul is gathering more courage with every stanza. She has the courage to address her judge by his sweet name of Jesus, and feels confident that she has come close to his Sacred Heart. But she does not stop; rather she draws still closer and even dares to enter the secret council of the Triune God. Her words are but a variation of David's superlative line:

*Mercy and fidelity shall meet,  
Justice and peace shall kiss (Ps. 84:11).*

In two lines the justice and mercy of God confront each other, and the former, so the penitent hopes, must carry away the victory. The first line of the stanza addressing the "Just Judge of vengeance," accords full credit to the divine attribute of eternal Justice which must have the right; but knowing that the divine Mercy is but another aspect of Justice and always immediately follows it, the penitent asks for it. God's mercy cannot be merited; it is a free gift to us. But the soul is sure of it and with a boldness that leaves no room for deliberation she begs for its givenness—even before the day of reckoning has come.

The prayer moves on with breathless rapidity. The soul does not wait for the answer of her Judge, but presses on with the best and

argument at her command. She argues with an act of perfect contrition. And how could he be deaf to such a prayer, who once said: *There will be joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents* (Lk. 15:10).

*Ingemisco tamquam reus,  
Culpa rubet vultus meus:*

*As one condemned I deeply groan;  
My brow blushes with the consciousness of guilt;  
O God, grant pardon to this suppliant.*

*Supplicanti parce Deus.*

This act of contrition is perfect. It embraces the whole man, his interior, his exterior, even his posture. The verb "ingemisco" is well chosen; it is a sigh that comes from the depths of the heart. The term "reus" is equally effective, for it implies more than mere guilt, but also condemnation for the guilt. The term "supplicanti" describes a man who bends his knees to the dust and asks pardon of his lord. Here the poet has given us a graphic description of perfect contrition. One may well wonder how in the turbulent and warring thirteenth century a poet could rise to such a lofty conception and deep realization of the enormity of the crime of rebellion against God. To the world of his day, and no less to our own, this stanza offers a perfect lesson in true repentance. Nor is this feeling of remorse only temporary. Suppliantly the sinner remains kneeling before his judge. As Father Faber says, the abiding sorrow for sin is one of the most wholesome and fruitful spiritual exercises. It places Adam's children in their true relationship to the Creator and lends power and freshness to our whole spiritual life. It does not necessarily stem from sorrow for sin in general, nor even from any actual sin committed; rather it makes us conscious of the sinfulness of all mankind and makes us cry out, together with the whole sinful world, the beautiful prayer of David: *Wash me thoroughly of my guilt, and cleanse me of my sin* (Ps. 50:4).

*Qui Mariam absolvisti,  
Et latronem exaudisti,  
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.*

*Thou who didst absolve Mary Magdalen,  
And didst give ear to the thief;  
To me also thou gavest hope.*

Humanly speaking, the strongest argument a culprit may produce in his favor is to remind the judge of how he has dealt with other people. It is like examining the judge's own conscience. It is an appeal to his fairness and honesty, and above all to his sense of justice. The poet chooses two of the greatest sinners from the Gospel, Mary Magdalen the public sinner, and the thief convicted of murder. The world had condemned both, but the Savior granted pardon, and the pardon was given in the most amiable manner.

Quite ingeniously Celano uses the word "absolvisti"—recalling the formula of sacramental absolution in the tribunal of penance which the Savior himself instituted. The word "exaudisti" also recalls liturgical usages, and with particular force and emphasis the poet gives prominence to the theological virtue of hope. Somehow we are inclined to overlook the charm and power of this beautiful virtue which is so genuinely Catholic. It is the golden link between faith and charity, the ladder that reaches from the groundwork of faith to the heights where charity reigns. It is a gift of God, and Saint Paul makes it the mark and characteristic of Christian living. *You were called in one hope of your calling* (Eph. 4:13), he wrote, and begged his own to keep apart from *others who have no hope* (I Thess. 4:13).

Preces meae non sunt dignae,  
Sed tu bonus fac benigne,

Ne perenni cremer igne.

My prayers are not worthy,  
But thou, who art good, graciously  
grant  
That I may not burn in unquenchable  
fire.

Calmness has now settled upon the troubled soul. Holy hope has shed its mellow light and warmth over the scene. The soul sees more clearly than ever God's greatness and her own nothingness; the power of divine mercy and the weakness of a sinful creature. In the light of this vision the full truth is manifested, and that truth engenders humility. There is no virtue, no perfection, without humility. Humility is the ground and basis of all striving for union with God.

The poet, who was the son of the humble Poverello, knew this and consequently after having taught the penitent soul the need and power of prayer, makes her feel the weakness of prayer that is not lifted up by divine grace. This new turn of thought presents the soul as an absolute captive in the hands of the Almighty. With the Psalmist she sighs: *For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us by fire, just as silver is tried; thou hast led us into a snare* (Ps. 65:10-11). She looks back upon her prayer—a prayer that was wrung from her inmost being—and she humbly confesses: "Preces meae non sunt dignae."

This frank admission brings to the penitent's mind the Savior's remarkable saying: *One there is who is good, and he is God* (Mtt. 19:17). If power is the first notion of God that nature teaches us, and truth the second, then goodness surely ranks third. Such was the philosophical teaching of the day, and Celano speaks with complete conviction when he writes: "Sed tu bonus." But he proceeds still further when he makes

that divine *bonitas* become *benignitas* in response to a poor sinner's plea for mercy. Benignity is a beautiful word; Holy Scripture uses it sparingly, perhaps for that very reason. Saint Paul sets forth its full meaning in his words to Titus: *But when the goodness and kindness* (benignitas et humanitas) *of God our Savior appeared* (Tit. 3:4). It is much to Celano's credit that he presented in this brief verse the glorious truth that the goodness of the Triune God manifests itself so wonderfully in the benignity of the Savior toward poor sinful mankind. But the climax occurs in the third verse. For how could the good God and the benign Savior suffer a poor repentant mortal to fall prey to the unquenchable flames of eternal hell-fire—"ne perenni cremer igne?" The last phrase is strikingly realistic. It is the term used to denote the burning and utter consuming of human bodies in the ancient cemeteries.

Confutatis maledictis,  
Flammis acribus addictis,  
Voca me cum benedictis.

The cursed having been silenced  
And cast into the biting flames,  
Call me with thy blessed ones.

This is almost an echo of the prophecy made by the Savior when he spoke of the Son of Man seated *on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left* (Mtt. 25:31-33). Here the penitent, by implication, makes an act of faith inasmuch as he accepts without doubt or reservation the Master's prophecy concerning the Last Judgment in its literal wording. Meanwhile we cannot but observe his supreme confidence in the good and benign Master who will, he is certain, look to his right hand and assign to the penitent, who now appears before him in the garb of the humble prodigal, a place among the sheep. "Statuens" corroborates the first line: the penitent not only seeks a place among the sheep but he desires to be firmly established there forever, close to the King he loves and longs to serve for all eternity.

Oro supplex et acclinis,  
Cor contritum quasi cinis:  
Gere curam mei finis.

Suppliantly I prostrate myself and  
implore thee,  
My heart is ground to ashes;  
To thy care I commit my last end.

This is a re-statement of the King's own verdict, according to Saint Matthew: *Then the king will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'* (Mtt. 25:34). *Then he will*

say to those on his left hand, 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41). With this scene before his mind, the poet, as if playing a mighty organ, resumes his original theme and in a stirring *majestoso* describes the curse of the Almighty upon those who shall be condemned forever. Strangely enough, the penitent soul now dares to assume what she has dreaded before—the role of announcing with conviction that divine justice must be avenged.

The word "confutare" is borrowed from the language of ancient court procedure. It means the complete silencing of the culprit and implies his condemnation. The word "acribus" has the connotation "sharp," "bitting," and carries the onomatopoeic suggestion of the crackling of the perpetual flames of hell. In the final line the poet reverts to his attitude of childlike supplication—"voca me cum benedictis."

The gates of hell are now shut and, as the old legend goes, there is seen the inscription written by the hand of the Almighty: "Forever. Never." The gates will remain shut forever; they will never be opened.

Lacrimosa dies illa  
Qua resurgit ex favilla  
Judicandus homo reus:

A day of tears that day will be  
When sinful man rises from ashes  
To be judged.

One more prayer is wrung from the very depths of the penitent's heart. It is the last, but it embraces all the emotions, hopes, and longings that a crushed conscience can muster. Prostrate on the dust from which he was taken, the penitent offers a truly contrite heart to God. Here the poet plays upon the original meaning of "contrition," from "conterere"—"to grind to pieces." Like ashes, the Biblical symbol of penance, his heart is crushed and ground. The last line is spoken with complete abandonment to divine mercy. The sinner has exhausted all his powers. He can say no more, and now he surrenders himself unreservedly to his Maker and Judge.

Huic ergo parce Deus.  
Pie Jesu Domine,  
Dona eis requiem. Amen.

To him, O God, be merciful,  
Loving Lord Jesus,  
Grant them rest. Amen.

These last two stanzas are not part of the original composition. Both in construction and in thought they differ from the rest of the poem. These additions were made at the time when the Sequence, formerly used in the Last and First Sundays of the liturgical year, came to be used in the Mass for the Dead. Though obviously additions, no one will deny

that they form a fitting and comforting end to the great dramatic Sequence. While they present a kind of summary of the thought and feeling of the original poem, they set forth the beautiful sympathy of Mother Church when one of her children is laid to rest. One may say that she picked from among all the stanzas the fairest gem for her final prayer: "Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem."

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M. ✓

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. XI, vv.11-16, Opera Omnia, Tom. VI, pp. 398f)

*He said to them, "Lazarus, our friend, sleeps. But I go that I may wake him from sleep." His disciples therefore said, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will be safe." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he was speaking of the repose of sleep. So then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I rejoice on your account that I was not there, that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who is called the Twin, said therefore to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn. 11: 11-16).*

The name "Lazarus" means *one helped by the Lord*. And this name, in its spiritual sense, signifies a man who has the grace of God assisting him. *Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee* (Isaiah 49: 8). This grace is a special sign of the love of God. Therefore, the one upon whom God lovingly bestows it should, like Lazarus, welcome it graciously. The Book of Proverbs voices the words with which the Lord condescends to speak of His love: *I love them that love me* (Prov. 8: 17). In return, God expects the chosen one to receive, cherish and re-act upon His gift of grace. According to Saint Bonaventure, this is "redamatio," or the "return of love" from the lover to the Beloved.

But, oftentimes, our gracious God finds the soul sound asleep: *Lazarus, our friend, sleeps* (v. 11). Here, the beneficiary has a som-

nolent indifference to the gifts of her Lord. Or, worse still, she may be asleep in the doleful death of sin: "*Lazarus is dead* (v. 14). On these points, Saint Bonaventure discovers that the *repose of sleep* (*dormitio somni*) is a highly equivocal term; it is a phrase of many meanings. So he describes four kinds of such sleep or dormition.

First, there is the sleep of laziness: *How long will thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou rise out of thy sleep* (Proverbs 6:9)? The grace of God finds this man "taking it easy" day and night. To him, grace offers the warning words of Christ to *do works. . . while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work* (Jn. 9: 4). And, should he drowsily turn over, undismayed, she prods him with the admonition of Saint Paul (I Thess. 5: 5): *You are all children of the light and children of the day. We are not of night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us be wakeful.*

Secondly, we may speak of the sleep of sin. And Saint Paul fairly shouts into the spiritual ears of those drugged with this deadly somnolence: *Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee* (Eph. 5:14). And yet, with this alarm incessantly ringing in the ears of many sinful sleepers, the Apostle of the Gentiles sadly admits: *Many among you are infirm and weak, and many sleep* (I Cor. 11: 31). If such sleep afflicts us, like Augustine at Milan, let us "take and read:" *The night is far advanced; the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly as in the day* (Rom. 13: 12f).

In the third place, there is sleep in the usual sense of repose. And although this is often not only harmless but even beneficial, at times it should be foregone in behalf of Christ or His little ones. This was the situation when the Saviour so needed, humanly, the comfort and consolation of His three chosen ones in the Garden of Gethsemani: *Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping* (Matt. 26: 40). One of them must have been at least half-awake and aware of the pressing petition of Jesus: *And he said to Peter, "Could you not then watch one hour with me? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Ibid. vv. 40f). In our own lives, have we not often too easily given in to rest when, like the Apostles, our *eyes were heavy* (Ibid. v. 43)? Spiritually speaking, our slumber of indifference may seem

harmless enough. But, possibly, at the very moment when we are sleeping Christ is beseeching our prayers lest some member of His Mystical Body be *betrayed into the hands of sinners* (Ibid. v. 45). And then suddenly, all too late, we may awaken to the realization that the betrayer has laid hold of one who was dear to His Sacred Heart: *Rise, let us go. Behold, he who betrays me is at hand* (Ibid. v. 46). Lest this happen, let us strive always to be alert to the needs of those belonging to Christ, saying: *But I go that I may awake him from sleep* (v. 11).

Finally, we come to that sleep which seems more properly applied to Lazarus. And this is the sleep of death: *Now Jesus spoke of his death* (v. 14). When Christ had first mentioned the sleep of Lazarus, the Apostles had taken it in the third sense, namely, the sleep of repose. For Jesus had said: *Lazarus, our friend, sleeps. But I go that I may wake him from sleep* (v. 11). Perhaps, naturally, our Lord wanted them first to take Him literally, so that then He could easily point out that in passing over to eternal life death is little more than a sleep. It is in this sense that the Church often speaks of her Saints and just men as "falling asleep in the Lord." But there was still another meaning that he wished to imply in those words. He wished to indicate to them and to us that, of all four kinds of sleep, the only sleep really to be feared is the sleep of sin. Not only laziness, not only neglect of a positive duty, but also and especially the terrible torpor of mortal sin must be avoided, or thrown off if we succumb to it. He even warns us, as he warned Peter, of the deceptive drowsiness of venial sin: *"Could you not watch one hour with me? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation* (Mt. 26:40f). Beyond doubt, the sleep of mortal sin is the worst kind of death. And mortal sin can catch us napping in the drowsiness of venial sin.

However, in our present text, the Apostles took Christ literally when He spoke of the sleeping Lazarus. So they replied: *"Lord, if he sleeps, he will be safe* (v. 12). They were thinking of the "sleep of the innocents," the healing sleep of nature that refreshes the mind and body. To correct their misconception, Jesus said to them plainly: *Lazarus is dead* (v. 14). How this short statement must have startled them. They reacted spontaneously. When Christ said, *Let us go to him* (v. 16), Thomas echoed the words for his fellow Apostles: *Let*

us also go (v. 16). The doubting disciple even tried to draw the others into the greater sacrifice of the sleep awakening in eternity: *That we may die with him* (v. 16). And, if Peter were ever bested in his impetuosity, it was here when Thomas spoke for all the rest: *Let us also go that we may die with him* (v. 16). And though this outburst of generosity may seem foolhardy to us, have not our promises often resembled the resolution of Thomas? At the death of a dearly-loved friend, did not our determinations approach the heroic? But when confronted by some comparatively trivial temptation, we forgot our pledge. Were we not at one time willing to share the sorrow of our friend, if not even to die in his stead? Yet when faced with the daily demands of living faithful to his memory, we failed miserably. Perhaps, like the Apostles, we forget that it is not great things that are asked of us, but little things. The little sleep of that temptation, the nap of carelessness to an occasion of sin, or even dozing in venial sin, can lead to the deep slumber of mortal sin. Indeed, slight sins can drug our wakefulness.

Each of us can remind himself that he is also a Lazarus, truly *one helped by God*. May we not become spiritual sleep-walkers; but, rather, let us pray that God may help us, that Christ may say of us: *I go that I may wake him from sleep* (v. 77). Wide awake, then, I must become alert to the needs of some other Lazarus. Perhaps, unable to help himself, he languishes in the tomb of purgatory. With the indulgenced prayers and graces at my disposal, I can literally stretch forth my hand to him in his hour of suffering need. Having succumbed to the sleep of death, he now cries to me in his sleepless sorrow: *Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me* (Job 19: 21). In reply, am I not bound, Christ-like, to keep my eyes open for opportunities to help release him from his entombment? Like the Master, must my compassion not compel me to *groan in spirit* at his plight? Or has my conscience become so insensible to the ravages of sin, that I can not even imagine the frightful consequences of unatoned-for faults? While I long so ardently to be remembered well by others, do I fall into the lethargy which shuts my eyes to the needs of the poor souls? Even our glorified God asked for our remembrance: "*Do this in remembrance of me*" (Luke 22: 19). Would He not then, want us to

share His help at the moment of Consecration with the suffering souls? Perhaps we carelessly or drowsily skip over the memento for the dead in daily Holy Mass. If we do, we are shutting our eyes to the fact that someday that will be our place of remembrance—if indeed we are remembered at all and not fully forgotten in turn. At least we could practice a selfish gratitude to those who have gone before. For though they cannot help themselves, it is well known that the poor souls can help us. Let us then, beg their help to keep us awake to the constant dangers surrounding us in life. If God will keep us wakeful and vigilant, it might well be that some poor, grateful soul has besought this grace for us. May the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen!

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M. ✓

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### BOOK REVIEWS

**MEDITATIONS ON THE RULE AND LIFE OF THE FRIARS MINOR.** Fr. Pirmin Hasenoeherl, O.F.M., translated under authority of the Very Reverend Ministers Provincial of the United States and Canada. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Vol. I, pp. 696; Vol. II, pp. 613. \$12.50. ✓

The long-felt need for a Franciscan meditation book is now more than adequately supplied in this excellent work of Fr. Pirmin. The two large, handsomely-bound volumes cover the entire liturgical year, which forms the framework for the meditations. Subjects applicable to the Franciscan way of life are fitted into this framework in such a way that the close association between the Gospels and our Rule becomes strikingly clear. Specifically, meditations on the three religious vows are woven into the principle cycles of the Ecclesiastical year: on poverty, for Advent and Christmas; on obedience, for the weeks after Epiphany; and on chastity, for the weeks after Easter. The Lenten season is devoted to meditations on the Passion. From the Sunday Gospels thoughts are taken that form the basis of meditations on the Rule and other writings of Saint Francis, principles of the spiritual life in general, and the fundamental truths of faith. There are also meditations for the special Franciscan feasts.

The form of the meditations follows that of Saint Peter of Alcantara; they are simple, brief, and pointed, and on the whole, excellently constructed for community meditation.

This is a book that should be made generally available in every Franciscan community. A thoughtful and prayerful following of these meditations must of necessity produce a deepening of Franciscan spirituality in every community that uses it.

S.M.F.



**UNION WITH CHRIST.** Leo Veuthey, O.F.M. Conv., translated by James Meyer, O.F.M. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Pp. 96. \$2.00

Readers of *The Franciscan Herald and Forum* who have profited from the series of articles entitled "Union with Christ" will be delighted to find the series available in book form. The work is already so well known that it seems superfluous to discuss it here. Suffice to remark that it treats of Franciscan asceticism, bringing out its Christocentric character and its tendency toward the mystical union as its normal goal. Each chapter of the book deals with some pertinent aspect of ascetical theology, beginning with a treatment of the Mystical Body and running through nine chapters on Mary, prayer, the Mass, poverty, humility, chastity, mortification, and suffering.

Sister M. Michaeline, O.S.F., did the jacket design for the book and the title page and chapter divisions. Interpretations of the symbols accompany her designs. Unfortunately, the printing is not up to standard.

The translation was made by the late Fr. James Meyer, O.F.M., for thirty-three years editor of *The Franciscan Herald and Forum*, and author and translator of numerous works on Franciscan spirituality. His death is a deep-felt loss to the Franciscan apostolate in this country, especially the apostolate of the press.

S.M.F.

#### SISTERS' DIVISION OF FEC TO MEET IN INDIANAPOLIS

It was announced at the closing sessions of the FEC that the meeting of the Sisters' Division is to be held at Marian College, Indianapolis, during the Thanksgiving recess, November 25-26. The subject will be the same as for the FEC: "Nature, the Mirror of God."

For information, write to:

**Sister M. Carol, O.S.F.**

**Marian College**

**Indianapolis 22, Indiana**

The FEC unanimously expressed its sympathy to the members of the Franciscan Institute and to all who were affected by the untimely death of Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., Founder and Director of the Institute. It also expressed "its own indebtedness to the deceased by dedicating the Report of the Conference to this great Franciscan who continually found in nature a mirror of God."

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### THE MEANING OF MINORITAS

During the past month we have considered the various aspects of our Franciscan life in penance and have tried to discover wherein we fall short of our ideal and into what alien paths we tend to stray. It now remains for us to synthesize these aspects of the Franciscan ideal or to find one single aspect that embraces them all. This we can discover at the feet of the Infant of Bethlehem, and we shall call it, for want of a better term, *minoritas*.

#### 1. Why Minoritas?

It is especially necessary for us children of Saint Francis, living as we do in this sophisticated age of worldly pride and wisdom, to study our way of life, *whence it comes* (Phil. 1:10). For our name of Friars Minor stands as a sign of contradiction and contempt to the vast majority of our contemporaries. If we cannot defend it to ourselves, we cannot hope to defend it to the world.

Our Order has a history some seven centuries long. It looks back upon an ancient tradition, yet a tradition sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the needs of every age. Actually, therefore, we have two traditions: the unalterable ideal, the total imitation of Christ, which is the essence of our way of life, and the ideal of adaptability in matters of external observance. This latter tradition is one of the clearest signs of spiritual vigor. An Order that continues throughout several centuries and keeps in close touch with the world must have the strength to conform to the times in manner and outlook without detriment to its essential spirit. Therefore, while the ideal remains intact, it must be expressed in new forms. An apostolic Order must be equipped to enter new fields of activity; it must be prepared to give answers to the questions that continually arise in human society; it must be able to adapt itself to the ever-changing customs of an ever-changing world—and all this without sacrificing or compromising its spiritual integrity. For if the Order clearly understands its divine mission, the specific purpose for which the Holy Spirit has called it into being, it can always fulfill that mission. It can always belong

to the age in which it finds itself without ever becoming a victim of the age. And the more completely the spirit of the Gospel rules the Order, the more effectually will it face up to the problems of the age.

Our Order has always had this mission of meeting the needs of the times. But because of the terrible spiritual uncertainty that is torturing the modern world, the needs are especially critical. It is necessary for us—indeed, it is incumbent upon us by our vocation itself—to examine carefully into our way of life and discover clearly and rationally what pertains to the essentials of the Franciscan ideal and what is meaningful only for a particular time. It is easy to discard certain forms as antiquated or impractical; but it is not so easy to establish new forms to contain the spirit that the old forms expressed. And certainly it is dangerous for us to discard external forms if the interior spirit is to be discarded along with them. Here is a matter that may well be considered a gauge for our own personal activities and attitudes: Do we know what the essentials of our vocation are? Do we know how to recognize outmoded forms and discard them aside without laying aside the spirit that moulded them? This is much in general for private consideration; but for this particular conference let us take the matter of Franciscan *minoritas*.

We are called *Fratres Minores*, Lesser Brothers. Is this name simply a charming remnant of medieval piety, slightly absurd in our modern world? Or does it embody an essential part of our Franciscan heritage, a spirit that must continue if we ourselves are to continue? According to our name we confess to our *minoritas*, to our being the lowly members of the Church. Why do we still bear this name? Just because we have always had it and one cannot so easily change. Then it has simply become an anachronism as far as we are concerned, and we may as well pass it off as merely a consequence of a pious mentality that once flourished in the Order but has no binding force on us today. As a matter of fact, most of us, it would seem, really do prefer to be called Franciscans rather than Friars Minor. It does no violence to our self-esteem to be named after the glorious Saint Francis of Assisi, nor do we find it difficult to bask in the reflected light of his glory. Yet, if we would be worthy children of our Seraphic Father we must live up fully to all the requirements he laid down for us. Not the least among those requirements is the name he

gave his Order, obliging us both to love it and to exemplify it in our daily living. "And let no one be called prior, but let all in general be called lesser brothers. And each should wash the other's feet" (I Rule, VI). In these words of our Rule we see clearly that we are obliged not only to *fraternitas* but to *minoritas* as well.

As a youth, Francis had longed for knighthood. His goal was military glory, and with it the power to rule and dominate. His dreams were solely of the pomp and glitter of worldly fame, of climbing to leadership and supremacy among his equals and of gaining the esteem of the great nobles who towered above him. And of all this he later said: "when I was in sins." For once he grasped the stupendous humility of the Incarnation, he realized that all high-minded striving for domination is but a consequence of man's original sin of pride, and a sign that the creature is unhealthy in the sight of God. Original sin was born of man's unholy desire to be like God, to glorify himself even in defiance of his Creator's will. It is one of the most tragic consequences of original sin that we can know the malice of pride and recognize its manifestations in others, yet make so little effort to conquer it in ourselves. Other sins seem so much more dangerous, so much more loathsome, than pride. But here our thinking is dangerously erroneous. Let us remember that because Christ came to save us and to teach us the way of salvation, he therefore *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man* (Philip. 2:7). Through the humility of the Incarnate Word the human race was healed of its primal wound, and it became possible for man to lift himself above the sin-stricken world and become a child of God. Thus humility appears in its true light, as part of human redemption; and only those who cast themselves down and seek lowliness with Christ will be exalted with Christ.

Saint Francis, with characteristic penetration, recognized humility as the antidote to the poison of pride and worldiness. "Holy humility shames pride, and all the men who are of this world, and all things that are in the whole world" (*Salutation to the Virtues*). In the last analysis, it is only through humility that we can hope to effect our *metanoia*, that complete turning away from self toward God that our vocation demands. For humility is the beginning of

our new life in redemption; it is the glory of grace. Therefore *minoritas* is essential not only to our Franciscan life but even more basically to our Christian life. We cannot cast it aside without sacrificing the integrity of our vocation of total imitation of Christ.

## 2. The Power of Franciscan Minoritas

For a true child of Saint Francis, the fact that Christ humbled himself when he lived with us on earth is reason enough to embrace and love *minoritas*. We cannot escape the compelling truth that the fundamental law of the Franciscan life is the total, uncompromising imitation of the earthly life of Christ. Therefore as Christ, through his self-abasement, exposed pride as the most powerful weapon of the Prince of this World, the poisoned sword that wounds the soul of man and drives him to every evil, so we can be sharers in Christ's redemptive work and be healed of our wounds only through following him in the way of lowliness and humble service. Humility, then, means power and security in the sight of God, it means order and tranquility and health of soul. We have the assurance of our Seraphic Father, that "where patience is and humility, there is neither anger nor confusion" (*Admonitions*, 27). "Holy humility shames pride, and all men who are of this world, and all things that are in the whole world."

Is it not true that in all of us, "the man who is of this world" is still alive, to a greater or lesser degree? Ever since Paradise was lost to us, the "men of this world" have been seeking for security and protection. Certainly this is not an evil in itself; the evil arises from man's desire to provide this security by his own strength and power. He relies on his own human self; he loves it, nurses it tenderly, sets the highest price on its needs and desires, and surrounds it with honor and dignity. With self thus enthroned and glorified, the mere thought of humility is repulsive and terrifying to him. He simply cannot endure to be lowly and small in his own eyes, much less can he endure to be regarded as such by others. And when he meets another who surpasses him in any way, or who is held in greater esteem, forthwith that other becomes his enemy. From pride to envy is but a short step; and from envy to hatred, still shorter. There is no enemy more cruel and implacable, more cunning and

relentless, than an envious man. And tragically enough, envy flourishes even in the highest and holiest places. The first sin of prideful envy was committed in heaven; and the proverbial *invidia clericalis* that is still rampant among us is a clear echo of that first sin. But all forms of envy, even the least noxious, are unmistakable signs that the spirit of the world has triumphed over the spirit of the Lord. God cannot abide where pride holds sway. We have but to consider the Infancy of Christ to realize the horrifying incompatibility between the diabolical pride of man and the divine humility of the Son of God. The insane pride of Herod that could not tolerate a rival king, even though that king were the longed-for Messiah, slaughtered the Holy Innocents and forced the Infant Saviour to flee with his parents into the pagan land of Egypt. And it was pride—the pride of the religious leaders of God's own people—that ultimately nailed the rejected King to the cross of shame.

The final consequence of pride is the rebellious *non serviam* of Lucifer, the sin that created hell. It is the sin of those who would be like unto God, who deify themselves and refuse to recognize their absolute dependence on their Creator. Thus pride, if left unbroken, destroys a man, for it turns him away from God irrevocably and forces him to seek security within the hollow shell of his deified nothingness. The proud man can cling to none but himself, for pride isolates him and cuts him off not only from God but even from his fellow-creatures. There is nothing more dangerous than the lethal solitude that ultimately envelopes the proud, self-worshipping soul. If only we would learn to realize this; if only we would learn to recognize the first growths of pride in ourselves and root them out quickly and completely! But how pitifully few of us ever succeed in conquering our pride; indeed, how few of us even recognize or admit the signs of it. Pride is a cunning vice; it wears many faces and operates in diverse and devious ways. We cannot pause to analyze its operations here, but we can suggest a few broad questions that, if answered truthfully, will at least indicate the spirit that guides us. For example: Is self-seeking so strong in me that it drives me to attack those who stand in my way, to wear them down, destroy their reputation, turn others against them? Am I so in love with myself that I resent anyone who fails to recognize my excellence? Do I re-

gard myself as a paragon of perfection, and despise and condemn those who are in any way different from me? Do I withdraw from others and keep aloof from them, disdain to associate with them? Do I make much of rank and dignity and personal achievement? It is not uncommon to find priests in our monasteries lording it over the lay brothers; and those with impressive academic degrees patronizing those who have none. Nor is it altogether unheard of that those who call themselves children of Saint Francis adopt a condescending attitude toward seculars, and act harshly and discourteously toward employees and others whom they consider their inferiors. It is in such conduct that our greatest danger lies, and the danger extends to the entire Order.

The only adversary strong enough to conquer pride is the holy *minoritas* obligatory for us as Franciscans and as Christians. "For holy humility shames pride." Humility is strength and security; it is the saving power of right order; it is true honor. For, according to Saint Francis: "Blessed is the servant who is no more elated at the good which the Lord says and does through him than at that which he says and does through anyone else. It is sinful for a person to be more set on receiving from his neighbor than he is willing to give of himself to the Lord" (*Admonitions*, 17). Here we find clearly expressed the root of Franciscan *minoritas*. For humility and littleness mean that a man recognizes every good as coming from God, and himself and all creatures as mere instruments in the divine hands. The realization of this fact does not debase him, but rather elevates him and gives him true dignity and abiding security. It is enough for him to know that in this he is following the footsteps of Christ, who, because he humbled himself, was elevated above every creature. Pride lures man to seek heights that are impossible to him, and to strive for a security that cannot be his by nature; therefore the proud man turns away from true security. But the humble man seeks only the place that is his by right—the place determined for him by God—and in this he rests secure. He knows that his works and words are good, for it is God who speaks and acts through him. He is but the instrument, and as such he has no thought of gathering praise for himself. Thus the humble man can work quite well when he is praised, for the praise belongs to God; and he can work just as well

without praise, for he feels no loss. How wonderful it would be if God found only humble hearts among us, humble men and women through whom he could work freely, unhindered by stupid human pride.

The greatest glory that man can give to God is the service of humble love. If there were anything better, Christ would have shown it to us. But we have his example before us, from the Crib to the Cross. And we have his clear command: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.*

### 3. Humility and Fraternity

Humility is ordered power. It conquers the disorder of original sin and sets man in his natural place before God. But the power of Franciscan *minoritas* does more than this: it sets in order man's relation to man. For pride is a crippling vice, and fear is one of its worst fruits. The proud man, relying on his own strength, is ever fearful of his security, and seeks to guard it with force. Where pride rules, men face each other as enemies, turning their God-given faculties into engines of mutual destruction. Contention, conflict, hatred, and ruin are the tragic consequences.

In this disordered world of today, the world that human pride is tearing to pieces, the Friar Minor stands as a symbol of order and tranquility. The world that Saint Francis lived in was not much different from ours. The poison of human pride had sickened Christian society almost to death. To heal the swelling tumor, Francis would have his friars oppose humility and self-abasement to pride and self-glorification. Thus he instructed them: "Let no one be called prior; but let all in general be called lesser brothers. And each shall wash the other's feet" (I Rule, VI). "Likewise, let not any of the brothers aspire to any power or authority, above all, not among themselves" (I Rule, V). The brothers shall not "quarrel among themselves nor with others, but keep minded to make a humble reply, saying to themselves: *We are unprofitable servants*" (I Rule, XI). They are not to become involved in strife and contentions, but are to *be subject to every human creature for God's sake*" (I Rule, XVI).

The true Friar Minor regards all men as children of the Eternal

Father, and he sees in their gifts and graces, in their achievement and station in life, the all-wise ordinance of God. Consequently, he holds all men in reverence as creatures of God, and esteems the work accomplished through them as the work of the Creator. And Christ expressly declared that he came not to be served but to serve, so the Franciscan soul is motivated in all human relations by the desire to serve others. Whoever meets a child of the Seraphic Father should immediately sense the truth of the words: "Where patience is and humility, there is neither anger nor confusion." Thus the name Friar Minor possesses a beautiful harmony; for *fraternitas* and *minoritas* belong together. The fraternal spirit can exist only with the support of humble lowliness.

If our Order is to accomplish its task of combatting pride in this disordered world of today, it rests with us to strive with all our strength for the spirit of Christian lowliness. Let us start first among ourselves. If our relations with the other members of our community are what they should be, we need have no concern about our influence on seculars. They will be quick to recognize our spirit and to adopt it as their own. But to preach Christian humility and then to violate it in our words and actions and attitudes is worse than useless.

The fact that throughout the centuries the world has always looked upon Saint Francis and his holy sons and daughters as worthy of love and reverence is the answer to the question: Why *minoritas*? For the world loved them because they were truly *minor*. Because they were humble they could change the world they lived in; because they desired to serve, they had power over men. We cannot bring salvation to the world of today if we come in the guise of masters and superiors. The world is waiting for, and will receive only him who comes to *serve* her, as Christ served her. For only the servant is the saviour.

"So, brothers, let us all be on our guard against any pride and vainglory. Let us keep ourselves free from the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh; for it is the spirit of the flesh that wants to strive much at making words but little at accomplishing, and it is not bent on the inner religious virtue and holiness of the

spirit, but wants and craves the religious virtue and holiness that shows outwardly to people. It is of such that our Lord says: *Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward* (Mt. 6:2).

"The spirit of the Lord, on the contrary, wants to have the flesh mortified and despised, rated low and base and worthy of disgrace, and it strives for humility and patience, frank simplicity, and true peace of the spirit. And always and above all it craves for the divine fear and the divine wisdom and the divine love of Father and Son and Holy Ghost" (I Rule, XVII).

Let us, then, implore the Infant Saviour, who *emptied himself* for us, to grant us the true spirit of littleness, that we may one day share in the glory of the children of Saint Francis who live to the full their vocation of *Fratres Minores*.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

## SPRING IN THE MIDST OF WINTER

Sermon of Saint Anthony of Padua on the Nativity of the Lord\*

*As the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of water* (Eccli. 50:8)

Ecclesiasticus (39:17 ff): says: *Bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give a sweet odor as frankincense. Send forth flowers as the lily and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace.* In this text there are three things mentioned: abundance of tears, constancy of prayer, and cleanness of life. The *roses* are the souls of the faithful, reddened in the blood of Jesus Christ, which should be *planted by the brooks of waters*, that is, the flowing of tears, that they may be strong enough to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. They ought also to have, like Libanus, the incense of devout prayer in the odor of sweetness, and like the lily, they ought to yield the fragrance of good repute by the cleanness of a pure life, and put forth leaves in thanksgiving. If the souls of the faithful have all these, they can present themselves worthily at today's feast, that is, at the Nativity of the Lord, born of the Blessed Virgin, of whom it is said: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of the water.*

The parturition of the glorious Virgin is compared with the rose and the lily because, just as in yielding the most sweet fragrance their flower is not corrupted, so Blessed Mary, in giving birth to the Son of God, remained a virgin. Whence, when the Virgin brought him forth, the Father could say what Jacob said in Genesis (27:27): *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed.* The Nativity of Jesus Christ was like the odor of fields full of flowers, because he kept intact the flower of his mother's virginity when he was born of her. For the Blessed Virgin was also a field full of roses and lilies which the Lord blessed. Whence: *Blessed art thou among women.*

Note that the Blessed Virgin was troubled when she heard herself blessed among women, for she had ever hoped to be blessed among virgins. And therefore *she thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be* (Lk.1:34) which at first seemed suspect. And as in the promise of a son there appeared manifest danger to virginity, she could not dissimulate further but asked: *How shall this be done, for I know not man* (Lk.1:34)? That is, I have intended not to know. Or perhaps it may be said that she was troubled at this because she heard herself so greatly praised, whereas she thought so little of herself. But rare virtue indeed, if your manifest sanctity is hidden from you alone! On the contrary, as Saint Bernard says: "You despise yourself in secret, being weighed on the scales of truth; but in the market-place when naming the price to others, you sell yourself to us as of greater weight than you have admitted to yourself." Therefore, of the virginal parturition of the Virgin let us say: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring.*

Spring (*ver*) is so named because it blooms (*vernet*). For then the blades of grass are clothed in various shades, everything is painted with flowers, warmth returns to the air, the birds sing, and all things seem to laugh. We give thee thanks, holy Father, because in the middle of winter, in the midst of the cold, thou has made springtime for us. For at this the Nativity of thy blessed Son Jesus, which is celebrated in the middle of winter and in the midst of cold, thou has made us a springtime full of all loveliness. Today the Virgin, the blessed earth which the Lord hath blessed, brought forth the blossoming herb, the food of penitents, that is the Son of God. Today everything is colored with the flowers of the rose tree and the lilies of the valley. Today the Angels sing: *Glory to God in the highest.* Today the tranquility of peace again takes form upon the earth. And what more? Today all things laugh, all things rejoice. Whence today the Angel said to the shepherds: *Behold, I bring you good tidings*

*of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger* (Lk. 2:10 ff). Bear in mind, dearly beloved, that the angel appeared to shepherds, because, as Solomon says: *His communication is with the simple* (Prov. 3:32). Those who keep the flock of simple and innocent thoughts hear from the Angel: *This shall be a sign unto you* (with which you are to sign yourselves): *You shall find an infant* (behold humility!) *laid in a manger* (not at his mother's breast; behold abstinence!) *wrapped in swaddling clothes* (behold poverty!). With this sign, God the Father has signed his Son and sent him into the world. With this sign, sign yourselves. *You will find*, he says, *an infant*, that is, one who cannot speak. Truly Christ became one who cannot speak because he kept silent and *opened not his mouth*, I do not say like a lamb before its shearers, but before its shearers and slayers. Therefore, *you shall find an infant*. Truly he is one who cannot speak who thus keeps silent, dissimulating the sins of men; and because he does not avenge himself, sinners think that he does not see. Whence in Isaias (57:11-12) the Lord complains: *Thou hast lied, and hast not been mindful of me, nor thought on me in thy heart. For I am silent, and as one that seeth not, and thou hast forgotten me. I will declare thy justice; and I shall give to thee justly, according to thy work; and he adds: and thy works shall not profit thee.* Therefore *you shall find an infant*. Alas, alas! Not an infant do I find, but a thief and a detractor, a murmurer and a flatterer, wherever I turn within myself. And you say, *You shall find an infant?* I find one who talks, because his mouth is placed in the skies and his tongue passes over the earth, that is, neither the just man nor the sinner does he spare in detracting. I find one who speaks, who says that good is evil and evil good, putting light into darkness and darkness into light, the bitter into the sweet and the sweet into the bitter.

To continue with our text: *You shall find him, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.* . . O pastors of the Church, this a sign to you: *You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.* Sign yourselves with the sign of the humility and abstinence of this Infant, and with the seal of his golden poverty. Therefore let us say: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring.*

Note that as in spring, that is, in March, the Lord made the world, so at the Nativity of his Son he made, as it were, a new world, all things being made new. On the first day God said (Gen. 1:3) *Be light made. And light was made.* And today the Word of the Father, through whom

all things were made, was made flesh. This very Light which said: *Be light made*, was made today. Whence, concerning this day, we sing at the dawn Mass: *Lux fulgebit*, that is, *A Light shall shine upon us this day* (Isa.9:2-6) Note that on this day three Masses are sung. The Mass at midnight, at which we sing: *Dominus dixit ad me, The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (Ps. 2:7), represents the hidden generation of the Divinity, which no man can relate. The Mass at dawn represents the generation from the mother, which took place today. And the third Mass represents the generation from both the mother and the Father. Whence in the Introit of the Mass we sing: *Puer natus est nobis, A child is born to us, and a son is given to us* (Isa. 9:6), which refers to the generation from the mother; and in the Gospel we read: *In principio erat Verbum, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God* (Jn. 1:1), which refers to the generation from the Father. Therefore the first Mass is sung at midnight, because the generation from the Father is hidden from us who believe it. The second Mass is celebrated very early in the morning, because the generation from the mother is visible to us, but not clearly so, being blurred, so to speak, by a kind of mist or cloud. For who can *loose the string of his shoe*, that is, comprehend the sacrament of his Incarnation? The third Mass, therefore, is sung in clear day, because in the day of eternity, when all obscurity shall have passed away, we shall clearly understand how Christ was born from his Father and how from his mother. For then we shall know Knowledge, because we shall see eye to eye, and as he is, we shall be.

To continue: *As the lilies that are on the brink of the water*. Note that the lily grows in uncultivated soil and springs up in valleys, is fragrant and white, and keeps its odor sealed up, and pours it out through an opening. It has six petals, little golden rods, and a clubbed stem in the center. It heals burnt members. The lily (*lilium*) is so-called because it is like milk (*lacteum*); it signifies the Blessed Virgin who was white with the splendor of virginity, and who was born of the chaste and humble parents, Joachim (which means "rising") and Anna (which means "grace"). Today she brought forth her Son; that is, like the lily she diffused her fragrance. She had six petals. . . which are like the six steps of Solomon. . . For Blessed Mary is called the throne of the True Solomon. The little golden rods in the lily are the poverty and humility in Mary, with which her virginity was adorned. The little stem in the center of the lily is the excellence of divine love in the heart of the Blessed Virgin. This is the medicine of sinners who have been burnt in the fire of vices. Joel says of them (2:6): *All faces shall be made like a kettle*. The kettle

is the mind of the sinner in which the water of concupiscence, placed over the fire of diabolical suggestion, sends up the bubbles of perverse thoughts. From this kettle proceeds the smoke of evil consent by which the eye of the soul is blinded; and thus the mind of the sinner becomes blackened. The word "faces" (*vultus*) is used because by it the will (*voluntas*) of the soul is made manifest, and it signifies the works by which a man is known. Therefore the faces of sinners are made like kettles, since from the blackness of the mind the works are polluted. To this blackening and burning the Blessed Mary brings the whiteness of her holy medicine, and to those who confide in her she gives every kind of sanctity. Therefore let us say: *As the lilies that are on the brink of the water*, as if to say: As the lilies in their freshness, beauty, and fragrance last a long time by the brink of the water, so the Blessed Mary, when she brought forth her little Son, remained in the freshness and beauty of virginity.

The blessed Mary is called the throne of the True Solomon; whence he says of her (Eccli. 24:7): *I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud*, as if to say: I who dwell on high with the Father have chosen my throne in a poor little mother. And note that the Blessed Virgin (the throne of the Son of God) is called a *pillar of a cloud*. She is called a pillar because she upholds our frailty, and she is called a cloud because she is free from sin.

*King Solomon also made a great throne of ivory: and overlaid it with the finest gold. It had six steps: and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were two hands on either side holding the seat: and two lions stood, one at each hand. And twelve little lions stood upon the six steps on the one side and on the other: there was no such work made in any kingdom* (III Kings 10:18). This throne was of ivory because the Blessed Mary was white in innocence and cool, without the heat of passion. In her were six steps, which are mentioned in the Gospel text (Lk. 1:20): *The Angel Gabriel was sent, etc.* The first step was modesty: *Who having heard, was troubled at his saying*. Whence: "In adolescence, modesty is to be commended; in youth, joyfulness; and in age, prudence." The second step is prudence; for she did not at once say yes or no, but she began to think. Whence: *She thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be*. The third step is modesty: *How shall this be done?* The fourth step is constancy in proposed good. Whence: *For I know not man*. The fifth step is humility: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*. The sixth step is obedience: *Be it done to me according to thy word*.



This throne was overlaid with the gold of poverty. O golden poverty of the glorious Virgin, in which she wrapped the Son of God in swathing bands and laid him in a manger! And "overlaid" is well said; for poverty overlays the soul with virtues, but riches despoils it. *And the top of the throne was round behind.* The "top" of the Blessed Mary was love. . . because of which she holds first place in eternal beauty. *And there were two hands on either side holding the seat.* The seat, that is the golden footstool, was the humility of Mary, which the two hands were holding, that is, the active life and the contemplative. For she was like Martha and Mary. She was like Martha going into Egypt and returning from there; she was like Mary when she kept all those words and pondered them in her heart. *And two lions stood, that is, Gabriel and John the Evangelist, or Joseph and John, one at each hand, Joseph at the active, John at the contemplative. And twelve little lions, that is, the twelve Apostles, bowing and paying reverence on the one side and on the other.* Truly, truly, *there was no such work made in any kingdom. . .*

Therefore we pray thee, Our Lady, loving Mother of God, in this the Nativity of thy Son, whom thou didst bring forth as a virgin, wrap in swathing bands, and lay in a manger, that thou beg of him forgiveness for us; and do thou heal, by the medicine of thy mercy, the wounds that the fire of our sins has burned in our souls; so that we may merit to arrive at the joy of the eternal festival where he who deigned to be born of a glorious Virgin ever presides. To whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## DUNS SCOTUS ON THE PREDESTINATION OF CHRIST

One of the doctrines dear to the Franciscan School is the Absolute Primacy of Christ. In substance it concerns the primary motive of the Incarnation. Negatively stated, it rejects redemption as the fundamental reason for Christ's coming. The glory of the redeemed souls cannot compare with the glory of Christ's human nature. Hence, their restoration to grace and glory cannot have been the primary reason why Christ's soul was created, assumed by the Word, supernaturalized by grace and glorified with the beatific vision from the first moment it existed. Positively stated, it proclaims that humanly speaking God first intended Christ as King and center of the universe. Only secondarily, so to speak, did God conceive Christ as redeemer of fallen man.

In its full development, the doctrine extends even further. It includes Mary His Mother, as the next most perfect of God's works, and is cited by its proponents as the fundamental reason for her Immaculate Conception. It broadens the notion of Christ's mediation and the meaning of His Mystical Body by making not only the redeemed, but also the angels and our first parents in their pristine innocence indebted to Him for this grace. It touches even the natural order, transforming the pagan notion of man as the microcosm in whom both the spiritual and material universe are combined. For it makes the human nature of Christ the *motif* the Divine Architect was to carry out in the rest of creation. In Christ's soul God saw mirrored the choirs of angels; after his body the visible world was sculptured. The whole universe is full of Christ.

Francis himself seems to have had some such notion in his mind when he wrote: "Consider, O man, how excellent the Lord made you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son *according to the body* and to His own likeness according to the spirit" (*Admonitions*, n. 5).

Historically, however, this doctrine is not limited to the Franciscan School, nor has every Franciscan embraced it. St. Bonaventure, we know, was such an exception, whereas outside the Order it found many a defender among theologians, saints and doctors of the Church. In fact as Pohle puts it: "If the question at issue had to be decided purely on the authority of the theologians, we should be unable to arrive at a unanimous decision, so evenly is authority balanced against authority" (Pohle-Preuss, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. V, p. 30).

Duns Scotus, perhaps, was its great champion. Not that he was the first to hold it, but he advanced the first compelling reason in its favor—an argument which, as one contemporary opponent puts it, "still remains to be solved, and in truth perhaps will never be solved in that which it simply asserts, namely that Christ is of such excellence that He cannot be decreed merely as a means, but must be decreed, if He is decreed at all, for His own sake" (Galtier, *De Incarnatione ac Redemptione*, Paris, 1926, p. 476).

This basic argument in Scotus is found in the question on the predestination of Christ in the third book of his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Since he lectured on the *Sentences* at both Oxford and Paris, we have more than one version of this question. Five such have been edited with critical notes by Father Balic, O.F.M. (*Ioannis Duns Scoti Doctoris Mariani Theologiae Marianae Elementa*, Sibenici, 1933). One of these represents the version he planned to incorporate in

his *Ordinatio* or the revision prepared for publication. It is this version of the question that we have translated in full.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Scotus was not primarily concerned with what God might have done in another order, for instance, if Adam had not sinned. He began with the actual order, with the fact of the Incarnation. For even though God in His liberty was not compelled to create Christ's human nature, or any creature, for that matter, *de facto* He did will the Incarnation, and having willed it, made the God-man the King of creation, the head of his Church. For to Him, if we may quote an eminent Thomist, as *finis*, all must be ordained, and to His great glory our Redemption redounds." (Billot, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 7 ed., p. 41). Scotus asks very pointedly; Does Christ's predestination to grace and glory, and consequently to His position as end of all creatures beneath Him, depend on the permission of sin? In short, is the universe sin-centric or Christ-centric? That for Scotus was the crux of the problem. Some theologians, it is true, believed that certain creatures were created only because God foresaw that others would sin. Scotus wanted no part of this opinion, for, he argued, in such a case one individual would have reason to rejoice in another's downfall, and no one should be thankful that another has sinned.

For the rest the argument is based on the idea of a reasonable and ordinate love. One who loves things inordinately disregards the intrinsic value of what he loves. He loves the means as an end and the end as a means. All this is incompatible with the wisdom of God. The supreme value, the end of all perfect love, is the infinitely lovable Godhead itself. Even a created will cannot find its full perfection or exhaust its capacity for love save by loving this first good. However, the love the three Divine Persons have for the infinitely lovable essence they share is not a jealous or selfish love. As Scotus puts it, following Richard of Saint Victor: "The perfect lover wishes the beloved to be loved." That is why God created angels and men. That too is why He will love first and foremost that creature that contributes the greatest love, that is closest to that end. As he puts it elsewhere: "Everyone who wills in a reasonable way first wills the end and secondly that which immediately attains the end, and thirdly other things which are more remotely ordered to the attainment of his end. And so it is that God who is most reasonable—not of course by different acts, but in one single act which may be said to tend in different ways to the different objects that are ordered in some way towards one another—first wills the end, and in this His act is perfect, and His intellect is perfect, and His will is happy. Secondly, He wills those things which are

immediately ordered to Him, predestining namely the elect who attain Him immediately, and this as it were by reflecting and willing others to love with Him the very object of His love. . . Hence, He first loves Himself ordinately and consequently not inordinately in an envious or jealous manner. Secondly, He wills to have other colovers, and this is nothing else than willing that others have His love in themselves and this is to predestine them, if He wishes them to have this good finally and eternally. Thirdly, however, he wills those things which are necessary to attain His end, namely the gift of grace. Fourthly, He wills for their sake other things which are more remote—for instance, this sensible world—in order that it may serve them, so that what is stated in the second book of [Aristotle's] *Physics* is true: 'Man is in some way the end of all sensible things,' for all sensible things are willed as it were in the fourth place, because of man being willed in the second place. Also that which is closer to the ultimate end is customarily said to be the end of those things which are more remote. Hence, man will be the end of the sensible world; whether it be because God wills the sensible world to be ordered to predestined man or whether it be because His more immediate concern is not that the sensible world exist, but rather that man love Him" (*Opus Oxoniense* III, d. 32, n. 6)

With this in mind let us read what Scotus has to say about the predestination of Christ.

(*Ordinatio*, Bk. III, Dist. 7, Question 3)

Was Christ predestined to be the Son of God?

*Negative view:*

Not as Son of God was He predestined to be the Son of God, for predestination must be prior to the event predestined, and there was no predestination prior to the existence of the Son of God. Neither is He predestined as man, for if as something one is predestined to be a certain kind of thing, then as such one is that kind of thing. Consequently, if as man He is predestined to be the Son of God, in so far as He is a man He is the Son of God, which is false.

*On the contrary:*

Rom. 1, 3-4: "[He who was born] of the seed of David. . . was predestinated the Son of God in power."

*I reply:*

Predestination consists in foreordaining someone first of all to glory and then to other things which are ordered to glory. Now the human nature in Christ was predestined to be glorified, and in order to be

glorified, it was predestined to be united to the Word, in as much as such glory as it was granted would never have been conferred on this nature had it not been so united. Now if it would not be fitting to ordain one to such glory if certain merits were absent, whereas it would be fitting if they were present, then such merits are included in the predestination. And so it would seem that this union by way of fitness is ordered to this glory, although it is not exactly as merit that it falls under this predestination. And just as it is foreordained that this nature be united to the Word, so is it predestined that the Word be man and that this man be the Word. The validity of these last two inferences may be established as we did [in the previous question where we proved that since the hypostatic union did not always exist, it is correct to say both that "God became man" and "And man became God"].

But you may object that primarily predestination regards the person, and hence one must first find some person to whom God predestined (1) the glory and then (2) this union with reference to the glory. Now you will find no divine Person to whom God predestined this union [as a means of glory]. Obviously He did not do so to the Word in so far as He is the Word. Neither was this union predestined as a means of glory to the Word as subsisting in a human nature, because to the extent that He subsists in this way, the union is already included.

I reply: we can deny that predestination concerns persons only, for if God can love a good other than Himself, not only when it is a person but also when it is a nature, then for its sake He can also select and ordain in advance some good suitable to it. Consequently, He can choose (1) glory and (2) the union as a means of glory, not only for a person, but also for some nature. It is true, however, that in all cases other than this, predestination does concern the person, for in no other instance has God foreordained a good to a [human] nature without by that very fact foreordaining it also to some person, for the simple reason that no other human nature subsists save in a created person to whom the good can be foreordained. But in our case this is not so.

At this point, however, two doubts arise. *First*, does this predestination depend necessarily upon the fall of human nature? Many authorities seem to say as much when they declare the Son of God would never have become incarnate had man not fallen.

Without passing judgment it can be said that so far as priority of the objects intended by God is concerned, the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of the sin or damnation of anyone (according to the final opinion given in distinction forty-one of

the first book). So much the more then is this true of the predestination of that soul which was destined beforehand to possess the very highest glory possible. For it seems to be universally true that one who wills ordinally, and not inordinately, first intends what is nearer the end, and just as He first intends one to have glory before grace, so among those to whom he has foreordained glory, He who wills ordinally, would seem to intend first the glory of the one He wishes to be nearest the end, and therefore He intends glory to this soul [of Christ] before He wills glory to any other soul, and to every other soul He wills glory before taking into account the opposite of these habits [namely, the sin or damnation of anyone].

Authorities to the contrary can all be explained in the sense that Christ would not have come as a redeemer, if man had not sinned. Perhaps, too, He would not have been able to suffer, since there would have been no need of a union with a passible body for this soul glorified from its first moment of existence, to which God chose to give not only the highest glory but also willed that it be always present. If man had not sinned, of course, there would have been no need of a redemption. Still it does not seem to be solely because of the redemption that God predestined this soul to such glory, since the redemption or the glory of the souls to be redeemed is not comparable to the glory of the soul of Christ. Neither is it likely that the highest good in the whole of creation is something that merely chanced to take place, and that only because of some lesser good. Nor is it probable that God predestined Adam to such a good before He predestined Christ. Yet all of this would follow, yes, and even something more absurd. If the predestination of Christ's soul was for the sole purpose of redeeming others, it would follow that in foreordaining Adam to glory, God would have had to foresee him as having fallen into sin before He could have predestined Christ to glory.

Consequently, we can say that God selected for His heavenly choir all the angels and men He wished to have with their varied degrees of perfection, and all this before considering either the sin or the punishment of the sinner. No one therefore is predestined simply because God foresaw another would fall, lest anyone have reason to rejoice at the misfortune of another.

Our *second doubt* is this. Which did God intend first, the union of this nature with the Word, or its ordination to glory? Now the sequence in which the creative artist evolves his plan is the very opposite of the way he puts it into execution. One can say, however, that in the order of execution, God's union with a human nature is naturally prior to His

granting it the greatest grace and glory. We could presume, then, that it was in the reverse order that He intended them, so that God would first intend that some nature, not the highest, should receive the highest glory, proving thereby He was not constrained to grant glory in the same measure as He bestowed natural perfection. Then secondly, as it were, He willed that this nature should subsist in the Person of the Word, so that the angel might not be subject to a [mere] man.

As for the argument [for the negative view], one could concede that He is predestined to be the Son of God 'as man' to the extent that 'as' designates the formal aspect under which the predicate is affirmed of Him in a restricted sense. For formally speaking, this Man is God, and the predestination to be God precedes this Man, i.e. the Person *as existing in a human nature*. And in consequence of this predestination, this Man becomes God. But if you understand the word 'as' properly as indicating reduplication, so that it expresses the precise reason why the predicate is true of the subject, then it is not correct to say 'As man, He is God' because it is not by reason of His humanity that He is God.

Another way the argument could be solved would be to distinguish the major where it states: 'If as something one is predestined to be God, then as such one is God.' For 'as something' can qualify either the act of predestination or its term. In the first case the meaning would be: 'If one is predestined as a man, he is thereby God,' in which case the major is false whereas the minor [*vis.* 'As man He is predestined to be the Son of God'] is true. In the second case the meaning would be: 'As the Man who is God, as such He is God,' in which case the major is true but the minor [*viz.* 'In so far as He is a man, He is the Son of God'] is false.

Or we can say, thirdly—and this perhaps is the real answer—neither as man nor as God is He predestined to be the Son of God. For that which is predestined to be the Son of God, includes two elements, one of which implies temporality in the terms, namely 'to be predestined;' whereas the other implies that the same term is eternal, namely, that this thing which exists as Son of God. One and the same thing, however, cannot be the basis for both characteristics in the term. For even though two things concur in the term, one temporal which can be the terminus of predestination, the other eternal by reason of which 'to be the Son of God' can be predicated of it, still both do not pertain to the term by reason of the same nature. To speak properly, therefore, from the standpoint of logic, neither as man, nor as God or Son of God is He predestined to be God or Son of God.

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

## THE THIRD JOY—THE NATIVITY

*And this shall be a sign to you:  
you will find an infant wrapped  
in swaddling clothes and lying in  
a Manger. [Luke 2:12]*

Of all the feasts in the splendor of the liturgy, surely Christmas draws the Franciscan heart. It was the joy of our holy Father Francis, it remains the joy of his sons and daughters. Well do we remember in our Lady's third Joy that it was Saint Francis—the least of the lesser brethren—who gave us the creche, the little manger, as a memorial of his tender and brotherly devotion to the Babe of Bethlehem. It remains for us to find the key to the importance of the Nativity in our Franciscan lives.

Saint Bonaventure, ever faithful to the mind of our holy Father, stresses with great and recurring phrases the importance of Christmas to us. And yet Saint Bonaventure realized that we were to approach the Crib not with thoughts of profound sentiment, but with sentiments of profound thought. The Seraphic Doctor knew, as did Francis, that in the manger lay the model for all those who would truly be among the little ones of Christ—the lesser brethren—the *Fratres Minores*!

Littleness is generally something to be spurned—for in itself it implies a certain weakness—a certain, if we may say, emptiness to the world. And yet, littleness is so indicative of our lives as Franciscans, that it can never escape our deepest reflection. Indeed, it would seem that if we are to characterize Franciscan life, our characterization can be contained in this one word. We may, then, seek to understand this virtue—and it is a virtue—of Franciscan piety. In our quest for its significance we can find no better guide than the learned, yet lowly Bonaventure; a man, who when presented with the cardinal's hat, continued with the routine monastic occupation of washing dishes!

Saint Bonaventure's unfolding of the deep significance lying behind the Christmas story is indeed very interesting for the eye that can make comparisons. His first counsel to us is that we *will find an Infant*, and that this Infant is the reward of all who seek purity. Next, we will find this Infant *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, and thus he will be the model of our poverty. Lastly we will find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and *lying in a manger, the bed of humility*.<sup>1</sup> Following the Seraphic Doctor, then, we may seek in these three virtues the roots of Franciscan littleness.

## I

The appearance of Christ in this world *in the form of man* is fraught with great significance. It was in taking our humanity that he truly became *Emmanuel—God with us!* We need not be theologians to know that there was no necessity for Christ to come to us in human form. And yet out of the wonderful harmony that sings the story of creation and revelation there is a unique and wonderful consolation in the fact that the *Son of God willed to be born*. The Mass recalls the import of this, for God not only “in a wonderful manner didst create and ennoble human nature,” but “still more wonderfully hast renewed it!”

In becoming a “partaker of our humanity,” our dear Lord came to tell us that the flame of purity had not been extinguished on this earth. Indeed not, for as the beautiful symbol of Christmas—the candle—imparts, the God-Man was to burn out in testimony to all that is pure and beautiful in this world, and in the next.

If the world has given appearances of losing its sense of values in regard to holy purity, it nonetheless, and pray God that it may always be, has not lost its innate ability to equate infancy with innocence. And in coming to us as a child, it would seem that the Son of God emphasized in a most succinct way that the path to purity and innocence is in littleness. Perhaps that is why the shepherds were the first called to adore him. And even in garb the shepherds resemble true friars. The more we reflect on this the more we might surmise that our holy Father received much of his inspiration in founding the Order from these humble men who sat on the Judean hills, *living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night*. It was their simplicity, their purity—not only in body, but in mind and speech as well—that made them worthy recipients of the angelic tidings: *I bring you news of great joy*. He who had come as a Babe willed that the purity of his littleness be seen first by these little men from the hillside.

May God give us the grace to become as shepherds this Christmas day. Immediately after the shepherds' visit, we are told by Saint Luke *Mary kept in mind all these things, pondering them in her heart*. May we ponder with her in this third Joy, ever to be loyal to the garb we wear. May it not only profess to the world, but *convince* the world that the ideal of purity is to be found in true littleness; a littleness which retires from the world, and, today, finds an Infant. In finding the Infant may we ourselves be blessed by the consolation that our littleness, modeled on his purity, will one day be repaid when we take up the refrain of

*the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest!”*

## II

Having found the Infant, let us, with Saint Bonaventure, attend to the fact that he is *wrapped in swaddling clothes*. Here we will find that Jesus came to us poor. The world does not care too much for poverty. Those countries which still thrive on their peasantry are regarded as ignorant and impotent. The simple dole to the beggar has been replaced by the complete dossier of the social agency. The poverty of a Francis, who so embraced it as to glory in the name *Poverello*, is thought slothful if not stupid.

True, there is a distinction between physical and spiritual poverty. Yet may we never forget, even if none of us is brave enough to practice it, that there is a close relationship of the physical to the spiritual. It will ever remain true that it is considerably easier to practice spiritual poverty if one is already physically poor than the contrary.

The third Joy leads to the fourth—the Adoration of the Magi, and there we behold that he who comes to us on Christmas morn is truly a King: *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* Strange again, how the world upsets the balance established by its Creator. Christ's kingship was built on poverty, whereas the world's kingdoms are based on wealth.

Yet no heart can truly be said to beat with Franciscan pulse if it is empty of poverty, or unless poverty has emptied it. True, existence in modern society has demanded certain conformities of our way of life to the world's. Yet it would be the utmost folly to imagine that our superiors ever intended to extend this conformity to an absorption of the world's spirit.

We have found the Infant, and we found him wrapped in swaddling clothes, but in the depths of our hearts let us trace that the poverty of the crib is to be concluded by the poverty of the cross. It is impossible to find in the course of our Lord's life any attachment to person, thing, or place. This is utter poverty, and it is fed on detachment. It is the mark of the lesser brethren of Assisi that they are detached completely from the great things of this world. Saint Francis has been called a great romanticist, which he was. But the romance that he lived was an espousal to the Lady Poverty. Thus it was, with an emptied heart, he could find his romance in the beauties of creation.

There is no better guide to our taking an unsung place in this life than poverty. In it we can glory in the fact that we will be truly little.

Little in the eyes of the world, great in the eyes of him who is born today in our hearts of him who was *by no means least among the princes of Juda*, although found as an *Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes*.

## III

Lastly, the Seraphic Doctor would have us consider the fact that the Infant was *lying in a manger*. He sees here an indication of the humility in which Christ came as our Saviour. Saint Paul in his glorious Letter to the Philippians first made the great connection between the wood of the manger and the wood of the cross. There he tells us that in coming to us Christ *humbled himself*, but then he adds *becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross*.

For us, who approach the altar on Christmas morn, there is a great deal to keep in mind as regards humility. We are to receive the same Flesh and Blood, now glorious, that first appeared on this earth in the most royal clothing of humility. The great effect of the Holy Eucharist is that it makes us Christ-like. Properly disposed, then, on Christmas morn, we may be prepared to receive within us the humility of Christ.

Humility takes its place with poverty and purity as the last great virtue of littleness. It, too, implies the readiness and willingness to empty oneself, *taking the nature of a slave*.

The humble Franciscan is in reality a truly noble person. He is one who, in the words of the Virgin Mother of God realizes that all that he has—every breath that he takes—is a testimony that he who is mighty has done great things for him. In a word, the humble man is the one who is awed by the simplest wonder of God's creation, and the wonderful simplicity and unity of his revelation. He knows, with unquestionable certainty, that the lowly are to be exalted, and in every difficulty places his consternation or confusion in this knowledge.

After mentioning the humility of Christ in coming to us, the great Saint Paul immediately mentions his obedience. If we look more deeply we can see much meaning in this. In our own lives as religious we are never called more to shine forth with humility than when we are asked to obey. So with God's mother, for the humility of her *Magnificat* is the fulfillment of her *Fiat*!

Humility is so closely aligned with Franciscan littleness that it is quite impossible to conceive of how one could truly claim for himself the title of a follower of Francis, unless he were first filled with it.

At the crib may we learn how to truly humble ourselves, so that every obedience we perform for the rest of our days as Friars Minor may take us more and more away from ourselves and draw us nearer and nearer to the humble scene of the manger.

## IV

When Saint Francis fashioned the first crib, he did so with a purpose. May our meditation on the third of our Lady's Joys impress that purpose deeply in our minds. Amidst all the tinsel and trim of Christmas in this twentieth century, may we return with heartfelt gratitude and love to the sacredness and silence of the first Christmas.

Standing beside the crib, may we be worthy to look in and pray to the Virgin we behold beside the sleeping Babe:

O beautiful Mother of God, the angels have led us here, even as they are to gather with us around the altar tonight. We are called the lesser brethren of your adorable Son—this Child. May we ever be worthy of our name!

Grant us, O Virgin most Pure, to know and to love the Purity that we behold here before our eyes. Let us *be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power*. We were *once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord*. May the Light of holy Purity shine forth from our souls and reflect in this crib.

Inspire us, our Lady Poverty, to walk through this vale of tears unmindful of the vanities of this world. Be it ever enough for us *to announce. . . the good tidings of the unfathomable riches of Christ*.

Unfold to us, dear Mother of God, the beauty of *serving the Lord with all humility*, thus bearing all that we are called upon to do with "the charity of God and the patience of Christ."

In a word, our mother Mary, make us small enough to find room in this Crib and *be at peace, and the God of peace and love* with us.

Fr William J. Manning, T.O.F.

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Lucam, ch. II, vv. 1-7, *Opera Omnia*, Tom. VII, pp. 44-47).

*Now it came to pass in those days, that there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This first census took place while Cyrinus was governor of Syria. And all were going, each to his own town, to register. And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem—because he was of the house and family of David—to register, together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass*

while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:1-7).

In his beautiful treatise on the Nativity of Christ, Saint Bonaventure develops three topics as described by the Evangelist: the *due time*, the *suitable place*, and the actual *birth from the Virgin*. First, the occasion was timely because it was so determined by God. Admittedly, we cannot fully fathom the arrangement of His Providence: *Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways* (Rom. 11:33). And yet it is hardly presumptuous to detect the divine design giving pattern, purpose, and destiny to human—albeit regal—resolutions. No doubt the whole Roman world respected the edict of Octavian: *There went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken* (v. 1). If so, how much more should all subsequent mankind stand in awe of the divine decree which chose this occasion as the *due time* for promulgating the celestial census. Indeed, the Birth of Christ indicated the opening of the eternal Book of Life, containing the names of all the elect. Because, as Gregory said (*I Bk. Homil.*: Hom. 8, n. 1), "He has come in the Flesh Who willed to enroll His elect in eternity." Augustus could but decree for a part of the world and but for a short time; whereas the Omnipotent God has determined a universal census for all time: *But in the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed* (Dan. 2:44). And the Psalmist declares: *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein* (Ps. 23: 1).

Further, God timed the Nativity with the very beginning of the listing of Roman subjects: *The first census took place while Cyrenus was governor of Syria* (v. 2). It would seem that, at the very outset of the registering, God willed to center all eyes upon His divine Son Incarnate. But, unlike the tyrant's tax to be exacted from all listed, God expected the tribute of a living Faith in His Divine Son—the Incarnate Word—and all that He taught. And the all-just God permitted the orderly carrying out of the imperial edict: *And*

*all were going, each to his own town, to register* (v. 3). Still, subservient to His plan, earthly authority must be given its just due: *Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Matt. 22:21).

Secondly, we notice the *suitable place*, chosen by God, for the birth of the Christ Child. From the *name* itself, 'Bethlehem' was most fitting. Indeed what could be more proper than that the 'Bread of Angels' should come forth in human form upon this earth: *I am the bread that has come down from heaven* (Jn. 6: 41). And yet His Birth at Bethlehem is even more meaningful: *And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall come forth unto me (He) that is to be the ruler in Israel* (Micah 5: 2). Truly, Bethlehem was designated by God as the birth-place of the Messiah. And though born here as prophesied, Christ was reared elsewhere. Why? Simply to hide the mystery of the Incarnation from Herod and other wicked men of perverse will. How well this worked is clear from the later dilemma of the befuddled Pharisees: *Can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that it is of the offspring of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, that the Christ is to come* (Jn. 7: 42)? But Joseph and Mary did not go wrong. For, recognizing the will of God in the human ruler's command, they simply obeyed: *And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem—because he was of the house and family of David—to register, together with Mary his espoused wife* (v. 4). Thus the promise to David was also fulfilled: *The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne* (Ps. 131: 11).

Now the Gospel adds a significant clause about the condition of Mary: *who was with child* (v. 5). Saint Bonaventure remarks that, although the Virgin had already conceived the King of heaven and earth, even in her pregnancy she willed to obey the command, so that she could say with her Son: *For so it becomes us to fulfill all justice* (Matt. 3: 15). In this she followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit: *Be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governor. . . For such is the will of God* (Pet. 2: 14). In this way the human command served the divine de-



sign; for God made use of the edict to send His Son, born at Bethlehem, to found the Kingdom of God on earth. Like an afterthought, the Seraphic Doctor appends a moral to the story of the obedience of Mary and Joseph, saying: "And therefore we should never despise, in any way, the mandate of those placed over us."

Finally, after the circumstances of the *time* and *place* of the Nativity, Saint Bonaventure describes the *very birth of Christ*. His description details three points. First, His Nativity was *opportune*: *And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled* (v. 6). With Mary, as in the case of her cousin, God here worked according to His created nature: *Now Elizabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son* (Luke I: 57). But, more than merely natural, this was the opportune time when a higher fulfillment took place: *When the fulness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman* (Galat. 4: 4). Secondly, the Seraphic Doctor notes the *newness* of His Birth, like One born of Nobility. Indeed, Mary had *brought forth her firstborn son* (v. 7). For He was 'firstborn' in the sense that she had had no other child before Him. Yet, as Saint Jerome tells us, this did not mean she would have any after Him. In point of historical fact, she did not. More positively, her giving birth to the only-begotten Son of God attributes Motherhood to Mary, the correlative—humanly speaking—to the Father of the Eternal Word: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature* (Coloss. I: 15). And, by analogy, this Birth from the Virgin is likened to His all-Pure, eternal Sonship of His Father. More than that: since Mary gave birth without pain or sorrow, she shared the joy of the Father in the eternal Filiation of His Beloved Son. But, beyond all this, the newly, only-begotten Son of Mary was a Priest by divine pre-ordination, and not as the Levites of the Old Testament. In very truth, her Christ Jesus is the eternal High-Priest: *The Lord said to my Lord: . . . from the womb before the day star I begot thee. The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever* (Ps. 109: 3f). Contemplating this eternal Mystery of God, Whose Divine Son now assumes human flesh, Saint John cries out as if awe-inspired: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory—glory as of the only begotten of the Father—*

*full of grace and of truth* (Jn. 1: 14). To which Saint Paul adds: *For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners* (Heb. 7: 26).

Thirdly, Saint Bonaventure concludes with the verse: *Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn* (v. 7). Commenting on this, how fitting that the Seraphic son of Saint Francis—the herald of the poor Christ—should pick out *poverty* as the main feature of the birth of Christ! The Infant Jesus was *poorly clad*: for *Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes* (v. 7). And, as if fearful we should not know our God, so poverty-stricken, Saint Bernard cries out: "Recognize Jesus, the High Priest, clothed with sordid vestments while he does battle with the devil!" Our Lord has thus exemplified for us the fitness of poor clothing for our earthly warfare with Satan. And, to the point, the Preacher has voiced the warning: *Glory not in apparel at any time* (Eccl. 11:4). And Christ remarked the unsuitableness of finery for his followers: *Behold, those who wear soft garments are in the houses of kings* (Matt 11: 8).

Next, the poorly-born Christ had *no fit resting place*: *Mary laid him in a manger* (v. 7). And, lest we forget His pitiful poverty. Christ reminds us: *The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head* (Matt. 8: 20). Dear Brothers in Christ, let us never complain; but rather may we ever experience perfect joy when Lady Poverty requests us to be like the Infant Saviour in poor clothing or place of rest. Lastly, the Infant Jesus had *no proper home*: *because there was no room for them in the inn* (v. 7). Homeless and born in a manger, Christ could claim the words of the Psalmist as His own: *I am become as a beast before thee* (Ps. 72:23) And yet He could confidently conclude: *and I am always with thee* (Ibid.). Here He offers us consolation, as if sharing His own lot, that whatever the poverty, meanness, or uncertainty of our dwelling, God will remain with us if we keep the spirit of Lady Poverty. Faithful to our vow, we now give our Infant Saviour a home prepared by Himself. As Saint Augustine says: "There was nothing for Him except a poor place on earth, so that you might open wide a fit dwelling for Him—the home of your heart." The proper preparation of our hearts on His Birthday is by poverty of

spirit. In its sublime significance, this poverty means the admission of our own nothingness and the entire emptying out of self. We are nothing: *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself* (Gal. 6:3). Likewise we can do nothing: *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn. 15:6). *How necessary* for us, then, to open up to Him the home of our poverty-stricken souls! Paradoxically, we stand to be the gainers: *For you know the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, how, being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich* (II Cor. 8:9). Receiving Him with Mary, we can breathe the words of Saint Francis, pregnant with meaning: "My God my All!"

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### BOOK REVIEWS

**THE PIERCED HEART: THE LIFE OF MOTHER MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA.** Francis A. Cegielka, S.A.C., S.T.D. Milwaukee: Catholic Life Publications, Bruce Press, 1955. Pp. 76, \$2.50.

The life of the saintly Mother Foundress of the Felician Sisters makes timely reading. It is the story of a heroic, self-sacrificing soul, called to do great things at the cost of great suffering. Living in troubled nineteenth-century Poland (she was born in 1825 and died in 1899), Sophia Truszkowska struggled against hostile governments and the prejudice of her own people to establish the first active congregation of women in her native country. Her extraordinary interior life, a beautifully balanced combination of action and contemplation, may well serve as an inspiration to many religious of today who are trying to harmonize their prayer life with an overwhelming press of active duties.

The work accomplished by the Congregation within the hundred years of its founding is a glorious tribute to the ideals of the saintly Mother Angela.

S.M.F.

**FATHER PAUL: APOSTLE OF UNITY.** Titus Cranny, S.A. Peekskill, New York: Graymoor Press, 1955. Pp. 93.

This is the first book-length biography of the famous Anglican convert, Father Paul James Francis Watson, Founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement and zealous apostle of Christian Unity. Father Titus has written well of his beloved spiritual father, tracing his "unity" vocation from childhood—when the elder Watson was dismissed from the General Theological Seminary in New York City as a "Jesuit in disguise"—to his reception into the Roman Communion in 1909. His work is too well known to require comment here. Suffice to remark that Father Titus has given us

an interesting and well-rounded picture of him as a man, and a fairly complete account of his efforts to promote Unity. It is to be hoped that a larger, more detailed life of the saintly convert will soon be forthcoming. Certainly the times are most propitious for promoting unity among Christians. If nothing else, the life of Father Paul should arouse Catholics to focus their attention on the problems involved, and to follow his example of prayer and sacrifice for that great intention.

S.M.F.

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN ASSISI.** Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache. Translated and Adapted by Sr. M. Clarissa, O.S.F. Herald Press, 1955. Pp. 115. \$1.50.

Here is a lovely little book about Saint Francis written for children of the middle elementary level. It is a work of genuine love, being a reply by Mme. Ancelet-Hustache, the noted French scholar and lover of things Franciscan, to a request of her God-children to tell them about their patron saints, Francis and Clare of Assisi. The book is precisely that: a combination narrative-dialog in which the author and other characters tell little Francis and Clare Matthews about their patrons and introduce them to the life of the Friars and the Poor Clares as it is lived today. The manner of presentation is both lively and instructive, the translation very well done.

The book is attractively printed and has the additional charm of Cassegrain's delightfully simple and humorous drawings.

S.M.F.

### NOTICE:

The proceedings of the first National Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhood will be available at the Indianapolis Convention and also through The Franciscan Institute

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Pp. 193

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