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**the  
CORD**

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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# THE CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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MONTHLY CONFERENCE

## A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

PSALMS 120 AND 124

Imagine the appearance of Jerusalem when the Temple still stood on Mount Sion. Along the slopes of the mountain buddle many of the city's homes and buildings. Others of them climb the sides of Mount Moriah, lying to the west, across the Tyropoeon Valley, which bisects the city from northwest to southeast. Beyond Moriah the mountains rear up like sentinels of the city. Jerusalem is guarded on the south by the Mount of Evil Counsel and mountains which dwindle away, one after another, to the Judean desert in the distance. The Valley of Cedron runs between Mount Sion and the mountains which border it on the east, the Mount of Offense, the Mount of Olives, the Mount Scopus. The circle is closed by the mountainous range which heaves its way north from Jerusalem to the faraway peaks of Lebanon.

These are the physical details of the panorama that a man sees

who, after passing from the courts of the Temple, pauses and gazes all around him. There before him lies Jerusalem, the city which the Lord loves, "his foundation upon the holy mountains" (Psalm 86:1). And on every side loom the mountains that enclose and protect it. Let such a man be as imaginative as he is pious, and he will see immediately that the natural scene perfectly symbolizes spiritual realities. If he should write a poem, it would, most likely, begin thus: *They who trust in the Lord are like Mount Sion,*

*which is immovable; which forever stands.*

*Mountains are round about Jerusalem;*

*so the Lord is round about his people,*

*both now and forever.*

These words are actually the two opening verses of Psalm 124, one of several Pilgrim Songs in which reference is made to the mountainous terrain of the Holy City. The references are indirect

in Psalms 121, 127, 131, 133; they are direct in Psalms 120, 124, 132. By this distinction I mean to suggest that references of the latter type are related to the very origin of the poems in which they are found. Psalm 132 does not appear in the Little Office; Psalm 120 is the second Psalm at Terce, and Psalm 124 is the third Psalm at Sext. It is these two Psalms that I shall consider in this conference, beginning, rather arbitrarily, with the second one.

In relation to the first verse of Psalm 124 I have already suggested that there is more in the poem of the poet who wrote it than we might suspect from a cursory reading of it. The very structure of the poem helps to acquaint you with the poet. What, for example, is the significance of the fact that the Psalm has just three strophes? Well, they certainly serve to reveal that the speaker is a man of firm and unshakable convictions; that he is sustained by these to bear manfully the most discouraging circumstances; that he is likewise strengthened by them to pray confidently to God for relief. And why should each strophe have just two ideas? Each of these complements the other, and thus a balance, a harmony, is achieved that reflects the peace of the speaker's soul.

The sense of the first strophe, as I have observed, reveals the piety and the imagination of the poet. This is evident in the figurative way in which he expresses

his conviction. Just as Mount Sion, though solidly rooted and immovable, nevertheless depends for safety and protection upon the mountains around it, so the confidence of God's people must be grounded in him and protected by him. There is an additional aptness about the poet's choice of similes because of the emphasis he lays upon the permanence of both confidence and providence. This is the characteristic, in fact, which binds the two verses of the strophe together. As long as Mount Sion stands immovable, so shall true confidence and God's providence endure "both now and forever."

The intense faith of the first strophe is in the second strophe confronted with contemporary facts. It is evident from the poet's words that Jerusalem is under foreign domination; it is even more evident that he expects this domination to be broken. The strophe opens with an eloquent expression of the victory of faith over fact:

*For the scepter of the wicked shall not remain*

*upon the territory of the just.*

The lines certainly imply that not only the capital but the entire land is under alien rule. Most likely the poet is describing the period after the exile when the country was still subject to Persia. There are actually linguistic forms in the Hebrew original that suggest this era. And the remaining

words of the strophe could be a reference to the dangerous times under Nehemias.

We have already learned about these times in our consideration of Psalm 84. They were surely discouraging enough to tempt even the just to "put forth to wickedness their hands." And what would be the wickedness? To give up the law, to accept the ways of their neighbors, to grasp at any compromise which, however much it might damage their souls, would spare their bodies, their goods, and their lives. In the mind of the poet it is a tribute to the kindness and fidelity of the Lord that he will surely break the power of the wicked over the land of the just

*Lest the just put forth  
to wickedness their hands.*

You have probably noticed a subtle contrast between the first and the second strophe. In the first the poet fixes his attention on the similarity between things stable and enduring. In the second he stresses the antithesis between the just and the wicked. He states it twice, in fact, once in each of the distiches that make up the single verse that is the strophe. This emphasis on the two classes of men flows over into the third strophe and shapes it into a twofold prayer. The strophe must be twofold to round out the poet's concern with the just and the wicked. It must be prayer to complement and to climax the confidence which has been building up in the preceding strophes.

The prayer begs God to reward the just and to punish the wicked. *Do good, O Lord, to the good and to the upright of heart.*

*But such as turn aside to crooked ways*

*May the Lord lead away with all evildoers.*

Although the petitions are quite different from each other, they do have something in common. The poet prays that God will reward or punish in a way that will be fitting recompense for each man's conduct. "The good . . . the upright of heart" are merely two designations for the man

*who follows not  
the counsel of the wicked  
Nor walks in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the company of the  
insolent,*

*But delights in the law of the Lord  
and meditates on his law day and  
night.*

(Psalm 1: 1-2)

To such a man the poet confidently prays that God may do good.

*Not so wicked, not so;*

*they are like chaff which the  
wind drives away.*

*Therefore in judgment the wicked  
shall not stand,*

*nor shall sinners, in the assembly  
of the just.*

*For the Lord watches over the  
way of the just,  
but the way of the wicked  
vanishes.*

(Psalm 1: 4-6)

You ought to watch a poet closely every minute you are with



him. I give you that advice here because the composer of Psalm 124 seems to be doing more in the last verse of his poem than you may give him credit for. Obviously he is praying that the Lord may punish the wicked. But do you catch the warning to the just mentioned in verse three of the condign penalty they will suffer if "they put forth to wickedness their hands"? If they "turn aside to crooked ways"? They become the very ones whom the Lord will lead away with the evildoers."

Their way like "the way of the wicked vanishes. The poet closes his poem, do you see, with a verse that stands in sharpest contrast to the verses with which he opened it. The whole poem, therefore, becomes a contrast between goodness that stands, sure and immovable, now and forever, and the wickedness that disappears, in God's time, "like chaff which the wind drives away."

Actually, the sense and the structure of Psalm 124 are completed by the words of the fifth verse, which we have been considering. But the poem does not close with these words. It has one more line:

*Peace be upon Israel!*

But words are not so isolated and detached as I may seem to have implied. They express a wish that is a logical corollary of what the poet has said and prayed for. With tyranny overthrown, the wicked punished and the good rewarded, then, surely, will come security.

peace, prosperity, and happiness. And all these material blessings, to an Israelite, spelled peace.

The words, too, are an ardent ejaculation with which the poet ends his prayer. How he happened to choose them need not be a complete mystery. His poem, I have suggested, was occasioned by the panorama of Mount Zion and its environs. What he saw before him in the soft morning light was enhanced and transused by his recollection of what he has just seen, heard, and felt in the Temple behind him. The fresh and moving memory of his joy when the lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering in the name of the whole people of Israel. And of the offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the wheat flour, sprinkled with oil and wine. And of the smell of the incense, sharp and fragrant on the altar of the Holy Place. And of the sound of music played by the Levites as the worshippers sang the sacred songs of Israel. And of the priests, his vesture resplendent in the morning sun, pronouncing Aaron's blessing over the bowed and silent people:

*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;*

*The Lord smile on thee, and be merciful to thee;*

*The Lord turn his regard towards thee, and give thee peace.*

It is this blessing, I think, which echoes in the words with which the poet closes his prayer and completes his Psalm:

*Peace be upon Israel!*

You might say that Psalm 124, therefore, springs from and records the experience of a pilgrim who has reached his goal. This characteristic of it—not to mention its suitability as a prayer for Jerusalem and Israel—could explain why eventually it was included among the Pilgrim Songs I mentioned at the outset, Psalm 120.

The Psalm is the song of a pilgrim still making his way to the Temple. This inference is justified by an imaginative reading of the words with which the poem opens: *I lift up my eyes toward the mountains.*

Why does the announcement seem sudden and abrupt? The caravan has finally reached the spot from which the Judean hills can first be seen. Long, flat stretches of land grow gently to verdant hills in the distance. Behind these, hazily seen against the sky, mountains erupt into the range that sprawls northward from Beersheba to Dan. Imagine the emotions of a pilgrim gazing on the scene. So much of the journey safely behind him now, the burning desert, the thirst and the fatigue, the fear of unknown dangers. At last the mountains are in sight. And among them, Sion, "the mountain God has chosen for his throne, where the Lord himself will dwell forever" (Psalm 67:17).

Even when while peering joyously into the distance, he is reminded that these very mountains which surround his goal are

stern obstacles to the easy attainment of it. So the question rises: *Whence shall help come to me?*

The answer is no mystery. Mount Zion, "where the Lord himself will dwell forever," is both the goal of his pilgrimage and the source whence his help shall come to complete it. This conviction prompts the closing words of the strophe:

*My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

In the first strophe the poet seems to be talking to himself. But the wishes expressed in the second strophe, for instance, and the sustained use of the pronoun "you" in strophes two, three, and four are evidence that these strophes are addressed to another. In the light of that fact you can wonder whether strophe one is truly a soliloquy or an utterance for others to hear of the poet's own thoughts and feelings. If he has in mind to compose a Pilgrim Song, then the poet, I surmise, would have designed his poem to be, in the opening strophe, a statement to be heard by others and, in the remaining strophes, a statement directly addressed to them.

All this may strike you as inconsequential, but it is necessary, I think, for an appreciation of the poem. Just as it is helpful to know that commentators believe that Psalm 120 eventually became a choral song. The leader would strike up the song and probably sing the first two verses as a solo.



His companions would respond by singing the third verse in chorus. The leader would then sing the fourth verse; the choir, the fifth; and the alternation would go on until the Psalm was over. The alternation is not, either, simply that. Every one of the verses sung by the leader actually reinforces, illustrates, or expands the idea contained in the verse previously sung by the chorus.

This relationship among the verses, which helps to unify the poem, can be demonstrated by an analysis of them. The words of the third verse—

*May he not suffer your foot to slip;*

*May he slumber not who guards you—*

are clearly occasioned by the singer's words in the first strophe. His companions wish that he may experience God's help in precise, specific ways suggested by the circumstances of the journey. By day, as the pilgrims climb along over the rocky roads, the supreme danger is a sudden slip, a fall, and the serious injury that results; by night, while the pilgrims slumber, it is the sleepiness of tired guards that leaves them unprotected against marauders. The singer, in turn, reiterates his confidence in God's providence. And he does so by catching up the word "slumber" and using it as a link between their wishes and his reply. *Indeed, he neither slumbers nor sleeps.*

*the guardian of Israel.*

You should notice, too, that there has been an advance in the description of the relationship between God and the pilgrims. The "Lord, who made heaven and earth," of the first strophe has become "the guardian of Israel" in the second strophe. The use of this title implies that the special grounds the pilgrims have for reliance upon God's protection is their descent from Jacob, to whom God promised, "I myself will watch over thee wherever thou goest" (Genesis 28:15).

When we read the first verse of the third strophe we see the repetition of God's special title as the link between it and the preceding strophe:

*The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your shade;*

*he is beside you at your right hand.*

Notice, too, that the wishes have become strong, positive statements of fact. There is a resemblance, nevertheless, between verse five and verse three: the imagery is still being drawn from the circumstances of the pilgrimage. The help of God will be as refreshing as the welcome pauses which the pilgrims make in the shade of the trees that border the rivulets at which they slake their thirst. His help will be as dependable as the support of the companion at his right side on whom a weary pilgrim leans so heavily for support. When the singer replies, the like-

wise, calls upon their common experiences for the imagery of his statement. The intensity of the sun's heat by day was the source, perhaps, of the greatest discomfort the pilgrims felt. They had a fear, too, of the bright light of the moon, which they considered the cause of several diseases. Verse six is an assurance of their rescue from these circumstances:

*The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*

You have to notice, too, that this verse has a kind of finality about it. Sun and moon, day and night, and all the dangers either brings, against all these perils of their journey the pilgrims will be protected by "the guardian of Israel."

As you read the fourth strophe of the Psalm, you discover almost immediately that the speaker's thoughts have gone beyond the circumstances of the particular journey that occasioned his poem. The notion still persists of God as "the guardian of Israel," and this notion serves to connect the strophe with the preceding ones. Emphasis is still laid upon his providence. But now this providence is described as extending to all the circumstances of life, of which, in a way, this pilgrimage is really the symbol. This is the intent of the words which the pilgrims sing in verse seven:

*The Lord will guard you from all evil;*

*he will guard your life.*  
Really you can not say that the

leader's response does much more in verse eight than to paraphrase the sentiments of his companions. He embroiders upon their final words, you might say, by casting them into a form that, at one and the same time, widens the concept of life and narrows it to the common every day comings and goings. Here are his words:

*The Lord will guard your coming and your going.*

But had the Psalm concluded with these words, you could rightly say it sounded like something that had stopped instead of ended! You can accept the abruptness with which it began: that quality reveals something of the suddenness with which the mountains in the distance break upon the sight of a pilgrim on the lookout for them. But here, at the end of the poem, something less curt and blunt is expected to round out the thoughts that have been growing during the development of the poem. And that something should not only bring the poem to completion, but it should draw together and fuse ideas that have permeated the poem, the idea of man's present and ever-changing need for help and God's sure and never-changing will to give it. This is what the poet does by adding four more words to what he has already said:

*The Lord will guard your coming and your going both now and forever.*



# The Example of Saint Francis

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5, 3)

## I

The first three chapters from the book entitled *Poverty—The "Fontal" Virtue of Franciscan Piety*, by the Rev. Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M., translated by Rev. Paul J. Olinny, O.F.M., soon to be published by the Franciscan Herald Press and here offered to the readers of *The Cord* with the kind permission of the Franciscan Herald Press.

Our Lord Jesus Christ began promulgating the Gospel, the glad tidings which he came to bring to mankind, by beatifying the poor.

Up to this point he had continued the preaching of St. John the Baptist, announcing the coming of the kingdom: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3, 1). He had confirmed his word by miracles. His renown spread throughout all of Palestine, and countless men and women crowded around him to hear his words. From among this audience he chose twelve men whom he named Apostles. The hour had come to provide for the internal government of the kingdom which was taking shape, to give it a charter, its law and constitution.

"And seeing the crowds," continues St. Matthew, "he went up the mountain. And when he was seated, his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth he taught them saying,

"Blessed!" (Matt. 5, 1-2).

Our Lord then went on to list the beatitude of poverty, of meekness, of sorrow, of hunger and thirst for justice, of mercy, of purity of heart, of found peace, of accepted persecution.

Christ's words upset the scale of values then in vogue. He glorified humiliation, exalted lowliness, praised suffering. The Maker intervened in his work to utilize what heretofore had not been used, to make a real being out of what had been of no account, and to confound him who thought himself something. He set ignorance against vain knowledge, contempt against pride, sorrow against voluptuousness, the cross against sin, detachment against cupidity (cf. I Cor. 1, 27-30).

*But he began with poverty.*

St. Ambrose rightly says that that virtue should be first which is the foundation and as it were the source of all the others. The first beatitude, he repeats, is poverty. It truly occupies first place in the order of virtues, being the mother and, as it were, the begetter of all the virtues: "parents quaedam generatioque virtutum." He reasons as follows:

## THE EXAMPLE OF SAINT FRANCIS

He who despises temporal things merits eternal ones. No one will acquire possession of the heavenly kingdom who, being weighed down under the cupidity of the world, no longer has the strength to leave it and to emerge from it.

Origen, St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory all argue in the same way: the one obstacle to acquiring the blessings of the Holy Spirit is attachment to the goods of the world.<sup>1</sup>

2. Jesus had begun to practice what he preached. To come into the world he was to redeem he had chosen complete poverty.

There was the poverty of his fatherland, a despised province in a small country without glory, Galilee; and in Galilee, the town of Nazareth of which someone said: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 1, 46)

There was the poverty of his family. It was of royal and pure blood, to be sure; but the stock, which had given but unimportant subservient kings, had been declining for more than four hundred years.

There was the poverty of his crib: a manger in a grotto which was used as an animal shelter.

There was the poverty of his hidden life, supported at first by the work of a craftsman, and later on by his own manual labor.

There was the poverty of his public life: "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). He lived on the alms of a group of women who followed him.

Finally, there was the poverty of his death. He died stripped of his garments, rejected by heaven and earth, abandoned by God to whom he appealed in vain. His tomb was a borrowed one.

He demanded a similar renunciation from his Apostles: "Do not keep gold, or silver, or money in your girdles, no wallet for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staff; for the laborer deserves his living" (Matt. 10, 9). The closer we are to him, the more positive must be our poverty.

3. All the saints have understood this. All of them, following him, have loved, chosen, and practiced poverty. But no one more strictly than our holy Father, Saint Francis of Assisi.

Francis was not only poor: he was the Poor One, the little Poor Man, II Poverello.

<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose, *Abraham*, Bk. 1, chap. 2; St. Luke, V, 6; St. Basil, *Hom. VII Riches*, St. Jerome, St. Matthew, V; *Letters*, 125, 127, St. Augustine, Bk. 1, the *Sermon on the Mountain*. Origen, St. Matthew XV, 16, St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, 22.



To what lengths he pushed poverty, renunciation of property and destination is hardly necessary to repeat here, so well is it known . . .

His poverty is legendary. He is blamed for excesses, for hardly justifiable exaggerations. One only lends to the rich, says the proverb. Almost superstitious practices have been ascribed to the riches, to the superabundance of Franciscan poverty in Francis and in his three Orders.

Our purpose is to study the concept and the exercises of this poverty in greater detail, since such is the subject of these meditations. With the grace of our Lord and of his Blessed Mother, this we shall strive to do. First, however, we must probe into the origin and nature of the poverty of St. Francis.

## II

St. Ambrose, as we have already mentioned, in agreement on this point with all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, justifies the choice of poverty as the foundation of the spiritual life, for the very reason that its opposite, namely covetousness, cupidity, avarice, is the root of all evil<sup>2</sup> and that the soul freed from the slavery of earthly things is free to devote itself to conquering those of heaven.

St. Francis, however, did not proceed in a *dialectic* way.

4. He loved Christ; he wanted to be like unto him. He saw the poor Christ, teaching poverty by example and word. Francis, too, wanted to be poor. And so he lived as a poor man and exhorted his followers to live in poverty and from poverty.

He was not led by theories. He was carried away by love. He did not justify his renunciation by texts, but by his deeds. He found, he recreated in his conscience and in his life the interpretation of the Gospel according to the Fathers of the Church, without study and with no pretense of learning. His keenness of supernatural realities made him grasp the value of poverty: freedom, liberation, exaltation. But that was not where he began, that was not his starting-point. He began with the idea of conforming himself literally to Jesus Christ, his love.

Francis was completely, and who knows? . . . perhaps voluntarily a deliberate stranger to the theories of systematizers. Their theories are true and beautiful and are signed by men worthy of our respect. They can, furthermore, certainly help us to understand his spirit. But these theories were deduced from his examples, and not the opposite, his actions from a theory.

<sup>2</sup> "For covetousness is the root of all evils" (1 Tim. 7, 10). "Take heed and guard yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12, 15).

"Let the friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor land nor anything, and as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go confidently for alms; and they should not be ashamed of this because the Lord made himself poor in this world for us.

"This is that summit of highest poverty which constitutes you, my dearest brothers, heirs and princes of the kingdom of heaven; which has made you poor in earthly goods, but raised you up in virtue. May this be your portion, leading into the land of the living. Dearest brethren, clinging wholly to this, may you never wish to have ought else here below for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Chap. VII, of the Rule of the Friars Minor).

There, in simple and plain words, stripped of all speculative thought, is the mind and will of the Saint as he transmitted them to his sons in the sixth chapter of the final Rule (1223). The first Rule (1210-1221), more diffused, spoke at greater length on contempt of money, on the value of the quest, on positive renunciation. But it remained concrete, very practical, and justified solely by the example of our Lord.

5. This verbal sobriety was perhaps sufficient for Francis and his first disciples who, being in immediate contact with Francis, were on fire with love for his Lady. Later, St. Bonaventure, either to exhort his brothers to keep the family heritage intact, or to defend, against those who despised it, the right of the Order to exist; or perhaps even for a very human and scholastic need to theorize and reduce his work to principles, took up again the assertions of the Fathers and dialectically exalted this noble Lady Poverty whom the Patriarch of Assisi had been content to love and serve.

Two cities are set against each other, says St. Augustine: the City of God and the city of the devil, Jerusalem and Babylon. Their opposition dates from the very beginning, for the cornerstone of Babylon is cupidity, and that of Jerusalem is charity. The more we are removed from cupidity, the farther are we from the devil and his city. Now, poverty, whereby we renounce both the affection and the desire to possess anything in common or in particular, is as far removed from avarice as possible.

6. Contempt for riches has various degrees:

the first is to wish to possess nothing unjustly;  
the second is to wish to possess nothing superfluous;  
the third is the wish to possess nothing in this world and to suffer need even of things that are necessary for life because of God. It is this degree which is the most efficacious remedy against cupidity.

"Contempt for riches is the opposite to desiring temporal goods; and from it comes what is called *the poverty of spirit*. This is commendable for four reasons:

Love of riches draws man away from the love of God and the things of God, and hence retards his conquest of the virtues. On the contrary, contempt for riches makes meriting and the increase of merit easier. In brief, the perishableness of earthly things more than justifies this whole attitude.



"Poverty is as it were the principal counsel, the fundamental principle, and the sublime foundation of evangelical perfection.

"It is useful, good, and efficacious, in rooting out sin, in exercising the perfection of virtue, in making preaching easier, in possessing interior joy.

"Who is better prepared for contemplation than that man who is relieved of temporal burdens, whose treasure is in heaven, whose kingdom is not of this world and who has here below no lasting city? Now is not that man the poor one? An abundant poverty disposes the soul to mortify the flesh and to renounce our own will completely. Are not these the conditions of purity of heart which enable a man to see God?"

7. The spark stirred in souls by the words and examples of Francis was so animated, the reactions which he caused even among those who were not his followers were so violent, that St. Thomas of Aquinas became involved in the battle and voiced some decisions like unto those of his rival St. Bonaventure, decisions of course, that bore the stamp of his own genius:

"Poverty of spirit," he says, "includes two elements: the first is the abdication of temporal goods, provided this is completely voluntary and inspired by a supernatural motive. St. Ambrose and St. Jerome are of the same opinion. The second is a crushing of pride. That is why St. Augustine calls it: 'exinanitio inflati spiritus,' a draining-off of an inflated ego (literally, an emptying of pride). Voluntary poverty is likewise indicative of very deep humility."

Elsewhere he gives the following reasons why our Lord chose poverty. "The first is the one St. Paul gives, namely: his poverty enriches us spiritually; secondly, voluntary poverty befits a preacher of the truth who in that state cannot be suspected of preaching for reasons of cupidity. Finally, and here he approves of St. Francis' thought, God's power is more strongly manifested by the help he gives to the apostle who has voluntarily deprived himself of human means."

8. Men of our times, in love with at least a literary Franciscanism, have written with no less wisdom and abundance on the poverty of St. Francis. We shall confine our citations to that of Father L. Roure, S.J. who has studied the subject with great sympathy and insight:

"Each saint," he writes, "has his or her own characteristic. Neither have the contemporaries of Francis nor for that matter has posterity erred in calling him the *Poverello*.

"His poverty was not only a spirit of simplification proceeding from a more or less conscious personal motive. It was a need of love. The saint detached himself from creatures because for him the Creator sufficed. The creature as creature became indifferent to him because the

<sup>3</sup> From the writings of St. Bonaventure in the following order: *De pauperitate Christi*. Qu. 1, a. 1; *de Perfecta religio*. Bk. 2, chap. 42, 45; *de paup. Christi*, a. 1; *Apologia pauper.*, resp. 3, chap. 3; *ibid.*, art. 1. The biblical allusions were to Matt. 19, 21; Lk. 12, 33; Jn. 18, 36; Hebr. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas, 2a, 2ae, qu. 19, a. 2, c; 3a, qu. 35, 7 c; cf. 3a, 40, 3 o.

Uncreated One absorbed Francis entirely. Francis put all his loving enthusiasm, all his ardent love into this detachment. God now became the subject of his undivided attachment. Later in his life, Francis sang of poverty in the same way as the author of the *Imitation* sings of divine love and its wonders . . .

"His life is proof of the exactitude with which he practiced poverty. It became the logical, rigorous, implacable application of an essentially Christian maxim, namely, to cast aside everything which does not serve our final end, to strip ourselves of everything but the *one thing needful*.

"Is not our life cluttered with a heap of superfluities, overburdened with many vain anxieties? It must be lightened and simplified. Poverty, with its deprivation of what for many has become through routine and laziness indispensable, will accomplish this. It will impose painful renouneements. It will require costly sacrifices of our self-love, for most men regard their fellow-men as their riches. But once the soul has decided to make these excisions, what liberty will it not acquire? With what soaring strength will it not hasten toward the Ideal! . . ."

William James was correct when he deplored the fact that his contemporaries, and especially his compatriots, despised the moralist's value of poverty. He wrote: "We have grown literally afraid to be poor. We despise anyone who elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life. If he does not join the general scramble and pant with the money-making street, we deem him spiritless and lacking in ambition. We have lost the power even of imagining what the ancient idealization of poverty could have meant: the liberation from material attachments, the unbribed soul, the manlier indifference, the paying our way by what we are or do and not by what we have, the right to fling away our life at any moment irresponsibly—the more athletic trim, in short, the moral fighting shape."

Once again, we do not hesitate to recognize and to repeat that these considerations are beautiful and pertinent. But they would have left St. Francis sceptical or at least indifferent, except perhaps that he might have looked upon them as a canticle to his Lady Poverty.

9. The same must be said for the argument taken from the needs of his times, namely, that only by returning to evangelical poverty could peace be restored.

The contemporaries of Francis were, like our own, bitterly divided into two classes: the wealthy or those who were accused of owning too much and of not being willing to part with any of it. The others lacked, or pretended to lack, the bare necessities of life and could not obtain them save by extorting the rich.

Historians have brought to light, and some of them have widely exploited, the evils caused by rich monasteries, by feudalism of the Church, and the revolts of the consciences of the masses which led to brigandage and heresy. Francis could not help but see this, for his illuminated mind was keen. But he did not want to set himself up as a reformer, to take sides for or against the lawfulness of private

<sup>5</sup> L. Roure, *Figures franciscaines*, Pion, 1913, pp. 45-47.

<sup>6</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1902, p. 368.



property. He respected the foundations on which the society of his time was built. The only thing which he deliberately and perseveringly wanted was to imitate and follow the poor Christ.

His example, his preaching, the growth of his Order wonderfully answered his aspirations and provided for the vital needs of medieval Christianity. Yet, it was simply an enlarging of the promise of the hundred-fold made to those who seek first the kingdom of God and his justice. Such was not the plan of Francis. He accepted the social consequences of his love for Christ as a blessing from on high. Anyone knowing him would not dare maintain that he had ever seen, understood, and even wished the opportunity and the benefits deriving from it. Nevertheless, even if these temporal repercussions of his apostolate had been wanting, he would unquestionably have acted in the same way.

### III

10. Following his Father's footsteps, the Franciscan soul makes evangelical poverty, better yet Jesus Christ, the Poor One, his ideal, his model, the rule of his life, the form of all holiness.

The Franciscan soul no longer lives only in poverty, as every disciple of his crucified Son must live if he is to please God, but he is inspired by poverty. It is through poverty that he vows himself to imitate Jesus. He does this in such a way that this poverty, which in other schools of spirituality is only a virtue—and a secondary one at that—derived from the cardinal virtue of temperance, is in Franciscan spirituality the mother and queen of all the others, the means of interior unification and of transformation into God.

The poverty of Christ is for a Franciscan the foundation on which he builds his spiritual life, the root whence his feelings and actions bud, flower, and bear fruit. Poverty appears in Franciscan asceticism as the fountain virtue, if we may be permitted the expression, because for the Franciscan soul, there flows from this virtue, as from a spring, all the other virtues which he practices toward God and his Christ, towards his neighbor and all other beings, and for his own self-discipline. Every virtue can be reduced to poverty, for all suppose an impoverishment, a renunciation, an abnegation or resignation of self in favor of God, our neighbor, and even inanimate creatures.

11. The substance of this little book may be briefly summarized as follows:

Does not believing in and accepting revealed truth as the principle of thought and action obviously entail impoverishment of oneself—of one's own feelings, experiences, learning, and knowledge to which, although fallible, the human mind clings to more than to riches?

To hope in God, to hope in the blessings which he promises together with the means to attain them; to seek above all else the kingdom of God in the confidence that the rest will be given as a surplus, to renounce earthly desires and the anxieties connected with their fulfillment, is not this to impoverish oneself of everything which gives human activity its incentive and its end? . . .

Chastity makes the body poor; humility impoverishes the soul; charity toward our neighbor makes the human heart poor by pitilessly

cutting off from their designs every object in opposition to the divine rule . . .

St. Francis expressly said that that man is not a real poor man who, although devoid of money, keeps in his possession the bill-fold of his own will. It matters not whether the goods he abandoned—and they are real goods—he fleeting and of little value, whereas the others, in whose favor we despise them, are lasting, eternal, and spiritual, for it is already by renouncing his human judgment that one can truly evaluate them.

Such is the Franciscan viewpoint of a perfect life. Such is its concept of poverty. To say that this restricts the Franciscan to the use of things, which usage is sometimes restricted to the extreme limits of need, is not to exhaust the meaning of Franciscan poverty. It requires a sincere conformity of the whole man with his status as a creature. It proceeds from an inward and operative working acknowledgment of his deep-seated essential needs, of his obligatory dependence upon God.

Such is the subject-matter of these meditations. In them our spiritual life will find nourishment and sustenance through the examples and words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and of his disciple, St. Francis.

12. The age in which we live makes these meditations very opportune. They will remind us that we are disciples of a poor God. They will induce us to give to the world the urgent and much-needed example of the poverty of spirit, that is to say, a poverty of choice, if not of liking, surely a freely accepted poverty. Our interest in the subject is not prompted by historical curiosity, by a simple family devotion, but rather by a vital necessity of our times.

By way of conclusion let us make our own the following prayer which Ubertino of Casale gave to his Father Francis to obtain from Jesus, his Master, the gift of poverty.<sup>7</sup>

"O Lord Jesus, show me the paths leading to the poverty so dear to you. Its love torments me. I cannot be happy away from it! Have pity on me and on my Lady Poverty, for you are the one who made me fall in love with her!

"She is present in sadness, spurned by all. She, the queen of nations, is like a widow. The queen of virtues is vile and despised. Those who ought to cherish her, forsake her. They behave like adulterers, not like faithful spouses. She weeps sitting on a dunghill.

"Yet, Lord Jesus, you left your throne and the company of the angels for her. You came down to this earth and in your eternal love you enoused her so that from, in, and with her you might have perfect sons. She remained united to you during your entire life . . . She was your inseparable companion right up to the cross where she followed you, whereas your sweet Mother was obliged to remain at the foot of the cross. She did not abandon you in death. She procured an almost given tomb for you, a borrowed sepulchre. You brought her with you

<sup>7</sup> This prayer was first known through the transcription which Ubertino de Casale gave it in his *Arbor vite crucifixæ*. It was later found in the *Sacrum Commertium*, which we shall speak of later, and rightfully belongs to this work. We of necessity have abridged the prayer.



into heaven, leaving to the world what is worldly. Lastly you gave her the seal of the kingdom of heaven so that she might stamp the elect who wish to walk in the ways of perfection.

"Oh! who could not love Lady Poverty above all things! I ask you to stamp me with her seal! I desire to be enriched with such a treasure. I beg this of you, Jesus most poor, for me and for mine! For love of your Name see to it that I never have anything of my own under heaven, and that as long as this flesh lives, I shall always sparingly use the gifts offered by others in your love. Amen."

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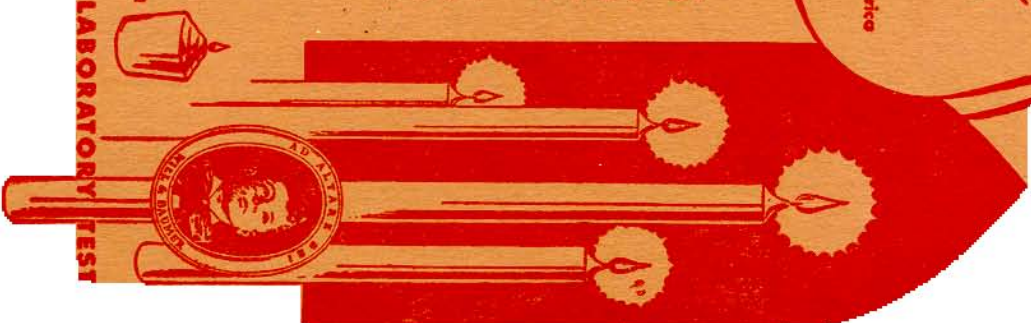
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# A Commentary on the Psalms:

Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.

## PSALM 121

Anybody who chants the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is bound to notice that certain Psalms are used twice in the course of the hours. Psalm 121, for instance, which is the third Psalm at Terce, is recited again as the third Psalm at Vespers. Suppose we try to discover what reasons we can for this particular double occurrence.

The reason for the appearance of Psalm 121 at Terce is fairly obvious. It is with this hour that we begin to use the group of Psalms to which has been given the name of "Pilgrim Songs"—Psalms 119 to 130. Quite logically, therefore, Psalm 121 follows Psalms 119 and 120 to round out the number of Psalms used in this hour.

The next question, of course, is why this particular Psalm should be repeated during Vespers. The reason for this repetition clearly has nothing to do with the position of the Psalm in the Psalter because the Psalms at Vespers do not follow any precise numerical order. The choice of Psalm 121 for inclusion among them, therefore, must be dictated by the subject matter of it. You can believe this when you

examine a little the nature of Vespers.

Vespers may very well be considered an expression of thanksgiving. We have arrived safely at the end of another day's journey and we are grateful. We are grateful for that and for all the many gifts and graces of the day that have made it possible. This view of Vespers—that it is actually a prayer of thanksgiving—finds support in the fact that the hour comes to a kind of climax in the *Magnificat*, the hymn through which the members of the Mystical Body express their gratitude to God in the very words of the Blessed Mother.

Moreover, that we are singing Vespers together, here and now, at the close of *this* day, after having passed unharmed through all its dangers and trials, is, we like to hope, a forecast of our final arrival, safe and happy, at the end of all our days in "that holy city which is the new Jerusalem" (Apocalypse, 21:2). When you come to think of it, that is actually what we ask for when we pray the words of the Vesper Hymn: "Grant a life all spotless, Guide us in our journey, That on seeing Jesus, We shall joy forever." So you can say with perfect logic



And they were words to which this pilgrim would give the fullest assent. For him, too, Jerusalem is the home city of Israel.

*To it the tribes go up . . .*

those great family groups that glory in their descent from the twelve sons of Jacob whose name they bear. They are, indeed,

*The tribes of the Lord,*

whose forefathers he had guided into the Promised Land of Canaan, which Josue parcelled out among them, tribe by tribe, so that each one of them had its territory. Even before that victorious entry, God had laid down the conditions for the peaceful possession of the land: "When I have disposed of the nations at thy coming, and given thee wide lands to dwell in, none shall invade them by treachery, as long as thou goest up three times a year to present thyself before the Lord thy God. Thrice in the year all thy menfolk shall present themselves before the Lord, the almighty God of Israel" (Exodus 34: 24, 23). For century after century, then, holy and devout men had been making the journey, which set the example for this pilgrim,

*According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.*

But it was not for worship alone that pious Israelites had gone up to Jerusalem. They had gone there to seek justice as well. There were located the tribunals before which cases could be tried which turned

Journey's end! You can catch in his words the revelation of this pilgrim's awe and reverence as he gazes about on this most sacred of cities. You can sense his deep love for it, so strong and abiding that it forces him to linger on its name as he pronounces it—

*O Jerusalem—*

*Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity.*

Solid and sturdy the buildings stand, row upon row, all along the slopes that rise within the crown of walls that circles the mountains of Sion and Moriah on which the city rests. His admiration grows as he gazes. What a striking contrast, indeed, to the shabby little villages and humble towns through which he has made his long and tiresome way, this "foundation upon the holy mountains the Lord loves" (Ps. 86:1).

Scholars are not absolutely certain of the date at which Psalm 121 was written. If they could be sure, we should know precisely whether this pilgrim was speaking about Jerusalem as it stood in the triumphantly splendid days of King David or as it existed,

hundreds of years later, when its glory was sadly diminished. This city was captured, as you know, by Nabuchodonosor and completely destroyed, Temple and all, in the year 587 B.C.; the inhabitants themselves, those of them who outlived the assault upon the city, were herded off to Babylon as captives. When the Persian King

that Vespers is intended to fix our minds, in gratitude and confidence, on the safe completion of this day's journey and on the happy close of life's journey. These are the circumstances that make the hour an ideal one for singing and for meditating upon the words of Psalm 121. A careful reading of the poem will, I think, support that statement.

The Psalm, we discover almost at the very outset, is the ecstatic utterance of a pilgrim whose journey to Jerusalem has at last come to an end. You are listening to him as he stands there just within her gates, completely overwhelmed by holy joy, pouring forth his feelings in a soliloquy that rises finally to the height of prayer. He calls vividly to mind that day on which his friends first began to plan their pilgrimage to this blessed spot and generously invited him to join their company and come along with them. He lives again the thrilling joy of that far-off moment:

*I rejoiced because they said to me,*

*"We will go up to the house of the Lord."*

Then came the long night marches in the white moonlight; the impatient pauses forced upon them by the heat of the day; the lack of comfort and of shelters; the fears, anxieties and dangers of the journey,

*And now we have set foot,  
Within your gates, O Jerusalem.*



out to be too complicated or too difficult for judgment by the local courts throughout the land. In the days of the kings, the meeting out of such justice was a royal function, and in the fulfillment of it the king would be assisted by members of the royal household. This is the fact that makes it possible to describe Jerusalem as actually the "centre of the nation's civil life as well as of its religious life." And this is the fact that the poet has in mind when he tells us that

*In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David.*

There is a special quality about this second strophe that we must take notice of: it is not so concerned as the first one was with the physical appearance of the Holy City. The poet seems now to dwell more on what Jerusalem

by the way, between the structure of Psalm 136 and that of the Psalm that we are considering. Both open rather abruptly with the depiction of an episode in the life of the poet, move along into a kind of reverie occasioned by this episode, and climax in a prayer that seems to be the very logical outcome of the thought and the feeling that have been at work in the poem. The difference between the two poems, however, is much more marked than the likeness. There is a fierceness, almost, about the prayer that closes Psalm 136, whereas kindness and love characterize the prayer that closes Psalm 121. We can very easily discover these qualities of the latter Psalm by reading carefully the final strophe of it, which comprises verses 6 to 9.

The strophe is a prayer for peace and prosperity and all good things, very much in the spirit of the words with which Saint Francis of Assisi greeted his fellow men, *Pax et Bonum*. The people for whom the poem was first written would most likely have enjoyed a play on words in the Hebrew that we miss. They would have been struck by the similarity between the words for "peace" and for "prosperity", *shalom* and *shalvah*, and the name of Jerusalem, *Jeru-shalem*, which means "vision of peace" or "foundation of peace." We can at least remark one thing, however, that they would have noticed: this prayer is

*If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten! May my tongue cleave to my palate*

*if I remember you not, if I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.*

(Psalm 136: 5-6)  
There is a strong resemblance,

threefold. The thoughts of the pilgrim turn first to the Holy City itself:

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May those who love you prosper!*

It seems almost as if, standing inside the gates, the speaker lets his gate sweep to either side, following the rugged line of the great walls that reach out to embrace the city . . .

*May peace be within your walls . . .* noticing the houses that border the streets before him, the buildings standing side by side, gray and silent in the dim morning light . . .

*prosperity in your buildings.*

Within these walls, sheltered by these buildings, dwell his brethren, relatives, and friends, who are privileged, as he is not, to live their lives within the confines of the Holy City. He thinks of them and prays once more:

*Because of my relatives and friends,*

*I will say, "Peace be within you!"*

And finally his thoughts turn to what sets Jerusalem apart from all the cities of the world and gives it a unique preeminence among them. Only of this one city has God said:

*Sion is my resting place forever; in her will I dwell, for I prefer her.*

(Psalm 131: 14)

And lifting his eyes to Mount Sion, gazing full upon the Temple, the holiest spot on all the earth

and the object of his journey, he whispers his final prayer:

*Because of the house of the Lord, our God,*

*I will pray for your good.*

As we listen to this third strophe, to its final words especially in which the pilgrim prays for the good of Jerusalem, we sense something about them that distracts our thoughts, makes us wonder what it is that they suggest so subtly. And then it comes clearly to mind: that last journey that Christ made to Jerusalem! Saint Mark in his gospel helps us to picture so vividly the band of pilgrims who made the trip with Christ, the twelve Apostles, some of the disciples, and a few of the holy women. "Jesus was walking on in front of them, and they were in dismay, and those who followed were afraid. And again taking the Twelve, he began to tell them what would happen to him" (Mark 10:32) at the journey's end. His words were ominous. Their impact seems to have been dissipated, however, by the exultant reception given Christ as he approached the gates of Jerusalem. His own thoughts and feelings, nevertheless, were in strong contrast to the excited jubilation which swirled about him. As he drew near and caught sight of the city, "Jesus wept over it and said, 'Ah, if thou too couldst understand, above all in this day that is granted to thee, the ways that can bring thee peace. As it is, they are hidden from thy



sight . . . and all because thou didst not recognize the time of my visiting thee" (Luke 19: 41-44).

As your mind dwells upon the scene, you can find yourself wondering whether, at that very moment, Christ recalled the visit he had made to Jerusalem so many years before when he was a boy of twelve. Whether he remembered the joy that had filled his heart when Mary and Joseph had first said to him, "We will go up to the house of the Lord." The journey nearly done, how thrilled he must have been when at last there broke upon his sight the vision of the Holy City, far off, brown and gray and white and golden in the sunlight, a diadem upon the mountain tops. How like the sentiments of the poet of Psalm 121—though infinitely richer than these could ever be!—were those that flooded his soul, when he finally stood within the gates of Jerusalem. Who could better know the meaning of its history from the ancient moment when David had wrested it from the Jebusites to make it the city of the Living God? Who more worthy than the Prince of Peace to say and to mean, "Peace be within you"? And where, ultimately, in all that populous city was the Son of God more likely to be found than "sitting in the Temple, in the midst of those who taught there, listening to them and asking them questions: so that all those who heard him were in amazement at his quick understanding and at

the answers he gave"? Is not this the very point of the reply that he made to Mary and Joseph when they questioned his conduct: "What reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?" (Luke 2: 46-49).

We may say with certainty that Psalm 121 recreates for us the thrilling experience of an unknown pilgrim to Jerusalem. But it is surely something more than a mere flight of fancy to claim that this experience is one which Jesus shared and, in a certain sense, lifted to the divine level. So that the Psalm, without ceasing to be the expression of the mind of an unknown poet, becomes at the same time an expression of the mind of Christ. Both of these, Christ and the poet, we must try to remember when chanting this Psalm, are to be our models, therefore, on our journey to each day's close. Thus inspired we shall joyfully and gratefully mean the words we say: *I rejoiced because they said to me*

*"We will go up to the house of the Lord."*

And meaning these words every time we utter them will insure our safe arrival finally at "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," journey's end for those "who are written in the book of life of the Lamb" (Apocalypse 21: 10-11, 27).

## OUR LADY POVERTY

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. (2 Cor. 8,9)

We have seen that for our Father Francis poverty is a universal, basic, fundamental virtue, or better still a fountain virtue whence, as from a spring all spiritual activity flows. Or if we prefer, it is the centralizing viewpoint whence he considers the work of God. That was the conclusion of the first meditation. To that was added the point that St. Francis adopted poverty as a means of acquiring all the riches of time and eternity. He did this not for any motive, however valid and compatible with his personality, but to imitate Jesus Christ.

1. He did not do this because he theoretically understood that poverty enjoyed an essential priority over all other virtues; nor was it because he submissively accepted a human tradition concerning poverty based on philosophers or on the Fathers of the Church. Neither did he ingeniously see in poverty the reforming for the evils of his time. His embrace of poverty was solely a matter of love.

Rich though he was, Christ made himself poor for us. Francis vowed to live a life of indigence because he desired to do so, because of the need he felt to conform himself to the object of his love. He wanted to follow Christ in all his ways, and to the extent in which he could. Looking beyond the indigence of the things to which Jesus reduced himself during his mortal life, Francis saw the more profound and radical renunciation of which indigence is but the sign: "Christ Jesus, who though he was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil. 2, 6-9).

That is to say, in so far as the poverty of the human mind allows us to conceive it and human words to express it, Christ, stripped of self, of his human person in favor of the Person of the Word, renounced his condition as God which he could lay claim to and his condition as a free man which he could accept in order to make himself like unto



the most miserable of us, like unto a slave without civil rights, like unto a convicted and executed criminal. Francis pierced this mystery.

Naked, he followed the naked Christ.

# I

2. This mind of Francis appears expressly in his personification of poverty as a lady of chivalry. One could be mistaken and see in this but an æsthetic game, the fantastic inspiration of a troubador. But the exact opposite is the truth. Poverty for Francis is a *Person*, a concrete living person; the very opposite to an abstraction, to a theoretical yet sublime but cold virtue. This Lady Poverty is a poor man; it is the Poor Man, Jesus Christ, just as later on it is the Son of God whom Blessed Henry Suso loved under his biblical name of Wisdom. And even if Francis saw in Lady Sister Clare the most expressive incarnation of his ideal, Francis yet loved and served poverty as a living person. Posterity has left us an undeniable proof of the realistic, concrete nature of Francis' love for poverty. This document is dated "the month of July, after the death of the Father" (1227). Its title is: *Sacrum commercium. B. Francisci cum Domina Paupertate*. Its author is a "Brother John," very likely John of Parma, who was Minister General of the Order from 1247 to 1257.

The work is considered to be an exquisite allegory. The banquet at the close of the feast is comparable to the historical meal offered in the Portinacula to St. Clare by St. Francis, and which ended, as we know, in ecstasy.

There is a total and deliberate lack of poetry in the arrangement of this marriage festival. The demanding Lady whose espousals are being celebrated amidst nothing which does not bear her stamp, namely, indigence and penury. She is presented with a broken fragment of a vase in which to wash her hands, there being no whole one. For a towel, a Brother offers her the end of his tunic. The only thing to eat is a little mouldy bread laid out on the grass and a few rustic herbs, no tablecloth, no knife, salt or wine, or cooked foods. She is extremely happy with this, congratulates her hosts, and begs them to continue in this wise to be strictly faithful to her.

It is clear that this distinguished Lady, whose nobility and dignity the first cantos of the poem solidly establish, does not have the pliability of a theory which can be bent to every whim. She lays down a way of life in which everything is prescribed according to the law of chivalrous love. To plight one's troth to her, means to renounce one's own projects, one's own plans, to enter into hers, and from this there results a renunciation of one's own mind.

To hope for favors from her one must refuse to weigh oneself

down with visible goods so as to be able to go in all alertness in quest of invisible goods. It is to subordinate the possession and use of material things to the acquiring of invisible goods. And this is can only mean a renunciation of one's heart.

To wear her colors of humility and patience is to renounce one's self-esteem, the fear of suffering, and the desire for enjoyment.

\* \* \*

3. Each school of spirituality, that is, the concept which each religious family forms of its worship of God, accentuates one aspect of the inimitable fullness of Christ, one trait of His ideal physiognomy, one virtue of His inexhaustible holiness, and this becomes its own distinguishing mark, its center of spiritual unification. the theme of its meditations, the method of its action.

St. Augustine recommends charity as the road to the interior life. He traced four stages of this virtue which are the four ages of the soul: birth, adolescence, maturity, perfection. But he gives to the soul, as its manner of growth, humility.

St. Benedict counted twelve degrees through which humility leads the soul to *peace*, which is union with Christ in charity. But all the virtues accompany it, as the following enumeration shows. 1) fear of God, 2) abnegation, 3) obedience, 4) silent patience, 5) frankness, with one's superior, 6) contentment, 7) humility, 8) faithful participation in the common life, 9) silence, 10) moderation of laughter, 11) reserve in speech, and 12) modesty of behavior. If we were to study the texts of this Saint, which we have tried to summarize in one word, we would find that these degrees are neither independent nor opposites. We would find them interrelated, as the sign of the thing signified.

St. Bernard had begun by adopting and commenting on the twelve degrees of Benedictine asceticism. Then, he summarized it all in humility, and set against it the twelve degrees of pride. Finally, he outlined the means of perfection: prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, sound judgment, spiritual direction (St. Benedict's frankness with one's Superior) and all this as a means of attaining charity.

Later, St. Ignatius fixed three degrees of humility which amount either to conformity to the will of God or abnegation of our own will as the foundation of all perfection.

In short, all of them end with charity obtained through humility. The theological virtue of Charity, a gratuitous gift, is not acquired. God pours it forth into the soul because of the immense love with which he loves us. But he does this in the renounced soul, stripped of self, emptied of self, in the humble soul, that is to say, the soul that lives in the spirit of poverty. Humility grooves the bed of charity. The

degree of charity in the soul is proportionate to its humility. Now in humility, the emptying of the old man, St. Francis saw an aspect, but only an aspect, of poverty. Indeed he was greatly inspired.

Poverty is more comprehensive than humility. St. Ambrose tells us. It is likewise more loving. For if it rid, one of self, it is in view of a greater fullness, according to the text of this meditation: "Being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9).

## II

### What, then, is poverty?

4. It is a state relative to the necessities of earthly life in which one is incapable of providing for oneself. It is the situation of a person who lacks the things he needs and who cannot procure them for himself. The need may be more or less felt, the need more or less urgent, the difficulty of providing for oneself more or less insurmountable. Consequently, there are various degrees of poverty.

Let us state, to begin with, that the average man is sure of his daily subsistence and that he is capable of setting aside some modest provision for the near future. The economy of divine providence presupposes the daily request for the bread of each day. "Therefore do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What are we to put on?' . . . for your Father knows that you need all these things . . . Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt. 6, 31-34).

Our Lord certainly does not lay a snare for those who lack the necessities of life, nor does he intend to recommend laziness, nor canonize want of foresight. For nothing is more instructive than the ingenious activity of the sparrow procuring its food. Nothing is more moving than the tenacity of a blade of grass reaching for the light and for those people who are starving, it suffices that he substitute himself for them by condemning the hardness of heart of those who starve them: "I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat" (Matt. 25, 42) . . . As regards the lazy, the Apostle Paul, faithful interpreter of the teaching of the Master, says without equivocation: "We have heard that some among you are living irregularly, doing no work but busy at meddling. Now such persons we charge and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that they work quietly and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3, 11-12).

Consequently, the counsels of our Lord must be understood and can be observed only when there is question of a normal situation, of an average state of affairs.

5. This average state of affairs, called mediocrity—the *honestas*

of the Latin—could be described as the decency which befits the living conditions of every human being, living conditions which St. Thomas describes as practically necessary for piety and salvation. With more than this, a person is tempted to do without God, and with less there arise many preoccupations which might induce man to turn away from God.

This mean which takes moderate joy in the current day, and at the same time provides for the foreseen needs of the near future is, we might say the dividing line below or above which all conditions of human life can be grouped: below, poverty, indigence, destitution; above, ease, abundance, superfluity.

We shall briefly define these.

Poverty presupposes the absence of ordinary comforts, discomfort sometimes, and insecurity for tomorrow.

Indigence (*indu* in, within *egere* to need) suffers from privation, often lacks what is even necessary.

Destitution lacks everything.

Now, for the other side of this imaginary line.

Ease lacks nothing; it is sure of tomorrow.

Abundance, riches, is unconcerned about even the distant future. Superfluity could, without any inconvenience, suffice for several.

6. According to our text: "He became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9), Christ chose indigence. The Vulgate text reads: "propter vos egenus factus est, ut illius inopia vos divites essetis," which could be translated "for you he became indigent, although rich, so that he might make you rich through his poverty."

During his hidden life, if he was poor, Christ nevertheless kept what might be called a social standing. He had a city, a home, a trade. He belonged to the tribe of Juda, of the family of David. He led a regular day of work, rest, and prayer, just as his parents and fellow-Jews did. In fact, he, together with Mary and Joseph, serve as a model to men who belong to the working-class and who have no special vocation, that is, those who make up the majority of human society.

When he entered upon his mission of salvation, he rejected all the humble security of his former way of life. He agreed to lack the necessary things. He made himself *indigent*. Without the charity of the women who followed him, he would have become destitute. He avoided privation only by accepting dependence.

We can and ought to imitate our Lord in his hidden and normal life. However, without a special calling from the Holy Spirit, we are neither permitted nor would it be possible to attempt to follow him



in his apostolate and his Passion. Now, such was the case with Francis. Our holy Father St. Francis chose extreme indigence, but in so doing he obeyed his personal vocation as the imitator of Christ, a literal imitator. And to Francis was reserved, if not explicitly promised, the stigmata, a divine seal, as it were, authenticating and crowning his efforts. Like unto his Master, vowing himself to want, he likewise vowed himself to depend on his neighbor.

7. Privation and Dependence: The common characteristic of these three stages of poverty is *privation*, that is, a need felt for things which are considered to be more and more necessary and numerous. But since a poor man cannot provide himself with these things, he is forced to fall back on the aid of someone else in order not to suffer excessively or to die. Thus he becomes dependent on the charity of others.

Just as privation calls for patience and endurance, that is, steadfastness in sorrow, so dependence preaches humility, subjection, and obedience. Now, it is by this "generation of virtues" that poverty can acquire a sanctifying value. By themselves, privation, even to the point of destitution, and dependence to the point short of slavery, do not make a man pleasing in the sight of God. They could make him a sinner if they breed vices instead of begetting virtues, such as envy, hatred, and wrath. Christ did not bless material poverty, but poverty of spirit or freely desired poverty.

This is what the Wise Man prayed for:

Two things I ask of you,

deny them not to me before I die:

Put falsehood and lying far from me,

give me neither poverty nor riches;

provide me only with the food I need;

Lest, being full, I deny you,

saying, "Who is the Lord?"

Or, being in want, I steal,

and profane the name of my God. ((Prov. 30, 7-9))

8. Just as we distinguished, from the economic and human point of view, three degrees of need, so we distinguish, from the ascetical and divine point of view, three kinds of poverty according to desire and spirit: material poverty, literal poverty, and spiritual poverty.

Material poverty is that practiced by beggars. In itself, it has no moral value. From the viewpoint of salvation and perfection it may be a voluntary obstacle if the poor person deliberately sins through envy or blasphemy, or it may be involuntary if the person lacks sufficient time to pray, to be instructed, to acquire and practice virtue.

And it was with this meaning in mind that we spoke of a normal estate of affairs, as being necessary for the spiritual life. Material poverty becomes meritorious when sanctified by poverty of spirit.

Literal poverty, also called evangelical poverty, is that poverty which religious persons vow to live. It consists in the voluntary abdication of the goods of this world. It is good and meritorious in that it facilitates poverty of spirit. Literal poverty is to the poverty of spirit what the sign is to the thing signified, what sacramental matter is to its grace. The value of literal poverty lies only in the spirit of poverty which it fosters.

This is only right, for the voluntary abdication of useful things is *impractical* outside an organization which sustains the individuals vowed to observe it. The history of the first Christians shows that the general handing over of their possession in favor of the poor reduced these people to a state of indigence bordering on destitution, and that they lived only by the alms collected by the Apostles from other Christian communities.

In like manner, religious live on the goods of the religious community to which they belong, if it has any. If not, then they live on the alms given to the community. It is therefore necessary that the rich make the practice of poverty possible.

Now are those rich people who support indigent religious, that is, who make it possible for them to pursue perfection, excluded from the beatitude? No, because it is their spirit of poverty which gives all its value to the indigence of the religious and to their vow of poverty.

### III

9. Poverty of spirit or of desire, the poverty of love which Christ blessed is poverty of affection (poverty of the heart, of the will), which gives value to the "effective" poverty (poverty of things) of indigents and of religious. It, too, has the twofold stamp of the privation and dependence of actual poverty.

It bears the stamp of privation because by giving alms a rich man deprives himself. An alms taken from one's superfluity, an alms which does not cause privation nor inconvenience to the giver, does not deserve to be called a spiritual work (Mk. 12, 43).

It bears the stamp of dependence because by detaching his heart, the rich man recognizes his dependence on God both as regards the possession and the use of his fortune. He is God's steward and deputy. He is likewise dependent on his neighbor whose interests he administers and whose necessities he serves.

Spiritual poverty also must give value and enliven the literal poverty of a religious as prescribed by his Rule. The latter must feel deprived,



he must voluntarily seek privation. He must use the things placed at his disposition only with submission and dependence.

Now this dependent use—coming under the virtue of obedience—is very penitential, and likewise causes privation. Those who criticize the poverty of religious have no idea of the perpetual restriction which it imposes on them. "Religious lack nothing," so they say. By "nothing" is understood anything of a rather strict necessity which they themselves undoubtedly would not be content with. Even in the midst of a "collective luxury" and of "riches" which communities are reproached with (if these censures are well-founded in some cases), not to dispose of anything, not to use anything without permission and without control, is a mortification whose acuteness is known only from experience, more especially since this dependence is concerned with small objects, all others being excluded from the use of religious.

10. Spiritual poverty is almost impossible, impractical for a person living in destitution. At least, it calls for a heroism which the Church has canonized in its poor saints. And God is not obliged to grant this heroic grace in a general way in order to make up for the egotistic hardness of the rich. On the other hand, this same poverty is likewise almost impossible and paradoxical for the rich; for money grips its owners, stifles the affections, blinds the soul, and hardens the heart.

Woe to you rich!

Twice Sacred Scripture proclaims that a rich man who has compassion on the poor deserves the blessing of God.

Happy is he who has regard for the lowly and the poor;

In the day of misfortune the Lord will deliver him.

The Lord will keep and preserve him;

He will make him happy on the earth,

and not give him over to the will of his enemies.

The Lord will help him on his sickbed,

he will take away all his ailment when he is ill.

(Ps. 40, 1-4)

And we read in the book of Sirach:

Happy the rich man found without fault,

who turns not aside after gain!

Who is he, that we may praise him?

he, of all his kindred, has done wonders,

For he has been tested by gold and come off safe,

and this remains his glory;

He could have sinned but did not,  
could have done evil but would not,  
So that his possessions are secure,  
and the assembly recounts his praises.

(Sirach 31, 8-11)

\* \* \*

11. Poverty exacts a continual effort of renunciation from everyone—the beggar, the religious, and the rich.

Renunciation of what one has, of what one is, even of his reason for living, of his goods of wealth, his goods of body, of his senses, of his soul, of his own value, and even of his life in order to let Christ, Christ's thoughts, desires, and motives, live and reign in him, to seek nothing but the glory of God, the salvation of souls, the fulfillment of all divine work.

It exacts privation and dependence. Before God, such a soul will be humble, confident, attentive, and abandoned; before one's neighbor, it will be kind, docile, and obliging; before creatures, it will be detached, discreet, in the use of creatures, grateful to and praising God; with one's self, it will be free and joyful . . .

Such was our Father St. Francis in his imitation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His ecstasy over poverty took this direction; he considered himself dependent on God and in God for all and everything; but he also knew that he could expect everything from God and in God.

Poor in spirit, he possessed the kingdom of heaven; even while on this earth he shared in God's mastery over things and men. And this mastery is still his.

O Patriarch of the poor, pray for us, your children, at least because of the indigence of our spiritual life! Obtain that we may bear the stamp of the Poor One in spirit, which is to possess without attachment and to suffer privation without regret, the one proving the other.

\* \* \*

12. This is the poverty which our holy Father took as the Lady of his chivalry, namely, the exacting ideal of an unsatiated love.

Just as to please his lady, the knight went from exploit to exploit, so does Francis want us to progress from virtue to virtue, from victory to victory. The height to be attained is *charity*, that is, concretely, conformity with Christ to the point of identification. It can be accomplished by a continuous effort or renunciation of ourselves in favor of him who must ever be *All in All*. Amen.



# In Christ Jesus Our Lord

Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M.

(Translated from the French by Michael D. Metlach, O.F.M.)

## III. BODY AND SOUL

(Continued)

In the preceding meditation, we considered the *supernatural* and *ascetical* principles of our Franciscan spirituality. Here we are going to discuss its *psychological* principle, which is no less imbued than the others with the realism so characteristic of Francis. Basically, it can be stated this way: Since the body and the soul of man form a complete unit and are intimately joined into one substance, actions of the spirit have their effect upon the body and those of the body also effect the spirit.

This principle explains why the spirit of prayer moves a person to kneel and why kneeling moves him to pray. In fact, kneeling not only helps *him* to pray, but it even constitutes a silent sermon on prayer—it arouses devotion in those who watch him.

The efficacy of the liturgy is certainly due at least in part to this principle, for the various ceremonies are intended precisely to dispose the soul for inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Thus light or darkness, silence or chanting, solitude or the pomp of assembled multitudes all provoke appropriate responses in man's sense faculties, and through these faculties they affect his heart. Thus too the formula or "letter" of prayer arouses the spirit of prayer and the prayer of the spirit.

That the Apostles knew this law of human activity is evident from the rules St. Paul gave for the prayer meetings of the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians (I Cor. 12 and 14; Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). And St. James wrote in the same vein: "Is one of you unhappy? Let him fall to prayer. Is one of you cheerful. For him, a psalm" (James 5:13).

Pascal also had this principle in mind when he exhorted his contemporaries to undertake an interior conversion because their conduct showed their need for it. Those scholars of our own day who lack Pascal's insight are offended at such an approach, but why? Certainly this is the way children are trained; they have to be formed from without because they have as yet no "within" which can be reached by reasoning. We force upon them habits of civility, good

manners, and obedience to prepare their souls for the convictions which will come later. In this way we communicate to them our own life-experience; only later will they be able to use that experience in working out their own solution to the riddle of life. If we have taken care to inculcate the proper external habits, it will be easier for them to form the corresponding inner convictions when the time comes.

With the aid of this psychological principle, we can learn an important lesson from the life of our Holy Father. Let us consider one incident in particular which is related by Celano and has to do with one Brother John, who was among the first to follow Francis (*Vita Secunda*, 299).

Francis, according to his biographer, was very fond of John and wanted to have him with him all the time—an arrangement which pleased John no end, for his one desire, his one aim in life, was to be like Francis in everything.

In fact, to achieve that goal John would imitate his master's every attitude and action. When Francis walked, John would use the same gait; when Francis stopped, John stopped. When Francis coughed, John coughed. When Francis raised his eyes to heaven, John did too. He united his own sighs to those of Francis, and when he could, his tears also.

In short, John copied Francis exactly in everything he did. Francis could not help noticing this, of course; so one day he asked his enthusiastic young disciple why he acted that way.

"I promised to do whatever you did," answered John, "and it would be dangerous for me to leave out anything."

Delighted with his friend's simplicity, Francis nevertheless pointed out to him that so literal an interpretation was unnecessary, that it would be enough to observe the Gospel with a righteous heart and sincere good will.

John must have heeded this advice, for it was not long before God took him to Himself; with him, as with the Wise Man, "early achievement counted for long apprenticeship" (Wisdom 4:13). Francis evidently had no doubt that he went straight to heaven, for he would often refer to him as "Brother Saint John."

Much has been said about John's kind of childlikeness. In our own day the Little Flower's example has given it a greater importance than it had ever before enjoyed—you might even say she has made it the "fashion" in spirituality.

But it was our Lord Himself who said: "Unless you become like little children again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). And it was this crowning perfection, this candid simplicity



in faith and in works, that He had in mind when, "filled with gladness by the Holy Spirit," He prayed: "Father, Who art Lord of heaven and earth, I give Thee praise that Thou has hidden all this from the wise and the prudent, and revealed it to little children" (Luke 10:21; Matt. 11:25).

Brother John, then, was not altogether wrong in his manner of imitating Francis, for his literal interpretation was based upon the psychological principle of psychosomatic interaction. When he imitated Francis' life in every minute detail, he really meant to attain the *inner holiness* he so admired in Francis; when he copied Francis' attitudes and actions, he really sought to confirm his very soul to that of Francis.

Francis himself, moreover, had followed the same course of action in imitating his own Master, Christ. When he reproduced Christ's every action and attitude, he really sought to share in Christ's inner dispositions—to *partake of His very life*! Francis imitated Jesus to identify himself with Him; and he identified himself with Him by docility and self-abandonment in order to imitate Him more perfectly.

In the Gospel, on the Cross, in the Host—everywhere Francis saw Christ humble, meek, suffering, doing good, and rejected. Then, with the spontaneity of true love, he copied Christ's poverty even to destitution; he shared Christ's sufferings by a voluntary crucifixion, and he made Christ's humility his own by an unparalleled self-abnegation.

But let us not look upon Francis as already haloed with the glory of his success. Let us go back to the very beginning of his conversion; let us see him scoffed at, taken for a madman, made a target for the jeers and the stones of his countrymen.

For Francis took the Gospel literally. At the Portiuncula, on the Feast of St. Mathias, he listened as the priest read it to him: "Do not provide gold or silver or copper to fill your purses, nor a wallet for the journey, no second coat, no spare shoes or staff; the labourer has a right to his maintenance" (Matt. 10:9-10).

"Have I understood you right?" he asked the priest. "That is exactly what I want to do."

And he went about it without delay; he threw away his staff, his purse, his shoes, and his money. Then, when his first companions joined him shortly afterwards, he bade them do the same; truly, it can be said that he built his Order upon an "apostolic" foundation.

From the outset, of course, the worldly-wise, who knew how to interpret Scripture so as to empty it of everything jarring to nature, took it upon themselves to criticize Francis for his "overly-literal"

imitation of Christ.

Now, we do not begrudge the worldly-wise their own interpretation of Scripture, but after all, we love our Founder; we have confidence in his holiness as well as in his common sense; we know that Jesus has ratified his spirituality with the stigmata. How can we possibly regard Francis' imitation as any kind of "externalism"?

Let us take a closer look at this accusation of "literalism," and in doing so let us take care to distinguish a *literal* imitation from a *literalist* one.

The person who imitates Christ in a literalist way thinks that the letter of the law is all-important; what counts as far as he is concerned is the gesture, the posture, the formula—never the meaning, the intention, or purpose of the law.

The Pharisees were literalists; they thought they were pure when they had washed their hands, even though their hearts remained full of avarice and lust. The members of the Sanhedrin were literalists; they took great precautions not to enter the profane dwelling of Pilate lest they be defiled on the Pasch, but they had no qualm about their hatred of Jesus. Our Lord patiently and gently warned his hearers against this narrow and false interpretation of the Law (Matt. 6:16ff; Is. 58:1-9).

But this was not Francis' spirit; Francis knew as well as his critics did that the letter kills and the spirit gives life; that it is not the action, but the intention which pleases God. But he also knew that grace is never refused to men of good will, even though they have no clear idea of their own capabilities; and he knew too that body and soul form one unit and cooperate in the service of God.

In no way can his literal imitation of Christ be called valueless, then, for it was practiced *according to the spirit*: it had nothing in common with any kind of dead formalism or literalism. This is further confirmed by the question he asked the priest at the Portiuncula. When the latter had finished reading the Gospel, Francis immediately made sure he had understood correctly; he immediately asked the priest how our Lord's words were to be interpreted. As far as Francis was concerned that poor priest at the Portiuncula was the Teaching Church, and Francis simply would not act without submitting his interpretation to the control of the Church; his way of life must be not only generous, but genuine as well. And that is what saved him from literalism—he sought the Spirit.

Other examples are easy to find in the course of his life; he renounced his patrimony under the aegis of Bishop Guido; he took up his apostolic vocation and form of life under that of Innocent III; he set up



his Order under that of Cardinal Hugolino; and he promulgated the divinely revealed Portiuncula Indulgence under that of Honorius III.

Hence his imitation of Christ could afford to be literal. He could afford to set up a counterpart to each of Christ's characteristics and to implement each lesson Christ taught. For he always did so *according to the Spirit*; his imitation was guided at all times by the spirit, and he always took care to find out the traditional interpretation of the Gospel events as given by the Fathers, Doctors, and theologians of the Church.

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The concept of a spirituality based completely upon the imitation of Christ did not originate with Francis, of course; the Apostles and the Fathers had always seen in the imitation of our Lord the very essence of Christian life. But it is no less true that a new application of this truth had to be made in the time of Francis, because the divine Model was no longer a living and vital force in the faith and devotion of the people as He had been in former times. No longer was it sufficient to tell the faithful that Jesus had left them His own example that they might follow in His footsteps, in order that His image might appear to them, luminous and captivating. For with the passage of centuries the spirit of the world had begun to make inroads upon Christian souls; it had succeeded in blurring the image of the divine Model and in vitiating its efficacy. Christian people had to be taught all over again to know, understand, and meditate on each word and action of our Lord—to see in each instance an example and a grace for themselves.

St. Bernard had set about this task of re-education with his monks; now Francis and his followers were to spread the same message among the faithful. The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* by Brother John of Calvoli are a good example of their style of preaching, for these meditations are far more characteristic of popular piety than are the tracts of St. Bonaventure with which they had long been joined. Each event, each seemingly insignificant detail of our Lord's life is related there and its meaning and lesson are explained—no longer only for the sake of dogmatic clarification as in the case of the Fathers, but for the sake of practical application in the lives of the people.

Thus the traditional imitation of our Lord became literal and explicit in St. Francis. And yet this literal application of the Gospel has always looked to the Spirit. Literal, but not literalist—indeed, spiritual throughout—it is the Franciscan method of imitating Christ. We have yet to see its sources and its fruits.

(To be continued)

## St. Francis of Assisi's Attitude Toward Money\*

Father Bruce Malina, O.F.M.

The obvious and primary source from which to draw any and all attitudes of St. Francis of Assisi is his writings. Hence in this paper, we shall endeavor to set forth what the writings of Francis tell us about his feeling toward money, then what his writings do not tell us, and finally why he says what he does say. Our conclusion will be: Francis was not very much interested in any sort of money problem; yet he was very interested in the problem of money.

1. *What St. Francis tells us about money in his writings.*

If we consider the number of St. Francis' writings in proportion to the number of times he speaks about money, our obvious conclusion will be that he speaks about money rather infrequently. The only documents specifically treating of money are the saint's two Rules. If we consider them in their historic sequence, we find a certain evolution of thought with regard to money as well.

The first mention of money is to be found in the Rule of 1221 (*Regula non bullata*), and this in the 2nd chapter where Francis directs those wishing to live the life of the Friars Minor to sell what they have and then give the proceeds to the poor, if they can. This directive clearly indicates that the Poverello did not consider money as something evil in itself, sinful in itself, as though any contact with it would render a person magically and automatically unclean. The context of this directive indicates that money aims to the poor were a common practice in Francis' day since money is more easily divisible and less perishable than donation in kind. This directive is repeated in the Rule of 1223, chapter 2.

Further on in the same chapter of the Rule of 1221, Francis insists that his Friars receive no money at all, either themselves or through anybody else. Then in chapter 8 of this same Rule, the Saint sets down the great prohibition of money binding on his Friars. The basis for this prohibition here is the Gospel prohibition to beware of all attitudes of wickedness and avarice and to refrain from the worries of this world and the cares of this life. Yet in one instance Francis does allow the receiving of money—specifically in the instance of the manifest need of sick Friars. This exception deals with particular



situations in which only the use of money can offer aid or relieve the problem. Aside from this exception, the context of this chapter indicates that poverty, as Francis understood it, rejects money as a sign of a person's drive to possess things, the drive to security through avarice. Hence rejection of money is part and parcel of poverty; Francis compares it to stones and dust, obviously evaluating money in relationship to God and not in relationship to economics.

Chapter 9 of this Rule leaves judgment of manifest necessity open to individual Friars, not to superiors alone. Further, chapter 14 states the Gospel text so important to Francis at the outset of his living in penance: "Take nothing for your journey, neither bag, nor purse, nor bread, nor money, nor staff . . ." Yet in this chapter, which authors consider a basic part of the primitive Franciscan Rule in its survey of the Gospel life, there is no further development of the theme of money. Hence the absolute prohibition of chapter 8 indicates a certain development of thought concerning money. If this is so, then at the very outset of his brotherhood, Francis placed no particular emphasis on the prohibition of money.

With the new Rule of 1223, the one which now binds the Friars Minor, there is apparently a greater severity with regard to money. Chapter 4 of this Rule expressly states the prohibition of money absolutely and thoroughly. It offers two new items, however: first, in no case (not even for the sick) are the Friars to take money; rather they are to take recourse to people outside the Order and ask them to furnish the needed items. Secondly, only superiors have the right and duty to judge a given necessity and subsequently ask for required items solely for the Friars' needs.

In this change of perspective, Francis obviously is moving to curtail abuses as he saw them. To help his Friars live the Gospel, live without the dangers of money, Francis shifts the responsibility by taking money worries out of the hands of his Friars and putting them into the hands of seculars or spiritual friends. But the problem arises—will the Friars always find a sufficient number of people willing to give them what they need when they need it? Francis does not seem to have foreseen this problem.

In chapter 5 of this definitive Rule, finally, Francis sets down the prohibition of receiving money once again, with no particular emphasis. And with these few texts, we exhaust the number of times Francis refers to money in his writings.

Obviously, it is extremely noteworthy that there is no further mention of money either in Francis' Testament or in the remainder of his writings. Considering the urgency with which the Rules treat

this point, the silence of the *Poverello* is more than surprising. Should we not expect a matter so close to the heart of Francis to be at least hinted at in various ways in the saint's letters and written admonitions? But such is not the case with the prohibition of money.

*B. What St. Francis does not tell us about money in his writings.*

First of all, Francis does not tell us that money is evil, or the root of evil; that money should never be touched because otherwise it might turn into a snake, or any such magical idea involved in touching money. The idea of money as evil in itself is the work of later biographers of St. Francis. To take one example, we might note how Thomas of Celano treats this "problem." When he describes Francis' early days with his first friars, Celano shows us Francis giving out money with Friar Bernard of Quintavalle upon his conversion. Then, when the future Friar Sylvester insists on being paid for the stones Francis used in repairing his churches, the *Poverello* personally paid him a great amount of money. But when we read Celano's second biography under the title "Examples against money," the biographer lists four unconnected incidents in which money becomes tantamount to dung, an evil charm, and finally the devil himself. This attitude is that of Celano, not that of Francis.

Secondly, Francis did not seem concerned about disobeying his new Rule of 1223 when dealing with "spiritual" friends. Though he renounced his superiority, the Saint would have recourse to people to buy things not only for the needs of the Friars (as the Rule allows superiors alone), but also for the needs of other people. And, since they remind him of Christ, the Saint would often have people buy lambs for him, and then the Saint would set the creatures free. Obviously this is not a case of manifest necessity as outlined in the Rule.

*C. Why does Francis speak of money as he does.*

To begin with, Francis stumbled upon the idea of rejecting money under God's inspiration. The random opening of the Gospel texts taken out of context offered him basis for his new way of medieval money. To understand what Francis was rejecting when he rejected money, we should look into what money meant to the person living in the Middle Ages.

In the 9th to the 12th centuries, things were evaluated in terms of money; it is true, but money itself played a lesser role because the economy of the times was agrarian. Each kingdom or state had its own money minted, and the value of money fluctuated greatly. Barter was the more common mode of economic life, since trading did not involve most of the population. However, about 1200 A.D. money



became the means of indirect exchange, hence of purchase, even as it is today. It likewise became the measure of value of all things. That is why people sought it—it was of stable value (*denarius grossus* of Venice), it gave impetus to the rise of trade and it acquired a stable means of exchange. It was during Francis' lifetime that this change took place gradually in Italy. The shift moved from an agrarian economy to a money economy.

The result was that money now was used as a universal norm for value. The superficial Christianity of the Middle Ages found it rather easy to treat money as though it were a person, and to treat persons as though they were things of economic value alone—much as we do in our own secularistic age. Everything has money value, including people. We speak of people being worth so much money, their productive value, etc.

A further result of this way of thinking and acting is that all ownership is judged in terms of money value; and stable money value is viewed as the basis for power and security—the more value a person has in terms of money, the more he has to say in enacting laws, in judging others, in ruling a country or city, in deciding the better interest of people. By the sixteenth century this idea of judging all things in terms of money was even applied to religious poverty—money or lack of it became the standard of whether a person follows Christ's poverty or not. In my estimation, such a procedure is rather ridiculous. Why?

Poverty as Francis understood it, has nothing to do with dollars and cents. Poverty means recognizing that God is the Lord of history and living one's life in total recognition of this fact, following Christ's footsteps. Stable money value coupled with human egoism would have us believe that the rich, the "haves," are the lords of history, and that we, in turn, should live in accordance with the money we have or do not have. Instead of taking our directives from the living Lord of history, God, we take our cue from the rich and measure our successes in terms dictated by the rich. If we but realize that only God is the Lord of human history, then money becomes tantamount to dust and stones—it is a good, convenient means of exchange, but not a measure of ultimate and universal values. With his rejection of money, especially toward the end of his life (as mirrored in the Rule of 1223), Francis wants to reject the security and the delicious feeling of power that comes with having and owning money. Money opposes poverty only because money would have us walk the way of the great of this world and not the way of God who alone is the Lord of men.

That our observations are correct can be borne out on three accounts.

First of all, on March 17, 1226, the Holy See granted a dispensation to the Franciscan missionaries in Morocco to use money because, as the document specifically states, the economy of Morocco was then a money economy, not an agrarian one. Francis was alive and head of the Order when his document was published. Yet he did not raise a voice of protest against it in his Testament, written after this said dispensation. It seems that money was the only way of solving the problem in this instance. The Friars in Morocco were poor to begin with; their sole purpose for going to such a heathen land was to bear witness to Christ there, to help others realize that God is their Lord, not world values. Hence they possessed what Francis called "poverty." Money was necessary and proved to be no obstacle.

Secondly, by 1223 a money economy took hold of nearly all of Italy as well. St. Clare wrote her Rule for sisters that year, basing herself on Francis' Rule of 1223, leaving out everything incompatible with the life of her cloistered sisters. And we might note that she dismisses Francis' prohibition of money as well as the need of recourse to spiritual friends. She likewise allows money to be brought into the cloister to take care of the needs at hand. No one will deny that Clare really understood St. Francis' concerns. It would seem that the change in economic circumstances, unforeseen by Francis, was the reason for Clare's action in this respect. Furthermore, the total poverty of Clare and her sisters would find no obstacle in money.

Finally, there is a gloss on chapter 8 of the Rule of 1221 telling why Francis allowed his friars to take money for the needs of the sick. The unknown author states that Francis allowed them money because "they did not give a tinker's damn about money and continually chased after poverty and were so enthusiastic about it." This poverty, as I mentioned, has nothing to do with dollars and cents. It means being totally intent upon emptying one's egoism and living always with the recognition that God is the Lord of human existence, not the rich or the powerful. This of course requires a lack of ownership, since ownership involves the ever present menace of making oneself lord and not God. It likewise involves sticking to the essentials of life rather than to superfluity, since superfluity would woo man's heart away from his Lord and back to selfishness.

I think these three instances indicate that poverty is the key to the use of money. If our sole intent is serving the Lord God alone, not ourselves, then money motives would not enter our plans. Our economic



situation demands the use of money, as St. Clare seems to have seen. But to use money as though it were merely a means of exchange, and not the almighty measure of all value in life, then one has to first possess the attitude of poverty as I have defined it. Otherwise a dispensation to use money will be taken as a dispensation from poverty, and poverty itself will continue to be measured in terms of dollars and cents.

\*The data of this paper have been culled from the following sources:

- K. Esser, O.F.M., *Themes Spirituels*. Editions franciscaines. Paris, 1957.
- L. Hardick, O.F.M., "Pecunia et Denarii. Untersuchungen zum Geldverbot in den Regeln der Minderbrüder," in *Franciskanische Studien* 40 (1958) 192-217; 313-328; 41 (1959) 268-290.
- S. Verhey, O.F.M., *Der Mensch unter dem Herrschaft Gottes*. Düsseldorf, 1960.

## REPENTANCE

I shall not be  
Disappointed or discouraged  
By my weaknesses and falls.

May they serve  
Only to remind me  
That I must rise in haste  
And run into Your arms,  
My God.

Hold me!  
Quiet me!  
Just let me rest here  
In Your arms.

Sister M. Baylon (Zamboni), O.S.F.

## Early Sources for the Life of St. Francis

Father Byron A. Witzmann, O.F.M.

(Continued)

### Philipp's or Little Collection

In 1910 a grand source for stories on St. Francis came to light. It was brought to the eyes of the Franciscan world by A. G. Little in the *Philips Codex*.

The book may be divided into four parts: 1. the two Rules, with papal and other expositions along with commentaries such as those of John Peckham, St. Bonaventure, the Five Masters, and John Olivi; 2. the *Actus*; 3. excerpts from the *Speculum Perfectionis* and other collections; 4. another version of the *Actus*, and 6. a collection of miscellanea. Perhaps the most important part of the study is to be found in the second and third section. All together it contains 230 pieces of Franciscan information. Moorman thinks that it contains some of the original "Rule" of Brother Leo, if so, it is of great importance. It was compiled about 1400.

A description of the manuscript can be read in the *Collectanea Franciscana*, Vol. I (British Society of Franciscan Studies, Vol. V).  
*St. Anthony in Rome Codex*

At the end of the 13th century another collection of Franciscan stories was made. This is now in St. Anthony's in Rome, whence its present name. It has three parts. The first contains the *Life of St. Francis* by St. Bonaventure; the second deals with Bartholi's *Tract on the Portiuncula Indulgence*; the third and most important is a collection of 95 Franciscan anecdotes, few of which are found in other sources. It quotes the writings of St. Francis, and the *Legenda Vetust*, namely, *Celano II*, as two of its main sources.<sup>9</sup>

A description of this manuscript can be found in the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Vol. XII, pp. 321-357. The text for the most outstanding part, namely, the third section, is printed on pages 358-440. *The Conformity of St. Francis to Jesus Christ*

<sup>9</sup> A 15th century Franciscan sermon on the Portiuncula Indulgence, recently acquired in manuscript at St. Bonaventure University was reported in the *Cord*, X, No. 1, Jan. 1960, p. 14.



From 1285 to 1390 Friar Bartholomew of Pisa was engaged in writing his most famous work *Liber De Conformitate Vitae Beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Jesu*. It was in this year of 1285 that he finished compiling a similar work entitled *Opus Conformitatum B. Virginis cum Christo*. The *Conformity of St. Francis to Christ* was approved by the General Chapter of 1399 and was so well received that the Ministers of the Chapter gave Bartholomew a habit worn by St. Francis.

This book of 1200 pages is a storehouse of Franciscan history up to the end of the 14th century. In three books, containing 40 'fruits' or chapters, the author points out the conformity of the life of St. Francis to that of his Ideal, Jesus Christ. He compares the virtues of St. Francis with those of Christ, showing how perfectly Francis was Christ-like and lived a Christ-life. Some of the comparisons are: how Francis, like Christ, was foreseen in the Bible and in early writings; how both Christ and Francis practiced humility; how crowds followed Jesus and also St. Francis in his three Orders; how Jesus gave a law and Francis wrote a Rule; how Christ had disciples and sent them out to preach, and thus did St. Francis.

It is a fairly reliable source for Franciscan history and, to some extent, even critical. A few of his sources which he lists are: *The Writings of St. Francis*, Thomas of Celano, St. Bonaventure, *Three Companions*, *Mirror of Perfection* and a *Legenda Antiqua*. Some of the stories he perpetuates seem improbable. He also has a "spiritual" view in regard to poverty. In reference to Elias, he does not play up to him, and often interprets his actions with St. Francis in the light of his later fall.

The Latin text for this source is printed in the *Analecta Franciscana*, Vol. IV and V (Quaracchi, 1906, 1912)

This monumental work of Bartholomew stands as a source of early Franciscan history and a source for understanding Franciscan Spirituality—conformity to Christ.

### Conclusion

With the prodigious work of Bartholomew of Pisa we bring to a close our study of the early sources on the Franciscan Friars. We end here because after Bartholomew's work, there is very little which is added to our knowledge of the early Franciscan life. All that is of historical importance in the life of St. Francis is found in the works of the 13th and 14th centuries.

*The End*

# Tenth Annual Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods

Father Irenaeus Herscher, O.F.M.

The Tenth Annual Meeting of Franciscan Sisters Educational Conference was held at Lourdes Convent, 5531 S. Karlov Ave., Chicago, Illinois, November 24-25, 1961, during the Thanksgiving holidays. Over 500 Sister Delegates gathered from the Eastern and Mid-Western States to consider this year's theme: "Franciscan Financial Administration."

The two-day convention was opened with a High Mass sung by the Very Rev. Ernest Latko, O.F.M., president of the Franciscan Educational Conference, under whose auspices the gathering was held.

The delegates were welcomed by the Provincial of the Chicago Province Mother M. Benjamin, S.S.J., who introduced the Mother General of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis: Rev. Mother M. Dionysia, S.S.J., whose keynote address was read for her by Sister M. Leonia, S.S.J. (Rev. Mother was nursing a cold.)

"Franciscans bound by the vow of strict poverty," she declared in her prepared statement, "discussing *Financial Administration* might be viewed with suspicion—as being out of joint with the spirit of their Founder. Today, however, we are living in an age of new dimensions.

"To provide for the steadily increasing and staggering cost of education so necessary to carry on the Apostolate of the Community; to secure assistance in erecting necessary housing for a growing community; and to participate in the works of charity undertaken by the Church, is a difficult and pressing financial problem of this present era . . . We are fortunate in being able, like St. Francis, to look to the Church and her representatives for guidance in this dilemma. We who are gathered here today, are beneficiaries of the finely tempered thinking of the F.E.C. who discussed this subject last summer," she concluded.

The first Paper was devoted to "The Attitude of St. Francis of Assisi toward Money," and was prepared by the Rev. Bruce Malina, O.F.M., of West Chicago, now on the Missions in the Philippines. He set forth what St. Francis thought about money, what he said about it, and what he did not say about it, and finally why he said what he did say about it.



A scholarly and well documented Paper "The Historical aspects of Franciscan Money Management" was presented by the Very Rev. Raphael Huber, O.F.M. Conv., S.T.D., of Rensselaer, N. Y. In it, he outlined the development of Poverty among the First Order Franciscans, and showed how various families of the Poorvello present slightly varied interpretations of the Franciscan Ideal, all of them approved by Holy Mother the Church.

Sister Helen Marie, O.S.F., of the College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, led the discussion which followed, and drew attention to the fact that there was a similar development of the Franciscan ideal among the Poor Clares, members of the Second Order of St. Francis. She concluded that "Community poverty is both the root and the fruit of individual poverty."

The afternoon session began with a general assembly at which the Rev. Urban Wiehle, O.F.M., of Cincinnati, Ohio discussed: "Purchasing: Centralized or Localized?" This very practical subject elicited a number of questions from the floor. Sister M. Catherine, O.S.F., of Peoria, Ill., was discussion leader.

Sister M. Aniceta, S.S.J. of Cleveland addressing herself to the college section, outlined the procedure of a Fund Raising Campaign conducted without professional assistance. In her paper entitled "Fund-Raising—A Community Project," she showed how Franciscans can retain the spirit of St. Francis by not being ashamed to ask for alms, and by assuring the giver that giving is a great privilege. Sister M. Laudise, C.S.S.F., of Chicago, was the discussion leader and brought out additional practical hints for those planning a "drive" or campaign.

The Elementary School section heard an inspiring Paper on "Poverty and Spirituality," by Sister M. Marilyn, O.S.F. of Wheaton, Illinois. The High School section was treated to a practical paper on "Franciscan Adaptation in Financial Administration with special emphasis on the High School." This was presented by Sister Muriel, O.S.F., of Joliet, Illinois. She said: "It is our challenge to keep the spirit of St. Francis while adapting to modern economic conditions."

"I firmly believe that if Our Holy Father St. Francis were with us today, he would heartily endorse the application of Fra Luca Pacioli's invention of Double-Entry bookkeeping, with all its important features, in our Franciscan educational institutions," she said. "To apply Franciscan ideals to financial administration would be as nearly as possible to 'put on the mind of Christ' in any given situation, just as Francis did."

The library section was treated to another practical discussion on the subject of "Budgeting in College, School and Convent Libraries," by the Rev. Jovian Lang, O.F.M., Quincy (Ill.) College librarian.

The afternoon session was closed with Solemn Benediction given by the Most Rev. Cletus F. O'Donnell, D.D., Vicar-General and Auxiliary-Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The second day of the conference was opened with a High Mass offered by the Very Rev. Juniper Cummings, O.F.M. Conv. S.T.D. of Chaska, Minn., vice-president of the F.E.C. This was followed by an Open Forum on "Canon Law and Financial Problems."

The Very Rev. Donald Wiest, O.F.M. Cap. J.C.D. of Marathon, Wis., was chairman of the panel which included the following members: Sr. M. Annella, F.S.P.A., LaCrosse, Wis.; Sr. M. Clarissa, S.S.J., of Chicago; Sr. M. Joyce, O.S.F., of Manitowoc, Wis.; Sr. M. Olivia, O.S.F., Indianapolis; and Sr. M. Theresa, O.S.F., of Joliet, Ill. This proved one of the most lively sessions. Members of the audience took an active part in the discussions, presenting some of the typical problems and questions regarding financial matters and Canon Law.

The afternoon session was opened by Sister M. Laura, S.S.J., of South Bend, Ind., who presented a paper on "Practical Business Problems of Religious." Sister M. Patrick of Winona, Minn., led the discussion which followed.

Summaries were then read of the various sectional meetings held the previous afternoon. In response to popular request, the open forum discussions of the morning session were continued.

The two-day conference was then brought to a close with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, given by the Very Rev. Ernest Latko, O.F.M., S.T.D. president, assisted by members of the Executive Board, which met during the sessions to discuss time, place and topic of next year's Franciscan Educational Conference.

### BROTHER LEAVES

Oh we're falling, falling to earth;  
Lost forever our slender living grip.  
Softly, faintly, gliding, sliding,  
swinging downward.  
Twisting, turning, gracefully settling,  
On Brother Earth.

We're rising, climbing,  
On gust of chilly wind!



Sinking, descending, returning earthward,  
Once again.  
Now rolling, spinning, wheeling,  
Moving from door to door;  
As if to say 'good-bye' to friends, long known,  
We'll see no more.

Happily, joyfully, we're hopping,  
Skipping along busy streets;  
Mingling and rustling in the crowds.  
Merrily dancing, singing, clinging,  
Hugging to people's feet.  
Seeing a-near, those known only a-far;  
Looking up, instead of down.  
All so different, all so new,  
So dream-like, so beautiful.

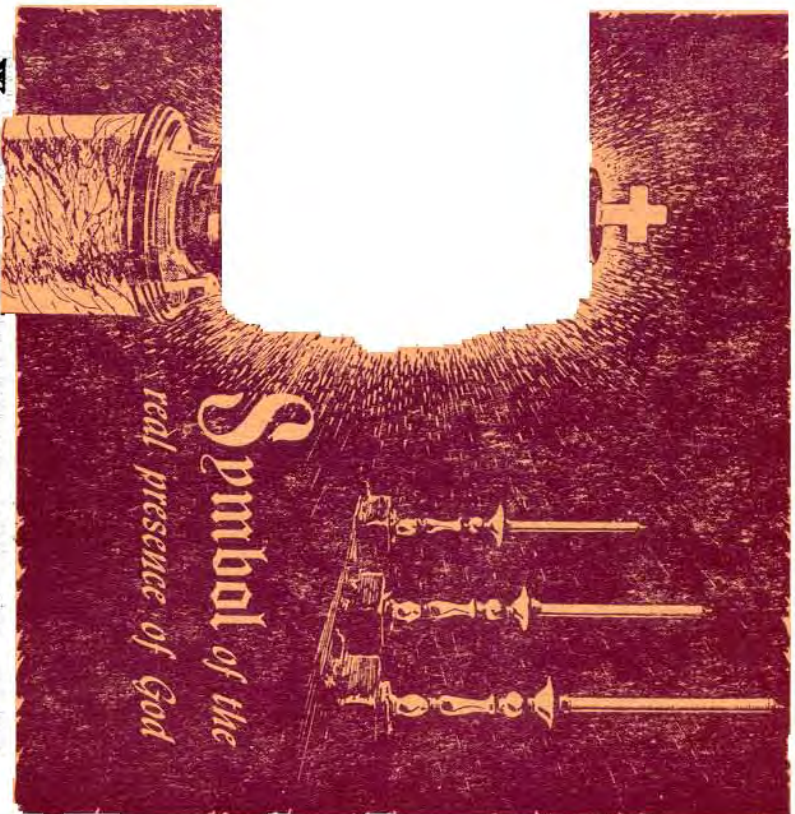
But life is departing, fleeing so fast.  
Color no longer shining, glistening,  
In noon-day sun. Life's evening shadows,  
Creeping nearer, covering us all,  
With its mantle of darkness.

They're coming; raking, sweeping,  
Gathering into baskets; taking us away.  
No escaping, no hiding; Brother Wind is still.  
No one to carry us to safety;  
Forlorn and neglected.

Pushing, squeezing, huddling together,  
Like homeless men. While Brother Fire,  
Blazing, flaming, anxiously awaits us.  
Into his arms we go; no weeping, no crying,  
No mourning among us.  
Glowing, sparkling, chanting and singing;  
Returning to our Creator,  
God's will accomplished.

*Portangatu, Goias, Brazil*  
*Frei Cormac Neil McDonnell, O.F.M.*





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# A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

## Psalms 122 and 127

"One picture is worth a thousand words" says the Chinese proverb, and all poets agree. This is true of sacred poets as it is of profane poets. The Psalms, therefore, will be rich in imagery and figurative language. As illustrations of this claim I'm going to choose two from the group of Pilgrim Songs, which we have been considering.

The first of these, Psalm 122, is found in the Little Office at the beginning of Sext. Like most of the Pilgrim Songs this poem is a short one; it has only four verses, distributed equally into two strophes. The first one describes in figurative language the desperate circumstances in which the poet stands; the second one consists of his fervent prayer for deliverance from them. This pattern resembles one which appears frequently among the Psalms. Commentators sometimes refer to such Psalms as lamentations: poems in which the speaker humbly presents his complaints to God, offers reasons why God should help him, and begs God to do so. Although we may, therefore, think of Psalm 122 as somewhat of a lamentation, this is not the feature of it that I am going

to emphasize. I want to stress its use of imagery.

The first strophe opens with an expression of the poet's appeal to God:

*To you I lift up my eyes  
who are enthroned in heaven.*

Nothing about the words reveals or even suggests the poet's reason for his action. He most likely intends them to tease our curiosity and so to provoke us into reading further to discover the cause of his conduct. What his words do reveal, of course, is a realization of God's transcendent dominion and of his own subjection to it. The strength of his conviction is discernible, I think, in his simple, stark statement of it.

The notion of dependence, implicit in the first verse, is the basis for the imagery of the second verse:

*Behold, as the eyes of servants  
are on the hands of their  
masters,*

*As the eyes of a maid  
are on the hands of her mistress,  
So are our eyes on the Lord, our  
God,*

*till he have pity on us.*

Before we consider the image presented here, we should notice the structure of the lines. The verse is composed of three distichs,



the first two of which form a perfect synonymous parallelism. The third distich, when we examine it closely, turns out to be partly a repetition and partly an elaboration of the notion expressed in the first verse of the strophe. This relationship makes these two parts—seemingly quite unconnected—come together to reinforce the idea of man's submission to God.

The picture presented in the verse would be familiar to anybody acquainted with oriental home life. The servants of the household, men and women, some of them slaves, stand about the room, waiting to do the bidding of the master or mistress of the house. Their eyes are intent upon the hands of those they serve. Why? Because when the master moves his hand, they have to be quick to notice and to interpret his gesture. Does it beckon forward or wave dismissal? Does the hand point here or there to indicate a task that must be performed immediately? Does the master raise his hand as a signal of satisfied approval? Does the mistress lift an angry hand to strike her maid in punishment? In the literal sense of the word, the fate of these servants depends upon the hands they serve.

The picture, admittedly, is no full canvas. It is simply a sketch. That is, I think, the reason for its peculiar effectiveness. There are enough details to help us picture the scene but not enough

to help us picture it completely. Our imaginations are nudged into wondering what feelings are reflected in these watchful eyes. Into wondering what sign these servants will see, what move these hands will make. It is a skillful poet who can thus keep us wondering about his picture until he puts the final stroke into it, the one which will complete it and satisfy our curiosity. This stroke comes in the final distich when we learn that the servants are looking for some sign that the master will have pity upon them and lower the hand he has raised in angry chastisement.

These final words of the simile reveal that God is actually the master whose angry hand is raised against his Chosen People and that they are the servants who are looking up to him in hopeful expectancy. The poet, of course, is falling back upon custom when he uses the human hand to symbolize God's power to punish man's misdeeds. David, for instance, in describing the suffering his sins had brought upon him, had cried out, *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.*

(Psalm 31:4)

In his petition for relief he had used the same figure:

*Take away your scourge from me;  
at the blow of your hand I wast-  
ed away.*

(Psalm 38: 11)

The same figure, too, was used to depict the almighty providence of God:

*If I take the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle at the farthest limits  
of the sea,  
Even there your hand shall guide  
me,  
and your right hand hold me  
fast.*

(Psalm 138: 9-10)

One more point should be made about this final distich of the first strophe. I have already mentioned its resemblance to the first distich of the strophe. Do you think it would be pushing things too far to say that the poet intended this likeness between the opening words of the strophe—

*To you I lift up my eyes  
who are enthroned in heaven—  
and the closing words of it—  
So are our eyes on the Lord, our  
God,*

*till he have pity on us—*  
to be a kind of frame for the picture which they enclose? You could say, then, that in this first strophe the poet has painted a picture, framed it, and set it before us for our contemplation.

What do we learn from contemplating it? That the Chosen People are confident that God will pity them and spare them further chastisements. Did you notice, by the way, that what started out as the utterance of one man becomes in the end the utterance of all the people? We could explain this change by saying that the poet is speaking as the representative of the people with whom he later associates himself. Or we might

say that, under the influence of his inspiration what started out as concern for his own welfare widens to embrace all those who suffer with him. The poem would thus be a reminder of the sympathy and love that must inevitably flood the soul of anybody who lifts his mind and heart to God. No matter, though, how we explain this passage from "I" to "us," we shall have to admit that it does make the poem a more appropriate hymn for groups of pilgrims to sing on their way to the Holy City.

The second strophe is the prayer occasioned by the circumstances in which the Israelites find themselves. It is the plea of servants to a master whose hand is too long raised in punishment. The opening words ring out like a cry of pain:

*Have pity on us, O Lord, have  
pity on us!*

Then comes the reason for the appeal for mercy:

*For we are more than sated with  
contempt.*

The imaginative word in the line is *sated*. It brings to mind people who have fed for so long on a monotonous diet that they have had more than their fill, and they loathe it. You have probably heard people say that they have had so much trouble that they are sick of it. That is the sense of the word here. Derision, mockery, persecution have been for so long the food of the Israelites that they are



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sated, satiated, filled to weariness on the diet. Theirs is the mind of the poet who thus prayed to God: *O Lord of hosts, how long will you burn with anger while your people pray? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in ample measure.*

(Psalm 79: 5-6)

If you concentrate for a moment on the structure of this third verse—another example, incidentally, of progressive parallelism—you notice that it carries over from the second verse and repeats twice the essential word *pity*. Something similar is done to tie together this third verse and the final verse of the poem. Here is the fourth verse: *Our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud.*

This tristicl repeats from verse three the phrase *more than sated*. Further, the phrase *with contempt* in the third verse is echoed in the synonymous parallelism of the concluding distich of the strophe. So that, actually, the fourth verse contains not so much a new idea as a repetition and slight modification of an earlier one. Is this a deliberate attempt by the poet to suggest something of the intensity of the emotion that moves his prayer? You have certainly heard people who are deeply moved expressing themselves by repeating the same words and phrases. The

sad monotony of their words reveals the depth of their misery. They repeat over and over again the few exclamations that give their hearts relief. The second strophe of Psalm 122, with its varied repetitions, is intended, I think, to be this kind of utterance.

It is in the fourth verse that we are acquainted with the persecutions sustained by the poet and his associates. Since there is no certainty when this poet wrote his work, there can be no identification of the persecutions, no exact description of the contemptuous mockery vented upon the Jews by their proud and arrogant oppressors. It is highly likely, though, that the conditions referred to are those that existed in Jerusalem after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. In his record of these days Nehemias remarks that when word of the rebuilding of Jerusalem "came to Sanaballat the Horonite, and Tobias the Slave, that was of Ammon's breed, and Gosem the Arabian, all was mockery and disdain" (Nehemias 3:19). The work went forward, however, and "great was the rage of Sanaballat when news reached him that we were rebuilding the walls, and cruel were the taunts he uttered against the Jews in his anger. There among his kinsmen, there before a throng of Samaritan folk, he taunted us: What are they about, these starveling Jews? Do they think we Gentiles will let them have their

way? Or do they think to handseal their work at dawn and have it finished by nightfall? From these charred ashes can they make stones to build with? Let them build, said his gossip Tobias the Ammonite; come a fox by, he will leap over all the stones they can put together" (Nehemias 41: 1-3).

At this very point, before going on to narrate the further troubles raised against the Jews by their enemies, as if he were "more than sated with contempt," Nehemias interrupts his chronicle and addresses God directly. The tone of his prayer and the feeling behind it are those of Psalm 122: "Mark it well, Lord God, how they turn us into a laughing-stock; on their own heads let the mockery recoil; exile and ignominy be their lot! Do not hide away their guilt; imperishable in thy presence be the record of the wrong they did, in flouting such a design as this (Nehemias 4: 4-5).

We cannot say that Nehemias and the poet of Psalm 122 were victims of the same persecution. What we can say is that they share the same attitude towards any and all persecution. The sufferings of the Jews were a punishment deservedly inflicted for the sins they had committed against God. This they always admitted, and the admission always brought them back to him with one prayer on their lips: "Have pity on us, O Lord, have pity on us!" On the other hand, they recognized always that the

afflictions meted out to them by their persecutors were an assault upon the Chosen People of God. Such assaults were a flouting of his eternal design for the salvation of mankind. Because of this outlook there were always two strands in Jewish prayer. One is expressed in the plea of Nehemias that God punish his persecutors; the other is expressed by the poet of Psalm 122, who calls, with repentance and confidence, upon the Lord for deliverance from his persecutors.

The second Psalm we want to look at is Psalm 127, the final Psalm at None. This poem, too, is a short one. There are six verses altogether, four in the first strophe, which describes the happy home of the just man, and two in the second strophe, which prays for the continuance of his happiness.

The structure of the first strophe resembles that of Psalm 122. A general statement is followed by a deft vignette, both of these parts being rounded out by a modified repetition of the initial statement. Thus you get the same impression of viewing a picture in a frame. The strophe opens with the announcement of the conviction that permeates the entire poem: *Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.*

The poet has already used a metaphor to depict those who live in conformity to the laws of God. They "walk in his ways." This figure was common enough among



the sacred writers. In praying for the grace to lead a holy and blameless life, David, for example, used the same figure of speech:

*At dawn let me hear of your kindness,*

*for in you I trust.*

*Show me the way in which I should walk,*

*for to you I lift up my soul.*

(Psalm 142: 8)

It is in words reminiscent of this metaphor, in fact, that the program for a good life is laid down in the first Psalm of the Psalter:

*Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked*

*Nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent,*

*But delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.*

(Psalm 1: 1-2)

The psalmist goes on to describe the reward of such a man. And to do so he employs another figure of speech:

*He is like a tree*

*planted near running water,*

*That yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade.*

(Psalm 1: 3)

I have spent time on Psalm 1 because its description of the just man and of the reward that comes to him follows a pattern somewhat similar to the one found in Psalm 127. The first verse of this latter Psalm, as we have seen, proclaims

the happiness of the man who fears the Lord and obeys his law. The three succeeding verses describe the rewards that will accrue to such a man. In the first of these verses, verse two of the Psalm, he is promised success and a measure of prosperity:

*For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;*

*happy shall you be and favored.*

Behind this figure of the man sitting down to enjoy the fruits of his labor is a twofold assurance: firstly, that the good man will be

blessed with the possession of the things that he needs and, secondly, that he will possess his belongings without fear of loss or deprivation. We may not sufficiently

realize how such a prospect would certainly make a Jew happy unless we know how ardently every Jew yearned to be self-supporting and independent. All of them

learned a trade in order to support themselves and to be no burden to anybody else. Saint Paul, you may recall so depended upon his trade of tent-making for his support that, in bidding farewell to the Ephesians, he could remind them, "I have never asked for silver or gold or clothing from any man; you will hear me out, that these hands of mine have sufficed for all I and my companions needed" (Acts 20: 33-34). Not that they were avaricious men, either. The degree of success and prosperity they worked for is explicitly

described in the request they made to obtain it: "For my state of life, be neither poverty mine nor riches. Grant me only the livelihood I need; so shall abundance tempt me not to disown thee, and doubt if Lord there be, nor want bid me steal, and dishonor my God's name with perjury" (Proverbs 30: 8-9). Every religiously-minded Jew, therefore, would consider himself happy and favored if it were promised him that "you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork."

In addition to material success, the good man will be favored with the joys of a happy married life. This is the promise of the third verse:

*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine*

*in the recesses of your home.*

I cannot help being reminded by these words of the comparison in Psalm 1 between the good man and "the tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade." Here, though, the comparison is a more delicate one; it focuses attention upon the wife's vitality, gracefulness, fruitfulness, and loving dependence upon her husband. That she has modesty and dignity is suggested by the assurance given the good man that his wife will be "like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home." He need not fear the disgrace brought upon a man by the kind of woman who "sits at her door, her chair commanding the city's height, and cries aloud to such as

pass by on their lawful errands" (Proverbs 9: 14).

As we read on, we realize that we are being conducted into those inner parts of the home where the members of the family live their lives in loving intimacy. We gaze on the group this good man was promised that he should see:

*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine*

*in the recesses of your home;*

*Your children like olive plants around your table.*

The figure of the young olive trees, springing up around the parent tree, fresh and green and full of promise for the future, completes the picture. It needs only to be put into its frame. And this the poet does by repeating, with some modification, the thought behind the statement with which he opened the strophe:

*Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord.*

The second strophe is far less picturesque than the first one. It is, too, much more formal. The first verse—the fifth verse of the Psalm—is at the outset an invocation of God's blessing upon the just man.

*The Lord bless you from Zion.*

This is followed by a wish for the enduring welfare of the Holy City, with which the happiness and fortunes of the individual Jew were so intimately bound up:

*May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem*

*all the days of your life.*



Then comes the wish for longevity and the "crown of old age, when a man sees his children's children" (Proverbs 17: 6) :

*May you see your children's children.*

Finally this garland of good wishes is closed with a blessing:

*Peace be upon Israel!*

There is here something like the kind of close we saw in the case of Psalm 124. The words "Peace be upon Israel!" seem to echo the liturgical blessing given by the priests and levites in the Temple. This entire second strophe, in fact, seems very much like the kind of blessing that the sacred ministers pronounce over one of the faithful. This quality and the fact that the first strophe, too, is so evidently addressed to the just man himself lend weight to the supposition that

we have here a Psalm that was used as a kind of liturgical prayer and blessing for the reception of pilgrims in the Temple. If this be true, then the Psalm as a whole evokes a picture of that solemn moment when a pilgrim comes to the end of his journey and stands in the Temple itself to offer his sacrifice to God. His very being there is evidence supreme of his willingness to observe the laws of God. In face of such proof, what more fitting than that the priest who blesses him encourage and strengthen him to continue walking in the ways of the Lord? And how better could he do the task than by promising the happiness and favors this Psalm describes as the reward of those "who fear the Lord" and "who walk in his ways?"

## LADY OF SPACE

Lady of space,  
Clothed with the sun,  
Born in God's mind,  
Immaculate one!  
Crowned with the stars,  
The moon at your feet,  
Mother and Mistress  
Your praise we repeat!  
Lady of sky-ways,  
Queen of our race,  
Flower of earthlings,  
Hail, full of Grace!

*Sister M. Josephine, O.S.F.*

## The Poor Man Before God

*Translated from the French by Rev. Paul J. Oligny, O.F.M.*

### III

All the labour of man is for his mouth, but his soul shall not be filled. What hath the wise man more than the fool? And what the poor man, but to go thither, where there is life?

(Eccles. 6, 7-8)<sup>1</sup>

1. A well-known episode in the life of our Holy Father St. Francis will serve as the subject of our next meditation, namely, his first encounter with Lady Poverty.

The incident is considered to have taken place in the third year of his conversion, after the long year of captivity at Perugia, after the other long year of sickness which followed his release, after the failure of many unrelated projects, the most famous of which was the escapade for the Crusade which ended in Spoleta the following morning . . . Although Francis had already had a change of heart, he was still weak and irresolute and did not yet know the road to take . . . His companions, who were little concerned with mysticism, suggested that he try the diversion of their former boisterous pleasures.

He once more let himself be won over. He organized a feast, and as usual he was the provider and king.

Celano recounts this banquet and gives the impression that he is relying on his memory. He mentions that Francis' companions had eaten and drunk beyond moderation, and that their conduct, conversation, and loud mirth only accentuated Francis' disgust for such amusement. At the close of the banquet, they walked down the narrow, sloping streets of Assisi singing, rollicking, exciting dogs, calling out to the rare passers-by, and awakening the sleeping citizens.

Francis followed them, his burlesque scepter in hand, and unintentionally let them precede him, for he was absorbed in silent recollection.

Suddenly he stopped. His eyes were lost in a sky spangled in the clearness of the Umbrian night with a thousand stars he did not see.

How long a time, how many minutes or seconds did he remain rapt in this ecstasy?

"Hey! Francis. The lover. Are you dreaming about getting married? Their call, accompanied by their coarse laughter, brought him back to reality. Meanwhile, they had returned to look for him. As they



grouped around him in their usual rollicking way, he answered them in the same tone of voice: "Yes, And I am thinking of taking a Bride, one more noble and wealthy and beautiful than you have ever seen." Again, outbursts of laughter greeted his answer. It was all of a piece with what people were saying about him. Then, all made their way to the *piazzetta* where they parted company forever.

## I

1. The noble and beautiful bride which Francis had seen on that clear night has been dubbed Lady Poverty. But we must decode her symbol.

The ecstasy had revealed to Francis the meaning of a truth which we all know but to which practically all of us are indifferent, just as he had been up to that time.

Francis had become conscious of his essential and absolute dependence on God; and, by way of contrast, of his absolute and essential poverty.

He had seen and understood, at once and without rationalizing, that *God is all*, while he, Francis, was *nothing*, except for what God wanted him to be, but nothing more than what God made him be;

that *God possesses everything*, while Francis possessed *nothing*, except what it pleased God to loan, give, entrust, and confide to him; that *God does all things*, while Francis accomplishes *nothing*, except what God in his generosity deigns to work in, through, and with him . . .

He had been caught up, penetrated, and transpierced by the revelation of his relationship as creatures to his Creator.

G. K. Chesterton has picturesquely expressed Francis' experience.

FRANCIS SUDDENLY SAW THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN.

A moment's reflection will convince us of the propriety of this paradox. Do we not picture to ourselves our antipodes in this strange situation? Antiquity and the Middle Ages, not knowing the law of gravity, claimed that it was impossible for men to live with their feet set against each other, for the very reason that these antipodes "would fall into the sky." No, the antipodes do not fall into the sky; they remain suspended there, just as we, the antipodes of the New Zealanders, are suspended without inflicting any injury on ourselves.

3. Francis would not, indeed, have thought of this comparison; but he was certainly not unaware of another which came from the pen of St. Augustine: *we are the beggars of God: we owe our very life to him.*

As a beggar of God, Francis looked upon himself as receiving life, breath, and all things from him. Emrapured both by the fullness

of God's love in his behalf which so universal a liberality gave proof of and by the plenitude of confidence in God which so complete a poverty demanded of him, he at once agreed to the complete renunciation of himself in God's behalf, from whom he had received being, movement, and life, in a word, everything that was necessary for the preservation, use, and perfection of being, movement, and life.

My God and My All! You are all to me; I then must and can hope that you will be ALL to me, and that you will be my all in time and in eternity . . .

## II

4. We could have learned from the philosophers of the absolute and essential dependence of the creature on his Creator, of the dependence of that which does not exist on him who is and who gives existence, of the dependence of all things on the First Cause. Without rising to the knowledge of the origin of the world through creation, Aristotle concluded, from the existence of movable things, to their necessary relation to a Prime and Immovable Mover.

St. Paul, however, has taught us this truth in a more assuring way. You undoubtedly recognized his words in the expressions we used to set forth the truths which had taken such a convincing prominent position in the soul of the ecstatic Francis.

One day as St. Paul was talking with a great natural wisdom to the Athenians grouped around him on the Areopagus, he said: "God who made the world and all that is in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by hands; neither is he served by human hands as though he were in need of anything, since it is he who gives to all men life and breath and all things" (Acts 17, 24-25). He was talking of men to whom God gives life, then a rational soul, intelligence, and knowledge, in a word, everything they need.

"And from one man," the Apostle continues, "he has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth, determining their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands; that they should seek God, and perhaps grope after him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 26-28).

We, men, and everything in the world, have existence, activity, our *raison d'être*, and our end in God, through God, and in dependence on God.

\* \* \*

5. Is it truly necessary to place so much emphasis on well-known truths? All of us surely know them. But as a rule not advert to them, anymore than we realize our paradoxical







## THE POOR MAN BEFORE GOD

His consciousness of participating in the being, nature, and activity of God is the witness by the Holy Spirit to him of his own filiation as well as that of every creature. For in discovering his dependence, in accepting his indigence, in professing his poverty, Francis further discovered and recognized the universal brotherhood of creatures, which like him and with him received from God the Father being, movement, and life as an alms given to their intrinsic poverty.

## III

8. Hello-Le-Voyant was struck and as it were dazzled by the place given to the poor man in the book of revelation, the Bible.

"When the poor man is mentioned," he says, "tremble, God is about to appear!" And why? Because the poor man wears his status as creature out in the open, and thinks not of dissimulating it.

His basic indigence in regard to God is manifested in his present dependence on his neighbor.

His material poverty is, as it were, the sacred acknowledgement of the universal need which makes creatures dependent on their Author.

Let there henceforth be no surprise at God's attentions to the poor man with which the Psalms and the Sapiential Books are so replete. We cannot cite hundreds of texts, but we give one which, as it were, summarizes them all.

The poor man is especially entrusted to the protection of God. "On you the unfortunate man depends" (Ps. 10, 14). God openly sides with him and the poor man has nothing to fear from God.

God listens, hears, helps, sustains, protects, delivers, cures, blesses, avenges, enriches the poor and the needy. He loves them!

Now, as we read the passages whence these words are taken, a face begins to appear, and its features gradually become clear. It is the face of him who merits the favors, the attentions, and the complacencies of God the Father: he who has warned us that on the Last Day we will be judged by our attitude toward the poor, the needy, the indigent, for he will say: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." . . . "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me." (Matt. 25, 35-37, 40). To those who did not perform these corporal works of mercy, Christ will say: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me" (Matt. 25, 45).

The Poor Man is CHRIST JESUS.

9. Chapter 3, No. 9 of my book the *Meditation of Jesus Christ*

## THE POOR MAN BEFORE GOD

treats of how, in truth, from the first moment of his existence, the God-man, Jesus Christ, seeing himself completely dependent on his Father, but enriched and blessed without any merit of his own and without anyone being able to merit for him, responded to the munificence of God by the complete gift and abandonment of his created being to the wishes and interests of God. Moreover, in order to imitate God's liberality toward him, he forewent the immunities and prerogatives which the Incarnation entitled him to that he might thus be able to suffer and die for our salvation. Let us consider also that only the God-Man could push self-renunciation to the point of renouncing so to speak his right to a human personality in favor of God in the second person of the Holy Trinity.

We can therefore say: the Poor Man is Jesus Christ who, being rich, "became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9).

\* \* \*

10. Whether in his ecstasy Francis ever had this insight into this mystery we do not know. Furthermore, it matters little. But who would deny this man who betrays in all his religious concepts a prodigious genius, one moreover irradiated with the splendors of the Holy Spirit, who would dare refuse him having known and understood what his disciples learned from his lessons and drew from his examples?

He saw Jesus Christ poor, and followed him.

He heard Jesus Christ say: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given to you besides" (Matt. 8, 33).

He saw the example of the Apostles: "Behold we have left all and followed thee" (Matt. 19, 27). He heard Peter, their leader, repeat with the Psalmist:

Cast your care upon the Lord,  
and he will support you (Ps. 54, 23).

That would have sufficed to make him embrace poverty, to disentangle himself from all that could weigh him down in his pursuit and search. Furthermore, he discerned that the sincere and true attitude of the creature before God was:

humility which impoverished the creature,  
and confidence which enriched it,  
God owing it to himself to honor the trust placed in him.

Over and above the example of Christ, we might still find an example of this humble and confident, sincere and blessed attitude in Mary, the Mother of the humble and the Mother of the poor. Meditations



on her *Magnificat* would show us the ecstasy of her indigence and poverty.

But let us limit ourselves today to what we have understood and enjoyed of the poverty of her Son Jesus and that of their servant Francis.

Following these examples, let us resolve to be poor before God, in dependence and privation, but rich in humility, in abandonment, in unshakable and victorious confidence. For what does the poor man have more than others, if not that he can run to the place where he knows Life dwells? Amen.



## BLESSED JOSEPH

Blessed Joseph, David's scion,  
Husband of the Virgin pure,  
Be our Father and Protector,  
Lest temptations us allure.

Jesus made thee Foster-Father,  
And obeyed thy ev'ry word;  
None e'er asked thy intercession  
And could say he was not heard

When the cruel and wicked Herod  
Sought the Holy Child to kill,  
Thou didst take Him and His Mother,  
Since it was the Father's will,

Flee to foreign land of Egypt  
In the darkness of the night;  
From the dangers of our exile,  
Lead us home to Heaven's light.

*Fr. Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.*

# Felician Foundress Upholds St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

*Sister Mary Jacinta Szczygielski, C.S.S.F*

## INTRODUCTION

The religious mind must forever return to the primary truths of the faith. The Christian aim is to live to the fullest possible extent the life outlined in the Gospel. St. Paul, the great expounder of the divine life of man, defines it with these or equivalent words—Christ is our life!

God through His divine Son had lifted us up to Himself so that we might enter and share the joy of His life. The merits of the Incarnation and Redemption brought forth the fruit of the Eucharist. Our divine life comes to us then through the passion and death of Christ, through faith and the sacraments. The Blessed Eucharist, above all other sacraments is the center of our religion and worship, of our dogmas, the point of convergence of the other sacraments, the perpetuation of Christ's presence among men, the continual sacrifice, the memorial of Christ's passion, and the cause of the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ. Consequently, the science of spirituality naturally revolves around the sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ since in this sacrament we become partakers in the divine nature and divine life.

"The God Man," writes Scheeben, "... necessarily becomes a sun for the entire world, a sun which draws all creatures to itself in order to shed over them all the beams of the divine goodness and glory that are concentrated in itself, in order to confer the riches of the Trinitarian communication upon the whole world, and thereby also to admit the world to participation in the Trinitarian unity."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the Eucharist is the eminently good gift which contains the God-Man by which myriads of Christians down through the ages have found it to be the potent factor by which they became Christ-like.

The purpose of this thesis is not to elaborate a theological treatise on the dogmatic teachings of the Eucharist. Treasures of learning have been poured out by the noblest of intellects such as Origen, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure, as well as by the contemporaries, St. Pius X, Abbot Vonier, and Thomas Merton. It may rather be considered as a commentary or humble account of two individuals



who nourished themselves on the Gospel message, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:34). St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of a great and flourishing Order and the Servant of God, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, the foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice of the III Order Regular of the Seraphic St. Francis were two souls, among so many, without doubt, who beheld the Son of God under the Eucharist veil. Through the medium of the Eucharist they maintained a vigorous spiritual life and obtained an insatiable energy for their zeal for souls.

The first chapter therefore, explains the importance of the Eucharist in the economy of spiritual life. No life of prayer, no holiness of life, can be maintained without this sacrament—much more the religious life. The aspects of this sacrament are briefly mentioned as well as its effects.

In the second chapter the facts of the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Poverello, who contemplated the Eucharist in the shadow of the Cross, are related. Hence, reference is made to his early biographers and his own letters.

The third chapter gives a biographical sketch of Mother Angela Truszkowska. It is based primarily on Sister Mary Bronislaus Dmowska's life of Mother Angela. However, several other books were consulted as well as the *Writings of Mother Angela*.

The last chapter is an exposition of Mother Angela's love for the Eucharistic King. As a true follower of St. Francis, the Eucharist was engendered very generously in her own life. Contemplating the Eucharist in the Heart of the Immaculate Mother, Mother Angela heard the cry of reparation from her Eucharist Spouse. She beheld the Eucharist as the School of spirituality. This thought is embodied in the words of the Felician motto, "Omnia per cor Mariae ad honorem Sanctissimi Sacramenti."

## CHAPTER I THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EUCHARIST IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Since the object of this thesis is to emphasize the driving spiritual force of the Eucharist in the lives of two individuals, it would be necessary to acquaint the reader with some of the basic concepts governing this sacrament. To evaluate, however, the importance of the Eucharist in our spiritual life properly, one would have to devote more than a single thesis to this subject. The scope of its importance is so vast since it is the "... living epitome of the whole Catholic creed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pope John XXIII, "The Eucharistic Bread", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 1, (Winter 1959-60), p. 92.

## ST. FRANCIS' LOVE FOR THE EUCHARIST

It is built not just on a theological supposition, but primarily on dogma, the Christian Mysteries of our Faith, the Trinity, Incarnation and Redemption. As stated in the Introduction, the writer does not have any intention of delving into theological arguments, therefore, to bring about a relative understanding only salient factors must be considered.

### *The Fruit of the Incarnation, the Eucharist*

In order to have a clear idea of the full force and significance of God's supernatural union with man in the Eucharist, the Incarnation ought to be considered since it is the presupposition and explanation of the Eucharist. Just as the power and operation of the Holy Spirit brought down the Son of God into the womb of Mary, so too, does this same power manifest itself in the Eucharist.

Thus, in the fullness of time, came the Son of God, the Word Incarnate, and dwelt among us. The visible habitation of Christ among men gave the world the most obvious opportunity to cultivate friendship with God. Jesus Christ said one day, anticipating the ignominy of the Cross, mindful of what the Cross was going to earn for Him: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John 12, 32). These words, indeed, are a fitting description of the effect of the Bread of Life and of all the treasures which it contains. Christ still abides in our midst with the same Flesh and Blood, the same Soul and Divinity. It is the same Christ who ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father. Briefly, the Incarnation and the Redemption did not cease, leaving people of the future to benefit by a single act; its work is continued in the Blessed Sacrament. This is true of the Sacred Species reserved in the tabernacle, but more so for the one communicating. The words of Father Merton are an expression of this thought.

The love of the Father for the Son burst forth from within the mystery of the Trinity and made itself known outside of God when the Father gave His only begotten Son for mankind. In the Incarnation, the love of the Father for the Son reached out to one with the Father. Jesus, in turn dying on the Cross, manifested at the same time His love for the Father and His love for mankind: for it was at the same time the Father's will that He should die for us. In the death of Jesus on the Cross we see the One Love which is God and we see the Three Divine Persons loving one another, and we are ourselves caught up in the bond of love, the circuit of mutual giving, which unites them with One Another.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Living Bread*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 52.



In the Eucharist, Jesus abides both as the living God and a living man. Therein is the same Christ born in Bethlehem, the "Son of Mary and Joseph", the miracle worker, the preacher, the prophet, the same Jesus who always went about "doing and healing all", the victim of Calvary. As Meger. Gay states:

The earthly life of Christ, although ended centuries ago, with regard to its temporal evolution and exterior form, still remains fundamentally in the Eucharist since it will always retain its essential qualities, its intimate origin, as well as its intrinsic beauty and infinite virtue and incomparable characteristics.<sup>8</sup>

During the historical setting of the Last Supper, Christ with His own sacred hand brought forth the "gift of God." The hour of His Passion was drawing near, He fulfilled the promise that He had made to his disciples by instituting the great mystery of the New Covenant. Blessing the bread He said to his Apostles: "Take, This is My Body (Matt. 14: 22), "This is My Blood of the new covenant (Mark 14: 24)." Following these words our Lord added, "Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22: 19)", thus granting the Church, through the priest to ever continue the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by the power of the Holy Ghost. The wondrous words of consecration ever continue the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption as the Council of Trent teaches, the "Mysterium fidei." Abbot Vonier, in his book, adequately expresses this point:

With regard to this Sacrament the Church is not in the attitude of one who worships something extraneous, something superimposed upon her life, something that is so high up in the sphere of the supernatural as to be far beyond her reach. No, the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ is in the very bosom of the Church, there it takes place as the Incarnation took place in the bosom of the Immaculate Virgin.<sup>9</sup>

In the Eucharist, then, the Incarnation is extended to each member of the Mystical Body. Father Scheeben explains that in Communion "... the Logos may, as it were, become anew in each man, by taking the human nature of each into union with His own," coinciding, therefore, with the mystery of Incarnation.

#### *The Eucharist, a Means of Sanctification*

Before speaking particularly about the Eucharist as an agent of

<sup>8</sup> Aloysius J. Willinger C.S.S.R., *The Eucharist And Christian Life*, (Paterson, N. J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1949) p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> Abbot Vonier, O.S.B., *The Collected Works of Abbot Vonier*, II. (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> Scheeben, op. cit., p. 486.

our incorporation in Christ, it would be best to retrogress to the starting point. Primarily, it must be remembered, the Passion of Christ was the price paid for our divine life. Logically, it is called the juridical reason for our incorporation in the Divine Life. Secondly, all the sacraments radiate the charity of the Cross. St. Augustine, commenting on the words of St. John, "A soldier opened the side of Christ, (John 19: 34)" replies: "The Evangelist used an intentional word when he wrote 'aperuit' that is, opened, and not 'pierced' or 'wounded' or another word, to signify that the opening was the gate of life through which issued the sacraments, without which access cannot be had to the true life."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the birth of Christ in us has its beginning with the sacrament of Baptism, often called by theologians "the door to the other sacraments." The Angelic Doctor would have us understand that Baptism alone will not bring about the perfect man. St. Thomas clarifies himself in the following manner.

He tells us that the Eucharist is the 'consummation of the spiritual life and the end of all the other sacraments' since all the sacraments merely prepare us for the reception of the Eucharist, and this means that they lead us up to the sacred reality which the Eucharist alone can effect in us: perfect charity, consummate oneness in Christ. To say that all the sacraments culminate in the Eucharist is not to say, merely that they are rites which serve as preliminaries to the one great rite, the mystery of the cult. It means above all that the other sacraments give us some part in the charity of Christ, to fulfill certain particular needs of our own souls or of the souls of others, but that the Eucharist gives us the fullness of His charity, incorporates us perfectly in His Mystical Body, which lives by charity and enables us thereby not only to receive charity directly from Christ our Mystical Head, but to rejoice in the life stream of Charity which flows through the whole organism from one member to another.<sup>7</sup>

The Doctor of Aquin again emphasizes, beyond doubt, that the importance of the Eucharist in Christian life lies in the fact that it is designated to the pre-eminent means in the divinization of man. The Angelic Doctor relates his proposition:

The Damascene affirms that the human nature of Christ acted as an agent of the divinity and therefore participated in a measure in the operation of divine power. How is it that Christ should cure the leper by merely touching him? It was the contact of Christ that instrumentally caused the cure. Therefore, this instrumental efficacy which it had for corporal effects, the Holy Humanity exercises also in the spiritual order. Hence the Blood of Christ, poured out for us, had ablutionary effect on

<sup>6</sup> Willinger, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Merton, op. cit., p. 137.



sin. He 'washed us from our sins in His own Blood': we were justified by His Blood. The Humanity of Christ is the instrumental cause of justification, a cause that is applied to us spiritually by faith, and corporally by the sacraments. Therefore the most perfect of the sacraments is that which really contains the Body of Christ, namely, the Eucharist, the end and consummation of the rest.<sup>8</sup>

Pope John XXIII, in his address to the Eucharistic Congress at Munich, quotes the words of St. Thomas as a complement of his own opinion, bearing in mind the given fact; namely, the Eucharist as a foremost factor in the sanctification of man. "This sacrament has a great and universal usefulness. Great because it produced in us a life that is spiritual now and that will be eternal. And universal, because the life which it confers is not just the life of one man, but taken in itself, the life of the whole world."<sup>9</sup> The words of our Lord confirm St. Thomas' argument: "I am the Living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the Bread that I give is My Flesh for the life of the world. (John 32: 35)" Our Lord again reminds us and thus summarizes that the Holy Eucharist is a means of sanctification:

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread that has come down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the Manna and died. He who eats this bread, shall live forever. (John 53: 59)

#### *The Three Stages of the Eucharist and Its Effects*

In the Eucharist there are two fundamental elements—the sacrament and the sacrifice. The threefold stages of the Eucharist are: Holy Mass, Holy Communion and the Real Presence. Each flows naturally from the other, yet holds its proper place in relation to the other, each retains the essential factor called for, namely; faith, and each helps us to live a full, well-integrated Eucharistic life. The three aspects of the Eucharist can be discussed from various viewpoints. In this thesis we are only concerned about each in a general way and in relation to the object of this thesis: the supreme medium of attaining personal sanctification

The *Sacrifice of the Altar* brings to mind the words of St. John, "Greater love than this no man has, that one lay down his life for his

<sup>8</sup> Willinger, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Divine Life in the Eucharist", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 4, (1960), p. 334.

friend (John 15: 13)." The significance of the Mass is the mystical immolation of Christ. The Sacrifice of Jesus on the hill of Calvary appears daily on our altars. Christ, the Victim continues His first, and only offering. On the Cross He was offered in a bloody manner, while in the Sacrifice of the Mass, He is offered in an unbloody manner under the appearance of bread and wine. Through the hands of the priest He offers Himself anew to His Father with all the love He once offered to Him on the Cross. The Mass, therefore, becomes the central act of Christian worship. The mystical immolation takes place by the separate consecration of the two species of Bread and Wine. The sacrifice is then completed by the priest and faithful who receive Holy Communion. The Crucified Christ offers His immolation as supreme adoration, thanksgiving, petition and expiation on behalf of the Mystical Body, and Divine Life flows from the cross into the bosom of mankind.

St. Augustine calls the Eucharist "the one and only sacrifice of our salvation."<sup>10</sup> The Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass have the same purpose, the obtaining of supernatural life for all mankind. Bishop Willinger aptly describes the equal supernatural value of each:

"Hence both sacrifices have the same supernatural value: that of the Cross flows directly from the merits of Christ, while that of the Mass emanates from the Cross. The latter is the well of life that issues from the sacrificial act in which Christ immolates Himself in a bloody manner; the former is the current that carries athwart the centuries the life obtained through the unique oblation of Christ."<sup>11</sup>

Since the Holy Mass is a school of sacrifice those attending may readily offer themselves as co-victims with Christ. Spiritual writers remind us that Christ is only our Victim and Mediator in proportion as we offer ourselves with Him on the altar, thus we may say we become partakers in His life of immolation.

Considering therefore, that the words of Consecration bring about the mystical separation of Christ's Blood from His Body thus constituting the sacrifice and at the same time making Him present upon the altar, it is necessary to uphold that Christ in the Eucharistic Host is the Victim. Every Eucharistic soul, therefore, must strive to lead a life of immolation by an active participation in the Mass. In this way the purpose of the Incarnation is fulfilled for all things are being returned to God in Him, with Him and through Him. Consequently the Mass is Christ's supreme gift and legacy to the Mystical Body of

<sup>10</sup> Willinger, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.



the Church. The Mass is the possession and inheritance of every Catholic. A prayerful eucharistic life of praise, expiation, thanksgiving and impetration unfolds itself each day in the unbloody sacrifice of Mass. Above all, it is a manifestation of God's love. Father Merton expresses his concept of the eucharistic sacrifice in the following words:

It is clear, therefore, that in order to appreciate the full meaning of the eucharistic sacrifice, we must remember that the Mass, by making present the great redemptive mystery of the Cross also by that very fact manifests, in mystery, the agape which is the secret and ineffable essence of God Himself. What we behold at Mass is the very reality of God's own love. And we enter into the reality. We are enclosed in the embrace of the Holy Spirit of Truth and Love, the bond which unites the Word and the Father. We become able to unite ourselves with the Word in the great act of sacrificial love by which He bore witness on the Cross to His love for the Father and for us. And at the same time we unite ourselves—in the very heart of the Mystery—with the eternal love by which, as Word, He offers His endless 'sacrifice' of praise to the Father in the depths of the Holy Trinity.<sup>12</sup>

The *Eucharist* as the sacramental food and the pledge of our future life incorporates us within Christ in a glorious and mystical union. Pondering on what is actually received in Holy Communion St. Bonaventure replies:

Certainly that Sacrament would be desirable even if only the most noble flesh (of Christ) were given as food; but not rather three most precious courses are placed as if on one plate; the flesh, which is sweet; the soul, which is sweeter and nobler than the flesh; the divinity, which is the sweetest. Scripture says (Wis. 16, 20): Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gave them bread from heaven, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste. What wonder? This is He (1 Pet. 1, 12) on whom the angels desire to look. If the sight delights so much, how much the taste! Behold, the Banquet of the table of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Mass and Holy Communion are not to be separated, since it is one single action. Holy Communion is the perfect climax of the Mass because its meaning and its fruits are completed by Holy Communion. The same Eucharistic Christ, the Victim of the Cross, Who had first been offered to God, is later received by the communicant. Christ was not satisfied with having made Himself present on our altars but also becomes the permanent Victim for our sins in the Mass. He comes to our hearts and gives Himself to us under the sacred species of bread

<sup>12</sup> Merton, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> Dominic Facin, O.F.M., *Spiritual Exercises According to Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Owen A. Colligan (St. Bonaventure, N. Y.: 1955), p. 283.

and wine, in the substance of His mysteries and the plenitude of his graces.

The fundamental idea of nourishing the soul as one nourishes the body characterizes the Eucharist as the "Bread of Life." Father Scheeben depicts this parallel, he also implies that the pre-eminent effect of Holy Communion is our incorporation in Christ, thus completing the Mystical Body.

What feeds and nourishes us in the Eucharist is properly the divine energy of the Logos inhabiting Christ's flesh. But if, in order to give us life, the Logos unites His body to us in so astounding a fashion, we must conclude that He unites His divinity to our souls in a way that resembles the union of His flesh and blood with our bodies. Our partaking of the God-man's human flesh and blood is the real sacrament, that is, the sign and instrument signifying our reception of the flesh and blood of His divinity, if I may so express myself.

What meat and drink are to the body, that the light of truth and glory, and the fiery torrent of love are to the soul. The human flesh of Christ corresponds to the brilliant aura of glory that suffuses Him in His divine nature, and His human blood corresponds to the river of life and love that gushes forth from His divine heart.<sup>14</sup>

The close union of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ reaches its climax in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The grace of charity is augmented and the Church's unity is made strong. This thought is exemplified in the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII on "The Mystical Body of Christ."

Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ our Lord wished to give special evidence to the faithful of our union among ourselves and with our divine Head, marvelous as it is and beyond all praise. For here the sacred ministers act in the person not only of our Saviour but of the whole Mystical Body and of everyone of the faithful. In this act of sacrifice through the hands of the priest, whose word alone has brought the immaculate Lamb to be present on the altar, the faithful themselves with one desire and one prayer offer It to the Eternal Father,—the most acceptable Victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal needs. And just as the divine Redeemer, dying on the Cross, offered Himself as Head of the whole human race to the Eternal Father, so 'in this pure oblation' He offers not only Himself as Head of the Church to the heavenly Father, but in Himself His mystical members as well. He embraces them all, even the weak and ailing ones, in the tenderest love of His Heart.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is itself a striking image of the Church's unity, if we consider how in the bread to be con-

<sup>14</sup> Scheeben, *op. cit.*, p. 524.



created many grains go to form one substance; and in it the very Author of supernatural grace is given to us, so that through Him we may receive the Spirit of charity, in which we are bidden to live now not our life but the life of Christ, and in all the members of His social Body to live the Redeemer Himself.<sup>15</sup>

In the Eucharist we also perceive the unique mission of the Holy Spirit who is the bond of union between the Father and the Son. The Paraclete unifies and sanctifies the new Adam. It is His distinctive work to create ties between the Creator and creature, between God and us. A truly great gift, the Holy Eucharist mediately contains the Holy Spirit Himself with His essence and power. This mission of the Sanctifier is beautifully explained by Father Scheeben:

Although the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son and comes to us in the Son, He is, by the strongest of all appropriations, also the channel through which the Son is brought to us. As the aspiration terminating the Son's love, He urges the Son to deliver Himself up to us in the Incarnation and the Eucharist. As the flame issuing from the mighty ardor of the Son in His work of sanctification and unification, in the womb of the Virgin He brings about the origin, the hypostatic union, and the resulting holiness of the Son's human nature, and in the Eucharist effects the conversion of earthly substances into the Son's flesh and blood. After the hypostatic union and transubstantiation have been wrought, He lives on in the Son's flesh and blood with His fire and His vitalizing energy, as proceeding from the Son, and fills the sacred humanity with His own being to sanctify and glorify it. Particularly in the Eucharist He glorifies and spiritualizes the Son's human nature like a flaming coal, so that it takes on the qualities of sheer fire and pure spirit. Straightway He makes use of the Eucharist as an instrument to manifest His sanctifying and transforming power to all who receive it and as a channel to communicate Himself to all who receive it and feast upon it. The body of Christ, as a spiritual gift which God presents to us and which we offer in sacrifice, has its origin from the fire of the Holy Spirit; it is permeated and encompassed by the Holy Spirit, who so transfigures and spiritualizes it that both the fire and the coal which the fire pervades with white heat seem to be one and the same object; and, finally, it is flooded with the Holy Spirit, thus yielding up His fragrance in sacrifice, and His vitalizing energy in Holy Communion.<sup>16</sup>

Before discussing the various effects of Holy Communion another observation is necessary. It is proper to note that we draw divine life and Christlike transformation from this sacrament in the same degree

<sup>15</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, (Washington, D. C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943), p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Scheeben, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-530.

in which we are worthy prepared. The will must consciously yield itself to divine action. St. Bonaventure exhorts:

... this Sacrament does not have efficacy in anyone except in one worthy approaching; ... for he who approaches worthy to the Sacrament does not return empty ... according to the amount of good will and according to the greatness of life and holiness, the valuable effect is attained. For according to the way in which one approaches Christ under this Sacrament, so also according to that disposition Christ shows Himself with the gifts of His grace; that is, (he shows Himself) greatly to the great, moderately to the mediocre, slightly to the ingardly, unfavorably to the wicked.<sup>17</sup>

The Seraphic Doctor prompts all to receive worthy. He enumerates several supreme advantages, thus producing an incentive:

'Therefore, one who approaches worthy to the Sacrament of the altar does not return empty'; rather, many the graces 'there are, which those are wont to receive in this Sacrament who approach worthy.' 'For manifold is the effect of the Eucharistic Bread.' 'In this Sacrament faith is increased, hope is raised up, and love is aroused.' 'For the Eucharistic Bread delights the mind, strengthens virtue, lengthens life; and 'in those communicating worthy, the Lord infuses consolation, lessens evil inclinations, removes the love of the world; and He renders them secure on the day of judgement.' 'And this Sacrament confirms for action, elevates for contemplation, disposes for revelation of divine things, animates and inflames for a contempt of the world and for a desire of heavenly and eternal goods.

'For one who approaches worthy receives these four effects of grace from the Sacrament. Because there the rational part of the soul is illuminated to know the highest truth. For he who frequents this Sacrament with fervor of devotion from day to day advances in illumination of mind. Secondly, there the appetitive part is aroused to seek the highest good; for one who approaches worthy to this Sacrament is delighted inwardly more and more. Thirdly, the irascible part is fortified to root out every evil. Fourthly, man is mortified to the world in order that he may see in accord with God.<sup>18</sup>

Pope John XXIII enumerated the fruits of the Eucharist in his radio broadcast at the closing of the Sixteenth Eucharistic Congress in Italy:

If only all Christians would better understand the Holy Eucharist and partake of it more worthy and more frequently! Abundant fruits of harmony, of peace, and of spiritual perfection would then ripen in the Church and in the whole world. Many problems which trouble modern minds would be more promptly and effectively solved, thanks to a feeling of

<sup>17</sup> Facin, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285.



sincere and perfect brotherhood which would restrain the individual from taking dangerous initiatives and would strengthen his refusal to compromise with the forces of evil and the temptations of this world.

True devotion to the Eucharist helps man achieve loyalty, righteousness, and moral uprightness, regardless of personal sacrifice, in his efforts to bring about the common good. We do not hesitate to affirm that rulers and their subjects will remain prey to natural selfishness and discord unless their laws comply with the Sacrament of the Altar as true and inexhaustible source. We must realize that the Eucharist promotes not only the good of the faithful communicants, but also, according to the Angelic Doctor, the common spiritual good of the whole Church, which is substantially present in the sacrament.<sup>19</sup>

The Eucharist also grants us spiritual exhilaration bestowing upon us a spiritual joy and jubilation. This is eloquently expressed by Lugo:

It is the fervor or ebullition of charity, which makes the heart dilate and flow over into the senses in acts not only of necessity, but also of supererogation (just as under the pressure of heat the cup of water expands and overflows), producing an ineffable joy of spirit through the satisfaction of the good that is done and the alacrity with which it is done. From this fervor which the Eucharist opportunity excites, issue both rapture and sweetness, and the reason seems to be that such delight is naturally consequent upon the love and the perception of the presence of that which is loved.<sup>20</sup>

The Eucharistic hymns of St. Thomas—Pange Lingua, Lauda Sion, Verbum Supernum—are an expression of such joy.

The *Real Presence*, the third stage of the Eucharist is often described by theologians and spiritual writers as the folly and excess of the Eucharist. The Church always believed that Christ is permanently present in the Eucharist as long as the species of bread remain and therefore, demand our adoration. The custom of reserving the Holy Eucharist in a sacred place dates back to the early history of the Church. Our late Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in his address, "The Liturgical Movement" clarifies the devotion to the Real Presence. His Holiness stresses the need of unity between Holy Mass and the "worship of adoration" offered to the God-Man reserved in the tabernacles.

... an awareness of their unity is more important than a realization of their differences. It is one and the same Lord Who is immolated on the altar and honored in the tabernacle, and Who pours out his blessings from the tabernacle. A person who

<sup>19</sup> Pope John XXIII, *op. cit.*, *Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 1, pp. 93-94.  
<sup>20</sup> Willinger, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

was thoroughly convinced of this would avoid many difficulties. He would be wary of exaggerating the significance of the one to the detriment of the other, and of opposing decisions of the one to the Holy See . . . There is question not so much of the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar, as of a tendency to which we would like to call your attention, that of a lessening of esteem for the presence and action of Christ in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of the altar (by some) is held sufficient, and the importance of Him who accomplishes it is reduced. Yet the person of our Lord must hold the central place in worship, for it is this person that unifies the relation of the altar and the tabernacle and gives them their meaning.<sup>21</sup>

In a radio message of Pope John XXIII to the International Eucharistic Congress at Munich, His Holiness completed his sermon with a beautiful prayer to the Eucharist. Within this prayer we find the sentiments of the Holy Father who places the strength of the apostolate and the hope of all spiritual life and salvation in the Real Presence.

... Make us hunger and thirst more and more for you, living in the Tabernacle, as in a tent pitched in the middle of the Church militant; so that, led by your light and inflamed with your life, we may successfully pass through the trials of the desert of this world and eventually come to the place you promised to the redeemed human race, to the happiness of heaven and life without end.<sup>22</sup>

The same thought pervades His Holiness' message to the pilgrims in the "Eucharistic Movement of France," April 16, 1960.

... The Eucharist is always our Shepherd—Pastor noster—no longer suffering, but still hidden from our eyes, and sometimes forgotten even by those who believe in His real presence. He is the eternal source of living water—fons aquae vivae—whence spring treasures of grace accessible to all; the source whence each can draw the strength to surmount daily hardships, the courage to profess his faith firmly, generosity in the exercise of love and service for his fellows.<sup>23</sup>

His Holiness Pope John places great stress on Eucharistic visits. He believes they will stimulate Christian virtue and procure hosts of saints.

... In addition to the solemn celebration of Holy Mass and the general communion of different groups of the faithful, is a Eucharistic Congress anything other than a long and fervent 'visit to the Blessed Sacrament'? Now you must have observed, as we have, that in our day many souls neglect this touching practice of Catholic life, which is so dear to pious souls and

<sup>21</sup> Martin Wolter, O.F.M., "The Liturgy of the Blessed Sacrament", *The Cord*, VII, No. 7: (July, 1957), p. 199.

<sup>22</sup> Pope John XXIII, *op. cit.*, *Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 4, p. 335.

<sup>23</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Eucharistic Movement of France", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 3, (Summer 1960), p. 292.



which consists in recollecting oneself in silence at the foot of the Tabernacle in order to restock one's soul with God's gifts. There are even some who, led by ideas foreign to traditional piety, seem to look upon this practice as of minor importance.

It is our fond wish that all participating in the congress at Lyons return to their homes convinced of the excellence of this practice and strive to make it appreciated and loved by others. Pause for a moment and think of the long hours which St. John Vianney spent in the beginning of his pastoral life, alone in his church before the Blessed Sacrament; think of the outpourings of faith and love of this great soul at the feet of his Master, and of the marvelous fruits of sanctity which he and so many others received as a result of these ardent Eucharistic prayers. There is no doubt that a flood of graces would descend on your families and on your country if more and more souls, enlightened and supported by the example of their shepherds, would become docile pupils in the school of the holy Cure of Ars.<sup>24</sup>

In concluding this chapter we may say that through the personal presence of the God-Man in each and every tabernacle of the world, Catholic worship is always constant, faith is made stronger. His living power from the tabernacle is made manifest in the lives of men, and hope is guided amid life's torments. The beacon light and pathway to the heavenly Father is mapped, Christ is the tabernacle and the companion of the wayfarer.

Father Faber's words succinctly draw this chapter to an end. They envelop the three stages of the Eucharist and are also a fitting exaltation for God's greatest gift to mankind,—the Eucharist, the indispensable element in the economy of spiritual life.

Thus all nature, angelic, human, brute, and inanimate, is gathered to the feet of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The Blessed Sacrament is the King of nature, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His Name shall be called Wonderful, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace; and His empire shall be multiplied, and of His peace there shall be no end. What shall I say any more but that one other truth in which is our beatitude? With unutterable joy, with a complacency so worshipful and vast, a jubilee so inconceivably above all natural raptures, the Person of the Word has united this Sacred Humanity to the Divine Nature in Himself, that His Human Nature is anointed and flooded with the torrents and abysses of uncreated perfections; and Creation enters in beneath the veil, and the Creator has a created Nature, and takes intimate part in His own Creation.

There in the Blessed Sacrament is the actual living accomp-

<sup>24</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Blessings of the Eucharist", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 2, (Spring 1960), p. 192.

ishment of that tremendous mystery, the source of all our hopes, the fountain of our joy, the eternal blessedness of every elect soul of man. What should we be, if God were not made Man? If the sun fell from the heavens, it were less dismal ruin, than if Jesus had never been, if the Word had never assumed our human nature to His Divine. How is it we can ever distract ourselves to think of earthly things? Are not all thoughts gathered into this one thought? Do not all lights go out in this light? What are all truths but pale satellites to this, shining only with a borrowed radiance from the Word made Flesh, the light that lighteth every man that is born into the world? All worship therefore be to the King of nature, dwelling amid His subjects in the lowly guise of the Sacramental Veils!<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Frederick W. Faber, *The Blessed Sacrament*, (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1865), p. 402.

## PAX ET BONUM

Through every street he goes today,  
He greets his friends along the way.  
In gentle tones you'll hear him say—  
"PAX ET BONUM!"

I see that peace within his eyes  
Not given to the worldly wise,  
When even to the birds he cries—  
"PAX ET BONUM!"

O humble friar, always know—  
You do bring peace wherever you go;  
For like St. Francis you bestow  
"PAX ET BONUM!"

As a bearer of peace, be standing by  
When the time has come for me to die.  
Listen then, to my feeble reply—  
"PAX ET BONUM!"

Elizabeth Metzger, Terling



## BOOK REVIEW

Inside a period of one month, two pamphlets were issued from the presses of St. Anthony's Guild in Paterson, New Jersey. The uneven quality of these two short publications is so striking as to seem deserving of some mention here.

**BONAVENTURE VS. MODERN THOUGHT**, by Liam Brophy, Ph.D., professes to set forth the thought of the Seraphic Doctor as an article for "modern thought" (Existentialism and Marxism). Regrettably, it does not achieve its purpose. There is much rhetoric about Bonaventure's metaphysics of light and the "inverted Franciscanism" of the Existentialist. The cheerlessness of contemporary thought as opposed to the gladness of Franciscan thought is much remarked, but little is done to explain the Franciscan thought. Too much space is devoted to the quarrel over poverty among the early Franciscans and to the sources of medieval philosophy; too little is given to the typically Bonaventurian insights into God, man, and the universe. What might have been a valuable, popular exposition of the Seraphic Doctor's genius and the pertinence of his message to the modern situation emerges, unfortunately, as a statement of generalities.

The author is guilty of several unscholarly slips. He identifies Robert Grosseteste as a Franciscan and describes his *De libero arbitrio* as the definitive statement of the Franciscan doctrine concerning human liberty. He, furthermore, remarks that Bonaventure "accepted and elaborated the characteristically Franciscan doctrine that God would have become man even had Adam never sinned." This bland assumption that Bonaventure accepted the doctrine of the absolute primacy and predestination of Christ suggests that the author has misinterpreted the philosophical and theological thought of the man who wrote, "*Præcipua ratio Incarnationis videtur fuisse re-*

*demptio humani generis* . . ." The author is also guilty of a misuse of the communication of idioms in his remarks on the "Divine Humanity."

These several errors, taken singly, may appear trivial, but, in a work that aspires to popularize the thought of the great Seraphic Doctor, they constitute an unfortunate lapse and do disservice to the cause of Franciscan scholarship.

In sharp contrast to the pamphlet reviewed above is **CHRIST YOUR KING** by Michael Meilach, O.F.M. Although the format and cover of this work are not so attractive as that of the former, the quality is quite superior. It deals with the doctrine of the absolute primacy and predestination of Christ. The work is divided into three sections. The first deals with the Scriptural basis of the doctrine; the second presents a survey of the doctrine's development over the past seventy years; and the final section contains an invaluable exposition of the devotional ramifications of Christ's primacy. Two appendices conclude the work, one containing an historical footnote to the famous Act of Consecration to Christ the King, and the other containing the Mass and certain prayers in honor of Christ the King.

The pamphlet is unpretentious, popular yet profound. It is written with sincerity, conviction and simplicity. Its unpretentious style enhances and brings out its deep doctrinal and devotional content. Its clarity and unction make it a valuable source for religious and preachers seriously interested in imbibing and communicating their Franciscan heritage. Here is a highly recommended little work on a much misunderstood doctrine. The correct understanding of it seems important enough to demand at least a thoughtful reading of a truly inspirational booklet. **CHRIST YOUR KING** is a "must" for the Franciscan.

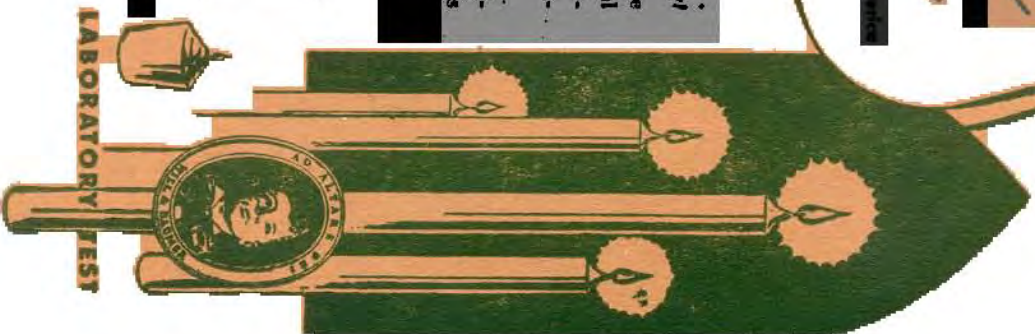
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CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

VOL.



# the CORD

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## A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

### PSALMS 123 and 128

There is still one other Psalm from the hour of Sext to be considered, Psalm 123. We are going to consider it now, in conjunction with Psalm 128, which is the first of the Psalms used in Compline. The association of these two poems is dictated by the strong resemblance between them in points of style, structure, and general content. The likeness is so marked, in fact, that it moves many commentators to a conclusion thus expressed by one of them: "They may well have been written by the same poet in the same period, with reference to the dangers which threatened the community in the time of Nehemias."

This resemblance, too, is more likely to strike a reader, perhaps, because the Psalms come so close to each other in the Psalter, only four short Psalms intervening, none of which has more than eight verses. They are found in that part of the Psalter which contains the "Pilgrim Songs," so called, as we have conjectured, because they were sung by the pilgrims making the annual trips to Jerusalem commanded by the Law (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Strangely enough, there is next to nothing in either of these Psalms—as there is something, for

example, in Psalms 120 and 121—that has any direct relevance to such a pilgrimage, the circumstances of the trip, or its object. You might at first reading, I suspect, wonder why they are included among the Pilgrim Songs. But study them more attentively, and you come to realize that their blending of intense patriotism and religion, of fierce pride in their race and deep gratitude to God for defending it, makes these poems ideal for expressing sentiments that would naturally well up in the hearts of travellers to Jerusalem, the capital of the nation and the chosen city of God.

As a matter of fact, you can say fairly that these two Psalms must have been intended by their composer or composers to become just such hymns. They were designed to be the songs Israelites would sing in grateful remembrance of God's stupendous and loving care. A remembrance, moreover, warranted to strengthen the singers' confidence in God's future protection. I think that we can make this claim because of the short, sharp command that appears so early and so abruptly in the first verse of each poem:

*Let Israel say,*

The poet surprises you, almost shocks you with these words, with



the suddenness of them. The Psalms begin calmly, move along

logically, then their flow is interrupted by this forthright exhortation. The repetition of the

opening words after his command seems to invest them with a new

force that grows to a ringing climax as the sentence carries

along to its triumphant close.

Incidentally you can easily catch the resemblance in style if you

compare the first two verses of these Psalms. In Psalm 128 the

poet commences his poem by saying:

*Much have they oppressed me from my youth.*

Almost by way of afterthought he injects a command that makes

his poem the utterance of all God's people:

*Let Israel say.*

He picks up again and repeats the statement he had interrupted:

*Much have they oppressed me from my youth.*

Then comes a boast that completes his thought and makes his verse

a perfect example of antithetic parallelism:

*Yet they have not prevailed against me.*

This effective rhetorical device is the very one used in the opening verses of Psalm 123. There

you find the matter-of-fact opening:

*Had not the Lord been with us;*

the sudden interruption:

*Let Israel say;*

the resumption and the repetition of the line of thought;

*Had not the Lord been with us;*

then the completion of the thought:

*When men rose up against us, then would they have swallowed us up alive.*

Not identical in style, to be sure, but like enough to be remarked.

The two Psalms not only commence alike; they run along for exactly the same number of verses, eight in each case. And the verses

fall obviously into two strophes. The first strophe deals with the

dangers which Israel has faced and from which God has delivered

them; the second is an expression of trust and confidence in the continued Providence of God. The

Psalms are alike, too, you discover, in structure. The poet builds up

a set of pictures, a series of images in both strophes of the poem to

illustrate and to drive home the point that he is trying to make.

Or, I suppose I should say, the theme that he is presenting. To see how he does this involves

reading each poem separately.

Let us begin with Psalm 123 and with the first strophe of it, verses 1 to 5. The framework of the entire

strophe is that of an ordinary conditional sentence, the contrary to fact kind. You know, if President

Lincoln had not been assassinated, he would have adopted a kindly

attitude to the defeated Confederacy. That kind of thing. The poet

first states his condition, a single condition even though he does

state it twice

*Had not the Lord been with us, let Israel say,*

*had not the Lord been with us.*

Then he states his conclusion three times, each time in a slightly different way. Here it is once:

*When men rose up against us, then would they have swallowed us alive.*

Here it is another way:

*When their fury was inflamed against us,*

*then would the waters have overwhelmed us.*

And here it is the third way:

*The torrent would have swept over us;*

*over us then would have swept the raging waters.*

Obviously in each one of these statements the poet is saying the same thing: the human enemies

of God's people would have prevailed against them and destroyed

them utterly had it not been for the Lord. What saves the statements from being mere repetition

of the same idea is the metaphor in each of them. In the first statement the enemy is pictured, seemingly, as a wild beast that would

have devoured Israel, "would have swallowed us alive." The metaphor

is a familiar one for the depiction of the enemies of God's people.

Jeremias, for one example, uses it in his Lamentations: "All thy

enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they have hissed,

and gnashed with the teeth, and have said: We will swallow her up: lo, this is the day which we have looked for: we have found it, we have seen it" (Lamentations 2:16). Elsewhere he presents

Jerusalem describing her destruction in these suggestive words:

"Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon hath eaten me up, he hath

devoured me... he hath swallowed me up like a dragon" (Jeremias 51:34). So there are good grounds

for taking this verse of the Psalm as another instance of this animal

metaphor. The only trouble with so treating it comes from the fact

that the figure is suddenly dropped, and the rest of the strophe

is developed by the metaphor of flooding waters. This figure, too,

was a familiar figure of great afflictions. One of the richest uses

of it, surely, is found in Psalm 68:

*Save me, O God,*

*for the waters threaten my life;*

*I am sunk in the abysmal swamp*

*where there is no foothold;*

*I have reached the watery depths;*

*the flood overwhelms me.*

And later on in the same Psalm we read these words:

*Rescue me out of the mire; may I not sink!*

*may I be rescued from my foes,*

*and from the watery depths.*

*Let not the flood-waters overwhelm me,*

*nor the abyss swallow me up,*

*nor the pit close its mouth over me.*

(Psalm 68:2-3, 15-16)



National as well as personal calamities were described by the imagery of waters engulfing the lands. Psalm 92 uses the figure of raging waters for chaos and rebellion spreading out over the land. Psalm 45 does the same. And this figure was used by Isaiah to describe the Assyrian invasion. "The Lord will bring the waters of Euphrates upon it in full flood; I mean the king of the Assyrians in all his greatness. This flood will fill up all the channels of the river, overflow all its banks, till it pours over Judah, overwhelming her and reaching up to her very neck" (Isaiah 8:7-8).

The problem created by these facts is whether to take the figure in verse 3 as that of a wild beast and to let the figure of engulfing waters begin in verse 4, or to take the figure in verse 3 as that of rising waters, a figure which then carries through verses 4 and 5. In favor of this latter alternative is the mounting movement that it gives to the strophe. The figure of rising waters to represent the enemies of Israel is just suggested in the words "swallowed us alive." That the flood increases is evident in the words "then would the waters have overwhelmed us." The full fury of the torrent is depicted in the words "over us then would have swept the raging waters." Thus you have flowing through the entire threefold conclusion of this conditional sentence a single figure, that of rising

waters sweeping in to engulf Israel. You have a perfect metaphor for the afflictions and disasters which would have wiped out the Chosen People "had not the Lord been with us."

The second strophe is a hymn of thanksgiving for what the Lord has done. Again you have a spate of lively, dramatic images, the first appearing in verse 6. Here it is:

*Blessed be the Lord, who did not leave us a prey to their teeth.*

The obvious interpretation is that the enemies of the Israelites are devouring beasts whom the Lord has foiled of their quarry. This, too, is a familiar metaphor in the Psalms. David uses it, for instance, in this prayer:

*O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge;*

*save me from all my pursuers and rescue me, Lest I become like the lion's prey, to be torn to pieces, with no one to rescue me.*

(Psalm 7:2-3)

The difficulty about this interpretation is that it isolates verse 6 from verse 7, in which appears the metaphor of a fowler, whose snare has been broken, whose prey has escaped. So that Israel can exult:

*We were rescued like a bird from the fowler's snare.*

*Broken was the snare, and we were freed.*

It is I think, this disappointed

fowler who is depicted, too, in verse 6, robbed of the prey he planned to feast on. The two verses are really using a single metaphor like the one that appears in this description of David's enemy:

*He waits in secret like a lion in his lair; he lies in wait to catch the afflicted; he catches the afflicted and drags them off in his net.*

(Psalm 9B, 9)

Likening Israel to a bird emphasizes his defenselessness and makes his deliverance all the more exclusively the work of God's omnipotence. The expression of this truth brings the poem to its close. No imagery now, no figurative language, but blunt, straightforward, matter-of-fact statement:

*Our help is in the name of the Lord,*

*who made heaven and earth.*

We may miss certain defiance about these words, I suspect, unless we remember that the enemies of Israel placed all their trust in what Jeremias contemptuously described as "gods that neither heaven nor earth could fashion . . . Fond imaginations, antic figures, when the time comes for reckoning, they shall be heard of no more" (Jeremias 10:11, 15).

And so we come now to Psalm 128, the companion piece, as it has been called, of Psalm 123. We have already noted the rhetorical structure of the first two verses: statement, interruption, repetition,

and conclusion. The next thing to notice is that the poet builds up his first strophe by taking parts of these first two verses and illustrating them imaginatively. The Psalm opens with the declaration:

*Much have they oppressed me from my youth.*

The third verse describes this oppression figuratively: *Upon my back the plowers plowed; long did they make furrows.*

This metaphor, when you come to think about it, is as revealing as it is stark. Isaiah had figuratively described the enemies of his people as "cruel oppressors that bade thee lie down and let them walk over thee, dust under their feet, a pathway for them to tread" (Isaiah 51:23). The metaphor in this Psalm is more intense, more shocking. Stretched prostrate, face ground into the dirt, Israel's back is ripped and furrowed by the sharp plowshares of invading armies, one after the other. And each intent on doing a more thorough job and sparing nothing:

*Long did they make their furrows.*

The figure comes, of course, from an occupation common enough in so agricultural a society. Everybody would have been familiar with the sight of the plowman, following in the footsteps of his oxen, guiding the bright blade of his plow across the back of the earth, turning over the red-brown soil in long, even grooves. And all would have recognized how aptly



the figure described the history of their land, themselves, and their ancestors.

However grievously the enemies of Israel have oppressed him, he can still claim:

*Yet they have not prevailed against me*

This plain statement of truth from the first part of the strophe is figuratively presented in the fourth verse:

*But the just Lord has severed the cords of the wicked.*

Actually the metaphor of verse 3 is subtly continued. The Lord puts an end to the oppression of Israel by stretching out his hand to cut the harness that hitches the oxen to the plow—and all plowing stops! He "has severed the cords of the wicked." And with that note of finality the strophe closes.

The second strophe is both a prayer for continued defense and an expression of confidence that the prayer will be granted. As in the first strophe, a direct, literal statement is elaborated metaphorically. First you have Israel's prayer for deliverance from enemies:

*May all be put to shame and fall back that hate Zion.*

The hope of the heart of this prayer is next expressed in figurative language. Here again the poet uses a familiar experience of his hearers to make the full import of his wish more surely

evident. A house-top in Palestine was usually a simple structure of tiles, flagstones, and rubble, laid across the roof beams. It was reached by a stairway that ran up the outside wall of the house. Sometimes seeds of grass or of other grains would lodge in the crevices and, in the rainy spring days, start to sprout. With the coming of summer "when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had not roots, they withered away" (Matthew 13:5-6). So may it be with them "that hate Zion,"

*May they be like grass on the housetops, which withers before it is plucked.*

Here today and gone tomorrow! The flashy kind of crop *With which the reaper fills not his hand,*

*nor the gatherer of sheaves his arms.*

A desolate yield, indeed, these dry and withered blades! How unlike the waving fields of golden grain into which the happy farmer goes with all his helpers to gather in their harvest, cheered at their work by neighbors who, while passing along the road, call down a blessing on them. No such harvest on these rooftops, no happy reapers.

*And those that pass by say not, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you!"*

*We bless you in the name of the Lord!"*

The artistry of this poet is demonstrated, I think, by his success in picturing by suggestion a harvest scene, so peaceful and charming, so idyllic, that his prayer for vengeance is intensified by his wish that nothing so lovely ever be the lot of the enemies of Israel. It is some kind of tribute to him that we are so captivated by the details of his imagery that we almost lose sight of its completely negative quality, in the sense that there are no greetings, no blessings, no gatherers, no reapers, no harvest at all because they "that hate Zion" are to be "like grass on the housetops, which withers before it is plucked." It is likewise a tribute to him that he has drawn all the imagery of his poem from the one same area of experience familiar to his hearers: the plowers and

their plowing the furrows, the oxen and their cords in the first strophe; the grass on the housetops, the reapers and gatherers of sheaves, the passers by and their blessings of the second strophe. That similarity seems to lock the two strophes together and give this Psalm unity that Psalm 123 lacks. It is quite accidental, of course, that this poem may send our minds off on a tangent to think of "the illies of the fields" and the grasses of the fields" (Matthew 6:28, 30); of "the sower gone out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5); of "the True Vine and the Father who tends it" (John 15:1). Accidental, that is, until you remind yourself that all these words, all of them, have for their author the one same Holy Spirit.

## In Christ Jesus Our Lord

*Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M.*

### IV. GETTING TO KNOW CHRIST (Continued)

Bartholomew of Pisa wrote a very important book which is presented to the General Chapter at Assisi on Pentecost Sunday, 1396. Entitled *The Conformity of the Life of Blessed Francis to that of our Lord Jesus Christ*, this book proposed the thesis that every event in the life of our Lord had its counterpart in that of St. Francis: the precursor, the birth in a stable, the twelve companions, the seventy-two disciples, and so forth, even to Calvary and the borrowed tomb.

Now, even if we allow for literary convention at the time and for minor accommodations here and there, the book obviously contains undeniable facts; it is the work not of a mystic but of a historian



who cited sources and referred to works later unearthed and found authentic.

Bartholomew's thesis is quite correct, moreover; every event, every mystery in the life of Christ had its counterpart, or better its reproduction, its "conformity," in the life of Francis. The coat-of-arms of the Order expresses this conformity perfectly; it depicts two crossed arms—Christ's bare and Francis' covered by the sleeve of his habit—before a Cross.

But we know the facts well enough. The question that comes up now is, where did Francis gain his knowledge of Christ? What were the SOURCES of his knowledge and therefore of his imitation?

The importance of this question is obvious: if we are to be imitators of Francis as he is of Christ, we too shall go to draw from his sources. Now we know from the life of St. Francis that these sources were the same ones that we have available to us today: Scripture, the Liturgy, the interior life, and above all the Passion.

*Scriptura gravisda Christi*, said St. Jerome in a figure difficult to translate into English: "Scripture is pregnant with Christ." In fact, the whole of Scripture really amounts to a prefiguring, a recounting, and an explanation of the life of our Lord. The historians, prophets, and wise men who wrote it had in mind only the incarnate Son of God come among us to teach us, to save us, and to sanctify us.

That is the sense in which, for us, the New Testament is Scripture; whatever was true and valuable in the Old has passed into the New—into its Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse—all of which should be familiar enough to us. But that is not to say that we should ignore the Psalms and the Sapiential Books, or that we can afford to be ignorant of at least the general outlines of Jewish history.

We should get to know the Bible, and to know that it is not enough to be exposed to the Sunday Gospels. We must read it as a whole; and we must re-read it over and over again, for with continued effort we come to understand it better and to derive greater profit from it. In its light the truths of our catechism become more vital, our faith is enlivened, and we develop that Catholic Sense which is so essential to the Franciscan soul.

We can leave the exegetical problems to the scholars; for as Bossuet said, Scripture is no less divine in its obscure passages than in its clear ones. All commentaries can do is to clarify the letter of Scripture, but we are seeking its Spirit. In the beautiful analogy of Thomas a Kempis, we are seeking communion with the Word of God hidden in the facts of Scripture just as He is in the Host (*Imitation*, IV, xi, iv, 22).

Of course those who have the ability and the desire to use a commentary can do so with profit; but it is by no means absolutely necessary to do so, for any modern translation of the Bible, complete with notes and summaries, is enough to give us a good idea of the text. At any rate, nothing can take the place of consistent, daily reading of Holy Writ. That is how our Holy Founder acquired his own knowledge of Scripture.

Francis, by the way, knew the letter as well as anyone, but he was not one to stop there, for he was no professional theologian, and scientific discussion meant nothing to him. Rather he passed quickly from the letter to the spirit of Scripture. In the Gospels, for example, he never saw simply facts, anecdotes, edifying stories and examples to use in sermons—nor were they "authorities" to use in support of his personal opinions. Perhaps the best possible description of what the Gospels meant to Francis is to say that they were a sort of television screen on which he could see the life of Jesus enacted before his own eyes—and from which he could assimilate that life to his own.

At any rate, his mind was filled with Scripture, as is apparent from the few writings he has left us: the Rules, Admonitions, and Letters. But he did not use Scripture as Bernard and Bonaventure did, to convey his own ideas with the words of the Bible; rather it was as though the words of Scripture welled up from within his heart by a special divine inspiration. That is why he could compose an entire Office of the Passion out of Scriptural texts. And that is why, when he was on his deathbed and a friar volunteered to read the Bible to him, he answered, "I can read it with greater unction and profit within my own heart."

St. John Chrysostom was once appalled to think that Christians did not know the exact number of Epistles St. Paul wrote; but is not our ignorance of Scripture much greater—and should we not be all the more appalled at it?

\* \* \*

Long before the average Catholic comes to know Scripture as such, he has been exposed to its living realization in the Liturgy. Indeed, many Catholics have read no more Scripture than that offered them as members of the worshipping Mystical Christ.

Nevertheless, in the absolute sense, Scripture is prior to the Liturgy, which gives it to us, which comments upon it, and which realizes its content before our eyes. Not only does the Liturgy make use of the letter of Scripture in formulating its prayers, but it comprises a real enactment of the spirit of Scripture.

This will become clearer if we take the example of Good Friday. On that day, the Liturgy enacts before our very eyes the entire drama



of Calvary, under the all but transparent veil of richly symbolic rites. The Lessons prefigure the Lamb's sacrifice, and the Gospel relates it. The beautiful prayers for the various classes of men recall those of our Lord on the Cross—for the impenitent sinners, for the repentant, for the tried and true faithful, for the Church committed to Mary. And then follows the adoration of the Cross with its *Impropetia*; finally, after the presanctified Victim has been consumed, there is the abandonment of the tomb. Truly, the Liturgy brings to life what history merely relates as past events.

And in that sense, the Liturgy is an introduction to—better, an initiation into—Holy Scripture. But it is still more than that: it is the life of Jesus relived by the Church, not merely in memory, but in actual fact: in the Church as a whole as well as in each of her members. During the Liturgical Cycle Advent, Christmas, the Hidden Life, the Public Life, the Passion, and the Glorious Triumph of Easter all pass through the Liturgy into the lives of Christians.

And the whole history of the Church is likewise summed up in the Liturgy. Feast after feast reflects the development of her thought, dogmas and mysteries, as well as her ever-growing catalog of saints.

Let us follow the example of St. Francis, then, and make the Liturgy a living force in our own lives. We know well enough how he did this from his Admonitions and from the record of his own life, so replete with examples of his devotion to the Grib, to the Cross, and to the Mass.

As he did, so let us attend Mass with the vivid realization that we are praying in union with the entire universal Church and in the name of Christ. Let us make an effort to offer as worthily as we can the prayer of the Mystical Christ.

Never mind the archeology and the affectations; let us go to the Liturgy for LIFE, for the living TRUTH which is CHRIST. Let us look above and beyond the mere letter of the spirit. Let us try to appreciate the treasure we possess in our liturgical books, our missals, breviaries, and rituals. We need a "material" knowledge of these books, of course (their rubrics, format, etc.); and we need a "literal" knowledge of them (the meaning of the prayers and rites). But we cannot be content with mere material and literal knowledge; we must try to acquire a "spiritual" knowledge of them: a living and vibrant understanding of the Liturgy as the very Life of the Mystical Body—as the continuation of the Life of its divine Head.

Surely St. Francis would have thought our expensive liturgical books useless if despite them we lacked devotion, reflection, and love. Let us try to see his point of view, then; for, after all, every one of us can say, and mean it, *Jam non vivo*—"It is not I who live; Christ is

my life, for I am Christ, insofar as I live in Him."

Like St. Francis, we can come to know Christ also by being attentive to His presence within us. This is an easy way to grow in knowledge of Him, and therefore it is an easy way to facilitate our imitation of Him.

We have already seen that Jesus lives within us as an interior Model whose features are made known to us by the action of the Holy Spirit. Let us reflect on that fact. The same Jesus Who lived and taught the Gospel in ancient Palestine now lives within us! He Who called Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life, He Who made our hearts for Himself, dwells within us!

Yes, Jesus lives within us. This is the teaching of our Faith, not the wishful dream of a mystic. Jesus our Head acts and speaks through us and in us, His members and organs. Each one of us, within his own limits, IS CHRIST, just as each consecrated Host is Christ, even though all the consecrated Hosts are but one sole and same Christ. Each of us can repeat: "For me, life means Christ; death is a prize to be won. True, I am living, here and now, this mortal life; but my real life is the faith I have in the Son of God" (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20).

Thus we are instructed by our Faith; thus we must believe. Now let us act as though we believed it; let us put our knowledge into practice; let us become ever more aware of our own nobility by means of a life more and more Christlike!

After all, this is the course our holy Father took. Once he had learned from the vision at St. Damien's that Jesus had impressed upon him the likeness of His Passion, he spent the rest of his life trying to conform to the Model presented to him on the Cross and living *within his own soul*. What happened on Alverna proves beyond any doubt that he was perfectly attentive and docile to his interior Model.

A word of caution is necessary at this point. It is true that the saints—and for us, St. Francis in particular—are our models; but we should not strive to imitate them too literally—particularly in those external actions for which each individual saint is known. For each one of us has his own personality and his own proper method of conforming to Christ. In each of us, Christ relives His own life in a slightly different manner. That is why we must be attentive to His action within us, why we must seek His will, know it, and accept it. Each of us must "help to pay off the debt which the afflictions of Christ still leave to be paid, for the sake of His Body, the Church" (Col. 1:24). We live not only for ourselves, then, but also for the Church, and for all mankind; or else the Communion of Saints is meaningless. Each of us has his own Bethlehem, his own Nazareth, his own work, apostolates,



contradictions. Some of us will have a Thabor, but all of us will have a Calvary and a sepulchre. What is important is that insofar as we allow our Lord to live His life as He wants to live it within us, we shall grow in knowledge and love of Him.

(To be continued)

## MY LENT

Is Lent a time in which I choose  
The practices I do,

The prayers I say, the food I eat  
The pleasures I pursue?

A time when friends all know I suffer  
And sympathize with me,  
For Lent was meant for torture,  
And for everyone to see!

Shall I pat Me on the back and say:

"Not one resolve I broke"—  
And in self complacent pleasure  
All my selfish pride invoke?

Or—has Lent seen the Me die out,  
Seen Goodness in me grow,  
Set Patience deeper rooted,  
And the sap of Kindness flow?

Do I give the tiny gift of time,  
Smile through disappointment clouds my day  
Smooth o'er the critic's stab,  
By some thoughtful word I say.

Can I withhold that curious glance,  
Take no sugar in my tea,  
Recite the self-same prayers—with zeal,  
Reserve less pleasant tasks for Me.

Then—too small my deeds for Self to enter  
Too common-place for Pride to claim  
Lent—just a string of loving Deaths  
And "Easter" more than just a name!

Sister Teresa Claire, O.S.F.  
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# Felician Foundress Upholds St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

## CHAPTER II

*St. Francis, Knight of the Eucharist*

A new renaissance of spirituality marked the Christian life of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The keynote of the moving trend was a greater devotion to and study of the human life of Christ. St. Bernard, a leader of this movement, wrote a sermon on the Incarnation and the Life and Passion of our Lord.

On the day of creation God made us to His image, supernatural life came down to us directly from Him. After the fall, an intermediary was necessary. Henceforth, the divine will ordained Christ, His well-beloved Son, to be our Mediator.

In view of this point, the Benedictine, Dom Cuthbert, explains that St. Francis and his followers gave the impetus to greater personal love for the God Man consequently, to the Holy Eucharist.

When we find that a change appears in Western Christendom towards the middle of the thirteenth century, a great wave of Eucharistic devotion and piety then beginning to flow, and when we recollect St. Francis' Eucharistic propaganda, we can hardly be mistaken in looking on him and his friars as the first heralds of the movement that more than aught else has given increasingly its most Special character to all subsequent piety and spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

The Eucharist is the cornerstone of the House of God. It is everything that the Catholic Church stands for. Faith remains constant, dogma does not change, yet theology develops and emphasis of piety shifts. In the Middle Ages the Eucharist was not an object of personal devotional life. The Holy sacrament of love was very often only revered rather than received. Catholic piety centered around the Mass as a sacrifice. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved in some hidden place and not upon the main altar. The faithful approached the Holy Table only on rare occasions. Into this milieu came a "genuine Knight of the Holy Grail," Francis of Assisi.<sup>2</sup> The troubador who loved to sing about the wonders of God's creation beheld the Eucharist as the wonder of

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Cuthbert, *Ways of Christian Life*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Hilariin, Felder, O.F.M. Cap., *The Ideals of St. Francis of Assisi*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1925), p. 37.



wonders. Fundamental to the spirit and life of the Poverello is his faith and great love for Christ as really present in the Sacrament of Love. The threefold meaning of the Eucharist unfolded itself in his life, each bearing its own character and proper meaning.

### *The Crucified Christ in the Eucharist*

He commenced by repairing the church of St. Damian. The young Assisian could not behold his Eucharistic King living in such a dilapidated house after hearing the words of Christ Crucified, "Francis, go and repair My House, which, as thou seest, is falling utterly into ruin."<sup>3</sup> It was then he ascertained the true meaning of Christ Crucified. And as Father Gratien tells us, "Love of Christ on the Cross logically led to love of Christ present in the Eucharist, to love of everything relating to Christ . . .<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas says that "The Eucharist is the perfect sacrament of the Lord's passion in as much as it contains the very Christ Himself who suffered." Celano describes this point aptly in the life of St. Francis, "And chiefly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion so occupy his memory that he would scarce ponder over anything else."<sup>5</sup> The Seraphic Doctor also comments that Christ Crucified always filled his soul. "Christ Jesus Crucified, was laid as a bundle of myrrh, in his heart's bosom, and he yearned to be utterly transformed into Him by the fire of the exceeding love."<sup>6</sup> The Seraphic Doctor further relates that on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, ". . . by seraphic glow of longing he had been uplifted toward God, and by his sweet compassion had been transformed into the likeness of Him Who of His exceeding love endured to be crucified."<sup>7</sup> ". . . Francis descended from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, engraven not, on tables of stone or of wood, by the craftsman's hand, but written on his members of flesh by the finger of the living God."<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere St. Bonaventure says: "The way followed by St. Francis was none other than a burning love of Christ Crucified." Justly does St. Francis de Sales remark, "Love transferred the interior sufferings of that great lover St. Francis to the exterior, and wounded his body with the same

spear of sorrow that pierced his heart."<sup>9</sup>  
 Under the aspect of Christ Crucified Francis conceived the true meaning of the Eucharist, the participation in the life of God in order to continue His life in ours. The words in the liturgy of the Mass reveal this profound significance so well understood by the Poverello:

O God, who in a marvellous manner didst create and ennoble man's nature, and in a manner still more marvellous didst renew it; grant through the mystical union of this water and wine we may become partakers of the divinity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, thy Son, even as he vouchsafed to share with us our humanity.

Christ, in the Sacrament of Love, became his model, Christ offering himself as a sacrifice on the altar of Calvary, in Holy Communion and in the Tabernacle.

### *The Eucharist: An Agent of our Incorporation in Christ*

A deep understanding of the Eucharist as the most efficient agent of our incorporation in Christ, after the seed of sanctifying grace has been planted by Baptism, can be noted in the First Rule of the Friars Minor. The chapter is entitled, "Prayer, praise and thanksgiving."

Almighty, most high, most holy and sovereign God, holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth, for your very self we give you thanks, because by your holy will and through your only Son in the Holy Spirit you have created everything spiritual and corporal, and you placed us, made according to your image and likeness, in Paradise, and it was through our fault we fell.

And we give you thanks because, just as you created us through your Son, so in that true and holy love with which you have loved us, did you have him, true God and true man, the born of the glorious and most blessed holy Mary ever virgin, and wish us captive to be redeemed through his cross and blood and death.

And we give you thanks because this your Son is to come again in the glory of his majesty to send to the eternal fire those accursed ones who did not practice repentance and did not acknowledge you; but to say to everybody that did acknowledge, adore and serve you in repentance, "Come, you blest of my Father, take over the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world (Mt. 25, 34)."

And since we wretched sinners all are not fit to mention your name, we implore insistently that our Lord Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, in whom you were well pleased, may together with the Holy Ghost the Paraclete give you such thanks as please you and them for everything—for he ever suffers you in

<sup>3</sup> Bonaventure, St., *The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Gurney Salter (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1902), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Gratien de Paris, *I Know Christ*, trans. Paul Oigny (St. Bonaventure, N. Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1957), p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Vauier, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Celano, *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. A. G. Petters Howell (London: Methuen and Co., 1906), p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Bonaventure, St., *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> Marion Habig and Alexandre Masseron, O.F.M. *The Franciscan*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959), p. 50.



every regard, through whom you have done so much for us.<sup>11</sup> In the conclusion of the Rule again St. Francis makes mention of this point.

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 all love God the Lord, who has given and still gives us all our whole body, soul and life; who has created 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.

So let us desire nothing else, wish for nothing else, take pleasure and delight in nothing else but our Creator, Redeemer and Savior, the only true God, who is the perfect good, everything good, wholly good, the true and sovereign good; he who alone is good (Lk. 18, 19), loving and gentle, sweet and lovable; he who alone is kind, innocent and clean; from whom, and through whom and in whom is all pardon, all grace, and all glory for all the repentant and the just and for all the blessed rejoicing together in Heaven.<sup>12</sup>

And since the word *eucharistic* literally means thanksgiving, Francis admonishes us to be ever thankful to God through Christ reserved in our tabernacles.

Then let nothing hinder us, nothing keep us apart, nothing get 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, glorify, exalt and extol him, and give thanks to him, the most high, sovereign, eternal God, in Trinity and Unity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the Creator of all things, the Savior of all who have faith and hope and love for him; who is without beginning and without end, unchangeable, invisible, unutterable, ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable, blest, worthy of praise, glorious, exalted above all, sublime, supreme, yet sweet, lovable, delightful, and always altogether desirable beyond everything forever and ever.<sup>13</sup>

Just as the contemporaries of Christ doubted His divine nature, the people of St. Francis' time overlooked and neglected the wonderful real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. St. Francis had a deep appreciation of this dogma and we can readily say he spoke as a profound theologian. The first "Admonition" of the Seraphic Father illustrates this fact. With all the love of a seraph he urges and counsels everyone to prostrate in deep faith and receive the Sacred Banquet frequently.

<sup>11</sup> James Meyer, O.F.M. (ed.), *The Words of St. Francis*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959), p. 280.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283

So, you children of men, how long is your sense going to stay dull (Ps. 4, 3)? Why do you not see into the truth and believe in the Son of God (Jn. 9, 35)? See, day after day he humbles himself, as when he came down from his royal throne (Wis. 18, 15) into the Virgin's womb. Day by day he comes to us personally in this lovely form. Daily he comes down from the bosom of his Father on the altar into the hands of the priest.

And just as he appeared before the holy Apostles in true flesh, so now he has us see him in the sacred bread. Looking at him with the eyes of their flesh, they saw only his flesh, but regarding him with the eyes of the spirit, they believed that he was God. In like manner, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, let us see and believe firmly that it is his most holy Body and Blood, true and living.

For in this way our Lord is ever present among those who believe in him, according to what he said: 'Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world' (Mt. 28, 20).<sup>14</sup>

Another describes the faith of Francis in the Eucharist quite graphically:

The faith of Francis beholds behind the crystal of the monstrance, on the linen on the altar, and on the tongue of the communicant, the hands and feet, the eyes and mouth, the flowing blood and throbbing heart, the majestic personality and the saving grace of Him who once walked the fields of Galilee and Judea, and to whom he himself had sworn allegiance as a knight of the cross. And this unfathomable mystery and infinite treasure the priest calls back from the bygone days of Palestine into the presence of every tabernacle, from the height of heaven into the hearts of the least of men. The thought is overwhelming, is staggering to the human mind.<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note the observation pointed out to us by Father Stier, namely, that St. Francis did not use the traditional terminology of Eucharistic literature as "the awful bread", "the awful sacrifice", "fear and trembling." "To him the Eucharist was the sacrament of infinite tenderness, a real feast of love, a bond of union, a banquet which Christ desired with great desire to eat with us . . . He constantly speaks of 'humility' and 'reverence' or 'veneration'.<sup>16</sup>

The words of his "Testament" also rang out his deep and profound spirit of faith in Christ permanently present in the tabernacle, day and night, and not just during the solemn moments of Holy Mass. The tabernacle became the center of his life.

And the Lord gave me so much faith in churches that I prayed

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130

<sup>15</sup> Myles Schmitt, O.F.M. Cap., *Francis of the Crucified*, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publ. Co., 1956), p. 133.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Stier, O.F.M. Cap., *Franciscan Life in Christ*, (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1953), p. 163.



and said simply thus: 'We adore you, O Lord Jesus Christ, here and at all your churches all over the world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.'<sup>17</sup>

The person of Christ in the Eucharist captivated every faculty of his being. Thomas of Celano declares:

Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he glowed with the fervour of all his being, marvelling at the thought of that loving condescension, of that most condescending love . . . and as he received the immaculate Lamb, he immaculated his spirit with the fire that was ever burning on the altar of his heart.<sup>18</sup>

In his "Letter to All the Custodes," Francis suggests a beautiful devotional act filled with faith and worship, called *latría*.

And when it is sacrificed on the altar by the priest or borne about anywhere, let all the people on bended knees render praise, glory and honor to the true and living Lord God.

And tell and preach this to all peoples in his praise, that at every hour and when the bells are rung, praise and thanksgiving should be offered to almighty God by all the people all over the earth.<sup>19</sup>

In the "Letter to the General and all the Friars", a noteworthy paragraph can be cited. It is an expression of one filled with holy fear and awesome dignity and faith for his God hidden under the tiny form of bread.

Let everything in man halt in awe, let all the world quake, and let Heaven exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is there on the altar in the hands of the priest! Oh, admirable dignity and amazing condescension! Oh, sublime lowliness! Oh lowly sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, should so humble himself as to hide under the tiny little form of bread for our welfare. Look brothers, at the humility of God and pour your hearts out before him. Be humbled yourselves, so you can be exalted by him.<sup>20</sup>

In the following words Francis urges all to be crucified through love, to consecrate themselves wholly to the service of God and neighbor as Christ in turn sacrifices himself for us. "So, do not keep anything about you back for yourselves, so that he may have altogether as his own who puts himself altogether at your disposal."<sup>21</sup>

At one time St. Francis wondered about continuing his public apostolate. After spending several days in prayer, undoubtedly in the Divine Presence, meditating the divine mysteries of Christ's life, he weighed the situation in favor of continuing his apostolate as Christ his Model, thereby, setting the example for his friars that they may

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>18</sup> Celano, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>19</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

always reap the spirit for the apostolate from the Author of all grace. St. Bonaventure relates the indecision of St. Francis.

Brothers, what do you advise and commend? That I give myself wholly to prayer, or that I go about and preach?

For of course as an insignificant, unlettered person without skill in speech I have received the grace of prayer rather than that of speech. Then too in prayer one seems to win and heap up graces whereas in preaching one as it were distributes the gifts received from Heaven. In prayer there is purification of the interior affections and union with the one true and sovereign Good together with invigoration of virtue; in preaching our spiritual feet pick up dust, we are distracted in many ways, and discipline suffers relaxation. Finally in prayer we address and listen to God and associate with the angels as if leading an angelic life; in preaching we have to exercise much condescension toward the people and in living among them as people do, we have to think and see and speak and hear things that are human.

On the other hand, there is one thing that seems to outweigh all this before God, namely that God's only begotten Son, who is the supreme Wisdom, descended from the bosom of the Father for the salvation of souls in order to instruct the world by his example and speak the word of salvation to the people, whom he was both to redeem with the price and cleanse with the bath and nourish with the drink of his sacred Blood, keeping nothing whatever back for himself that he did not give away liberally for our salvation. And since we ought to do everything according to the model of what we saw in him as on a high mountain, it seems to be more pleasing to God for me to interrupt my retirement and go out for such work.<sup>22</sup>

After restoring St. Damian Church, St. Francis devoted himself to rebuilding the walls of other churches as an outlet for the love which welled up in his heart for his Eucharistic God. With his own young and inexperienced hands he gathered stones and mortar to rebuild crumbling chapels. Perhaps the job was more difficult than he had anticipated. It meant not only physical labor for a rich merchant's son, but also begging for money, tools and oil to have a lamp burning continuously before the most Holy Sacrament. Thus, the old Benedictine Church, St. Peter; St. Mary's of the Portiuncula, Mother Church of the Order; the chapel of the Holy Virgin between San Gemini and Porciana, and the completion of the Church Santa Maria del Vesovado in Assisi were renovated and made into beautiful houses of God.<sup>23</sup>

Biographers tell us that even prior to rebuilding churches, Francis cherished a reverent love for anything related to the Blessed Sacrament. He would purchase valuable vessels which were used at the Holy

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>23</sup> Felder, *op. cit.*, p. 41.



Sacrifice and then send them secretly to poor priests and parishes. It would be incorrect to say, however, that St. Francis was prompted to remodel churches, sweep out cobwebs, wash church linen, clean altar vessels and bake altar bread as an expression of talent and a passion for cleanliness. Again, we say it was an exercise of his virtue of faith.

It was during the lifetime of St. Francis that the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 took steps to ensure external reverence and care for the most Blessed Sacrament. In fact, some biographers believe St. Francis was present for this meeting. The 19th decree of this Council admonishes those

... who not only leave the churches uncared for, but even the vessels of the ministry and the vestments of the ministers, and the palls of the altar, nay even the very corporals, which are left so dirty that they are at times and in some places a horror. But since the zeal for the house of God consumes us, we firmly prohibit such furnishings to be allowed in the churches. . . .

We also command that the aforementioned oratories, vessels, corporals and vestments be preserved clean and bright. For it surely seems absurd to neglect stains in sacred things which are becoming even in profane things.<sup>24</sup>

In studying the life of St. Francis we find that he became a true Knight of the Holy Grail, and as a faithful son of the Catholic Church, he did everything in his power to do away with the shameful abuses toward the Blessed Sacrament. In a "Letter to all the Clergy" he expressed his devotion and love of the Blessed Sacrament by explaining the dogma of the transubstantiation as later defined by the Council of Trent. The Poverello also pleaded with the clergy to have the utmost concern for all things pertaining to the Blessed Sacrament. It follows that this letter should be quoted:

Let all of us who are clergymen note the great sin and the ignorance of which some are guilty with regard to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the most sacred names and written words which sanctify the body.

We know that the body cannot be at all unless it be sanctified first by the word. For in this world we have and we see nothing in bodily form of the Most High except his Body and Blood and the names and words through which we have been created and brought back from death to life.

Now, let all who administer mysteries of so very holy a nature, and especially those who minister thoughtlessly, give their careful attention to how wretched are the chalices, corporals and other linens where the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is sacrificed. And many leave it in wretched places, and convey it along the way in a regrettable fashion,

<sup>24</sup> Martin Wolter, O.F.M., "Liturgy of the Blessed Sacrament", *The Cord*, VII, No. 7, (July, 1957), p. 196.

and receive it unworthily, and administer it to others without due concern.

Then too his names and written words are sometimes trampled under foot, because the sensual man has no appreciation for the things of God (1 Cor. 2, 14).

And all this does not move us with loving concern, though Our Lord is loving enough to entrust himself to our hands, and we handle him and receive him on our lips day after day! Do we not know that we are destined to get into his hands?

Well then, let us be quick and determined to do better in these matters and others like them. Wherever the most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ may be put away or kept in a way that is not proper, let it be removed from there, to be put away and reserved in a respectable place.

In like manner wherever the names and written words of our Lord are found lying about in dirty places, let them be picked up and put in a decent place, as is proper.

We know that we are above all bound to observe all these things according to the teaching of our Lord and the decrees of Holy Mother Church. Let whoever does not act that way, know that he shall have to give an account of it before our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgement.

And let whoever has copies of this writing made in order to get it observed the better, know that he is blessed by the Lord.<sup>25</sup> The same type of admonition can be found in "Letter to all the Custodes."

I beseech you more than if it concerned myself, that where it is proper and you find it helpful you may plead humbly with clerics that they ought to venerate above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and writing with his holy writing with his holy names and words, which sanctify the Body. The chalices, corporals, the ornaments of the altar and everything pertaining to the sacrifice, they ought to regard as precious. And if there is any place where the most holy Body of our Lord is lodged very poorly, let it according to the command of the Church be placed by them in a choice place and reserved there, and let it be borne about with great reverence and administered to others with discretion. Also the written names and words of our Lord, wherever found in sordid places, should be picked up and they ought to be put in a decent place.<sup>26</sup>

Appropos is the fact that the immediate successor of St. Francis, as Minister General, decreed for the whole Order that the sacred species should henceforth be continued in a properly secured tabernacle instead of the suspended pyx arrangement which was then in vogue. This injunction brought about a very desirable change. The tabernacle received the place of honor on the high altar.

<sup>25</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164.



His "Letter to the Chapter General and all the Friars" is replete with passages in regard to reverence for the Blessed Sacrament.

So, I entreat you all, brothers, with a kiss for your feet and whatever charity I can, to bring all the reverence and all the respect you ever can to bear on the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom whatever there is in Heaven and on earth has been appeased and reconciled (Col. 1, 20) to God almighty.

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 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, so 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. For, now that he says, 'Do this for a commemoration of me,' if anybody acts otherwise, he becomes Judas the traitor, and makes himself guilty of the body and blood of our Lord.<sup>27</sup>

In the following paragraph of the same letter, Francis with great solicitude admonishes all to always receive the Sacraments worthily lest they are guilty of judgment.

For a person despises, soils and tramples on the Lamb of God when, as the Apostle says, he does not make a difference and distinguish between the holy Bread of Christ and other foods and actions, or when he eats it while unworthy or, if worthy, then in an idle and improper manner, since the Lord says in the words of the Prophet, 'Cursed the man who does the work of the Lord deceitfully' (Jer. 48, 10). And spurning those priests who do not bother to take this to heart, he will say: "I will curse your blessings" (Mal. 2, 2).<sup>28</sup>

The same type of admonition can be cited in the "Letter to all the Faithful."

We should, in particular, confess all our sins to the priest and receive from him the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever does not eat his flesh and drink his blood cannot enter the kingdom of God. Let him of course eat and drink worthily, because whoever receives unworthily, eats and drinks judgment on himself, not distinguishing the body of our Lord (1 Cor. 11, 29),—that is, not distinguishing it from other foods.

All they, however, who are not repentant and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ but commit vice and sin, walking the way of their evil appetites and desires; who do not observe what they have promised;

who with their person serve the world, their fleshly desires, and the cares and worries of this world, while with their mind they serve the Devil, deceived by him whose children they are and whose work they do: all such are blind, since they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ. They have no wisdom spiritually, because they do not have the Son of God in them, who is the true wisdom of the Father, and it is said of them: Their wisdom has been swallowed up (Ps. 106, 27). They see the truth, acknowledge it, know it, and yet commit evil and knowingly lose their soul.<sup>29</sup>

Going back to the "Letter to the Chapter General and all the Friars", a beautiful parallel can be noted. The Poverello stresses the dignity of holy priesthood as well as the proper disposition of one communicating.

Listen, my brothers: If the Blessed Virgin Mary is honored so much—and rightly so—because she bore him about in her most holy womb; if the blessed Baptist trembled all over and did not dare to touch the holy crown of his God; if the tomb in which he lay for a while is venerated so much: then how holy, just and worthy ought the person to be who freely handles him, receives him in mouth and heart, and presents him for others to receive, not in a mortal state any more, but as going to live and as glorified forever, 'whom the angels yearn to gaze upon' (1 Pet. 1, 12).<sup>30</sup>

The troubador of the Eucharist reminds the clergy of the obligations of a priestly vocation. The eucharistic vocation and the priestly one must complement each other. It must be first in the lives of all priests. Above all, the gift of self must follow as the holocaust of the Victims of Calvary.

Let everything in man halt in awe, let all the world quake, and let Heaven exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is there on the altar in the hands of the priest! Oh, admirable dignity and amazing condescension! Oh sublime lowliness! Oh lowly sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, should so humble himself as to hide under the tiny form of bread for our welfare. Look, brothers, at the humility of God and pour your hearts out before him. Be humbled yourselves, so you can be exalted by him.<sup>31</sup>

The following admonition pertains to respect, and reverence towards the clergy.

... and be respectful to the clergy not only for their sake, if they are sinners, but for their charge and ministry of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they sacrifice on the altar and receive and distribute to others. And let us all be firmly convinced that no one can be saved except through the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the holy

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187 and 191.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.



words of our Lord, which the clergy repeat and announce and minister to us, and which it is for them alone to administer, and for nobody else.<sup>32</sup>

Celano records the words of Francis which also speak of great respect and reverence for the clergy. "If I chanced to meet at the same time any Saint coming down from heaven, and any poor priest, I would do honor to the Presbyter first, and would sooner go to kiss his hands; and I would say (to the other), 'Oh, wait, St. Lawrence! for this man's hands handle the Word of Life, and possess something that is more than human.'<sup>33</sup>

The words of his Testament point out this fact clearly, too.

After that the Lord gave and gives me so much faith in priests that live subject to the law of the holy Roman Church, by reason of their Orders, that even if they were to persecute me I will take recourse to them. And if I had as much wisdom as Solomon had, and were to come upon poorly-off priests out in the world, it is my will not to preach against their pleasure in parishes where they are stationed. And it is my will to love and honor them and all others as my masters; and I will not regard sin in them, because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my masters. And I do this for the reason that in this world I see nothing bodily of the most high Son of God himself but his most holy Body and Blood, which they have in charge and they alone administer to others.

And I want these most holy mysteries above all else to be honored and venerated and kept in choice places. Wherever I find his most holy names and written words in improper places, I mean to pick them up and I beg that they be picked up and put in a respectable place. And all the theologians and persons who administer the most holy words of God, we must honor and respect as people who minister spirit and life to us.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Frequent Reception at Holy Mass*

The Seraphic Patriarch promoted the practice of frequent Holy Communion in a day when it was customary to receive once a year by many of the faithful.

The First Rule of the Friars Minor reads:

Thus contrite and confessed, let them receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with great humility and reverence, bearing in mind that the Lord himself says (Jn. 6.55), 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has life everlasting'; and (1k. 22, 19), 'Do this in remembrance of me.'<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>33</sup> Celano, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-330.

<sup>34</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

The same prescription can be cited in the Rule of the Third Order Regular.

A great sign and aid of the love of Christ is the frequent and even daily approach of the Holy Eucharist, which is at once a sacred banquet and a memorial of His passion. It should also be the endeavor of religious souls frequently to visit and devoutly to venerate our Lord Jesus abiding with us in this admirable mystery; for, this is the greatest Sacrament of the Church and an inexhaustible fountain of all blessings.<sup>36</sup>

Other passages which can be quoted in regard to frequent reception of the Sacrament of Love appear in the "Letter to Public Officials."

For that reason I advise you strongly, my lords, to think less of all such care and worry, and lovingly to receive the most holy Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ in holy memory of him. And do the Lord so much honor among the people entrusted to you that every evening you have a cryer or some other signal summon all your people to render praise and thanksgiving to the almighty Lord God. If you do not act thus, it is well for you to know that you must render an account before your Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgment.<sup>37</sup>

Another reference to receiving Holy Communion frequently is found in a "Letter to all the Faithful."

Now, such was the will of his Father that his glorious blest 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 (Jn. 1, 3), but for our sins, leaving us an example, so that we all should be saved by him and receive him with a pure heart and a chaste body. But there are few who care to receive him and be saved by him, though his yoke is sweet and his burden light (Mt. 11, 30).

Those who have not the will to taste how sweet the Lord is (Ps. 33, 9) and who love the darkness more than the light (Jn. 3, 19), being unwilling to fulfill God's commandments, are under a curse. It is said of them by the prophet: Cursed are they who turn away from your commandments (Ps. 118, 21). But oh, how blessed and blest are they who love the Lord and do as the Lord himself says in the Gospel: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and your neighbor as yourself (Mt. 22, 37).

So let us love God and adore him with a clean heart and mind, because that is what he desires above all when he says: The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4, 23). For all who worship him, should worship him in the spirit of truth (ib. 24). Let us speak his praise and pray to him day and night with the words, Our Father, who art

<sup>36</sup> Allan Wolter, O.F.M., *The Book of Life*. (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1954), p. xiii.

<sup>37</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184.



in Heaven, for we should pray always and never lose heart (Lk. 18, 1).<sup>38</sup>

Similar yearning for the Bread of Life is disclosed in St. Francis' paraphrase of the Our Father, called the "Praises of God in the Our Father."

"Give us this day—so that we will remember, understand and respect the love he bore for us and all he said and did and endured for us—our daily bread—your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>39</sup>

A great depth of love for the Holy Mass is noted in the fact recorded in the Breviary of St. Francis and also in the Minor Testimonies of the thirteenth century. "When I do not hear Mass, I adore the body of our Christ with the eyes of the mind in prayer, just as I adore it when I see it at Mass."<sup>40</sup> Although St. Francis had a profound veneration for the priesthood and Holy Mass, he only remained a deacon. He, who was adorned with the sacred stigmata, felt himself unworthy to perform the sublime vocation of the priesthood, to consecrate the bread and wine, and to give the Sacred Species to the faithful. In Celano, we note the following concerning Francis: "He often communicated, and that so devoutly as to make others devout. Attending on that reverend Ordinance with all reverence, he offered the sacrifice of all his members . . ."<sup>41</sup> Continuing in the same vein, Celano also says that, "He deemed it to be treating the Sacrament with no small contempt if, having leisure, he did not hear at least one mass daily."<sup>42</sup> Hilariin Felder quotes the "Speculum Perfectionis", "If illness prevented him from going to church, he would ask a priest to celebrate Mass for him in the sick room."<sup>43</sup> In the "Letter to the Chapter General and all the Friars", Francis prescribes a single Mass in every Friary for he did not want the friars to lose their reverence for the most Blessed Sacrament.

So I admonish and exhort you in the Lord, that in the places where the brothers stay, a single Mass in the day be celebrated according to the form of Holy Church. If, however, there are several priests at the place, let each for the love of charity be glad to have heard the celebration of the other, for the present and the absent that are worthy of it, get their fill from the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Celano, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>43</sup> Felder, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

### *The Eucharist and Followers of St. Francis*

The influence of St. Francis' eucharistic legacy to his Order is so great it would take volumes to record it conscientiously. Yet it is only in glancing at the history of the Order that one might say the Eucharist is one of its most outstanding characteristics.

In the thirteenth century, when the Saracens were overcoming Italy, looting and vandalizing homes, churches and monasteries, St. Clare caused the monsternce containing the consecrated Host to be placed on the rampart facing the enemy. Faith and confidence in the Real Presence won them a reward—the enemy retreated.

Another manifestation of the power of the Eucharist may be observed in the episode which St. Anthony of Padua encountered with a particular Jew and his followers. The deep faith of the Evangelical Doctor convinced them to abjure their heresies and embrace the Catholic Faith.

In the writings of St. Bonaventure we find many allusions to the Blessed Eucharist which are indicative of the ardent love that filled his soul toward the Sacrament of Life.

Many others of the Order were likewise zealous in furthering the triumph of the Eucharist over heretics and unbelievers. Alexander of Hales and Duns Scotus developed works of theology concerning the Eucharist.

Pope Leo XIII chose St. Paschal Baylon, a humble lay brother, to be the special patron of Eucharistic Congresses since his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was so eminent. Many other Franciscan saints could be mentioned who also had an untold devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; namely, St. Leonard of Port Maurice, St. Mary Frances of the Wounds of Jesus, St. Angelo of Foligno, and Ven. Pierre Julien Eymard, a Franciscan tertiary. St. Pius X issued a decree proclaiming that all the faithful should come nearer to our Eucharistic Lord by frequent reception of the sacrament.

The Franciscans of yesterday and today have always endeavored to spread devotion toward the most Holy Eucharist. They have become the troubadours of a great Eucharistic message to the world according to Father Lombardi's words:

If concern should arise at the thought of preserving in grace all those souls once they have been regenerated, let it not be forgotten what a resource we have in the Holy Eucharist . . . Without It, we shall not arrive at the new age, because grace, the fundamental element, will be lacking. No effort can be too great for this end.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> R. Lombardi, S.J., *Toward a New World*. (Staten Island, N. Y.: St. Paul Publications, 1958), p. 260.



In retrospect as to the matter of this chapter, we can summarize by saying that St. Francis has left the world a magnificent eucharistic message, "... the little unlettered man reveals himself to be a sublime theologian, a descendant of Paul and John."<sup>46</sup> This message can be found not only in his personal life in which he displayed an ardent faith that "... that could see his Creator beneath the symbol of nature, could also pierce the veils of the Eucharist,"<sup>47</sup> but also in formal documents bearing the Eucharist in mind, which have been left for us to study and meditate, namely; his Rules, Testament, and "Letter to the Chapter General", "Letter to the Custodes", "Letter to all the Clergy", "Letter to the Faithful", and a "Letter to Public Officials." These writings point out the necessity of the God-Man, and our incorporation into the Mystical Body through the Eucharist. Emphasis is also placed on respect for churches and dwelling places of the Lord, for sacred vessels, the word of God and priesthood, and all related to the Eucharist.

The effect of St. Francis' Eucharistic devotion was indeed tremendous not only in the Order itself, but also in Christianity at large. His example and works will always serve as an incentive to those who, like their Seraphic Patriarch, desire to become one with Him.

To finally conclude, we quote the words of Father Plasmann speaking about the Seraphic Saint, which express the entire object of this chapter as well as this thesis.

What was the object of his whole life? He did not analyze and divide. It was all creation with all its beauty—the birds, the sun and the rain—all creatures of God. It is the same with the Gospel. Immediately he flies to God, the Alpha and Omega. It was the same with Christ, Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and Christ in the Crib and on the Cross, and the mind concentrates upon Christ. That is the synthesis of St. Francis. The God who wrote the scriptures is the God who created the world. It is one and the same. Here is God in Tabernacle—on the Cross. To him it was "That is my objective; that I will exemplify in my life."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Jean Gautier, (ed.), *Some Schools of Catholic Spirituality*, trans. Kathryn Sullivan, R.S.C.J. (New York: Deslee Co., 1953), p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> Cesaire De Tours, O.F.M. Cap., *Franciscan Perfection*, Trans. Paul Barrett (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1956), p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Aidan Carr, "The Essence and Characteristics of Franciscan Spirituality", *Franciscan Educational Conference*, XXIX, (Washington, D. C.: Capuchin College Press, 1948), p. 22.

## Discussion On Poverty

### AT THE 1961 FRANCISCAN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sister Helen Marie, O.S.F., Joliet, Ill.

It is perhaps a testimonial to the breadth and depth of Francis' ideal of poverty that his followers found it necessary to ask repeatedly for an interpretation of this ideal. It is also significant, I think, that as true Franciscans they sought such guidance from the Holy Roman Church.

As Father Raphael Huber, O.F.M. Conv. has pointed out, even in Francis' own lifetime the need for such interpretation had become apparent and shortly after the founder's death, the Order found it necessary to appeal to Francis' friend, Cardinal Ugolino, then Pope Gregory IX, for an interpretation of the rule. Gregory laid down the principle that the Order was not to own property and that money must be handled by a lay man, a spiritual friend or syndic. Subsequent Popes confirmed or modified this original position, discussing in addition the notion of "poor" use in contrast to "moderate" use. Finally Clement V, in a bull which is still effective today, reiterated the original ideal that the Order was not to own anything and he also declared in favor of "poor" use.

However, varied interpretation of poverty continued to give rise to new groups of Franciscans until, at the turn of this century, Pope Leo XIII unified some of these groups, recognizing three branches of the First Order. Today Observants, Conventuals, and Capuchins, each with its own government and constitutions, present slightly varied interpretations of Franciscan ideal, all of them approved by the Holy Roman Church.

It may be of some interest to this feminine audience to realize that a similar development of the Franciscan ideal took place among the Poor Clares. During her lifetime, Clare, like Francis, spoke out boldly for the "privilege of property." Even though Innocent IV ruled that common ownership was permitted to the Poor Ladies, at the request of Clare herself he added that no one had to accept this concession. In her own rule, Clare reiterated her precious privilege of poverty. However, the Urbanist rule of 1263 again allowed common ownership. Finally the reform of St. Collette in 1458 returned to the original ideal of no common ownership and no income for the Poor Clares. Thus both the First and the Second Order struggled to maintain Francis' ideal of absolute poverty.



In summary, I am inclined to agree with Father Ignatius Brady when he points out that the issue was not one of strict vs. lax practice of poverty but rather an attempt to balance poverty against the development of the Order as an organized whole.

Seen in this perspective one realizes that Father Huber's historical presentation can be of great service in enabling this conference to discuss Franciscan Financial Administration today. For history is only "the unfolding of the web of eternity under temporal and transitory eyes."

In this light I would like to suggest for consideration the following points:

1) The motivation behind Francis' choice of Lady Poverty and the relevance of this emphasis on poverty for our own times.

2) The meaning of poverty for the Franciscan—yesterday and today.

3) The question of collective poverty vs. individual poverty.

A few points perhaps to stimulate thinking along these lines: Why did Francis choose poverty? In the light of Father Huber's presentation we have something of the historical background for Francis' choice. Francis knew only too well the accumulated wealth within and without the church. He must also have been aware of the various reform movements abroad, the Humiliati and Cathari, for example, which had arisen to protest against wealth in the church. In contrast to these movements, Francis remained firm within the church and there heralded the importance of poverty. The uniqueness of Francis' position and its daring is underlined by a statement made in 1205 by Innocent III in which the Pope expressed his opinion that it was a disgrace for the clergy to live on charity. Such was the thinking of the Pope; such the attempted reform by those who ended up repudiating the church, such was the historical need for the Franciscan reform.

However, I do not believe that Francis' ideal was purely a deliberate response to the historical situation. It seems truer to me to say that Francis' poverty was a whole-souled response to Christ. It was the true answer of a creature completely aware of his dependence on God and of his own sinfulness. This notion, it seems to me, is basic to the Franciscan vocation.

How is this vocation to Franciscan poverty relevant today? Now, as in Francis' time, stands out the shocking contrast between extreme wealth and direct poverty. As someone has said, today's struggle is fundamentally a conflict between those who "have" and those who "have-not". Certainly one of the pivotal points in the Communist

program is the whole question of property reform and relief of poverty. Granted that the Communist solution is no solution, nevertheless it remains true that this very movement can call our attention to the contemporary problem of poverty. Certainly such a concern with the poor can be pre-eminently a Franciscan apostolate.

Today we might consider such points as the contrast between poor and wealthy; between poor and middle class; Communist capitalization on the needs of the poor, for example in Cuba and South America; we might also consider what efforts have been made and can be made to bring the full impact of Franciscan poverty to bear on those problems of the poor in our times.

In view of the contemporary historical situation there seems a special need for poverty in today's apostolate. As Francis realized so many centuries ago, the apostle must first of all bear witness to the "poor Christ" and to the message of the cross and the transcendental need of the gospel. This means that his own apostolate must be worked out in complete dependence on God, trust in his Fatherly care, and realization of the creature's own inadequacy. In this way the Franciscan will bear witness to the role of poverty as an integral part of today's apostolate.

But all of these considerations on the motives for Franciscan poverty may well raise the request for a clarification of our own practice of poverty. Here I might suggest for consideration the topic of exterior poverty in relation to interior poverty. Father Huber's paper has carefully underlined Francis' own concern, as well as the care of the Order itself, in regard to such externals as ownership and handling of money. Obviously, this emphasis on the material aspects of poverty presupposes the detachment, freedom of heart and trust in God which form interior poverty. In the light of our own times perhaps we have need to re-examine our external expression of poverty as a safeguard for the spirit of poverty. How can our Third Order congregations deepen their interior practice of poverty through careful attention to the details of exterior poverty? How can we be poor in the midst of middle class comfort? How can we distinguish (to use the historical phrase) between "poor use" and "moderate use"?

All of which brings us to one final point of consideration: community poverty vs. individual poverty. Again I draw your attention to the fact that this was the issue in much of the legislation which Father Huber has described. In what sense can our community be called poor? How is this notion of community poverty related to the poverty practiced by the individual? At the outset it is planned to be granted that both the poverty of the community and that of the individual will vary



from one Order to another, from one age to another. Demands of the apostolate will also shape this ideal of poverty. Granting these differences in practice it still seems true to me that, "Community poverty is both the root and the fruit of individual poverty." How can we, who do admit of community ownership of property and do handle money, how can we practice community poverty?

These, then, are some ideas for consideration: the motivation for the need of poverty today, especially in view of our contemporary apostolate; the relation of exterior and interior poverty; the need for a community poverty.

\* \* \*

## ARIDITY

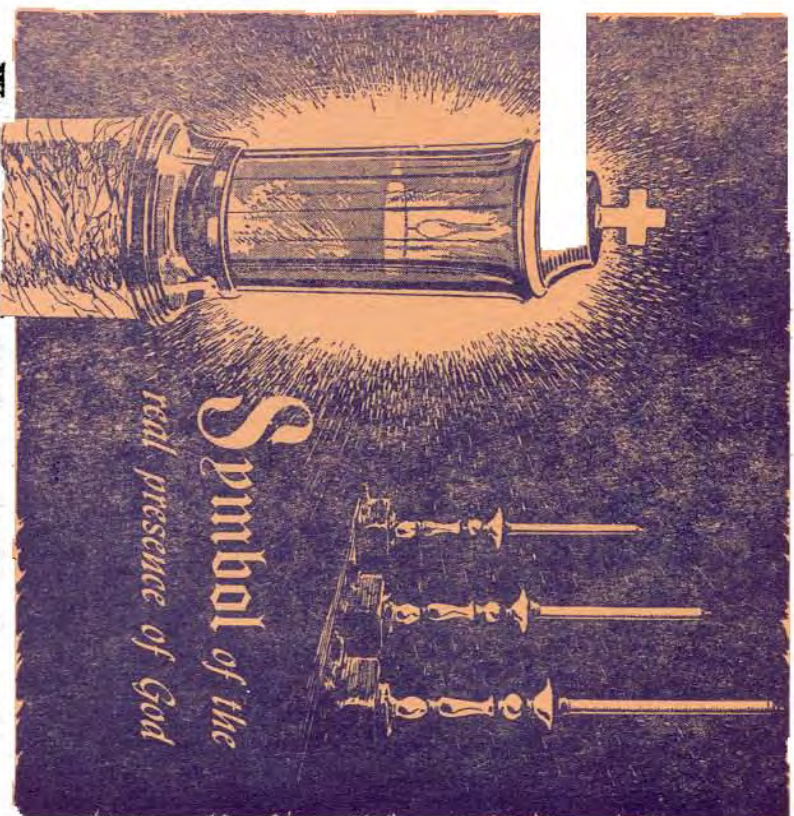
Jesus!  
I call,  
But You do not answer.  
You are hiding;

But I shall seek You  
And I shall find you  
Standing.

Behind me,  
Waiting for me to turn  
That You may embrace me.

*Sister M. Josephine, O.S.F.*





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# the CORD

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## A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

### Psalm 126

Of the twelve Psalms used in the Little Hours, only one remains to be examined, Psalm 126. Students of the liturgy may well be imagined as wondering why this Psalm appears twice in the Little Office, once at None and again at Compline. On the other hand, students interested in Sacred Scripture, and particularly the Book of Psalms, might more likely wonder whether we are dealing here with one song or with two songs joined rather loosely to make this one Pilgrim Song. Let us concentrate on the second of these problems and see what answer we may discover by a critical reading of Psalm 126.

The first strophe of the Psalms, identified by some writers as a distinct and separate song in its own right, consists of eight lines, grouped into four distichs or couplets, two of which form the first verse, two the second. Here is the first pair of lines:

*Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.* Certainly the first thing to notice about the distich is the pronounced balance of thought between the clauses which compose it. Not agreement of thought, now, but

balance of thought, a symmetry obtained by placing one idea parallel, you might say, to another.

As a matter of fact, I ought to remind you, perhaps, that this balancing of thought is a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry and is called "parallelism". When the thought in the second line merely repeats and echoes the thought in the first line, with some slight modification, of course, we have what is known as "synonymous parallelism". Sometimes, however, the second thought offers a sharp contrast to the first to give us what is called "antithetic parallelism". There is a third type which is termed "synthetic" or "progressive parallelism", in which the thought expressed in the first line is further expanded, elaborated, or completed in the second line. This last kind of parallelism frequently—more frequently, too, than the other kinds—runs over into three and sometimes four lines. I can not recall where I read a rather ordinary but enlightening description of this poetic device, but I am going to mention it in the hope that it may help you to associate the name and the description of each of these three types. In synonymous parallelism,



you are dealing with twins. In antithetic parallelism, you are dealing with a brother and a sister. In synthetic or progressive parallelism, you are dealing with a parent and his child or children. Anyway, all three types occur in this poem, as we shall see, the first to do so being progressive parallelism in the first distich:

*Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.*

The tenor of these lines is the need of God's blessing for the success of man's undertaking; it is presented in terms of carpenters or masons building a house. The same motion is illustrated in the next two lines by reference to the city watchmen keeping vigil on its walls:

*Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil.*

Here we have a second example of progressive parallelism. Notice, moreover, that the poem gains effectiveness and a kind of integration by the similarity now established between the first and the third lines—

*Unless the Lord build the house,*

*Unless the Lord guard the city—*

*and between the second and the fourth lines—*

*they labor in vain who build it, they labor in vain who guard the city.*

It may strike you here that the poet seems as much to be repeating himself as to be getting on with whatever he has to say. The observation is valid and pertinent because it serves to remind us that

the Psalms, composed in the first place for a Hebrew audience, conform to oriental notions of poetry. This is why sometimes their thought is, you might say, circular, not linear; what is said does not move along uninterruptedly in a straight line from one thought to the next and then on finally to a conclusion, but revolves once or twice or three times about one

one thought and then goes on to repeat the process with another and then another thought. It is this repetitiveness of the Psalms that makes them such good exercises in meditation: we keep turning over in our minds the same idea, revolving it, looking at it from different angles, considering it from several sides. One of the reasons that some people find the Psalms tedious is that they expect consecutive thoughts and are disappointed when their minds are kept hovering about a single theme, presented over and over again, sometimes with only the slightest variation in the diction and the imagery. Such people want to fly in a long, straight line as the wild geese go, instead of circling around and round a steeple like so many swallows. They fail to see—to use another figure—that the theme or central thought or important idea of a Psalm is a brilliant ray of pure white light, refracted into all the colors of the rainbow by the facets of a prism. And the theme, so shining forth in Psalm 126, is the vanity, the

complete futility of any work's being successful unless the man who performs it acknowledges his need of the Lord's blessing upon it.

This is the lesson taught in more general terms and more embracing imagery in the next verse of the poem:

*It is vain for you to rise early,*

*or put off your rest.*

This is, incidentally, an example of synonymous parallelism. You must have met people, I am sure, who are forever getting an early start so as to finish in a day all that the world expects of them, as if the running of the whole world were entirely and exclusively their responsibility! Vanity! Foolishness! That is what the psalmist would call it. These are the same people who can never get to bed on time, either, because they have to be sure that the whole world is tucked away to rest before they lie down to sleep! And that is vanity, too, the psalmist thinks.

If I seem to be making the poet talk directly to his hearers, that is precisely what he is doing: talking to people who think that everything depends on their work to win the things they need or to accomplish what has to be done. They are the ones whom he warns: *You that eat hard-earned bread.* And in the very next words, which make the verse a good example of progressive parallelism, the poet complements the advice by showing why it must be true:

*For he gives to his beloved in sleep.*

I want you to remark about these lines, too, that they reveal the artistry of the poet as well as his wisdom. In the preceding lines he first mentions the Lord and then those who labor. Now he reverses the order: first he speaks of men who labor, then he speaks of the Lord. Thus he climaxes the strophe and closes it as he had opened it, with reference to the Lord without whom men can do nothing.

We have some words of Jesus which aptly comment on this insistence that God works for "those who fear him . . . those who hope for his kindness" (Psalm 32-18), even to the extent of blessing "his beloved in sleep." The words are recorded by Saint Mark. They picture a man who would "sow a crop in his land, and then go to sleep and wake again, night after night, day after day, while the crop sprouts and grows, without any knowledge of his. So, of its own accord, the ground yields increase, first of the blade, then the ear, then the perfect grain in the ear; and when the fruit appears, then it is time for him to put in the sickle, because now the harvest is ripe" (Mark 4:26-29). And the Lord, of course, is behind it all "for he gives to his beloved in sleep."

Mention of Christ logically reminds us that this Psalm states in germinal form the supreme duty of trust in our heavenly Father which Christ laid upon us in the doctrine which he taught. This is



one of the very things to which Saint Paul refers when he reminded his listeners, and us, too, that "God spoke to our fathers in many ways and by many means, through the prophets; now at last in these times he has spoken to us, with a Son to speak for him . . . (Hebrews 1:1-2). And this Son said to his disciples, "I say to you, then, do not fret over your life ( how to support it with food, over your body, how to keep it clothed . . . See how the ravens never sow, have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them; have you not an excellence far beyond theirs? . . . See how the lilies grow; they do not toil or spin, and yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these . . . You should not be asking them, what you are to eat and drink, and living in suspense of mind; it is for the heathen world to busy itself over such things; your Father knows well that you need them. No, make it your first care to find the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be yours without the asking" (Luke 12:22-31).

But to get back to the third verse of the Psalm. It is at this point in the poem, claim many exegetes, that we begin to read a new poem, originally independent of the one we have analyzed but later joined to it to form Psalm 126 as we have it now. Still, as one critic points out, "the conjecture . . . seems unnecessary: in view of

the importance attaching to the family in oriental countries, it is not unnatural that the Psalmist should enlarge upon its advantages, though he is led away thereby from the point with which he started." Agreeing that it seems unnecessary to make two short poems of this Psalm, I take objection, nevertheless, to the suggestion that the latter part of it—verses 3 to 5—dealing with God's gift of sons wanders from the point with which the first two verses are concerned. Let me give you my grounds for holding that the Psalm is one, whole, and entire poem, unified in thought and imagery.

Ambiguity, double meaning, the capacity of a word to be taken in several senses is an inevitable and basic aspect of language. Lawyers and scientists, for example, do not like this trait that words have, so many of them. That is why such people try very hard to use words so that they can have only one possible meaning. To keep their statements pure and single in sense, they even invent words that nobody else will use. Poets, on the other hand, revel in ambiguity because they know that it enriches their statements and makes them effective in several ways at once. One word will suggest two, three, even four related thoughts and images to the reader. How economical and useful a way to enrich your statement without loosening it or lengthening it! Not to make an excursion through the museum

of poetical examples, let me remind you of one superb illustration of ambiguity. This one was used by Christ himself on a most solemn occasion. *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam*. "Thou art Peter"? Yes, surely, but also and at the same time, "Thou art a rock." "And upon this rock"? Certainly, but also and at the same time, "Upon this Peter right here in front of me."

Now if you read the first line of Psalm 126—as many an exegete seems to do—as if it were a sentence in a theology book, it means precisely what it says:

*Unless the Lord build the house,*

*they labor in vain who build it.* Simple and clear, no ambiguity! Bricks, mortar, trowel, ladder, scaffold, work, and here you have it, a house. That is what is meant by "build a house." But if you read the lines as poetic statement—which dotes on ambiguity—and not as a scientific statement, is that all they mean?

Well, when God repudiated Heli, he announced his choice of Sadoc in these words: "I will raise me up a faithful priest;" and God spoke of Sadoc's posterity in these words: "I will build him a faithful house" (I Kings 2:34). And when God sent Nathan to assure David of the continuance of his line, the message ran like this: "The Lord will build thee a house" (I Paralipomeon 17:10). And when God sanctioned Jeroboam and his descendants as

rulers of Israel, he said so through Ahias the prophet: "I will be with thee and will build thee up a faithful house, as I built a house for David" (III Kings 11:38). There are more examples of a similar kind to show that "build a house" can be taken as a figurative way of describing the founding of a family, the establishing of a lineage, the begetting of children and heirs.

You can say, therefore, that the very opening reference in this poem to the building of a house poetically justifies special mention later on of God's gift of sons. The second strophe of the Psalm is thus an echo and an expansion of a theme implicit in the first lines of the poem. If it be vain to rely on your energy and ambition to get what you want; if it be vain to depend on your own care and vigilance to guard what you have; it is equally vain to make your plans for what the future will bring to your name and your fortunes. For,

*Behold, sons are a gift from the Lord;*

*the fruit of the womb is a reward.*

By this synonymous parallelism the poet reminds Israel that, as the Lord had gratuitously bestowed upon them the land of Canaan through no merit of theirs, in his mercy and generosity he will give them the blessing of numerous children to populate and to cultivate the land. This was a truth



that needed reiteration, especially at the time in which the psalmist is speaking. There is only slight reason to accept the opinion that Solomon composed this poem. The attribution of it to him in the title is due, most likely, to the resemblance of its language to that of the sapiential books; to the mention of building a house, which statement some scribe took to be a reference to the Temple which Solomon had built; but, above all, to the fact that Solomon was called "Beloved of Yahweh" and had, in sleep, received from God his gift of wisdom.

The poem, however, really seems to date from the time, after the Babylonian Captivity, when the Jews had returned to find Jerusalem devastated and desolate.

"Far and wide the city stretched, and its citizens were few and far between; the houses in it had not yet been repaired" (Nehemias 7:4). But the returning exiles set manfully to work at once. Meanwhile, their jealous neighbors made common cause to stop them, even attacking the city. But, as Nehemias tells us, "We ask help of God and set watchmen on the walls, day and night, to defeat their purpose" (Nehemias 4:9). How desperate things actually were Nehemias goes on to relate: "Already the Jews were complaining that they had no strength left for carrying burdens, that the ground was choked with rubble; our task

would never be finished; and now our enemies thought to steal upon us unawares, and put an end to it by taking our lives" (Nehemias 4:10-11). This was precisely the moment when the Jews needed to be reminded that everything did not depend upon their brains and brawn alone. God watches over his people; he will build up their houses and protect their cities, and he will do both by giving them children in abundance to dwell in them and to defend them.

This is the thinking, I feel, that lies behind the simile which the poet uses in the next two lines of the strophe. Not only a "gift from the Lord" and a "reward" to those who rely on him, but

*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the sons of one's youth.*

It is the sons who are born when their parents are young and vigorous who will grow up to succor and to defend their aging parents. That is the point of using the figure of a warrior with arrows in his hands, a fighter with his weapons in his grasp. In the Psalm that follows this one in the Psalter, Psalm 127, the poet again celebrates the blessings of family life. The lovely intimacy of it, its hidden vitality and fruitfulness, these are the aspects he singles out for comment. You can tell that is his intention by the very words he uses, the figures he uses:

*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine  
in the recesses of your home;  
Your children like olive plants  
around your table.*

Quite a contrast, these words, with the warlike figure of Psalm 126! And the poem grows even more war-like in the closing verse:

*Happy the man whose quiver is  
filled with them;  
they shall not be put to shame  
when they contend  
with enemies at the gate.*

You may think there is a fierceness here that is out of place, but how else could the poet have pointedly reminded his hearers that ultimately the welfare of their city and the safety of their lives depend upon the strength and bravery of the sons the Lord gives them to be the instruments of his Providence and the reward of his beloved who trust in him? I suppose that I ought to put in here, as a kind of aside, the reminder that the third and the fourth verses of this strophe illustrate the use of progressive parallelism.

The burden of this song is that God takes care of those who believe in him, a fact that men tend to forget, but one which affects every minute of their lives. This Providence of God is exercised usually indirectly and through secondary causes. The poet illustrates his theme by insisting that no one builds a house without the help of him who "at the beginning of time, created heaven and earth" (Gen-

esis 1:1); that no one guards a city without the help of him who "neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel" (Psalm 120:4). He addresses those who rise early and work late, who fret and worry and sometimes doubt and so "eat hard-earned bread." Meanwhile, to those who repose in calm confidence in him God gives the blessings that others work in vain to obtain. He does it indirectly, sending them sons in their youth, who will establish their houses, populate and multiply their cities, protect and defend them in their old age, and insure their triumph over "the enemies at the gate."

It is customary to see in this last verse a reference to the oriental habit of settling legal disputes at courts held in the large, open space just inside the city's gate. The interpretation is that a man who comes to such a tribunal surrounded by a band of sturdy sons shall be assured of fair play and "shall not be put to shame when they contend with enemies at the gate." I think this interpretation is much too facile and not very well founded. It fails to notice that it is not the father who is contending and is rescued from shame but the sons; not "he" but "they." It overlooks the martial tones suggested as early as the second verse of the Psalm. These tones grow in intensity as the poem unfolds. And all the imagery of the second strophe seems practically wasted if all we are expected to see is a



The whole poem collapses and dribbles away unless we see in its conclusion an assurance that Israel, if he remains faithful to God, need never fear that God will desert him in his hour of need or that he will have to rely upon his own frail powers alone in such times. God will fill the hearts of his people with the courage that inspired Nehemias and his men; God will strengthen them to say in the face of any enemy what Nehemias said in the face of his: "Fear no assault . . . bethink you how great, how fearsome the Lord is, and fight well, each for his own kindred, for son and daughter and wife, for house and home" (Nehemias 4:14). It is only when and if such faith inspires men that "they shall not be put to shame when they contend with enemies at the gate." Our challenge is that we, who know what happened to the Chosen People, make not the mistake they made in missing the message of this Psalm.

group of sons marching with their father to the city gate to overawe their adversaries and to intimidate a judge. This is a very shabby thing to gladden a just father's heart!

## St. Peter Of Alcantara

Encyclical Letter of Most Reverend *Augustine Sepinski*,  
Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor

Most beloved sons and daughters in the Lord:

St. Peter of Alcantara, outstanding promoter of a purer discipline in the Order of Friars Minor, died very peacefully on the 18th of October, 1562, at Arenas in the diocese of Avila, Spain.

Four centuries have passed since then and two provinces in particular are striving to mark this anniversary with equal solemnity: the Castilian Province of St. Gregory of the Philippines, which possesses the precious remains of the Saint, and the Province of Andalusia-Granada wherein is located the friary known popularly as "El Pedroso". Moreover, we are happy to learn that in Spain a civil and religious assembly has been arranged to pay due honor to the memory of so great a man.

Such observance is clearly fitting and praiseworthy and we most willingly give our consent to it. For as "a sun rising over the Iberian lands", Peter spread the rays of his light so that he might impel his own countrymen to the peak of sanctity, support every effort of his

own time towards the restoration of religion, and, what cannot at all be overlooked, ennoble Spanish literature by his own writings.

But surely this celebration must strike a responsive chord within the entire Order because St. Peter so effectively promoted the observance of the Rule and kindled the fervor of the seraphic spirit that through his influence a new and most fruitful springtime of sanctity flourished in "the meadows of poverty". Although he cannot be called the founder of Discalced reform, nonetheless, in justice he must be recognized as the pillar of this reform because he gave it prudent and courageous leadership, made it firm with most wise constitutions, and fostered it with the strength of his own spirit. Small wonder, then, that in the course of time, the Discalced Reform taking its name from him became known as the Alcantarine reform. So strong did it grow that later it gave rise to many flourishing provinces in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Mexico, the East Indies, the Philippine Islands, and in Brazil where Peter of Alcantara is honored as Patron by decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

No wonder the liturgical Office regards Peter as a new Francis and grants him the singular praise: "Our Seraphic Father is dead, and yet not so; for he has left one like himself, Peter, whom he has made defender of his home. This Peter follows all the paths of his father: he veers neither to right nor left" (Office, 19 October, Resp. I).

Moreover, Peter is among the holy founders memorialized in marble in the Vatican Basilica and the inscription at the foot of the statue reads: "Renewer of the life of his apostolic Father St. Francis." For these reasons, therefore, we wished ourselves to inaugurate on 22 October 1961 the centennial year in the Church of the Forty Martyrs, Rome, a church belonging to the Province of St. Gregory. Further, we considered it opportune to address the entire Order by this present Letter on how this memorable event might be celebrated with benefit.

It is not our intention to narrate at great length the life and works of this saint; we wish rather to set forth in simple words his outstanding virtues of *poverty*, *penance* and *the spirit of prayer* for consideration to this end that the example of this faithful follower of our Father St. Francis may incite everyone to renew the fervor of seraphic life. For especially in our times, how eloquently does Peter speak by his wonderful life reproving sluggishness and listlessness in the practice of perfection, stirring up the good will to strive for greater things, showing the supernatural rewards of penance and mortification and, with the Apostle, urging "so run that you may win the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24).



## I. — POOREST OF THE POOR

Reforms, as they are called, have been frequent in the history of our Order. For the most part they have had as their aim the safeguarding of the highest seraphic poverty or the restoration of its former purity. Among reformers, indeed, Peter of Alcantara, "poorest of the poor", so faithfully understood and made his own the mind of the "little poor man of Assisi" that it can rightly be said that the most severe way of life he restored surpassed to a certain extent the earliest state of the Order.

On 25 September 1958, when We visited the shrine at Arenas, We were deeply affected by looking at Peter's very narrow cell—itself the most eloquent testimony of his extreme poverty.

The example of the saints speak in vain, however, if they do not move us to imitation. Taught by such great examples, let us strive to approach the height of holy poverty and to lay hold of its summit with all our might.

The true son of St. Francis cannot forget that poverty is the fountain and special characteristic of Franciscan life, a characteristic or ideal that cannot be changed because of changing times without disfiguring the very form of this life. Circumstances change, true enough, and the conditions of life and even the regulations concerning the use of things; but the spirit of poverty must always remain the cornerstone of our spiritual edifice lest we depart from the intention of the Seraphic founder of our Order. The Friar Minor stripped of all things, especially of himself, eager to serve the Lord in simplicity and desiring only heavenly things, "has nothing to do with worldly goods" so that having become all things to all men he may devote himself entirely to God and the salvation of souls.

This freedom of spirit overcomes the souls of worldlings. When modern society sees the friars imbued with his spirit, it will realize itself fettered just as did the thirteenth century when it saw Francis and his companions. Consequently, the more there shines forth a striving for highest poverty, so much the more effective will be the Franciscan apostolate of winning souls to Christ.

Religious poverty does not at all consist in a purely theoretical renunciation of things. Religious poverty especially means a spiritual detachment from temporalities, dependence upon superiors in the use of things and a way of life foreign to superfluous comforts and worldly pleasures. Moreover, Franciscan poverty not only carries with it the inability to possess things even in common; it adds the precept of not using money. The precept of not using money, although at present mitigated in practice by a special indulgent of the Holy See, remains in

force always, so that the use of money becomes permissible only within the limits expressed in the indulgent.

These things must be remembered in regard to communal poverty and personal poverty. Our Order must excel the others in the simplicity of our buildings, in the moderate use of vehicles and all things, in the frugality of our meals, the roughness and humility of our clothing, but especially in the skillful effort to conform to the precept of the Rule "that the friars receive neither coins nor money." Would that in our friaries a single substitute for the apostolic syndic would handle all business matters—to the exclusion of any handling of money by the other friars! Would that our friars who use money by indulgent while travelling or for some other legitimate cause would always remember their obligation to render an exact account of every expense even the smallest!

## II. — WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF PENANCE

Peter of Alcantara is best known as an admirable *example of penance and mortification*. The instances of its practice which St. Teresa relates (*Vida*, c. 27, nn. 16-21) would seem incredible were they not verified by the witness of one of such position and trustworthiness. For indeed the servant of God had made a special pact with his body "that he would not give it any rest". This pact, doubtless, he kept with utmost fidelity; as a result, he found in eternity the rest he reserved for his body for eternity and so when after death he appeared to the seraphic Teresa, he could exclaim, "O blessed penance which earned me such great glory."

Today the spirit of penance and mortification seems to be made light of even by certain religions, although our Saviour himself openly proclaimed its importance or rather necessity in religious life: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me" (Mt. 16:24). On the occasion of this fourth centennial celebration, therefore, it helps to meditate attentively on these words of the Divine Teacher and, earnestly relying on them, to pattern our mode of life according to the example of St. Peter.

On this matter We wish only to present the manner in which our whole life can be and must be a way of penance and mortification. To live a truly penitential life it is enough that those things be accurately fulfilled which are prescribed in the Rule, in canon law, in the General Constitutions and other laws. The precepts of fasting, of the amount and quality of clothing, of not wearing shoes, of the prohibition against using money—these things are clearly not pleasant to human nature to which our strict way of life is not less repugnant because it stands completely against the luxury and comforts of the world.



Nevertheless, if we faithfully observe these things, if we carefully shun the ways of the world which, shame to say, too easily force themselves into the house of the Lord, if finally we truly throw off the vanities of the world which we abandoned by our profession, then, as befits true Friars Minor, we will be true followers of the spirit of penance. We will be its heralds "carrying about in our bodies the mortification of Jesus that the life of Jesus may be manifested in them" (II Cor. 4:10).

Besides, the Friar Minor who faithfully observes the common life will not lack other lesser inconveniences: the rule of silence, the practice of the discipline, prompt and exact participation in community exercises, observance of the ceremonies. These and others like them continually provide an opportunity for self-denial. Not without reason is the highest fidelity in little things considered the greatest penance of religious life.

All these things must be borne with a willing and joyful spirit, not rationalizing any excuses nor seeking exemptions or dispensations except there be legitimate cause. For the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; he who refrains from doing violence to himself will not reach it.

### III. — ELEVATED BY THE GRACE OF PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION

St. Peter's zeal for prayer is extolled by the sacred Liturgy in these words: "Gifted with much virtue, the holy father did not relax an unconquered spirit from prayer: with the fruit of good works he brought forth words of divine wisdom. Day and night he did not cease from heavenly conversation and prayer" (Old Office, 19 October, II Noct., resp. 6).

Truly, enlightened "by the gift of highest contemplation" and endowed with the wonderful charisms of the mystical life, he himself not only reached the highest peaks of divine union but, as a wise teacher, he was consulted on spiritual matters by many of the holiest men and women: it is enough to mention, among others, St. Francis Borgia, St. John of Rivera, St. Teresa of Jesus.

Moreover, through his little book *On Prayer and Meditation* he became the teacher of this highest knowledge for future generations. Thus the enlightened "doctor and teacher of mystical theology", as Pope Gregory XV is said to have addressed him (cf. Wadding, *Annals*, 1562, XIX, t. 435, n. 325), still speaks to us not only by his life but also by his writings. He teaches us excellently about the supreme importance of prayer for acquiring perfection, of the need of right instruction and long practice in the exercise of prayer, and of the attaining of supernatural contemplation by the practice of holy meditation.

Moreover, if we find religious in whom the fervor of seraphic life is affected by excessive sluggishness or, what is more lamentable, apparently entirely extinct, we may be sure that the chief cause of this evil is to be found in the lack of the spirit of prayer. For this reason, We cannot urge too strongly that each one strive daily to nourish and foster the spirit of prayer "to which all temporal things are to be subservient." Especially is it to be fostered by conscientious participation in the common exercises of piety. Let superiors place highest value on the daily hour of prayer and meditation prescribed by the General Constitutions and let them not allow it to be neglected in any way. All religious, superiors and subjects alike, should take care that they do not use vain pretenses to excuse themselves from the sacred obligations to give their own soul supernatural nourishment through personal contact with God in holy prayer, be that prayer vocal or mental, communal or private.

Celano speaks of our Seraphic Father Francis as "not so much a prayer as become totally a prayer" (*Vita Secunda*, n. 95). Would that of every Friar Minor it could be said at least that he was a man imbued with the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. To become so imbued, a great help is the firm determination to consecrate a fitting time every day to the practice of prayer. Constancy begets perseverance; perseverance will be crowned with victory.

For the rest, prayer is the royal road to acquire the virtues proper to our state, to keep religiously all that we have promised and to persevere unto the end in the state of life we have freely chosen. Without the spirit of prayer no one will be able to conquer himself and fulfill the sacred obligations of religious life.

While we recall these things, beloved sons and daughters, We earnestly beseech the Father of lights that the seraphic spirit which St. Peter of Alcantara wisely taught and wonderfully confirmed by his own holy example remain pure in each of us and be constantly increased. We are the sons of saints; therefore, let us also strive to walk in the path of sanctity. As in the sixteenth century, through Peter, "the offspring of Francis shone bright, renewed unto the early way of life," so also in our day through his intercession may virtue grow in our family "by a generous gift of heaven" (Office, 19 October, hymn at Matins). May Christ Jesus, who promised St. Teresa "always to hear those who petition in the name of Peter" (*ibid.*, Noct. III), deign to grant us this most sought after grace as the sweet fruit of the centennial celebration.

(Last two paragraphs which constitute Christmas greetings omitted.)

Given at Rome, 29 November 1961  
(Translated by Father Valentine Healy, O.F.M.)



# St. Francis And Obedience

ST. FRANCIS AND OBEDIENCE

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Rev. Bellarmin Hebert, O.F.M.

By the grace of God, St. Francis of Assisi founded a religious Order whose objective was to live the Gospel and to promote this same evangelical spirit in the world. A community was formed for this end. A community of necessity needs an authority, the heart of any social group. The problem then arises of the relationship of subjects to their superiors—a relationship that protects the vow and the virtue of obedience. This prompts the question: what was St. Francis' idea of obedience? Reliable sources can be found which clearly and directly bespeak the mind of Francis, his writings and sayings.<sup>1</sup>

All these sources can give us a rather true and faithful picture of religious obedience according to the mind of our Seraphic Father. Through these writings we grasp the foundation of Franciscan obedience, the object of the virtue, the manner of obeying, and the spiritual fruits that will result.

## I The Foundations of Obedience

### Love of God and Christ Crucified

Everything in the life of St. Francis finds its ultimate explanation in his love for Christ crucified. At the very outset of his conversion, the vision of Christ on the Cross set his heart aglow with an ardent love that gave him the courage to subject himself to the purifying trials of self-renunciation, the indispensable preliminary to perfect Christian life. According to St. Bonaventure, "the memory of Christ crucified was ever before his mind's eye like a sashet of myrrh in the breast of the Spouse of the Canticle of Canticles, and in the fervor of his ecstatic love Francis desired to be totally transformed into Christ crucified."<sup>2</sup> Love of God and particularly of Christ became the ultimate reason for all his actions; the practice of all the virtues, especially of strict poverty, of sincere humility, and of perfect obedience was motivated by love.

<sup>1</sup> Generous use has been made of the recent French translation of the *Opuscula de Saint Francois* published by the *Editions Franciscaines* of Paris (1956), which was based on the Latin text of Quaracchi, and the sayings of St. Francis which have been collected and grouped in a book entitled *Ainsi Parlait Saint Francois (Editions du Vieux Colomier, 1955)*. One last invaluable source is the sixth chapter of St. Bonaventure's *Life of Saint Francis*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Bona. *Leg. Maj.*, Chap. 9, No. 2.

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In his *Third Admonition* he mentions that a subject sometimes feels that a different situation would be better and more beneficial for his soul than the one imposed by obedience. Such a religious must sacrifice his will to God and comply with the orders of his superior for, as St. Francis writes, "obedience is true and based on charity when it satisfies both God and neighbor."<sup>3</sup> In his *Second Rule*, he clearly affirms the primary motive of obedience: "The friars who are subjects should remember that for the love of God they have renounced their own wills."<sup>4</sup> In his *Letter to All the Faithful*, he wrote: "We should never desire to be above others. Rather ought we to be their servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake."<sup>5</sup>

### Imitation of Christ

By its very nature love tends to identification. When we love someone, we manifest our love not only in words and external acts; but we strive to imitate the loved one in every possible way. For what fosters love is awareness of the good of the person loved. Good attracts and urges toward identification. Such was the case with St. Francis. With perfect insight he perceived all the riches of Christ and strove in all things to imitate his Master. "His supreme endeavor, his most ardent wish, his foremost resolve was to observe the Holy Gospel in all things, to practice the doctrine of Our Lord, and to follow him step by step."<sup>6</sup> He likewise endeavored to put on the way of thinking, the ideas and the sentiments of the Gospel, and in his lifetime he fulfilled the words of the Apostle: "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2, 5)

But the particular traits of the divine likeness which he was intent on reproducing were those in which the Son of God seemed to display greater love and to humble himself the more, the self-abasement shown in the Incarnation and the Redemption. This is one of the profound reasons for his ever-prompt obedience. Because his Master had made himself obedient even unto the death of the cross for the redemption of our sins Francis himself wished to obey God the Father in all things. In a *Letter addressed to the General Chapter*, he wrote: "I say the same concerning all those who wander about disregarding the prescriptions of the Rule, for Our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his life rather than be

<sup>3</sup> *Admonitions*, Chap. III, No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Second Rule*, Chap. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Letter to All the Faithful*, No. 47.

<sup>6</sup> *I Cal.*, 84.

<sup>7</sup> *Third Letter to the General Chapter*, 46.

<sup>8</sup> St. Bona. *Leg. Maj.*, chap. 6, No. 1.



disobedient to his Most Holy Father."<sup>7</sup> In another place he said, "If the Son of God descended from the great height which separates the bosom of the Father from our abjection, he, the Lord and Master, did so to teach us humility by word and example."<sup>8</sup>

Complete renunciation of the will

To attain perfect identification with Christ crucified, Francis understood that he must effect the paradox of the Gospel in his life by dying as much as possible to himself and emptying himself fully to be the more enriched with Christ. Obedience promotes this inner renunciation because it touches what is closest and most profound in the human person, the will.

In the opening words of the *Third Admonition*, Francis explains and bases perfect obedience on the following words of the Gospel: "Every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14, 33) and "he who would save his life will lose it" (Matt. 16, 25). He then adds, "That man gives up all he possesses and loses body and soul who abandons himself wholly to obedience in the hands of his superior."<sup>9</sup>

This death of self, this martyrdom through obedience was for Francis a source of apostolic riches, like unto Christ, who by obedience to his Father, accepted death for the redemption of the human race. "If a superior were to command anything against our conscience, we may refuse him obedience, but we must not on that account definitely break with him and leave him. And if we should be persecuted by some for so doing, we should love them the more for God's sake. For he who would rather suffer persecution than wish to be separated from his brethren truly abides in perfect obedience for he lays down his life for his brethren."<sup>10</sup> Here again is the idea of death and martyrdom which perfect obedience implies. "We must deny ourselves and place our bodies under the yoke of servitude and of holy obedience as each one has promised the Lord."<sup>11</sup> This complete self-renunciation in obedience for love of God was for Francis a form of poverty—spiritual poverty. Evangelical poverty is not limited to the humble privation of earthly and material goods. It also personifies the spirit of total self-renunciation. Hence, poverty is truly the way of perfection since it is joined to renunciation, without which neither supernatural life nor Christian perfection is possible. Thus understood faithfully, love not for itself but for Christ and in imitation of him, and practiced rigorously, poverty kept the soul of the Poverello in that state of renunciation

<sup>9</sup> *Third Admonition*, 1-4: cf. *First Rule*, I.

<sup>10</sup> *Third Admonition*, 7-9.

<sup>11</sup> *Letter to All the Faithful*, No. 40.

which consists in preferring God to all that is not of him. Consequently, Francis subjected himself in absolute dependence on his superior in order to dispossess himself completely. "I firmly purpose to be obedient to the Minister General of this Order and to any other whom he sees fit to make my Guardian; and I wish to be so submissive in his hands as neither in my movements nor in my work to overlap his obedience and will, for he is my master."<sup>12</sup>

Always Doing the Will of God the Father

Love necessarily seeks a union of wills. He who loves strives to fulfill the desires and wishes of the person loved. "If you love me, keep my commandments," Jesus said (Jh. 14, 15). Consequently, St. Francis thought of obedience as a clinging of his will to that of God. In concluding his *Letter to the General Chapter*, he prays fervently to God: "Grant us to do what we know you want and always to will what is pleasing to you."<sup>13</sup> To a certain minister who was having trouble with his subjects, he wrote: "You ought to regard this as a favor. You should want it that way and not otherwise. Regard this as true obedience to the Lord God and to me, for I know positively that this is true obedience. Love those who do such things to you and do not wish anything else from them save in so far as the Lord may grant you."<sup>14</sup> In this way are we true brothers of Christ since the first-born among us and the true Son of God ever did the will of his Father. "We are his brothers when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven."<sup>15</sup>

Obedience wins merit

Another factor which induced Francis to practice obedience was merit. His life seems a form of barter. To obtain the gifts of Christ, especially love, Francis sacrificed everything, even his own will, basing himself on the text of the Gospel "he who loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk. 9, 24). Thus Francis preferred being a subject to a superior. And in this we may certainly see one of the reasons why he renounced his title of General of the Order to Brother Elias. St. Bonaventure states, "Francis, like the merchant in the Gospel ever seeking to earn more and make every moment produce greater yield, chose to be a subject rather than a superior and to obey rather than rule."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Testament*, 27-28.

<sup>13</sup> *Letter to the General Chapter*, No. 50.

<sup>14</sup> *Sixth Letter to a Certain Minister*, No. 2, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Letter to All the Faithful*, No. 52.

<sup>16</sup> St. Bonav., *Leg. Maj.*, Chap. 6, No. 4.



"In truth," said Francis, "obedience has this immense advantage that once we bend our neck under its yoke not one minute is without some merit."<sup>17</sup> That is why he promised obedience and obeyed the friar who ordinarily accompanied him in his travels.<sup>18</sup> "I know," he said, "the fruit of obedience: not one second can go by without merits for the man who bends his neck under the yoke of another."<sup>19</sup> At first sight, this outlook may seem self-centered and imperfect. But not so, for Francis sees the automatic result of a loving exchange in the reward. To live one must die; to enjoy union with Christ, one must practice complete self-detachment.

## II. The Object of Franciscan Obedience

### The Church

St. Francis was outstanding by reason of his feeling for the mind of the Church. His reform was wrought in the Church, contrary to that of the dissident sects of his time, the Waldenses, the Albigensians, the Humiliati of Lyons, and the Cathari. St. Francis saw in the Lord Pope the Vicar of Jesus Christ; in the authority of the magisterium he acknowledged the very authority of God. He asked for a Cardinal Protector for his Order.<sup>20</sup> His *Rule* had to be approved by the Church, and he forbade his friars to go and preach in dioceses without first obtaining the authorization of the bishops concerned.

He indeed had that *sentire cum ecclesia* and our liturgy grants him the title of *vir catholicus*. The first object of Franciscan obedience is the Church. In the prologue of his *First Rule*, Francis in his own name and in that of the future Generals solemnly promises obedience to the Holy See: "Brother Francis, and whoever may be at the head of this Order, promises and will promise obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and to his successors."<sup>21</sup>

### The Rule

For Francis obedience to the Rule is at the same time obedience to the Church which approved it. He strongly insists on this in several places in his writings. He wrote his *Testament* so that his brothers could observe the Rule in a more catholic way.<sup>22</sup> In virtue of obedience

to the Rule, the Minister General, the other ministers and the custodes can add nothing to it nor subtract anything from it. He moreover asks them not to add any gloss or interpretation to it. To obey the Rule is to obey Christ since it was he who enjoined this form of life on Francis: "As the Lord gave me to speak and write the Rule . . ."<sup>23</sup> He exhorts his brothers to love this Rule, to keep it, and to practice it.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he identified obedience with observance of the Rule: "Let them (the candidates) be received to obedience, promising to observe always this form of life and Rule."<sup>25</sup> Francis himself gives the example of his deep submission to the Rule by the confession he makes in a *Letter to the General Chapter*: "In many ways I have offended through my grievous fault, in particular because I have not kept the Rule I promised the Lord and I have not said the Office as the Rule prescribes, either from negligence or due to infirmity, or because I am an unlettered and simple person."<sup>26</sup>

### The Superior

The superior represents God; he is the intermediary of the will of God in behalf of his subjects. The true Friar Minor should see the will of God in that of his superiors and obey them as he would God despite their faults. Francis said: "A subject should never consider the man in a superior but only him for whose love the religious has subjected himself. The more contemptible the superior is, the more pleasing to God is the humility of the obedient friar."<sup>27</sup> Was not St. Francis ready to obey a novice of one hour?<sup>28</sup> We must then obey our superior in all things, except what is contrary to the Rule and our conscience. "Let all my other blessed friars readily obey them in all that concerns the salvation of their soul and is not contrary to our Rule."<sup>29</sup> Consequently, we must obey superiors with faith and promptness, even when the will of our superior is not formally manifested.<sup>30</sup>

## III. The Manner of Obedience

In the well-known allegory of the corpse,<sup>31</sup> Francis has given us an even more perfect example of obedience. No matter where a dead body is laid, it offers no resistance. So too a religious must not complain if he is changed. If he is left in the same friary, he will accept this willingly and in silence. It is well-known that in the Middle Ages, a

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 39.

<sup>24</sup> *First Rule*, Chap. 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Second Rule*, Chap. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Letter to the General Chapter*, 39-40.

<sup>27</sup> *II Cel.*, Chap. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; St. Bona., *Leg. Maj.*, Chap. 6, No. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *First Rule*, Chap. 4, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *II Cel.*, II, c. 22.

<sup>31</sup> *II Cel.*, Chap. 112; St. Bona., *Leg. Maj.*, 6, No. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>19</sup> *II Cel.*, Chap. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Second Rule*, Chap. 12.

<sup>21</sup> *First Rule*, Prologue; *Second Rule*, Chap. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Testament*, Nos. 34-40.



period of pilgrimages and crusades. Mendicants as well as the laity wanted to be constantly on the move. Let us then accept the honors of certain demands with the humility of a corpse which, if seated on a throne keeps its eyes cast down or if dressed in purple looks only the more pale. This for Francis is the picture of the perfectly obedient soul.

Such a soul does not set himself up as the judge of his own reason for a transfer, does not intrigue to get himself moved to a particular house, is not constantly asking for a change. If he is changed, he remains humble; the more honors he receives the more unworthy he considers himself.

#### IV. The Fruits of Obedience

For St. Francis the truly obedient soul receives the blessing of God, for he maintains a filial attitude toward the Father, as did Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly a good servant. On the contrary, if he disobeys, he incurs the malediction of the Lord. "Let them know that they are under a curse outside of obedience . . . ; and when they persevere in the Commandments of the Lord which they have promised by the holy Gospel and their life, let them know that they abide in true obedience, and are blessed by God."<sup>32</sup>

The disobedient religious lives under the empire of Satan.<sup>33</sup> "I saw the devil," he said, "on the back of my disobedient friar strangling him mightily. Conquered by such a horseman, the religious, having despised the yoke of obedience, followed the guidance of the devil blindly."<sup>34</sup> This is altogether psychological. By disobedience, the will grows weak, grace disappears from the soul, and the religious remains powerless to fight against his passions and the suggestions of the devil. God withdraws his protective hand, as he did to our first parents after their fall. On the contrary, holy obedience gives strength to accomplish what is asked of us. The religious receives actual graces and the graces of his state in life. And so we must never be alarmed at a command, however impossible it may seem. We must not even envision its impossibility.<sup>35</sup>

Holy obedience goes even further. It "confounds all bodily and fleshly desires and keeps the body mortified to the obedience of the spirit and to the obedience of one's brother, and makes a man subject to all the men of this world, and not to me alone, but also to all beasts and wild animals, so that they may do with him whatsoever they will,

<sup>32</sup> First Rule, Chap. 5, 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Admonitions, II, 2.

<sup>34</sup> II Cel., Chap. 2.

<sup>35</sup> II Cel., II, Chap. 112.

insofar as it may be granted to them from above by the Lord."<sup>36</sup>

The Franciscan soul truly in love with God becomes identified with Christ through perfect obedience to the Church, to the Rule, and to his superior. Such a complete renunciation gains for him incalculable merits: peace of soul, self-mastery along with heavenly favors. St. Francis held disobedience on his part and on the part of others in horror.

One day, a friar guilty of disobedience was brought to Francis and, seeing his genuine repentance, Francis was very lenient with him. But to prevent others from imitating him, since it was so easy to obtain forgiveness, he ordered that his capuche be pulled off him and that it be thrown into the fire, thereby showing with what vigor violations against obedience should be punished.<sup>37</sup>

*Translated from the French, by  
Fr. Paul J. Oligny, O.F.M.*

## Felician Foundress Upholds St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

*Sister Mary Jacinta Sczygielski, C.S.S.F.*

### CHAPTER III

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES CONCERNING MOTHER ANGELA

The noblest being of God's magnificent world is man. He possesses tremendous powers of body and soul; he fulfills the very purpose for which he was created to know, love and serve his Creator, his Heavenly Father. The Seraphic Doctor refers to man as a microcosm, a lesser world. Man is a creature that has intelligence with the angels, feels with the animals; he lives with the plants and has being with the stars. The book of Psalms (8, 6-7) extols man, "And thou hast made him a little less than the Angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor." The dignity of man is such that the Son of God deigned to assume to Himself a human nature. Hence, every man, the loftiest of God's creation, must find his way back to Almighty God. Countless souls guided by the Holy Spirit attained this goal. The subsequent pages will tell of one such soul, Servant of God Mother Mary Angela Truskowski, Felician Foundress.

<sup>36</sup> *Salutations to the Virtues*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> St. Bona., *Leg. Maj.*, Chap. 6.



*Early Milestones*

On May 16, 1825, Sophia Camille Truszkowska was born in a somewhat older city in western Poland, called Kalisz, at that time under Russian rule. Her father, Joseph Truszkowski, was an aristocrat and lawyer by profession. He pursued his studies at the University of Warsaw. Her mother was educated by the Visitation nuns in Warsaw. Both parents were God-loving and devout in the practice of their faith.

Sophia was by nature impulsive and of frail health. Although not externally very attractive, she was richly endowed with gifts of mind and heart. Recognizing her potential her parents had hoped to educate her to the best of her ability. Her early education was entrusted to the care of Miss Anastasia Kotowicz, a private tutor.

At the age of twelve, she continued her education in a private and exclusive school known as Madame Lehmann's School in Warsaw to which the family had moved in 1837. After a short period Sophia was threatened with tuberculosis. Upon the advice of her physician she was sent to the Swiss Alps. Her parents engaged Miss Kotowicz to accompany their daughter. During this time she studied French intensely. In her life she made good use of this knowledge which enabled her to read and appreciate wholesome spiritual works published in French. The atmosphere and beauty of the Alps captivated her soul and she perceived the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in the vestiges of Creation. Upon regaining her health she decided to embrace the religious life. Like many others, she had to make the decision between the active and contemplative life. Her confessor advised her to enter the Visitandines, a contemplative order. The hand of Providence, however, intervened; her father became ill. Sophia was asked to accompany him to a health resort in Salzburg, Germany. During her stay there she visited the Cathedral of Cologne. Sophia was so deeply impressed with this visit that she referred to it very often. Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit urged her to embrace Christ's poor and suffering through works of mercy; consequently, she abandoned the idea of the cloistered life.

*The Birth of a New Congregation*

After returning to Warsaw, Sophia enrolled in the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The director of the local unit, Rev. Victor Ozarowski (1799-1870), introduced her into the new Apostolate. Sister Mary Bronislaws describes Sophia's enthusiasm for the poor and needy. "Sophia not only performed the proposed works of mercy but also embraced them without limit."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sister Mary Bronislaws Dmowska, *Matka Maria Angela Truszkowska, Zalozycielka Siostr Felicjank, 1825-1899*, (Buffalo: Wydawnictwo Felicjana, 1949), p. 15.

In 1854, at the age of twenty-nine, Sophia, aided financially by her father, opened a two-room orphanage known as the "Institute of Miss Truszkowska". Sophia's cousin, Miss Clothilda Ciechanowska, soon joined her to help carry on this work. During the day the children were instructed in religion, reading and writing, for the night they were entrusted to an elderly woman. After some time both Sophia and Clothilda left home to live permanently with the children.

On November 21, 1855,<sup>2</sup> Sophia and Clothilda consecrated their services to God before an image of our Lady of Czestochowa, who ever since that memorable day has been called the "Foundress." Thus, a new religious Congregation was brought into being. When other generous souls joined the newly founded lay-institute, the provincial superior of the Warsaw Capuchins, Rev. Benjamin Szymanski, arranged to have them organized into a religious community of the Third Order of St. Francis. Rev. Honorat Kozminski was appointed director of this organization. After a trial period of community life, the first ten novices were invested in the Franciscan habit on April 10, 1857, on which day Sophia received her religious name, Sister Angela. Her patroness is Blessed Angela Foligno. Four months later, on July 9, 1857, Mother Angela made her first profession. The sisters did not make any religious vows during the first nine years of existence. They simply made promises to live according to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Neither Sophia or Clothilda realized that God had chosen them to be the first members of the new congregation. It is a noteworthy fact that in Poland up to that time there were only contemplative women, and other forms of religious life were unknown.<sup>3</sup>

Ernest Marie de Beaulieu describes Mother Angela as a person very competent of carrying out this project. "Sophia Truszkowska, was a woman not only outstanding in faith and great piety but, also, intelligent and wise, especially active and generous; one of those women, briefly, who was made to govern a kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

The people of the city were really shocked when they saw the young women of the "Truszkowska Institute" dressed in a religious garb. This was a bold adventure since at that time a certain unrest was caused by the Russian government, which sought to liquidate all existing religious orders and communities unable to maintain a stable capital or who wore a religious habit and lived a common life at one place of residence.

<sup>2</sup> Siostry Felicjanki, *Historia Zgromadzenia SS. Felicjanek na Podstawie Rekopisow*, (Krakow: 1924) Czesc I, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Sister Mary Tullia, Domian, *Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska*, (Livonia, Mich.: Felician Sisters, 1954) p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Dmowska, op. cit., p. 266.



The decree of Leo X, "Dum intra"<sup>5</sup> provided for tertiaries living together to be garbed uniformly. Bishop Benjamin Szymanski petitioned Czar Alexander II to grant a three-year permit for the establishment of the Institute of St. Felix for orphans and aged directed by Rev. Honorat, a Warsaw Capuchin. The Institute was under the patronage of St. Felix and was conducted by Mother Angela and her sisters, since they were seen frequently praying with the orphans at the altar of St. Felix of Cantalice in the Capuchin Church, the people began to call them the Sisters of St. Felix, known to many today as the Felician Sisters. The number of candidates increased rapidly and Mother Angela began to solicit funds for a new house. On July 10, 1858, the sisters and orphans were solemnly transferred to their new location, the former Zaluski Library, thanks to the benevolence of some good friends. In the same year, Father Salvator ab Oziero, the Capuchin minister general, incorporated the new religious group into the Capuchin family. The Papal nuncio, Archbishop Flavio Chigi, during his stay in Warsaw also visited the Institute and imparted his priestly blessing.

The young congregation took on several new apostolic activities; namely, homes for delinquent girls and fallen women, Third Order secular units, social centers among the peasantry under the auspices of the Agricultural Society, a catechumenate for Jewish girls and other religious denominations such as the Ruthenian Uniates, the preparation of youngsters for their First Communion, and sponsoring retreats for the laity. The Congregation attracted many vocations, and as was stated previously, it was the first community of women in Poland to lead a mixed life of prayer and social action, well adapted to the needs of the time. This apostolate of prayer and sacrifice was fostered according to the Franciscan pattern at all times.

#### *A New Branch and Disbandment*

Several members of this growing congregation felt inspired to embrace an entirely contemplative life. They felt that the apostolic works of the community ought to be supported by prayer; secondly, they wanted to sacrifice their lives for the needs of the Church and strive to make expiation for the sins of the world.

Upon their request, on the feast of the Seraphic Father in 1860, twelve candidates were chosen by ballot to begin an austere life, sometimes known as the "sepolte vive", according to the primitive Rule of St. Clare. Mother Angela, was one of the twelve. She spent two years of her life in the cloistered branch. Thus, the young community was divided into two parts: Mary, contemplating the Savior in His Eucharistic Life and expiating on behalf of the Mystical Body;

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

Martha, exercising herself in various works of mercy. Mother Angela, as the Superior General, took care of both choirs. Although she lived with the contemplative branch, she devoted every Friday to the needs of the active members.

On July 26, 1871, the cloistered branch of the community became independent of the active branch. In that year they moved to Przasnysz, where the only house of the order exists today. These sisters are known as the Capuchin Sisters of St. Clare and claim Mother Angela and Rev. Honorat as their founders.

Meanwhile there was a growing hostility among the Polish people toward their Russian oppressors. The despotism of the Czar finally resulted in the insurrection of January 22, 1863. The Felician Sisters opened their institutions for use as hospitals to wounded soldiers, making no discriminations as to countrymen and enemies. Unfortunately, due to this fact, the government later used this point as a pretext for the suppression of the Congregation.

During this period of unrest, Mother Angela was re-elected superior-general on July 27, 1864. Soon afterwards, on August 28, 1864, Mother Angela consecrated her community to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at a solemn ceremony.

In the meantime, the Russian police began liquidating religious communities. On November 28, 1864, the Capuchin Fathers were exiled, and with them the co-founder of the Felician Sisters, Father Honorat. The "ukase" or verdict of suppression, authorized by the Russian government befell the Felicians on December 17, 1864. The cloistered branch of the community was not affected by the act of suppression, but was ordered to join another contemplative community. In a spirit of charity, the cloistered Bernardine Sisters at Lowicz graciously accepted the refugees. The sisters of the active branch were forced to don secular garbs and live with their families and friends. Mother Angela encouraged the sisters to be firm in their religious promises and with an aching heart bade each one goodbye. During the period of suppression Mother Angela, in great distress and under obedience to Father Honorat, departed for Lowicz at the end of December.

On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in 1865, through the intervention of Bishop Galecki, the ordinary of Cracow, the Austrian Emperor Joseph granted permission for the re-establishment of the Felician order in Austrian Poland. Each sister, however, had to pledge her citizenship to the Austrian domain. Accordingly, a provincial Motherhouse was opened in Cracow. A few months later, on November 21, the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin



Mary, the sisters took up their abode in the new convent. Since Mother Angela had become seriously ill, she was not able to join her sisters until the following May, 1866.

Mother Angela pronounced her perpetual vows on November 21, 1868, and the General Chapter, held the same year, again elected her as superior general and spiritual mother. Mother Angela accepted this office reluctantly, since her health was steadily failing and her hearing was fading away. Mother pleaded with Father Honorat to accept her resignation as superior general and as a result a special chapter was called in 1869 to vote for her successor. Mother Mary Magdalen Borowska, one of the pioneer members trained by the Foundress, was appointed superior general of the Congregation. She held this position for forty-four years.

#### *Mother Angela's Last Days*

Throughout the next thirty years, until her death, Mother Angela led a very quiet and unassuming life hidden in the Heart of her Eucharistic Spouse. The hours of her day were spent either at prayer adoring the Blessed Sacrament, in the garden tending flowers for the decoration of the altar, or in the community room sewing church vestments. She herself conceived it her mission, now, to pray for the sanctification of the Congregation that it might fulfill God's designs and to entrust it unceasingly to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Mother Angela suffered not only the physical pains of cancer, but also the crucifying, spiritual night of the soul. The last days of her illness found her calm and peaceful. With great love and understanding, she received and blessed her visiting daughters. By a strong will and constant prayer, she patiently bore her pains to the very end. The doctors, who knew what pain Mother was undergoing, admired her courage and fortitude, since most people suffering from this type of cancer become delirious.

The cancer developed steadily causing Mother Angela untold pain. It seemed inevitable that Mother Angela would be doomed to a death of starvation. On the feast of St. Clare in 1899, she received the Viaticum. Her greatest happiness in those trying days was the notification from the Holy See, on July 19, 1899, of a final approbation of the Congregation and a temporary approval of its Constitutions. On October 10, 1899, at the age of seventy-four, Mother Angela was beckoned by Sister Death. At her bedside was the Superior General, Mother Mary Magdalen, and many other spiritual daughters.

Fifty years after her death, on October 28, 1949, the cause of beatification was undertaken by the ecclesiastical authorities of Cracow. An intense study of her life and virtues has been undertaken ever since.

The exhumation took place on May 23, 1950, in the catacomb chapel of the Cracow Mother-house in the presence of His Excellency Cardinal Sapiecha and many other priests. The fifty questions of Canon 2023 were addressed to the assembled group at the time of exhumation by P. Hippolytus Eberhardt, O. Min. Conv., Promoter Fidei. The informative process was formally concluded on January 12, 1951, and the documents transferred to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the Vatican.

#### QUERY TO A SILENT SENTINEL — ON THE RESURRECTION

Lo! How it lies!

What didst thou see,

A precious stone?

What heavenly thing transpired

That one celestial touch

Could cause thee, in thy

Grey, granite glory,

To yield?

O sacrosanct of portals,

Behind which did lie

The God-made Man

Then dead;

Answer me, O Silent Sentinel,

What met thy grey, granite gaze?

Then came this solemn reply:

"Can stone reveal

What to the human eye must fail?

To put into words what here transpired

Would be to no avail. Yet,

I must needs say this: When men

With all their guilt and wile,

Unmoved, did hide their crime

Behind a stone . . .

It was their stone, its role regaining;

At a touch from the Master—

His glory revealing!

—Fr. Thomas More Malsch, O.F.M., Cap  
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# In Christ Jesus Our Lord

Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M.

(Translated from the French by Michael D. Mellich, O.F.M.)

(Continued)

On the Fourteenth Nisan, which was the vigil of the Great Sabbath in that year, a Man died on a Cross a short distance from Jerusalem's Ephraim gate.

He had invoked God's help with a loud cry, but God had not heard Him.

His enemies, all about Him, had dared God to defend Him, but God had not accepted their challenge.

A wise pagan was there, shocked at the crime and seeking in the tragic event before his eyes some answer to the doubts that flooded his mind. "If there were a God," he finally concluded, "He would surely show Himself now. Therefore, God does not exist . . ."

A member of the Sanhedrin was there too, who did not know what to think of Jesus' mission. He believed in God, but God's silence pointed inexorably to the conclusion that this Man could not possibly be the Son of God.

John and Magdalen doubted neither God nor their Master; but this catastrophe which seemed to end all their hopes raised an agonized question in their hearts: WHY?

Mary alone understood.

The empirical facts were the same for her as they were for the others: the silence of God and the dereliction of Jesus. But how completely different was her understanding of them! For she saw in them the most conclusive proof imaginable of God's love and her Son's divinity. Indeed, she alone among all human beings has fully grasped the true grandeur of her Son's Redemptive death.

Obviously, then, the Passion makes sense only to the extent that Jesus is known. Those who do not know Him take little or no interest in it; they usually misunderstand it completely, and on occasion they are even scandalized by it. St. Luke tells us of people who saw in it only a side-show, a circus (Luke, 23:48). And then there were the soldiers who regarded it as a routine job, and the thief who blasphemed. Love certainly does presuppose knowledge, then; but it also enlightens and inflames it. This may seem to be a vicious circle from the viewpoint of logic, but nevertheless it is *fact*—it is a vital and basic fact in the real order where Love reigns supreme.

That is why we had to consider Scripture, the Liturgy, and the

## IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD

Interior Life first, to get to know Jesus. But in reality, all of these are but various aspects of the Passion.

All of Scripture, first of all, can be reduced to a prediction, narration, and explanation of the Passion. Hence St. John could write: "And now Jesus knew well that all was achieved which the Scripture demanded of its accomplishment; and He said, I am thirsty" (John, 19:28).

The whole Liturgy is likewise centered about the Passion; for in its essential rites of sacrifice it renews the Passion, explains it, and applies its merits to the Mystical Body.

And finally, our interior life also can be fully understood and accounted for only in relation to the Passion. Only in the light of the Cross can we understand what is taking place within us; only by the strength of the Cross can we cooperate with the divine action; and only by the merits of the Cross can we make our interior life truly holy.

Now we are not trying to act like philosophers here and to trace the effect to its cause; it is far more accurate to say that we must start with the Cause, with the immeasurable Love of God, with the Cross, and descend from there to the effects; i.e., apply the Love of God and the merits of the Cross to our own lives and the needs of our spiritual development.

On the Cross, Jesus shows Himself true God and true Man, King, Teacher, Judge, Prophet, Saviour, Lord of the world to come, Eternal and Universal Priest, Unique and Universal Mediator. He shows Himself as the First-born of every Creature, Who loves us with an unequalled Love. BUT—He loves us only with, in, and through that same love with which He loves the Triune God—His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

As Duns Scotus put it, "Christ willed to suffer thus out of love for God and for us—He suffered out of that Love with which He loved us for the sake of God" (Ox. III, 2, 1, 11). And as Scotus explains elsewhere, what pleased God in this Sacrifice of Calvary was not Christ's suffering as such, but rather the immensity and spontaneity of His LOVE! (Ep. 119, c. 8).

We have deliberately sought in Duns Scotus the explanation of what Francis discovered in the Passion; for unless we see things from this Franciscan point of view, we cannot possibly understand the Passion as Francis did; we cannot possibly see in it the all-embracing source of knowledge of Christ. Yes, the Stigmata, the Coat of Arms of our Order—the whole saga of Franciscanism—shows us a Passion whose surface characteristic is pain, but whose real meaning is LOVE.

The Passion, then, is the \* \* \* Sacrament of our Vocation—the key to



our Franciscan Life. Only by understanding it and mediating on it can we possibly follow Francis in his imitation of Christ. Let us consider this all-important truth at greater length.

To begin with, it should hardly be necessary to recall that in his devotion to the Passion Francis was solidly in the Apostolic tradition of the Gospels. Nevertheless, we can re-read with great profit the pertinent texts of Scripture.

St. Peter, for example, tells us that "Christ suffered for our sakes, and left you His own example; you were to follow in His footsteps." And elsewhere, the Prince of the Apostles explains these footsteps as "sufferings," "bloodshed," and "rejection at the hands of men" (I Pet. 2:21; 1:11; 1:19; 2:4).

St. Paul, the theologian of the Passion and theorist of our imitation, says that "we must share His sufferings, if we are to share His glory," and "we carry about continually in our bodies the dying state of Jesus, so that the living power of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies too" (Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 4:10). That is why Paul "had no thought of bringing you any other knowledge than that of Jesus Christ, and of Him as crucified," to unbeliever a discouragement and mere folly, "but to us who have been called, Jew and Gentile alike, Christ the Power of God, Christ the Wisdom of God" (I Cor. 2:2; 1:23-24).

And elsewhere the same Apostle says, "Yours is to be the same mind which Christ Jesus showed" (Phil. 2:5). Now by this St. Paul means much more than a mere conformity of ideas, of intellect; we must share also in Christ's sentiments and emotions, in His motives and His virtues. The reason for this is that our sentiments and emotions are often stronger motives than our ideas are. If our ideas are to guide us, they must first become convictions; they become convictions by passing from the ideal, intellectual order into the real, affective, emotional, dynamic order.

But let us return to St. Paul's Epistle, where he contemplates Jesus: "He disposed Himself, and took the nature of a slave (poverty), and then lowered His own dignity (humility), accepted an obedience which brought Him to death (subjection to His Father and to His tormentors), death on a Cross (austerity)" (Phil. 2:7-8). Thus poverty makes us humble; humility makes us docile; docility leads us to imitate the austerity of our Lord.

St. John records the same thoughts in the very words of our Lord Himself: "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me . . . I lay (My life) down on My own accord. I am free to lay it down, free to take it up again; that is the charge which My Father has given Me . . . The world must be convinced that I love the Father, and act only

as the Father has commanded me to act" (John 4:34; 10:13; 14:31).

But St. Francis had no other plan in mind than this, no other thought, no other love. He contemplated Jesus Crucified, and he identified himself with Him. The place of the Cross in his vocation, in his way of life, and in his final consummation on Alvernia, is well expressed in the Office for the Feast of the Stigmata. The hymn at Matins, the antiphons at Lauds, and the *Magnificat* antiphon at Second Vespers are all taken from the same poem, a poem focused upon the Cross from beginning to end.

There is no room here to cite the entire poem, but we can at least give the *Magnificat* antiphon as a representative example:

Crucis apparet hostia	Behold the Saviour crucified,
Tensis in cruce brachiis	His arms distended by the beams;
Sex alis tecta variis,	His visage pure six wings do hide,
Cum vultus elegantia;	And yet its light supernal gleams.

Quae Francisci cor attrahit	Francis, overcome with bliss,
Augens ei charismata,	Feels deep within love's burning coal
Suague sacra stigmata,	Which carves in hands and feet and side
In eius carnem protrahit.	The wounds he bears within his soul.

Whoever the poet was, Thomas of Celano or Julian of Speyer, he certainly rose to his subject, and his poem is without any doubt worthy of the frescoes of Giotto! The antiphons of Lauds, which are taken from earlier verses of the same poem, tell of St. Francis' call at St. Damien's, of his apparition to the Chapter at Arles, of Brother Sylvester's vision, of the *Tau* imprinted on the forehead of Francis, and of Brother Pacificus' vision—all of which concern Francis' intimate relationship with the Cross.

But of supreme importance is the last line of the *Magnificat* antiphon, which tells us that Francis already bore within his heart the wounds that were impressed upon his flesh on Alvernia. Both Celano and the Three Companions assure us that those wounds began to be carved into his heart ever since that first day at St. Damien's (Celano, II, 1, 10 and 11; Three Comp., 1, 13, 14).

All these facts, recorded and commented upon by Francis' biographers and commemorated in the Liturgy, are incontestable; Francis



was utterly penetrated with the knowledge of Jesus Crucified. And the abundant testimony and example of his followers confirms this conclusion; e.g., St. Bonaventure's mystical treatises, St. Clare's Prayer to the Five Wounds, St. Margaret of Cortona (1259), St. Catherine of Bologna (1462), Bl. Battista Verani (1527) who wrote a book called *The Sufferings of Divine Love*, St. Veronica Giuliani the Stigmatist (1727), and St. Leonard of Port Maurice (1751) who did so much to popularize the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

And knowing as he did the ineffable love that motivated Christ's sufferings, Francis could pray *sincerely* for a share in those sufferings; "O my Saviour, Jesus Christ, grant me two graces before I die; grant that I may feel, insofar as it is possible, in my soul and in my body, the sufferings which YOU endured in Your flesh during your cruel Passion; and also, that I may feel, as far as a mere creature can, that immense Love which inflamed You and led You to suffer voluntarily so many horrible torments for the sake of us sinners."

The object, the motive, the final goal of Francis' imitation, then, was the Love of Christ, and Duns Scotus, faithful interpreter that he was of Franciscan thought, expressed that fact perfectly: "*Non mors, sed voluntas placuit sponte Morientis*—Not the death, but the Love of Christ Who freely gave Himself up to death is what pleased Francis, as it pleased the Father" (loc. cit.).

On the Cross, just as in the Host, "only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail" (John 6:64). Suffering is not an end; it is a means—a means without equal as a proof of one's undying love. "This is the greatest love a man can show, that he should lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"Through the wounds of His body," says St. Bonaventure in a passage used in our Liturgy, "let us penetrate into the abyss of His love: the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

But it is by the *wounds* of the body that we must pass—by austerity of life, by a docile acceptance, understanding, and love of the Cross. These are necessary steps in our journey to the Sacred Heart: to accept the Cross, to understand it, and to love it. "Let him renounce self, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

We shall come to know Jesus only insofar as we believe in His Love, a Love borne witness to by the Cross and the Host. He loved us, and He gave Himself up for us; in this love alone we find an adequate explanation of Scripture, of the Liturgy, of our interior life, all of which serve to reveal it to us. And this Love will nurture within us the Gift of Wisdom; it will illumine our minds and inflame our hearts; it will make our every act holy.

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by

Gratien de Paris, O.F.M.Cap.

translated by

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# A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

## PSALM 109

Fundamental to an intelligent recitation of the Little Office, of course, is that we pay attention to what we are doing. We can do this in three ways. Firstly, we can attend the praise and worship of God, and this is called spiritual attention. Secondly, we can apply our minds to the meaning of the words we say, and this is called literal attention. Or, thirdly, we can concentrate on the proper utterance of the words we say, and this last is called verbal attention. My purpose in reminding you of these familiar facts will become clear, I think, in what I have still to say.

Verbal attention is fairly well assured if we are alert and careful in our recitation of the Psalms, pronouncing words correctly, enunciating them precisely, and timing our saying of each word so as to contribute to the uniform pace and rhythm of the whole choir. On the other hand, spiritual attention requires a little more than this. It presumes a certain familiarity with prayer, a degree of facility in prayer. We help ourselves to attain this state by learning all that we can about the nature of prayer, the methods of prayer, and the hindrances to

prayer. And as we put into practice what we learn, we find our own thoughts and affections coloring and permeating the words we speak, vitalizing them, making them the conscious expression of our own personal worship of God. In the case of the Psalms, of course, we must know their significance as prayers before we can use them effectively to lift our minds and hearts to God. And that is not a difficult discovery because nearly every book about the Psalms is concerned with their being prayers; so much so, in fact, that many a book practically overlooks the fact that they are likewise poems. Which is too bad, because to slight the poetic character of the Psalms is to miss some of the meaning of the words that you recite. Literal attention, then, full literal attention, is virtually impossible unless you recognize that the Psalms are God's poems and are to be treated as such. You must use on them—because they *are* poems—the ordinary techniques that you employ for the intelligent reading of any poem. This is the method that I have been trying to use, and this is the method that I shall continue to use on the Psalms in Vespers of the Little Office.

We have already considered



Psalms left for examination. The first of these is Psalm 109, a relatively short Psalm of only seven verses. But as you read the poem—let alone examine it carefully and trace out its ramifications—you begin to sense what prompted Saint Augustine to say that “the brevity of its statement is matched by the weight of its wisdom.” And I think, you begin to see, too, why “no Psalm is more frequently quoted and alluded to in the New Testament.”

The occasion on which Christ quoted it is certainly familiar to all of us. One day, as Saint Matthew describes the scene, “while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them, saying, ‘What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son is he?’ They said to him, ‘David’s.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying: “The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies the footstool of thy feet”?’” (Matt. 22:41-44). For our present purpose, the force of this episode is that Christ attributes this Psalm to King David. Actually Christ was voicing the constant tradition among the Jews, one which both the Scribes and Pharisees accepted, in so making David the author of Psalm 109. And that this tradition was continued by Christ’s followers is evident from the sermon of Saint Peter on the first Christian Pentecost. It is in talking

about the resurrection that he points out that “David did not ascend into heaven, but he says himself that, The Lord said to my Lord . . . “and Saint Peter continues to quote the first verse of this very Psalm.

It may help a bit to know that the initial words of the Psalm in translation—“The Lord said to my Lord”—are not the best rendering of the Hebrew, which uses two different words which we translate by the one same word, *Lord*. The first word in the Hebrew, *Yahweh*, is the word for Almighty God; the second word, *Adoni*, is a word used in polite address by a subject to a superior. So that freely, but with substantial accuracy, the Psalm opens thus: “The Declaration of God to you, my Lord.” I make a point of this because the poem falls into two nearly equal parts, each addressed to one of the persons mentioned in the opening lines. The first section, verses 1 to 4, is addressed to the Lord, who is dramatically revealed as King and Priest; the second section, verses 5 to 7, is a narration to Almighty God of the conquests and judgments of this King and Priest.

Looking at the first section, you can discern a symmetry which the poet achieves by pairing his statements with statements made by God. David does this three times. There is, too, such a sequence in God’s statements that you might

almost suppose them to be three phases of which David is prefixing his own comments. David’s first statement—

*The Lord said to my Lord—*  
is followed by the declaration of God himself:

*Sit at my right hand*  
*till I make your enemies your foot-*  
*stool.*

The second statement—  
*The scepter of your power the*  
*Lord will stretch forth from*  
*Sion—*

introduces another pronouncement of the Almighty:

*Rule in the midst of your*  
*enemies.*

*Yours is princely power in the day*  
*of your birth, in holy splendor,*  
*before the daystar, like the dew,*  
*I have begotten you.*

Then comes the third, final, and most impressive statement—

*The Lord has sworn, and he will*  
*not repent;—*  
with its divine correlative:

*You are a priest forever, accord-*  
*ing to the order of Melchis-*  
*dech.*

These utterances, of God, the more carefully we consider them, seem scarcely applicable to any, even the most exalted, merely human personage. Granted the custom of the East to describe its rulers in highly ornate and figurative language, still, whom could David have expected among his descendants to be in any way able to accept Yahweh’s invitation to

“sit at my right hand”? There is something, too, about the portions of the promised victory that makes it difficult to ascribe to any merely human conqueror. Not this enemy or that enemy, some of them or many of them, but simply and starkly “your enemies” without any limitation. And no partial victory, but total, complete subjugation—“Till I make your enemies your footstool.” This was the kind of ultimate destruction remembered by the Chosen People from their entrance into the Promised Land, when Josue had defeated and captured the Kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jerimoth, Lachis, and Eglon. “And when they were brought out to him, he called all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the army that were with him: Go and set your feet on the necks of these kings . . . Fear not, neither be ye dismayed, take courage and be strong: for so will the Lord do to all your enemies against whom you fight” (Josue 10:24-25).

These words of Josue to the people of Israel are practically echoed in Yahweh’s utterance: “Rule in the midst of your enemies.” Then Yahweh reveals how rightfully such domination belongs to David’s Lord: “Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor.” And, finally, God says whose Son this Lord really is: “Before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you.”



This third verse of Psalm 109 is clarified by another Psalm to which Saint Paul points our attention in his Epistle to the Hebrews. There, while defending the pre-eminence of Jesus over the angels, he falls back on Psalm 109 and asks; "Did God ever say to one of the angels: Sit on my right hand, while I make thy enemies a footstool under thy feet? (Hebrews 1:13). Now, just a few verses earlier he had used Psalm 2 in the very same way: "Did God ever say to one of the angels, Thou art my Son, I have begotten thee this day?" (Hebrews 1:5). The conjunction of these two verses show that Saint Paul—and he was speaking under Divine Inspiration—took the words of Psalm 109 to refer to Jesus Christ. His words, too, send us to take a look at Psalm 2.

When we read that Psalm, we discover that it is practically the key to an interpretation of Psalm 109. With a scene on earth that depicts the rebellion of the nations against God and his Christ, there is contrasted a scene in heaven wherein God is shown as laughing at his enemies scornfully and speaking of them in anger: *I myself have set up my king on Sion, my holy mount.* A third scene immediately introduces this King: *I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:* *The Lord said to me, "You are my son;*

*this day I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession.* *You shall rule them with an iron rod;* *you shall shatter them like an earthen dish."*

The parallel between the thought in the two poems is fairly exact. Any difference is due, partly, to the poetic economy of Psalm 109. The might of the king and the extent of his dominion, elaborately described in Psalm 2, are strikingly compressed into the one, beautiful line: "Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor." Again, the almost defiant simplicity of the announcement in Psalm 2—"You are my son; this day I have begotten you,"—contrasts strongly with the rich suggestiveness of "before the daystar"—before ever time was, from all eternity—"like the dew"—in the infinitely tranquil way that God works all his mysteries—"I have begotten you,"—"You are my son."

There is still something to be added, however, to the portrait of this regal personage, begotten of God, seated at his right hand, sceptred, and robed "in holy splendor." What it is is the theme of Yahweh's final pronouncement: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech." Do you notice the subtle way in which David lifts this statement

to equality with the other two? To balance its brevity he makes his own prefatory words the strongest so far spoken: "The Lord has sworn and he will not repent."

Again you have a statement which could not possibly be understood in the ordinary framework of Jewish thought. The priesthood was hereditary in the family of Levi; no son of David could ever claim it. Nor, given the pride of the Jews, would any Son of David be quick to claim relationship with the non-Hebrew Melchisedech, "King of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him" (Hebrews 7:11), offering then and there the sacrifice of bread and wine. For that one moment only, he mysteriously holds the center of the stage of history, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," as Saint Paul proclaims, "but likened to the Son of God he continues a priest forever" (Hebrews 7:3).

Now that we have examined the four verses that constitute the first section of this Psalm, I think that you can see why they are distributed into two strophes. The first one, verses 1 to 3, describes a king; the second one, verse 4, describes a priest. Both use language that cannot possibly apply to any human personage. We conclude, therefore, that what these verses say is in-

tended to apply to the Messias. The children of Israel, you have to remember, were unique among all the races of their time and place: God was their king, Saul, David, Solomon, and all the others after them, were looked upon as delegates of Yahweh. With the passing of time, successive kings proved false to this ideal and this responsibility, so that the prophets looked yearningly forward to the time when a descendant and heir of David would come to rule in the name of God, a king whose reign would be God's reign on earth. "Yahweh was the king of Glory, the King of Heaven and Earth, the King of the Nations, the King of Kings, the King Eternal; and this is exactly what the Messias will be," the Chosen One, Anointed of God, the Christ. He is the one whom David foresaw "in the Spirit" and foretold in this Psalm.

Psalm that foretells the coming of the Messias or describe his person are known as Messianic Psalms. There are several such in the Psalter, and because they apply to the Messias in different ways, they are variously classified. Some of them speak directly and exclusively about the Messias; their words can not be applied to anybody else. Such a Psalm is this one that we have been reading. Another such Psalm that occurs in the Little Office is Psalm 44. Other Messianic Psalms speak indirectly about the Messias; their words



apply to some person or event which is, in turn, a type or figure of Christ. You have examples of this kind of Messianic Psalm in Psalms 95, 97, and 125. And these appear in the Little Office. There is still another way in which a Psalm can merit the name of Messianic: statements in it, although applying to men in general, are true of Christ in a pre-eminented degree. Psalm 8 has a verse like that: "You have made him a little less than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor."

This Psalm 109 has always been considered exclusively Messianic. This traditional Jewish interpretation explains the indignant uproar in the Sanhedrin when Jesus applied the words of the Psalm to himself by saying that "a time is coming when the Son of God will be seated in power at God's right hand" (Luke 22:69). Christ's followers have always applied this Psalm to him. Even in the first sermon Saint Peter delivered, he quoted this Psalm to prove that the Risen Christ was "exalted at God's right hand" (Acts 2:33). Saint Paul, too, takes his words from this Psalm to teach that Jesus Christ . . . has risen again and sits at the right hand of God" (Romans 8:34). The entire argument for the priesthood of Jesus, as Saint Paul outlines it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, presumes that this Psalm is Messianic: "Christ did not raise himself to

the dignity of the high priesthood; it was God that raised him to it, when he said, Thou art my Son, I have begotten thee this day, and so, elsewhere, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Hebrews 5:5-6).

It is high time that we turned to the second part of the Psalm. It consists of a single strophe of three verses, and is addressed actually to Yahweh, even though its subject is the Messias and the victory that will be his. What is said may be every bit as much a revelation as what was said in the first two strophes, but the style patiently less dramatic than that used in the earlier part of the poem. It is more now a narrative style. We are given an account by David of what will take place in times to come. In this respect the strophe contrasts sharply with the first two, in which events mentioned had a timelessness about them. With the exception of the command in the first verse—"Sit at my right hand"—everything else seems to have taken place before time began. The Son is born (is appointed King, is anointed Priest, and is promised victory in the unmeasurable eternity which Saint John had in mind when he said that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

With the first verse, though, it is different. The complete fulfillment of the promise that it makes, it

would seem, must wait for that future day and hour "known to nobody, not even to the angels in heaven, not even to the Son; only the Father knows them" (Mark 13:32). Saint Paul leads us to expect the same thing when he tells us that Jesus Christ "sits forever at the right hand of God, offering our sins a sacrifice that is never repeated. He only waits until all his enemies are made a footstool under his feet . . ." (Hebrews 10; 12-13). Now, it is this future that David views in the third strophe of his poem. He uses words to express his vision that are practically an act of faith in the Messias as Conqueror and judge. The scene he sees is a vast battle ground, over which, with the power of God supporting him, ranges the Messias, slaughtering and killing his enemies throughout the world.

*The Lord is at your right hand;  
he will crush kings on the day  
of his wrath.*

*He will do judgment on the  
nations, heaping up corpses.  
he will crush heads over the  
wide earth.*

It may strike us that the severity, the cruelty, the almost bloodiness of these words must be explained by the harsh and barbaric customs of the times in which David lived and wrote. Not at all! His words are no more shocking than those used by the Beloved Disciple to describe the sight he saw when the heavens opened and he watch-

ed "a white horse appear. Its rider bore for his title, The Faithful, the True; he judges and goes to battle in the causes of right. His eyes were like flaming fire . . . from his mouth came a two-edged sword, ready to smite the nations; he will rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God Almighty. And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written, 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'" (Apocalypse 19:11-16).

We must be on our guard here—and so often elsewhere while reading the Psalms, when we come across terrifying descriptions of the vengeance God will take upon his enemies—lest we misplace our sympathy or our pity. This is "the day of his wrath" when God moves, at long last, against the nations that have ragged and the people that have uttered folly, against the kings that have risen up and the princes that have conspired against God and his Anointed. This is the moment when he musters all his might to punish those whose cry has been, unchangeably and unceasingly, "Let us break their fetters and cast their bonds from us" (Psalm 2: 3). We can make no case against God as being harsh and unjust "when his anger blazes suddenly" at the end of time and he destroys his enemies. Because, you see, the conquering King is Christ, who, before crushing kings, doing judgment on nations, heaping up corpses, and crushing heads



over the wide earth, did every-  
thing in an excess of mercy and  
love to save those who would not  
be saved. And that he so acted, I  
think, is the reminder in the last  
verse of the Psalm.

Like a poor and tired traveller  
who kneels and bows his head to  
slake his thirst at a wayside stream,  
so the Eternal Son of God, King  
and Priest, in his thirst for the  
souls of men, all men, bowed down  
to drink at the stream of human  
life.

*From the brook by the wayside he  
will drink;*

*therefore will he lift up his head.*

So that, with the end of this Psalm,

we come back to its beginning:

"Sit at my right hand till I make  
your enemies your footstool." This  
is precisely the circle which Saint  
Paul describes when he says that  
Christ, the Messias, "lowered his  
own dignity, accepted an obedi-  
ence which brought him to death,  
death on a cross. That is why God  
has raised him to such a height,  
given him that name which is  
greater than any other name; so  
that everything in heaven and  
on earth and under the earth must  
bend the knee and every tongue  
must confess Jesus as the Lord,  
dwelling in the glory of God the  
Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).

## OCTOBER SONG

Brown bird

fluttered flying by

swooping

swirling

sweeping high.

"Four for a farthing,"

Our Lord had said,

"Each one counted,

head for head."

Brown bird Francis

singing, too

In our hearts

and in our rule

Keeping counsel

shows the way

"Do God's Will just

day by day."

Brown birds we,

though not so fine

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Migrating in

one straight line

Straight to heaven

our desire

Lives burnt out

in love's pure fire.

Brown birds

pass

as breeze may wave

Not as we

with souls to save.

Flutter

swirl

prayers on high

Pause not brown birds

'till you die.

October song the brown birds sing

It is our prayers that make them ring.

From Father Francis inspiration

For true love's total dedication.

*Sister M. Lourdet, C.S.B.*

## LITURGY

(In a convent garden)

The dew still sparkles on the grass,

While from every shrub and tree

The birds are chanting Matins

In many a different key.

At None the sun has opened

All the buds and flowers;

The locusts and the honeybees

Are singing Little Hours.

When evening's lengthening shadows

Give peace and sweet repose,

Crickets chirping Compline,

Bring day to perfect close.

*Sister Mary Electa, R.S.M.*

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# Felician Foundress Upholds St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

Sister Mary Jacinta Szczepielaki, C.S.S.F.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOTHER ANGELA'S EUCHARISTIC CENTERED FAITH

A study of Mother Angela's life necessarily points to her eucharistic-centered faith. This thought deeply impresses the reader after considering how the Holy Eucharist became the center of her Catholic life. We find that the knowledge of her religion became life-like and her perseverance in her religious vows certainly can be attributed in great part to the fact that she honored our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in a very special manner. Her Eucharistic Spouse in turn provided her with a constant flow of new life enabling her to further His kingdom on earth. Mother Angela journeyed along the path of life directing her attention toward an ever more perfectly integrated eucharistic life, a thoughtful and active participation at Mass, frequent reception of Holy Communion and the practice of the fruit thereof, charity in thought, word and deed, loving adoration and meditation before the Blessed Sacrament and above all, the apostolate of reparation through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In Chapter II we discussed the eucharistic facet in the life of the Poverello. It is the "Bread of Life" which intervenes in the lives of all Christians, giving it new meaning and glory, directing each particular soul toward a new horizon. Moreover, as mentioned before, through the medium of the Eucharist the Holy Spirit manifests His divinizing power and fills the souls with sweet charity, thereby bringing forth a new Adam, a new creation.

### Guiding Factors

To what can we attribute Mother Angela's personal attraction for the Eucharist? In the writer's opinion, besides the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it was her love for Saint Francis whom she desired to imitate. Secondly, her early religious training and later the influence of confessors and the various spiritual books she read either in Polish or in the original French by such authors as Boesnet, Eymard, Father, and De Montfort which enhanced her Eucharistic devotion.

Since she had a fond devotion to the Seraphic Saint, she wished to live according to his Holy Rule, although as foundress of a new congregation and a former member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Mother Angela very easily could have chosen a type of rule in accordance with St. Vincent and have had him as her patron. Undoubtedly, she was acquainted with the writings of St. Bonaventure and Celano, since Father Prokop, her spiritual director, wrote a life of St. Francis and quoted the Seraphic Doctor and Celano lavishly.<sup>1</sup> Her love for St. Francis can be noted in the following letter addressed to Mother Mary Cajetan, one of the early pioneers in the American province.

May the blessing of our Blessed Father Francis accompany you with his spirit, that being his daughter, you may perform his works. Do not be satisfied with merely externally wearing his habit, but strive, particularly, to clothe yourself in his spirit. May his humility, contempt of the world, poverty and love of God, neighbor, reflect itself in your whole life. Be mindful of the fact that your whole life is to be the fulfillment of what you have promised in your religious profession, for not to them who promise but rather to them who perform is eternal life promised . . .<sup>2</sup>

In the Directorium or commentary on the Constitutions of 1899, we read the following " . . . they will enkindle their hearts at the very depths of love, that is, the heart of Jesus hidden in the Sacred Host, being vigilant against any kind of tepidity contrary to the seraphic spirit."<sup>3</sup>

The *Memoirs of the Congregation* which contain the guiding principles accumulated by Mother Angela and her early followers point still further to her deep Franciscan convictions.

The sisters who know the happiness of being spiritual daughters of the Holy Father Francis, have at the same time the duty, or rather the privilege, of schooling themselves in this seraphic spirit which makes chosen souls less human and more like the Seraphs.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, a study of the life of the Seraphic Father and what was most important to him, that is, the crib, the cross, and primarily the

<sup>1</sup> Prokop, O.F.M. Cap., *Zywot Sw. Franciszka z Asyzu*. (Wisconsin: Poslanca Sw. Franciszka, 1924), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Sister Mary Annuncia, C.S.S.F., *Cnoty Slugi Bozej Marii Angela Truszkowskiej*, (unpublished, Livonia, Michigan, 1955), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Cegiela, S.A.C., *Segregavit Nos Dominus*, Buffalo, N. Y.: Felician, 1952), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Sister Mary Jane, C.S.S.F., (ed.), *Memoirs of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix*, (Corapolis, Pa.: St. Joseph's Protectory Printery, 1959), p. 47.



Eucharist hidden in the heart of the Immaculate Mother, became the pattern of her life.

The very first seed toward a Eucharistic love was planted in her early life by an Augustinian, Father Augustine. Mother Angela admits this herself and it is accounted for in the "Memoirs" of Sister Mary Joseph, her infirmarian of many years. She writes, "He earnestly desired that my soul be filled with an ardent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament."<sup>5</sup>

Sister Bronislaws, her biographer, also points out that Sophia and her cousin Clothilda spent many prayerful hours of adoration in the neighboring chapel of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Nowe Miasto. Among others, Father Honorat was an important influence in her Eucharistic life. He nurtured the loving seed of adoration, now ripe, to embrace the apostolate of reparation and expiation. His counsels and admonitions were always obeyed: in fact, Mother Angela made a vow to obey him in all matters pertaining to her spiritual formation. With Mother's directives, Father Honorat wrote the Constitution of 1874, underlining the importance of conforming to the will of the Seraphic Father as expressed in his "Testament" and "Letters." The said constitutions concurred with the directives of St. Francis: regarding frequent reception of Holy Communion, the exercise of spiritual communion, daily attendance at Mass and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. In reference to this the Constitution read, "... the Mass will secure all the grace a Spouse of Christ needs to persevere in her vocation."<sup>6</sup> "... they should how profoundly with a double genuflection and recite the prayer of St. Francis, 'We adore You, Jesus Christ, present here and in all the churches of the world because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'<sup>7</sup>" The constitutions revised later still dictate the same course: "The spirit of the Congregation with which every sister should be imbued is that of the seraphic love of God and neighbor—the spirit of zealous self sacrifice to save souls and, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the spirit of atonement and reparation to God in the Holy Eucharist for the sins and crimes of the world."<sup>8</sup>

#### *Privilege of Daily Exposition*

It is apparent that Mother Angela had for her community, two

<sup>5</sup> Dmowska, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Canalicie*, (Cracow, 1877), p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Constitutions of the Sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Canalicie*, (Rome, 1956), p. 24.

great ambitions, namely, that the constitutions receive approbation from the Holy See and that her congregation be blessed with daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in each provincial Motherhouse. She prayed and offered her life to obtain these two great blessings. The first was granted to her on her dying bed in 1899, by the representative of Leo XIII, Cardinal Puzyna.<sup>9</sup> At this time the Holy See approved the Constitutions for a period of seven years. The second blessing was granted during her lifetime, in the year 1883.<sup>10</sup>

Mother Angela conceived the idea of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from the Franciscan Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Troyes, France. In many of her letters Mother petitioned Father Honorat to be sure to provide for this privilege. Evidently, he looked forward to the practice also.

I was pleased with many things . . . but most of all with the practice of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. My heart is filled with untold joy at this thought. Indeed, our Community would be blessed with so great a privilege. I realize it will be difficult to secure this favor, especially in our country, and in this day. Please consider this matter, of incorporating it into the Constitutions, seriously. I am sure our Heavenly Superior will grant us this favor. What joy, strength and support would this devotion provide for the whole Congregation.<sup>11</sup>

She also exhorted the Mother General, Mother Ann, to return to the former practice of nocturnal adorations performed during her own jurisdiction.

It is not difficult . . . the following plan could be used . . . In this manner each sister would have to offer only 2 hours each week. Is it asking too much? . . . Holy Mother Church is in dire need of help, hell is devouring countless souls; should we begrudge two hours in which we could implore God's mercy? Are we living the spirit of the Congregation? Are we not obliged to uphold a life of devout prayer? . . . Mother, do you recall the initial fervor of the sisters? . . . They possessed more fervor and self sacrifice . . . The spirit grows old, sluggishness is apparent, not only in prayer but also in sacrifice. Surprised—no—for our spirit is seraphic, different from other Congregations, this spirit is only maintained by sacrifice and prayer.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Dmowska, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> *Writings of Mother Angela Truszkowska*, II, (Livonia, Mich.: Felician Archives), p. 334.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 569-570.



Even before the permission for daily Exposition was obtained Mother Angela interceded for many privileges from Bishop Galecki, such as, exposition during the Conventual Mass and forty hours devotion, all-day exposition on certain feast days of our Lady, as, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, first and last day of May, first Sunday in July to honor the Precious Blood, Circumcision, Epiphany, Holy Name of Jesus, St. Joseph, the octave of Easter, two days after Pentecost, Ascension of Our Lord, Corpus Christi, last day of the octave of Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, SS. Peter and Paul, St. Felix, St. Clare, St. Anthony, St. Francis, Bl. Angela of Foligno, St. Magdalen, All the Saints of the Franciscan Order, Holy Trinity Sunday, Stigmata of St. Francis and on other occasions.<sup>18</sup>

Mother Angela spent many hours praying and begging God for this extraordinary practice of daily exposition within an active Community. In the following prayer, originally written in French, found among the many notes left by the Servant of God we detect the underlying motive for obtaining this privilege. Mother Angela firmly believed that Our Lord's visible presence on the Eucharistic Throne would be the potent transforming factor in the lives of the Sisters and their apostolate, by creating a proper balance between the works of mercy and the spirit of prayer. She pleads for every necessary grace to become truly Christ-like by sacrificing every faculty to labor for love of the Mystical Body, thus bringing into effect the exhortation of the Seraphic Father, "... they will not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer, to which all temporal things must be subservient."<sup>14</sup>

Bless me O God of Goodness! Bless me, O You Who are Good. Bless me as You have blessed the Patriarchs and the Prophets, as you have blessed Your holy Precursor, as You have blessed Your Mother, herself. Bless my body and my soul, my spirit and my heart, bless me entirely. Bless my eyes and do not permit that they ever open to vanity. Bless my ears and surround them with a crown of thorns which will close them to all conversation that is not Christ-like. Bless my mouth, and place there a guard of watchfulness. Bless my whole body and may chastity surround it like a cloak of glory. Bless my spirit that I may think in everything as You, Yourself. Bless my heart and enkindle that fire which you came to bring upon the earth and by which You wish that all Christians might be consumed. Bless my whole interior that it may become as Yours, a sanctuary of all virtues. Bless me, O Holy Host without stain, that my life may be entirely conformed to Yours, in

<sup>18</sup> Dmowska, *op. cit.*, p. 290.  
<sup>14</sup> Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

order that I may glorify You in me in time and that I may have the happiness of being glorified in You with the most Holy Virgin and Your blessed spouses for all eternity. Amen.<sup>15</sup>

Bishop Dunajewski, later Cardinal and also the first canonical protector of the Congregation, observing the zealous spirit of adoration within the Community and most of all in the foundress, resolved to help Mother Angela attain her extraordinary desire. At the same time, Sister Mary Raphael, who also desired this privilege and who excelled in love for the Eucharist, before her death requested that the entire fortune bestowed upon her by her family be used to build a chapel for this purpose. The will also adds that if this cannot be granted, the money should be used for Peter's Pence. Sister Raphael died in 1871. Mindful of this testament, and Mother Angela's desire of daily exposition, Bishop Dunajewski in 1883, presented the case to His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII, in a private audience. His Holiness saw no incompatibility between the apostolate of adoration and works of mercy, since they necessarily complement each other. The favor was granted on condition that the Sisters provide this sum but the hand of Providence found a willing soul, that of Rev. Mother Hedwig Wielhorska, a Carmelite in Rome, who bequeathed her parent's fortune of 10,000 zl. toward this end. The joyous news was welcomed most of all by Mother Angela who at the time held no official position. She wrote thus:

"... today we received word regarding daily exposition and the fund for sanctuary lights as well as the regular indulgence attached to the Forty Hours Devotion. Christ, Himself, has honored us with His Presence. We are unworthy of His goodness... I would like to behold the entire universe coming and offering adoration and reparation with us."<sup>16</sup>

A photostat copy of the document can be found in Sister Mary Bronislaus' *Life of Mother Angela*.<sup>17</sup> It is said that Mother Angela wanted to be sure that this document be always preserved and for that reason wrote several copies herself. The distinct feature of this decree lies in the fact that the privilege of daily exposition cannot be withheld at any time except by the ordinance of the Holy See.

Since the convent church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was conveniently located, the students of the University of Cracow, as well as those of other private and public schools, were often found adoring

<sup>15</sup> Sister Mary Annuncia, C.S.S.F., Collection of Notes of Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, (unpublished in the Felician Archives, Livonia, Mich.) not paginated.

<sup>16</sup> *Writings of Mother Angela Truszkowska*, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

<sup>17</sup> Dmowska, *op. cit.*, p. 322.



our Lord. In 1884, the Sisters organized the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament which encouraged Eucharistic devotion among the laity.

### *The Apostolate of Reparation*

The Sacred Host is the symbol of reparation in which Christ the Victim continues His Sacrifice in the three stages of the Eucharist, referred to in Chapter I. The mission of Christ on this earth was the cry of the Cross, "Sito", the thirst for souls. The expiation of our Lord upon the hill of Calvary was absolute. The Mass especially continues the work of our redemption. "Christ enclosed in the Eucharist the memorial of the 'past' sacrifice of the Cross, so that it might be multiplied down the ages and in all places: 'in omni loco'."<sup>18</sup> Christ Himself clarified the expiatory character of the Holy Eucharist: "This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins." The aspects of reparation are simply explained by Fr. Willinger:

Expiation has three aspects: one directed to God, who thereby becomes 'propitious' towards us; one that regards sin, the stain upon the soul which is erased by 'expiation' properly so called; and another that refers to the punishment which we seek to pay, or 'satisfy', by acts opposed to sin. Propitiation, expiation and satisfaction complete the rectification by which the soul reacts upon itself in an effort to annul, not what cannot be annulled, namely, the fact of its deviation, but the multiple effects in the spiritual order that flow from life's derangement.<sup>19</sup>

By virtue of the sacrament of Baptism, every Christian is privileged to partake in the victimhood of Christ through the Mystical Body of Christ. St. Peter reminds us, "You are partakers of the suffering of Christ (I Pet. 4:13)." Since the Church Militant suffers, Christ suffers in His Mystical Body from without by those who oppose His teachings and from within, by His own members falling to the pit of sin. God is displeased, and His will transgressed, therefore expiation becomes necessary to regain His friendship, to overcome His displeasure and indignation aroused by sin, and to arouse His mercy. Religious life in particular, is a call to continue this Sacrifice of Christ in a more perfect manner by means of the vows.

We can recall how Christ pleaded with Margaret Mary Alacoque for consolation and how, recently, Our Lady of Fatima begged for reparation. It is only natural then for a soul interested in presenting

herself as a victim of loving reparation to be powerfully attracted toward the Holy Eucharist especially in Mass and Holy Communion, for in them the soul finds Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body.

With this short introduction on reparation we continue to unfold the reparatory element in Mother Angela's eucharistic life. The mission of reparation emphasized by Father Honorat in a letter addressed to the Sisters shortly after daily exposition was granted, was clearly drawn:

... and I wish ever to remind you that from the beginning of your foundation by the grace of the Holy Spirit you were convinced that spiritual rebirth must begin with reparation to the honor of God so neglected in the world, that is, with adorations of atonement. For that reason your zeal prompted you, despite difficulties, to introduce the custom (hitherto unheard of in this country or, at least, forgotten since the days of the Redemptorists) of frequent daily expositions of the Blessed Sacrament in your catcomb chapel, during which you endeavored to atone to Our Lord for the insults of the godless as well as for the tepidity of the faithful, toward His Sacred Heart and to merit His blessings upon your work and upon the souls entrusted to your care... Thereby you became true daughters and followers of our Holy Father, who rightfully is called the Repairer of the Divine Honor neglected in the world, who from the beginning of his conversion almost unceasingly honored Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and adorned His tabernacles... Your devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was crowned with daily exposition and adoration in the motherhouse of the Immaculate Heart (in Cracow) and with His loving Presence in almost all of your (mission) houses. And so, while I contemplate all this and remind you of it, I wish to perpetuate it (the Eucharistic devotion) and to encourage you most earnestly that you never neglect so important a practice and so holy and salutary a custom and that you ever place great hope in it, for as Pope Pius IX says: Adoration of Atonement will save the world.<sup>20</sup> For even now it draws upon (the world) many graces, appeases human anger as well as the punishment of heaven; may God grant that this practice may restrain it... I desire that you go everywhere and do everything in the spirit of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and in the spirit of this mystery, which is the epitome of all the miracles of God's Love.<sup>20</sup>

Continuing in the same vein the *Memoirs* define clearly the ideal of reparation which became an integral factor in Mother Angela's life.

The principal task of the sisters is to make reparation to God; that is, to atone for the blasphemies and insults committed

<sup>18</sup> Willinger, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> Felician Sisters, *Magnificat*, (Buffalo, N. Y.: Wm. Keller, Inc., 1955), p. 43.



against Him; to atone for the negligence and irreverences committed by those in the service of God in fulfilling their sacred obligations. They are to do this by perpetually adorning the Blessed Sacrament in their hearts, by reciting the Holy Office devoutly, and living always in the Presence of God . . . The sisters are to bear all discomforts willingly in order to atone for the lax lives of Christians. They should endeavor to observe great poverty to make satisfaction for those who yearn for riches. They should humble themselves and bear all contempt with joy to atone for those who are proud. Briefly, they should repair the spiritual and moral conditions of the world through their virtuous and exemplary lives. It is likewise fitting for them to atone for laxity in religious life by returning to the former strict observances of rules and to early zeal in the practice of virtues. To revive the spirit of reparation in the community, they should willingly undertake this task at the risk of being ridiculed by the world and even by souls consecrated to God . . . They should repair the neglected piety in the hearts of the faithful by inflaming their own hearts with love and by seeking always the greater glory of God in all their actions.<sup>21</sup>

Mother Angela considered the Immaculate Heart as the monsternace enshrining the Sacred Victim. She desired to lead a hidden life of expiation in union with Mary. Mother Angela expressed her sentiments thus:

Within this heart is enclosed the sentiment of our Seraphic Father, 'My God, My All'. The Blessed Trinity designed to select it for its repose. Christ is there, our sweet Spouse, who finds in the Heart of Mary a most delightful abode. Therein is the Blessed Sacrament to whose exclusive honor we are dedicated.<sup>22</sup>

The young foundress was well acquainted with St. Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*. In her own Consecration to the Immaculate Heart, Mother Angela invites Mary to lead her on to the Eucharistic Heart of her Divine Son.

O beloved Heart of my Immaculate Mother,  
I desire to make an offering of myself to You,  
For belonging to you, I belong to Jesus also,  
O dearest and sweetest Heart of Mary,  
I consecrate myself entirely to You forever.  
As your exclusive and entire possession.  
I give You my body, my heart and soul;  
All my actions, thoughts, words, desires and intentions  
I dedicate wholly to you.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Cegielska, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

In you I place the burden of my sorrows and desolations  
Which Jesus may wish to send me.  
I give You my sins and my falls.  
May I be so closely united to You as to say:  
I live now, not I, but the heart of Mary lives in me.  
Feel, love and do all in me;  
Rule my whole self.  
Guide those whom You have placed over me.  
I solemnly promise You, O sweetest Heart,  
My fidelity until death.  
Watch over me and give me strength  
That I may keep my promise.  
I am entirely Yours on earth;  
May I be Yours for all eternity. Amen.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that almost every letter written by Mother Angela begins with the words "All Through the Heart of Mary . . .", and that after the decree was granted for daily exposition the phrase "in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament" was added. Accordingly, this motto was adopted by the Congregation. The daily practice of reparation through the Immaculate Heart is brought to mind by the morning communal prayers: "I thank you most gracious Lord for giving me another day to atone for my sins and for those of the world. O Jesus, I offer You through the Immaculate Heart of Mary . . ."<sup>24</sup> The liturgical prayer of atonement "Respite" was recited daily by the young community and is still in use at the present time.

### *Expiatory Acts*

During Shrove-tide the Servant of God led her community in expiatory adorations. At Holy Mass some sisters prostrated while others, kneeling, held lighted candles and besought God to look with mercy upon the world. The theme of Shrove-tide echoed in the often repeated versicle, "The Lord reserved us for Himself and by His grace called us to atone for the revilings aimed against the Throne of His glory."<sup>25</sup> Other exterior acts of atonement which were put into practice are the discipline, dining on the floor, praying with arms extended, or lying prostrate.

Mother Angela's *Act of Reparation* recited during the Mardi Gras season describes the sentiments of her soul and her desire to offer

<sup>23</sup> Felician Sisters, *Magnificat*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Felician Sisters, *Ordinances of the 13th General Chapter 1959*, publ. not cited, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Cegielska, *op. cit.*, p. 15.



reparation to the most Holy Sacrament for the erring members of the Mystical Body and those outside the true Church. The Act is somewhat lengthy and is still said by the community during the Mardi Gras days. In the final paragraph of the Act we find Mother Angela inviting the Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, the Angels, St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Colette, St. Elizabeth and St. Felix to aid the Sisters in their adoration and reparation and to obtain for them the abundant graces that flow through this sacrament.<sup>26</sup> Within the Act itself we discover the reason for this expiatory act.

... The more we contemplate Your Omnipotence, Wisdom, Goodness and Mercy in instituting this most Holy Sacrament, the more we detest our sins . . . we offer ourselves, desiring to make expiation for the sufferings which you undergo in this Most Holy Sacrament . . . Grant us a lively faith so that we might expiate for the unbelieving idolaters, Mohammedans, Jew, heretics, apostates and all unbelievers. Inflame our hearts with love so that we might atone for the coldness of Catholics and those called to your service, who ought to serve You more perfectly. May we be filled with deep respect for Your infinite Majesty in this Blessed Sacrament . . . Grant us zeal so that we may increase and promote love and reverence for the Holy Eucharist. Grant us the grace to serve you in the spirit of atonement and thanksgiving for this eminent gift . . .<sup>27</sup>

The mission of reparation was well understood by the young foundress. In 1866, she wrote to Father Honorat. "... I have fulfilled my vow, that I would freely offer myself as subject to all interior and exterior sufferings. I decided to accept everything in the spirit of sacrifice and atonement."<sup>28</sup> The forthcoming years were to reap the harvest. God, in His Providence, beset her life with sickness, deafness, the torture of no consoling words from the confessor and those dear to her, the excruciating pains of cancer, and the interior trial of the "Night of the Spirit."

In her resolutions of 1876, we discover that Mother Angela promised to recite the Office of Reparation for each day of the week. These hours were evidently said in French, since they were found thus among her spiritual notes. Again, they were probably sent to her by the Franciscan Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Troyes, France. The following outline reveals the contents of these hours.

A different prayer is said each day in which the soul consoles

<sup>26</sup> *Society Felicitanki, Ceremonial Sister Sw. Feliksa*, (Krako, Polska: publ., not cited. 1911), p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> *Annuncia, Cnota Sługi Boży Marii Angeli Truszkowski*, op. cit., p. 23.

Jesus for some particular irreverence and in reparation practices a particular virtue. Every hour is concluded with a longer prayer. In the last paragraph of the prayer the theme of victimhood is clearly defined.

Sunday	— Adoring soul — Profound respect before the Blessed Sacrament.
Monday	— Compassionate soul — Sincere compassion with Christ in agony.
Tuesday	— Faithful soul — Entire submission to the will of God.
Wednesday	— Zealous soul — Zeal in preparing oneself for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.
Thursday	— Loving soul — Faithful performance of small things in a spirit of love.
Friday	— Victim soul — Mortification of the senses.
Saturday	— Supplicating soul — The practice of charity and humility.

I will offer myself, immolate myself, consume myself as Your victim, but above all purify me — so that I may begin to love only You, that I live only for You, that I never take back my heart after having consecrated it to You: in the end that I find in Your Heart my refuge at all times, my peace at the hour of my death, my blessing in eternity. Amen.<sup>29</sup>

On many occasions Mother Angela encouraged her spiritual daughters to be faithful in the apostolate of reparation.

My dearest child, God has every right to your soul . . . Do not resist Him but allow Him to do with you as He wills. Trust Him with your whole heart and surrender yourself to Him completely in reparation for so many souls that rebel against His will.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Felician Sisters, Magnificat*, op. cit., p. 38.



"Be Thou praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures . . .  
for Brother Sun . . . for Sister Water . . ."

*St. Francis*

in Sister Bird and Brother Fire  
saw God — and, keener his desire,  
he welcomed Sister Death.

*His Sons*

in singing birds and flowering tree  
the goodness of their God they see,  
and bless Him with each breath.

"Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace! Where there  
is hatred, let me sow love . . ."

*St. Francis*

embraced the leper as Christ's own;  
sowed peace where discord had been sown;  
gave self for others' gain.

*His Sons*

embrace the sinful souls of men,  
to bring them Christ's sweet peace again,  
with hope uplifting pain.

"Deus meus et omnia!"

*St. Francis*

burned with purest charity,  
flaming seraph of love was he;  
"My God and my all!" his prayer.

*His Sons*

follow the shining path he traced;  
to reach their Goal, like him, in haste,  
they aspire — they hope — they dare.

*Sister Mary Luke, S.J.*

# In Christ Jesus Our Lord

*Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M.*

(Translated from the French by Michael D. Meliach, O.F.M.)

## V GREAT THINGS ARE PROMISED TO US

This final meditation will help us to know what fruits we have  
a right to expect from following the Franciscan method of initiating  
our Lord Jesus Christ.

The ultimate fruit of our imitation can only be a transformation  
into our divine Master—an identification with Him as conceived and  
realized by our holy Father St. Francis. Every one of us hopes event-  
ually to attain that ultimate goal within the limits of his own vocation  
(we are not all called to the stigmata!); each of us looks forward to  
the day when he will be united to God in Christ Jesus in that communion  
of life with the Holy Trinity which is the last end of every free  
created spirit and which is the final realization of God's eternal design.

But this final consummation, in which Christ will give history its ful-  
fillment by resuming in Himself everything in heaven and on earth, and  
in which God will be all in all, is what we call heaven; and heaven is not  
a fruit which we can enjoy here below. All we can hope to enjoy here  
on earth is the pledge of what is to come.

It is this pledge which we are to consider here—this foretaste  
of heaven which can best be described as a growth in Love, a more  
fruitful knowledge of Christ, and a greater unity and efficacy in our  
lives.

Let us open our minds to the light of the Holy Spirit, then, and  
dispose our will for his gentle movements; and let us invoke the help  
of our Blessed Lady and of our Seraphic Father as we proceed to  
meditate on the "great things which are promised to us" (Exhortation  
of our Holy Father, St. Francis).

\* \* \*

As we know, all our human activity must help foster the divine  
Life within us; whatever cannot be made to do that is at best useless.  
But very often we lose sight of this basic Christian truth and lose  
ourselves in externals. Even reading the lives of the saints may foster  
this delusion in us; for miracles, after all, make much better copy than  
monotonous routine.



But—let us admit it!—monotonous routine was as much the lot of the saints as it is our own. Our Holy Father St. Francis may have preached to the birds once or twice in his life, but we may be sure that the rest of the time he humbly and modestly restricted his conversation to those of his own species. If he performed miracles, it was because he was a saint, not in order to become one! What made Francis a saint was, purely and simply, his heroic *Love*.

St. Paul deliberately singled out the ordinary and humdrum activities of our daily lives and told us to supernaturalize them if we wanted to grow in holiness. Now if he was right, if routine work can be made to foster the divine life in us, then surely at least as much can be said of our spiritual exercises. Take the examination of conscience, for instance. We should seek in our exams less an enumeration of good acts, imperfections, and hidden tendencies, than a growth in love. This growth, moreover, can take place immediately, regardless of whether we have enough self-knowledge to enumerate all the virtues and vices we usually look for in our exams.

It is ordinary common sense as well as an axiom of philosophy that the more effective means is the one that brings us closer to our end. It follows, then, that the best way to use our examination of conscience is to seek in it an immediate union with Christ, our End. Our attention should be focused not on ourselves and our own conduct, but directly on Jesus Christ—on means of knowing, imitating, serving, and loving Him. Indeed, if we use the exams in this way, as a means of centering our thoughts and affections upon Christ, we in a sense anticipate the very union we seek.

This method, moreover, is completely Franciscan; for to Francis and his followers, as we have already seen, the imitation of Christ can never be just one ascetical practice among man—or even the best of man; rather it must pervade and supplement all the others; it must be our unique means of sanctification, and hence it is a sort of anticipation of our ultimate End: transformation into Christ Jesus our Lord.

Growth in Love, then, is the first immediate fruit we are to reap from the practice of our Franciscan imitation. But this Love is none other than that of our Lord Himself; it is the very reason why we first set out to follow Him. For we have pledged ourselves to imitate Christ not primarily for the sake of our own salvation, but rather because He loves us, because He gave Himself up for us, and because He has called us to follow Him.

Therefore, ours is a spirituality based completely on Love; we have

freely given ourselves to Jesus and to the workings of His Holy Spirit so that His grace may utterly transform us into Himself. We have abandoned our own short-sighted plans, our own imperfect actions, so that we may be made perfect with the fullness of His perfection as it is revealed to us in His mysteries and in His entire life.

In a very real sense we can say that as soon as we made our original decision to embrace the Franciscan motive and method of imitating Christ, we consciously and deliberately united ourselves with Him even then—as perfectly as we could at the time.

Certainly any devout practice can have this efficacy, but how many do? What makes our spirituality so effective is that it presents so little danger of making an end out of the means, out of the practice itself—as we might, for instance, if we used the particular exams to reflect upon our own actions and tendencies. The Franciscan method is to seize immediately upon the Love of God, not to reach it indirectly through innumerable and practically unrelated actions.

\* \* \*

We have already considered the sources of our knowledge of Christ in the preceding meditation, but we shall now look at them from a different point of view.

Although the Holy Bible is nobler in itself, yet the Liturgy does play a much more important part in our lives, as it did in the life of St. Francis. Therefore, we shall consider it first.

The Holy Mass, Communion with Christ in the Eucharist and in the other Sacraments and rites, the recitation of the Divine Office—all of these are excellent means of attaining identity with Christ. In truth, it is no longer we that live while we take part in these liturgical functions, but is Jesus who lives and acts in us and through us.

As in the Liturgy, so in our whole lives, we must give up to Christ our whole being, so that He may use us in whatever way His Wisdom, His Power, and His Love may demand. For in the Liturgy we know that the officiant must relinquish himself—so much so that he is “assumed into Jesus” (Phil. 3:12), in order to leave to Him complete freedom and power of action. In the same way we can and must strive in our entire lives to be no more than the conscious and voluntary organ of that same Christ.

The Liturgy is a Life of Jesus reproduced by the Church both in memory and in action; the liturgical cycle is not simply a commemoration of the past; it is its re-enactment, because it remains always



actual, i.e., active and present, living and vital; it lives in the Church, whose entire history it incorporates, and it lives in each of us according to his own capacity (1 Cor. 12:27—LXX). The Church's Life renews that of her divine Master, and that explains why Francis tried in every conceivable way to make the Liturgy a living and active force in his own life (we think immediately of Greccio and of the Office of the Passion). For Francis wanted to absorb as completely as possible both intellectually and sensibly the Life of his divine Head as it was re-enacted for him in the Liturgy.

But the Liturgy cannot really be separated from Scripture, from which it draws both its letter and its spirit. Scripture is historical; the Liturgy is symbolic and representative. For example, where the *Acts* relate that Jesus stayed with His disciples for forty days after His Resurrection, the Liturgy actually shows Him to us, present under the symbol of the Paschal Candle. After all, we saw the Liturgy before we ever read any Scripture, and many of the Faithful read only that part of Scripture which has been incorporated into the Liturgy.

Nevertheless, ignorance of Scripture means ignorance of Christ; *Scripture grævida Christi*, as St. Jerome said. Scripture is also a Life of Jesus, prefigured, prophesied, narrated; and so there is no substitute for a direct, personal knowledge of the Bible. We must read it and re-read it; we must meditate on it, forgetting about the Commentaries, which explain only its letter, if we want to penetrate to its spirit and seek in it *Communion with the Word of God*. Certainly the successful preaching of Francis and the great missionaries of our Order was due in no small part to their intimate knowledge of Scripture.

Those of us who are learned, assuming that we do sustain ourselves at the banquet-table of the Scriptures (See the *Imitation of Christ*, III, li, 6; IV, xi, 27), still should not disdain the humbler fare offered us by the Rosary, the Stations, and the Crucifix. After all, Jesus remains ever and always, in all of them, the BOOK (Apoc. 5:1); and He communicates to us a knowledge of Himself through all these media while at the same time helping us to grow in self-knowledge too. Here again, Francis is our model; for even though He knew the Bible practically by heart, both literally and spiritually, He always had recourse to pictures and to the popular devotions in use at the time.

But we have just called attention to the third source of knowledge of Jesus—one which was certainly exploited by our Seraphic Father, and one which unfortunately remains practically unknown to the majority of Catholics: self-knowledge.

As St. Francis himself has shown us by his teaching and by his own example, the principal means of growth in holiness is to know the Model Himself, Jesus Christ. This implies the spirit of prayer, however; it implies being attentive to His presence within us; it implies being docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; it implies being faithful to even the least demands imposed upon us by our Rule and by the promptings of the Spirit within us. Indeed, this spirit of recollection is the most important means we have of coming to know our Lord. Unless we avail ourselves of it, every other means will remain useless and sterile.

Of course, we can do no more here than point out the way; each individual must discover from his own experience how rich a source lies within him.

If Jesus does in fact live within us, and if we live in Him—if this communion of Life is what we have said it was: a datum of Faith, a law of our very being, and sometimes (at least at the summit of the spiritual life) even a fact of experience, then it follows that each one of us must seek and find in his own inner life the mysteries and the very life of Jesus: the hidden life, the apostolic life, the Passion; Bethlehem, Nazareth, Egypt, Galilee, sometimes Thabor, more often Gethsemane and Calvary; every day the Cenacle—"Do this in memory of Me." According to St. Paul every time we eat of this Bread we elow forth the death of the Lord until He comes.

The knowledge we gain in this way of the dispositions, actions, mysteries, and life of our divine Master will help us to recognize His workings in us, to accept them, to reproduce His features in ourselves by a conscious and generous cooperation with Him. This knowledge will help each of us to become, as St. Francis did, a living copy of Christ Jesus.

As a matter of fact, just what ideal does Franciscan spirituality propose to us, if not to become more and more aware of and responsive to the profuse tokens of love which our merciful Father grants us in view of the vital transformation we have proposed to undertake into the likeness of His own Son? Does not our life involve substituting everywhere and always the actions, thoughts, motives, and desires of our divine Master for our own sterile actions, faltering desires, uncertain motives, and fallible thoughts? Does our life have any other purpose—can it possibly have any other legitimate purpose—than the adoration, praise, and service of the Blessed Trinity, to Whom we can attain worthily only in and through Jesus Christ, Who alone is truly perfect and Who alone is proposed by God Himself for our imitation?



Such is the more fruitful and vital knowledge of Christ that we come to enjoy as a result of imitating Him faithfully according to the method of our Seraphic Father.

\* \* \*

Among all the characteristics of St. Francis' life, there is one in particular which, though not so spectacular as the miraculous events so plentiful in his life, is no less marvelous in the eyes of those who can see it; moreover, it is far more meaningful to us than all the miracles, far easier to apply and realize in our own lives. It is the unity of his spiritual development—the unparalleled efficacy of his strivings toward identity with Christ.

From the first imperceptible stirrings of grace until the fully conscious crucifixion of Alvernia, Francis never once hesitated or turned aside from his chosen path. From the still literalist interpretation of the order to "rebuild My Church," to the more spiritual conception of his mission as the Founder of an Order, to the vision of Lady Poverty, to the renunciation before Bishop Guido, to the apostolate among the Faithful, to the founding of the Three Orders, Francis did not deviate for one moment from his arrow-like course toward Christ.

Whence came this unity? From grace, no doubt—from a singular predestination which the Church has never hesitated to affirm; but also from Francis' own cooperation with that grace, from his fidelity to his predestination. Francis knew, and he wanted to know only Jesus and Him crucified. He clung to Him as to the very Source of his being. This unity of vision, of will, of action, can be a characteristic of our own lives, too; it is the third fruit which Franciscan imitation promises us. But it is so intimately joined to the imitation itself that it is easily confused with the very exercise of Franciscan imitation. While this fact is unfortunate from the dialectical point of view, it merely shows all the more forcefully the real unity and efficacy which characterize the Franciscan life. The true disciple of Francis has no divisions, no compartments, in his life; the Love of Christ pervades every aspect of it, unifies it, divinizes it.

Have we not all at one time or another deplored the unfortunate plight of those Christians who go to Confession and Communion regularly and yet have never really given themselves whole-heartedly to Christ—whose whole life, especially their conduct towards their neighbors, seems utterly to contradict the Christian convictions and principles they claim to hold?

Even if we allow for the imperfections of our nature and the bad

will of the world toward those who spurn it, the life of these nominal Catholics is still incoherent. For it has no principle of unity; it is made up of unrelated, uncoordinated, merely juxtaposed elements. Prayers, exercises, virtues are forced into it and dropped out of it—all without much apparent effect.

These poor people are unhappy because they have never really made up their minds; they keep trying to reconcile contradictory obligations to their own convictions and to the world. And they make everyone around them unhappy too by their lack of balance and coherence. They make holiness seem intolerable!

But unity and coherence are easy to establish in our lives. Instead of losing ourselves in a maze of devotions, instead of becoming enmeshed in a host of incompatible obligations so that we finally give up and forget our whole self-imposed practices, devotions, and resolutions (each good in itself, but taken together forming an insuperable obstacle to true piety)—let us keep Christ in our minds. Let us focus our attention upon Christ and our obligation of being like Christ, of letting Christ transform us into Himself; then we will have true unity in our lives. We will have unity because everything we do will be directed toward the same end. Nature, grace, duties, inspirations—especially contradictions, which detach us from self and make us want to cling to Christ—all these elements coalesce as we take on a closer and closer resemblance to our divine Model.

It is enough for us to be what we are, members and organs of the Mystical Body, branches of the True Vine, in order to give full play within us to the action of the Holy Spirit. What Christ demands of us is precisely what He gives us the grace to do, for in every case grace precedes, accompanies, and follows our own will. The law of the Gospel, the call to perfection, the humdrum of daily life, the duties of our state—all are reconciled in this one law of our being: "Through the law, my old self has become dead to the law, so that I may live to God; with Christ I hang upon the Cross, and yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me. True, I am living, here and now, this mortal life; but my real life is the faith I have in the Son of God, Who loved, and gave Himself for me."

\* \* \*

Let us keep the inner eye of our souls fixed upon Jesus living and acting within us, completing in us and through us, for the sake of His Church, both His life and His Passion.

Let us maintain within us unceasingly yet flexibly the *Mind of*



*Jesus Christ; let us use all our strength to make that Mind our own, to cooperate with Him as He manifests it in and through us, in our relations with God—His Father and ours—with other men, our brothers, and with ourselves, His other self.*

*Let us constantly recall to mind the events and the teachings of His life: His mortal life, His Sacramental life in the Eucharist, and His Mystical Life within our own souls.*

*Let us try to grow in knowledge and awareness of His life within us; let us rejoice to be able to act with His strength, think with His mind, love with His heart. Let us try to appreciate the infallible efficacy He gives to our lives in this way—not, it is true, apparent to the world, but all the more real for being hidden from the world—supernatural, real, eternal, divine.*

*Let us fulfill our duties towards God and neighbor always through Him and in Him, and in that way know a peace, a joy, a complete forgetfulness of self and giving of self to God, which exceeds our wildest dreams!*

*What an ideal! What a lofty ambition! The Christian who undertakes this Franciscan imitation thus becomes, even if he is completely unaware of it, a radiator of Christ: a living mirror, an expressive copy of His Beauty and of His Love. He becomes another Christ among men, just as St. Francis was.*

*No one claims that this transformation into Jesus is child's play; but then, we have not recommended it to children. For those of us who really want to make ourselves capable of practicing it, though, the difficulty is actually less than that involved in the all-too-common "devout" but incoherent, exterior, egocentric life.*

*The gentle unction of the Holy Spirit sustains our souls; the Blessed Virgin, whose interior life had no other motive or method than to conform to her Son, is only too eager to help those of us who are generous enough to follow in her footsteps. For even more than St. Paul and St. Francis, our Mother can invite us to "follow my example, then, as I follow the example of Christ."*

## IHS

## CALL IN KALEIDOSCOPE

Lo, these streets —  
A close kind and  
Death to a bibber  
For the crazed  
Floor-level of cobblestones;  
And lined with rock  
Rising — pile on pile —  
Into houses walls steeples  
The drapers the cobblers  
The chandlers. And a garden wall.  
A precise primrose blows leeward  
In the west wind,  
A courtesy for My Lord Sun  
Of the ready wealth.

The metronomic movement  
Is a rhythmized match for  
The fall of claret sleeves.  
In a rush of velvet,  
Silver satin of crimson slashed  
And shoes a little toe-turned,  
Someone sings a madrigal to a lute tune,  
Crescendo and a hush —  
A jewelled laugh at the sun,  
Several steps and the claret sleeves  
Cast a shadow  
Upon the primrose poised.  
Out in the street —  
A fantastic sound of wood:  
Wood on wood — LEPPER.  
Throw the man (less a man)  
An alms for Christ's sake,  
Ah, for Christ's sake,



Wood! A man —

And He wooden too —

Pinioned to a cross, looks down  
From a niche.

In a tumult of claret, silver, gold,  
Crimson slash and rose

The sun bursts

The earth writhes smugly

And calls in anguish

FRANCIS

*Sister M. Arlys, F.S.P.A.*



## COMMUNION

Was ever greater miracle?

Wrapped in white,

Waiting to be wanted, to be loved, to be given,

The Word,

Cradled once in immaculate purity,

Now takes flesh in a poor, helpless creature

Who wants Him,

Who needs Him,

Whose sole desire to love Him,

The adorable,

The Holy One of God,

Can be satisfied in nought

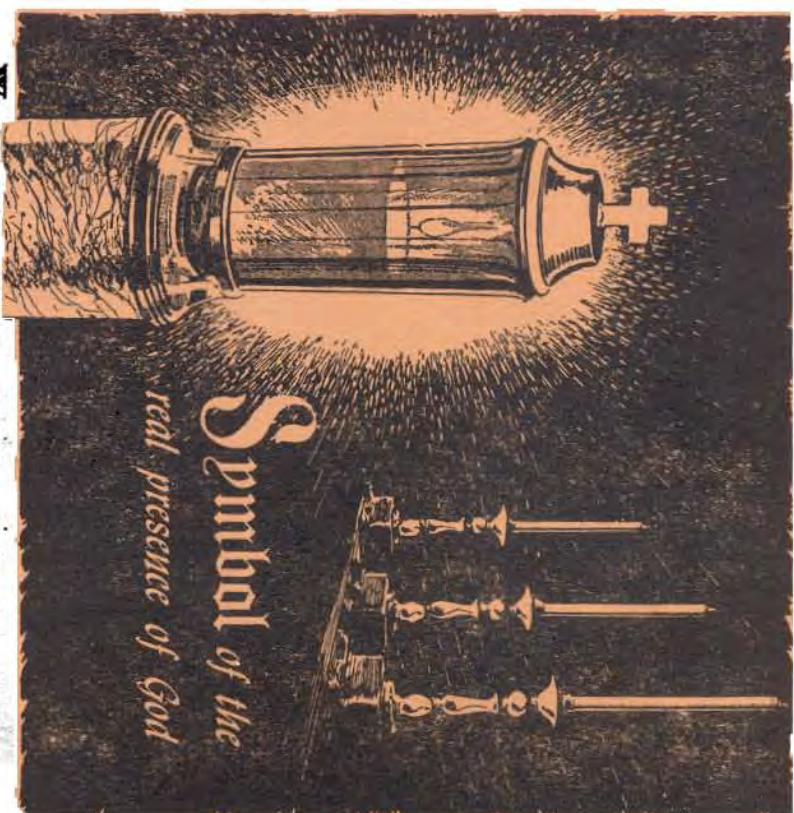
But oneness with Him.

Breathlessly I hasten to the throne of God.

The Blessed Trinity accepts me in the Son of God.

*Sister M. Baylon (Zamboni), O.S.F.*





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A FRANCISCAN

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# A Commentary on the Psalms:

Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.

## PSALM 147

Sometimes, to clarify our understanding of things, it helps to investigate the original meanings of the words we use to talk about them. Suppose, for example, that we are wondering what *praise* really means. It helps, I think, to learn that the word comes down to us from the Latin *pretium*, which means value, worth, price, prize, or reward. When we praise a thing, therefore, we are somehow paying tribute to its merits, its excellence. There is another word in current use that comes from *pretium*, the word *appreciate*. It still means pretty much what it meant among the Romans: to judge accurately or to esteem fully the worth, the value of a thing. Although *praise* and *appreciate* thus come, by roundabout ways, from the same Latin word, they do have a subtle difference in meaning. When we say that we appreciate something, we usually refer to that inner estimation we make of a thing's worth. When we say that we praise something, we ordinarily refer to the expression of our judgement, to the manifestation of our esteem. This explains why we cannot sincerely praise a thing unless we first have some sound appreciation of it.

Which is, of course, no profound utterance, but the statement of a very familiar fact. We meet people in everyday life with whom we associate more or less frequently. We get to know them and their ways, sometimes by very deliberate study and analysis. We discover in them traits that are admirable—honesty, reliability, patience, loyalty, charity—and we reckon their real value and excellence. This means that we appreciate them. But all too often, I am afraid, our appreciation fails to break out into praise. Perhaps we lack the knack of paying compliments. Anyway, we do not, as often as we should, praise people. Which is, you must admit, a great pity. And not a very logical state of affairs. Seeing something admirable in our neighbors, why do we hesitate to proclaim the fact so that they can be encouraged to grow in goodness and others can be inspired to follow their example? Why do we so easily miss seeing that our praise can help them to fulfill the bidding of Christ: "Your light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)?

That brings to mind another



fact. There is something false and sentimental about whatever praise we do give our fellow men unless it leads us to praise their maker. After all, "whatever gifts are worth having, whatever endowments are perfect of their kind, these come to us from above; they are sent down by the Father of all that gives light, with whom there can be no change, no swerving from this course" (James 1:17). Because God is the source of all goodness, he must be the subject of all praise—even though we can never hope truly to appreciate his infinite perfections and must after all our study exclaim with Saint Paul: "How deep is the mine of God's wisdom, of his knowledge; how inscrutable are his judgments, how undiscoverable his ways!" And yet because "all things find in him their origin, their impulse, the centre of their being; to him be glory throughout all ages" (Romans 11:33-36). That logic is inspired and inescapable, as much for us today as it was for Saint Francis when he prayed: "Almighty, most holy, most high and sovereign God, the sovereign good—all good, wholly good, who alone are good—to you let us render all praise, all glory, all thanksgiving, all honor, all blessing, and let us always trace back to you what is good. Amen."

The final words of this prayer suggest still another fact for our consideration. There are traces and reflections, vestiges and images

of God all around us everywhere in the world. "God is good," we are told by Christ, and "goodness tends to diffuse itself, to pour itself out," as we are reminded by Saint Bonaventure. Nothing outside himself, nothing but his own absolute and infinite goodness, could have determined God to pour out and to diffuse this goodness in the creation of the world. Just as nothing but himself could have been its pattern and model. Deep within the infinite abyss of the Godhead from all eternity was the Word. That Word is the image and exemplar of every and all created being. We know that because Saint John has said that "it was through him that all things came into being, and without him came nothing that has come to be" (John 1:3). So that "each particular being, in its individuality, its concrete nature and entity, with all its own characteristics and its private qualities and its own inviolable identity, gives glory to God by being precisely what He wants it to be here and now, in the circumstances ordained for it by His Love and His infinite Art."

There is still another fact to be noted, or, more accurately, another aspect of this same fact. "Sun and moon . . . shining stars . . . highest heavens . . . waters above the heavens . . . sea monsters and all the depths . . . mountains and . . . hills . . . fruit trees and . . . cedars . . . wild beasts and tame animals . . . creeping things and

winged fowl" (Psalm 148:2-10), all these and all other "created things are the mirror of God's glory, because, being his creation, they reflect something of his nature. In so doing, they praise him by their very existence." But the momentous thing about all this that we cannot afford to overlook is that "they themselves know nothing of it, but man does; he can think himself into their silent song of praise; he can voice it in their behalf, offer it up to God and thus act as the spokesman of creation." Among the ends that man must have in view, therefore, when he raises his mind and heart to God in prayer, is to praise God, to extol and to glorify him, to proclaim his infinitely perfect goodness, to join the angelic choirs in chanting "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

All this being so, we should not be surprised, then, to find among the divinely inspired books of the Bible a collection of hymns or songs of praise. That, in Hebrew, is precisely what the Psalms are called, *tehillim* or *tilim*, songs of praise, and the Hebrew name for the Psalter is *Sepher Tehillim*, Book of Songs of Praise or, simply, Book of Hymns. These hymns, although each is inspired by God, are not the work of one man alone. They were written by different poets at different times and eventually collected. Some of them may be old enough to have been sung

at the Tabernacle which the Israelites pitched at various places on their journey to the Promised Land or at the Sanctuary which the Chosen People erected at Shiloh. Some of them were composed by David to be chanted by the Levites at the public worship of the nation. Some of them were composed during the period of the Exile and included in the collection when the worship of God was restored by Esdras and Nehemias. All of them extol and glorify "the greatness of the one and only God, the creator of all things, the ruler of the world, the King of kings, the Lord and defender of Israel, his chosen race."

You could say that "the whole history of the Old Testament, from the creation up to (at least) the Babylonian exile, is put into poetry by the psalmists: the creation . . . the deluge . . . Sodom and Gomorrah . . . from the patriarchs to David . . . Solomon . . . the destruction of Jerusalem . . . the exile." Some of the Psalms are prophetic: Messianic Psalms such as Psalm 44; some of them are lamentations: Penitential Psalms such as Psalm 129. There are didactic Psalms, too, and national or historical Psalms. But songs addressed to God in praise, prayer, and thanksgiving form the largest class of the Psalms. Of this class, a group of seven Psalms, the last in the Psalter—Psalms 144 to 150 offers perfect examples. The Place of these poems at the close of the



Psalter may point to their late composition; they could have been written after the exile in the days of Nehemias. They may have been intended, therefore, for liturgical use in the restored Temple.

That they form a group is pretty clear from similarities in point of language and of thought. They extol the sovereignty of God, his almighty power as revealed in creation, and his tender providence and mercy towards men—"The Lord is near to all who call upon him . . . He fulfills the desire of those who fear him" (Psalm 144: 18, 19); "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 146:3). This group of Psalms proclaims the duty of mankind to praise God. "Not priests and Levites only, but all Israel, not Israel only but all mankind, not all mankind only but every living thing, must join in the chorus of praise. The universe is Jahweh's temple and all its inhabitants should be his worshippers." Therefore, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:5).

Two of the Psalms in this group appear in the Little Office, Psalm 148 at Lauds, Psalm 147 at Vespers. We have already dealt with the first of these poems, now we shall consider the second of them. In the Hebrew text what we consider Psalm 147 does not stand alone; it is joined with what we reckon Psalm 146 to make one poem. When you read Psalm 146, you do

see similarities between its two strophes and the single piece which is Psalm 147. All three members commence with an invitation like the one which stands at the beginning of Psalm 147: *Glorify the Lord, O Jerusalem; Praise your God, O Zion.*

After concentrating for a few verses on some aspect of God's nature or activity that is worthy of praise, each member closes with a reference to God's goodness to man. But whereas the two sections of Psalm 146 are addressed to Israel in general, Psalm 147 calls upon Jerusalem specifically and exclusively. Its imagery, too, points to definite conditions of peace and prosperity in the Holy City, conditions such as might have obtained when the political and religious reforms of Nehemias were bearing fruit there. And the winter picture, too, seems a little too concrete not to have been suggested by an actual experience of some unusually severe cold spell. These grounds justify our treating Psalm 147 as a distinct poem even though "the current Hebrew text is probably correct in treating as only one Psalm the parts which the Greek and Latin versions rendered as separate Psalms." Psalm 147 has nine verses, the first three of which form a kind of unit. The first verse of the Psalm, calling upon the Holy City to praise God, is followed by two others which offer motives for such praise:

*Glorify the Lord, O Jerusalem;  
Praise your God, O Zion.  
For he has strengthened the bars  
of your gates,  
he has blessed your children  
within you.  
He has granted peace in your  
borders;  
with the best of wheat he fills  
you.*

To appreciate these motives, here is what you have to remember. One of the heavy tribulations the Jews had to bear when they returned from Babylon was to discover "the wall of Jerusalem lying in ruins, and its gates blackened with fire" (Nehemias 2:13) and to find themselves all but powerless to do anything about it. To make matters worse, enmity broke out among the classes until "there was a great outcry of the common sort, men and women, against their richer neighbors, that were Jews too. Poor folk, who had sons and daughters in great numbers, had bethought themselves of bartering these for the corn they must have if they would live; some, in the great scarcity, had been ready to pledge lands, vineyards and houses in return for corn (Nehemias 5:1-2). The disagreement was finally patched up, and the work went on of rebuilding the walls and restoring the gates of the city. Then Samaritans, Arabs, Ammonites, and Philistines began to prowl around, waiting their chance to swoop down upon the Jews, kill them, and destroy their work.

Things grew so desperate that there was scarcely a "workman but must build with his sword girt at his side" (Nehemias 4:18). From such hopeless depths God finally raised Jerusalem to a position of power, peace, and prosperity. This is the message of the second and third verse and the motive for praising the Lord God almighty.

The next section of the poem consists of four verses, of which the first one, verse 4, is a kind of prelude that states a theme, the illustration of which is worked out in verses 5, 6, and 7. The whole section, let me point out, bears a remarkable likeness to this passage from Isaiah: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth, and water it, and make it to spring, and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, which shall go forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and prosper in the things for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11). You might almost suppose that the psalmist had these words in mind while writing his poem. Certainly there is an echo of them in this verse: *He sends forth his command to the earth;  
swiftly runs his word!*  
This verse, you notice, employs a figurative expression, frequent in the Old Testament, to describe the creative activity of God. He is



portrayed as issuing a "command," as speaking a "word," through which means he achieves what he wills, very much as earthly potentates do when they give commands or pass the word to their followers. You will notice too, I think, that in personifying this "word" of God—"swiftly runs his word!"—the psalmist is again adhering to a custom among the inspired writers. The most familiar and perhaps the most poetic instance of this practice is a passage from the Book of Wisdom, a passage incidentally, used in a transferred sense in the Introit for the Sunday after Christmas: "While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty word leaped down from heaven, from thy royal throne" (Wisdom 18:14-15). This habit among the inspired writers—of representing God's omnipotent, creative power as operating through his word and of personifying this word—we see now to have been but the foreshadowing of the truth revealed to us in the words of Saint John: "At the beginning of time the Word already was; and God had the Word abiding with him, and the Word was God. He abode, at the beginning of time, with God. It was through him that all things came into being, and without him came nothing that has come to be" (John 1:1-3).

In order to illustrate the power of God's "word" at work and the

effect upon earth of God's "command," the poet next paints a word picture of winter. Really more a sketch than a picture, just a few, sharp, suggestive details, rapidly and deftly put down:

*He spreads snow like wool;  
frost he strews like ashes.*

*He scatters his hail like crumbs;  
before his cold the waters freeze.* Snow and frost would have been so rare at Jerusalem that their mention by the poet leads some critics to suppose that he composed his poem after an unusually severe winter. However that may be, in the poem the winter is actually now past and spring is on its way: *He sends his word and melts them;*

*he lets his breeze blow and the waters run.*

And the cycle of the season, thus begun again will roll around in regular sequence because that is the will of God, "the Strength and Stay, upholding all creation, Who ever dost Thyself unmoved abide."

The contrast in these verses between the seasons is like a preparation, you might say, for a double contrast between the last section of the poem—verses 8 and 9—and the two preceding sections. Here is the first of these contrasts. God has just been depicted as the Lord of Nature, the forces of which are blindly subject to his control and commands. In verse 8, God is the Lord of his Chosen People, who must be listened to and willingly obeyed because

*He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.*

This verse paves the way for the second contrast. In the opening verses of this Psalm, Jerusalem was urged to praise God because of his generosity in the natural, physical order. God had re-established the city, blessed its people, granted it peace and prosperity—all great gifts and certainly grounds for grateful praise. But such gifts God has now and then bestowed on almost every other nation in history. These benefactions hardly reveal any predilection or preference that God may have for the Jews. What does reveal a unique and everlasting love for them is a gift of another order, a gift of the spiritual, the supernatural order, God's proclamation of "his word to Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances to Israel." This is the reason, unequalled and unparalleled, why Jerusalem must "glorify the Lord:"

*He has not done thus for any other nation;  
his ordinances he has not made known to them.*

Almost eight hundred years lie between Psalm 147 and the first statement of the truth embodied in its final verse. Almost eight hundred years during which the infinite wisdom, the merciful patience, and the everlasting love of God

have worked unceasingly to make his Chosen People appreciate and live up to their destiny as Moses had described it to them when he said: "Israel, pay good heed to the laws and the decrees I am making known to you . . . Keep them in honor and live by them; these are to be the arts, this the wisdom, that you teach the world, as men come to hear of these laws, and say to themselves, Surely they must be wise, surely they must be discerning folk, that belong to so great a nation as this! And indeed no other nation is so great; no other nation has gods that draw near to it, as our God draws near to us whenever we pray to him. What other nation can boast that it has observances and decrees so rightly ordered as we have in this law of ours, this law which I am setting before your eyes today? . . . Why else did the Lord choose you out, deliver you from Egypt's furnace of iron, but to make you a people of his own, as you are this day? (Deuteronomy 4:1, 6-8, 20).

Almost eight hundred years later a poet will echo these truths in the words of a poem which, almost twenty-four hundred years later, we today are reading. If they make us appreciate the infinite goodness of God and so lead us to praise him, then the Word of God "shall prosper in the things for which he sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).



# In Silence and Shadows

*Blessed Innocent of Berzo*

*Blaine Burke, O.F.M. Cap.*

When Pope John XXIII was a boy living at Sotto il Monte, he used to trudge daily the nine miles to school in Bergamo. One day a few months after his ninth birthday, while the future pope was engaged in his schoolwork, a very sick Capuchin priest was brought to the Capuchin Friary at Bergamo. Fortified with the sacraments, the friar died there on March 3, 1890.

Despite the fact that he died a very holy death in their city, the residents hardly knew of this humble friar. The people of Berzo, his home town, however, were well acquainted with him and his holiness. They clamored for, and obtained, the remains of their saint. Fame of the friar's sanctity spread quickly. Miracles were attributed to him and soon the Holy See was examining this simple friar's life. November 1, 1961 saw their labor rewarded. Pope John XXIII entered in the rolls of the Blessed the humble little friar who spent his last days at Bergamo, while nearby he, Angelus Joseph Roncalli, labored at his schoolbooks.

Had he remained in the world, the new Blessed's name would be Blessed John Scalvinoni. Upon entering the Capuchin branch of the Franciscan Order, however, he changed his name to Innocent. As Blessed Innocent of Berzo he took his place among the 184 other Franciscan priests and lay-brothers in the Church's catalogue of Saints and Blessed.

Niarlo, in the Camonian Valley many miles northeast of Bergamo, was John's birthplace. St. Joseph's Day, 1844, was the day—just 62 days after St. Bernadette Soubirous' birth at Lourdes. Three days later, John was born as a child of God by baptism. Soon after this, John's father died, and his widowed mother returned to live in her native village of Berzo. There she raised John, imbuing him with piety and good morals.

John cherished his childhood companions and enjoyed conversing with them. He also loved the suffering and the poor. Willingly he skimped on his own meals so he could feed the poor.

His studies at Berzo showed that John was well-suited for higher

studies. With his mother's help, he enrolled in the Bishop's College at Lovere on the northern shore of Lake d'Iseo. John was blessed with a keen mind capable of deep thought as well as a tenacious memory. Used with the application that John employed, these were bound to win him the reputation of being first in studies at the college.

His primary striving, however, was virtue. To acknowledge that all his gifts were from God, John spent most of his free time before the Blessed Sacrament. Seeing him in church so often, the administration feared for his health. Many a time they admonished him not to spend so much time there. Eventually they persuaded John to follow the middle course in his studies and his striving after virtue.

"Another St. Aloysius" was his companions' appraisal of the young man. What made them think so was his calm countenance, his modesty and his frankness. Ever winning and friendly, John didn't hesitate to turn just as severe if someone uttered something off-color.

Certain of the students at Lovere considered him a hypocrite. To prove their point, one night they fell upon him in the dormitory and one after the other struck John in the face. Much to their surprise, he bore it all without a whimper. Later an embittered collegian bodily hurled John between the beds and pounced on him ready to pommel him. Though the attack was checked, word of the incident eventually reached his superiors. When questioned, John gracefully accused himself of being imprudent and asked that the other young man be excused.

Through the years at college, John became more and more confident that God was calling him to the altar. Finally, he asked the bishop's permission to enter the seminary. When Pope John XXIII beatified him in November, 1961, it was on the one hundredth anniversary of John's entrance into the major seminary at Brescia.

Records at the seminary show that John Scalvinoni was most diligent in his studies. In his grasp of theology, John was inferior to no one. His professors, however, were quick to point out that he never attempted to answer any question that was over his head.

Immediately after his ordination on June 6, 1867, John was stationed at Cevi as an assistant pastor. Though he was only 23, he fulfilled this charge after the manner of an experienced and mature priest. When he was not engaged in preaching or hearing confessions, he prayed in the church or retired to the sacristy to read St. Thomas' *Summa Theologica*. He also won a name for helping the hungry of the area.

Two years passed. Then John's bishop decided to make him vicerector of the seminary. Such an assignment disagreed with this timid character, but his obedience was prompt. Paradoxically, through his



own sanctity, he forced the bishop to change his mind. Father John's office demanded that he correct the seminarians, and he just couldn't bring himself to it. He feared violating charity. On those occasions when he succeeded in correcting a boy, he would then immediately kneel down before him and beg his pardon. Naturally this gave John a bad reputation among his fellow priests at the seminary, and the rector pleaded with him to use sternness. To which John practically always answered that he himself was at fault, not the boys. One year of this was too much! Father John was relieved and sent to Berzo. For the next four years he assisted the pastor in his home parish.

On a hill opposite Berzo stood the village of Borno. Here there was a Capuchin church and friary called the Annunciation. Father John frequently visited this friary, and evidently he left his heart there. Long and fervently he asked God to call him there permanently. When he was convinced that God was calling, he simply and candidly made this known to Father Augustine of Crema, the provincial of the Capuchins in Milan.

The difficulties in obtaining leave of his bishop were many. The archpriest, the parishioners and even his own mother were opposed to his joining the Capuchins. Now well on in years, his mother didn't like the idea at all. Firm and faithful to his call to a more perfect life in the religious state, John solved all difficulties and overpowered all obstacles.

On April 16, 1874, he received the habit of St. Francis and the meaningful name Innocent and was admitted into the Capuchin novitiate. Already, in the novitiate, Father Innocent was a perfect Capuchin Franciscan, observing the Order's rule and constitutions as well as all its customs in their finest details. The novice master was able to work wonders because of the docility and pliability he found in Innocent. Innocent's humility, his love for the poor, and his sincere charity towards his confreres all grew more intense.

After his religious profession, Innocent was stationed most of his remaining years in the friary at Borno. Short assignments at Albino, Crema and Milan in the first years of his religious life were the only exceptions. Save for the works of the ministry, he seldom ventured forth from his friary.

In all humility, Innocent shunned offices in the Order. Obedience called, however, and Innocent freely accepted the office of assistant novice master. He also agreed to teach grammar to the clerical students. A wise and saintly educator, Innocent inspired the youths to sanctify themselves by his perfect faith in, and ardent love of, Christ Crucified and His Virgin Mother.

As a teacher, Innocent paid close attention to exterior mortification, especially the brilling of the tongue and the furthering of religious decorum. Interior mortification, however, was what he was really seeking. He realized that external discipline without its internal complement was hypocrisy and tyranny and in time would lead to outright perversity.

With real prudence, perhaps recalling his own days at Lovere when the superiors had to caution him, he instructed those under his care: "Let everyone pay attention to his own nature. While one person can get along with less indulgence, I would not have someone else, who needs more, trying to imitate him. Rather let him have regard for his own nature and give it what it really needs. Just as we must guard against superfluity of food, so must we beware also of too great an abstinence. God desires mercy, not sacrifice."

At his superiors' wish, Innocent also helped in the parish attached to the friary and in other neighboring parishes. He engaged in preaching to the poor and hearing confessions, and enjoyed a fruitful ministry in both. Many were recalled to the fold by his preaching and confessional work.

While hearing confessions, Father Innocent forgot himself entirely. His all was for others. Tender and compassionate as he was, he was able to carry on a most efficacious mission in the confessional. It is sufficient to say that his greatest admirers were his penitents.

A ministry of preaching was Innocent's life's desire, but ill health greatly frustrated his zeal. The simple but sound discourses that he was able to give were on Christ Crucified. They drew many from near and far. His speech united the simplicity of a child and the humility of a proven religious. He became rapt in God when he spoke. This excited a healthy and holy enthusiasm among the people and Innocent became greatly honored by the people for his preaching. To tell the truth, the sight of the man alone preached a sermon. Crowds often gathered round the friary to see the saint sent them from heaven.

Toward the end of the year 1889, Innocent was sent by his superiors to preach retreats to the friars at Milan and Albino. Innocent obeyed but his body resisted. Extreme pain gripped his lungs and made his work a great struggle. Caring little for himself, Innocent finished his work at Milan and then headed for Albino. The third day, however, the pain was too much. Innocent had to stop. The friars, thinking his condition would improve at Bergamo, quickly moved him there.

Already a profound joy had overcome Innocent. His soul must have felt Sister Death's breath. What resignation and patience he displayed in those days! Every exercise was one of most sublime virtue.



more readily imagined than described. His deathbed was a school of highest perfection. One could not draw near without vividly sensing this. To the doctors, the Father Guardian and the Brother Infirmaryman, Innocent was completely obedient. Of the expected cure, Innocent said that if someone should be promised a cure, there was no one less worthy of it than he. As the malady continued, he was given the last sacraments. While the prayers for the dying were said, Innocent remained serenely absorbed in God. Peacefully his soul took leave of his body at 10:45 on the morning of March 3, 1890.

Ever the example of humility during his life, Innocent had blinded himself to his own acclaim. He was not aware of the world's acclaim, but even during his life, the simple folk in the towns where he lived venerated him as a saint. How much more so now, when they believed he was in heaven! The proper legal steps were taken, and on September 28th, Innocent's body was removed from the cemetery at Bergamo and returned to the Camonica Valley. When the relics arrived at Berzo the next day, a vast concourse of people from the Valley were on hand for the event. Monsignori, priests, clerics and lay people—all in all, about 14,000 people were there.

Nineteen years later, steps were begun for the cause of Innocent's beatification. By 1917, the Congregation of Rites had examined his writings and had found nothing against faith or morals in them. These manuscripts included his diary that he had begun as a layman, his spiritual notes, ten booklets of sermons, two letters and a number of other spiritual writings.

On January 22, 1919, Pope Benedict XV officially opened the cause. During the next three years, the Apostolic Process was carried on. The next significant step was Pope Pius XII's declaration on March 21, 1943 that Innocent practiced all the virtues to an heroic degree. Finally, on July 25, 1961, Pope John XXIII solemnly approved the two miracles needed for Innocent's beatification. On the following November 12th, he enrolled him in the catalogue of the Church's Beati.

Thus ends the general outline of what the world is inclined to call the life of a man. A man's real life, however, is the one hidden with Christ in God deep down in the depths of the soul. It is in this life that Blessed Innocent is a beacon, a shining example to our age. In the imitation of this life, this example, these virtues, one practices the highest form of devotion to him.

The virtues that the Church found so heroic in Innocent came to him only through an equally heroic effort. Anyone who would imitate him can expect nothing less. Consider the virtue of humility—the foundation of all others. Every day, Innocent set himself to examining his

own imperfections and considering the natural and mortal miseries of human nature. Then he lifted his contemplation to God's infinite perfections, to the flawless examples of virtue in our Divine Saviour. Dwelling long on these thoughts was bound to make Innocent humble. Still it required a daily effort.

As a result of his humility, Father Innocent sought humiliations. Any credit paid him on his own merits he ignored. For example, once when he was so badly treated at the College of Lovere, he was asked if someone had been picking on him. His answer, simple and humble: "Oh no! I have always been treated better than I deserve." At Borno, where he spent most of his religious life, many people clamored for his blessing. Only the express command of his superiors could bring him to bless them, for he felt they were already far above him.

Once, when one of the friars started talking of Innocent's accomplishments to his face, Innocent said: "Brother, Brother, let's change the subject. I have a tendency to be proud and such a thing is evil." Innocent went so far as to promise one of the clerics that he would say six *Hail Holy Queens* for him every time the cleric would correct him.

Humility led him to a life of mortification. Though this was total war with sin, he still considered himself a great sinner. Thus he felt obliged to walk Calvary's bitter road. His austerity of life became singular. The many permissions that were required, the discipline, the hard bed and other mortifications of Capuchin life were not sufficient for Innocent. With the blessing of obedience he undertook many others.

His confreres felt sure Innocent was out of his hard old bed all night long. When the Father Guardian inquired into this, Innocent replied that he could not sleep more than a half hour a night. This was real penance. Even a robust person would have difficulty, and Innocent was always sickly. And though he was tormented continually by his grave malady, the holy friar never complained.

Rather he went right on up the road to Calvary. When he meditated on the Stations of the Cross in choir, if he knew he was alone, he weighed himself down with breviaries and other books. One day, however, he was not alone. When asked his reason for his action, he told the friars: "As I carry these, I keep before my mind the enormous cross that my most grievous sins have heaped on Jesus' shoulders."

For love of suffering he also went barefoot. Capuchins, of course, are allowed to wear sandals; but when Innocent's pair wore out, he declined to ask for another. His superior finally gave him a new pair without his asking, but Innocent shrank from wearing them. His feet



frequently were masses of blood. Often he would return home with his feet frozen from walking on ice.

In brief, Innocent had a fever for suffering—voluntary suffering undertaken only with his superior's permission. As he wrote in his book of resolutions: "With my sins, I have made Jesus sweat blood. Therefore, I must hourly console him . . . I have known the need of placing myself under the Cross." Seculars and religious alike were moved to compassion and devotion by the result. The very sight stirred them. A person in his forties, so bony and broken!

As must have been noted by now, God did not lead Innocent along a path of extraordinary happenings calculated to stagger the world's admiration. In silence and shadows, he was sanctified. God and his family—first the one at Berzo, then that at Borno—were alone able to give evidence of his brilliant virtues. His sanctity was all the greater as it was secret, for sanctity is dearer to God when known to him alone.

Innocent was a light peacefully and prayerfully planted on a lampstand at the corner of the altar. Burning for God alone, he did not illumine himself but rather the holy sanctuary and the people who came to see him. While his love's flame burned thus before his Eucharistic Lord, his body resembled the candles the sacristan had placed there. Very few people could remain for a quarter of an hour as motionless as he did without finding.

Primarily, Innocent's life was a life of prayer. In prayer, he performed his indefatigable work. In prayer, he plunged into deep study. In prayer, he planned and practised his constant dying to self. Each moment for Innocent was a continual preparation or thanksgiving for his celebration of the Mass. Frequently, he was found in church, sometimes, praying mentally, sometimes vocally. When obedience called him to external activity, he punctuated his work with prayer. Heart and mind remained ever with God through his use of aspirations.

Whether within or without the friary, Berzo's Blessed always set others a potent example in his prayer life. As his principal meditation was the Son of God, Innocent relived Christ's passion by going the Way of the Cross five or six times a day. Anxious about Innocent's health, the Father Guardian once forbade him to enter the church except with the community. Innocent obeyed, but his sympathetic superior, knowing that it grieved Innocent, soon lifted the prohibition.

The saint also edified those around him by his adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, by his fervent Marian prayers at Our Lady's altar, and by his faithful observance of the rubrics. At Holy Mass, especially

during the Consecration, he resembled a seraph: his face was a beaming light, his eyes burning embers.

Innocent prayed ardently for the Church and for the Holy Father. A most devoted son and servant of the Church, as every Franciscan professes to be, the holy friar loved the Church most dearly. He called it his Teacher, his Queen, his Mother.

The unifying quality that governed all Innocent's virtues was his faithful observance of the rule and constitutions of his Order. Innocent professed his determination to become a saint following the Capuchin Franciscan life. The best compliment one can give him is to say he was a good Capuchin Franciscan.

In a sermon on St. Francis, St. Vincent Ferrer once wrote of Francis' rule that "whoever keeps this rule, is a saint and may after death safely be canonized." When Pope John XXIII solemnly beatified Innocent, he offered the Church another proof for this Dominican Saint's words.

Innocent didn't have a great name as a preacher who went abroad preaching the word of God, moving men's souls with fiery sermons. He wasn't a man who wrote numerous books full of deep thoughts. Nor was he a great apostle in the field of the social and charitable apostolates.

He was a man who for seventeen years spent most of his time engaged only in contemplation in the retreat of his friary. He was a man who for seventeen years exercised the ordinary Franciscan apostolate which overflowed from that life of contemplation. At the requests of the neighboring pastors, he assisted them in the sacred ministry on Sundays and Holy Days by hearing confessions and preaching missions and retreats.

Truly, it was in living the life proper to a Capuchin Franciscan, in the strict observance of his rule and constitutions that Innocent merited a place among the Blessed. In death, a friar is judged by the life that he professed. Certainly, when Innocent appeared before the Eternal Judge, he heard the consoling words: "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Enter into the joy of your master."



"It is only Love that counts!"

Ah! then, to be a part of Living Flame,  
of everlasting Light,  
bereft of self,  
to know and taste eternal Peace  
it is enough to love?  
To make each breath and dream  
the fuel for fire,  
to never know "enough"  
when Giving puts her hand on wounded heart  
when Joy expands the silent avenues  
of waiting mind,  
to welcome Wisdom's advent there?  
Oh Love, greater than any grief,  
Destroyer, builder,  
Today you hoard and spend,  
In our tomorrow, only YOU will count!

Sister M. Josephine, O.S.F.

## FAITH

Numbness chills the spot  
Once I called my heart;  
My soul roams as a spirit  
Without place to rest  
Its deathlike weariness,  
Shackled by heavy fetters,  
Yet completely free,  
No emotional blindness,  
Yet a dense fog  
Prevails;  
Leaving only trust  
And a shivering surrender  
To One I choose to love  
But cannot see.

Sister Mary Angela, C.S.B.

## Felician Foundress Upholds

### St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

Sister Mary Jacinta Szczepiński, C.S.S.F.

(Continued)

#### Pious Reflections

Mediating upon the Holy Eucharist Mother Angela remarked:

I know the Lord has done much for me . . . I begged the Lord that He Himself tell me, what I ought to consider as the greatest of graces, of which I will have to give the strictest account and it occurred to me that the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest grace, for truly therein we behold the Giver of all gifts. The Blessed Sacrament is the spring from which all other graces flow. It is, therefore, from this frequent exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, from these daily Holy Communions, that the account will be most demanding.<sup>31</sup>

Elsewhere in her spiritual notes we can observe her deep spirit of faith in this wonderful sacrament. "Jesus will be carried again in procession.—We cloistered Sisters will follow the procession in spirit—during this time we will prostrate and say the Magnificat to thank our Lord and the Blessed Mother for the many graces He has bestowed upon us."<sup>32</sup>

In many of her letters to Father Honorat, Mother Angela begged for permission to prostrate herself during Mass in order to obtain the many graces of which the community was in need.

During this time Mother Angela was beset by interior trials and tepidity. She writes,

When I think back and recall, in the spirit of humility, how zealously I served the Lord . . . every Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the feast of Corpus Christi, was a source of happiness and joy. I wondered and could not understand how people could leave the Church, when God Himself was on the altar . . . today I find myself weary and sleepy during the Holy Mass.<sup>33</sup>

Undoubtedly, Mother was not responsible for this apparent indifference because of her physical condition, yet, in humility, she accuses herself of this fault.

Mother Angela begged her Eucharistic Spouse to help her lead

<sup>31</sup> *Writings of Mother Angela Truszkowska*, III, op. cit., p. 658.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 663.



a quiet hidden life, full of good deeds, especially to practice love of neighbor. Her resolutions of 1879 point out her effort to contemplate the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament and to ponder how Christ would act on a given occasion. The following prayer expresses Mother's desire to obtain the fruit of a wholesome devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, namely; charity.

Lord . . . I do not ask Thee for the gift of some ideal love, but I beseech Thee for love like unto Thine—a love dependent upon sacrifice, upon self-abnegation and complete self-denial, an unselfish love which never seeks self in anything. You, O Lord, counsel that we deny self. I desire to sacrifice self for others, no matter what the cost (for cost, no doubt, it will), and should I suffer intensely, let me conceal the affliction, never making it known. Thou knowest, O Lord, that it is hard to do so in such spiritual anguish, but give me Thy grace and refuse not the helping hand of a Father, for only then will I be strong. Thou knowest, O Lord, that when I beg Thee for the grace to perform this virtue, I do so to fulfill Thy commandment and to secure but Thee, not my satisfaction but Thine. Thou knowest what general love and esteem surrounds me; yet, it is this love I am willing to sacrifice in return for the conviction that I have fulfilled charity towards others.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Frequent Reception, Visits, Reverence and Respect for Clergy*

True devotion to the Eucharist also implies a worthy and frequent reception of the Eucharistic Bread. For, as already indicated, the Sacred Species is a symbol and source of powerful unity in the Mystical Body which inflames one with the fire of love for God and neighbor.

In regard to frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, Mother Angela resolved in her spiritual notes,

. . . to make every effort to prepare myself to receive my Lord by devoting at least fifteen minutes the evening before to saying one mystery of the rosary, begging the Blessed Mother to prepare my heart herself, to saying five prayers to the wounds of Jesus pleading for the forgiveness of sins. To be well disposed to receive Holy Communion, the time before noon is offered as a thanksgiving and afternoon as a preparation for the following day.<sup>35</sup>

The meditations used for the recitation of the one mystery of the Rosary were as follows.

#### The Annunciation

The mystical life of Jesus in soul, is His life in us. Through grace He renders us participants of his divine nature; through Holy Communion He perfects in a mysterious but real manner His Presence in us.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 666.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 661.

The life of grace is nothing else than a continuation of God's life in us—and Holy Communion an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation in our souls.

Oh! How great is the Christian! Through grace he is divinized; through Holy Communion he becomes like Mary, the living tabernacle of the Word made Flesh; as Mary, pure and innocent; as Mary, renouncing the world and its pleasures; as Mary, recollected and in continual union with Jesus in the depths of our hearts.

#### The Visitation

Jesus continues in an ineffable manner the Mystery of the Visitation in us. The tender devotion, the sudden fervor, are visits of the Good Master and His Grace.

I come to the door without ceasing and I knock . . . Open to me my spouse and my sister—open to me . . . I have loved you with eternal love. My child, give me your heart! Mary, the source of Jesus' natural life, was also the most perfect sanctuary of His Mystical Life. In her He lived through His grace; in her He rendered Himself sensitive through the sweet and delightful visitations. And Mary faithful in corresponding to grace, advanced to greatness by the practice of all the virtues and she walked the road of most eminent sanctity.

Imitating Mary, let us be faithful to the Good Master when He makes Himself known in us through His sweet visitations. Let us open to Him the door of our Heart and let it be closed to all human affection.

#### Nativity of Our Lord

Our heart, most often is only a stable full of sins and misery. Nevertheless, Jesus does not disdain to come there to bring a mysterious rebirth through His Grace and Holy Communion.

As the stable of Bethlehem, after the birth of Jesus, became a heaven all brilliant with light, and so our soul, after the mysterious birth of Jesus in it, becomes another heaven all resplendent with light; and our body and our heart resemble the shepherds and the kings, offering their adorations in order to render to Jesus a perpetual homage. O my soul, comprehend your dignity in the state of grace; do not forget that you are a spiritual crib, that heaven is here below, where Jesus loves to rest and find His pleasures.

#### The Presentation

Jesus and the Christians form one and the same body, the great Mystical Body of the Church. Jesus is the head and the faithful are His members. Our life must therefore be none other than the life of Jesus; a pure life, an open life, and obedient life but also a life of sacrifice. In this mystery Christ wants to unite all of the members of the church in order to offer them to His Father and only to seal them in an immense holocaust with themselves. Let us thus say: Behold, I come—Here I am Good Master—behold, I come—Here I am my God—as a victim united to Jesus for the sacrifice.



## Finding in the Temple

If the altar is the temple where Jesus instructs souls in the science of communion and His Happiness, our soul veritably is the Nazareth where He finds pleasure to dwell; it is there that He wants to live with Mary and Joseph until our last day.

The life of Jesus in Nazareth is a humble and hidden life, a life full of sweetness and charms. What sweet conversations took place between the Child Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Child Jesus wants to communicate to us this life; He wants to love humility and solitude; to ravish our heart with the intimate communications and sweet conversations.<sup>36</sup>

They were also found in French. Again, we presume they were sent to her by the Franciscan Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Troyes, France. A careful study of these considerations indicate that they influenced and strengthened Mother Angela's Eucharistic piety day by day and helped her to receive our Lord in a more worthy manner. It is evident that frequent reception was uppermost in her mind as these words imply.

When I look to the future and see that we may be deprived of the opportunity of frequent Holy Communion, terrible anguish overcomes me and I feel greatly grieved for all those dedicated to God who cannot receive Him often . . . it is difficult for me to be without Him even for a single day.<sup>37</sup>

Her spiritual concern for the future was blighted by the silent movement of Jansenism which originated in the seventeenth century. It victimized the ignorant and learned not only into the habit of abstinence but also resulted into a period of cold indifference. This seemed to be the case with the Visitandines who were under the influence of Jansenism as we know it today. To them it was undoubtedly known as a devotion based on a complete conviction of man's unworthiness to receive the Eucharist frequently. We assume this fact, since the *Felician Chronicle*, commonly known as the *History of the Congregation*, records the incident describing the Visitandines as filled with wonder in seeing the group of Felicians receiving our Lord daily. (They were residing at the Visitandine convent during the period of disbandment.)<sup>38</sup> The *Chronicles* also state that the sisters living outside the convent were steadfast in this practice despite the spirit of Jansenism pervading convents and monasteries at the time perhaps not with great force but, nevertheless, the sting was present. Unfortunately, it was a pity that this heresy lingered so long. Pope Pius X, the great modern "Eucharist

<sup>36</sup> Annuncia, *Croty Slugi Bozej Marii Angeli Truszkowskiej*, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Writings of Mother Angela Truszkowska*, III, op. cit., p. 658.

<sup>38</sup> *Siostry Felicjanki, Historia Zgromadzenia St. Felicjanek*, (Krakow, publ. not cited, 1924), p. 347.

Crusader", reversed the trend of Jansenism by championing frequent reception of Holy Communion. This decree was issued on December 20, 1905. The decree itself is long and explicit, but it is summarized thus,

Frequent and daily Communion should be open to all the faithful of whatever rank or condition of life, so that no one who is in the state of grace and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention can lawfully be hindered therefrom.<sup>39</sup>

Mother Angela encouraged her sisters to be faithful in receiving our Lord. The following paragraph is a letter addressed to the sisters shortly after the decree of suppression was issued.

. . . We served our Beloved, when He favored us with sweetness and joy, when we were able to live with Him under the same roof . . . when He fed us with His Bread . . . we served Him . . . rejoice in the Lord that He deigned us worthy to suffer persecution . . . O my beloved daughters, all has been taken away, however, we have Christ, rejoice always with Him, thank God for Him . . . pray to Him unceasingly . . .<sup>40</sup>

In many of her letters to her spiritual daughters, Mother wrote:

If you must frequent confession more than once a week do so, but do not omit Holy Communion without a serious reason.

Receive Holy Communion often since it is so powerful in making us Christ-like. Love depends on the nature of the union. Jesus loves the soul, which is in the state of grace, infinitely. Nothing else is more pleasing to Him than the frequent reception of the Sacrament of the Altar. Besides Sacramental Communion, it is salutary to receive Jesus in the Host spiritually, as often as possible during the course of the day.<sup>41</sup>

Mother Angela's attitude demonstrates that no spiritual confusion was wrought as far as daily reception was concerned. She was enlightened by divine Wisdom to conform to the will of God by shaping her life and molding the life of her spiritual daughters according to the divine plan of God engendered in the Eucharistic text of St. John . . . unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. (John 6:54, 56)"

In one particular letter Mother Angela described a convent as being heaven on earth, for within the walls of the religious house Christ abides, living in the tabernacle. And again in another,

Visit our Lord as frequently as possible. With each visit awaken an act of faith, thanksgiving, love and sorrow, beg God fervently for charity and perseverance.

In every instance of sorrow, misfortune and humiliation, as well as in the pursuits of life, go before the Blessed Sacrament

<sup>39</sup> Katherine Burton, *The Great Mantle*, (New York: Longman Green Co. 1950) p. 180.

<sup>40</sup> *Siostry Felicjanki, Historia Zgromadzenia*, op. cit., p. 312.

<sup>41</sup> *Writings of Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska*, III, op. cit., p. 652.



and draw strength and comfort. And if you are unable to do so bodily, direct your mind and heart before the Eucharistic throne. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Sacrament also testifies to her deep spirit of faith. The testimony of Mother Joseph and other sisters provide us with evidence that Mother Angela performed her visits to the Blessed often kept a Eucharistic vigil late into the night, returning to her cell at three o'clock in the morning.

It is also known that after Mother resigned from her position as Superior General of the Congregation, she humbly asked permission to raise flowers and to personally decorate the altar of the newly-consecrated convent Church in Cracow. She also embroidered the chasubles and altar linens as is attested by the permissions granted by her superiors. . . . to make the things necessary for our chapel, the poor churches, or the oratories of nuns."<sup>43</sup>

Because Mother Angela loved our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament dearly, she had a deep respect for His Holiness the Pope and clergy, who have the power to administer the sacraments. Her esteem and reverence for the clergy were an outgrowth of the teachings of St. Francis as founded in his "Letters" and quoted previously.

Mother Angela's lenten resolutions of 1860 - 1864 illustrate this point. "Kneeling with the cincture about my neck during Mass, I offered this for the Holy Father's intention," . . . on Saturday to fast on bread and water for the intention of the Holy Father."<sup>44</sup> At the time of the "January Uprising" in 1864, when so many priests were sent to Siberia, Mother Angela told her sisters to thank God that there were some priests left to minister to their spiritual needs. She also introduced the custom of saying a special invocation to St. Joseph, daily after Compline, for the Holy Father and the Church.

Once again, these gathered notes justify Mother Angela's Eucharistic devotion as being essentially an expression of loving faith. It was a completely voluntary act of inner faith and devotion, a strictly personal relationship between God and herself; the folly of suffering embraced to requite God's justice by reparation, finally being crowned by a mystical union. The foundation for a eucharistic life as exemplified by the Seraphic Father was formulated in her life, her influence permeated to her spiritual daughters.

In spite of the fact that Mother Angela was deprived of a sacramental Communion due to frequent vomiting spells—can we doubt for a moment that October 10, 1899, the day of her memorable

<sup>42</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Annuncia, *Cnoty Slugi Bozej Marii Angeli Truszkowskiej*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

death, did not find her "Eucharistic piety" outlined in the words—"Give us this day our daily bread . . ." unrewarded? . . .

It would be in vain to question the incomprehensible knowledge and wisdom of His judgement on how He deigned to provide a soul with the gift of Bread, or, rather, in this case, by virtue of its promise, the "eternal happiness". "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day," (John 6:55.)

## CONCLUSION

Summarily, the Holy Eucharist, above all, is pre-eminently the sacrament of life; it directs the will towards a greater union with God, which is the ultimate end of every man. It is a fundamental principle in God's plan of restoration and increase of supernatural life. Christ, the Word made Man, the spiritual Head of humanity, through the efficacy of His life and death upon the Cross, through His divinely instituted Church and sacraments, has ordained, above all, the Eucharist in the economy of spiritual life to be supreme. We have observed that the Eucharist sustains supernatural life, develops it under the intimate guidance of the Holy Spirit, repairs the supernatural life and gives it joy. It explains the mystery of life enclosed in every sacrifice because the Cross of Christ is the expression of spiritual life. It is important to grasp the idea that the Eucharist is the potent factor of spiritual life. A relative understanding of its position is not sufficient. A definite and complete study of all its aspects is necessary to bring about a beautiful Eucharistic harmony. A proper relation and balance of each Eucharistic phase is of paramount importance to spiritual life. The depth of a Eucharistic spirituality will not be substituted with mere exterior acts. The beauty of the Mystical Body and the proper function of being a member will unfold itself magnificently. A hierarchy of values is established only when there is a proper knowledge and background.

Men of the world are concentrating on the advance of civilization, but unless there are souls in the world who come to know the art of interior life as hidden in the Eucharist, there will be not true civilization. Faith in created riches, inventions, political and foreign strategy, education and materialistic luxuries can never be a substitute for faith in the Eucharist. The Eucharist in the lives of all Christians will produce a spiritual evolution.

These conclusions become clearer as we recall how essential and meaningful the Eucharist became in the lives of the saints. In particular, as was the concern of this thesis, in the lives of the Knight of the Eucharist, St. Francis of Assisi and in the Servant of God, Mother



Mary Angela Truskowska. The gathered notes of Chapter II exemplify Francis of Assisi as one who found the motive of love since a virtuous life needs love as its motive. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of love. His encomiums written, simply, in an age which needed to be awakened to the eternal Gospel message, "Christ is our Life". Over the course of seven centuries, his writings and life had effected the triumph of the Eucharistic King, crucified, the Savior of the world. Franciscan families have flourished, united in force by adherence to the Poverello's secret of the apostolate, the proper balance of prayer and works of mercy. He made Christ visible to all because Christ was visible in Him. He looked only to the Beloved, not bothering about Himself, for Christ in the Eucharist is God: God is charity, and charity is the bond of perfection.

In Chapter IV, the Eucharistic life of Mother Angela also points to this fact. Mother Angela was a true spiritual daughter of St. Francis and assimilated his teachings, adding to them some personal shadings. The hand of Divine Providence, directed her from childhood toward the great mystery of love, the Eucharist. The motto of the Seraphic Father, "My God and my All", and the motto of Mother Angela, "All through the heart of Mary in honor of the most Blessed Sacrament" became schools of spirituality in which Christ in the Eucharist beckons continuous immolation as Christ Crucified on Calvary. The seraphic call can be summarized in the words of the Old Testament reiterated by Father Plassmann, "Embrace this 'vein of living water' (Jer. 17, 13) 'this chalice of benediction' into which the Savior has poured all the love that filled His Sacred Heart." In conclusion, we choose the words of St. Bonaventure to be the cornerstone of this thesis and upon which the Church and its people build their Eucharistic piety.

Just as God takes care of the bodies of all living things providing them with suitable foods, so too He takes care of the most noble Body of His Son, which is the Church, and Whose Head is Christ the Son of God. That Body cannot live and be nourished from any other source than from this Head, so that all the members, that is all just men, united and integrated together in Christ the Head, should be nourished by His Spirit and by His love through this Sacrament of unity and peace. And thus, just as no body can live without taking into itself food which agrees with it, so too there is no life for the rational soul except by eating and taking to itself this spiritual food which is what it needs. Hence Christ says: 'He who eats me shall live by me.'<sup>2</sup>

#### THE END

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Plassmann, "Our Monthly Conference", *The Cord*, I, No. 6 (April, 1951), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Merton, *op. cit.*, p. 149

## Life and Works of Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

(In May, 1962, at the clericate of Immaculate Conception Province, Mount Alvernia Seminary, a panel was held, commemorating Rev. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. (1901-1955). Both Immaculate Conception Province and Holy Name Province of Franciscans in New York State trace their foundation to Rev. Pamfilo Pierbatista da Magliano dei Marti, O.F.M. (1824-1876) pioneer missionary who opened St. Bonaventure College (now University) in Allegany, N. Y. in 1856 and in 1861 was first Custos of the new American Custody of the Immaculate Conception, from which, in 1901, the Province of the Holy Name was erected. Fr. Pamfilo was Italian by birth and education; Fr. Philotheus, German, illustrating the universal fraternity of Franciscans. Editor)

### *Life and Works of Father Philotheus*

*Father Romano Almagno, O.F.M.*

Were Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. with us this evening he would be very embarrassed.—For, Father Philotheus was not a "paragon of perfection." But rather "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." And so, this talk is written as a character-sketch, a portrait, a mosaic. Here, you will meet, Father Philotheus Boehner, the man, the scholar, the Franciscan-priest.

Father Philotheus was born on February 17, 1901 in Lichtenau (Weestphalia, Germany). Heinrich was a boy like all other boys. A strong boy, an active boy, a boy who loved the woods and fields more than the classroom. None of his classmates could have imagined him a priest and moreover a great scholar.

His vocation came about in a very strange manner. Heinrich had beaten a schoolmate so badly in a fight that he had to be taken from the school. As there were no other institutions available at the time, his father enrolled him in the nearby Franciscan Seraphic Seminary.

He passed his years in the minor Seminary as a good and religious boy but as a very poor student. And although he entered the novitiate with great sincerity, it was not until the last years of the clericate that he showed any signs of his great and many talents. A kind and under-



standing Professor opened to Frater Philotheus the door leading to the enticing chambers of scientific study and research. Now, he distinguished himself in all his studies (excepting Canon Law, which he despised and barely passed).

However, just before ordination Frater Philotheus was infected with tuberculosis. He became so ill that it was thought that he would soon die. But it was in the face of death that he began his life's work. He passed the hours translating into German (from French—the language that he had failed for three years) Etienne Gilson's, *Saint Bonaventure*. And, against all expectations, he regained his health, was ordained and the book was published.

With these notions, then, of the first years of Father Philotheus (and before considering him as a scholar), we turn to our character-sketch of Father Boehner the man. What kind of person was he? What did he look like? How did he act? What were his likes? His dislikes?

Father Philotheus "was a powerful man, . . . 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 belogged." In a word, he was German. "A typically '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 shabby and usually in need of a hair-cut, although his red-blond hair had long since been reduced to mere fringe curling about his ears and neck. The little black solidos that kept slipping off his head was a much a part of him as his patched and mended habit."

"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."

"His mortifications which were many indeed—were never of the kind that would chill the warmth of fellowship."

"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 . . . And he was one of the few men left in our day who could quote nice things from the Greek and Latin poets."

Like all foreigners in a new land, he made the usual mistakes. And

although he was a United States citizen, he always found our ways strange and difficult. The English language was a special source of difficulty for him. Although he had a rather large vocabulary, he never mastered the proper pronunciation.

"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."

Although, greatly misunderstood and criticized, Father Philotheus was a real gentleman in the finest sense of the word.

Having seen, Father Philotheus the man, we turn now to another aspect of his personality: *the scholar*.

Once Father Philotheus had translated and published Gilson's work on Saint Bonaventure, his Superiors could not fail to see (as also evidenced from his last years in the clericate) that the Province of the Holy Cross in Saxony had a real scholar in the person of young Father Philotheus. And so, he was sent to the Universities of Munich and Muenster, where from 1929-33 he studied to obtain a degree in Biology. And although very busy with his biological studies, he still found time to translate another of Gilson's books.

Studies over, he returned to his Province and was appointed as a Lector in Philosophy. He served in this capacity until 1939. Although during the summer he went to Paris, Rome and Quarachi for special studies, already Father Philotheus was beginning his life's work—Ockham studies.

In 1939, his good friend Professor Etienne Gilson, invited him to the Medieval Institute in Canada as a lecturer in paleography. (I say, good friend, for with the translations of Professor Gilson's books, the good Professor had begun not only to admire Father Philotheus on a scholarly level, but to be-friend him. So much did Professor Gilson think of Father Philotheus' talents and capabilities, that in 1937 he asked him to collaborate with him on a history of philosophy.

Let us hear from Father Philotheus himself, what his friendship with Gilson meant to him: "... I am indebted to him not only spiritually but materially also. I shall never cease considering him 'amicum et patrem nostrum', as I have said in the preface to the edition of the first question of Ockham's *Commentary on the Sentences*. He has awakened in me a great love of the Seraphic Doctor, and of the personal conversations, to undertake much-needed editions of Ockham. The translating of three of his books into German has recompensed me considerably more than the tedious work of translation could be expected to, by shaping my own intellectual development. I am



indebted to him especially for that very attitude of mind which has forced me to criticize his interpretation of Ockham . . . "But I know well that Professor Gilson is capable of a benevolent smile at the 'rigor Minorum qui nemini parant.' And he may rest assured that his *Philosophie de saint Bonaventure* is one of those rare and precious gifts of which the 'turba Fratrum Minorum' will always be grateful."

And thus, it was because of his friendship with Gilson that Father Philotheus found himself in Canada at the Medieval Institute. But with the outbreak of World War II, he realized that he could neither remain there nor return to Germany. It was then that Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., came to the rescue, by inviting him as Professor of Franciscan Philosophy at Saint Bonaventure's College—now University—in Western New York State.

As a "pilgrim and stranger" he came to the College whose destiny he was to help shape. His foundations of the Franciscan Institute, *The Cord*, the renovation of *Franciscan Studies* are today a lasting memento and tribute to his memory.

It was at Saint Bonaventure's that Father Philotheus took up his life's work—Ockham studies. With a group of scholarly and dedicated collaborators he started on the publication of the works of Ockham. These publications testify to his scholarship, dedication to duty, and love for our Franciscan heritage and tradition.

Father Philotheus also lectured in Epistemology and Psychology—and his lectures were greatly appreciated by those who were capable of following him. Among his first students were Thomas Merton and Robert Lax. And Thomas Merton devoted some pages in the *Seven Storey Mountain* to his beloved Father "Philo."

Fr. Philotheus' fame did not remain within the Order alone, for he was a much sought-after lecturer in the large American Universities. But his greatest joy came when the Jesuits asked him to lecture to their scholastics on medieval logic.

However, the man we have been speaking of was more than a scholar, more than a medievalist, more than a real gentleman with a charming and attractive personality—he was a priest and a Franciscan priest at that! All that has been written of Father Philotheus after his death has tried to stress this point, for his Franciscan-priesthood played an important role in his life.

Father Philotheus was an excellent retreat master and spiritual director. It was nothing for him to give up hours of his precious time so as to help and comfort someone in distress or need. He was never "too busy" to leave his desk for a confession.

Weekly he wrote on an average of 12 to 15 letters, all of a very

personal nature. For he was a man who knew human nature well, and his advice was greatly sought-after. And, I have learned, he worked very hard for the rehabilitation of fallen away-priests.

Yet, "ironically enough, it was largely because of his work in the care of souls that he was severely criticized." . . . where there was a question of helping another he never hesitated to expose himself to rash judgement 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. Father Philotheus never worked for his own satisfaction but solely for the love of God and the good of souls that clung to him. His charity never led to self-satisfaction; rather it led to self-sacrifice and not infrequently to bitter humiliations." This was Father Philotheus Boehner the Franciscan-priest.

"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. On the evening of May 21, (1955) 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 there were the unidentified mosses he had collected two days before, his microscope . . . "He was busy to the last hours of his life."

"Then, sometime after midnight, May 22, a heart-attack 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."

This, then, was the life of Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., a great scholar, a great man, a great Franciscan priest. He had many ambitions in life, but strangely enough, these were never for himself but for others and especially for his Order. What were these ambitions? That we might know and love Franciscanism better! That we might better appreciate Ockham. That we might, through knowledge and study and love,—serve the God who made us!

I think that Father Philotheus, on his part—at least, accomplished his task!

Since history must essentially be not only interpretation of facts and events, but their recording, a great amount of the information in this essay has been gathered from the following sources:



Boehner, Philotheus. *Collected Articles on Ockham*, edited by Fr. Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, N. Y., The Franciscan Institute, 1958.

"In Memoriam Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., 1901-1955" *Franciscan Studies*, Volume 15, No. 2, June 1955, pp. 101-105.

"Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M." *The Cord*, July 1955, pp. 206-215.

## Franciscan Thought According to Fr. Philotheus

Father Christopher Kurina, O.F.M.

(In the July *Cord*, we began publication of a panel held in May, 1962 at the Franciscan clericate, Mount Alvernia Seminary, Wappinger Falls, N. Y., commemorating the late Rev. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. (1901-1955). Editor)

Father Philotheus, in his many writings and lectures, always wrote and spoke with the intention of making us fully aware of the vastness and plenitude of our religious vocation, and especially our precious Franciscan vocation. He constantly put before his readers and listeners the poignant question: "Do I know what I am?", which question logically led to the questions: "Do I really know what I ought to be?" and "What is our vocation as Friars?" These questions seem simple and innocuous at first glance, but with careful introspection they could prove mighty embarrassing to each of us. Father Philotheus aptly remarked: "Every friar must enter the secret room of his conscience—in order to *know himself*." *Know himself*—two vitally important words capable of causing a spiritual revolution within us and words which Father Philotheus felt his duty to expose to the *modern friar* for thoughtful consideration. He sought to re-juvenate the true Franciscan ideals which he felt we were losing, and to discard the superficial-sentimental concepts of Franciscanism. He was interested not so much in a new approach to Franciscan spirituality, as much as he was in a re-examination, and re-study of the duties, obligations and sources of our very special life.

Being a professor of psychology and a capable director of souls, he was deeply interested in the psychological approach to this re-examination. This approach was thoroughly presented in his book *Examination of Conscience according to St. Bonaventure* which has proved to be the goad to many a serious-minded religious who has sifted and weighed its pointed thoughts, barbs, and queries and has caused within himself a spiritual *metanoia*.

Father Philotheus may be endearingly called our Franciscan

## FRANCISCAN THOUGHT ACCORDING TO FR. PHILOTHEUS

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Jeremias of recent times, who often in the face of difficulty, but with a good nature, simplicity of heart and unlimited kindness, and at the same time being a "true son of St. Francis", is exhorting us to undergo a "*Shubu u Shebu*" (that is) a "return to Franciscan ideals so that we may truly live" and reap the blessings of our blessed vocation. He constantly felt it his task to remind us that we "owe it to ourselves to understand the origin and genius of our vocations as Franciscans and to develop our interior life according to that distinctive kind of asceticism traditionally fostered in the Order." Otherwise, our spirituality, which would be culled from many sources, would prove to be sterile and fruitless. He felt that we should use our own water supply fed by the prolific streams of our contemporary spiritual writers although few, and the rich traditions of the great masters of centuries past. Humbly, and cognizant of his own faults and failings, he took up his pen and sought to dent the hard shell of each and every one of us and to crash "the little idols of our adored ego."

To enable us to come to a more appreciative understanding of our sublime vocation and to inculcate genuine Franciscan traits in the alert group which took up the challenge of his words he initiated, besides his voluminous output of philosophical and scientific writings, a series of monthly ascetical conferences in the *Cord* entitled "*Living Stones*." I think that they are a good gauge of his Franciscan thought, and although they are a series of only twelve conferences, they contain the spark from which proceeds a deeper knowledge and more ardent love of the Franciscan way of life. Without pretending to be an innovator or disciple of new doctrine he simply was striving to make us more aware of our Franciscan goals. To know the *what*, *why*, and *wherefore* of our Franciscan Rule and Life, is a matter of vital concern—we might even say, of spiritual life and death.

Without trying to be novel and without attempting to superimpose personal and subjective ideas on the status of modern Franciscan spirituality, Father Philotheus endeavored to apply the age-old ideals of Francis to our thirsty Franciscan generation of today. In doing so, he surveyed the relationship of: The Friar and his Order; The Friar and Others; and the Friar and himself.

In acting thus, he but forged the molten matter which we must each shape according to our personal needs. Dipping into his vast experience, he presented the obstacles and detours which we must overcome, and he instructed us with paternal Franciscan charity. Father Philotheus exhorts us to be youthful and radical like Francis in pursuit of our ideal, and to daily begin anew, for in the words of



Francis he reminds us: "Brothers, let us start today, for up to now we have made but little progress."

In this somewhat sketchy resume of his "Living Stones" I hope to have exposed and dismissed some of the thoughts and ideas of Father Philotheus which might serve as the "touch-stones" to a further study of this little known and hard working friar of our times. He realized fully that the Franciscan ideals and traditions must not become a stagnant pool but rather a rushing, bubbling stream which finds its way into our hearts and minds and which must re-vivify, re-juvenate, and re-orientate us to the One Whom Francis was convinced of and knew, and Whom we must be convinced of and know, to be Our Way, Our Truth, and Our Life. We are duty bound, as Francis did during the medieval period, to re-live Christ and re-present Him to our own period.

In his first conference of the "Living Stones", Father Philotheus asks: "Do I know what I am?" If seriously pondered, it should lead us to a complete 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.

(To be continued)

## ENDLESS TOMORROW

Lost in a forest of utter desolation,  
Wandering without hope of restoration,  
Torn by the low hanging branches of the known,  
Looking to the treetops; trusting the Unknown,  
Exhausted by the day's busy blinding light,  
Fearful of the lonely cold oncoming night,  
Stumbling amidst the rocks of desire,  
Detesting pettiness; caught in its mire,  
Falling almost senseless to the moist blue Grass,  
Clinging childlike till dreaded nightmares pass,  
Carressed now and then by the unseen Wind,  
Eyes close, lips murmur, one word, "Him."

*Sister Mary Angela, C.S.B*





# the CORD

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# A Commentary on the Psalms:

*Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.*

## PSALM 129

Three Psalms are appointed for use at Compline: Psalms 128, 129 and 130. We have already studied Psalm 128; in this conference we shall consider Psalm 129, and in the next and final conference we shall concentrate on Psalm 130.

Psalm 129 is familiarly referred to as the *De Profundis* because these are the words with which the Latin version of the Psalm begins. Most of us recognize it, too, as one of the Penitential Psalms. Actually it is located in the Psalter among the Pilgrim Songs although there is seemingly little about the poem which would make it an appropriate song for pilgrims to sing on their way up to Jerusalem. It deals so pointedly with sin and the hope of forgiveness that it is now used as a kind of act of contrition for the priest in preparation for Mass. Its concern with these very themes certainly explains, too, why "the Church has adopted it as a prayer on behalf of the souls, who in Purgatory, full of hope, wait for complete forgiveness from the merciful Redeemer."

Psalm 129 is so obviously suited for inclusion in the liturgy of the dead that one might be puzzled at its appearance in the Little Office

of the Blessed Virgin. The Psalms that make up this Office all can, in some way, through their typical or accommodated sense, be referred to the Blessed Virgin. But what does a reading of this Psalm reveal that applies to the Blessed Mother? More puzzling still is the inclusion of Psalm 129 in the office for Christmas Day, where it is the fourth Psalm in Second Vespers. So that brief though it be—it has only eight verses, falling nicely into four strophes of two each—Psalm 129 poses several questions even before you undertake a critical reading of it.

Such a reading of the poem should reveal, first of all, that it is not so patently imaginative as the poems considered in previous conferences, Psalms 123 and 128, for example. We do in the first verse of this poem find a figure familiar from our reading of Psalm 123, that of a torrent of raging waters that flood in on a man and threaten his very life. Such is the figure, exegetes agree, suggested by the opening words:

*Out of the depths I cry to you,*

*O Lord;*

*Lord, hear my voice.*

But commentators warn us not to identify the condition of the poet with that of Hamlet facing his



"sea of troubles". The context of the poem makes it evident beyond all doubt that the suffering and misery are truly spiritual, not mental, physical, or social. Then again, a little later on in the poem there is another image, that of "sentinels" who "wait for the dawn." Since these are the two most striking figures in the poem, it certainly cannot depend upon its imagery for its effect. If the poem makes any impact on a reader, it does so, I think, in virtue of the sincere, intense emotion surging through it.

The earliest indication of strong emotion is in the opening words:

*Out of the depths I cry to you,*

*O Lord.*

We miss it, I am afraid, *Why?* Because English words do not sufficiently suggest, as the original words do, that this is not a sudden outburst, no surprised and momentary cry, but a prolonged bewailing of the speaker's plight. Nor do the words of address that come immediately . . .

*Lord, hear my voice! . . .*

reveal as clearly as the original words do the attitude of this suppliant. The Hebrew word here translated *Lord* is the word *Adonai* and implies that a servant is addressing his master. This implied relationship between inferior and superior is certainly less formal, less august, less mysterious than the one implied by the use of *Jahweh*, which Hebrew word of

the original is also translated as *Lord* in the first part of the verse.

Another indication of the feeling behind the words is the movement of the poem. It grows. It develops the same sort of sequence that anybody's words fall into who is really thinking of what he says and is moved by what he thinks of. You can find two types of evidence for saying this. Firstly, within individual strophes you can detect the repetition of a word or an idea. As if the poet had thought of something or had made a statement and then said, "Yes, that's it! That's just what I mean!" And he repeats himself to drive home the point. For one example of this, just look at the way in which verse 2 picks up from the preceding verse and repeats the word *voice*:

*Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication.*

There are other examples to be seen in this kind of repetition, but here I want to point out the second kind of evidence I mentioned. It is discovered in the way in which one strophe will sow the seed, as it were, that flowers in the next. But before illustrating this device by a comparison of the second strophe with the first one, I should like to call your attention to a possible inference that we can draw from the first strophe.

"When Solomon had finished building the temple," we are told in the Second Book of Paralipo-

menon, "the Lord spoke to him in a vision seen by night. I have listened to thy prayer, he said; this place, none other, shall be the home of my sacrifices . . . Open my eyes, my ears attentive, shall be to every man's prayer that here prays to me; I have set this place apart and hallowed it, to be the shrine of my name for all time; never a day but my eyes shall be watching, my heart be attentive here" (II Paralipomenon 7: 11-16).

This resplendent and sacred Temple was ultimately demolished by the Babylonians, and the one that replaced it after the Exile, though built by love and sacrifice and heroic work, was a candle to a sunburst in comparison to it. But it *was* the Temple, the House of God, the one place in all the world where He would listen to a pilgrim's prayer and accept the offering of "a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled" (Psalm 50: 19). This Psalm, therefore, far from being out of place among the Pilgrim Songs is of a kind to express most perfectly the holiest sentiments of a pilgrim's heart. One whose journey is done, who stands now in the courtyard of the Temple, whose prayer rises, like the pungent smoke of the sacrifice prescribed by the Law, and whose words, in gentle and humble audacity, remind Jahweh of that long ago promise he had made to Solomon:

*Lord, hear my voice!*

*Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication.*

Now for an illustration that this poem develops logically by the expansion in a new strophe of a notion implicit in the preceding one. In the first two verses the pilgrim prays to the Lord God of Israel, the God before whom "no living man is just" (Psalm 142: 2). In so infinitely pure and holy a presence any honest man would surely see how certainly the words of Isaiah were true of him: "Sin of yours has come between you and your God; guilt of yours has estranged him that he denies you audience; the blood-stained hands, the itching fingers, lying lips and tongues that whisper of treachery" (Isaiah 59: 1-3). In such a moment the words that come to a man's lips will easily sound like those which the psalmist uses to begin his second strophe:

*If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand?*

But however terrifying the knowledge of his plight, he is not terrified. For it is this same God who has Himself said, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33: 11). And confidence grows, to inspire the words he utters next:

*But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered.*

Where we use *forgiveness* in our translation of the original Hebrew word—one of rather rare oc-



currence, too—Saint Jerome in his version used the Latin word *proptatio*, from which comes our familiar English word *proposition*. And *that* word is much more likely to remind us that the mystery of God's mercy is "not that we have loved God, but that he has first loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4: 10).

The psalmist well knows, too, as we can judge from what he says, that the mercy of God really makes it possible that he "may be revered". If God were a stern, exacting task master, and if man were nothing but an outcast and a slave, "all his faults observ'd, set in a note book, learn'd and conn'd by rote", to be condemned and punished, who in the world would escape damnation? Only because God forgives us are we able at all to worship Him with confidence and with love. As a matter of fact, what Jesus had in mind, as He looked across Magdalen kneeling before Him and said to Simon, "He loves little who has little forgiven," is what the poet has in mind, even though he might have phrased it, "He loves much who has much forgiven."

This truth and his own love inspire the words which open the third strophe:

*I trust in the Lord;  
my soul trusts in his word.*

The simplicity of the verse may

lead us to overlook the subtle insinuated description of the poet's confidence by reference first to "the Lord" and then to "his word". His confidence is grounded not only in the fact that "the Lord" is God and therefore infinitely trustworthy in himself but also in the fact that the Lord has interrupted history to speak "his word," which is absolutely credible and dependable. God did so speak when He gave the decalogue to Moses, particularly in the codicil He Himself appended to the first commandment: "I thy God, the Lord Almighty, am jealous in my love; be my enemy, and thy children, to the third and fourth generation, shall make amends; love me, keep my commandments, and mercy shall be thine a thousandfold" (Exodus 20: 5-6).

You cannot have missed noting that the poet has fallen back on his device of echoing in the latter part of a verse some word he had used in the first part of it. He had no need to use such a device to enrich the second strophe, I suspect, because the antithesis is so striking between what would happen were God to punish us justly and what does happen because he mercifully forgives us. In this third strophe the poet first plays in verse 5 upon the word *trust* and then, in verse 6, he goes on to do the same thing with the word *wait*:

*My soul waits for the Lord  
more than sentinels wait for the dawn.*

The repetition actually advances the thought of the poem. Trust is a settled state of soul, an habitual attitude of complete assurance that another will not fail you. Trust proves itself by patient, uncomplaining, undiscouraged waiting. So the "soul" that "waits for the Lord" is actually putting her trust into practice. And this waiting is no listless, lazy thing, as we learn from the striking figure which the poet associates with it:

*My soul waits for the Lord  
more than sentinels for the dawn.*

Pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem in the last cool hours of the night, just before the break of day, would be sure to notice the sentinels, silhouetted against the sky, manning the walls of the city, as they had since the troubled times of Nehemias, to protect it against the dangers that might threaten it. It would be easy for one such pilgrim to imagine how patiently impatient these watchmen were as they dutifully walked the ramparts of the sleeping city, waiting for the coming dawn, watching for the first rift of light to signal the beginning of day and the end of their lonely and anxious vigil.

Once a caravan had entered the city gates and wended its way through the deserted streets, it

would ultimately come to the Temple precincts. Here, too, sentinels are watching, but Levites, this time, waiting for the dawn. For the tired watchers on the city walls, dawn means the end of their labors. For the sentinels in the Temple courts, dawn is a holy moment, and they wait for it with eager piety because, when it comes, the daily sacrifice prescribed by the Law (Exodus 29: 38) can be offered up to usher in a new day with the blessing of God upon it.

The sentinels of Jerusalem, the sentinels of the Temple, his own eager anxiety as he took his turn as sentinel of the little band with which he had made the pilgrimage—obviously some such memory suggested to the poet the imagery he used in the third strophe. The image must have pleased him because he repeats it in the first line of the strophe which closes his poem:

*More than sentinels wait for the dawn.*

The strophe moves along by what is now fairly familiar to us, the device of word repetition:

*Let Israel wait for the Lord.*

With these words, now—and we have to notice this—something entirely new happens to the poem. It is no longer, as it was in the first two strophes, a private prayer uttered in extremity directly to God. It is no longer, what it was in the third strophe, a declaration of personal trust and confidence. No,



It is now an open exhortation, not to this man or to that one only but to all the people of God:

*Let Israel wait for the Lord.*

And this widening of concern is matched by a generous sharing with his brethren of his own grounds for solid faith and hope:

*For with the Lord is kindness  
and with him is plenteous  
redemption.*

This verse, could certainly round out and close the poem, as far as its theme is concerned. But the structure of the poem has been so much a matter of repetition that another verse is required—almost expected—to echo some word or idea in this seventh verse and so give perfect balance to the strophe. This is the duty of the final lines of the Psalm:

*And he will redeem Israel  
from all iniquities.*

There is more to this verse, I think, than meets the eye. It makes a perfect complement, although by way of contrast, to the first verse of the Psalm. The confident proclamation this seventh verse makes of universal redemption for all God's people—"he will redeem Israel from all their iniquities"—is a far cry from the exclusive concern with personal salvation expressed in the first verse—"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!" You can actually trace a growth in brother-

liness, in concern for others in a similar plight, in charity and love for one's fellow men, all of whom are plunged into depths from which only the Lord can deliver them. This is a realization which, when it occurs to a man, draws him closer to his brothers and prompts him—as it prompted this poet—to pray for them, too, and to console and encourage them.

It may just be possible that this growth of sympathy and charity deepens a man's grasp on the truths that he believes; that these truths enlarge and take on their full dimensions in the light and warmth of his growing love. Anyway, something like that takes place in this Psalm: the poet's concept of salvation expands as the poem moves along. In the beginning all he expects and asks for is a hearing:

*Let your ears be attentive  
to my voice in supplication.*  
But as he prays, he delicately suggests what shall be the outcome of that hearing:

*With you is forgiveness.*  
When his heart expands in charity, his grasp upon the mystery strengthens:

*For with the Lord is kindness  
and with him is plenteous re-  
demption.*

And by the time his prayer closes his words have become practically a promise and a prophecy:

*And he will redeem Israel  
from all their iniquities.*

I say this because of the resemblance between the concluding words of Psalm 129 and these, for example, of Jeremiah: "A time is coming, the Lord says, when I mean to ratify a new covenant with the people of Israel... I will implant my law in their innermost thoughts, engrave it in their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people... I will pardon their wrong-doing; I will not remember their sins any more" (Jeremiah 31: 31-34).

And when "the appointed time came, then God sent out his Son on a mission to us. He took birth

from a woman, took birth as a subject of the law, so as to ransom those who were subject to the law, and make us sons by adoption" (Galatians 4: 4-5): Thus were finally fulfilled the words of Psalm 129.

*And he will redeem Israel  
from all their iniquities.*

Which is, I suppose, precisely why the Psalm is chanted in the Office of the Mother of God and in the Office of the Nativity of her Divine Son, "Jesus Christ... propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (I John 2: 1-3).

## WITNESS TO CLARE: 20th CENTURY

Louder than jetplanes, soars her requiem  
Unended till the ultimate bird records  
On tapes of wind his final cadenced praise  
Of dying Clare who thanked for having lived.

When all the bombs have barked their bitterness  
Against creation, pocked earth's comeliness  
With pitted rage, nature may yet remember  
Clare found it ripe for singing, small to love.

Then go, and blame her hostile bed of straw,  
Refuse your absolution to her vigils,  
My prophylactic world! But still be wary:  
Her light may dim your calculating day.

And when you prove her penances archaic,  
Render her life forever obsolete,  
Clare may detour your space ships, rout your reason,  
And lay her mantle on your television.

Sister Mary Francis, P.C.C.



# Our Lady of the Red Mantle

*Titus Cranny, S.A.*

On the feast of the Divine Motherhood of Our Lady, October 11, 1962, the Second Vatican Council, the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Church, will begin in Rome. Pope John chose this feast of our Blessed Mother both to honor her whose privilege was defined at the Council of Ephesus in 431, and to beg her motherly intercession upon the Church and upon this great and important meeting.

The idea of Mary's role in the function of the Church prompted Fr. Paul James Francis, S.A. (1863-1940) and Mother Lurana Mary Francis, S.A. (1870-1935) to organize and foster a new title and devotion for the Mother of God and the Mother of all men. They saluted her as Our Lady of the Atonement.

They had founded their Franciscan Community, the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor, New York in 1898, and even as Episcopalians were intensely devoted to Mary. In October 1909 they entered the Catholic Church, together with their small group of followers. Their "spiritual homecoming" was the special blessing of God granted through the love and prayers of Our Blessed Lady.

Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana chose—or were inspired to choose—a special representation for Our Lady of the Atonement. She wears a red mantle over a blue tunic, the red signifying the Precious Blood of Our Redeemer. In her arms she holds the Christ Child who holds a cross in His right hand, the sacred emblem of His holy Passion.

Fr. Paul often said that Mary's garments were dyed red as she stood on Mount Calvary and when she held the body of her beloved Son in her arms after He was removed from the Cross. To one who asked the reason for the crimson garment, Fr. Paul replied: "The connection of the red mantle with the Atonement is very obvious. It was during the shedding of the Most Precious Blood of her Divine Son, the very blood He had derived from her own Immaculate Heart, that the Redemption of the world was wrought and an Atonement made for the sins of the whole world. Our Lady of the Atonement stood by the Cross when the Atoning Sacrifice of Calvary was enacted and it is most fitting that she should wear a red mantle when accepting our homage and devotion under the title of the Atonement."

Fr. Paul was also pleased to have the feast of Our Lady of the

Atonement, as approved by the Holy See, on July 9, during the month of the Most Precious Blood.

But the sufferings of Mary in union with those of her Son were not the only idea for Our Lady of the Atonement. Fr. Paul was fond of saying that Atonement also means At-one-ment, and that Mary is Our Lady of the At-one-ment or Unity, the principal patroness of bringing men to union with God.

Thus Mary constantly prays for the restoration of lapsed Catholics to the sacramental life of the Church; she prays for those who have never enjoyed full religious unity, as non-Catholics, though they bear some relationship to the Church because of baptism in another religious organization; she intercedes for all men even those who are separated from the Church in the widest possible way—such as those peoples in Africa, China, India and Japan. Mary is the Mother of the world, the spiritual Mother of all men, because her Son died for the salvation of all, and the Church exists for the salvation of all.

Graymoor's Founder was fully convinced that Mary would win back millions to the Church, even though the disasters of the Eastern schism and the Protestant revolt had torn millions of uncounted descendants away from the unity of the One Fold.

The feast of Our Lady of the Atonement, July 9, is an excellent opportunity to renew one's dedication to Mary for the cause of Christian Unity. Mary is the Mother of the Mystical Body, watching over each member. She is the Mother of the Good Shepherd whose consuming desire is that all her children "may be one" in the fold of her Son. She longs for unity, prays for it, and seeks it for all men. May we follow her holy example and leadership and pray for Unity on her feast day, July 9, and make this a daily prayer in our lives.

How long the General Council will last we do not know. What matters it will discuss we do not know now, but it will be, it seems, a supernatural preparation for the work of reunion that will develop in the future. Our Lady's prayers will be there, as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of Our Lord to prepare the way for the exaltation and renewal of the Church and ultimately for the return of those who are unhappily separated from the true and only Fold.

## OUR LADY OF THE ATONEMENT:

Intercede for us — "THAT ALL MAY BE ONE."



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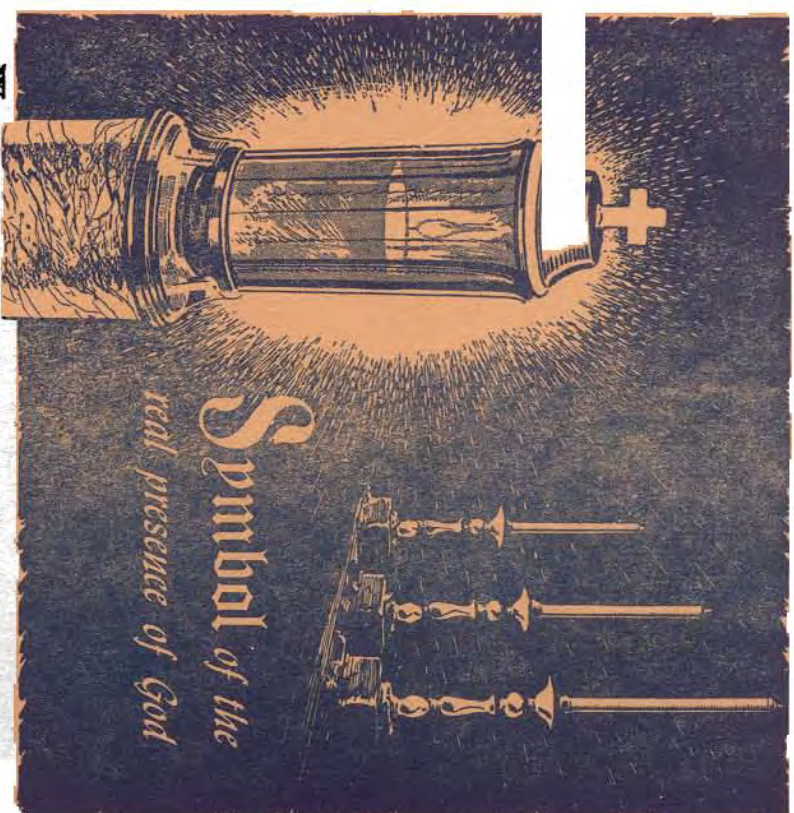
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# the CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

VOL. XII, NO. 9, SEPTEMBER, 1962



## MONTHLY CONFERENCE

# A Commentary on the Psalms:

Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.

(With this conference, concludes the series on the psalms of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin by Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M., of the Department of English, St. Bonaventure University.)

## Psalm 130

Psalm 130, according to one commentator, is "a pearl among the Psalms." And he goes on to add that it is a "touching little poem which, in quite simple terms, conveys something sublime, something that surpasses all thought and the wordiest of speeches: the peace that comes to the soul from God." Commentators, though, while they would most likely concur in this evaluation of the poem's beauty, are not so unanimously agreed when it comes to the question of its authorship. This may strike one as a bit strange in view of the title ascribing the Psalm to David and prefixed to it in so many of the ancient versions of the Psalter. This title is retained in the Confraternity Edition and is translated by two phrases: "A song of ascents. Of David." The point is that this title appears in many but not all the ancient versions, not being mentioned, for instance, in several old manuscripts of the Septuagint. The sentiments expressed in the Psalm, it must be admitted, are reminiscent of those which characterized the life of David and marked his dealings with God:

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THE RELIGIOUS TEACHER AND EDUCATOR OF THE TERTIARIES REGULAR



occupies in the Psalter, where it falls among the Pilgrim Songs, being the eleventh in that group of fifteen poems. For the most part, these Pilgrim Songs seem to have been composed in the fifth century before Christ, after Israel had returned from the Babylonian Captivity, whereas David composed the Psalms we know to be his way, back in the tenth century. And as far as the spirit and the sentiment of this Psalm are concerned, they are precisely those that could be expected of a pilgrim on his way up to the Holy City of God. Open confession, humility, resignation to God's designs, such would surely be the feelings that would surge up in the soul of any truly devout Israelite making such a pilgrimage.

Which brings us up against another problem. Psalm 130 is "often interpreted as a communal Psalm which declares that Israel has learned through suffering that there is no rest save in the Lord. The concluding verse would support the communal interpretation."

This is to claim that the Psalm voices the attitudes of all Israelites rather than that of any particular one of them. The poem was intended to be taken, that is, somewhat as we take "The Star Spangled Banner," which is now, and

was written to be, the expression of the thoughts and feelings of all patriotic Americans, not just of one single individual, its composer. According to this interpretation, you, fetch timber and restore my

the Psalm incorporates lessons that the nation had learned during and immediately after the years of exile in Babylon. In that strange and alien land the Jews were forever letting their thoughts slip back to Jerusalem and forever dreaming ahead to the day when God in his mercy would lead them home, when God in his justice would send his Anointed One, the new David, the Christ, to rule his triumphant people. After all, had not God himself raised such hopes and kept them living through his words to the prophet Ezekiel? "I mean to protect this flock of mine . . . They shall have a single shepherd to tend all of them now; who should tend them but my servant David? He shall be their shepherd, and I, the Lord, will be their God, now that he rules them on earth; such is my divine promise to them" (Ezekiel 34:22-24).

Imagine, therefore, the sheer delirium of joy and exultation that seized upon these holy people when the word went forth from Cyrus that they might go home to their fatherland! What sublime ambitions they must have entertained! And faced, at the end of their long and eager journey, with the desolation of Jerusalem when they had finally reached its ruins, how soon their hearts were lifted by the words which God spoke to them through his prophet Aggaeus: "Up to the hill-side with you, fetch timber and restore my

temple, if content me you will, the Lord says, if honor me you will! . . . A little while now, the Lord of hosts says, and I mean to set heaven and earth, sea and dry land rocking; stirred all the nations shall be, hither shall come the prize the whole world treasures, and I will fill this temple with the brightness of my presence

. . ." (Aggaeus 1:8; 2:7-8). Year after year passed but their hopes ebbed not with the passing of time. There were the encouraging words of God again, this time through the mouth of Zacharias: "Glad news for thee, widowed Sion; cry out for happiness, Jerusalem forlorn! See where thy king comes to greet thee, a trusty deliverer; see how lowly he rides, mounted on an ass, patient colt of patient dam . . . peace this king shall impose on the world, reigning from sea to sea, from Euphrates to the world's end" (Zacharias 9:9-10). And even when the faith of many grew cold and they fell away from God, still, in the hearts of the faithful, hope was kept alive by messages like the one that Malachias brought from God: "All at once the Lord will visit his temple; that Lord so longed for, welcome herald of a divine covenant. Ay, says the Lord of hosts, he is coming" (Malachias 3:1). And what commanded faith in these oracles was the strong echo in them of the great cry that Isaiah had uttered centuries earlier: "A cry, there, out in the

wilderness. Make way for the Lord's coming; a straight road for our God through the desert. Bridged every valley must be, every mountain and hill levelled; windings cut straight, and the rough paths paved; the Lord's glory is to be revealed for all mankind to witness; it is his own decree" (Isaiah 40:3-5).

But decades multiplied and lengthened into a century, and still no sign of the stupendous restoration of Jerusalem or of the triumphant coming of the Lord's Anointed. Some Jews gave way to despair and disbelief. Some began to wonder whether they had properly interpreted God's promises. Began to wonder, that is, whether the fulfillment of their expectations would ever come in just the way that they had dreamed. They came to see that God must be trusted to keep his promises in his own good time and in his own inscrutable ways. In humility and in resignation to his will, they learned to support and to strengthen each other in prayer: "O Israel, hope in the Lord, both now and forever."

Now there may be, actually, some echo of the history which I have sketched in these words of Psalm 130. But the two verses which precede this prayer, the verses which form the kernel of the poem, seem to express the personal dispositions of a devout individual rather than those of all the Israelites taken collectively.



So religiously-minded a person would most likely end his prayer with the kind of fervent exhortation to his brethren that we find in the last verse of the Psalm. Or that last verse can logically be regarded as a liturgical addition to make the Psalm more suitable for singing by all the members of a pilgrim group on their way to Jerusalem. The whole Psalm, though, no matter how you look at it, expresses a spirit—humility of heart and child-like resignation—which the Lord Anointed would certainly look for in those who lived in expectation of his coming. It was, after all, this same Anointed who would claim that “the man who does not accept the kingdom of God like a little child, will never enter into it” (Luke 18:17). It was he who would say, “Learn from me; I am gentle and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

I think that we can settle, therefore, for the opinion that this Psalm is the utterance of one whose sentiments perfectly match those of all other true Israelites, all of whom are fraternally remembered in his prayer. The prayer is, truly, a flawless and delicate pearl. You can see the symmetry of it, too. The first two verses have each four lines, grouped into two distichs. What connects the verses is their common concern with the condition of the poet's soul; what sets up a contrast between them is the

description of that condition negatively in the first verse, then positively in the second one. The third verse rounds out and complements the other two: they are addressed to the Lord and speak about the poet; the third is addressed to Israel and speaks about the Lord. This final verse, too, ends on a note of timelessness, of eternity, that nicely balances the concentration of the first verses on things as they are here and now.

Examining each of these verses separately, you discover that it is deceptively simple. Take the first distich of the opening verse:

*O Lord, my heart is not proud,  
nor are my eyes haughty.*

It is easy to miss the accuracy and the economy with which the poet deals with all pride, that which is interior and hidden—

*my heart is not proud —  
as well as that which shows itself  
in external appearances—  
nor are my eyes haughty.*

And how rightly has he chosen the one kind to put before the other! He knows what we all know and what Christ expresses so succinctly: It is from within, from the hearts of men, that their wicked designs come, their sins of adultery, fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, malice, deceit, lasciviousness, envy, blasphemy, pride, and folly. All these evils come from within, and it is these which make a man unclean” (Mark 7:21-2). That is a fine stroke, too, his choice of “haughty eyes” to symbolize dis-

dain and arrogance. Can you help thinking of the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the Temple to pray? The Pharisee stands there, boldly erect in his self-righteousness, his head high, his eyes looking boldly up at the God whom his prayer insults, while the Publican, standing afar off, “would not even lift up his eyes to heaven” (Luke 18:13).

The next distich, you can see, develops the notion of pride presented in the first one. Pride can not be concealed in the heart; it betrays its presence, not only in the face and in the carriage of a man, but in his conduct as well. That is exactly the thought behind this couplet:

*I busy not myself with great things,  
nor with things too sublime for me.*

The words say what they mean: the poet is not implicated in great undertakings, large-scale projects; he is not intent on or interested in achieving sublime results. But there is more behind the words, I think, than this bare meaning. The poet seems to have grasped what the author of Ecclesiasticus puts thus: “Sovereignty belongs to God and no other; they honor him most who most keep humility. Seek not to know what is far above thee; search not beyond thy range; let thy mind ever dwell on the duty God has given thee to do” (Ecclesiasticus 3:21-22). That duty, of course, is the main concern of the poet. It is the duty that God him-

self has defined: “Thou art to love the Lord thy God and follow the path he has chosen for thee, to hold fast by all his commandments and observances and decrees, if thou wouldst live and thrive and prosper through him in the land that is to be thy home” (Deuteronomy 30:16). It is a duty that God himself has described: “It is not above thy reach, it is not beyond thy compass, this duty which I am now enjoining upon thee. It is not a secret laid up in heaven . . . it is not an art, practiced far overseas . . . No, this message of mine is close to thy side; it rises to thy lips, it is printed on thy memory; thou hast only to fulfill it” (Deuteronomy 30:11, 14). When we catch these implications of the first verse, we can more readily see how logically flows from it the attitude presented in the second verse.

Before we pass to a consideration of the second verse, let me once more remind you that all the statements in the first one are negations. The poet denies that he is proud, that he looks proud, or that he acts proudly. His record, however, seems not always to have been so fair! That we are sure of, once we begin the positive statements which constitute the second verse. Take the first distich of it for proof:

*Nay rather, I have stilled and  
quieted*

*my soul like a weaned child.  
How could this speaker have “stilled.*



ed and quieted" his soul unless it had been at one time restless and clamorous? Is not that too, the whole point of the comparison of his soul to the child that has been weaned? In whom quiet contentment has replaced fretful craving for the breast? So that, in reality, the second verse is a kind of indirect confession of the way things used to be before the coming of the new attitude described in the first verse.

There are words in this particular distich which demand a little extra attention. "Stilled" is our translation of a word meaning "levelled." And that word is used to describe the farmer's smoothing out of his land to prepare it for the sowing of the seed. This is a very slight detail, admittedly, but we cannot overlook it because it gives a rich insight into the poet's conduct. In stilling his soul he has prepared it as soil is prepared to receive the seed which will grow and bear fruit. Again you think of a parable, this time the one about the sower who went to sow his seed, and some grains "fell where the soil was good, and when these grew up they yielded a hundredfold" (Luke 8:8). And, as Jesus said, "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

The notion that the poet has prepared his soul to receive the message of God may strike you as a rather far-fetched reading of these lines. I think that suggestions of this interpretation are certainly

found in the use of the word that we have translated here as "stilled," and I think that this interpretation is reinforced by the use of another word which is translated here as "quieted." Literally, the speaker has tilled his soul so that silence reigns there. What better reason could this good man have for so acting than a wish to fulfill the injunction of Jeremiah: "If deliverance thou wouldst have from the Lord, in silence await it" (Lamentations 3:26)? This is harder wisdom to come by, let me remind you, harder wisdom to accept than it may seem to be. We tend so naturally to be up and doing, hustling and bustling to work out our own destinies, pretty sure that our wishes must be God's will. The poet has left this kind of pride all behind him. He has attained the condition for which another poet, centuries later, prayed:

*Teach us to cure and not to care*

*Teach us to sit still*

*Even among these rocks,*

*Our peace in His will.*

The imagery he uses to convey his attitude is delicate and touching, and it is used to create a picture in the second distich of this verse:

*Like a weaned child on its mother's lap*

*(so is my soul within me.)*

The latter part of the couplet, you notice, is enclosed in a kind of brackets to indicate that there is some doubt that this translation represents the exact sense of the

original, which is rather hard to decipher here. Certainly this reading fits and follows logically what has been unfolding in the poem. Having turned from the pursuit of "great things" and "things too sublime" for him, the poet is now at peace. His soul is quiet and tranquil, like the placid child on the lap of its mother. And as the child nestles lovingly in its mother's arms, so the poet commits himself with a sense of great security to the love and mercy of the Lord. Be sure to observe, though, that it is neither the littleness of the child nor its innocent helplessness that is emphasized. The likeness between the poet and the child lies in the contentment of both despite the loss of what once seemed indispensable. Both are at peace in the arms of one they have learned to love and to trust.

Now the last verse. This, as has been noted, may well have been part of the original poem, or it may have been added later, by the poet himself or by somebody else, to give the Psalm a conclusion that would fit it for liturgical use or for community singing. Not that the verse is a mere tacked-on conclusion; it is truly a climax because it exhorts Israel—all Israelites—to take the one final step which makes conversion complete. Here is that advice:

*O Israel, hope in the Lord,*

*both now and forever.*

To be humble and docile, to be quiet and peaceful, then, is not

enough. Israelites and Israel in general must do more; they must wait in hope and confidence. For what? For the fulfillment of God's words or promise: the restoration of Jerusalem, the world-wide extension of her dominion, the coming of her king, and his victorious enthronement as the Lord of all mankind. But there can be no more proud and haughty dreams of a purely national and temporal fulfillment of these promises. There can be no more unquiet anxiety to bring these promises about in terms of human might and power, human victories, material splendor and magnificence. Whatever comes will not come that way. Israel has learned that lesson from its history. But there can be no discouragement, no despair, no disbelief. On the contrary:

*O Israel, hope in the Lord,*

*both now and forever.*

He who is merciful enough to have made such sublime promises is faithful enough to fulfill the promises he has made. All he asks is humble trust and child-like confidence—such as the poet himself possesses. That is the attitude that will receive its reward. The poet, perhaps, did not know how perfectly because he died before the Lord lived up to his word. Had he been able to look ahead—and was he actually given such a vision?—he would certainly have been consoled and enraptured by the vision he would have seen. A Jewish maiden who was, too, a mother, with her



child cradled lovingly in her arms, advancing slowly through the Temple precincts to take her stand before an ancient figure, an old man, an "upright man of careful observance who waited patiently for comfort to be brought to Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him: and by the Holy Spirit it had been revealed to him that he was not to see death, until he had seen the Christ whom the Lord had anointed" (Luke 2:25-26). An old man, who took the child into his arms, gazed upon his face, raised his eyes to heaven, and prayed: "Now Lord you may dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word: For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have set before all nations, As a light of revelation for the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

## Jesus Christ; High Priest of Creation

Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M.

If the universe is a temple for the glory of God, Christ is its Cornerstone. If rational creatures are the Kingdom of God, Christ is the King of that Kingdom. If these creatures are the chorons which sing the praises of God, then Christ is the *leitourgos*—the High Priest—of that chorus.<sup>1</sup>

In giving this description of the world, Alexis Benigar, O.F.M., has not produced mere poetry or phantasy; nor has he simply expressed a striking analogy. He has stated the literal truth. In calling the universe God's temple, Benigar has summed up the true purpose of creation—the glory of God; and in calling Christ the High Priest of that temple, he has aptly characterized Christ's true function of universal mediator-ship.

These truths are not new, of course; but they are important enough, in our opinion, to warrant the continued attention of Catholic theologians. The present article is our attempt to shed some (perhaps new) light upon the subject by considering Christ in two complementary aspects: first, as the proximate unifying principle of theology (God as God is the ultimate one); and second, as the High Priest of Creation, who, in the concrete world of reality, realizes the same unification through the Liturgy which He achieves in theology by His natural preeminence in the hierarchy of being.

<sup>1</sup> Alexis Benigar, O.F.M., *Compendium Theologiae Spiritualis* (Rome, 1959), 73.

## JESUS CHRIST; HIGH PRIEST OF CREATION

### I. THEOLOGY

In his great work, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, Emile Mersch, S.J., has this to say:

Christ is the first universal principle in Christianity: the first principle of grace, of satisfaction and merit, and of the revelation of mysteries. How could He be other than the first principle of the understanding of the mysteries? Supernatural truths have come to mankind through Him or in view of Him. For this very reason, the understanding of these truths . . . must come from Him.<sup>2</sup>

This passage seems to comprise the basic premise of Father Mersch's entire work, which has for its avowed purpose the more perfect "Christocentrizing" of Thomistic theology.

Seven hundred years ago, however, St. Bonaventure had understood this same truth and felt this same need to put Christ in the center of theology. His duties as Minister General of the Franciscan Order did not permit him to formulate a synthesis of his own theology on the scale of St. Thomas' *Summa*, but his *Breviloquium*, a miniature synthesis in its own right, clearly shows the central position occupied by Christ; three parts precede and three follow the one which treats of the Incarnation. Of much greater importance, moreover, is Bonaventure's explicit statement in the *Hexameron* that Christ is the only foundation upon which to build a theology.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, when the Seraphic Doctor tells us, only a few paragraphs later, that his whole system of thought can be summed up as "creation, exemplarism, and consummation,"<sup>4</sup> we must take the two passages together and understand the true Bonaventuran theology as turning upon these three key concepts: the creation of the world in and through Christ; the modeling of all the rest of creation upon Christ, and the return of all things to God through Christ. The Whole Christ, then, occupies a central position in the theology of St. Bonaventure.

As the work of Mersch shows, this outlook is not restricted to St. Bonaventure—or even to what some have termed the "Franciscan School." It must characterize any truly Christian theology. Nevertheless, the division made by St. Bonaventure is admirably suited to explain Christ's place in theology, and so we shall use it here.

### A. Creation

Looking at God "before" anything else existed, in the indescribable bliss of eternity, we see that He freely willed to create other beings

<sup>2</sup> Emile Mersch, S.J., *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (tr. C. Vollert, S.J.: St. Louis, 1951), 74.

<sup>3</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Hexameron*, I, 10 (ed. Quarachi, V, 331).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 17 (p. 332).



outside Himself. Two questions immediately arise with regard to this creative act: How? and Why?

For St. Bonaventure, the first question is answered satisfactorily only if we include some mention of the Incarnate Word. For according to the Seraphic Doctor, the universe was created not simply in the Word (as for St. Thomas), but in and through *Christ*—because everything was made in view of the Incarnation of the Word—everything has its purpose and reason for being in the Incarnate Word, Who is predestined to lead it all back to God.<sup>5</sup>

The second question, the “why” of creation, has always been answered by Catholic teaching in the doctrine that God willed to create primarily and ultimately for His own glory.<sup>6</sup> Everything God has created is meant to be a manifestation of His infinite Goodness and to redound to His extrinsic glory.

And so God produced out of nothing an extensive hierarchy of created beings, ranging from the most common mineral to the most beautiful flower, on up through the whole range of the animal kingdom, to man, and still further, up to the highest of the seraphim—all, in the final analysis, for His own glory.

But how does this hierarchy give God glory? What is it that unites all these creatures and transforms their imperfect and sometimes discordant praise into a completely perfect, single and unique act of adoration which is worthy of God Himself? It is Jesus Christ, the God-Man. Without Him the whole hierarchy of created beings would remain essentially incomplete, disunited, meaningless; but once He assumes His rightful place as its Head, the entire divine plan of creation stands out in all its beauty and harmony. In Christ, and in Christ alone, God is certain of receiving constant, perfect glory. As Duns Scotus puts it, “First of all, God loves Himself; then He loves Himself in others (i.e., He decides to create) . . . and then He wills to be loved by Him who can love Him most perfectly.”<sup>7</sup> Efreim Bettoni, O.F.M., has explained this same truth in a different way: “With the Incarnation God has found the means to reach His creatures and to bind them to Himself, endowing them with that infinity of value which He could not give them with the simple creative act.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the entire hierarchy of created being must be united in Christ and subjected to Him—“Thou has put them all under His dominion” (Ps. 8:7)—offered by Him and in Him to God before it can achieve its destiny. As St. Paul

told the Corinthians, “It is all for you, and you for Christ, and Christ for God.”<sup>9</sup>

Everything else has a reason for existing, then, only because Christ exists. Mary is predestined from all eternity to be His Mother. Angels and men are brought into being to share in the Sonship of Christ and glorify God as members of the Mystical Christ. And material creation is intended to help man in his all-important function of adoring God.

### B. Exemplarism

The exemplarism of St. Bonaventure can be epitomized in the statement that the Incarnate Word is the Model for all the rest of creation. We find united within His unique Person not only the two principal natures, divine and human, but even within His human nature we find virtually present the nature of every other creature.

In the order of grace, first of all, St. Paul tells us that all rational creatures were predestined in the image and likeness of Christ to be adopted sons of God: “All those who from the first were known to Him, He has destined from the first to be moulded into the image of His Son, who is thus to become the eldest-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). That the angels are included is shown, e.g., by St. John when he cites the angelic hymn of praise to Christ, in which the angels call the martyrs their brothers, doubtless because both share in the common life of Christ.<sup>10</sup> It is implied by St. Thomas too, when he says, “Of His influence not only men but even angels partake,”<sup>11</sup> and by St. Jerome in the following passage: “His fullness, which perfects all in all, can be understood to be the gathering (Ecclesia) not only of men, but also of the angels and all the virtues and rational creatures.”<sup>12</sup>

In the order of nature also, Christ is the Model of all other creatures. We read in St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, for example, that all things were created in Him and through Him and unto Him, and that in Him all subsist. Commenting on this passage (Col. 1:17), A. Biskupek, S.V.D., writes that

the words of the Apostle give us a glimpse into the divine purpose of creation. Material creation was to furnish the material for the human body of the God-Man, and the whole spiritual creation, angels and human souls, were to reach the

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 3:23: this verse shows clearly the order of final causality which God has built into His creation.

<sup>10</sup> Apoc. 12:10: see John F. Bonnetoy, O.F.M., *La primauté du Christ selon l'Écriture et la Tradition* (Rome, 1959), 310ff.

<sup>11</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, III, 8, 4.

<sup>12</sup> St. Jerome, *Comm. in Eph.*, I, c. 22 (PL 26, 464).

<sup>5</sup> Leo Venetey, O.F.M. Conv., *Itinerario dell'anima francescana* (Rome, 1943), 55f.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Conc. Vat.*, Sess. III, *de fide*, c. 1 (D.B. 1783).

<sup>7</sup> Duns Scotus, *Rep. Par.*, III, 7, 4 (ed. Balic, *Elementia*, p. 14).

<sup>8</sup> Efreim Bettoni, O.F.M., *Nothing for Your Journey* (tr. B. Malina, O.F.M.; Chicago, 1959), 91.



highest perfection in the human soul of the Incarnate Word of God, "the firstborn of every creature."<sup>13</sup>

It would be difficult indeed to express more graphically the important truth that the human nature of Christ is the model of all other natures. It cannot be otherwise, for as St. Thomas explains, the noblest is always the model of whatever is less noble. Christ, then, unites in Himself in a unique way the entire hierarchy of creatures and uncreated being.

### C. Consummation

Thus the Incarnate Word is in a unique position wherein He can complete the cycle of creation and lead all creatures back to their Source: the Trine Godhead. This final stage is what St. Bonaventure referred to as the "consummation." He uses the Latin word *reduci* to portray vividly the "leading back to God" by which Christ brings all creation to its consummation.<sup>14</sup> As Leo Venthey, O.F.M. Conv., writes, the Seraphic Doctor considered the whole universe as a dynamic process which begins with creation in the Incarnate Word and proceeds through the progressive development of beings from the inanimate to the living, from the animal to the human, and from the human, through man's elevation, together with the angels, in the Mystical Body of Christ, back to God, "for His own greater praise and glory."<sup>15</sup>

In all this, St. Bonaventure merely repeats and develops the Pauline teaching found in the Letter to the Ephesians: "It was His loving design, centered in Christ, to give history its fulfillment by resuming everything in Him, all that is in heaven, all that is on earth, summed up in Him" (Eph. 1:10).

In its very essence, then, in its whole purpose and reason for being, the entire ensemble of God's works *ad extra* can be said to be "liturgical." It was produced out of nothing for the ultimate purpose of giving God glory, and so of acting like one immense, substantial "prayer," and with Jesus Christ as its Head, it is constantly engaged in fulfilling this law of its very being. This is certainly the thought Decodet de Basy, O.F.M., had in mind when he wrote that "Christ is the Head of the great body of creation, and all creation is harmonious, the splendid organism of religion which glorifies God."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A. Biskupek, S.V.D., *Our Lady's Litany* (Milwaukee, 1954), 75.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. note 4, above.

<sup>15</sup> Venthey, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Decodet de Basy, O.F.M., *Le Sacre-Coeur selon le Bx. Jean Duns Scot* (Paris, 1945), 57f.

(To be continued)

## The Doctrine of the Image and Similitude In Saint Bonaventure

Father Alvin Black, O.F.M.

Saint Bonaventure was indeed a true metaphysician who took from the revealed truth of Theology what he needed to construct an authentic picture of the whole of reality. For to him the world was a book that reflected the Most Blessed Trinity. This reflection exists in three degrees: namely, the vestige, the image and the similitude. All of creation is a vestige of the Trinity because every creature is an effect of the power, the wisdom and the love of the Trinity. The image of the Trinity is limited to rational creatures and angels. Those who have the Divine Life of sanctifying grace in their souls are properly called similitudes of the Trinity. We limit our investigation to a treatment of man as an image and similitude of the Most Blessed Trinity. It stands to reason that man is a vestige of the creative Trinity, the formal, the efficient and final cause of everything created.<sup>1</sup>

Saint Bonaventure taught that the human soul was the image of God and he meant by this statement that God is actually in the soul as an object naturally known and loved. The soul naturally embraces and carries God in the depths of its memory. This presence of God in the soul is a presence over and above the natural presence of God in creation. It is a presence that is also distinct from the Divine Presence of God in the soul of the justified. In order to understand Saint Bonaventure's thought more precisely we must first of all investigate the teachings of Saint Augustine. Saint Bonaventure echoes the Doctor of Grace who taught that, by the very fact that the soul is an image of God, it is capable of Him and can be partaker of Him. This famous statement of Saint Augustine: *The soul by the very fact that it is God's image is capable of Him and can be partaker of Him; which so great a good is only made possible by its being His image*,<sup>2</sup> is the key to the real meaning of Saint Bonaventure's interpretation of the soul as an image of God. In order to appreciate just exactly what Saint Augustine meant, we must investigate the meaning of two words: capable (*capax*) and partaker (*particeps*).

The Latin word, *capax*, can be taken in both an active and passive sense. Taken actively, *capax* means that something is capable of some

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bonav. *Brev.*, p. 2 c. 12 (V 230a).

<sup>2</sup> Bonav., *Sent* 1 d. 3 p. 2 dub. 1 (193a) also, August., *De Trinit.* XIV c. 8 n. 11 (PL 42, 1044).



action. In the passive sense, *capax* means that something is capable of some substance.<sup>3</sup> To discover how the word *capax* is to be used in a given text, one must look to the object of the text.

The literal translation of the word *particeps* means capable of a part (*capax plus pars*). *Pars* gives the specific difference and even though some analogy exists between the two words, because of the specific difference, in practice they cannot be used synonymously.

The word *capax*, in the famous statement of Saint Augustine is to be taken in a passive sense. Hence *capax* means that something is capable of some substance. That substance, in the statement of Saint Augustine, is God Himself, naturally present in the soul as an object known and loved.

In the first book of the *Confessions* the text shows clearly that Saint Augustine held to the passive meaning of the word *capax*. For him *capax Dei* is equivalent to God-bearer. It means, therefore, a capacity for substance and such a capacity is not in potency but in act. The subject of this capacity is the memory whose function it is to bear a spiritual substance.<sup>4</sup>

God, therefore, is in the soul as the light of reason and as the object of cognition and love. God is in the soul because of the nature of the memory which according to Saint Augustine is the faculty by which the soul is open to the infinite. For him the memory is the innermost part of the soul where the presence of the illuminating God, the Divine Light, is a secret fount of the innate ideas of spiritual things.<sup>5</sup> For Saint Augustine, then, the soul is an image of the Most Blessed Trinity insofar as it represents within itself the intrinsic processions of knowledge and love. This is so because the soul bears within the depths of its memory, God Himself. The memory reflects the Father who does not turn outside of Himself for a knowledge of His substance. The Son, the expression of the Father, is reflected in the faculty of the intellect. The will, the faculty of love, reflects the Holy Spirit, who joins together in love the Father and the Son.

Saint Bonaventure follows closely in the footsteps of Saint Augustine. For according to his teachings, the soul, by the very fact that it is an image of God is capable of Him and can be partaker of Him.<sup>6</sup> We will treat in the first place of the soul as an image of God.

The soul is *capax Dei*, according to Saint Bonaventure, in the

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, editus auctoritate et consilio academiarum quingue germanicorum, Vol. III, Lipsiae, 1957, coll. 300-304.

<sup>4</sup> August., *Confess.* lc 1-3 (PL 32 66id.)

<sup>5</sup> August., *Confess.* xcc 7-24 (PL 784-94) Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan.* lc 24-27 (ed. Scutrz. XII, 479-485).

<sup>6</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* I d. 3 p. 1a. un. q. 1 fund. 1 (168b).

passive meaning of the word, *capax*. God is actually in the soul, therefore, as an object known and loved. He is to be found in the depths of the memory, which faculty is not limited just to the past and present but also looks to the future by anticipation. The faculty of the memory contains also single notions, the principles of higher complexes and has within itself the principles of the sciences.<sup>7</sup> The memory, therefore, grasps not only sensible images but also truths and objects not informed from without, first principles which the soul recognizes as innate and familiar. Saint Bonaventure holds that within the soul there is a *Changeless Light* which enables the soul to recall changeless truth. This *Changeless Light* is the Eternal Exemplar and it is by means of this that we judge all things including our soul and its reflections. This Eternal Exemplar is necessary for the soul to arrive at immutable and eternal truth. In other words, it enables us to make a proper judgment of reality. Hence to know something by means of the Eternal Exemplar is to know it not only as it is but also as it ought to be. The Eternal Exemplar, therefore, is the formal cause of our intellectual act. How does this awareness of the Eternal Exemplar take place in us? God Himself is present in our soul through an idea of Himself placed in the depths of our soul. This presence of God in the depths of our memory makes us capable of knowing and loving Him and of knowing all other things.

This presence of God within us, therefore, helps us to arrive at the concepts of unity, truth and goodness. It also enables us to arrive at the theoretical and practical first principles. Saint Bonaventure is not to be accused of innatism for he does hold to experience as a true and proper source of knowledge of sensible things. But in regard to our knowledge of the soul, our idea of God, and the first principles, experience is but the occasion by which our mind passes from an implicit to an explicit knowledge.

The soul therefore is turned completely inward in the knowledge and love it has for itself and God. Hence the soul of man resembles the Trinity in so far as the order and distinction of its faculties resembles the order and distinction which exists in the Divine Persons and is intrinsic to the Divine Nature.<sup>8</sup>

Saint Bonaventure adds another reason to support his view that the soul is an image of God. For it seemed to him that the ultimate reason why the soul is *capax Dei* lies in the fact that all things are related to God and their ultimate end. For God, when He created, willed that all things give Him glory. The only creature on earth

<sup>7</sup> Bonav., *Itin.* III 2, c.v.

<sup>8</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* II d. 16a q. 1 in corp. (II 395a).



that could possibly give Him glory is a rational creature. Irrational creatures are not related to God as their immediate end. They are, however, related to God mediately through the rational soul. Hence the soul is as it were a mediator between God and the rest of His creation and it is through the soul that all of creation is united with the Creator.<sup>9</sup> The root of this union is love. Man therefore holds a unique place in creation. According to Saint Bonaventure, he is the king of creation—all things below him give glory to their creator through him for he alone is capable of praising God due to his spiritual nature.

We can see, therefore, the richness of Saint Bonaventure's thought. For he enriched the teachings of Saint Augustine on the soul as *capax Dei* and at the same time the perfect union existing between God and the soul. To understand Saint Bonaventure's teaching on the soul as a similitude of the Trinity we must again return to Saint Augustine.

Saint Augustine held that the soul is an image of God because it is *capax Dei* i.e. the soul actually contains Him in the depths of the memory. Saint Augustine held further that the soul can be a partaker of Him. We have seen the connection between *capax* and *particeps*. When Saint Augustine used the word *particeps*, he referred to the soul ornate with sanctifying grace and the theological virtues. The participation of God crowns and perfects the capacity for God, conferring perfection and beauty on the image of God.<sup>10</sup>

By sanctifying grace the infinite abyss between God and man is bridged. For grace makes a rational creature a similitude of the Trinity. Man becomes God-like. Even though the three Divine Persons come in a special way to the soul of the justified, man does not become God. He is but a partaker of Him. He does not possess God as He is in Himself. That is why Saint Augustine uses the word *particeps* to express this union between the soul and the Trinity. This word expresses clearly the difference and the likeness between the Trinity and the soul. The soul is similar to the Divine Persons inasmuch as the soul contains the Divine Nature communicated to it. At the same time it differs from the Divine Persons inasmuch as the Divine Persons possess the Divine Nature wholly.<sup>11</sup>

We can see, therefore, why Saint Augustine uses the word *particeps* to express the relationship of the soul to God as a similitude. Yet there is a relationship that exists between the image and the similitude.

The image, as we have seen, is actually present to the soul without the similitude. So that if the soul did not contain the life of grace, God

<sup>9</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* II d. 16a. 1 q. in corp. (II 394b-395a).

<sup>10</sup> August., *De praesentia Dei liber seu Epist.* 187 (PL 33, 832-848).

<sup>11</sup> August., *Contra Maximinum* II c. 9 n. 2 (PL 42, 763-64).

would still be actually contained in the soul in a natural way. Yet the soul needs the similitude because without it the image lacks the Divine Beauty. It follows therefore that the soul must contain a potency for the similitude. The famous sentence of Saint Augustine brings this out in bold relief: "By the very fact that the soul is His image it is capable of God and can be His partaker."<sup>12</sup>

Hence the image and the similitude are united causally to one another, but this order of causality is a diverse order. The image is an effective dispositive cause of the similitude since the soul must elicit deliberate acts of knowledge and love in order that it might freely accept the supernatural free gift of grace. The similitude on the other hand is the final immediate cause of the image. Hence we can see that Saint Augustine never confused the two orders but clearly distinguished between the natural and the supernatural.

Hence we see that there is a more intimate union between the soul and the Trinity when the soul is a similitude of the Trinity. This doctrine of Saint Augustine influenced to a great extent the teachings of the Seraphic Doctor.

Saint Bonaventure faithfully expressed the doctrine of Saint Augustine on the similitude. By sanctifying grace the soul becomes a similitude of the Trinity. It becomes a sharer in the Divine Life. Grace so elevates the soul above its nature that it very closely imitates the Divine Persons and represents by a very clear analogy their inner relations. Saint Bonaventure, like Saint Augustine, uses the word *particeps* to express the union between the soul and the Trinity. At the same time he points out clearly that the soul does not become God but only a sharer in the Divine Life.<sup>13</sup> In the principle of Divine Love, Saint Bonaventure places the secret source of the similitude. The Holy Spirit is the principle of union between the soul and God just as He is the principle of union between the Father and the Son. From this union flows the highest intensity of assimilation.<sup>14</sup>

The soul is not completely perfect without grace, hence it has a potency for the similitude. The image therefore is a certain disposing form, a means through which the soul receives grace and becomes a similitude. Since the soul as an image of God is but a disposition, the gratuity of grace is safeguarded.<sup>15</sup>

Having treated briefly Saint Augustine's and Saint Bonaventure's treatment of the image and similitude of the Most Blessed Trinity

<sup>12</sup> August., *De Trinit.* XIV c. 8 n. 11 (PL 42, 1044).

<sup>13</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* II d. 27a. 1 q. 3 in corp. (II 660a).

<sup>14</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* III d. 27a. 2 q. 1 in corp. (III 604a).

<sup>15</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* III d. 27a 2q. 1 in corp. (III 604a).



in creation we are now in a position to treat of the value of image and similitude in a knowledge of the Trinity.

Both Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure were aware of the mystery of the Trinity. They realized that faith was needed to accept the reality of the Trinity of Persons in a unity of essence. Hence it follows that faith is needed to realize that the soul is an image of the Trinity by nature and a similitude of the Trinity by grace.<sup>16</sup>

Both the image and the similitude have value in that they are the synthesis of the vestiges of the Trinity found in the world. For the vestiges are but visible representations of the original Divine Truth reflected within the memory. To know the original by its imitation we must compare what we receive from without with the Truth found within us. By doing this we arrive at an analogical knowledge of the Trinity.<sup>17</sup> This Truth within is the Eternal Exemplar which shines in our soul because the soul bears the idea of God within itself. To know God therefore one must compare the creature with the Eternal Exemplar shining in our soul. This leads to contemplation provided of course that the soul is purified by penance and has the spirit of prayer.

Man's ideal state according to Saint Bonaventure is contemplation, which is wisdom in the highest sense. It should be the goal of all of man's intellectual strivings. For Saint Bonaventure, the creature is a mirror reflecting the Divine Perfections. He calls the method of employing creatures as a means of knowing God, *speculatio*. Saint Bonaventure uses *speculatio* and contemplation interchangeably. Another word he uses to express the same thought is *contuitio*. By this word he expresses the simultaneity of form in the created thing or mirror and in the Eternal Exemplar. In other words *contuitio* is an awareness of the ontological presence of God attained in the consciousness of being.<sup>18</sup> This *contuitio* belongs to our soul as an image of God.

Intellectual contemplation is but the direct road to affective contemplation or mystical ecstasy. This is not the privilege of the few. All men, desirous of Christian Perfection, have this end as their goal.<sup>19</sup> For the soul to arrive at this ecstatic knowledge of God, it must enter into the depths of its memory and keep entering up to the point that it passes over itself and becomes contained by the Divine Light which it contains because it is capable of God.<sup>20</sup> Strange as it might

seem, in ecstatic knowledge, the soul attains the fullness of illumination and at the same time the intellect is covered with darkness. This apparent contradiction disappears if we but recall that in Saint Bonaventure's system of thought he distinguishes the intellect and the *mens*, the highest portion of the soul, the memory. The intellect is the faculty that is in darkness and the *mens* is the faculty bathed with the fullness of light. The *mens*, or transcendent memory, contains by its nature the Divine Light. Hence the apparent contradiction disappears.<sup>21</sup> If men do not arrive at this ecstatic enjoyment, it is their fault because they have failed to seek wisdom.

The doctrine of Saint Bonaventure is rich with meaning. In the harmonious system he has left us, the various parts form together such a unity and totality that considered separately and in themselves, they cannot be understood in their real meaning.<sup>22</sup> Saint Bonaventure but re-echoes the vision of his Seraphic Father but adds to his legacy by justifying the intellectual striving after peace and contemplation without betraying in the least the ideal of Saint Francis.

Saint Bonaventure's aim in life was the acquisition of wisdom, the knowledge of God by experience. Hence the goal of all his works is not to cultivate the intellect for the intellect's sake but to make all knowledge end in true wisdom.<sup>23</sup> This is quite evident in Saint Bonaventure's treatment of the soul as capable of God and a partaker of Him. Taking his inspiration from Saint Augustine, he contributes new facets to the doctrine and is like a doctor instructed in the kingdom of heaven who brings forth from his storeroom things new and old.<sup>24</sup>

NOTE: I have used Rev. Titus Szabo's book, *De SS. Trinitate in Creaturis refulgente. Doctrina S. Bonaventurae*, (Rome: Herder, 1955) as my main source, guide and inspiration for this essay. His book is the first comprehensive synthesis of Saint Bonaventure's teachings on the analogy of the Trinity in creatures and formed the basis for my dissertation. "The Doctrine of the Image and Similitude in Saint Bonaventure," submitted to the faculty of the Department of Philosophy at Saint Bonaventure University, Saint Bonaventure, New York, on July 4, 1962 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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<sup>21</sup> Bonav., *In Hexaem.* coll. 20n II (V 427a).

<sup>22</sup> E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Dom Illyd Trehowan and F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938) pp. 479-481.

<sup>23</sup> Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., "The Spirit of Franciscan Philosophy," in *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. II no. 3, (Sept. 1942), p. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Titus Szabo, O.F.M., *De SS. Trinitate in Creaturis Refulgente. Doctrina S. Bonaventurae*, (Rome: Herder, 1955) p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* I d. 3 p. 2 a. 2q. in corp. (193b).

<sup>17</sup> August., *Confess.* X c. 6 nn. 9-10 (PL 32, 783) also, Bonav., *In Hexaem.* coll. 2 n. 20 (V 340a).

<sup>18</sup> Bonav., *De scientia Christi*, q. 4 in corp. (V 23b).

<sup>19</sup> Bonav., *Sent.* II d. 23a 2q. 3ad 6 II 546a).

<sup>20</sup> Bonav., *De scientia Christi* q. 7 in corp. (V 40a).



# The Formation of the Religious Teacher And Educator of the Tertiaries Regular

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Rule of the Third Order Regular of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, as approved by Pope Pius XI, chapter seven deals with the "Nature and Manner of Work." Specifically, article twenty reads:

Those who, inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit, have dedicated themselves to the service of God, should avoid idleness, and give their efforts faithfully and devoutly to the divine praises or the various works of piety and charity.

St. Francis himself expressed this idea in another way when he urged the Brothers: "Be always busy in some good work that the devil may find thee occupied." In commenting on the above passage of the Rule, Father Allan Wolter, O.F.M.,<sup>1</sup> reminds us that the "various works of charity" mentioned refers to all those activities which Tertiary Religious perform immediately and directly as a service to others, such as teaching. In the United States, the major apostolate of the Tertiaries Regular is education. In this work of charity we have a direct mandate from Our Holy Father on the motives and manner in which Franciscan educators are to approach their vocation of teaching by personal service to the members of Christ's Mystical Body.

Our challenge has been well stated in *Menti Nostrae* by Pope Pius XII, who pointed out that the modern apostolate involves not only safeguarding traditional faith, but also assuring its practical value in the Twentieth Century:<sup>2</sup>

It requires men to lead back to Christian principles those brethren who have strayed through error or have been blinded by passion, to enlighten nations with the light of Christian doctrine, to guide them according to Christian norms and to form in them more Christian consciences, and lastly to urge them to struggle for the triumph of truth and justice.

Those in the Third Order Regular may be teachers in many ways based on the models of Christ and His mirror, Francis of Assisi. All

<sup>1</sup> Wolter, Allan B. *The Book of Life*, (An Explanation of the Rule of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis), (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute, 1954), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Pius XII, Pope, *Menti Nostrae*, (Washington, D. C.: N.C.W.C. translation, Sept. 23, 1950), p. 38, 135.

friars have the opportunity to teach by the example of their good lives. Whether assigned to missionary or hospital work, there are many informal ways of teaching others, in addition to instruction in Christian doctrine. However, this paper will concern itself primarily with the intellectual and professional formation of Tertiaries Regular who are formally assigned to the apostolate of the Catholic classroom. Since the fundamental need is for good religious, it is presumed that other speakers at this Congress will emphasize the requirements for the spiritual formation of the Franciscan teacher. Furthermore, these observations are offered on the supposition that intellectual learning is no substitute for development of one's religious spirit in the state of perfection. It agrees with the statement of the President of the University of Notre Dame that "Catholic education can't substitute competence for piety, or piety for competence." The basis of the Franciscan approach should be that of Pope Pius XI who taught that knowledge illuminates piety and piety sweetens knowledge.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in his magnificent book, *The Divine Milieu*,<sup>3</sup> notes that non-Catholics sometimes shame us by their attitude and effort toward their work. They almost chide religious for the shabby way some of those dedicated to Christ's service approach their secondary vocation. They see the discrepancy when a priest, brother, or sister is assigned to teaching, but acts in such a manner, by a lukewarm educational performance, as if to say, "Well, my main vocation is to be a priest or religious; this teaching work is strictly secondary." It is so obvious that such religious educators have failed to grasp the fundamental theology of their Christian vocation, namely, that their sanctification lies in the excellence of both their spiritual and educational life, which are entwined.

In an address before the men's section of the First National Congress of Religious of the United States, Father Paul O'Connor, S.J., highlighted the problem.<sup>4</sup>

Religious must have a firm conviction that only in so far as they prepare themselves diligently for their apostolate, and perform excellently their duties as teachers, will they achieve the perfection of their vocation. Too many think that time spent in the classroom is time lost from prayer . . . they seem to be not really convinced that an hour spent in scholarly study or scientific work under obedience is more fruitful in producing union with God than an hour spent in the chapel during free time.

<sup>3</sup> DeChardin, Pierre Teilhard, *The Divine Milieu*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> O'Connor, Paul L., "The Religious Teacher" in *Religious Community Life in the United States*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1952), p. 150.



Therefore, before one can speak of formation programs, it is necessary that superiors and instructors in houses of study have themselves the proper perspective toward the educational apostolate. Then, the congregation will be willing to sacrifice so that members can engage in extensive preparation. How true are the words of the above writer at the same National Congress, when he noted: "You cannot fill new schools and new missions with poorly and hastily trained religious, and then expect those schools to do great things for the cause of the Kingdom of Christ."<sup>5</sup> The natural result will be mediocre institutions of learning and religious teachers who are neither good religious nor competent teachers.

On the eve of the Ecumenical Council, it is wise for Tertiaries Regular of St. Francis to anticipate the renewal of spirit and ideas that as a result will sweep through the Church in the next fifty years. It is prudent to develop a program of formation now that will produce a sense of responsibility, imagination, and inquiry on the part of our religious teachers of the future. The goal is again to be found in the words of our late Holy Father: More than ever before, Catholic education needs good teachers.<sup>6</sup>

with a clear professional Catholic conscience, souls burning with apostolic zeal, and an exact idea of doctrine, which must penetrate all their teaching, and a profound conviction of serving the highest spiritual and cultural interests, and that in a field of special privilege and responsibility.

Furthermore, whatever plan evolves from these meetings should be based on the Franciscan heritage of scholarship which was so evident in the medieval universities. Even during the lifetime of our Founder, scholars were flocking to join the Franciscan at Paris, Oxford, Bologna and other seats of learning. In combating heresy in the Middle Ages, the Church turned to the "teaching orders," the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Thus, the training colleges of the friars at the great universities developed into the most frequented of the university schools.<sup>7</sup> With the study and teaching of the "queen of sciences," theology, as the basis, Franciscan mendicants dominated the academic world during this period. The Franciscan apostolate found an outlet in the university chair as well as the pulpit, the lecture was used effectively as the simple sermon.

In fact, the Order's "second founder," St. Bonaventure, laid down the following regulations for the scholastic activity of his brothers:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> Pius XII. Pope, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Felder, Hilarton, *The Ideals of St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1925), pp. 360-64.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

- a) the study of theology or of Holy Scripture is an essential obligation of the friars, and the center of their endeavors in acquiring knowledge;
- b) the study of philosophy and profane sciences is justified and necessary when they are employed in the interests of theology; and the manifold wisdom of God is manifest in every science and the chief fruit of all learning consists in furnishing material for the strengthening of the Faith;
- d) Franciscan scholarship is first based on piety, then speculation—every truth from whatever source can be transformed into prayer and praise of God.

With these basic guidelines as background, the following ideas are offered for the training of future Franciscan teachers in the latter part of the Twentieth Century.

#### *Suggested Principles for Franciscan Educational Formation*

These are offered simply as points for discussion that may result in a more unified approach to the educational preparation of Tertiary teachers.

- 1) By vocation, Franciscan educators are obliged to a commitment to educational excellence both in their faculty and school's offering. We can not expect to produce scholars and intellectual leaders unless the teachers in Franciscan schools possess traits of scholarship themselves and have been properly trained for their apostolate. The Franciscan approach to all things in life would demand a flexibility in teacher preparation, curriculum and techniques without sacrificing the quality of educational effort. Franciscans should be in the forefront of the religious who adapt and improve their training procedures according to the current mind of the Church and the needs of modern man.
- 2) *Projection into the future* is necessary if programs of religious development are to be provided which prepare a Tertiary now to meet the demands of the Space Age and to teach a student of this complex and fast-changing world. The Third Order Regular can lead Christian educators in their proper formation of members by anticipating reforms and needs of the Church for the decades just ahead. Although emphasizing the educational essentials in the instruction given to both our teachers and, subsequently, their pupils, it is important that new subjects be studied and new knowledge assimilated by the modern Franciscan student.
- 3) *The heresy of activity* must be avoided if a balance is to be attained in the life of the Franciscan educator which permits scholarship and the professional competence to develop. Excessive concern with the peripheral, co-curricular functions, or social life, leaves no time for real speculative thought, higher studies, or research. The energy of the Tertiary Regular must be channeled in the novitiate and thereafter into constructive industry for Christ, rather than worldly and superficial enterprises. The Third Order friar dedicated to intellectual pursuits



according to the Franciscan spirit can be a glory to the Order and the Church.

4) *Cooperation among the various branches of Tertiaries* can be the means for upgrading the training of our Franciscan educators. Centers of concentration in certain specialties within the Third Order Regular will avoid useless duplication and mediocrity. Regional, national or international houses of study will furnish the opportunity for improving the quality of the formation staff and curriculum. Exchange of professors, students and facilities will permit the training of a well-rounded teacher in all parts of the Order. Through a Congress such as this, it is possible to inaugurate a program of in-service training which would enable us to share our talent and improve the background both of present and future teachers.

5) *Evaluation of the Order's human resources* by major superiors and special commissions would make it possible to spread the talents within the Order where they will be most effective. A study of what our teachers now possess and how they are being utilized will help to avoid overextension of their services and provide better use of their abilities. The virginal life requires psychological sublimation or compensation; by assessing the capabilities of present and future members of the Order, assignments and challenges can be given which will capitalize on the creativity and aptitudes of certain friars so that they may experience success and accomplishment in their apostolate. (The ideal of the future in this regard may be realized when it is possible to cross congregational or provincial lines to share, even on a short-term basis, the special training and experience of our educators.)

6) There are many *motivations for enrichment and advancement* of the educational formation of the Tertiary Religious. Basically, zeal for souls and the renewal of Christian life should stimulate the friars to better the current practices in the preparation of religious teachers. Since the educational level of the masses has been raised, it is essential that the training of the religious educator be elevated if these Tertiaries are to be leaders of the laity entrusted to them. Finally, the demands of accrediting agencies, as well as an age that abounds with changes ranging from astronomical and atomic findings to automation, makes it urgent that both the scope and depth of knowledge be increased on the part of the Tertiary teacher.

An ideal has been set forth for the religious teacher by Pope Pius XII when speaking of the mission confided to Teaching Brothers.<sup>9</sup>

If (the minds of boys and young men) are illumined by the light of the Gospel, if their wills are formed by Christian principles and fortified by divine grace, then we may hope that a new generation of youth will emerge which can happily triumph over the difficulties, bewilderments and fears that presently assail us, and which by its knowledge, virtue and example can establish a better and healthier social order.

<sup>9</sup> Pius XII, Pope, "The High Mission of the Teaching Brother," *The Pope Speaks*, April 7, 1954, p. 125.

### *Integration of the Spiritual and Intellectual Formation*

In *Menti Nostrae*, Pius XII has indicated that this intellectual formation implies that the candidate acquires an appreciation for the spirit of broad scholarship and research, of fine arts and refinement of manner which should typify a cultured educator. The Church recognizes the stabilizing effect that a well-grounded and complete training will have on the teacher's religious and apostolic life.

In harmony with Franciscan tradition, theology and philosophy should be the foundation of our educational preparation. However, this should be taught with special emphasis on the Franciscan approach to these subjects. In addition to courses on Sacred Scripture and liturgy which might be part of the Tertiary's undergraduate preparation, some provision should be made for instruction in Christian pedagogy, catechetics, comparative religions, psychology, and oral and written communication. Furthermore, in the study of the humanities and social sciences should be included some insight into non-Western civilizations and cultures. Apart from this basic core of formal courses for the Franciscan religious educator, there might be informal study of allied subjects by the individuals or in groups. Certainly, for example, the Tertiary in the classroom should have knowledge of the Church's social teachings, especially as manifested in recent papal encyclicals.

At all stages of formation, it is possible to provide group guidance which will integrate Christian and educational ideas. For instance, during the first year of college, guest lectures and discussions may be held for scholastics on such topics as these: intellectual responsibility and vocation, reading and study skills, education as a vocation and profession, group dynamics, personal adjustment, emotional maturity, educational and vocational planning, religious and the social order, scholarships and fellowships, the teacher and mental health, human relations, leisure for personal and cultural growth, and the theology of the Brother's vocation.

From the viewpoint of attracting and holding vocations to the Order, there are two strong points which will inspire American youth, as well as an appreciation of the religious state per se. One is to inculcate in both lay students and scholastics an understanding of the glorious calling of the teacher, especially if he is a religious. The influence of the teacher over the minds and hearts of generations, his opportunity to mould character and train the will, his impact on the Catholic from a spiritual and moral standpoint—these are concepts that will challenge young people to an educational apostolate. Since the endowment of the Catholic school is the contributed services of its religious teachers,



young Americans will wish to imitate the Franciscan educator who exemplifies the Order's motto of "peace and goodness" coupled with competency in his field. As Father O'Connor so aptly put it in his talk before the National Congress of Religions:<sup>10</sup>

Youth can see nothing attractive in the person or in the life of a mediocre, because overworked and poorly trained, teacher. A high-minded youth is seeking peace of soul and the opportunity to work for an inspiring cause. If he senses very little of either in the teacher before him, he will look farther afield. Do not blame the selfishness of the youth of today for the shortage of vocations. Look for the cause in the classroom exemplars of your early training.

In the light of these remarks, is there any wonder, then, that the best educators in the Order should be assigned to train future teachers? If the Catholic school of tomorrow is to produce its fair share of Catholic intellectuals and scholars for our country, the Franciscan responsible for forming the Tertiary educator today must be himself a dedicated, inspiring, learned man of letters. He must help the scholastics or clerics to understand that a life of study is austere and imposes grave obligations. "The athletes of the mind, like those on the playing field, must be prepared for privations, long training, and sometimes superhuman tenacity. We must give ourselves from the heart, if truth is to give itself to us."<sup>11</sup> Such an approach to study as an integral part of teacher training can become part of the religious self-discipline and motivation that is essential in the spiritual formation of the friar.

#### *Procedures in Forming the Tertiary Educator*

The first step in the preparation of the future Franciscan teacher begins with his selection for the educational apostolate. Beside the spiritual and moral qualities that are sought in the candidate, there is a question of having the necessary physical fitness not only for the religious state but for the demanding career of teacher. A program of psychological assessment and guidance regarding the individual's intellectual and emotional suitability for teaching, as well as religious life, is necessary. Testing and counseling will help to determine if the candidate has the needed aptitude and temperament for higher studies and a teaching vocation. Actually, the obligation of superiors to discern the talents and capabilities of their subjects and to assign them suitable work is implied in the Twenty-first Article of the Rule which spells out how the Tertiary Religious should comply with his duties given in obedience.

<sup>10</sup> O'Connor, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> Sceriflangas, A. D., *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methode* (The Newman Press, 1959)

If the congregation maintains a *juniorate* or *preparatory seminary*, it goes without saying that every effort should be taken to provide a program that will eventually offer greater depth in the religious teacher who might result some day from this institution as compared with the offerings in ordinary Catholic secondary schools. The equal of an honors program in the Catholic high school should function in a junior house of studies. Guest lecturers and academic co-curricular activities can be powerful means for forming the youth aspiring to become a Tertiary educator.

During the *canonical novitiate* the whole emphasis of training must be directed toward religious perfection. However, during the second year of novitiate, some communities use this opportunity for instruction in foreign languages, reading or study skills. Furthermore, some formal instruction in theology (especially ascetical theology) might be undertaken, as well as informal discussion on methods of Christian doctrine, Catholic Action techniques, trends within the Church today, the essence of the major encyclicals, the role of liturgy in religious life, and like subjects. Certainly, this is a time when a program of self-study or reading can be encouraged during the novice's free time. This is the period for developing also Catholic thinkers by providing materials to satisfy the novice's desire for knowledge, especially of a religious nature. Thus, it is fundamental that each house of study have a well-stocked and up-to-date library.

Throughout the *scholasticate* the program is normally devoted to a thorough preparation in liberal arts and sciences. Some communities of Teaching Brothers, for instance, have compressed the study for the bachelor's degree into three years by the use of summer vacation periods. Although there is a generous amount of theological study in this undergraduate plan, it provides a fourth year and a summer for a Master's degree in a sacred science. Then the members of these congregations are assigned to teaching and undertake another graduate degree program in a profane field, or they may go on to higher degree study on a full-time basis. However, apart from this formal educational effort during this time of temporary vows, the student Tertiary Religious should have ample opportunities to supplement his degree program. Such learning for personal enrichment may result from auditing extra courses or in self-study, but it is also possible through attendance at workshops, professional meetings, and educational tours within the limitations of this formative period.

This is also a period before life profession, when the young religious should be given the opportunity of some practice teaching under supervision, or to observe outstanding veteran teachers at work.



The latter might also include watching public school educators in action as well. It is also the time when all the advantages of modern educational and vocational guidance techniques are available from professional counselors to these student Tertiaries, just as our lay students now enjoy in our Catholic colleges.

Once the friar has undertaken the *active educational apostolate*, his formation as a religious teacher should continue until his retirement from the classroom! Experience has shown that with a light teaching and co-curricular schedule during the first year of teaching, he can eventually become a more effective teacher, providing he uses the extra time for better preparation, classroom observation, and to receive guidance from the more experienced educator. Superiors may further assist by providing time in the daily horarium for study and intellectual discussion by de-emphasizing many of the non-essentials which clutter up the lives of American religious.

The following are some practical means for broadening and rounding the scholarly approach of the Tertiary Religious:

a) pursue higher studies leading to the doctorate or professional degrees. In the next twenty-five years the students in our colleges today will, for the most part, possess such training. Furthermore, the Tertiary religious will more and more be called upon to teach in junior or senior colleges, as well as graduate and professional schools. Not only will the highest degrees be required for this purpose, but post-doctoral and specialized study will be expected of these Tertiary professors. In particular, the more gifted friars should seek scholarships and fellowships for such study, both on the long-term and short-term basis.

b) seek in-service training opportunities which may range from week-end workshops to non-credit courses. These may be held within a faculty or congregation, or could be sponsored by this Tertiary Congress in the future on a regional or national level for members of various congregations trained in the same professional field or concerned with a similar problem. Friars with special competencies should be invited to lecture for short periods on an intra-community basis! c) participate in both Catholic and secular professional associations by reading their publications, attending their meetings, working on their committees, addressing their sessions, and seeking offices within these organizations. Not only will this be a great learning experience, but it can become an apostolate among non-Catholic educators.

d) engage in research or extensive speculation which will result in the publication of findings in learned journals or textbooks. Such activity can become a great source of good for the people who benefit by reading such materials, as well as the Order which may receive additional income from royalties.

e) provide a program for the training of administrators. The religious institutions conducted by Tertiary Religious now and in the future affect the lives of thousands of people and involve the expenditure

of considerable money of which we Franciscans are but custodians. Therefore, it is essential that these administrators receive more on-the-job training. Formal course work and guidance can help to develop such individuals for positions of responsibility. This is especially true in the field of higher education. A careful plan of selection should be followed in the preparation and appointment of Franciscan administrators.

f) consider the value of a "second novitiate" for the educational improvement of the professed teacher. After a period of ten, fifteen, or twenty-five years as a religious teacher, it is helpful to remove such a Tertiary from the classroom for a three-, six-, or twelve-month period. The opportunity can then be provided for the renovation of both spirit and skills by the friar. This time of renewal does not have to be limited to spiritual matters as in the first novitiate. It can include intellectual advancement by group discussion, formal study, and educational tours. A period of sabbatical leave from teaching can vitalize the educational efforts of the Tertiary when he returns to the classroom. If properly used, this tertianship may not only confirm and strengthen previous training, but it may open new vistas and hold out new horizons to conquer for Christ. Assuredly, the student will benefit by the religious teacher who has had the chance to "retool."

On a smaller scale during the years between such a major release from educational duties, it is helpful if the Tertiary Religious has a regular annual vacation away from the community, is permitted to attend educational conventions or tours, and is sent occasionally to special institutes, seminars, and workshops within his professional field or within religious groups and the Order.

Among the outcomes of national and international conferences of the Third Order Regular, such as this one, these procedures may be studied for translation into action in the future:

1. Use the Franciscan colleges of the Third Order Regular for the undergraduate training of some of the Tertiary Religious. There are three such institutions of higher education for men in the United States, each with special programs of significance for members of the Order. For example, St. Francis in Loreto offers a pre-engineering program. St. Francis in Brooklyn has a Latin American major which would benefit future missionaries, and the College of Steubenville provides a major in physics. The facilities of these colleges are also ideal for intra-community workshops and like activities within the Third Order Regular.

2. Exchange of students, especially abroad, within the various branches of Tertiary Regulars. This might range from attending an educational institution overseas conducted by the Order to residing in a house of a different segment of the Order which is near a great university where study is undertaken. For instance, the Irish Franciscan Brothers have a scholasticate near Dublin University, while the Order's motherhouse in Rome is convenient to Jesu Magister of the Lateran University. A beginning might be made shortly in this area, at the Catholic University of America. The T.O.R. Immaculate Con-



ception Province has a large, beautiful new house of studies nearby which may provide hospitality to other Tertiary students. Furthermore, smaller congregations of Tertiary Brothers in this country who cannot support a scholasticate of their own, might consider leasing another T.O.R. residence of Sacred Heart Province near this Pontifical university which could serve as a common or central house of training for the different congregations.

3. Exchange of professors from various provinces or congregations here and abroad can stimulate both the teacher and the students exposed to him. This is especially practical for summer or short-term assignments for Tertiary specialists to conduct clinics, workshops, or institutes, or simply to give a guest lecture series.

4. Exchange of ideas on formation and vocations by the various branches of the Third Order Regular. In addition to annual national or international meetings like this, it should be convenient to assemble at the annual convention of the National Catholic Educational Association or the Franciscan Educational Conference. At such times, it would be possible to share the results of the various communities' own educational conferences. Such events might be planned jointly by the Directors of Education and Community Supervisors of Schools for the various congregations and provinces, also to the mutual benefit of those friars themselves who will benefit by their contact with men of similar responsibilities.

5. Develop a corps of educational specialists both within the individual community and within the Order. These individuals may or may not have the aptitude or experience for teaching, but have the ability to train in the specialization that is necessary in the modern educational plant. Such Tertiaries might be prepared as registrars, attendance officers, librarians, school nurses or social workers, school psychologists and counselors, cafeteria and book store managers, maintenance superintendents, public relations and development directors, research directors, and business managers.

6. Establish a training policy for coadjutor Brothers so that these religious receive not only spiritual formation, but a simplified course in theology for laymen and instruction in a particular skill which is of value to the Order. Again, a spirit of cooperation might utilize the wonderful facilities for training such men in vocational subjects at St. James Trade School in Springfield, Illinois, where the German Franciscan Brothers there could provide Brother candidates from other congregations and provinces with a knowledge of various trades within a Franciscan religious atmosphere.

#### CONCLUSIONS

A clue to Tertiary Regulars is offered in a remarkable dissertation on "The Mind of the Church on the Training and Formation of Lay Teaching Religious Men."<sup>12</sup> The author reminds us that religious need to develop the means to perfection by being well instructed, educated, formed and practiced in the truths and exercises of religious and spiritual life. In addition to this training as religious, there is the

<sup>12</sup> Hurst, Brother Vincentius, *The Mind of the Church on the Training and Formation of Lay Teaching Religious Men* (Rome: Lateran University, 1961) pp. 19-20.

added necessity to develop men of culture and professional educators. The man of culture, the product of our Catholic colleges which should have formed him in Christian humanism, should possess a wide and varied learning: secular, philosophical and doctrinal. Professionally, these same men as religious teachers must be proficient in the art, techniques, and processes of education. In this way the Franciscan educator can become a leader not only in Catholic circles, but among secular persons and agencies to whom this disciple of the Poverello can transmit knowledge and a broad Christian culture, "free from the errors of the day."

However, this three-fold objective to form Tertiaries religiously, culturally and professionally is a requirement that demands serious re-evaluation of present training efforts. First, if parents are obliged by Canon Law to send their offspring to Catholic schools, then the administrators of these institutions have an obligation in justice to provide well-educated teachers who will conduct an educational program that is truly Christian, while in no way inferior to secular schools of the same type. As Pope Pius XII insisted:<sup>13</sup>

It is our fervent wish that all (your schools) endeavor to become excellent. This presupposes that your young teaching (religious) are masters of the subject they expound. See to it that they are well trained and that their education corresponds in quality and academic degrees to that demanded by the State. Be generous in giving them all they need, especially where books are concerned, so that they may continue their studies and thus offer young people a rich and solid harvest of knowledge.

This papal mandate has been carried out by the Sacred Congregation of Religious by a policy of approving only those Constitutions of newly formed educational Institutes which provide for post-novariate professional training leading to the acquisition of degrees. Their approach is based on the assumption that to send out "inexperienced and ill-trained religious into a life of full activity is detrimental to both the individual and the apostolate. The very spiritual vigor that the religious is supposed to acquire in the initial training period is endangered . . ."<sup>14</sup> When a candidate is admitted into an order that has committed itself to a teaching apostolate, the least he can expect in justice is that his community offer him the total preparation to fit him as a Christian educator of youth.

In the light of what has been pointed out in this paper thus far, the following recommendations for action, now or in the future, by

<sup>13</sup> Pius XII, Pope, "Counsel to Teaching Sisters" (Washington, D. C.: N.C.W.C. translation, Sept. 15, 1961), pp. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Hurst, op. cit. p. 23.



this National Congress of the Third Order Regular are respectfully submitted:

1) Establish a permanent national commission of the male Tertiary Religious in the United States for the study, analysis and improvement of programs for the spiritual and educational formation of our members. Certainly, such a group, including the various directors of education for the communities here represented, could be the means of carrying out the many constructive points which will flow from this conference. Perhaps a pattern would be evolved which would benefit the international obediential Congress and other religious orders as well.

2) Develop a plan for the assessment and guidance of young religious from the time of application throughout professed life. This implies the use of professionally trained counselors to assist the Order in the maximum development of its human resources. It can be accomplished both on an individual and group basis.

3) Consider the possibility of inaugurating regional and national centers of training that cut across provincial and congregational lines. Multiplicity and duplication of such facilities often means they are weakened in strength and resources, becoming incapable of achieving their purpose.<sup>15</sup> By pooling our talented faculty members and plants, a truly worthwhile house of training can be forthcoming. Such intracommunity cooperation might be best realized after the novitiate period, but by keeping clerics and teaching Brothers in separate programs.

4) Projection into the needs of the Church and our students in the future is necessary if our teachers are to be prepared in professional fields where a demand is anticipated and which are vital to the apostolate. For example, special methods must be learned to teach exceptional children; to study missiology particularly by concentration on area studies in parts of the world where the Order is preparing to send its missionaries; to understand academic subjects which are taking on new significance, such as oceanography, atomic physics, critical languages, psychology, and the like.

The ideas in this paper are best summarized in this statement adapted from the words of Brother Joseph Schieffer, C.F.P.:<sup>16</sup>

The Third Order congregations for education have to bring their pupils to faith in God and to a life according to the example and teachings of Christ. Our field of apostolic action is set out through the divinizing of these boys in their individual life, and in doing so, we can Christianize their community life and the world. In this way the Franciscan educator can influence the whole social structure and help to make it a fitting home for divinized men. This is the accomplishment of God's plan for salvation, to gather all humanity into the great society, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church.

May Saint Anthony of Padua, patron of Franciscan Teachers, guide us in these deliberations!

<sup>15</sup> Hant, op. cit. p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Schieffer, Brother Joseph. *The Movement for a Better World and the Congregations for Christian Education of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis* (Rome: Tertiary Franciscan Interobediential Congress, Via Dei Fiori Imperiali 1, 1959), p. 23.



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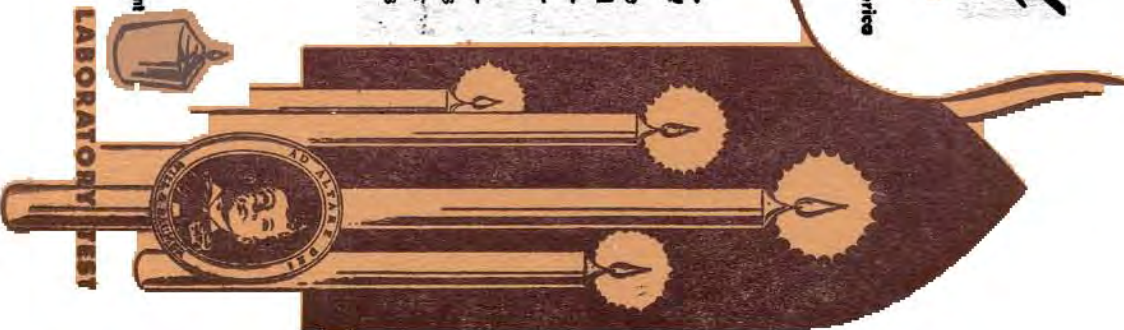
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# CORD

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## CHANGES IN THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE CORD

The Very Rev. Donald Hoag, O.F.M., Minister Provincial of the Province of the Most Holy Name, announced on September 7, 1962, the following changes in the editorial staff of THE CORD:

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### Our "Circular" Argument

*Father Regis Marshall, O.F.M.*

Sit on the edge of a running brook and listen to its song without end; lie on a carpeted meadow and gaze at the clouds drifting to an unknown destiny; stand at the fringe of the silent sea and ponder its heaving sighs; feel the restless breeze as it jostles you like a puppy at play—this is NATURE ON THE MOVE, God's unfinished symphony. A repetition without repulsion, a frequency without fatigue, a multiplying without monotony—these are nature's sedatives for a sagging soul. It may be a feeble whisper or a distant echo, but the refrain is a distinct utterance of beautiful creation that it is so good to be alive and on the move.

He estimates death most accurately who appreciates life most completely. To be bored with life is to be half-dead already. When we have exhausted the vital words of Christ, "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), then we have also drained life of its exhilaration, excitement, and ecstasy. With Christ's dying begins our living. To discover that the very Mother of God is our life, our sweetness, and our hope, and that her Son is also the way, the truth and the life, is to reduce the argument in behalf of the dullness of life to an absurdity. Without God, and the Mother of God, life is but an endurance. We simply await death as one does a trolley. There is no anticipation and of course no preparation. Nature now has no lesson to teach, no example to give. Instead of life being a romantic tale we have but a sterile story whose climax is that there is no climax, a narrative whose final chapter is unprinted. Like the jumbled garble of an inebriate it becomes debased and profane. Without motive it is the cuckoo in the clock serving no further purpose than defining the present moment.

Against the orchestral background of nature's hymn, and in tune with it, is another strain far more beautiful, certainly more sonorous. This is the oft repeated prayer surnamed the Rosary. To the drudge the Rosary beads have less meaning than those that adorn a necklace. Perhaps an exquisite work of art, the Rosary is nevertheless a mere artifact, a product of a skillful hand, but one never to be fingered prayerfully. It is to be admired for its own sake. The Mother of God is not permitted to enter into its design. To attempt to "live" the Rosary is even more foolhardy.



Everyone is obliged to pray; hence the Rosary is for all. Composed of prayers learned from childhood days, it is always old and yet as refreshingly new as the rising sun. Whether it be the exultant instant of success or the weighty moment of tragedy, there is no occasion which cannot be complemented by the Rosary. The beads are our universal instrument of prayer. Is there a need? Ask through the Rosary. Has the need been fulfilled? Give thanks with the Rosary. It is through the Rosary that we place our strengthened hands into those of the Blessed Virgin. To lose touch with the Rosary is to lose something of one's grip on life, to slacken the hand at the plow.

A wheel that makes contact with the ground makes progress possible. With the holy Rosary we make contact with the Queen of Saints and advance in affection for the Immaculate Mother of God. The Rosary is our "circular" argument. With each revolution of the sun the world approaches its demise. With each orbit of the Rosary the devout soul strides closer to everlasting life. With each rotation of the sun there is an increase in nature, a daily growth. With each turn of the Rosary we add another step to the spiraling staircase that leads to Mary's throne. From God to God is the ultimate explanation of life. From the Cross to the Cross in the Rosary is explanation enough for praying the beads. The faithful disciple of the Master never tires of expressing his love for the Crucified. With each enunciation of the Rosary this genuine love becomes more indelible. To persevere in the Rosary is to purify such a love. The dross of doubt is removed. The beads then, without a doubt, become pearls of great price.

Our lives are to be spent within the circumference of the Rosary. Is there a more secure way of keeping a morning offering intact than by encircling it with the Rosary? It is thus that our daily efforts are surrounded with an aureole of Marian intentions. The temptation of wanderlust is ever with us. Would it be too crude to remark that the Rosary is Mary's lariat that safeguards us from stampeding for the enticements of this world? The lover of the Rosary is a humble servant of Mary held captive by her grace-full charms. For him the Rosary is the "manacle" of Mary. He never wearies of praying the Rosary. His days are numbered in terms of this holy chain reaction. Boredom is banished. In its place is to be found an excited anticipation that the ringlet of Hail Mary's in his hands will soon be converted into a halo over his head.

In these days of excursion the most adventurous is the round trip of the holy Rosary. We set out from the Cross and return to the Crucified. Like an angler that never drills without penetrating, so our Rosary too is never prayed without gaining a profound love for the

Cross. Christ on the Cross is the center of the universe, and with our Rosary we remain within the gravitational pull of Calvary. With each circuit of the beads we satisfy yet more the tugging of our restless hearts. When that last Rosary will have been said we will have arrived home, there to join the angelic chorus with our "Hail, Holy Queen".

### *The Joyful Mysteries*

How nimble is the hand of an accomplished musician. How precise and steady the hand of the veteran wood-carver. How delicately poised is the creative hand of the artist. How beautiful are the hands! We employ our hands to give expression to the desires and frustrations of the human heart. They are the extension of our emotions and feelings. In our charity we have proffered them with the suggestion, "Could I lend you a hand?". When stymied we have admitted that "our hands were tied". Except for the ministering hands of the saintly priest, the hands are probably never more graceful than when entwined with the Rosary generously measuring a love for Mary with these holy counters. Surely it must be then that our hands most closely resemble the chaste hands of the Queen of Angels.

One day just before a Thanksgiving recess, a grade school teacher requested her pupils to draw a sketch that would be adequate to the occasion. She suspected that most of the images would be that of a turkey, a species of fruit, a Pilgrim or a pumpkin. Her suspicions were well-grounded except in the case of scrubby, little Mikie, the least gifted in her class. The picture he drew was crude, untidy, but very distinct. It was simply the uncertain outline of a human hand. But whose hand was it? Curiosity and excitement now dominated the class. Embarrassingly silent, Mikie became the object of a guessing game. "It must be the farmer's hand," volunteered the girl at his side, "He raises the turkeys." "No," retorted another, "It is the hand of a mother, for she prepares the Thanksgiving dinner." More profoundly another ventured, "That is God's hand, for He looks after us all." Impatient and intensely anxious, the teacher leaned over Mikie's shoulder and whispered, "Mikie, tell me, whose hand is it?". Mikie looked up and with eyes that betrayed affection blurted, "It's yours, teacher."

The Rosary came from the hands of Mary, the Cause of our Joy. With our hands we cheerfully pray the beads. In doing so we too become accomplished artists, creative in our loving, precise in our loyalty, delicate in our conversing. What a joy to contemplate the hands of Mary solemnly joined at the Annunciation; the outstretched hands of Mary as she approached Elizabeth; the tender, fondling hands of Mary at the manger; the selfless hands of Mary in the Temple;



the possessive hands of Mary upon the finding of her Child! Yes, how beautiful hands are! How graceful the hands that pray the beads! How elegant the hands of the Handmaid of the Lord! In this life we place our hands into those of the Blessed Virgin by placing them on the holy Rosary.

### *The Sorrowful Mysteries*

There is no Rosary without the Crucifix. In like manner, a life without the Cross cannot be Christian. To the very end the lengthening shadow of the weighty Cross must trespass our every path. But without any equivocation the Master has said, "My burden is light". And there is only one way to discover how light, and that is to attempt to carry it. He who learns to shoulder his Cross will one day realize that it was the Cross that supported him. In her grief the Mother of Sorrows was braced by the Cross. What would become the most universal of symbols Mary experienced as real, accepted with resignation, and clasped without reproach. When Mary received her dead Son from the Cross, she accepted the most bitter offering the Cross could give. But accept it she did.

A recent news release informed us that the famous Pieta of Michelangelo will soon be exhibited in America. For millions of visitors this world-renowned sculpture will be the object of admiration and appreciation. The Pieta represents the anti-climax of Good Friday. Were we to regard it with curiosity and wonder alone, we would thereby fail to note that the sculpture is incomplete, that the mangled Body of Jesus in the arms of Mary is also her sacrificial gift to us. In the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary we have the prelude to the Pieta. In the Pieta we see the affliction of Mary brought to the surface. In the Mysteries we are given to witness the depths of her agony, the prophetic sword piercing her Immaculate Heart to the very hilt.

It was in a garden of delight that man opposed God. In Gethsemani, the garden of grief, God proceeded to save men. A scourge lacerated His exposed Body so that one day a wedding garment might adorn our glorified bodies. Blood streamed as thorns were tightened about His head so that the flow of Baptismal water on ours might loosen us from sin. Christ staggered beneath His Cross so that we might triumph over ours. At the Crucifixion the Saviour was utterly humiliated so that we, being humbled, might be exalted.

### *The Glorious Mysteries*

It is common knowledge that the fingers of the blind become quite sensitive. This is a welcomed compensation for those burdened with

such a nocturnal affliction. With original sin our intellects were likewise darkened. But what a wonderful compensation we have in the holy Rosary! With the beads we can "feel" our way in this vale of shadows. Mary our Protectress guides us along this hazardous route to Him Who is our Resurrection. Wherever we pray the Rosary, be it in an auto, in the fields, or to and from work, it is there that Mary lowers her cincture within accessible reach of our groping hands. It is there that we continue our "hand over hand" ascent. Wherever the locale, it becomes for us the Mount of our Ascension.

One can detect the approach of a friar by the rustle of his beads. Mary too is made aware of our advances the moment we grasp the Rosary. When life appears to become wearisome and encumbered with a heaviness of heart, a slowness of foot; when the most sincere endeavors are marked with futility; then take hold of the Rosary, and at that instant Mary will have you in tow. There are few things in this life as uplifting as a well prayed Rosary. As for aid and comfort where can one better find it than in Mary, the Spiritual Vessel, filled to the brim with the needed grace of the Holy Spirit? She is the Virgin Most Powerful, so attractive to God that the momentum of her Assumption is strong enough to draw in its wake the entire human race. But we must first be attracted to her, and we will, if as loyal servants we recognize that in her Coronation Mary also became our Queen.

When time has laid its heavy hand on our shoulder and compelled us to lay aside the Missal we revered, the Breviary we cradled, the manuals we so caressingly palmed, there will yet remain the holy Rosary. Upon dying, the sense of hearing will be the last to depart. Immediately preceding it will be the sense of touch. After having felt the oft repeated Rosary for the last time, we will still remain receptive to the long awaited invitation, "Come ye blessed of My Father". For the apathetic bore who can discern nothing of profit in the Rosary, the gaining of Heaven will always be "touch and go". Not so with the soul that maintained daily "contact". Heaven will certainly be his for having always kept in "touch". There are no strangers in Paradise!

"Comrades, unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains!", is the fanatic cry of the dedicated Communist. "Hold fast to the chain that is the Rosary and you have everything to gain", is the plea of the Mother of God. Unite in the saying of the Rosary. Let it be the common route, that narrow path that leads to the Cross, our standard of victory. The Rosary is our "circular" argument whose one conclusion is: to pray to Mary is to pray to God, and to pray to God is the most exciting of adventures! Why, with Franciscan joy, and in the spirit of Brother Juniper, we can even look upon our Rosary as our "Mary-go-round".



We have the custom of placing the beads in the hands of the deceased, as though the Rosary is to be their master key to Heaven. On that day of surprises, and disappointment, Resurrection Day, how sad will be the lot of those who neglected this most salutary prayer. The instrument of judgment will be in their very hands. How delightful for the lovers of Mary, who in both their joys and sorrows, had recourse to their beads daily, and then only to count their blessings.

#### ANOTHER SAVED

A little mass of dead-black dirt  
That sighed when drenched by falling rain  
One tiny green peeped through the mud  
And raised itself to view the storm.  
A sunbeam helped the little thing  
To stand and stretch its weary limbs —  
A smiling violet raised her head —  
The sun bent low to kiss its child.

A sinner caught within the bog  
Who cried when blest by wholesome grace  
One contrite phrase, "I love" he said  
And raised his head to see the light.  
A heart then took the weary man  
To help him pray and laugh again.  
A smiling face had turned to God —  
And God bent low to kiss His child.

*Father Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.*





# The "Transitus" Of St. Francis

On October 3rd—the eve of the Feast of St. Francis—or on the Feast itself, Franciscans the world over will re-enact the centuries-old ritual, commemorating the death of the Poor Man of Assisi. It is a rather short ceremony, but it is prescribed by the Ceremonial of the Franciscan Order, and has come to be known affectionately as the "Transitus".

The word "transitus" means passing; hence, we commemorate the passing of the soul of St. Francis from this earth to heaven. It is a deeply moving ceremony, and even though we may have participated in it many times, our emotions are not dulled or worn thin through familiarity with it.

But then, the purpose of the "transitus" is not to awaken emotions. It is actually to thank God for the many graces He so liberally bestowed upon His servant Francis, and to ask for the same grace he received, namely, a happy death and everlasting life with Christ.

While for many years, the ceremony has been confined to Franciscan churches, there is no reason why it cannot be used by our Franciscan Sisterhoods in their Motherhouses and larger communities. It would certainly contribute toward the spiritual edification of each of the Sisters, and would be a wonderful means of renewing that sense of love and loyalty to St. Francis which must be found in every Franciscan heart. The ceremony could be conducted in this manner.

A relic of St. Francis is placed on the altar for public veneration—or on the altar dedicated to St. Francis, if there is one in the chapel. The priest, vested in surplice, white stole and cope enters the sanctuary, genuflects before the main altar and proceeds to incense the relic of St. Francis. (If the relic is placed on a side altar, he proceeds to this altar and incenses the relic.) Immediately following the incensation, a brief sermon may be given on St. Francis, or the Sisters may read a description of the death of St. Francis as found in several of his biographies.

All now arise, and the choir proceeds to sing the beautiful antiphon: *O Sanctissima Anima*. This antiphon recalls in the present what took place seven centuries ago:

"O most holy soul, at whose passing the citizens of Heaven rise up in welcome, the angelic choir rejoices, and the glorious Trinity invites him, saying: Remain with us forever."

Then follows the singing of the plaintive Psalm 141 by alternating choirs. This is the Psalm which was dearest to St. Francis; when he realized that death was approaching, he asked his brethren to sing it for him as he lay dying on the dirt floor of the Portunucula on October 3, 1226. When we study this psalm carefully, we see that it is, in fact, the story of the Saint's life—the story of a soul filled with an ideal and longing to rally kindred souls to his side, yet meeting opposition and persecution at almost every step along the way. Now he longs for the moment of liberation from the prison of the body: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise your name: the just wait for me, until you reward me."

Having completed the psalm, the choir repeats the chanting of the antiphon: *Salve, Sancte Pater*. Then all kneel for a few moments of silent prayer, followed by the recitation of five Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glories.

Again we have recourse to song, this time paying direct tribute to St. Francis as "Holy Father, glory of your country, model of your followers, mirror of virtue, path of rectitude, rule of life: lead us from this land of exile to the realms above." All genuflect, and two chanters sing the Versicle: "Francis, poor and humble, enters heaven laden with riches." And the choir answers: "Amid heavenly songs of praise." The celebrant then rises and sings the prayer: "O God, who this day gave to the soul of our holy father Francis the reward of everlasting bliss: be pleased to grant that we who, with loving hearts celebrate the memory of his departure, may deserve to obtain the same happiness for our reward. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

After the *Dominus Vobiscum* there follows the chanting of the solemn *Benedicamus Domino* and *Deo Gratias*. The priest then incenses the relic and blesses the congregation. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament brings the ceremony to a close, as Franciscan hearts look forward with joyous expectation to the morrow—the earthly solemnity of their Father's joyous entry into heaven.



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# As Eyes Turn Toward Rome

*Father J. Forest Faddish, O.F.M.*

"All roads lead to Rome." Could there be anyone who has not heard this familiar phrase? This statement will become a reality for some two thousand bishops and their theological advisors as they converge from North and South, from East and West, upon the Holy City for the opening of the Second Council of the Vatican on October 11, 1962. The eyes of the world will be focused upon this solemn gathering throughout its deliberations. But for all of us, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, not only will our eyes turn toward Rome but so will our hearts. Indeed, might we not say, that as the Shepherds of our dioceses depart for Rome, our hearts will go with them, sympathizing with them in this hour when such a terrible responsibility rests upon their shoulders?

Ever since January 25, 1959, when our Supreme Pontiff made his surprise announcement of a Council to a group of Cardinals, we have read with keen interest the news items concerned with the Council. We rejoiced that God in his goodness should have inspired our Holy Father with the desire to convoke a Council. Time and again, in his allocutions at solemn pontifical ceremonies, in addresses to the members attending the General Chapters of the many religious communities in Rome, and in his paternal talks to the laity, our Holy Father has thrilled us as he spoke of his hopes and desires for the Second Vatican Council.

He has repeatedly asked all the faithful to pray fervently for the success of the forthcoming Council. God alone knows the exact number of prayers and sacrifices which devoted children of Holy Mother Church have already laid reverently at the foot of Christ's throne in Heaven. And we may rest assured that the sons and daughters of St. Francis, mindful of their precious heritage of devotion to the person of the Vicar of Christ and to the Holy See, have been prominent in this army of "prayers."

Now as we stand at the threshold of the Council, what may we, sons and daughters of the Poverello of Assisi, do to promote the success of the Council? We are not bishops. We have not been invited to take part in the deliberations of the Council. But we are not necessarily excluded from it. Indeed, we will be partaking in it in a very special way because of our membership in the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Bishops attending the Council are not like the members of the United States Congress, who are elected representatives of the people. Our Bishops receive their authority directly from God and they are directly responsible to Him for the exercise of that authority. Hence we cannot bring pressure to bear upon them. Being members of the Mystical Body, however, we know that the actions of one member have an influence upon the other members of this Body. And this is the marvelous mystery, that even the smallest of my actions, when performed out of love for God, may produce undreamed-of results.

Yes, this is why we can participate in the forthcoming Council, because through our prayers we may prevail upon our Divine Saviour to inspire the Conciliar Fathers to make those decisions which will be most conducive to the glory of God and His Church, and also to our own eternal welfare.

The humble friar, in sandaled feet, walking through a hot and humid jungle of South America, could raise his heart to heaven and pray: Dear God, it is your love which compels me to visit Your outcasts, and to bring Your message to them. It is not an easy task, Lord, but I offer my physical sufferings to You for the intentions of our Holy Father. Grant that His desires for the forthcoming Council may be realized, so that You may be glorified, and the Church may reap the benefits of these deliberations.

The Sister in the classroom, gazing upon the sea of bewildered faces before her, whispers in her heart: Dear God, each year seems to be getting more difficult. But then again, I'm not getting any younger, Lord, and I still want to do something worthwhile with my life. Would You be willing to accept my patient bearing of these little hardships in behalf of the success of the Second Vatican Council?

But while he may not traverse foreign lands in search of souls, or instruct youth, the lowly Brother will not be outdone in generosity. Confined to the kitchen from early morning until late at night, he finds he can make his work a prayer. And with each movement of the knife as he peels potatoes, with which he nourishes the physical life of his fellow friars, goes a prayer that God would bless the deliberations of the Council, so that through them our spiritual lives may be nourished.

So you see, the field is almost limitless. But to our sacrifices we should also join our prayers as we assist each morning at Holy Mass. We should daily raise our hearts toward Mary Immaculate, and to St. Joseph, the Heavenly Patron of the Second Vatican Council, imploring their unfailing intercession in its behalf.

And if we're looking for a prayer that would be worthwhile,



what better prayer could we find than the prayer composed by our own Holy Father for the success of the Council:

"Holy Spirit, who art sent by the Father in the name of Jesus to be with the Church by Thy presence and sure guidance, we pray Thee graciously to pour out the fullness of Thy gifts upon the Ecumenical Council.

"Sweet Comforter and Teacher, enlighten the minds of our Prelates who gladly assemble at the invitation of the Supreme Pontiff at Rome to celebrate the Sacred Council.

"May the Council be most fruitful, so that the light and strength of the Gospel may spread more and more among men and the Catholic religion and its missionary work happily prosper, making the teaching of the Church and her wholesome moral guidance fully understood.

"Sweet Guide of the spirit, strengthen our minds in truth, that we may be humble and obedient in heart, and that, receiving gratefully the decisions of the Council, we may hasten to put them into practice.

"We pray also for those still separated from the one fold of Jesus Christ, that, glorying as they do in the Christian name, they may come, at last, to unity under the one Shepherd.

"Show once more Thy wonders in our day as on the day of Pentecost. Grant to Thy Church, that, constant and united in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and following the lead of Blessed Peter, the reign of our divine Saviour may be advanced, a reign of truth, of justice, love and peace. Amen."

## THE KINGDOM

Sky taut above, across, beyond  
Candor of plain and arrogance of mountain  
Is not, after all, surprising,  
No more than tension of earth turned  
Precisely right, is.  
We may expect exactitude of God.

Smaller details of local administration  
May be, admittedly, endearing.  
Only churls will fail to credit  
God's contriving of flowers  
On planets' sweating faces.

Even the notion of cornered stars  
To prick light-holes in night  
Is quaintly charming:  
God indulging His fancies.

If He sometimes ripples the land with breezes  
We can be clever to recognize His mirth  
Over our shredding atoms, pestering space  
With rocket inquiries.  
God is patient with children.

All is predictable, given Him:  
Throb of a thousand worlds in ordered traffic  
Persistence of birds against the longest war.  
We can depend on God to stoke the fires  
Of sun each day and quarter the years  
With seasons.

Only, who will explain  
Spiney? crown



Father Roy M. Gasnick, O.F.M.

A few years ago, there was an editorial in the *Newark, N. J. Advocate* which expressed a rather wistful wish: "If only the mandate of the Spanish King, insisted on by Fr. Serra and the other Franciscans in California, proclaiming that non-white races were not to be enslaved, had taken effect in the non-Catholic colonies along the eastern seaboard . . . things might be different today!"

We can only guess how different it would have been. The peaceful, humanistic methods of Junipero Serra and his fellow Franciscans not only precipitated the abolition of slavery in the Spanish colonies, but also prevented the possibility of an interracial problem in all of the New World south of the Rio Grande.

But the Franciscan influence did not touch the Americans in the eastern part of the country. Slavery persisted until it was slaughtered in the cruelest of civil wars, which left ugly scars on the American Negro, still a pawn between North and South, still segregated and discriminated against because of his background.

And now, this same Franciscan influence, which could have helped prevent the American race problem 200 years ago, is exerting its power again, this time to help find a solution to the problem.

On Feb. 1, 1960, the Third Order of St. Francis in North America entered the field of race relations with a new movement called ACTION FOR INTERRACIAL UNDERSTANDING. The direct aim of this movement is to convince the Catholic community that it is time now to start practicing the love of neighbor that Christ commanded, and that our Negro neighbors cry out loudest for this love since they are most often offended against.

This step taken by the Third Order opens up unlimited possibilities for the Catholic interracial movement, because suddenly 125,000 lay Catholics have been committed to work actively in helping solve racial problems. The 125,000 lay Catholics, grouped together in approximately 1,200 fraternities throughout the country, are located in the areas of Catholic life where they are needed the most—the parish, school, college and professional levels.

It would be an exaggeration to say that overnight 1,200 centers for interracial understanding had suddenly blossomed, but potentially that is what happened.

As can easily be seen, the whole scope of the Catholic interracial movement is immediately broadened. For the first time, a nationally organized Catholic group has adopted an interracial program as its official Catholic Action apostolate. Up to now, the burden of the movement has been carried by such groups as the Catholic Interracial Council organized for that specific purpose. They had to fight a long struggle just to win enough members to make themselves effective.

In the Third Order movement, members do not have to be recruited—they are there already; they do not have to be convinced of the necessity of social action, for they are committed to that by their Rule and Constitutions. The only work left to the Third Order then is to train and educate its members in methods of effective leadership in specific problems of race relations.

And what is perhaps the most significant fact about this new Third Order movement, is that a new dimension has been added to the cause of civil rights. It is first of all a new dimension of method: it is a popular movement, on the grass-roots level, where, in the relationship of one man with another, the real heart of the problem lies.

It is also a new dimension of doctrine: its approach is that of Christian love which the Third Order recognizes as the basic social force necessary to reform society. The goal of this love is to unite man and man with the bond of recognition of the tremendous dignity of each man. And this goal can be totally achieved only through personal responsibility and individual action, as the American hierarchy pointed out in their annual statement in 1960.

In this new interracial movement, the emphasis is on understanding and action. It emphasizes understanding, first of all, because it seems clear from past experience that legislation and pressure without preparation often tend to accelerate racial tensions. Preparation through understanding will not only aid the fulfillment of the law; it will, in reality, anticipate the law.

It emphasizes action, on the other hand, because interracial understanding can be achieved only through the concerted effort of ordinary citizens in their neighborhoods, schools, churches and places of employment.

It is not by accident that the Third Order has become involved in the interracial movement; the involvement was rather a necessity, something that had to come to pass.

Ever since the day when a young and as yet unconverted Francis of Assisi got down from his horse and embraced a leper, those who would follow the Seraphic Saint were pledged to a special mission to



all social outcasts; to lepers, the poor, the slaves, the downtrodden—to anyone who is socially despised, no matter why he may be despised.

I am not sure whether anyone ever called St. Francis a "leper-lover," but he was. He was a leper-lover not because he loved leprosy, but because he loved man. He would have loved that leper even if he had no leprosy; but the fact is that the leprosy was there, and so Francis spontaneously loved the man the more, to make up for the love denied him by others.

That was how St. Francis loved, and that was how he taught his followers to love. Indeed, this love has come to be more or less a hallmark of Franciscanism, even to the extent that the late Pius XII could refer to it as a "Franciscan doctrine."

Now, this insistence on Christian love as a social force might at first seem wildly idealistic, and it is. But for someone on fire with the love of God, an ideal is not something unattainable, but something that *has* to be attained. That is the meaning of an old inscription that was found on the chapel door of a Franciscan friary in Germany, "Learn from Francis, that ideals must be put into practise."

No one has more movingly described how effective this ideal is than Fr. John LaFarge, S.J., the founder of the Catholic interracial movement. In his book, *No Postponement*, he said:

Hitler . . . raged against the priests and brothers of the three Franciscan Orders precisely because these men were close to the people. The Franciscans were armed with a tremendous weapon . . . the power of God-inspired social love. The Nazis might have tolerated it if it had been an ineffectual love; but they could not for an instant put up with an effective love; a love that used modern methods, modern medicine, modern organization, and that went straight from the mystic reality of the Eucharistic God in the chapel . . . down into the aches and pains and wounds of ordinary suffering mankind . . .

The "secret" is simple: a passionate devotion to truth—truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of reason; a profound persuasion that the Gospel contains the solution for the agonizing ideological and socio-economic problems of the age, that modern man frantically craves love . . . and that the triumph of this love is to be achieved through personal, individual reform.

There is no mistaking the dynamism of a social movement which is so thoroughly entrenched and emersed in the Gospel, a social movement whose principles go far beyond the fondest dreams of sociologists and lawmakers, a social movement which presents a complete spirituality as its motivating force.

It is no wonder, then, that Pope Leo XIII once stated bluntly,

"My plan for social reform is the Third Order of St. Francis." The Pope could say that because he himself had adapted the Third Order Rule to contemporary needs, knowing from history the tremendous potentiality of an Order of lay people 3,000,000 strong throughout the world equipped with one training manual—the Gospel, and with two weapons—Christian love and the dignity and responsibility of the individual.

The Third Order's interracial movement has opened up a new frontier in race relations, in which the quest for interracial justice and charity finally come to rest in the homes, offices and backyards of American citizens where, and only where, the race problem can truly be solved.

How successful it will be is the challenge that faces all Franciscans in the United States.



# Self-Denial In The Following Of Christ

(This article is from Chapter XIV of "Love Answers Love" by Cajetan Esser, O.F.M. and Engelbert Grau, O.F.M., translated by Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. It will be published in book form by the Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago.)

## I

At the heart of the Franciscan life of penance stands the figure of Jesus Christ. His life is to be our life, his spirit our spirit, his ways our ways. The more we die to self in penance, to live completely unto God according to the Gospel, the more must we be ready to follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and become more like him in all things. The life of Christ must so penetrate, form and shape us, that we become wholly changed into him. But to become Christlike is no easy task for sinful man. It can be accomplished only by the mortification and denial of self. For this reason our Lord in the Gospel (and his words are repeated by Francis in the first Rule): "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."<sup>1</sup> This was one of the texts which Francis found when he opened the gospel book at San Niccolò to learn the will of God for himself and his first brethren.<sup>2</sup> Thus from the very beginning of the Order self-denial and mortification were part of that Franciscan life in which we are "to seek to follow in all things the footsteps of Jesus Crucified."<sup>3</sup>

### I. The Motives of Self-denial and Mortification.

Francis was drawn to such a life of penance by the overwhelming love revealed in the life and sufferings of Christ for our sake: "The love of him who have loved us so much, we must in return love with all our heart."<sup>4</sup> In consequence, Francis loved the crucified Lord with such an ardor as to be wholly conformed to him: "Francis was dead to the world, but Christ lived in him. The delights of this world became a cross for him, because the Cross of Christ was deeply rooted in his heart."<sup>5</sup> "The whole life of this man of God, whether in public or in solitude, was centered on the Cross of the World."<sup>6</sup> Because in the

Cross, the center and norm of his life, he saw revealed the greatness of God's love for man, that love compelled him to become like to the Crucified by self-denial and abnegation. When he meditated on the sufferings of Christ, his prayer was no mere exercise of piety but rather a true "*passionis Christi compassio*, a co-suffering with the passion of Christ."<sup>7</sup> In the Passion Francis found not merely a model to imitate, but the very motive and reason for leading himself a crucified life.

Francis did much more than think on the sufferings of Christ as something that had happened in the past. He sought to enter into and identify himself with the victim of Calvary. Love has the remarkable power of making the lover like unto the beloved — and it manifested that power in the life of Francis.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the Mass became for him a living co-offering of self with the oblation of Christ: "He followed that sacred and awe-inspiring action with all reverence, offering all his members in that sacrifice, and as he received the Lamb that was immolated for us, he offered his whole being with that fire which burned always on the altar of his heart."<sup>9</sup> "Pure *purus*: in purity of person and with purity of intention," he joined "the true sacrifice of the most holy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the Mass, the unbloody commemoration of the death of the Lord, "who alone works therein as it pleases him," he desired to be accepted as a fellow-victim that through the Mass "his whole will, insofar as the grace of the Almighty aided him, might be directed to God alone."<sup>10</sup> One striking phrase in particular reveals how deeply Francis grasped the interaction of the divine and the human in the Mass and in the life of penance and self-denial rooted in that sacrifice: "Keep back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that he may receive you wholly who has given himself wholly to you."<sup>11</sup> The life of penance is the conscious answer of love to the unspeakable love which God herein bestows on us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A further motive that drew Francis to self-abnegation was that "devout prayer: oratio devota" in which a man offers himself wholly to God. To pray for him was "to make a complete holocaust of all the fibers of his heart." In prayer he so surrendered himself to the workings of grace that Celano could say: "*Totus non tam orans quam oratio factus*: he was not so much praying as prayer personified."<sup>12</sup> Yet such

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 16, 24; Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 1 (Words, p. 250, 12-15).

<sup>2</sup> II Celano, n. 15 (cf. Words, n. 30, p. 54).

<sup>3</sup> Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda minor*, ch. 7, n. 4. The present chapter incorporates much material from K. Esser, "Die Lehre des hl. Franziskus von der Selbstverleugnung," in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 18 (1955) pp. 161-174.

<sup>4</sup> II Celano, n. 196.

<sup>5</sup> II Celano, n. 211.

<sup>6</sup> III Celano, n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> II Celano, n. 127; cf. above, ch. 3, part 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. II Cel., n. 135: "Versus amor Christi in eandem imaginem transformatur amantem."

<sup>9</sup> II Cel., n. 201; cf. above, ch. 6, note 20.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to the Chapter (Words, p. 144, 30ff.).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. (p. 147, 6-9).

<sup>12</sup> II Celano, n. 95.



devotion is possible only for one who has completely overcome self, as Francis suggests in instructing his friars "not only to mortify their passions and to repress the inclinations of the flesh, but to mortify their external senses also, through which death gains entry to the soul."<sup>13</sup> The spiritual man, he knew, has no greater enemy than his own self,<sup>14</sup> especially when he wishes to lose himself in prayer before God. On the other hand, when such prayer is offered in purity of heart, God comes to us to take up his dwelling in all fulness. If therefore we wish to offer ourselves in prayer, we can do so only if we offer the sacrifice of self in our whole life. One can lose himself in God only if he has lost self in God in all other phases of his life.

## II. The Goal of Self-Abnegation.

If we here consider the goal of self-denial and mortification, we do not use the word in a philosophical sense, as though we were concerned with the relation of cause and effect. To posit a determined "goal" in the strict sense would be for Francis to interfere with God's work in us, since from God alone comes whatever is good in man. We should rather rephrase the question, to ask: to what, "insofar as the grace of the Almighty aids us," does a life of self-denial and abnegation lead us?

For Francis, such a life becomes, so to speak, the fulfillment of all he understood by poverty without and within, since it is a life "without anything of one's own," a life in which a man "empties" himself of everything, a life which is a constant dying to self. Hence in his praise of the virtues Francis expresses this simply and plainly: "There is no man in all the world who can possess any of you unless he first die" to himself.<sup>15</sup> To die to self is to deny oneself, to keep back nothing of self for oneself, to be wholly "pure" of heart, to live in total poverty of spirit. Only when we practice such a living death can our life be truly religious and centered on God. Only in such as do this is there that void into which the charity of God can be poured forth to overflowing.<sup>16</sup>

The very first "goal" then of self-denial and mortification is to taste the joys of divine love, a lesson Francis learned in his own conversion when God told him: "If thou wouldst know me, despise thyself."<sup>17</sup> Whoever wishes to know God and experience his love must condemn himself, rise above himself, and — as Francis once expressed

<sup>13</sup> I Cel., n. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. II Cel., n. 122.

<sup>15</sup> Salute to the Virtues (Words, p. 73).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 and 23 (Words, p. 277, 9-19; and p. 282, 28-283, 28).

<sup>17</sup> II Celano, n. 9.

it — be stripped, "*expropriatus*," of any desire to possess anything.<sup>18</sup> Only when he is free from everything earthly, but especially free from self, can he really love God and truly serve him.<sup>19</sup>

Self-denial and mortification are likewise means of removing whatever might hinder the action of God in us. Because they make us truly poor, they help us submit unreservedly to the will of God in our regard. This Francis implies in speaking of the denial required by obedience: "That man abandons all he possesses and loses his body (that is, himself) who yields his whole self to obedience in the hands of his superior."<sup>20</sup> Such "true obedience,"<sup>21</sup> as the expression of radical self-denial and total abnegation, is that complete submission to the will of God which can be found only in that man who has given up all will of his own. For such a man who is wholly centered on God and God alone, all things work together unto good — man, and things, and circumstances, no matter who or what they may be, help, not hinder, him in loving God. The "spirit of the Lord" alone controls and guides his life because he has surrendered himself completely to the "*sancta operatio*, the holy workings" of that spirit.

Lastly, the primary purpose of such mortification is not the sanctification of the individual but the good of the kingdom of God. For the Franciscan, one word sums up the whole practice of such abnegation: "*minoritas*; the virtue of being little." Only when his sons preserved that "littleness" did Francis believe they could best "bring forth fruit in the Church of God."<sup>22</sup> He did not say, we might note, "for the Church," but "in the Church." There is no greater obstacle to the inner life of the Church, to her growth as the kingdom of God, than the vain desire for power or domination to which her members too often succumb, even in matters ascetical. She has need therefore of such among her members who strive to be absolutely poor and "subject to every human creature for God's sake,"<sup>23</sup> who are thereby truly "lesser" (*minores*) than all others. This is the vocation of the followers of Saint Francis, to "bring forth fruit in the Church of God" through utter "*minoritas*" attained by way of self-abnegation and mortification, to "edify" her from within, and thus in her and through her prepare as "pilgrims and strangers"<sup>24</sup> for the glory that is to come.

<sup>18</sup> II Celano, n. 194 (cf. Words, n. 56, p. 62).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 (p. 277, 9-18).

<sup>20</sup> Admonitions, n. 3 (p. 131, 18-21).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Letter to a Minister (p. 161, 7).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. II Celano, n. 148; for details, see chapter 18, part 2, below.

<sup>23</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 16 (p. 267, 24-25); and Letter to the Faithful (p. 190, 4-6); and especially chapter 18 below.

<sup>24</sup> Final Rule, ch. 6 (p. 289, 19).



## III. The Practice of Mortification.

If such are the motives for the life of mortification and self-denial Francis proposes to us, and the goal to which such a life leads, the question still remains how such an ideal is to be practiced. This is no idle question, since we shall soon discover that Francis said very little indeed on specific forms or practices of mortification. For him, it was much more important to emphasize the spirit of self-denial and our whole attitude toward it than to lay down definite norms and regulations. He leaves no room to doubt that for God's sake and for his kingdom we must deny self and mortify all inordinate movements of self-love. But how this was to be done in individual circumstances, he preferred to leave to the guidance of "divine inspiration," and not hamper the free workings of God's grace by detailed and pre-established rules.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time Francis laid great stress on the true Christian spirit in which his followers were to face the problems of daily living and contacts with his neighbor in his weakness as much as he would wish to be treated by him were he in a like situation.<sup>26</sup> He warned them therefore against the misuse of the time God gives us here, which "the flesh (self) so often wastes on useless trifles."<sup>27</sup> All the friars should rather "remember, wherever they are, that they have surrendered themselves in soul and body to the Lord Jesus Christ; and for love of him must expose themselves to enemies visible and invisible."<sup>28</sup> This attitude is of particular importance in time of sickness. Hence Francis asks "the sick friar to give thanks to the Creator for all things, and to desire to be whatever God wills for him, whether healthy or sick; for all those whom God has destined for eternal life, he instructs by the goad of suffering and infirmity and by compunction of spirit; for thus says the Lord: "Those whom I love I rebuke and chastise."<sup>29</sup>

Certainly we are not wrong in saying that for Francis the whole life he proposed to his sons, especially the poverty and humility it demands of them, is itself a perfect pattern of self-denial and abnegation. A life truly formed and shaped by the Rule of the Friars Minor, that of Saint Clare, or of the Third Order, contains in itself all that the

<sup>25</sup> Fasting and abstinence are prescribed according to the usage of that epoch. Yet Francis remarks expressly that "in time of clear necessity the friars may make use of whatever is necessary for them, as the Lord gives them grace; for necessary has no law" (Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 9: p. 263, 1-4). Both Rules make exceptions, too, in regard to the clothing of the friars.

<sup>26</sup> Admonitions, n. 18 (p. 138, 26-29): cf. Letter to a Minister (p. 161, 1ff.).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. II Celano, n. 134.

<sup>28</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 16 (p. 268, 16-21).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., ch. 10 (p. 263, 14-21).

Gospel demands of self-denial and abnegation. Whoever follows his Rule faithfully will be free from everything, free from self, free entirely for God.

At the same time, Francis would never let us forget the words of the Gospel, that no matter what we do, even to the utmost of human powers, in mortifying and denying ourselves, we must realize that before God we are but useless servants (cf. Lk. 17, 10). "We do not save ourselves. It is "God alone who will redeem us through his mercy" and "by his grace alone."<sup>30</sup> We can never let ourselves think that asceticism, however systematically pursued, will make us holy. We do but remove thereby the obstacles to God's work in us! Were asceticism made an independent means or an end in itself, it would be a hindrance and not a help to the work of divine grace.

As a result, our asceticism must be governed and guided by a virtue which played no small role in Francis' own approach to penitential practices: "He told the friars that every offering made to God was to be seasoned with salt (Levit., 13), and warned that each must consider his own physical capacity in honoring God. It was just as much a sin, he asserted, to deny 'indiscrete' what the body needed as it was to fall into gluttony and give the body more than was needful."<sup>31</sup> According to Saint Bonaventure, Francis "taught the friars to use discretion as the 'charioteer' of the virtues; not that discretion which the flesh would advise, but that which Christ taught, whose most holy life is the sure model of all perfection."<sup>32</sup> In the last analysis, then, such "discretion" means that we are completely docile to the grace of God, and with holy prudence judge what we must do to follow Christ. It is by no means synonymous with human prudence<sup>33</sup> and certainly not with laxity. Rather, for Francis and the Franciscan it has an eminently Christian meaning: it is that virtue in the following of Christ which leads us to "serve Christ the Lord without any reluctance; *sine ulla repugnantia*."<sup>34</sup> For our Seraphic Father, *discretio* is intimately linked with *pietas et misericordia*, piety and mercy: "Though he earnestly introduced his brothers to an austere life, he did not favor an ironclad severity which was not tempered by mercy (*pietas*) nor seasoned with the salt of discretion."<sup>35</sup> The Saint himself says: "Where there is mercy

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., ch. 23 (p. 282, 23-24): Concluding prayer of the Letter to the Chapter (p. 150, 18).

<sup>31</sup> II Celano, n. 22 (cf. also Words, n. 127-128, p. 99f.).

<sup>32</sup> *Legenda maior*, ch. 5, n. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Discretio*, from the Latin *discernere*, to judge or distinguish between things, might well be called discernment in English, rather than prudence.

<sup>34</sup> II Celano, n. 211 (Words, n. 266, p. 228).

<sup>35</sup> *Legenda maior*, ch. 5, n. 7.



and discernment (*discreetio*), there is neither superfluity nor hardness of heart."<sup>36</sup>

Piety and discretion must be the judges whether what one is engaged in at the moment is actually, here and now, in accord with the will of God, whether it is done "with the blessing of God," "as the Lord shall give one grace," "through divine inspiration," "as may seem to them most advisable according to God," "as the Lord shall ever inspire them." Such phrases, used so frequently by Francis in regard to self-denial and penance, characterize that Franciscan discretion and moderation which is closely linked with the exhortation of Christ: "Be merciful, therefore, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6, 36). They remind us that in the end God is our guide and not any self-appointed standards of asceticism which might well indicate that even in this area of religious life we seek to impose our own will. Only when such a selfless spirit pervades us will our asceticism, our self-denial and mortification, retain its proper role and truly give glory to God.

#### IV. Application.

In his teaching on self-abnegation, Francis is careful to give first place to God in the actions of man. "The Lord gave me" is a key-phrase in his Testament, and indeed in his whole life even down to the finest detail. When he was told on his sick-bed by God's representative that he had lived too strict a life, he reacted immediately: "Rejoice, Brother Body, and spare me, because now I gladly do what you wish and hasten to fulfill your complaints and desires."<sup>37</sup> The asceticism of Francis is thus free of all obstinate attachment to self-imposed goals, for its primary concern is to let God's grace work unhindered in the hearts of men.

At the same time, Francis is careful to give first place to God in judging the worth of man. "God alone is good, and to him belongs every good," is a thought that filled his prayer<sup>38</sup> and colored his whole teaching on asceticism, self-denial and penance. To God alone, and not to self, he ascribed all the graces of his life, graces which God "the great Almsgiver"<sup>39</sup> had given to one unworthy of them. Because he did not wish to be "a robber of God's treasury,"<sup>40</sup> everything to him was the work of God, the gift of God, and God himself the greatest good a Christian could possess. Thus Francis kept his teaching and practice of asceticism free from all human conceit.

<sup>36</sup> Admonitions, n. 27 (Words, p. 142, 19-21).

<sup>37</sup> II Celano, n. 211 (Words, n. 266, p. 228).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the preceding chapter, end of part 2.

<sup>39</sup> II Celano, n. 77.

<sup>40</sup> II Cel., n. 99 (Words, n. 73, p. 76).

Finally, Francis was careful to give first place to God's love in man's love. "In *sancta caritate, quae Deus est*: in the holy love which God is,"<sup>41</sup> was the spirit in which he sought to do everything. He could not have put it more clearly or pointedly. Nothing must stand in the way of God's love as it comes down to the heart of man. Thus is the asceticism of Saint Francis free from all self-seeking, self-centered love. Instead, it desires but one thing: to attain that love which overflows from God to us, and in turn to give that love to others. Where this happens, there is the kingdom of God.

All this, we might conclude, Francis sums up in his beautiful prayer: "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, give to us poor ones for Thy sake to do what we know Thou wilt, and always to will what pleases Thee, that inwardly cleansed, inwardly enlightened and set aflame by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by Thy grace alone come to Thee, O most High, who in perfect Trinity and simple Unity livest and reignest and hast all glory, God Almighty, through all ages of ages. Amen."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 (p. 277, 8-9).

<sup>42</sup> Concluding prayer of the Letter to the Chapter (p. 150, 10-21).



# Jesus Christ; High Priest of Creation

Michael D. Mellich, O.F.M.

## II. THE LITURGY

O HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL,  
O holy Guardian Angel,  
Be ever at my side!  
By God thou hast been given  
To be my Friend and Guide;  
By thee I'm not forsaken,  
Whatever may betide.

To thee, my strong Protector,  
My troubles I confide.

With constant love thou carest  
For me by day and night;  
Be ever my adviser,  
That I may do what's right.  
Oh, keep my soul and body  
From ev'ry harm and blight,  
And through life's darksome dangers  
Lead me to Heaven's light!

Father Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.

In the preceding part of this article, we have seen that the whole universe, summed up in Christ, was created by God to give Him glory—that since all creatures culminate in Christ the High Priest, the whole created world can be called, at least in a figurative or applied sense, “liturgical.” But we have already observed that Fr. Benigar’s description of the universe as a temple is not to be taken figuratively, that it is the literal truth. It now remains for us to see how Christ exercises His Priesthood in the concrete—how Christ leads all back to God through the Liturgy. For it is in the Liturgy that God receives that very glory for which He created the universe!

### A. The Pre-eminence of the Liturgy

Martial Lekeux, O.F.M., in his recent work, *The Art of Prayer*, explains that “man, as well as the angels, is above all an adorer, a being constituted for prayer. The meaning of life is adoration.”<sup>17</sup>

This is the inescapable conclusion which must follow from any serious consideration of man’s ultimate destiny. And this is what St. Francis had in mind when he insisted that whatever work his followers did, they were to be careful not to “extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which all created things are meant to contribute.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus, by its very nature prayer, which has for its principal object the uniting of the creature and his Creator is an act of love, is an act of the highest dignity and importance. But this is only half the picture. In the supernatural order which God has in fact willed, we do not pray in isolation; rather Christ prays in us, for we “have received the Spirit of adoration, which makes us cry out, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). Christ gives an inestimable value to all our prayers before they reach the Father. Has He Himself not told us this? “As long as you live on in Me, and My words live on in you, you will be able to make what request you will, and have it granted” (John 15:7).

Nevertheless, all prayer does not have the same value. The Liturgy, which is the official prayer of the Mystical Christ, is far nobler and more efficacious than any private prayer. It is not merely a collectivity of private prayer, but it belongs to a completely different order. As Valentine Breton, O.F.M., writes, the sacraments and other liturgical

<sup>17</sup> Martial Lekeux, O.F.M., *The Art of Prayer* (tr. P. Olligny: Chicago, 1960), 3.  
<sup>18</sup> *Rule of the Friars Minor*, chapter 5.



actions are necessarily of a higher order, "since their efficacy bears a more authentic divine stamp of approval."<sup>19</sup> Breton's reason is not the ultimate one, however; for one might ask, "Why do these actions bear a more authentic stamp of approval?" And the answer would have to be that Christ Himself prays in them—not only as Mediator, as He does in our private prayers, but in an altogether different and more sublime manner.

Indeed, if the words of Lekeux are true, if man is "above all, an adorer, a being constituted for prayer," then they certainly apply in the fullest sense to Christ, Who is the perfect Adorer, and Who alone gives God perfect praise and adoration. For Christ alone realizes perfectly that purpose for which God decided to create the universe. Pius XII has explained that the entire Liturgy, comprising the Mass, the sacraments, and the Divine Office, aims at uniting our souls with Christ and sanctifying them through Christ "so that He may be honored and through Him and in Him the Most Holy Trinity" may receive the infinite glory which Christ alone can render to God.<sup>20</sup>

#### B. The Liturgy as "Reductio"

The Liturgy, moreover, is not confined to this visible world of ours: it is carried out in heaven also:

And I saw a great multitude, past all counting, taken from all nations and tribes and peoples and languages. These stood before the throne in the Lamb's presence, clothed in white robes, with palm-branches in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, To our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, all saving power belongs. And all the angels that were standing round the throne, round the elders and the living figures, fell prostrate before the throne and paid God worship; Amen, they cried, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God through endless ages, Amen. (Apoc. 7:9-12).

But this universal homage paid through Christ to the Holy Trinity corresponds perfectly to what we have described as the third division or stage of theology: the consummation or "reductio" (leading back) of all things to God through Christ. Again, in the words of Pius XII, "By assuming human nature, the Divine Word introduced into this earthly exile a hymn which is sung in heaven for all eternity. He unites to Himself the whole human race and with it sings this hymn to the praise of God."<sup>21</sup> Although the Holy Father speaks explicitly only of the "human race," there is in reality no distinction to be made between men and angels in this context; as the Preface

<sup>19</sup> Valentine-M. Breton, O.F.M., *Franciscan Spirituality* (tr. Frey; Chicago, 1957), 31.

<sup>20</sup> Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (tr. N.C.W.C.), n. 171.  
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 144.

says, "per quem maiestatem tuam laudant angeli"; it is through Christ that the angels honor God, because He is their Head just as He is ours, and He offers their praise to God just as He offers ours. Bettoni has expressed this truth well in this passage:

By assuming human nature the Word is placed at the center of creation and in condition to thrust His divine influence in all directions, toward the depths or toward the heights, and to exercise His function as Head over all irrational creatures,

on the one hand, and over the angels, on the other.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly the great doxology which closes the Canon leaves little doubt in the matter: "per ipsum et cum ipso, et in ipso est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti omnis honor et gloria . . ."

A few moments ago, we saw that Pius XII enumerates three principal aspects of the Liturgy: the Mass, the sacraments, and the Divine Office. A brief consideration of each of these aspects will make our explanation of the "reductio" more clear and concrete.

The Mass (here understood more as sacrifice than as sacrament) is the Liturgy in the strictest possible sense; therefore we may consider it as the "reductio" in the strictest sense too. In the Mass, Christ unites within Himself all the angels, all men, and all material creatures, aptly symbolized by the species of bread (a unity composed of many grains of wheat) and wine (produced by the juice of many grapes), and He offers this holocaust as a perfect act of adoration to His heavenly Father in the identical sacrifice which He once consummated in a bloody manner on Calvary. Thus He fulfills the destiny of the whole of creation by giving infinite glory and honor to God.

If we consider the Sacraments (including the Mass in its sacramental aspect), we see two important features worthy of our examination: the cause-element and the sign-element.

Insofar as the sacraments are instrumental causes of grace, they effect infallibly a vital union between Christ and His member who receives them. This is precisely the penultimate stage of St. Bonaventure's "reductio," however; in the *Hexameron*, the Seraphic Doctor speaks explicitly of our union with Christ in His Mystical Body, a union effected by grace, which comes to us through the sacraments.<sup>23</sup>

The sign-element of the sacraments—both in the essential and accidental rites—is well explained by P. Albrighi as being part and parcel of the work of the teaching Church as she strives to unite us more closely to Christ.<sup>24</sup> And this truth is discussed at length from the

<sup>22</sup> Bettoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 86f.

<sup>23</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Hexameron*, I, 20 (ed. Quarachi, V, 332f).

<sup>24</sup> Pietro Albrighi, *Sacra Liturgia* (Vicenza, 1940), 13f.



ascetical viewpoint by Breton, who points out that the Liturgy is one of the primary means of achieving more perfect knowledge of Christ and hence greater intimacy with Him. According to Breton, the Liturgy is a living representation of the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels. Participation in the prayer-life of the Church therefore allows us to increase our understanding of Christ's own life, to take part in it, and so to be united more perfectly to Christ.<sup>25</sup> Pius XII has observed that this sign-element of the Liturgy was developed by the Church so that her teaching authority might "reach the minds and hearts of Christ's people more readily."<sup>26</sup>

In another part of his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the same Pope speaks of the Divine Office as an integral part of the Liturgy. He goes on to say that the Divine Office is "the prayer of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, offered to God in the name and on behalf of all Christians, when recited by priests and other ministers of the Church and by religious who are deputed by the Church for this."<sup>27</sup>

The Mass, the sacraments, and the Office, then, are three aspects of one reality: the worship of the Mystical Christ; they are the concrete setting in which we find realized the more or less theoretical explanation of St. Bonaventure, that Christ "leads back" all of creation to God.

Brief as it has been, the foregoing explanation of Christ's threefold liturgical activity suffices to show the truth and importance of Benigar's description of the universe as a "temple for the glory of God" and of Christ as the "cornerstone" and "High Priest" of this temple. The perspective in which we have viewed the Liturgy has enabled us to see it more clearly in its true light as the ultimate stage of the cycle of God's activity *ad extra*; truly, we may apply to it the words Scheeben uses to describe the Incarnation, and we may call it the act in which "creation receives its ultimate and most august consecration" through Christ.<sup>28</sup>

## APPENDIX: THE SUBSTANCE AND THE MODE OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Accustomed as we are to thinking of ourselves as the center of the universe, we men ordinarily view the priesthood, and in particular the priesthood of Christ in the New Law, as consisting essentially in offering sacrifice for sin, in preaching, and in dispensing the Sacraments.

<sup>25</sup> Valentine-M. Breton, O.F.M., *In Christ's Company* (tr. M. D. Melach, O.F.M.: Chicago, 1962), 48-50.

<sup>26</sup> Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (ed. cit.), n. 52.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 144.

<sup>28</sup> Matthias J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (tr. Volpert: St. Louis, 1946), 402.

—particularly the Eucharist and Penance. These are, of course, priestly functions, but they are only the forms of priestly activity, not its essence. The essence of the priesthood is mediation: giving God's gifts to creatures and returning their homage to Him.

If this is the essence of priestly activity, however, we can easily see that Christ is the priest par excellence, independently of sin or sacrifice or any other particular concrete reality in our experience: He is priest primarily because He is the cornerstone of creation. St. Paul draws out the implications of this central importance of Christ in Col. 1:16, where he tells us that all things, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, were made in Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.

The priesthood of Christ therefore consists in summing up the whole universe in His single act of self-oblation to God—in ordering and unifying all things so that they can reach their fulfillment in Him. In this perspective Christ could still be the High Priest of creation if there had been no sin—as Head of all creatures, He could conceivably have gathered their worship and presented it to God in a quite different manner from the one He uses in reality.

But we can make no certain statement about such a hypothetical universe; nor are we seriously interested in doing so. There can be no substance without a mode, and so we must look to concrete reality to determine the mode of Christ's priesthood.

This distinction between essence and mode is a traditional one generally used with respect to the Incarnation itself: the term *essence* or *substance* denoting the mere fact of the Incarnation, and the term *mode* denoting the kind of Incarnation God decreed—i.e., an Incarnation in passible flesh. We are using the distinction the same way here with regard to our Lord's priesthood. The essence, we said, lies in unification and mediation; the mode, as we shall now explain, is one of suffering and sacrifice.

Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M., expressed this fact well when he wrote that "God, in His eternal wisdom, decided in favor of a suffering Christ rather than a glorious Christ."<sup>29</sup> This is important: Christ did not suffer simply because man sinned; that is putting the cart before the horse. Man was permitted to sin only that Christ might draw greater good out of the evil through His suffering. This is what Garrigou-Lagrange means when he says that "original sin was permitted for the sake of Christ."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M., "Suffering," *The Cord* 10 (1960), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.F.M., "Mortuum Incarnationis fuit motivum misericordiae," *Angelicum* 7 (1930), 299.



In His wisdom, then, as Buytaert says, God decided in favor of a suffering Christ. He decided that the merits Christ would acquire, chiefly through His Passion and death, would play an important and basic role in His plan for the universe. This is why suffering and sacrifice, insofar as they are united with those of Christ or prefigure those of Christ, are inseparable, in the present order of things, from the priesthood itself, why, in other words, they form its "mode."



## WHERE LOVE IS

Where love is  
There is joy —

And love is like  
A deep, deep singing,  
Out of all measure  
For us mortals to gauge.

Joy is out  
With the larks singing —  
Singing unasked for  
Into eternity's fair  
Shimmering vault.

Branded with these two  
— Love, Joy —  
Firm-joined in cruciform  
Stands Francis  
And holds their red blossoming  
In his bare palms,  
A love-rose on his heart,  
Singing.

*Sister M. Antonina, F.M.M.*



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### MONTHLY CONFERENCE

## Keepers of the Faith

*Father Regis Marshall, O.F.M.*

### *The Summons to Sainthood*

There simply is no choice. A summons has been issued. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). These words of Christ are not a request, not an invitation nor an entreaty, but a command. We are bidden to be friends of Christ. And the Master assures us, "You are My friends if you do the things I command you" (John 15:15). Although we are creatures gifted with a free will, saintliness is not a matter of preference. The inescapable truth is that we are obliged to become holy. For this purpose did God create us. There is no other. We place an encouraging hand on the shoulder of a young citizen, and remind him that some day he may become the President of these United States. I prompt a youngster to persevere in her music lessons; Carnegie Hall may be the arena of her success. Sanctity, however, is not a cause of "may" or "might" but "must". Point-blank the Son of God says, "Be you perfect." Just as no physical object is exempt from the law of gravitation, so no human has any other goal save that of union with the Creator. This union is achieved on earth through grace. In heaven, as a reward, it will be translated into a personal, intimate friendship with God without end. The creative hand of God that permits the pursuance of holiness is the same hand that prevents man from lapsing into nothingness. Hence, to God there is owed an attachment of mind, heart, and will. To know, love, and serve God is the most sane of our endeavors. For this is the "reasonable following" preached by St. Paul. Such is the following that Christ demands as a necessary condition. "He who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:39). Such an aspiration is the most representative of our nature; the most intelligent response to the summons to sainthood; a delightful source of joy to the all-holy God. It spells out our responsibility, and is imitative of Christ's personal holiness. "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). To hustle for holiness in this life is to be pleasing to the thrice-holy God in heaven.



*Esteem for the Saints.*

We admire the saints. We revere them. We boast of favorites. Saints are the source of inspiration and direction. But frequently our esteem for the saints is so exaggerated as to place them far beyond our reach. The only contact ever expected with them is through the medium of prayer. Like the pot of gold at the rainbow's end, they are forever elusive. As exclusive residents, they dwell on the "other side of the tracks". Theirs is a performance to be applauded, but never emulated. So exalted have we imagined them, that we shrink from offering them any competition. With a humility that is fictitious we even use them as an excuse in rationalizing our shortcomings. "After all I'm not a saint!" And summarily, another heart-warming article of the Creed, the belief in the communion of saints, suffers from man's shortsighted interpretation.

A mountain climber who insisted on imagining the defects of his equipment, the slippery shale of a steep cliff, or the depths of the valley below, would never climb the mountain. A martyr who concentrated his wits on boiling oil, the burning fagots, the weight of the stone would soon grow faint of heart. What sustains the climber and the martyr is a goal which fires them with ambition, promotes their zeal and spurs them on to "run so as to win the prize". However dark the cloud of an obstacle may be, it is never allowed to obscure their goal. Clouds are always on the move, and somewhere the sun is always shining. As lofty as the saints are, they are not our goal. Rather, they exhort and encourage us to attain the goal that is now theirs, the goal of God in heaven. Should we surpass a given saint in holiness and the acquisition of this goal, we would by that very success increase his joy. To further God's glory is to gladden any saintly heart. As it was with our Saviour, so the reciprocal prayer of each saint to our Father in heaven begs "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me, may be in them" (John 17:26).

Was there anyone in Galilee more accessible than Jesus Christ? "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to Me" (Matt. 19:14). Is there anyone more available in our town than the same Christ in the Holy Eucharist? "Everyone that asks, receives: and he that seeks, finds: and to him who knocks, it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:8). And where could one find a prayer more invitational than the one from the lips of the Master Himself, "That where I am, there you also may be" (John 14:3). If the Son of God beseeches our intimacy, then why does our estimation for the saints render them so remote? Our esteem for them should certainly recognize their solicitous concern for us. Like

a big brother or elder sister, they desire for each of us the maximum of joy and happiness. Their saintly lives should evoke awe and admiration. But are they not also constantly stepping front and center, to remind us that one or the other of them was the one-hundredth sheep, the one that was lost, sought for and found by Christ; that some were laborers who came at the eleventh hour and also received each a denarius; that some were desperately in need of mercy; were the boy or girl next door; the one perhaps thought least likely to succeed; the abysmal failure in this world, whose only claim to publicity was an abbreviated notice in the obituary column? These accomplishments should also be the basis of our esteem for those whose company we are commanded to join as lovable friends of God.

*Saints are Ordinary.*

Right order calls for loving God in preference to all created things. To love God with an undivided love is the supreme vocation of all mankind. All other vocations are subordinate to this cardinal one. Every other vocation is but a whisper when compared with this the most audible of calls. We preserve the right order when we dutifully respond to this vocation. We answer this call when we pattern our minds after the mind of God, and synchronize our wills with the divine will. This is the symphony of the saintly life, so ordinary because it is never "out of order". In fact it is so ordinary that it is usually lived unnoticed, and beyond the curious inspection of the public eye. Like the twinkling stars in the heavens, such lives are spent in our midst in all their splendor, but are the object of interest to relatively few. Being of one mind and one heart with God, theirs is a perfect co-ordination. Clothed with the ordinary garb of sanctifying grace, over and above a natural neatness they are possessive of a supernatural smartness. If, as it is said, the best things in life are free, then I dare say man's noblest efforts are also the usual, the ordinary. Receptive to Divine assistance, which certainly orders and harmonizes any life, becoming a saint is simply doing what comes supernaturally.

On the other hand, it is the perverse will that introduces tension and friction in a human life. Refusing to mesh gears with grace, it stands idle. The sinner, with his betrayed allegiance, is really the most extraordinary of beings, and hell, the hotbed of disorder and disruption, the most extraordinary of places. To witness a critic all enthused and enthralled over a tapestry that has been exhibited backwards is to look upon an extraordinary man. To turn one's back on God is the most disorderly of all conduct, quite extraordinary.



*Saints in Exile.*

Since the Renaissance, God has been regarded by many as an antique. Having been evicted from the hearts of men. His proper abode is now the museum. He Who made us from the dust of the earth is left to gather dust with the other discarded oddities of by-gone generations. Forgotten and impersonal, He has been driven into the cob-webbed corner of man's conscience. In His stead there now appears the pioneer, the man of genius, the hero. Man is the main attraction of modern times. Created as a child of God, man remains partially true to this image, but as an infant who of a sudden has discovered that it has a tongue and becomes enamoured of it. With a dedication that spares no zeal and initiative, man has made sizeable strides in promoting self-interests. He has become so very proficient in this game of solitaire. He is sitting on top of the world, but only because that same world has been taken by him and turned upside down. To him we could so appropriately offer the toast, "bottoms up". Certainly he thinks for himself. After all, first things first. Of course he "lives modern". He thrives on novelty and plaudits are the barometer of his success. His is a new religion, whose main altar is consecrated to self-education. With the cult of personalities we have its "litany of saints". The mere sight of a famous personality is for some akin to an "apparition". Autographs are treasured as "relics". In a secularism that is the deepest cult of all, man, the apple of God's eye, the select of His boundless love, banishes his Benefactor and tries to go it alone. As his fare he prefers shadows to substance, the rose-colored to the real, the created to the Creator. Sick men acquire strange tastes, and today man is sick. The orange is now relished for its peel and not the fruit within; the frame determines the value of a masterful painting. Logically consistent, the Incarnation becomes merely another birthday, another red counter on the calendar. The Redemption has no more historical value than the sale of Manhattan. Grace is as superfluous as a crutch to an Olympic miler. Charity, the bedrock of all the virtues, becomes an inflated but sterilized slogan: love but a candy-coated sentimentality. God is reduced to a tall tale. And the saints? Just a fantastic race, a mythical tribe. Little wonder, then, that the lives of saints become but bed-time stories, sedatives for fancy-minded children, coloring books for the imagination. One cannot hate a father and still love his children. When God is banished, His saints follow Him into exile. The "true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (John 1:9) is snuffed out. Man has spiritually short-circuited his world.

*Saints in Disguise.*

There is no variety like that of the saints. Whatever be the project or profession, there can be had for the choosing a saint as its patron or patroness. Likewise, there is no originality to compare with that of the saints, except it be that of God's love for man which they faithfully imitate. An earnest lover never exhausts the possibilities of demonstrating his love, and the saints are lovers without peer. How often has it been remarked that the face of a gentle nun or a kind priest radiates sanctity? How often does the countenance of the mortally sick reflect a holy serenity? But again, how often is saintliness veiled and curtained from the business world. To the all-seeing eye of God the saints are the "greatest show on earth". To us, what appear to be just plain folk are sometimes saints in disguise. The capering clown may be to his public a frolicing fool. In the privacy of his chamber the confessions welling to the surface of a contrite heart may resemble those of St. Augustine. The white uniform of a street cleaner may be outwardly symbolic of an inward purity. Who would ever detect the penitential sweeps of his broom? The garbage collector's tolerance may be a heroic virtue practiced daily within the definition of his Master's words, "The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and it is they that defile a man" (Matt. 15:18). The pretty lass posing so pertly for a commercial may be the acme of humility. Yes, to us, they are saints in disguise; to God, "precious in the sight of the Lord".

At one particular juncture of Christ's sojourn on earth, it was inquisitively asked, "Whence therefore hath He all these things?" (Matt. 13:56). Whence, too, is the source of wisdom and the seat of virtue for the saints? As is the case with genuine truth and beauty, all holiness comes from within like "the glory of the king's daughter" (Ps. 44:14). There may be many a wolf in sheep's clothing beguiling man. However, God is beyond deception, and encouragingly reminds us, "I know mine and mine know Me" (John 10:14). On that day of eternal exposure; on that expected occasion when Christ will personally canonize His own; when the angelic choir itself will render the *Te Deum*; when the sheep will be irrevocably separated from the goats; when all disguises will be removed; on that day the clown, the cleaner, the collector, and every saint, will be vindicated. On that day all will be given to know first hand "whence therefore, they, the saints, had all these things". For, in a day when status is determined in terms of social and economic capacity; when the ingenious invention and artful application of cosmetics has approached the ultimate in disguise; when everyday duties were exacted in the milieu of mundane attractions and distractions, these persistently continued to live by the spirit. They nurtured, safeguarded, and advanced



their friendship with God. They not only prayed, they *were* a prayer. They not only sacrificed, they *were* an oblation. They were not only our fellow-citizens but our dearest neighbors. For they, who loved God second to none, loved us as they loved themselves. To be loved on account of a valiant love of God is a love to be gratefully cherished. There is no disguising that!

#### *Saints in the Making.*

Saints are not fashioned in heaven, but on earth. The approaching night of death must be anticipated by working while there yet remains the light of day. Indeed it is in this world that the gem is cut, ground, and polished. Only in the next is the jewel displayed to the eternal delight of God. It is in the heat of temptations and passions that the forging is done. With our last breath the mold will be final. It is on earth that the soul does its footwork, so runs "as not without a purpose" (I Cor. 9:26). The trophy is awarded hereafter.

As with cleanliness, holiness is a personal affair. Though we all possess a like mind, heart and will, serving God is proper to the individual. Service to God cannot be delegated. One does not become a saint by proxy. Nor is anyone absolved from seeking sanctity. All are given the grace to achieve, and the effort demanded of each must be all out, maximum. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength" (Mark 12:30). The popular conviction that admits a double standard for holiness, one for religious and another for layfolk, is false. As though says Fr. D'Arcy, "the pegs of the high jump are deliberately lowered" for the layman. There is but one standard for all. Whatever be our state in life, God is to be loved with our whole strength.

As an auxiliary to the ambitious college student a series of texts have been published, entitled, "Mathematics Made Easy", "Philosophy Made Easy", and the like. Their value may be quite dubious, but, without a doubt, there never will appear such a volume entitled, "Sanctity Made Easy". Struggling for holiness may be a joy, a consolation, a peace of heart and mind, but never is it easy. With the exception of the Holy Mother of God, no creature in this world ever "has it made". Sanctity and the cross are synonymous, with an association more intimate than that of body and soul. Our bidden daily chore is to carry that cross in this world, and to glory in it in the next. The cross makes of holiness in this world the most burdensome of professions but, in cooperation with God, also the most lightsome. Our degree of sanctity is measured by the firmness we have on the Cross. For the saint in the making, there is no alternative. Of necessity, Calvary is part, if not the whole, of our itinerary. Without the Cross there is no crown.

#### *A Saintly Legacy.*

At the moment that St. Francis of Assisi revealed his last will and said, "This is my Testament, which I, little brother Francis, make for you, my blessed brethren", we thereby inherited an incalculable treasure. Seven hundred years have elapsed, and we still live off the interest of his saintly example. Never was a man so poor, a redemptive world to him so rich. People were so lovable because God became one of them. Francis was a worldling to the extent that he regarded it as the proving ground for holiness; the locale whence souls lifted hearts and minds to God; the native soil of the Holy Eucharist about which the saints rallied. It was indeed a Franciscan world, the world of the *Our Father*. In the Lord's Prayer Francis saw the ideal harmony between heaven and earth, Creator and creature, the honor due God and the obedience owed by men. As taught to the Apostles, the *Our Father* would emphasize a virtue that St. Francis would bequeath to those with the courage to aim for holiness, "to strain forward to what is before" and "press on towards the goal" (Phil. 3:15). That virtue is docility. Animals were so docile to this holy friar because he in turn was so pliant before God. Gratefully did he accept the reproof of the stranger who reminded him that he could very readily become the most self-willed of creatures, the world's greatest sinner. Sister Clare's advice was so taken to heart as to determine the course of the Order for centuries to come. So submissively did he bend an ear to every scriptural promise an exhortation. Brother Fire and Sister Death were his instructors. Lady Poverty was on the faculty too. But it was from the docile Christ that Francis took his advanced degree. And the diploma that he merited was not one daintily embossed on parchment, but a certified impression indelibly imprinted on his fragile body, the marks of approval, the Sacred Wounds of His Master. Yes, docility is a portion of the Poverello's legacy that leads to the land of the living. In his dying, Francis willed it to us. Here was a docility inspired by St. Paul, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not inflamed? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness" (2 Cor. 11:29). And Francis of Assisi did have one patent weakness. He just could not resist the outstretched arms of the Crucified. In his docility, he yearned to become the saintly extension of those arms so as to encircle and embrace more securely his sons and daughters, and draw them nearer to Our Father in heaven.

#### *Our Will and Testament.*

One cannot love God sincerely without also loving that which He has made. When, on occasion, holy men of God preferred to retire to a cell or a cave it was never to cabin and confine their love to God and self alone. They abhorred that insulation whereby a neighbor becomes



an absolute stranger. Their surging love for God spilled over into a selfless love for all his creatures. By loving God and their neighbor as themselves, they, by their holy lives, enriched posterity, left the world a better place for men to live and love, brought into relief the route that tends toward heaven. This is the legacy of every saint, and our inheritance. We in turn are asked to spend it wisely, and to profit by their holy lives. It is now that we must make out our will. With every thought, word, and act, every intention, whether good or ill, we add clauses to our legacy. We must leave the world a better place than we found it. Just by our having lived here, our neighbor must find heaven more accessible, God more lovable, Mary more imitable. After the heart of our spiritual father, we must give even as we have received. And more. Without prejudice our prayers must blanket the earth, as does the sun shining on the good and bad. In every soul we must see the satisfaction of God's desires. The lack of love in another should be added reason for increasing our own. If particular friendships must be had, then we must restrict them to those in need of mercy, the forgotten, the obstinate, those who were the object of Christ's compassion, sinners. Live in the daily hope and prayer that the Gates of Heaven will be a bottleneck, the highway leading thereto a traffic jam, and in the Court itself a "standing room only" crowd. This will be our response to the summons to sanctity. Not an extra-curricular activity or an elective, not a hobby or an avocation, but a way of life more vital than breathing, the sole reason for living, the only goal in our dying. To attempt to be at the terminus of our life on earth what Mary was at the outset of hers; to water, till, and prune, so as to be like Mary, God's holy harvest; to stroke painstakingly and perseveringly with the brush, that the Image of God in our soul may be the exquisite portrait reflected in the Immaculate Virgin: to "do always the things that are pleasing to Him"; this is holiness and nothing less. To those docile friends of God who have rid themselves of the spirit of compromise, who even feel the pinch of the Cross, who take these words to heart, to the keepers of the faith, I relay the benediction of our holy Father Francis, "Whosoever shall observe these things, may they be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high heavenly Father, and on earth may they be filled with the blessing of His beloved Son, together with the most Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, and all the powers of heaven and all the saints".

## Spirituality of Saint Leonard

### of Port Maurice

Father J. Forest Faddish, O.F.M.

Experience has taught us that it is an impossible task to chart the thoughts which course through men's minds. It is equally impossible to sketch the journey of a soul to God. For of all the world's secrets this is perhaps, the most closely guarded. God and I, we two share the secret of my attempts at sanctity and my many miserable failures. Every other creature, be he relative or friend, is barred from sharing this knowledge, save one, and he is our confessor, for whom we lift this veil of secrecy and to whom our virtues and malignancies of soul are an open book.

Fortunately for us, however, we find from time to time a noble soul which is not afraid to make an open confession of its failings and striving for heroic sanctity. Such a soul is our own Franciscan confrere, Saint Leonard of Port Maurice, whose feast we celebrate November 26th.

It was during his annual retreat of 1745, only six years before his death, that Leonard reviewed his entire life. Now, as the end was drawing near, he saw it in its true perspective; indeed, he must have felt that a very precise and definite plan of attack must be made if he would capture the crown being held out for him by his Redeemer. The many pious and efficacious practices which had proven so useful to him over the many years were now gathered methodically and set down in writing. Leonard proposed to review them for himself each month to see how faithfully he was living up to them. It is from these resolutions that we get a real glimpse of the real St. Leonard of Port Maurice. True, it must remain only a glimpse, for the innermost secret of his personal dealings with God must remain hidden from our eyes; but what he wrote might well serve as a guide-line for us, pilgrims in this vale of tears, seeking Him Who alone can satisfy the cravings of our human hearts.

#### *A Personal Relationship with God.*

Like his spiritual father St. Francis of Assisi, Leonard came to regard God in a very personal manner. He literally put the Gospels to the test and found in them the secret so many men are seeking, but do not find, because they are unwilling to go far enough. He realized that since "God is a Spirit", He must be known in the spirit, i.e. through prayer. Hence, after a few preliminary remarks in his Resolutions, he embarks upon regulating his prayer life. The manner in which he says Holy Mass, his Divine Office and mental prayer occupy the first few chapters of his Resolutions.



**HIS DAILY MASS.** Leonard resolves to prepare worthily each day for this most sublime act of his day. He lists the means he proposes to use to attain this goal: confession twice daily. And if this is impossible, then he will make a "spiritual confession" at the feet of Jesus and impose a penance upon himself. His striving must ever aim at that "utmost purity of heart" which must be the most treasured garb he brings with himself to this august Sacrifice.

**HIS DIVINE OFFICE.** In the fourth chapter he speaks of the Divine Office, saying: "I will see to it that the choir becomes the place of my delight." He then proceeds to outline his actions upon entering choir:

"I will prostrate myself on the floor and adore the Blessed Sacrament, saying the antiphon *O Sacrum Convivium*, with its oration. Arrived at my place, I will promptly place myself in the presence of God, collecting myself interiorly. Making an interior act of faith, I will contemplate the Blessed Trinity in the midst of my soul."

Thus, while the other religious are gathering for choir, he will be making appropriate acts of faith and love, and then "when the office begins, I will try to turn this vocal prayer instituted by the Church to praise God, into mixed prayer; that is to say, a combination of vocal and mental prayer at the same time." He proposes to do this by meditating on the various stages of the Passion throughout the Office.

**HIS MEDITATION.** Leonard knew only too well that the Divine Office would not suffice in drawing him into intimate companionship with his God. Mental prayer too, was a necessity; hence, "I will endeavor to familiarize myself with it till it becomes my daily bread." Whenever obedience took him away from his community, he tried to be present mentally with them at meditation:

"While conducting missions I will never omit the customary meditation, reading over the subject matter. I will keep in mind the hour when the meditation is made in the convent, in order to observe the aforesaid interior recollection at that time." (Chapter 5)

How unlike the Saint are we? Leonard learned to place first things first. This was the secret of his spiritual success, yet we refuse to learn from him, even though the message is boldly emblazoned before us. We forget the *unum necessarium* of which Christ spoke to Martha as she busied herself about the house during one of his visits to her home. And then we wonder why we make so little spiritual progress! Look to St. Leonard. Here is a teacher sent by God. Become a disciple of his, and you will soon find you have greater strength and perseverance than you ever dreamed you had.

### *Generosity with God.*

Heaven is no handout, and Leonard knew this only too well. He knew that we cannot just sit back and twiddle our thumbs and make verbal protestations of our great desire for sanctity. Again, like his holy father Francis, Leonard turned to the Gospels, where he read those words of Christ: "If thou wilt be perfect . . ." Ah, there's the rub, "if thou wilt". And will it he must. He resolved to entertain the greatest distrust of self:

"As the foundation of all my resolutions I lay down distrust of myself, since all my lapses into sin and my failings, great and small, come from my pride, vanity, feeling of superiority, self-esteem and self-reliance." (Chapter 1)

This distrust, however, would not reduce him to a state of inertia. Rather would it propel him into that vortex of spiritual activity which would gradually lift him ever closer toward God and heaven.

Since we cannot be saved without the theological virtues, Leonard says:

"I wish to be animated with a practical and lively faith . . . I resolve to make acts of hope with such assurance as if I were entirely certain of my eternal salvation, indeed as if I were already in Paradise . . . I am resolved also to love God with all the effort of my will, for the sole sake of the infinite goodness of God."

Observe here the generosity of his love, as he continues:

"Even if I were certain of damnation, I should have to love God with all my heart, for the sole reason that he deserves to be loved thus. I desire to be second to nobody in this love, but to love him the way his most faithful servants have loved him. Indeed if it were possible, I would want my love to be equal to that of the Blessed Mother. These acts of faith, hope and charity shall be the ordinary food of my heart, by day and night, whether I am alone or in company . . ." (Chapter 21)

"I am resolved in all my work to be guided by grace and not by nature. In order to recognize whether it is grace or nature which is impelling me, I will take note of the following signs to keep me cautious in what I do:

"1. Nature likes to have what it does publicized, wants to shine with it, boasts of it. Grace on the contrary seeks to keep it hidden, even have it looked at with scorn . . .

"2. Nature develops a great enthusiasm for things temporal, grasps at them, enjoys having them in abundance, saddens when there is a lack of them. Grace however attaches no value to them, actually despises them, with the Sovereign Good as its only desire, finding peace nowhere but in him.



"3. Nature is not constant in doing good, desists from virtuous endeavor at the least difficulty. Grace keeps God in view and remains steadfast in all that is good, both when things fare well and when they fare ill. Grace generously follows through, once it has entered on the road.

"4. Nature is self-complacent, is eager for novelty, grasps at distraction and amusement in the creature world, is in dread of doing harm to the body or of injuring its health. Grace is altogether intent on the pleasure of God, treats the body like a beast of burden, and aims at nothing on earth but holiness.

"5. Nature sneaks its way even into the spiritual domain. It likes to enjoy interior consolation, and to feel that it is important in the eyes of God. Grace in turn tends to make a person humble, patient and just without him being aware of it. And because it is altogether and solely intent on the pleasure of God, it loves and serves him courageously, even amid the greatest dryness of spirit.

"6. Nature keeps tumbling into extremes and excesses. Grace imparts the light needed to follow the golden mean, so that neither more nor less is done than what is proper and is allowable under obedience.

"7. Nature is everlastingly set on internal and external gratifications and has idle excuses for every suggestion of self-denial. Grace courts disregard, humiliation, renunciation, suffering, abandonment to almighty God; it is at pains to love him in every way and by every means possible, so that it can comply in all things with his most holy will.

"8. Nature makes us prone to the seven capital sins. It stirs in us grand, lofty ambitions in matters both spiritual and temporal, it puffs the heart up and makes it eager for applause and idle recognition, and persuades us to flatter our ego in every possible way. Its way of looking at things insinuates itself into the heart with a certain sensual tenderness and sweetness that readily deceives people who are not recollected and on the alert. Grace on the other hand resists all such elation of the heart as well as pride of spirit and coddling of the senses. Its constant tendency is toward chastity, detachment of self, humility.

"These characteristics of the two forces shall serve as my standard, to guide me constantly in acting according to the ways of grace and not those of nature, lest my practice of virtue itself be set down by God the all-knowing as false. In order not to belong to the class of those who take appearances for reality, I will ask for enlightenment before everything I do, asking for the help of God with the words, 'My Jesus mercy'."

That he might maintain constant check on himself in these matters,

Leonard proposes to examine his conscience twice daily, at noon and in the evening. The evening examination is more extensive, and here he subjects his every action to careful scrutiny.

#### *His Favorite Devotions.*

Leonard's life of piety rested on solid Franciscan foundations. Devotion to the Passion of Christ, the Most Holy Eucharist and Our Lady are the three devotions that stand out conspicuously in his sermons and writings.

**THE PASSION.** In Chapter 17 of his Resolutions he says:

"I will keep thinking of the sufferings of our Lord, especially in saying the Divine Office . . . I will often have on my lips the ejaculation, 'The sufferings of my Lord Jesus Christ be ever in my heart.' I will also strive to introduce everywhere the custom of ringing the bell at three on Friday afternoons, to get all the faithful to say three Our Fathers and Hail Marys in honor of the three hour agony suffered by Jesus on the Cross . . . saying the prayers for the conversion of the most obstinate sinners. To keep the memory of our loving Saviour impressed on the hearts of the faithful, I will introduce and spread everywhere the practice of the Way of the Cross, sparing no pains to remove difficulties that present themselves . . . For once we get the memory of the sufferings of our Redeemer introduced into the hearts of the faithful, good morals and the disposition toward everything (good) will be introduced with it."

It is said that Leonard himself erected the Stations in at least 572 places, and that several thousand were erected throughout Italy and Europe through his influence. His crowning glory came when, on December 27, 1750, he erected the Stations in the Colosseum of Rome. On this occasion he remarked to the people present:

"A treasure, great and precious though it may be, is only appreciated in proportion as it is known. Hence it is that many among you do not value as you ought the Way of the Cross. Treasure immense though it be, it remains for the most part hidden and unknown; for the Blood itself, of infinite value, which our Saviour shed in such abundance, is known but little and appreciated less . . . Sinners, seeing these Stations and pondering on the mysteries they represent, are indeed touched, and become converted . . . Try it yourself . . . learn to love this holy exercise, practice it often, and you will see how your heart will change."

**THE EUCHARIST.** "Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament" Leonard observes, "shall be the center of all my affections. I will give it my homage and adoration wherever I come upon It." His devotion to the Eucharist impelled him to write a separate treatise entitled: **THE**



HIDDEN TREASURE, which is a beautiful explanation of the ends of the Holy Sacrifice, the blessings and benefits we received from each Holy Mass and then a fourfold manner for attending Holy Mass. Toward the end he addresses himself to the reader on the purpose of this treatise:

"It is simply to plant in the hearts of all those who shall read it a holy desire that there may be introduced into the Catholic world the practice of hearing Holy Mass every day with the most solid piety and devotion, and that each time Mass is heard each hearer may make a spiritual Communion. Oh, the gain if this end were attained. I should then hope to witness, throughout the whole world, that holy fervor flourishing once more which was admired in the golden age of the primitive Church, when the faithful assisted every day at the holy sacrifice, and every day communicated sacramentally. If I succeed in gaining you who read me now, I shall imagine myself to have gained the whole world, and I shall consider my poor labor well rewarded."

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY. True to his Franciscan heritage, Leonard was intensely devoted to Mary:

"I desire to profess the most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose holy hands I have entrusted and placed the great matter of my eternal salvation. I want to love her with the tender affection of a child toward the mother with whom it is in love, and I want to get everybody to love her and pay her the utmost, choicest homage. For that purpose, I will preach my sermons on her with special fervor of spirit, so that everybody may be enflamed with love of so glorious a Mother.

Indeed, Leonard meant every word he said concerning the spread of devotion to the Immaculate Conception. He used his leisure hours to write personal letters to rulers and bishops alike, asking them to petition the Holy See to declare the Immaculate Conception a dogma of faith. His letter to the Apostolic Nuncio at Paris is interesting because it shows the forcefulness with which he pursued his goal. After urging the Nuncio to get the French court to press the definition at Rome, he says:

"Above all I will be most devoted to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, never giving up the endeavor to see it defined as a dogma of the Faith, and working for it with every means and way possible, and that even if I had to give my blood and life for the purpose." (Chapter 17)

"... already the Crown of Spain is taking keen interest in the issue . . . . Tell His Eminence, Cardinal Fleury, that if he wishes to see the world at peace, France happy, heresies overthrown, political difficulties with foreign powers vanish, he must

do all he can to get the Immaculate Conception declared an article of faith."

Some years later we see him writing to a prelate in Rome, in language just as forceful: "I wish to have this mystery declared an article of faith. Do not draw back in alarm, as though it were attempting the impossible. It is imaginary difficulties which are blocking the most important affair in the world." Leonard died on November 26, 1751. A little more than a century after his death, his heart's dream was realized when Pius IX on December 8, 1854, declared the Immaculate Conception an article of faith.

#### *Concluding Remarks:*

It is sincerely hoped that this article has served to introduce to our readers another great hero of Christ. It would be difficult to present a complete picture of his spirituality in these few pages. For those who may wish to pursue this study, an English translation of St. Leonard's RESOLUTIONS was serialized in *The Franciscan Herald and Forum* in 1951 and 1952. They would certainly make wonderful matter for meditation.



# The Service of the Kingdom of God

(This article is from chapter XVII of "Love Answers Love", by Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M. and Fr. Englebert Grau, O.F.M., translated by Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. It will be published in book form by the Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago.)

When the contemporaries of the early Franciscan movement spoke of Francis and his followers, they usually emphasized that this new Order had devoted itself to the apostolic life. Because the Friars Minor chose to follow the life of the early Church, they strove to make their own the life and work of the Apostles. Jacques de Vitry, an admirer and friend of the new Order, saw precisely in this the reason for its astounding world-wide growth, that "it imitates the life, poverty and humility of the primitive Church and takes as its model in all things the example of the Apostles."<sup>1</sup> In consequence, he did not hesitate to call it "the holy Order, the religion of apostolic men, worthy of admiration and imitation."<sup>2</sup> Again, an early testimony from the Roman Curia, a letter of Pope Honorius III (1218), praises the Friars Minor "because after the example of the Apostles, they go from place to place, to sow everywhere the seed of God's word."<sup>3</sup> One who otherwise was critical of the new Order said that "the Friars Minor can truly be numbered among the disciples of the Lord."<sup>4</sup> Because Francis chose to live not for himself but to help and save others, the movement he originated had from the beginning an apostolic character, being wholly dedicated to the "edifying" service of the kingdom of God.

## I. The Ideal of the Apostolic Life.

At first the early friars were not sure what was to be their future manner of life. As they were coming back from Rome, where Innocent III had approved their primitive Rule, they spoke of this: "They began to debate among themselves, these true lovers of justice, whether they should dwell among men or betake themselves to solitary places. The blessed Francis, who did not trust his own powers, but prefaced every undertaking with holy prayer, chose to live not for himself alone, but for him who died for all, since he knew that he was sent to gain for God the souls which the devil was trying to snatch away."<sup>5</sup> Yet later even Francis himself was in doubt over such a decision, at least for himself. Saint Bonaventure portrays his dilemma as, troubled

<sup>1</sup> Letter of February or March 1220; in L. Lemmens, *Testimonia minora*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Historia Orientalis* II, 32 (*ibid.*, p. 83).

<sup>3</sup> Bull "Cum dilecti" of 11 June 1218 (*Bull. Fran.* I, p. 2; *Annales Minorum* I, ed. 1931, p. 334; on the date, cf. *Arch. Fran. Historicum* 12, 1919, p. 591).

<sup>4</sup> The Rhetor *Buoncompagni* of Bologna (about 1220), in L. Lemmens, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> I Celano, n. 35.

in spirit, he pondered the pros and cons of the question: "What do you counsel me, my brothers? what do you recommend? Should I give myself to prayer, or should I go about preaching? . . . In prayer we gain much merit and acquire many graces, while in preaching we give to others what we have received from above. In prayer our heart and affections are cleansed, and we are united to him who is the one, true and highest good, while we grow strong in virtue. In preaching, even spiritual men get much dust on their feet (*Cf.* Lk. 10, 11), and are distracted about many things, while discipline suffers. Finally in prayer we speak to God and listen to him and lead an angelic sort of life, since we are in the company of the angels; while in preaching we must come down to men and live among them in human fashion, and think and see, speak and hear the things of men. Yet there is one thing to the contrary, which would seem to count above all before God, that the only-begotten Son of God, who is highest wisdom, came down from the bosom of the Father for the salvation of souls, that he might teach the world by his example and speak to men the word of salvation and redeem them at the cost of his blood and wash them clean in the laver (of Baptism) and feed them by the cup (of the Eucharist). He held back nothing for himself but generously gave all for our salvation. And since we must do all things according to the pattern of those things which we see in him as on the high mountain (*Cf.* Ex. 25, 40), it seems more pleasing to God that I break my quiet and peace and go forth to labor."<sup>6</sup> In such a touching debate we can still see how Francis wrestled with the problem which the imitation of Christ laid upon him. Though he could say in joyful gratitude that he, "a simple, unlettered, uneloquent man, had received more of the grace of praying than of the grace of preaching,"<sup>7</sup> he did come to see that God himself had called him to follow Christ in the apostolate, and to such a vocation he did not wish to be untrue.

The apostolate is thus an integral part of the Franciscan vocation. Whoever wishes to follow the footsteps of Christ must give himself to the service of souls. Whoever wishes, as Francis says, "to hold fast with all his heart to the commandments of Christ and with his whole soul fulfill Christ's counsels,"<sup>8</sup> must be filled with the same zeal Christ the Lord had for souls. Whoever wishes by "a life according to the form of the holy Gospel"<sup>9</sup> to renew in himself the life of the God made man, must not "hold back anything for himself, but generously give

<sup>6</sup> *Legenda major*, ch. 12, n. 1 (in *Words of St. Francis*, n. 209, p. 170).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Letter to the Chapter (*Words*, p. 143, 30ff.).

<sup>9</sup> Testament (p. 245, 8-9).



all for the salvation of others."<sup>10</sup> Such words suggest the close link between the apostolate of the Friars Minor and the ideal of highest poverty, since here more than ever the words of Saint Francis have a real significance: "The example of the poverty of the Son of God must bind us more than all other religious."<sup>11</sup> The Friar Minor must be ready, if called to the apostolate (as was Saint Anthony), to give up even the spiritual joys of a contemplative life. In this he has before him the example of Christ, who held back nothing for himself that he might sacrifice all for our salvation; and the example which Francis gave to his brethren of the apostolic life: "The man of God had learned to seek not his own (Cf. I Cor. 13, 5), but what he saw was best for the salvation of others."<sup>12</sup> That was why he went forth as the herald of Christ to preach to men.<sup>13</sup>

## II. The Motive of the Franciscan Apostolate.

Neither the esteem of men nor the desire for visible results, but only the love of Christ is the true motive of the Franciscan apostolate. "Because we must do all things according to the pattern of what we see in him as on the mountain:"<sup>14</sup>—this is the real reason why the Friars Minor choose to live and work after the manner of the apostles. In that pattern on the mountain, the life of the Incarnate Word, we behold a constant revelation of God's love for man, of Christ's love for souls. Themselves filled with that love, the sons and daughters of Saint Francis must in turn bring the good news and the grace of the Gospel to all men. In this they follow their seraphic model: "If Francis' love made him the brother of other creatures, it is not surprising that the charity of Christ made him much more the brother of those stamped with the image of the Creator. There was nothing higher, Francis said, than the salvation of souls, and the proof he offered was that the only-begotten Son of God deigned to hang upon the cross for souls—He would not consider himself the friend of Christ unless he too loved the souls which Christ had loved before him."<sup>15</sup>

Such words are a meager expression of the love that filled the heart of the seraphic Francis and drew him to the apostolate. The love of Christ for us so fired his soul with love that he too loved souls because Christ loved them and in the way Christ loved them. Nothing, he would say, was to be preferred to the salvation of souls. For this reason he loved and honored those who were dedicated to the salvation

<sup>10</sup> Bonaventure, *loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> II Celano, n. 61.

<sup>12</sup> I Cel., n. 71.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Legenda major*, ch. 12, n. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 1.

<sup>15</sup> II Cel., n. 172.

of others: "This for him was the important reason for respecting teachers and preachers, that as Christ's helpers they fulfilled their office in union with him."<sup>16</sup> To engage in the apostolate meant for him to share the work of Christ, to continue and prolong his mission in the Church. To be an apostle was for him to be a co-worker of Christ out of love for those whom Christ loved. The one all-embracing motive, therefore, of the Franciscan Apostolate is the love of God which has come to us in Christ and is made visible to us in his earthly life. By such a love the whole Franciscan apostolate must be inspired and guided, for only those can the Lord call his friends "who love souls as he loved them."

## III. The Special Form of the Franciscan Apostolate.

For Francis, the apostolate was not to be understood in the narrow sense we perhaps give it today when we think of it primarily as preaching the word of God and announcing the glad tidings of salvation. Francis does not speak of apostolic activity, but always of an apostolic life, as when he wrote to the Chapter: "Praise the Lord, for he is good, and exalt him in your works. For unto this he has sent you into all the world, that by word and deed you should give testimony to his voice."<sup>17</sup>

What Francis meant by "word and deed" he himself shows us in speaking, in the early Rule, of the friars who were to go among the Saracens. His words are a kind of primitive mission-method that retains its value even today: "The friars who go can conduct themselves among them in two ways. The first is this: not to engage in strife and controversy, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake, and simply confess that they are Christians. The other way is this, that should they see it pleases God, they announce the word of God."<sup>18</sup> The first way is the ordinary apostolate of example, while the second, that of preaching the word, is exercised when and if God's grace asks it of us. Both must be found together, for the second without the first Francis considered of little importance. For him, the sermon of one's life was always more effective than the sermon of one's lips, since we must first practice ourselves what we preach to others.<sup>19</sup> Hence Francis rejoiced, relates Celano, "when he heard that his sons gave a holy example, and upon those friars who by word or deed led sinners to the love of Christ he heaped his choicest blessings."<sup>20</sup>

"By word and work"—here too Francis bowed to the will of the Church, which had decreed that the apostolate of preaching in the strict

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the Chapter (*Words*, p. 114, 2-6).

<sup>18</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 16 (*Words*, p. 267, 21-28).

<sup>19</sup> I Cel., n. 36.

<sup>20</sup> II Cel., n. 155.



sense was to be entrusted only to friars who were "examined and approved."<sup>21</sup> But there was another kind of preaching which all his friars, clerics or laics, could undertake with apostolic zeal, the sermon of good example: "No friar is to preach contrary to the form and prescription of the Holy Roman Church, and only with the permission of his minister . . . But let all the friars preach by their deeds."<sup>22</sup> All who follow Christ under the guidance of Francis, friars and Sisters, can and must make this apostolate their own.

How Francis understood this apostolate of example is well illustrated by one incident in his life. He once had a discussion with a Dominican doctor of theology over certain texts of Holy Scripture. The latter asked him to interpret the words of Ezechiel: "If you do not warn the wicked man of his iniquity, I shall require his soul at your hand." "I myself know many, good father," said the Dominican, "of whom I am certain that they are living in mortal sin, and yet I do not always warn them of their wickedness. Will the souls of such people actually be required at my hand?" Though Francis protested his simplicity and ignorance, he at last gave in to the other's insistence. His answer still has meaning for us today: "If this verse applies to everyone, I would say that the servant of God must be such a burning lamp by his holiness of life that by the light of his good example and the tongue of his conduct he is himself a rebuke to the wicked. In this way, I would say, the brightness of his life and the odor of his good repute will make all conscious of their iniquity."<sup>23</sup> For Francis, a Christlike life is the most effective way to preach the doctrine of Christ. Instead of reproving man by word of mouth, his sons and daughters were to be a living reproach to sinners by the holiness of their life. In the Franciscan apostolate, then, the sermon of one's life, a sermon which all can and must give according to the ideals of Saint Francis, is of equal and even greater importance than actual preaching.

But Saint Francis speaks also of a third kind of apostolate: the battle for souls in prayer: "Those preachers," he said, "are to be pitied who often sell what they do for the half-penny of empty praise. Against such swollen pride he offered this remedy: 'Why do you glory in those you have converted, when they were really converted by the prayers of my simple friars?' And the verse: 'While the barren hath borne many children' (Cf. I Kings 2, 5), he interpreted: 'My poor little Brother is that barren woman, since he does not have the offices of begetting sons in the Church. He shall beget many at the Judgment because those whom he now converts by his hidden prayer the Judge on that

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Final Rule, 9 (p. 292, 6-12).

<sup>22</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 17 (p. 269, 17-24).

<sup>23</sup> II Cel., n. 203.

day will credit to his glory.' The other: 'She that has many children is weakened' (*ibid.*), means that the preacher who rejoices that he has begotten many as though by his own power shall then know that in reality he had no part in them."<sup>24</sup> One could hardly express this third form of the apostolate more clearly or strikingly.

Somewhat further on, Celano sums up such ideals in one short phrase: "From his love for Christ came his wrestling for souls in prayer, the eloquence of his preaching, and a constant good example."<sup>25</sup> Because Francis himself gave such a compelling example of these three forms of apostolic life, he could ask of all "his sons that in their zeal for souls they be a faithful copy of what they saw in him."<sup>26</sup> There is truly no one in the great Franciscan family who cannot live and work in such an apostolic way. All without exception, no matter what their post, can help to build up the Body of Christ, the Church, from within, by their unflagging prayer for souls, by the powerful sermon of good example, by the word they speak to bring Christ's love to man.

#### IV. Faulty Notions of the Apostolate

The life of the Franciscans within the Church, whether friars or Sisters, must be completely imbued with the spirit of the apostolate. All their prayers, their words, their actions, should serve the salvation of their fellow men. Their whole life must be at the service of the Church, to further in her the kingdom of God. "Like a burning fire"<sup>27</sup> the love of Christ must rage within them, embracing all men and seeking to lead all men back to God. But such an apostolate is not without its dangers. Francis realized what perils could accompany and beset such a life, and endeavored to instill in his followers the right approach to the apostolate.

Thus he set before the preachers the ideal that should govern their office: "We would guard all the brothers from all pride and vainglory. We must keep ourselves from the wisdom of this world and from the prudence of the flesh. For the spirit of the flesh desires and makes great effort to have many fine words, but it cares little for good deeds, and it does not seek to foster inner piety and holiness of the spirit, but wishes and desires to have a piety and holiness which will be seen by men. And these are those of whom the Lord says: 'Amen I say to you, they have had their reward.' But the spirit of the Lord on the contrary wishes the flesh to be mortified and despised, mean and reviled and humiliated, and strives after humility and patience, pure simplicity and true peace of spirit; and always and above all it longs for the fear

<sup>24</sup> II Cel., n. 164 (cf. Words, n. 203, p. 159f).

<sup>25</sup> II Cel., n. 172.

<sup>26</sup> II Cel., n. 155.

<sup>27</sup> I Cel., n. 123.



of God, the deep understanding of God, and the love of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>28</sup>

By such holy advice he sought to banish what he considered the greatest danger that could beset the friars in their apostolate: namely, of finding self-satisfaction in their work, of becoming proud and conceited in their accomplishments, taking glory in them and boasting of them. This is a great danger for poverty, since it means that one ascribes to himself the good which follows his work and considers it something he has produced. Were this to happen, the apostle would cease to be one "sent" in the power of God and becomes instead a worshipper of self. Just such a danger Francis seeks to prevent when he continues: "And let us ascribe all good to the Lord God most high and sovereign, and recognize that all good things are his, and give thanks to him for all things from whom all good things do come. And let him who is most high and sovereign, the only true God, possess every good; and let men render to him, and may he receive, all honor and reverence, all praise and blessing, all thanks and all glory, to whom belongs all that is good and who alone is good."<sup>29</sup> If we return such thanks for all the good that God says or does through us in the apostolate, we shall not succumb to the danger of putting ourselves in the place of God, of taking to self what belongs to God, thus robbing God of what is his alone and ultimately becoming sterile and unfruitful in our apostolic labors.

At the heart of such a danger lies what Francis calls "*appropriare*," whereby one considers things, actions, accomplishments, success, as his own, whereas they are not truly his. Only when our apostolate is firmly rooted in a "life without anything of one's own: *sine proprio*" will it be in accord with the mind of Saint Francis. Otherwise, we are not "Minor" Brothers and Sisters in our apostolic activity.

#### V. The Right Approach in the Apostolate of Preaching.

Francis was not satisfied to warn and exhort. He also gave us a concrete example, especially in his portrait of a true preacher, how the apostolate should be conducted: "The ministers of the word of God he wished to be men given to spiritual studies and not hindered by other duties. They were chosen, he said, by a Great King to announce to the people the commandments they had received from his mouth. Therefore Francis was wont to say: The preacher must first draw from his secret prayers what he would afterwards pour forth in holy words; he must first be set on fire within that he may not spew forth cold words without. This, he would say, is the most important duty, and those who undertook it were to be honored by all. The preachers, he said, are the

<sup>28</sup> Non-Confirmed Rule, ch. 17 (p. 270, 10-271, 8).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 271, 9-19).

life of the Body, the Church her champions against the devils, the very light of the world."<sup>30</sup> Such words bring out how closely the life of an apostle is related to his spiritual activity. The apostolate is to grow and develop through spiritual studies and through prayer. Without these two well-springs of the inner life, the preaching of God's word, as Francis once described it rather drastically, can become merely the chatter of a parrot which has been taught to repeat many fine words.<sup>31</sup> But when the apostolate is the fruit of prayer and study, of a deep inner life and intimacy with God, the apostle becomes a vital part of Body of Christ, the Church, because "as Christ's helper he fulfills his office in union with him."<sup>32</sup>

For Francis, then, preaching is not just a matter of a good mind and a strong voice. It is something far more vital. The whole man enters into it because it must grow out of the true Christian life and character of the preacher. "That preacher is a lamentable figure, he would say, who, lacking in true piety, seeks his own praise in preaching and not the salvation of souls, or who destroys by his evil life what he builds up by the truth of his teaching. To such Francis preferred the simple and uneloquent friar who by his good example drew others to good."<sup>33</sup> "This work of spiritual mercy," he claimed, "was more acceptable to the Father of mercies than any sacrifice, especially if it was done out of perfect charity and was accomplished more by example than by word, more by tearful prayer than by eloquence of speech."<sup>34</sup>

If, then, one is to engage in the apostolate, he cannot, as Francis expressly reminds him, separate it from his whole being and life. Celano portrays Francis' concern here: "He had little liking for those who sought to be known more as orators than as preachers, and who spoke more with outward elegance of speech than with inward fire. They lacked balance, he would say, who gave all to preaching and nothing to devotion. He esteemed that preacher only who knew how, at the right time, to withdraw within himself and taste for himself" the things of the Lord.<sup>35</sup> Only if we follow these admonitions of one of the most indefatigable of apostles will our apostolate be fruitful, because then all our words and actions will be animated by the Spirit of God, who fills those who depend wholly on God.

<sup>30</sup> II Cel., n. 163 (cf. *Words*, n. 202, p. 159).

<sup>31</sup> Thus Ubertino da Casale: "Non enim erat sua intentio, quod fierent tot praedicatores, qui privati orationis studio et divino gustu cartabellando diacerent sermones compositos, quos proferrent aliis velut pica" (*in Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte*, III, p. 178).

<sup>32</sup> II Cel., n. 172.

<sup>33</sup> Bonaventure, *Legenda major*, ch. 8, n. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 1.

<sup>35</sup> II Cel., n. 164.



## VI. Building up the Kingdom of God.

The intimate connection between the apostolate and the life and character of the apostle suggests another point of great importance. In the apostolate our goal is not merely to make men better, but to give glory to God by making him once more the center and final end of every man's life. For this reason the sermons of Francis and the early friars, like the Gospel itself, laid great emphasis on penance. Men were to turn away from their old paths, to walk once more the ways of God. They were to live not for themselves nor according to their own lusts and desires, but for God and according to his will and commandments: "And this or like exhortation and praise, all my friars whenever they will, can speak among all men whomsoever with the blessing of God: Fear and honor, praise and bless, thank and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and Unity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things. Repent, bring forth fruits worthy of penance, because you must know that you shall soon die. Give, and it shall be given to you. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. And if you do not forgive men their sins, neither will the Lord forgive you your offences. Confess all your sins. Blessed are they who die in penance for they shall be in the kingdom of heaven. Woe to those who do not die in penance, for they shall be the children of the devil, whose work they do, and they shall go into eternal fire. Take care and keep yourselves from all evil, and persevere in good even unto the end."<sup>36</sup> In this example of the type of sermon preached by the first friars, attention is focused primarily on the glory of God and the way men are to honor him by their life and deeds. Their life is plainly to be that of the new man in Christ, who once more follows the will of God and not his own desires, for whom God is truly the center and goal of life. In such a life the name of God is hallowed, the will of God is done, and his kingdom comes in the hearts of men.

Yet here again, the apostolate that brings such a change in men's lives need not be limited to the formal task of preaching. There is also another means proposed by Francis which is within the reach of all his Brothers and Sisters: "And when we hear or see that men speak or do evil, or blaspheme God, then let us say and do good and praise the Lord who is blessed forever."<sup>37</sup> Such words clearly if simply show how every Franciscan can and must contribute to the coming of the kingdom of God.

It is a way open not only to Tertiaries, religious or secular, who perhaps come more frequently into contact with people, but also to the

<sup>36</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 21 (Words, p. 273, 19-274, 113).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 17 (p. 271, 20-23).

friars of the First Order and the Sisters of the Second Order, who after all are not completely isolated from the life and problems of the laity. They too come face to face in many ways with the evil which men say or do, and often enough by the press, the radio, and other means see how men offend God, blaspheme him, and give him no place in their lives. At such a sight the heart of a religious is filled with deep sorrow that the good God is thus offended, his love trodden under foot, his kingdom harmed and destroyed. Yet more positively, Francis would have such an experience lead us "to say good and to do good," because all good comes from God. Where good overcomes evil and achieves the victory, there God and his kingdom are triumphant. Such sorrow too should induce the religious "to praise the Lord who is blessed forever," because where the praise of God resounds among men, where God is honored and acknowledged as Lord, his kingdom comes even now. If the Franciscan makes his or her life a constant "*bene dicere et bene facere*," a constant act of saying good and doing good, by which God is truly praised and glorified, is not such a life in itself a real and vital apostolate? Even though men may be blind to it or heedless of it, such a life is a most important and fruitful service for the kingdom of God. Has not God himself shown this in our day through the hidden life of such holy Brothers as Conrad of Parzham, Jordan Mai, and countless others? Yet what else have they done, save that when they heard and saw men speaking or doing evil, or blaspheming God, they "said good and did good, and praised the Lord who is blessed for ever and ever"? In return, God has glorified them, that all may know and understand that theirs was and is a valiant apostolate in the service of the kingdom of God.

Again, the kingdom of God is a kingdom of peace, especially among the servants of God. If our apostolate is truly to serve that kingdom, we must take care to fulfill one last, serious admonition of Saint Francis: "We have been sent to help the clergy in their work for the salvation of souls, that what is lacking in them may be supplied by us. Each one will receive his reward not according to his authority, but according to his labor. Know, my brothers, that the serving of souls is most pleasing to God, and we can accomplish it more through peace than through disagreement with the clergy. If they perhaps obstruct the salvation of their people, remember that vengeance belongs to God and he will repay them in his own due time. Be therefore subject to the prelates of the Church, that you may do nothing to provoke the jealousy of any one. If you are the souls of peace, you will gain for God both priest and people. And this is more acceptable to God than to gain the people and scandalize the clergy. Cover up their lapses, supply for their many



shortcomings, and when you shall have done all this, be humbler still."<sup>38</sup> These words, which spring from the deep faith of a truly Christlike man, need no commentary.

Every son and daughter of Saint Francis who ponders all that he has said on the apostolate and lives his words with an earnest will, is faithful to our great vocation in all things the footsteps of the crucified Christ. Their apostolate will be in keeping with their very life as Franciscans, their "life of penance." Apostolic in life as well as in work, they truly help to build up the kingdom of God on earth.

<sup>38</sup> II Cel., n. 146 (Words, n. 215, p. 174).

## Mystical Theology of St. Anthony of Padua

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### I. THE ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

#### *The Distinction between the Active and Contemplative Life*

"On the fifth day God made the fish of the sea and the birds of the air" (Genesis 1: 20). The fifth virtue is the exercise of the active and contemplative life. In this virtue the active man, as a fish, swims through the paths of the sea, that is, the world, in order to assist a neighbor in need; and the contemplative man, as a bird, is lifted into the air by the wings of contemplation and, as far as he is able, meditates upon the King in his beauty. "Man", says Job (5:7), "is born to (the) labor" of the active life and "the bird to (the) flight" of the contemplative life. And notice, that as the bird which has his breast spread out is slowed by the wind because he captures much of the air, but one that has a restricted and narrowed breast flies more swiftly and without difficulty; so also the mind of the one contemplating is hindered too greatly in the flight of contemplation if he is spread out by many and various thoughts, but if he begins to fly in a recollected state, and concentrating on one thing, he will experience the joy of contemplation. The exercise of this two-fold life is signified by the eleventh hour, about which hour the master of the house went out (Cf. Matt. 20: 6-8). The eleventh hour is made up of ten and one. The contemplative life refers to the one because it considers the one God, the one joy. The active life, on the other hand, refers to the ten precepts

of the Decalogue, by which the active life is fully perfected in the life of this exile. (*Domin. in Septuages.*)

#### *The Excellence of the Contemplative Life*

a) The greatest and most excellent grace is had in the tears of contemplation, because the greatest and most excellent sweetness is found in this . . . . The sweetness of the contemplative life preserves the soul in the youthfulness of grace. Wherefore: "Your youth is renewed as the eagle's." (Ps. 102:5) (*In Domin. XVIII post Pent.*)

b) The taste of contemplation is more precious than all other pursuits, and all things which are desired cannot be compared to this. (*In festo Apost. Philippi et Jacobi*)

c) The active life, as the inferior element, must serve contemplation, because the inferior part exists only for the superior. Hence the Apostle says (I Cor. 11:9): "Man was not created for woman, but woman for man;" so too the contemplative life was not created for the active, but the active for the contemplative.

And as the brain, a cold member, is situated right opposite to the heart so that it may temper its heat; so the contemplative life, which consists in compunction of mind, is placed in opposition to the active life so that, by its prayer and compunction of tears, it may temper the fervor of work and the heat of temptation, which things must subsist in humility of heart. And as the head is larger in size than all the other members of the body, so the grace of contemplation is more sublime, since it is closer to God whom we contemplate. (*Serm. in Dom. IIII post Pascha.*)

### II. THE NATURE OF CONTEMPLATION

#### *The Cause of Mystical Contemplation*

Contemplation is not up to the choice of the one contemplating, but depends on the disposition of the Creator, who infuses the sweetness of contemplation to whom He wills, when He wills, and how He wills. (*Domin. IV post Pent.*)—Therefore Solomon says (Proverbs 25:16): "Son, you have found honey", that is, the sweetness of contemplation; "eat only what is sufficient for thee, lest being gluttoned with it you vomit it up." He vomits up that honey, who, not being satisfied with the grace freely given to him, desires to search out the sweetness of contemplation with human reason, not attending to what is said in Genesis (35: 18-19), that "Benjamin being born, Rachel died." Benjamin signifies the grace of contemplation; Rachel, human reason. Therefore when Benjamin is born, Rachel dies; because when the mind, elevated above itself in contemplation, meditates upon something from the light of divinity, all human consideration succumbs . . . . Hence someone has said: By human reason no one comes to that height where Paul



was taken up. (*Domin. II in Quadrages.*)

The south wind is warm and is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The interior things of the south wind signify the retreats of contemplation, joy in mind, sweetness of internal delight, which things are, as it were, certain retreats of the South Wind, that is, the Holy Spirit, in which He dwells and by His indwelling spreads about the breath of His sweet love. (*In Domin. V post Pentec.*)

#### *The Object and Subject of Infused Contemplation*

##### I. OBJECT

a) Primary: God.—The one contemplating is lifted into the air like a bird on the wings of contemplation, and dwells upon the King in his beauty according to the extent of his ability. (*Domin. in Septuages.*)—Those contemplating are snatched up in contemplation, not in body but in mind, to the third heaven, beholding the glory of the Trinity in subtlety of spirit. Here, with the ear of the heart, they hear things which they cannot express in words or even comprehend in mind (II Cor. 12:13). (*Domin. in Sexages.*)

b) Secondary: 1) The Humanity of Christ.—Faith having passed into affection, those embracing Jesus Christ in the depths of their heart with the embrace of His sweet love (that Jesus Who is perfect man because of the man assumed and perfect God because of the God assuming)—these really begin to know Him according to the spirit, though they cannot fully know Him nor God according to their divinity; and these, by sanctifying him in their hearts, love to offer Him their vows. (*In Pascha Domini*)—If Christ is so sweet in the acknowledgement of His name and in the taste of contemplation, how sweet will He be in the enjoyment of His Majesty? (*In Inventionem S. Crucis*)

2) The Triumphant Church.—Concerning the savor of contemplation, the prophet says (Ps. 33:9): "Taste and see how sweet is the Lord." "Taste", that is, "turn it over often in the throat" of your mind and by this turning over, consider the happiness of that heavenly Jerusalem, the glorification of holy souls, the unspeakable glory of the angelic dignity and the eternal loveliness of the Trinity and Unity. How great indeed will be the glory of being united with choirs of angels, of praising God with them with unwearied voice, of perceiving without any medium the face of God; of looking upon the manna of divinity in the golden vessel of humanity! If you taste these things well, you will most certainly "see how sweet is the Lord." (*Domin. II in Quadrages.*)

##### II. SUBJECT

a) The Intellect.—Note that the sweetness of contemplation is twofold: one part is in the affection and this is sweetness of life; and the other is in the intellect, and this is sweetness of conscience. The

latter occurs in the *elevation* of the mind, the former in the *alienation* of the mind. The elevation of the mind takes place when the vivacity of the mind, divinely irradiated, transcends the boundaries of human diligence, but does not, however, make the transition to the alienation of the mind. Thus it happens that what it sees is above itself, though at the same time, it does not recede entirely from accustomed things.—The alienation of the mind takes place when present things are forgotten, and the memory, by a transformation of divine operation, is changed into a state of mind which is somewhat strange and impenetrable to human diligence. (*In Conversionem S. Pauli*)—The mind of one contemplating is an aqueduct through which flow the waters of spiritual understanding. (*In Domin. XI post Pent.*)—An eagle, because of its keenness of vision, is said to signify the just man; for as the eagle has the keenest sight . . . so the just man, by the keenness of contemplation, gazes at the splendor of the true sun. (*Domin. I in Quadrages.*)

b) The Will.—The heat of the sun fits the savour of contemplation, in which the heat of love is surely present. Wherefore St. Bernard says: It is impossible that the highest good be seen and not loved; for God Himself is love. (*Domin. II in Quadrages.*)—The contemplative man . . . lives on air, that is, the sweetness of contemplation; therefore it can be said with the Apostle (Philip. 3:20): "Our citizenship is in heaven," and in Job (7:5): "My soul chooses hanging." Hanging is the lifting up of the vision to the Lord. The just man is lifted up from worldly things by the hope of divine love, and hangs in the air by the sweetness of contemplation, and then becomes like total air, having nothing of flesh. That is why it is said of John the Baptist, that "he was a voice crying in the wilderness" (Isaias 40: 3; Matt. 3:3). Voice is air, and John was air, not flesh, for whatever he tasted was completely celestial with no admixture of the carnal. (*In Domin. XXII post Pentec.*) Daniel, the man of desires, is a contemplative who lifts himself up by the rope of love into the sweetness of contemplation. (*Sermo in Resurrectionem Domini*).

##### III. THE EFFECTS OF INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

1. PEACE AND REST.—The soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom. For God *rests* in the soul elevated by humility and lifted up from worldly things by the contemplation of the eternal. Then the house of the five senses is full of His majesty. For all the members are *rest* when God *rests* in the mind. (*In Domin. I de Adventu*)—The spiritual man, returning from the solicitude of temporal things and the unrest of thoughts, and entering into the house of his own conscience, and, having closed the door of the five senses, rests with wisdom. That is, he gives himself to divine contemplation, in which he tastes the



quiet of supernatural sweetness. (*In Domin. X post Pentec.*)

2. JOY AND SWEETNESS.—It should be noted that the sweetness of contemplation, which is born from the love of the Creator, is more precious than all other pursuits, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to this.—Spiritual delights increase the desire for them, and the more they are laid hold of, the more they are loved; and in this is happiness and joy. Blessed that house, happy that conscience, which the savor of wisdom affects, and in which that wisdom rests. (*In Domin. X post Pentec.*)

When the mind of man stands before the fact of God by contemplating His beauty and tasting His sweetness, then truly is the mind a "garden of delight" (Prov. 3: 15). (*Domin. III in Quadrages.*)—When the mind is elevated to taste that sweetness of contemplation, the injury of every tribulation loses its force; for that sweetness so affects the mind that it is unable to suffer from sorrow. (*In Domin. III post Pentec.*)

3. DEVOTION, ADMIRATION AND EXULTATION.—Oh how great is the devotion, admiration and exultation in the heart of him who contemplates. By the abundance of devotion he is *elevated* above himself; by the abundance of admiration he is *led* above himself; and by the abundance of exultation he is *alienated* from himself. (*In festo B. Johannis Evang.*)

4. GREAT KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—There are three heavens. The first is subtlety of knowledge, the second is clarity of justice, and the third is sublimity of glory. In the first is contemplation of truth; in the second, love of equity; in the third, fullness of eternal joy. In the first, ignorance is illuminated; in the second concupiscence is extinguished; in the third, misery is absorbed. If the light of truth surrounds you, you have the first heaven. If the flame of love enkindles you, you dwell in the second heaven. If you enjoy a certain taste of internal sweetness, you have been admitted to the third heaven. This taste is the union by which the bride is united to the bridegroom. "Whoever is united to the Lord" says St. Paul (I Cor. 6:17), "becomes one Spirit with Him." (*In Circumcisione Domini.*)

5. CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF.—Some say that an eagle, because of the acuity of its eyes, looks at the sun without flinching. Therefore it is reported by naturalists that its vision is very keen, and that it forces its children to look at the sun before they are able to fly. And to do this, it strikes them and turns them to the face of the sun. And if the eyes of one eaglet waters before that of the other, it kills this first and feeds it to the other . . . . The eagle is a symbol of the subtle intelligence of the saints and their sublime contemplation. They

turn their children (i.e. their works) to the face of the true sun, to the light of wisdom, so that by the splendor of the sun, whatever is not genuine or whatever is out of place, might become evident. For every iniquity is exposed by the light, and the works of darkness are revealed in the light. Wherefore, if they see that some work of theirs does not look directly at the sun and is agitated and waters from its rays, they immediately destroy it. The ray of grace shows who is the true son. The true work looks directly at the sun if it does not give up when sustaining the heat of tribulation. The truly non-genuine work gazes at the earth, gives up in tribulation, weeps at the loss of temporal goods, and therefore must be killed and fed by him to the good work. For when you destroy the evil in yourself, then you nourish the good in yourself, and wherever the evil falters, there the good flourishes. (*In Domin. XIV post Pentec.*)

6. SUPERNATURAL, FERVENT, AND UNITIVE LOVE OF GOD.—"Sephora" is interpreted as "his bird" or "mediating on him" or "pleasing" or "adhering." The faithful soul is Sephora (Gen. 21: 34), which, if it is a bird, it will be meditating; if meditating, then it is pleasing; if pleasing, then adhering. Thus one follows from the other. A bird by the abdication of things, meditating by the contemplation of the heavenly, pleasing by love, and adhering by union. When it is lifted up, it observes; when it observes, it is inflamed by love; and when it is inflamed by love, it is united. (*In Circumcisione Domini*)—Wisdom (*sapientia*), derives from savor (*sapor*), is the love and contemplation of God who comforts the one savouring, that is, the soul, which values the savour of love above the ten princes of the city, i.e. above every delight of the ten senses of the body. (*In domin. II post Pentec.*)

7. THE AVOIDANCE OF SINS AND FAILINGS.—Licentiousness is indicated by the "caper tree" (cf. Ecclesiastes 12: 5), which will be destroyed when the fore-mentioned soul is saturated with sweetness. . . . Daniel, the man of desires, is the contemplative, who is left alone when he considers all exterior things of little account, and suspends himself by the rope of love in the sweetness of contemplation . . . . When the soul is thus illumined, thus suspended, the power of the body fails, the face grows pale, the flesh droops, and thus it gives up hope in the delight of the body and in the present time, in which it no longer desires to live as was its custom, because now he himself does not live, but the life of Christ lives in him (Cf. Gal. 2: 10). (*Sermo in Resurrectione Domini.*)

8. INCENTIVE TO THE ACTIVE LIFE AND THE ZEAL FOR SOULS.—Saints enter contemplation and return to action, because they are not able to remain there for a long time on account of their fruit-



fulness. They are like a flash of lightning (Ezech. 1: 14), for through those ascending to contemplation and engaging in good works, the heavenly light is dispensed to others. (*In Domin. XXIV post Pentec.*)—A sapphire is a stone of sky-blue color . . . In the sapphire, heavenly contemplation is designated . . . One is not always to be given over to contemplation . . . the contemplative life is not to be engaged in at all times. (*In Annuntiatione B.V.M.*)

#### IV. THE DURATION OF INFUSED CONTEMPLATION.

1. CONTEMPLATION IS NOT SOMETHING PERMANENT, BUT RATHER TRANSIENT. The tent (*Cf. Gen. 18:2*) is the warfare of the active life, from which one goes out and engages in the battle of the Lord, for unimpeded, he suspends himself in contemplation, and led out of himself through excess of mind, he contemplates the light of highest wisdom in joy of mind; and in order to cleave to him longer, he asks him not to depart. (*In festivitate S. Petri.*)

2. IT CAN BE LOST.—a) The sweetness of contemplation is corrupted by a certain quasi adulteration, if the honey of temporal things is mixed with it. It is said by the naturalists that a spider is generated in the combs of honey, and what is in the combs is corrupted, and small worms are born in the hives, which grow small wings and fly . . . In temporal sweetness, poisonous pride is generated . . . and gluttony and luxury are born, which things compel a man to fly in order to lust after unfavorable things. It is no surprise, therefore, if by the admixture of such things, the balsam of the contemplative life is adulterated. (*In Domin. XVIII post Pentec.*)

b) The eagle, because of the sharpness of its vision or of its beak, is a symbol of the just man. For the eagle has the sharpest vision, and when his beak becomes dulled by very old age, he sharpens it on a rock, and it is thus renewed. So the just man, by the sharpness of his contemplation, looks on the splendor of the true sun, and if sometime his beak, i.e. the affections of his mind, become dulled by some sin, lest he should not be able to take the accustomed food of internal sweetness, he immediately sharpens it on the stone of confession and thus becomes renewed in his youth. Hence the Prophet says of him (*Ps. 102: 5*): "Your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (*Domin. I in Quadrages.*)

c) Alas how many carnal affections and clatterings of thought pass in and out of our heart, so that we do not have room for eating the food of eternal sweetness, nor of perceiving the savour of internal contemplation. For this reason, the good Master says: "Come apart" from the troubled crowd "into a desert place," that is, into solitude of mind and body. (*In festo B. Johanni's Evang.*)

## What Return Shall I Make?

Father Regis Marshall, O.F.M.

Christmas is the season of many moods. It is the season of chorus and carol, the season of home and hearth, the season of peace and prayer. Christmas is the season of rags to riches, the humble become exalted. Christmas is the season of bells, trees, stars, and sparkling eyes. Christmas is the season of dumb animals and wise men. It is the season of surprise and mystery, perhaps the least baffling of all, the mystery of a Child. Christmas is the season of silence, a silent night, a mute light, a quiet stable, a speechless guardian, a breathless Mother. Christmas is the season of friendship, welcomed company, community spirit, God dwelling amongst us. Christmas is the season of quickened hearts, lively gait, of good will, God's delight to be with the children of men. Christmas is the season of feast, festooned streets, frolics, parades, finery in dress. God's Presence renewing forever the face of the globe. Christmas is the beginning and the end, God taking up residence in city and country, the end of man's waiting, the fulfillment of his expectations. Christmas is children and angels. Christmas is St. Nicholas and Francis of Assisi. Christmas is all that is sacred. Christmas is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Christmas is Love. Christmas is God.

Christmas is the season of appreciation. Without invitation or provocation God wills to co-habit this world with me. I am the terminal of his coming. Wanted, desired, loved: this is how I stand before God. However cheaply men may judge concerning me, however base may be my self-criticisms, one no less than God proposes and reveals His evaluation of me. Christmas is the feast that arouses an awareness of this awesome appreciation. I mingle in a society of dividends, stock market returns, and profit sharing, but it is at Christmas that I realize my greatest gain. On this occasion I come into my own. With the birth of Christ I am overwhelmed by a landfall of love. With God's Presence on earth I note the beginning of that "common life" which I have espoused as a Franciscan. In the adoration of the Magi I mark the origin of "organized love", a living Love so alive in the crib, a Love that came that we may have life, and have it more abundantly. This corporate, institutionalized, family love is mine to share as a child of St. Francis. Yes, Christmas is the wonderful day of my inheritance, that day when the divine will is manifested and publicized. God enters my life as a child that I might attain the "manhood" of a St. Paul. I hover over the manger and know that I can now rise above myself.



In God's condescension I am apprised of my ascension. He clothes himself with the restrictions of the flesh that I might be robed with the freedom of the spirit. He humbly submits to become the roots that I might be the blossom. What an estimation of me! God comes to me, and no sooner does he arrive than he prepares to assist me in the return to Heaven. In the shop of Joseph he is already blueprinting the mansion that will be promised me. What return shall I make for the appreciation God has showered on me?

My return will admit straightaway a recognition of my lack of appreciation, a slighting of the Creator for the creature. What an example of fortitude is presented me in a Therese, the Little Flower! So often have I failed to acknowledge the real saint for the roses. What a model of saintly manliness do I possess in the Poverello! How frequently have I neglected to appreciate the genuine saint for the birds. And is it not likewise with Christmas? Because it is the season more given to distraction, it is more demanding of concentration. Greetings, gifts, and gaiety surround the creche. Should these be permitted to obscure the Christ Child, then Christmas becomes a diluted season of diversion, the occasion for self-gratification, an exhibition of groundless generosity. The height of my appreciation for this holy season must be pinnacled in the conviction that God was present in Bethlehem as he is present in every Holy Mass. The degree of my appreciation for Christmas will be gauged by my estimation for the Holy Sacrifice. In the Mass we have the same God, the same Gift. It is in the Mass that we reciprocate and make our returns. In the Mass we can appreciate the poverty of the stable in the simplicity of the sacred species; the Lamb of Bethlehem in the breaking of the Bread; the humility of Nazareth in the subjection to a priest. In the Mass my appreciation is magnified and exaggerated, in that the love of the first Christmas is now a sacrificial love, a persevering love, a love promised until the end of time. The Mass demonstrates an appreciation. The Mass begs of appreciation. The Mass provides the Gift of appreciation. What more efficacious manner is there to express our appreciation of God than to return, in every Holy Mass, the Gift that was initially given to us, His Divine Son? God loved us first. We return that love with interest by coupling our love in the Mass with the love that Christ offers to his Father. The Christmas that the Father gave us now becomes his Christmas!

Christmas is the season of nostalgia. Christ is born without a home so as to be the more homesick for man. Every heart is his hearth. In particular does he sigh for the sinner, the stray, those in need of mercy. That he may be all the more acceptable and we the more hospitable, he comes as an adorable Child. No sooner does he arrive than he

implements this nostalgia in us, a homesickness for God and heaven. The magi come from afar to be near. The shepherds leave their flock to be with him. Even the angels make a gladsome appearance. Is there a more nostalgic experience than the stillness of a winter's night lighted by the shimmering stars, the countryside tucked contentedly beneath a comforter of woolly snow, if the night be Christmas eve, the lights that of a village church, the satisfaction that of Midnight Mass? Every Holy Mass has its nostalgia. The stillness of Bethlehem is the stillness of the consecration; the nearness of the manger is the nearness of the Presence; the sacred sociality of the stable is the commerce of Holy Communion. Anticipation is a partial remedy for homesickness. We have this anticipation at every Holy Mass. It is in the Mass that Christ as a lover anticipates the needs and desires of his beloved. Whatever be our needs and desires during this season of desire, God provides the solution at every Mass. In the Babe of Bethlehem he made an overture that will continue at every Mass even to the consummation of the world. How true is the utterance, then, that it is really God Who proposes and man disposes! Is it not, hence, the basis of our Franciscan optimism to appreciate the truth that it was God's desire that brought us into existence, and that it is God's wish that we live for him? This yearning was made quite evident in the nostalgia of the Nativity. What return shall I make for this nostalgia of God, his homesickness for me?

The Franciscan Order is notable for its nostalgia. In our holy Father Francis we find a nostalgia that stirred him to schedule a Christmas Mass at Greccio. The Franciscan emphasis on the evangelical is our nostalgic hankering for the Gospel truth. Our nostalgia spares no effort in protecting and preserving the holy places in Palestine. The special reverence we tender towards relics and saintly souvenirs is a confession of our nostalgia. Our particular affinity for a Simeon, who so yearned to see the Child; for a St. Augustine, who bequeathed to us a restless inclination for God; for a Mary Magdalene, who brooked no obstacle so as to be near the Master, is an admission of this nostalgia. It was Franciscan nostalgia that inspired the Angelus, the Way of the Cross, the procession of the Bambino at Christmas. The same nostalgia induces every Friar to feel so "at home" in the sanctuary. The return that I shall make will be an endeavor to sustain a spiritual sense of security, of "belonging" in the Franciscan Order. Upholding and keeping intact the customs of my Province will be a personal apostolate. My nostalgia will discard those acrobatics that would jeopardize my vows, those rationalizations that are the first cousin to compromise, that casuistry and legalism so kindred to a shallow obedience, that pliability which is nurtured by pride and breeds discontent. My nostalgia will



prompt me to live my religious life from Mass to Mass, to live off the fruits of the previous Mass and in expectancy of the next. Every Mass will be a graduation accurately measuring my appreciation for Christmas and God's nostalgia for me. We need God closer than the mind alone can bring him. We have him to love in his nostalgic presence at Christmas and at every Holy Mass.

Christmas is the season of gifts. In the Christ Child we have the Gift that sublimates all other gifts. Every offering, every hand-out, every fund drive derives its merit from the exemplary Gift of the first Christmas. And indeed the Gift is the more precious in that God did not give of his abundance, but "sent His only begotten Son." Because of the Infant nestled in the mellow straw, wrapped in the warm embrace of a Mother's love, protected by the sinewy strength of a faithful guardian, all gifts take on a new dimension. To the three dimensions of every material gift we can now add another: love. A lover's generosity grows with the intensity of his love. God, who is Love, in his munificence follows up the gift of the Christ Child with the gifts of Calvary, the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Consecration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the Mass we have a gift that is an end whereas other gifts are means, a gift Who is Love while others are expressions of love. What return can I make for this gracious gift of Christmas?

God gifted me with the best, himself. He awaits in return the selfless gift of self. There is no gift as available as the gift of self. There is no one so miserly as the one who hoards this gift; no one so generous as the one who proffers it. The gift of self is so inexpensive in the giving, so dear in the receiving. The gift of myself to God is so exquisite, truly a "religious article", my Franciscan vocation. It is a gift so much in demand, requested by God Himself. The greeting card that accompanies this gift is the promise to live professionally in Christ, for Christ, and with Christ. He is my inspiration, my co-operator, the end product of my living. Just as he endows me without surcease in the Mass, I in return gift him by fashioning my religious life into a living Mass. May I encourage you to offer a similar gift? And may I assist you in the preparation, the parcelling, and the presentation of this gift?

Accept, O Holy Father, the gift of our vocation. In our reception we approached the altar of God, the joy of our youth, with the alacrity of a Samuel. As we knelt before your tabernacle, we were assured of a joy convertible with the life of a dedicated Franciscan. With what reverence and respect we beheld the Franciscan garment, the fabric of faith, the habit of hope, the cloth of charity? At the very outset you who are mighty was doing great things for us. All the warmth that attends a newly formed friendship was there. At the dawn of such a

beautiful life we drew in excited draughts of Franciscan freshness. In return we channeled our ambitions and aspirations into one, simple, capsuled prayer: to please you. Without reservation we permitted ourselves to be poured into the crucible of the novitiate. Ours was a love undivided, without complications. The gift is still ours to treasure and to tender. May the spirit of that initial offering never wither; may the love of things and persons Franciscan never ebb; may our free-will offering become the more generous as we become the more privileged in our ability to make it in this the offertory of our living Mass.

A withered hand was restored; a lifelong illness was cured; a dead man was raised to life. What wonderful changes were wrought at the command of Christ. No less marvellous was the conversion accomplished on the day of our profession. A real Franciscan! All that we heard, all that we read, all that we witnessed of the way of St. Francis now became our Franciscan way of life. On that day it became possible for us to live a life of obvious contradiction; to act, and not as Christ; to speak, and not as Christ; to live, and not have our being in Christ. Christmas without Christ is a current contradiction. To up-date the crib, to contemporize the Cross, is an experiment so dear to the Franciscan striking for sanctity. And the effort we expend in the pursuance of personal sanctity makes the effort to edify others effortless. To sanctify ourselves is the consecration of our living Mass. Every thought and deed! Mind and will! Body and soul!

A vocation is an invitation to walk hand in hand with Jesus Christ, a constant companionship with the Master. We meet every morning in an intimate greeting at Holy Communion. Daily he beckons, "Come, follow me." He leads us to the poor, the sick, the suffering. On other days we escort him wheresoever obedience directs us, to work, to class, to play. What an incomprehensible association! This is the communion of our living Mass. It is through us that Christ seeks introduction to others. Our Franciscan etiquette demands that we be ever prepared to introduce him. In our poverty we must make him as approachable as he was on the Mount of Beatitudes; in our chastity we must reveal him as attractive as he was on Mount Thabor; in our obedience we must make him as disarming as he was on Mount Calvary. What more precious gift can we offer to God and neighbor? As true Christ-bearers we will prolong Christmas on earth. For us to live is Christ, and hence he will also be our "only begotten."

To love and be loved is the actual meaning of Christmas. Christmas may be the season of many moods, but above all it the season of reciprocal love. It is not too difficult to imagine the beloved disciple, St. John, preparing himself to write his most beautiful Gospel. His



memory is flooded with the affection and love that Christ had so liberally bestowed on him. No sooner has he grasped the quill than he comes to that line which is perhaps the saddest in all Scripture, "He came unto his own and his own received him not." The disciple is reduced to tears. Tears also flowed when St. Francis expressed like sentiments, "Love is not loved". And who is the Franciscan who does not feel like crying upon witnessing the calamities of our day? A loveless world is a hopeless world. The same door that banishes Love welcomes strife! The staple diet of love is love. The pity of it all! Surplus food, vitamins, preventive and curative, calorie counts! But a love so lean! Must we confess, "Love's labor lost?" Never! Our response to Love will be the response of a St. Francis. Our fidelity to our Franciscan vocation will place love in the front lines of a contentious world. As never before must our prayers be touched with a note of urgency. As never before must our love be as alive as Love was on the night we received "the good tidings of great joy." Peace in our time can come only from him who is the Prince of Peace for all times. Until the end of the world the gift of Christmas, and the appreciation of this holy season, will be the barometer indicating success or failure, sinner or saint, war or peace.

## HE PRAYS TWICE WHO SINGS

*The Cord* is happy to bring to the attention of its readers—especially, perhaps, the *Teaching Sisters*—the publication of a folder containing seven Christmas carols, entitled *Carols of the Christmas Morn*. The composer of both words and music is Fr. Bruce Ignatowski, O.F.M. Cap. Copies of the folder may be purchased from Father, whose address is 1027 North 9th Street, Milwaukee, Wisc. (Price: 20c per copy).

## Brotherhood in the Kingdom of God

(This article is from chapter XVII of *Love Answers Love*, by Fr. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M. and Fr. Englebert Grau, O.F.M., translated by Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. It will be published in book form by The Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago.)

As Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, had lived on earth, so Francis of Assisi also wished to live. Such was to be the ideal likewise of all those who were "joined to Saint Francis in their life and in their habit."<sup>1</sup> These disciples Francis called Friars Minor, as in the early Rule: "Let all be called simply Friars Minor."<sup>2</sup> Such a title more than any other capsules the vocation of the Order and the very inner nature and spirit of the Franciscan community, whether of the friars or that of the Sisters. What is proposed in this chapter therefore applies equally to all three branches of the Order. To be "Lesser," to be a "Brother," to be a "Friar Minor, a Lesser Brother," sums up their whole life according to the Gospel, their whole "life of penance."<sup>3</sup>

### I. The Secret of Brotherhood.

Francis has not left us any profound statement on the nature of his brotherhood. Likely he never paused to reflect very deeply on it, nor had he need to, since he and the friars lived and practiced a truly Christlike community life, as did Clare and her Sisters. What we live with constantly and what we live out of the fulness of the heart is not usually the subject of lengthy analysis. Only when a man begins to question such inner convictions does he stop to examine them. The first friars—and the first Poor Clares—were so full of spirit of brotherliness, which penetrated their whole life, that they did not pause to ask questions about it. Instead, they were more concerned with practicing it in a way that would be more pleasing to God.

Yet from occasional remarks we can glean something of the inner secret of Franciscan brotherhood and brotherliness. Christ is the head and vital center of the community. "If Francis' love made him the brother of other creatures, it is not surprising that the charity of Christ made him much more the brother of those made to the image of the

<sup>1</sup> *I Celano*, n. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 6 (*Words*, p. 257, 20-21).

<sup>3</sup> In the thirteenth century some wished to call the Sisters of the Second Order "*Sorores Minores*." The name never became popular, and was later expressly forbidden for purely external reasons.



Creator."<sup>4</sup> Since creation is the effect of God's fatherly love, that love led Francis to close union with all God's creatures. "He called all creatures his 'brothers' and 'sisters,' and in an extraordinary way the glance of his heart penetrated into the secrets of creation, as though he had already attained the freedom of the glory of the sons of God."<sup>5</sup> "Thus indeed did that goodness which is the source of all, and which one day will be all in all, appear to this holy man even now as all in all."<sup>6</sup> Yet if the love of his heart thus made him brother of all irrational creation, how much more did not the love of Christ "make him the brother of those creatures stamped with the image of the Creator . . . for whom the only-begotten Son of God deigned to hang upon the cross" to make them once more the children of his Father. For love of that love Francis followed his Master in loving all men as his brothers and sisters.<sup>7</sup> But his love drew him in a special way to those who belonged to his Order: "His friars, as members of the household of a common faith and as sharing with him an eternal inheritance, he embraced beyond measure with all the love of his heart."<sup>8</sup> In his brothers he saw and loved Christ, and the love of Christ for us made him the brother of all the friars.

In striking contrast to the medieval consciousness of rank and social position, Francis restored the gospel ideal of the equality of all men as children of God. When he came to sum up (in the early Rule, chapter 33) the spirit that was to penetrate Franciscan life, Francis simply pieced together as it were, what Christ had taught on the ideal of brotherhood: "And when you stand up to pray, say: Our Father, who art in heaven. . . . But you are all brothers. But call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for one only is your Master, the Christ, who is in heaven . . . Wherever two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them. Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." Then Francis continues: "Let us thus hold fast to the words, life and doctrine and the holy Gospel of him who has deigned to beseech his Father for us and to make known to us his name: Father, I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me . . . Holy Father, keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be sanctified in truth. Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those who through their word are to believe in me, that they may be perfected in unity and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and that Thou lovest them even as Thou hast loved me. And I will

<sup>4</sup> *II Celano*, n. 172.

<sup>5</sup> *I Celano*, n. 181; *Rom.* 8, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *II Celano*, n. 165; cf. *I Cor.* 15, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *II Celano*, n. 172.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

make known to them Thy name, in order that the love with which Thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me, that they may behold Thy glory in Thy kingdom."<sup>9</sup> Many of these passages Francis repeated later in his *Letter to the Faithful*.<sup>10</sup> They so clearly present the gospel ideal of Franciscan brotherhood that there is no need to add more. The secret of Christian brotherhood is found in our adoption through Christ as children of our Father in heaven. Through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the redeemed are united in him, and, because they are his brothers, are made children of the Father. Their life as children of God must henceforth be the expression of their brotherhood in Christ.

Such is the essence of Franciscan brotherhood and community life. Time and again Francis gave practical expression to this ideal in a phrase he liked to use of his friars. They were for him "*fratres spirituales*, brothers in the spirit," even as Clare spoke on her "*sorores spirituales*, sisters of the spirit."<sup>11</sup> He is a "*frater spiritualis*, a brother in the spirit" who has "the spirit of the Lord" and in consequence (as Francis simply presupposes) seeks ever to let the grace of the redemption operate in him. Yet that grace can work in him only if it meets no obstacles; only, therefore, when in that man all self-love has been banished; or, as Francis would put it, when the spirit of the flesh (*spiritus varnis*) has been replaced in man by the spirit of the Lord: "We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh (that is, according to purely human ways of thinking, willing, doing), but rather we must be simple, humble and pure,"<sup>12</sup> for thus shall a man be detached from self and free from all self-love and self-seeking, which are the greatest obstacles that grace encounters in producing its full effects in the individual and, as a result, in the community. On the other hand, when a man is "simple, humble and pure," and empty of self, grace finds the room it needs to grow in the soul. To such a man the spirit of the Lord can give itself to the full: "And on all who act in this manner and persevere therein to the end the spirit of the Lord shall rest, and he will make for himself in them a tabernacle and a dwelling-place, and they shall be children of the Father in heaven."<sup>13</sup> When such a spirit replaces the spirit of the flesh and becomes the guiding and motivating force of a man's life, he is able to fulfill with Christ the will of the Father in heaven. He thus becomes,

<sup>9</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 (*Words*, p. 277, 24-279, 30).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Words*, p. 191, 2-16.

<sup>11</sup> Rule of Saint Clare, ch. 8, n. 9 (*Legend and Writings*, p. 76).

<sup>12</sup> *Letter to the Faithful* (*Words*, p. 189, 24-26); cf. *I Cor.* 1, 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 190, 7-11).



as Francis adds almost immediately,<sup>14</sup> the brother of Christ—and when all those who are filled with the spirit of the Lord are united together they become in Christ our Brother a “*fraternitas*,” a brotherly community.

In pondering such truths, Francis broke forth in joy, his words tumbling over one another as he exclaimed: “O how holy and dear, pleasing, humble, peaceful and sweet and desirous above all else, to have such a Brother!”<sup>15</sup> Because Christ is our Brother, we, who are filled with his spirit and share his sonship, are brothers to one another, brothers in the spirit.

Such is the spiritual man, Friar Minor, Poor Clare, Tertiary: redeemed by Christ, adopted into the house and family of God’s children, and made co-heir with Christ, he strives through God’s grace to overcome the spirit of self, and surrender himself to the spirit of the Lord. His footsteps follow those of his Lord, to whom he is wholly united; and in the Church of Christ he acts always under the guidance of the spirit of Christ. The Franciscan community is essentially a family of such Brothers and Sisters.

## II. The Well-Springs of Brotherhood.

When Francis speaks of the deep mystery of brotherhood and unity, he always points to Christ our Brother, “who laid down his life for his sheep and prayed to the Father for us, saying: Holy Father, keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given me. Father, all whom Thou hast given me in the world, were Thine, and Thou hast given them to me . . . I pray for them, not for the world. Bless and sanctify them. And for them I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in unity, even as we are.”<sup>16</sup> The sacrifice of Christ, his dedication to the Father for us, make him our Brother, and in him and through him and with him make us children of the Father in a most marvelous unity. The spirit of true brotherhood thus has its roots in the sacrifice of Calvary.

Because the Mass is the renewal of that sacrifice, Francis found in it the source of life, the means of growing in Christ and in union with one another. By sharing through the Eucharist in the oblation of Christ, the Christian will overcome the chief obstacle to community life: self-love and self-will. Sacrificing himself with Christ, he will crucify the “old self” (Rom. 6, 6) that the spirit of the flesh may be destroyed, and so come to a new life in which the spirit of Christ will live and work in him. In and through the Mass, Francis begged, “everyone’s will, insofar as the grace of the Almighty aids it, should be directed to

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 190, 13-18).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 190, 27-30).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 190, 30ff).

God, while its sole desire should be to please the most high Lord alone, because he alone works therein as it may please him.”<sup>17</sup> Who thus joins in the Holy Sacrifice becomes one with Christ in his oblation and death. Because he keeps back nothing of himself for himself, Christ can receive him wholly and in turn give himself entirely to him.<sup>18</sup> He thereby becomes the “*homo spiritualis*,” the man filled with the spirit of Christ: and only such a man is fit and able to share in a true Christian, Christ-like brotherhood.

Because of this, Francis expressly desired that in every place where the friars dwelt the Holy Sacrifice should be celebrated daily, “because the Lord Jesus fills those present and those absent who are worthy of him,” as he alone works in all “as it shall please him, with the Lord God the Father and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>19</sup> Thus filled with Christ, because they are dead to self, the friars (and the Sisters) are daily incorporated anew into the family of God. Because they are filled in the Mass with the spirit of the Lord, they issue forth from it with a greater love for one another as brothers or sisters in Christ. The Eucharistic sacrifice becomes for them the well-spring of new life, the source of greater love, the bond of fraternal charity. In it each member, and through each the whole community, is brought to share in the life of the Triune God, from whom all union and communion in heaven and on earth has its origin: “For them I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in unity, even as we are.”<sup>20</sup>

## III. Gratitude for the Gift of Brotherhood.

Because brotherhood, fraternal union with one another, is made possible through Christ’s sacrifice for us, it is a precious gift of God’s fatherly love. For such a grace we owe Christ our deepest thanks: “Because he has suffered so much for us and has given us so many good things and will give us many more in the future, every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and on the sea and in the depths must give God praise and honor and glory and blessing, because he is our power and our strength, who alone is good, alone most high, alone almighty and marvelous, glorious and all-holy, worthy of all praise, and blessed for endless ages of ages.”<sup>21</sup> Francis thus calls on all creatures, because they are his brothers, to offer thanks with him that we “have such a Brother,”<sup>22</sup> and that in him we are brothers.

Whoever like Francis has come to know the power the Mass bestows, how it helps to overcome self and therefore to build up the

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the Chapter (Words, p. 144, 30ff).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 147, 6-9).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 147, 22-24).

<sup>20</sup> Letter to the Faithful (p. 191, 11-13).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 191, 17-26).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 190, 30).



community, and the grace the Holy Sacrifice gives us of union with Christ and with one another, will never cease to thank the Father through Christ our Brother in the Holy Spirit for the grace not only of being called brothers but of being truly "brothers all" in Christ!

#### IV. Application.

To be faithful to our God-given vocation as Franciscans, brothers in Christ, we must strive to be deeply penetrated by the secret of true brotherhood, and above all be conscious of the role the Mass and the Eucharist have as the sacrament of unity, in which is daily renewed our union with one another. If we truly esteem such graces and are full of gratitude for them, we shall try to live such graces in our daily life, in fidelity to the will of Saint Francis: "As a sign that they are mindful of my memory and my blessing and our covenant, let them love and honor one another as I have loved them and do love them;"<sup>23</sup> faithful also to his words in the early Rule: "They are to love one another according to the word of the Lord: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. And let them show by their deeds the love which they owe one another, as the Apostle says: Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth;"<sup>24</sup> or as Saint Clare exhorted her Sisters: "Love one another with the charity of Christ, and let the love which you have in your hearts be shown outwardly by your deeds."<sup>25</sup>

1. "And wherever the friars are or meet with other friars anywhere, they must as spiritual men take care to show reverence and honor to one another without murmuring."<sup>26</sup> Because the spirit of the Lord abides in them, because indeed the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has made a tabernacle and dwelling-place in them,<sup>27</sup> they should as spiritual men be possessed above all of "reverence and honor" for one another. Where such an attitude toward our brother is lacking, love will scarcely flourish.

Very practically, such reverence must be manifested above all in our words, since it is usually by word that we sin against it. Accordingly, Francis reminds us of the admonitions Holy Scripture gives us: "They shall not speak evil of anyone; nor should they murmur; nor disparage others, for it is written: Whisperers and detractors are hateful to God. And let them be moderate, showing all mildness to all men. Let them not judge or condemn; nor should they, as the Lord says, consider even

<sup>23</sup> "Siena Testament" (Words, p. 230, 16-18).

<sup>24</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 11 (p. 264, 17-23).

<sup>25</sup> Testament of St. Clare, n. 18 (Legend, p. 86).

<sup>26</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 7, (p. 259, 3-8).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., ch. 22 (p. 277, 17-19).

the slightest sins of others, but rather recount their own bitterness of soul."<sup>28</sup> Reverence, respect, esteem, thoughtfulness for others, grow out of the spirit of the Lord within us and are fruit of love for Christ in our neighbor. At the same time, reverence finds its foundation in humility, in the true estimate of our own worth and that of others before God: "In humility, let each regard the others as his superiors, each looking not to his own interests but to those of others" (Phil. 2, 4).

In such reverence and honor for others the community of brothers or sisters in Christ finds its strongest basis and support. "The grace of God is in Courtesy!"

2. Our honor and respect for others must cover also those who are absent, for here too often we fail to watch our words. Realizing such a danger, Francis reminds us: "Blessed is the servant who would love and reverence his brother as much when he is far away as when he would be with him, and would say nothing behind his back that he could not say in charity to his face."<sup>29</sup> How much uncharitableness would be avoided in our individual and community life if this simple earnest exhortation were always observed! Each of us would be sure that though absent we could count on the affection of our fellows. Such respect would go far in sustaining and perfecting our common life.

3. "And wherever the friars may be together or may come upon any of their brethren, let them show by their behavior toward one another that they are all of one family. And if one of them is in need, be should in full freedom and trust make known that need to the other. For if a mother has such care and love for the child born of her flesh, how much more love and care must not one have for him who is his brother according to the Spirit!"<sup>30</sup> This passage of the final Rule (repeated in that of Saint Clare) clearly shows us the mind of Saint Francis: his disciples are not merely to be called Brothers, they are to be brothers! Not only this, but their love for one another in the spirit must be greater than the greatest natural love mankind has ever known: it must be greater, more intense, purer than the love of a mother for the child she has carried under her heart. Among spiritual brothers (as also among spiritual sisters) there must exist an atmosphere of loving trust which surpasses anything purely human. Franciscan communities must be true families marked by a more than motherly love and concern for one another: "And let one unhesitatingly reveal his need to the other, that the latter may find and provide what is necessary for him. And each should love and cherish his brother, as a mother loves

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., ch. 11 (p. 264, 24-265, 6). - Cf. *The Cord*, 3 (1953), 335-341.

<sup>29</sup> Admonitions, n. 25 (p. 141, 13-17).

<sup>30</sup> Final Rule, ch. 6 (in *The Marrow of the Gospel*, p. 159); cf. Rule of Saint Clare, ch. 8, n. 9 (Legend, n. 76).



and cherishes her child, in those things wherein God shall give them grace."<sup>31</sup>

The modern man finds these words strange because, even in religious communities, he is generally inclined to be reserved and even a little aloof. He can hardly bring himself to reveal to another his spiritual or material needs—for he is not at all sure that such a revelation will be met with a more than motherly love and succor on the part of his spiritual brother! If this is true, then precisely here we need a return to our true Franciscan ideals. Is this not a touchstone to prove whether Franciscans today live by the power of the spirit of Christ, and whether their morning Sacrifice is fruitful in their community life? For only then are they really "*fratres spirituales*, brothers in the spirit," according to the mind of Saint Francis. Even more, such a problem concerns the very fundamentals of a truly Christlike life. Of what good are all our sublime thoughts on union in Christ or all our fine phrases on such a mystery, if we cannot or do not translate them into practice in daily life? Religious are not so inhuman as not to need the security of the more than maternal love of their brothers and sisters. But this they will have only if a genuine family spirit pervades their community. That is why Saint Francis so emphatically exhorted his friars to show one another a sincere brotherly affection in a real family spirit: "I wish that my friars show themselves sons of the same mother;"<sup>32</sup> or why Clare could insist: "Let them be ever careful to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love, which is the bond of perfection."<sup>33</sup>

4. The spirit of brotherhood and the concrete expression of brotherly love must be shown first in regard to external needs. Man is a creature of flesh and blood as well as spirit, and were his charity to remain purely on the spiritual plane it might not thrive too well. Francis then did not hesitate to tell his friars: "If one asks for a habit, a cord, or anything else, the other should gladly give it to him . . . ."

Rather, the one ought to insist that the other take it."<sup>34</sup> His words imply that out of love the friars should anticipate the needs of others and not wait to be asked. Celano adds a striking comment: "In order not to have anything save what Christ had wrought through him, he was himself the first to do all such things." True brotherly love in us is the work of Christ, since it is his spirit which prompts us to show a more than motherly love toward those who are our brothers or sisters in that same spirit. Where the community is animated by such love, there is Christ in the midst as the bond of their union. There indeed

<sup>31</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 9 (p. 262, 9-15).

<sup>32</sup> *II Celano*, n. 180 (*Words*, n. 176, p. 122).

<sup>33</sup> Rule of St. Clare, ch. 10, n. 5 (*Legend*, p. 79).

<sup>34</sup> *II Celano*, n. 180 (*Words*, loc. cit.).

is kingdom of God a happy reality, "a noble structure of charity, in which living stones gathered from all parts of the world are built together into a dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit."<sup>35</sup>

5. "Should there be among the friars, wherever they are, any brother who is minded to walk according to the flesh and not according to the spirit, the friars with whom he is should admonish and advise and reprove him with all humility and care. But if after three admonitions he will not amend his ways, they should send him to his minister and servant, or inform the latter. The minister and servant shall then do with him what seems best to him according to God."<sup>36</sup> Clare provides a similar prescription for the Sisters.<sup>37</sup> The spirit of brotherhood and a love more than that of a mother will thus be concerned with the very spiritual foundations of the community. In sincere humility and Christlike care all must be anxious that each member keep alive in himself the spirit of the Lord and not "walk according to the flesh, but in the spirit, according to the true tenor of our life."<sup>38</sup> Every religious stands in danger of giving way anew to self. All of us too easily look at ourselves through the eyes of self-love and self-esteem, and in such distorted vision judge ourselves and all else by the standards of "the spirit of the flesh." Who gives in to such folly runs the risk of being "minded to walk according to the flesh and not according to the spirit." And who is to free us from such a danger if not our brethren (or sisters) in the spirit, who should care for us more than would a mother?

Gently, humbly, patiently, the friars (the Sisters) should "admonish and advise and reprove" those who stand in such danger, and lead them back to the ways of the spirit. And this not once, but three times—and only when all this fails are they to have recourse to those are "*vice Christi*," the representatives of Christ.<sup>39</sup> The gospel life of penance would be spared many dangers were such brotherly and sisterly concern for one another to be found in all communities.

6. Such true love and concern must not be limited only to those in peril; it must include those above all who have actually succumbed to such dangers. His "Letter to a Minister" shows us what Francis once proposed to insert in the Rule on such erring subjects: "If any of the friars is misled by the wicked enemy and sins mortally, he is to be bound by obedience to have recourse to his guardian. And all the friars who may know that he has sinned, must not shame or reproach him. They should rather show great mercy toward him, and keep his sin entirely

<sup>35</sup> *I Celano*, n. 38; Eph. 2, 22; I Peter 2, 5. (add. Transl.)

<sup>36</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 5 (p. 255, 24ff).

<sup>37</sup> Rule of St. Clare, ch. 9, nn. 1-2 (*Legend*, p. 77).

<sup>38</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 5 (*Words*, p. 255, 17-19).

<sup>39</sup> *II Celano*, n. 186.

hidden; for it is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick."<sup>40</sup> Yet what actually happens? Is it not too true that "spiritual men" are the best gossips, detailing the sins of their brethren not only among themselves but outside the community as well? How far removed they are in this from the spirit of Christ that should reign in them! How few indeed have real compassion (*cum-passio*!) for those brothers (or Sisters) who have had the misfortune of falling. How different the reaction of Saint Francis, as narrated by Berthold of Regensburg: "His compassion for sinners so touched the blessed Francis that he could scarcely bear to hear of the fall of any religious. And when others spoke of such things, he tried to flee. So great was the sorrow they caused him that, as he himself said, it was almost as though a lance had pierced his side."<sup>41</sup> Like Christ, Francis suffered under the weight of sin. Like Christ, he suffered because of the sinner. Like Christ, he suffered for the sinner. Does not true Christlike love seek to heal and to save, and not to condemn? Without such love there can be no real community of brothers or sisters, as is made clear in the Rule: "They must take care not to be angered or disturbed because of the sin which another may commit, since anger and anxiety hinder charity in themselves and in the sinners."<sup>42</sup> When Clare repeated this admonition in her Rule,<sup>43</sup> she further suggested that when a Sister was obstinate and refused to recognize her sins, the others should "pray that God enlighten her heart to do penance."<sup>44</sup>

7. "If any of the friars becomes sick, the other friars shall not leave him, wherever he may be, unless they appoint one of the friars or more, if need be, who will take that care of him they would wish to have themselves."<sup>45</sup> When the Order was young and the friars moved about in small groups, this prescription of the early Rule had more meaning. But today also, is not the time of sickness a special challenge to our spirit of brotherliness, a special opportunity to manifest to the sick our more-than-motherly love? This supposes that we have the right approach to sickness and do not fall into the modern fallacy, found even in religious life, of judging everything in terms of external activity and visible success. Such an error is inclined to regard the sick Brothers or Sisters as a liability and deny them the love they should receive. What a cross it is for sick religious to feel abandoned by the love of their busy brothers and sisters, especially since the time of sickness so

<sup>40</sup> Letter to a Minister (*Words*, p. 162, 5-14).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. L. Lemmens, *Testimonia minora*, p. 74; cf. also *Il Celano*, n. 157.

<sup>42</sup> Final Rule, ch. 7 (p. 291, 1-4).

<sup>43</sup> Rule of St. Clare, ch. 9, n. 3 (*Legend*, p. 77).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 10 (p. 263, 6-11).

often evokes the memory of our own mother's tender loving care! Let us take the time to care for them, and not always leave it to professionals, mindful of what Saint Francis said: "Truly blessed is that friar who loves his brother who is sick and cannot render him service with as much love as he has for him when he is well and can be useful for him."<sup>46</sup> The Rule of the friars reduces such an ideal to action: "And if any of them becomes sick, the other friars are to take that care of him which they would wish to have themselves."<sup>47</sup> So too that of the Poor Clares: "All are bound to care and serve their Sisters who are ill as they would wish to be served themselves were they suffering any sickness."<sup>48</sup>

In how many ways then cannot the love which God has given us in the Holy Spirit contribute to the inner growth and development of Christian communities, and through them of the kingdom of God on earth—which is above all a kingdom of love. It may well be that today we cannot carry out to the letter all that Saint Francis established for the circumstances of his day and age. Yet who will dare say that his ideal of a love between spiritual brothers which surpasses that of a mother for her child is outmoded or outdated? It is as timeless as the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on which it is based. And no one can deny that communities imbued with such an ideal and built on such love have as much service to render the Church today as did those of Francis and Clare in the thirteenth century. Now as then, perhaps, the spirit of individualism and love of self threatens the very Body of Christ. Against such a danger true brotherly love and sisterly love in the spirit of the Lord can both offer a remedy and be a source of blessing for the Church!

<sup>46</sup> Admonitions, n. 25 (*Words*, p. 141, 9-12).

<sup>47</sup> Final Rule, ch. 6 (p. 290, 13-16).

<sup>48</sup> Rule of St. Clare, ch. 8, n. 8 (*Legend*, p. 76).

## WE HAVE A NEW SAINT!

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1962, Franciscans everywhere will congratulate and rejoice with the Friars Minor Capuchin on the canonization of Blessed Francis Mary of Camporosso, O.F.M. Cap. (1804-1866).

The September, 1962 number of the *Round Table of Franciscan Research* carries a six-page article on the new Saint's life.



# OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Harold J. Rahm, S.J.

Not quite four decades after Columbus discovered America and slightly more than one decade after the Spaniards first set foot on what is now Mexico, God in a special way showed His love for the peoples of the New World by sending them His Mother. And His Mother gave to the Americas a unique and wonderful gift; Her own self-portrait miraculously impressed upon the *tilma* of Juan Diego, an humble, unlettered Aztec Indian. Further, She promised Juan Diego that She would "give to you and all your people my merciful love" and expressed the desire that a church be built on the spot where She appeared, so that She might "show my compassion to all who are devoted to me and seek me in their need". And this took place at a time when no boundary lines were yet drawn across the Americas—hence Her words were for *all* the peoples of the New World.

Her portrait, the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe (for so She stated She wished to be known when She appeared to Juan Diego's dying uncle, Juan Bernardino) hangs high over the Main Altar of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City—an inspiration to all who behold it, a source of comfort and hope to all who invoke Her aid. Her compassionate partly-downcast eyes and loving hands joined in prayer teach us by example the value She places on prayer.

To this Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City annually come millions. They come by car, by train, by plane, and many on foot—from all corners of the country and from faraway lands beyond Mexico's borders. They come to see the portrait, to ask Our Lady's special intercession, to thank Her for graces received.

The portrait itself has confounded art experts through the centuries who have examined it minutely. By all natural laws the *tilma*, a coarsely-woven cloak of cactus fibre, should long ago have disintegrated, especially so since for over a century it hung in the open, whereas now it is covered with glass. No art expert has ever been able to explain the method of application of the media used for impressing the portrait on the *tilma*. No other painting known to exist has the natural life-like quality of the portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe—and certainly nothing comparable to it was known or is available dating back to the early part of the 16th century. Moreover of a group of five ophthalmologists who examined the eyes of the portrait through their ophthalmoscopes in May of 1956,

each found he was "looking into a human eye" (this is authenticated by a certificate dated May 26, 1956, signed by the five).

This portrait was left to us by Our Lady in the year 1531.

By the end of 1531 the Spaniards had a decade of conquest of the Indians behind them but, unfortunately, the leaders had become ruthless in their quenchless thirst for wealth and power; and the Aztecs had discovered the Spaniards were not gods but only human beings even as they, and had become very restless under their yoke of oppression; all of which did not tend to make them take kindly to the religion the Spaniards sought to spread.

But fortunately, just shortly before, the Spanish Crown had sent Bishop-elect Juan de Zumarraga, O.F.M., to represent the Church, and Fray Zumarraga, a holy and just man, was concerned greatly about the behaviour of the Spaniards in the New World and the slowness of the spread of Christianity among the newly-found peoples. Upon his arrival in Tenachtitlan, where the Spaniards had set up their seat of government upon the ruins of the principal city of the Aztecs, he built his cathedral in honor of the "Mother of God" and expressed the wish to consecrate the lands of the New World to Her. (Incidentally, the United States of America was consecrated to the Immaculate Conception in 1846.) Fray Zumarraga prayed fervently to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady to help him find a solution to the threat posed by the Aztecs whom he sensed were ready to revolt against and destroy the Spaniards, and for a way to win them in great numbers to the Christian religion and way of life.

Our Lady's answer to his prayers came so simply and beautifully and was so quietly accomplished that historical writings make little mention of it as a moment which changed American history. Yet Our Lady's gentle touch did just that.

Her answer was delivered through Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian, who with his wife Maria and uncle Juan Bernardino, had been among the very first few New World converts to Christianity.

Early on the morning of December 9, 1531, as Juan Diego was walking from his home to the Franciscan Monastery at Tlaltelolco, some miles distant, to attend Mass in honor of the Conception of Mary celebrated on the 9th, She appeared to him in this wise:

As he was passing the rocky crags of Tepeyac Hill, he was brought to his knees by a dazzling light and the sound of ethereal music. He looked up to see a beautiful lady smiling tenderly and lovingly at him.

The lady called him by name and, addressing him in his own Nahuatl language told him:

"I want you to know, my son, that I am the ever Virgin Mary,

Mother of the true God, Author of life, Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and earth, Who is everywhere. I urgently desire that a church be built here on this site where I may give to you and all your people my merciful love and may show my compassion to all who are devoted to me and seek me in their need. Go to the house of the bishop in Mexico and tell him all that I have told you. Tell him of my desire for a church to be built on this site in my honor."

When Juan presented his claim that he carried a message from the Mother of God, Fray Zumarraga listened patiently to his story and then dismissed him. Juan felt that the bishop did not believe him.

Discouraged, he returned to the hill where the music and the radiant light proclaimed the Lady's presence. She assured him that she had chosen him above all others to be Her messenger and told Juan to return to the bishop on the morrow and repeat her request.

True to his promise, Juan visited the bishop's house the next day and repeated the story. The bishop listened more attentively as each detail was reaffirmed by the Indian. Finally, the bishop asked Juan to bring some sign as proof of the story, and Juan happily agreed to do so.

As the Indian left, the curious bishop assigned two servants to follow him and report on what they saw. However, as they approached Tepeyac Hill, Juan disappeared from their sight. They turned back, disgusted, and gave the bishop an unfavorable report.

Our Lady now told Juan Diego that She would give him a sign for the bishop on the following morning. He left with joy in his heart, but was upset upon returning home to find that his uncle, Juan Bernardino, was very ill and required constant attention throughout the next day. The morning of December 12, Juan Diego set out to bring a priest to his uncle's bedside as the old man was convinced that death was near and wanted to receive the Last Sacraments.

As he approached Tepeyac, Juan reasoned that he could take a different path and avoid the Lady. Surely she would be angry with him for failing to keep his appointment the day before. Well aware of his feelings, the Lady met him on the path and comforted him.

Juan requested Her permission to let him continue on his way, for his uncle was very ill.

"Do not worry and do not be afraid", the Lady said, "your uncle is well. Go now to the top of the hill and there you will find roses blooming. Pick as many as you can hold in your cloak and bring them to me."

Flowers had never before been seen on this rocky point where only cactus could thrive. Trusting the Lady, however, Juan ascended to the rocky summit.

There he found beautiful, fragrant roses, the like of which he had

never seen before, blooming in profusion. Juan gathered as many roses as he could and placed them in his *tilma*. Descending, he returned to the Lady who arranged the flowers carefully in his cloak and then bade him return to the bishop. His heart singing, Juan hastened to the bishop's house, clutching the roses in his *tilma*.

Once in the presence of the bishop, Juan Diego opened his *tilma* to reveal the roses, unaware that Fray Zumarraga had been praying for just such a sign. But at the very instant the roses dropped to the floor, Fray Zumarraga witnessed the appearance of the Image of Our Lady on the cloth. Falling to his knees, he thanked God for this heavenly gift.

In the meantime, the old uncle, Juan Bernardino, also had received a visit from the Lady, Who instantaneously restored him to health. Thus cured, She gave him the message that She wished to be called "Santa Maria de Guadalupe". This name, as spoken by the old man in his native Indian tongue, more than likely was the Indian phrase meaning "She who crushed the head of the serpent". This sound was interpreted by the Spaniards to be "Guadalupe", the name of a well-known shrine to Our Lady in Spain.

In truth, Our Lady did "crush the serpent", for the Indians, whose religion had many gods and goddesses of all shapes and attributes, likewise revered the feathered serpent. Now, they accepted the God of the Spaniards as they flocked to the shrine built to house the Holy Image.

Through this intervention of Our Lady of Guadalupe, eight million Indians were converted in the next seven years. For to the Indians, who had no alphabet of their own, the message of the visions and the symbolism of Our Lady's portrait as interpreted by them, had tremendous significance, and it brought them by the myriads into the Church, many of them traveling great distances for such purpose.

With Our Lady's help, the Spaniards remained to colonize Mexico and to extend the teachings of the Church in America. Without Her help, they might have vanished from Mexico and American history might have followed a vastly different course.

To the Indians, She is the beloved "Dark Virgin". To all the Americas—North, South and Central—She is the Mother of God.

Whatever may be the correct interpretation of Her name and Her appearance, it is certain that once you see Our Lady of Guadalupe, you will never forget Her. She is an inspiration to all to try to live up to the wonderful love of God Who blessed the Americas through this precious gift. In truth, She is *The Mother of the Americas*.



# Index to the Cord

Father Honorius A. Santoriello, O.F.M.

Note: While we regret the fact that the double Index below consumes so much space in this number, we decided that it would be best to include it here lest it run into next year's Volume XIII. We beg your pardon!

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- "Friendship Resurrected", May, 1958, p. 135.

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- "Proles De Caelo Prodiit", October, 1959, p. 306.
- "An Old Easter Hymn", April, 1961, p. 139.
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- "For a Nun Tempted", July, 1959, p. 208.

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## INDEX IV. — AN INDEX OF BOOK REVIEWS

For convenient reference we have listed these reviews under five general headings, viz., I. - *Franciscana*, II. - *Biography*, III. - *Blessed Mother*, IV. - *Spiritual Reading*, V. - *General*.

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- "Franciscan Life in Christ", Fr. Mark Stier, O.F.M. Cap., Paterson, 1953, pp. 290; March, 1954, pp. 95-6.
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- "Saint Francis and the Poet", Eliz. B. Patterson, Devin-Adair, 1956, pp. 240; March, 1957, pp. 95-6.
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- "The Little Flowers of St. Francis", Raphael Brown, Hanover House, 1958, pp. 357; March, 1959, p. 95.
- "The Voice of Your Father", Martin Wolter, O.F.M., Franc. Herald Press, 1959, pp. 400; May, 1960, p. 160.
- "In The Spirit of St. Francis", Theodosius Foley, O.F.M. Cap., St. Anthony Guild, 172 pp.; Jan., 1951, p. 60, reviewed by Fr. Anslem Hardy, O.F.M.
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- "Jesus of Nazareth", Hilarion Felder, O.F.M. Cap., transl. Fr. Bittle, O.F.M. Cap., Bruce, 1953, 353 pp.; Feb., 1955, pp. 63-4.
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- "Ste. Anne De Beaupre: Its Shrine; Its Spirit", E. Lefebvre, C.S.S.R.; August, 1960, p. 238; reviewed by Fr. Alfred Carey, O.F.M.
- N.B. Most of the above reviews in the *Cord* are unsigned, some are initialed, and others are signed. Those who have reviewed certain books and have affixed their names are underlined above.

## CORRECTION

In setting up the August number of *The Cord*, the "printer's devil" apparently nodded. We are grateful to our confreres, Father Celestine Regnier, O.F.M. Conv., and Peter Damien Fehlner, O.F.M. Conv., for bringing to our attention several errors in the "Index to the Cord", August, 1962.

- p. 235 (under "*Anthony Saint*") : for Fr. DiCicco, O.F.M. Conv. read Fr. M. DiCicco, O.F.M.
- p. 236: for Billy, O.F.M., cap. read Billy, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 240: for Carr, O.F.M. Cap. read Carr, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 241: for DiCicco, O.F.M., Fr. Hugh read DiCicco, O.F.M. Conv., Fr. Hugh. *ibid.*: (under DiCicco, O.F.M. Conv., Fr. Hugh) : for Fr. Raymer (sic) Sciamannini, O.F.M. Cap. read Fr. Rayner Sciamannini, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 244: for Gallagher, O.F.M. Cap. read Gallagher, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 246 (under Joergensen, Johannes) : for Fr. DiCicco, O.F.M. Cap. read Fr. Hugh DiCicco, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 247: for Kannenburg, O.F.M. Cap. read Kannenburg, O.F.M. Conv.
- ibid.*: for Klein, O.F.M., Cap. read Klein, O.F.M. Conv.
- p. 253: for Regnier, O.F.M. Cap. read Regnier, O.F.M. Conv.
- ibid.*: for Sciamannini, O.F.M., Cap. read Sciamannini, O.F.M. Conv.
- ibid.* (under Sciamannini) : for Fr. H. DiCicco read Fr. H. DiCicco, O.F.M. Conv.

## GOD'S DESIGN

Lines crisscross —

Colors contrast —

Geometric forms converge

into varied sizes and shapes . . . .

Can it be that in such a PATTERN OF LIFE

the Creator has found *balance*?

Will race, color, and creed

culture and personality

blend in *harmony*?

Only a Master Artist

can make each work a Masterpiece

And though He fashions millions of souls in SYMMETRY

to the image and likeness of His Divinity;

Yet, each individual — a unique original

through His Infinity!

Even if all do not appreciate

the worth of His Art,

This does not lessen the value

of the Master's work,

His every scheme makes a perfect design,

"For God can draw straight with a crooked line".

*Sister Mary Antonelle, C.S.S.F.*